

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

by CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR(Ref), artwork by Carl Snow



There was a very real possibility that Puresome's Flat Hatting Franchise was going to lapse. Even though the statute of limitations had long since run out over a series of inexplicable low-altitude high-speed transgressions over dusty New Mexico Territory towns and ranches, Youthly had plumb run out of *Skyhawks*, *Crusaders* and *Double-Barreled Fantooms* to drive. This was an unanticipated side effect of retirement, and it was clearly intolerable that folks and a whole generation of field animals could wander around without flinching. A grand gesture was in order, and Puresome sloshed some brown whiskey in his glass and pondered. But inspiration was not found by putting the bottle to his head and pulling the trigger, at least of the sort to solve slipping the surly bonds of earth problems.



Rather, the answer came from a tattered old copy of "Flying Along In Flight" magazine that featured an article on the damndest airplane Puresome had ever seen. It was called an *Air Cam*, and it had been developed to go down to Africa and take pictures of the many picturesque animals out in the bush. The airplane had to take off and land in little bitty distances, go slow, have great visibility and have twin-engine redundancy to avoid forced landings in the middle of toothed creatures. The result looked like a long canoe with a big wing stuck over the top of it, with two pusher Rotax engines and a giant vertical stabilizer and rudder on the back. The best part was a tandem cockpit with the driver stuck way out on the pointy end in an open cockpit. The safari airplane had been so successful that it had been put into production as a kit. "Hell, I made model airplanes when I was a kid! This thing is a Harley for the air! Tunita could even ride along, so she couldn't possibly object! *Air Cam* — that's the ticket!

Of course, Youthly was predictably wrong about Tunita's objections, particularly about the part where he figured on selling off some of her grandbabies to finance the project. But, in the end, she threw up her hands in the sure knowledge that a weird gloppy pseudopod that had crash-landed his saucer near Roswell, N.M., had somehow invaded her husband and now wore a Puresome suit. It had happened before ...

The planning and execution of *Operation Air Cam* made D-Day look simple, and it happily kept Puresome out of trouble for most of a year. He petitioned the Federales to let him have a custom N-number for the plane, "Four Zero Yankee Poppa," "Four-Point-O" being Naval Aviator for perfecto and "Yankee Poppa" for his ownself. He found a good ol' boy in western Florida who had put together an *Air Cam* kit for another chap, and he agreed to put 49 percent of one together and help Puresome with the other 51 percent of construction. After many strange adventures, the *Air Cam* got lashed together and it came time for Puresome to bring home *Yankee Pop*.

Puresome flew a Grits Jr. Airways Dinky Jet to Tallahassee and only waited 45 minutes curbside for a rusty 1955 Chevrolet pickup from Sorghum State rent-a-car to amble over to get him. "Well, they was sick folks in the office ..." The good news was that there was a place across from the rent-a-car emporium that said "Catfish Patch." Puresome asked the car folks if it was any good, but they were just down from Michigan and certainly didn't know. But the parking lot was full, and, when Youthly walked in the place, it was full of coveralls and ball caps. When he saw "Cheese Grits" was a side dish for all the fried catfish, mullets, oysters and scallops on the menu, he knew he was truly back in the land of Navy Flight Training. Oh, yes — he had to choose between "Sweet Tea" or "Unsweet Tea." Only someone from New Yawk City or an anorexic body would chose the "Unsweet Tea," and it was clearly better to be neither ...

Interstate highways in this part of Florida have Stalag 17 type fences along their borders to keep the deer from running out and impaling the tourists, so Puresome made the 50-mile trip west in relative safety. Exiting into the piney woods, he ended up on a red dirt farm road that led to the shop, hangar and grass strip where *Yankee Poppa* had been born'd up and raised. Many strange and complicated adventures had passed so that the plane came to be ready to fly, but there it was, shining bright white against the deep Florida green grass.

Yankee Poppa's nominal 49 percent builder, Mr. Glenn, was there to meet him. Mr. Glenn was a former Marine, some 260 pounds of tall guy who could bench press John Deere tractors and also dabble a touch-up paint brush with Picasso-like adroitness. He was a true good ol' boy and a devout craftsman, and, naturally, Puresome found some other stuff for him to do to his airplane. So passed the afternoon until about 1600. An ultralight pilot had showed up and invited Puresome to go flying with him. Nupe. It was the hour of truth. Enough fussing and primping, it was time to go fly his airplane.

