

# COPA Flight news

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## COPA award winner celebrates 95th birthday flying over favourite haunts

By Gord Mahaffy

In 2014 at the age of 93, Lou Wise received an Award of Merit from COPA National for his work as a pilot in preserving the Oak Ridges moraine. He did this by creating a collection of aerial photographs showing the boundaries, the kettle lakes, the rivers, the tributaries, and the aquifers that make up the moraine.

This was no small feat, since Lou was flying a Cherokee 180, often by himself. The challenges were to get permission to enter controlled airspace at low level, communicate with ATC and then position the plane so the low wing would not block the shot. He did this successfully for many years and shared the pictures with several academic and environmental groups.

In fact His Royal Highness Prince Charles presented Lou with a medal for this work. Now, as an aging veteran, Lou makes his home in a special ward at Sunnybrook hospital in Toronto. But the aviation community is quick to recognize those people, who in the future will be identified as "special" or even as "heroes" for their dedication to making the future a better place for all of us.

So on Lou's 95th birthday his friends arranged for him to have a flight over the Oak Ridges Moraine in a Cessna 172 with



flight instructor George Nelson.

The flight covered much of the ground that Lou had photographed so often in the past

and, upon landing, a party was held in the Chadburn lounge of the Oshawa airport. Some of those attending this party were

Lou's wife Lena, members of his family, co-pilot Noriko, photographers John Bertram and Gus Corujo and COPA National director, Cheryl Marek.

Lou became quite relaxed and shared some of his aviation stories. One that resonated with the group was how he met and married his wife, Lena, who had just been discharged from the RCAF after the war. After his first meet-

**Above:**  
Lou's co-pilot, Noriko, looks on as COPA National director, Cheryl Marek congratulates Lou on his 95th birthday.

**At left:**  
Lou can still blow out all his birthday candles with one breath.

ing with Lena, Lou was smitten and really wanted to impress her. So as a first date he invited Lena to go flying with him in a rented Aeronca Champ.

This was to be Lena's first flight in a light aircraft. But as fate would have it, the Champ suffered an engine failure shortly after takeoff. Lou made a textbook forced landing in an available field, but the soft ground put the little plane over on its back. However, the story has a happy ending.

"In spite of all of this, she still married me". So if you are a pilot and have not yet reached your 95th birthday, take some inspiration from Lou. You still have a lot of hours of flying to go.

For some really great pictures of this event, go to Gus' website, [www.gusair.com](http://www.gusair.com) and follow the links, Home > Website Updates > Lou Wise 95th Birthday Flight.



Lou (centre) with his wife Lena. In Lou's own words, "Even after a forced landing, she still married me".

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