

We were in rural Ontario after a few days in Toronto with daughter Megan and her husband Charlie. Staying with B&B hosts Manfred and Heidi in a beautiful cropping farm setting near Fergus, I got to learn that Manfred flew with the Luftwaffe in World War 2 – and he still flies regularly! The conversation flowed on and he told me some War stories from the 'other side'. Always up for some adventure, I asked if I could take a flight with him in his 2 seater microlight in the shed. At 88, he told me the only passenger he takes up these days is Heidi – but he offered to make a call.

The next morning I was helping his friend John roll one of the eight little planes out of the huge shed behind the house onto the grass runway. As I buckled up the harness, John called Jan over for a chat before we took off. He explained that he was not licensed to take passengers, the aircraft was not certified, he carried no insurance, he required me not to interfere with the controls, he is an insulin-dependent diabetic and if something should go wrong, there would be NO claim on him, his descendants or his estate. I took a deep breath, said a quick prayer and agreed. This was as safe as it could be – he was so thorough with the checklist and radio contact with the flight traffic control tower **and** he'd fitted a parachute to the aircraft for good measure.

We sat on the runway with the motor idling while he tested his blood sugar – all okay – then we were off! A smooth take-off and quickly we were 1000' in the clear warm morning air bumping through a few thermals, looking down on the flat patchwork of peaceful fertile paddocks and the winding Grande River. There is something quite liberating about defying gravity. People and animals are specks on the landscape and the beauty of creation is apparent from a very different perspective. I wondered afresh how God sees things.

After 20 minutes we came in for a challenging landing on one wheel - fighting a cross wind which had sprung up out of nowhere. Even so, John was calm, controlled and confident and I was delighted to be back on terra firma in one piece – without needing the parachute. With my heart racing, I thanked him for his generosity as he refused any contribution towards fuel – and we went on our way.

I like being outside my comfort zone from time to time – and I'm sure that God is able to teach us new things more easily when we open ourselves up in this way. May God bless us all in our flights of fancy. Shalom, Mark.