



By David P Andersen

I couldn't sleep. I was tired but I just couldn't get to sleep. Perhaps I was too tired. I was wound up from too much business pressure and too much family responsibility. So I just laid there, body still but mind racing a mile a minute. Perhaps if I took a walk, or better yet, went for a ride, it would help me relax. Then maybe I could get some sleep.

I got dressed and got into the car. It was a cool fall night with a full moon and a clear sky. The air soothed my face as I drove out of town.

I drove along the freeway until I came to the river highway. Before long I approached the turn-off to the club field. I wondered what the place would be like at night. It's secluded, peaceful and quiet and full of fond memories. I turned off the main highway and drove to the end of the county road to my model airplane club's flying field.

There, in the still night, was the old flyin' yard. It had been so long since I had been there. Somehow I just hadn't found the time to keep up with the hobby any more. That was too bad.

I could see the whole field in the bright moonlight—the taxiways, the outhouse, the picnic grounds, and of course, the runways. How I wished that I were still active in the hobby! I resolved to make an attempt to simplify my lifestyle so that I would have more time once again to fly model airplanes.

I shut off the car, expecting total silence to follow. But instead I heard a low humming coming from outside the car. I got out and looked around. There in the middle of the field I saw an airplane. How could someone forget their airplane? As I walked toward the plane, I noticed a transmitter too. I picked it up.

There was no sign of anyone around. There was just a transmitter and an airplane—no car, no field box, no people—nothing. I called out, "Anybody here?" in spite of the fact that it was obvious that I was quite alone.

That was strange and stranger yet, the airplane's motor was running. The plane was resting there, engine ticking over as if it were awaiting clearance for take off.

With the transmitter in my hand, I walked to the plane to examine it.

"Fly me," a voice whispered.

"Somebody there?" I responded with a start.

Nobody answered. It must have been a rustle in the leaves of the trees, I reasoned.

The plane was a precision scale Hawker Hurricane. I recognized the sound of an OS engine in the cowl. The airplane was magnificent—panel lines, cockpit detail and just a bit of weathering.

I moved the left stick of the transmitter. The tail of the airplane sashayed back and forth in response to the tail wheel. *"Fly me,"* I thought I heard a voice whisper again.

I tried the other controls—ailerons and elevator. I inched the throttle up just a little bit. The engine crackled into a fast idle and the plane began to move. I stepped back to the edge of the grass and steered the plane along the ground until it came to the end of the runway. With full left rudder I turned the plane around and stopped it.

"Fly me. Fly me."

I advanced the throttle slowly and applied a little right rudder and full up elevator. The plane began to accelerate. As it picked up speed, I eased off the elevator and applied more right rudder. The tail lifted off the runway. More throttle. As the plane rushed by me it became airborne and assumed a shallow straight climb.

Oh what a sweet sight in the moonlight! Those slender wings shadowed against a half-lit sky. I throttled back and approached the field for a slow flyby. The moonlight flashed off the propeller as the plane leveled off at ten feet of altitude. I flicked the retract switch and watched first one leg fold inward followed by the other. I heard the swish of the propeller blades over the hum of the engine as the sleek fighter cruised directly over the center of the runway.

When I advanced the throttle she shot forward. Turning around downwind, I decided to try for a loop. When the plane became centered before me, I pulled partway back on the elevator stick. The nose came up and the occasional four-cycle of the engine became a solid two-cycle as the powerful engine slowly arched the plane up and over onto its back. I momentarily eased off the elevator to stretch the top of the loop. I throttled back to idle as the plane glided downward, leveling out once again about ten feet above the runway.

After a straight flight out from the loop, I used both rudder and aileron to turn the plane quickly around in preparation for a slow roll.

“The next maneuver will be a slow roll,” I called aloud.

At full throttle in a shallow climb, I moved the aileron stick about a quarter of an inch to the left. As the wings began to roll, I began to slowly feed in a little right rudder followed by about a quarter of an inch of down elevator. When the wings became vertical I eased off the right rudder but continued to apply more down elevator. The rudder stick passed from left to right as the plane passed thru inverted flight. Continuing the roll, I slowly released the down elevator and applied more left rudder. The elevator almost reached neutral as the wings became vertical again, the nose being held up by the rudder alone.

At last the plane assumed upright flight and I released the ailerons. In joy of what I had just done, I shouted, “Maneuver complete,” and laughed aloud. What a thrill to fly such a splendid airplane!

I imagined that I was flying in the FAI Scale World Championships. I called double stall turns and a touch and go, and did the required figure eight. The plane responded to my commands with smoothness and steady stability that was unlike any airplane I had ever flown. I called a split-S and landing--commonplace during the Battle of Britain when fighters ran low on fuel, I explained to the judges. The beautiful Hurricane streaked before me in a high-speed pass, pulled up at a 45-degree angle and rolled inverted. The nose dropped as I retarded the throttle. The plane arched over as I pulled back on the elevator and I simultaneously snapped the retract and flap switches. By the time the plane leveled out, I saw that both landing gear legs and the flaps were down. I began the flair at about twenty feet of altitude. She slowed and settled for a soft three-point landing.

I felt exhilarated, yet relaxed. I savored the moment of accomplishment. Putting down the transmitter where I had found it, I walked back to the car. Glancing back at the Hurricane as I stepped into the car, I paused.

It was resting there where I had found it, engine still ticking over in a low idle. What an airplane! What a flight, I thought as I drove home. Once again I experienced the relaxed contentment I had known so many times before when I used to regularly fly R/C. The satisfaction that comes from a good flight is a joy I had not experienced in a long time. I felt so contented that when I reached home, I got into bed and immediately fell asleep.

The next morning my wife asked if I had slept well.

“Oh yes,” I replied. “I feel very refreshed.”

“I thought you must have slept soundly by the way you were snoring,” she said. “And you said the funniest thing when I rolled you over.”

“You rolled me over so I would stop snoring?” I asked. “What did I say?”

“You said in a very loud voice, ‘Maneuver complete!’”

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