Puresome figured he had flown the F-11, the A-4, the A-7, the F-8 and the F-4 (well, there was somebody in the back seat to pray for him) the first time by his ownself, and he had practiced up his tail-dragging in a *Citabria* earlier in the summer, so this was just another different airplane. You just had to go try it on.

Mr. Glenn was nervous as a momma with cubs about his baby. "Ye want me to fly along with ye?" asked the ultralite pilot. Nupe. It was time to go fly, so Youthly saddled up and fired up both motors. After taxiing around for a bit, it was time to get the hell out, so he pointed in the right direction, stirred the controls and ran the throttles up. *Yankee Poppa* literally squirted forward, and he was airborne almost before he knew it! Yeeeeehaw! Puresome was too surprised to honk the nose up to space shuttle attitude and show off, but at a 40 mile-per-hour climb speed, he didn't have to worry about getting the wing down and locked before he hit hypervelocity. Sitting behind a clear windshield and no canopy around him, the side rails about thigh level, Puresome was delighted not to be a little weirded out. He had been during the first ride in the *Air Cam* at the factory, where (acutely afraid of heights) he found he was suddenly sitting in a chair 1,000 feet in the air! Leveling off, he throttled back to a blistering 82 mph and headed for Marianna, Fla., about 10 miles away to do some landings.

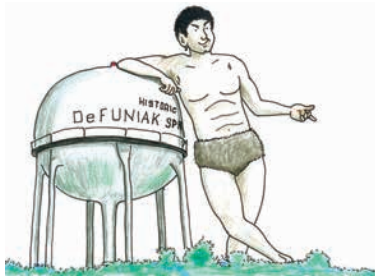
Puresome figured that he would be landing on asphalt runways on the trip back home, so he had better practice on them. Besides, having several thousand feet of smooth surface couldn't be too bad for finding the ground.

He was in some luck, because the Florida dusk was beautifully smooth with hardly any wind. Since he had lots of runway to find exactly where the ground actually was, Puresome tip-toed down in stair steps the final few inches, found it, and just kept the tail in the air going down the runway, memorizing the sight picture.

He did three more bumps and circuits, and the approaching darkness made him head on back to the home patch. He made an acceptable short-field landing on the grass and figured he was your basic Ace of Base. It was hard to stop grinning.

Next morning was time to head to Texas. Plan was to blast off for Defuniak Springs, Fla., where a waiting techie would certify the transponder, and then to head on down the road to Hattiesburg, Miss., where a motel reservation and cold beer waited. Puresome had forgotten about Grong, the Goat God, who is particularly powerful in the South. His powerful goat god influence slows down time and makes things in airplanes go wonky. Sure enough, Puresome got involved in trips to Wally World for more bungee cords and giant tupperware items to hold his steamer trunk, pounds of paperwork and leftover paint. Sure enough, an item that had worked perfectly on the test hop decided to go blinky. So he did not blast off until nearly 1300 for the trip to the techie at Defuniak Springs. Time was a wasting.

It took about an hour to get to the little strip stuck between tall Florida pines. The wind seemed to be favoring the "W," so Puresome, the self-proclaimed *Air Cam* Ace of the Base, pointed to runway 28. He was really more interested in seeing where the techie's place might be on the



small airport than landing, and he forgot that tail-draggers needed to be flown ALL THE WAY TO THE CHOCKS. *Yankee Poppa* touched down and promptly decided to head for the weeds ... YAAAAAAA! Fortunately, thousand-hour hands and feet, followed by a red face, reminded the former Base Ace

that proper respect needed to be paid. Puresome wrote that down in his day book in red magic marker.

After much techie stuff, it was sadly discovered that the brand-new transponder lacked empathy with the test equipment and needed to be sent back for electronic Viagra or a more studly item. Naturally, this blew most of the rest of the afternoon and Youthly's legendary patience, so he decided to decamp, tie down and spend the night. Since he had a long way to go the next morning, he found the facility's self-serve gas setup. "Well, normally all you have to do is swipe a credit card and pump, but I kinda ran out of gas ..."

It was time to go have a couple of beers, more cheese grits and think about things. Later at a luxurious Defuniak Springs motel, Puresome watched the Weather Channel on the telly and developed Plan "B." Despite the passage of a cold front during the night, the weather was to be clear, VERY COLD and gusty winds out of the northwest. Real good. Puresome had brought along his mossy breakup cammo deer hunting overalls, so he was ready for the cold, he hoped, but the gusty northwest wind would be on the beak all the way to Texas, and he would encounter gusty crosswinds at three of the four stops on the way home. Recently humbled, this gave some pause even to one so pure of heart.

It was really cold the next morning, and the promised wind was there. Puresome had decided to fly on to nearby Crestview, Fla., rather than use the electric golf cart and five-gallon gas cans to motor across a busy highway to fill up the plane, as had been kindly offered by the gas-less FBO operator. He took advantage of a dirt runway that was a little more into the wind and found that the *Air Cam's* almost helicopter lift-off saved him again.

The low-level flight to Crestview was lumpy, and it was found necessary to sit on his map to keep it from going bye-bye. Puresome briefly thought, "Jerbis Flinderbars! Wot if I roll this thing up in a ball?!!!" But, fortunately, there was a plan. On his ride at the *Air Cam* factory at Sebring, the wind had been blowing a gale across all known runways, and Puresome had watched what the factory pilot did with interest. He had made a no-flap landing at a zortching F-104 speed of 60 mph, tip-pie-toed down to the runway, and, ground-speed almost nothing, cut the power and STOPPED. To his amazement and relief, this technique worked at Crestview and no morting went on.

So, thoroughly gassed up, Puresome flew on to Mississippi. After 2:26 flight time, he was so cold he couldn't get out of the airplane and was sitting on the ramp with nothing but sunglasses and bill of ball cap sticking out of his deer-hunting outfit, trying to thaw out enough to unstrap. Two good ol' boys in a pickup roared up. "Whut in the hale is that you're flyin'? Where yew from? What you gonna do with it?" Youthly kindly told them that it was on the eventual way to Rancho Delmundo, New Mexico, was going to fly around and look at the spread. "Don't even tell me you don't deer hunt!" Deer hunting got thoroughly discussed, and Puresome finally got warm enough to get out and go see about some gas. Inside there was HOT COFFEE. The kindly FBO operator volunteered to make another pot, got Youthly some homemade German chocolate cake and popped a bag of popcorn for his frozen guest. More deer hunting got discussed, including proper garb for keeping warm feet, which two pairs of socks and Wellington boots had not done for Puresome. A corporate pilot volunteered that a couple of trash bags duct-taped over the lower extremities might help. Mr. FBO said, "Hell, I got trash bags AND duct tape!" So it was done. Impeccably clad in cammo deer-hunting suit and trash bagged lower extremities, Puresome waddled on out to *Air Cam* it to Jefferson Parish airport in Louisiana.

Three hours and thirty-two minutes worth of flight time proved that that trash bag trick worked some. Puresome passed over Elderly Man River Mississippi and puffing river barges about 1345. The American South, seen from very low altitude, is a bunch of pine trees punctuated by deer stands and the occasional swamp. In an open cockpit airplane,



the jolly paper mill smells and the smoke from lots of small forest fires took Puresome back to the happy odors around Saufley Field. When he landed in Louisiana, he was lucky enough to catch the FBO operator there before he shut down early on Friday afternoon so he could go get in his stand and maybe bag that big buck he had missed. Like a horse nearing the home patch at the end of a long day, Puresome could smell Texas. He figured that his ETA would be 1900 in the darkness, but, since he had instrument lights and a couple of landing lights that looked like they had come off a Schwinn bicycle, he had the technology. He called Tunita and told her "Mama, come and git your baby boy!"

When he hit the Texas border, the wind died. It got warmer. Puresome let down to tree-top level and found that he could actually hold a heading and an altitude for more than moments. The sun eased down, and the red dusk peacefully moved into a nighttime sparkling with lights. He climbed up to 1,000 feet and enjoyed the Great Antheap unfolding toward him at a pace where he could enjoy the scenery. He landed at Grand Prairie Airport and found that his Schwinn bicycle lights lit up the runway like a 767 at DFW. It had only taken nine hours of flight time that day, and his greeting committee was vastly impressed with the trash bags.

Saturday morning, Puresome and his son transferred *Yankee Poppa* to his winter home on a grass strip south of Fort Worth. It was a beautiful, breezy day, and there were LOTS of aviators out to watch the takeoff. *Yankee Poppa* rolled about two airplane lengths and shot up to 1,000 feet hardly before anyone could say "Holy Sheeeeeeit!" It didn't even matter that it took a month and a half to leave the airport boundary after that.

