



Higher Calling

The freedom of flying
Adirondack skies

BY AURORA PFAFF

Last fall, while driving the quiet stretch of Route 458 between St. Regis Falls and the turn-off for Madawaska, I noticed a pair of birds flying above. Although not usually an exceptional sight—I live in the Adirondacks, after all—this time it was. They were crows, flying east, when one suddenly and gracefully tipped its wings and changed course to join the other midair. Riding in my car, trapped on a prescribed course, I envied the birds. Their swift turn and easy adjustment of wings struck me in a way it hadn't in the past. It's because I was learning to fly.

Adirondack pilots have historically been adventurous, building their own planes, scouting for forest fires, documenting crannies of the wilderness and ferrying ministers to remote lumber camps or lumber barons to their Great Camps. Even Noah John Rondeau, the famous hermit,

made the trip to his wilderness outpost via helicopter, particularly in his later years. Adirondack icon Clarence Petty was a wilderness advocate and conservationist, forest ranger and, as a lifelong aviator, taught other people how to fly until he was 94. The story goes that he fell in love with flying when, as a boy, he watched a floatplane land on Lake Flower. For many pilots, one chance encounter is all it takes.

As a child I dreamed of flying airplanes, pretended, and read about pioneering female pilots such as Betty Pettitt Nicholas, from Upper Saranac Lake, who was a WASP in World War II and even a skywriter.

Late 2022 found me sitting in the cockpit of a tidy, compact Piper Cherokee next to Mike Wolford, of Adirondack Aviation Academy, surrounded by rolling waves of red, orange, yellow and green—the Adirondacks lit up in fall. In the four-seater Piper, we cruised from Saranac Lake to Lake Placid, where I took the controls and made an awkward

The author's cockpit-view of the fall landscape.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



loop around the village. Down below it looked like a model railroad miniature. On the way back to the Adirondack Regional Airport, in Lake Clear, as we flew over the McKenzie Mountain Wilderness and the village of Saranac Lake, Mike and I spotted my house; later, my husband told me he heard our plane.

Mike and his partner, Michelle Smith, have operated the Adirondack Aviation Academy since 2020, leading student pilots of all ages from their first flight to soloing and private pilot's licenses. Mike's been flying a variety of aircraft for more than 40 years and is a natural at putting his students at ease. Michelle loves flying for its freedom and independence and the satisfaction of sharing that with her students.

I started flying because I wanted to, but after my initial flight, I continued my lessons because I needed to.

I was struggling with personal loss. My dear friend Niel, 89 years young, had just died. In the last part of Niel's life I had weekly phone calls with him, and



FULL SERVICE EVENT RENTALS THAT MAKE YOUR GATHERING UNIQUE


TENTS • LUXURY RESTROOM TRAILERS • LINENS • DISHES • LIGHTING
DANCE FLOORS • STAGING & MORE





PartyPlus[®]
EVENTS

108 Hammond Lane • Plattsburgh
518-324-7814
angela@partypluseventsny.com
PARTYPLUSEVENTSNY.COM



BIKE the BARNs
A farm-by-bike tour of
New York's Champlain Valley

Saturday, October 7, 2023
Ausable Brewing Co., Keeseville, NY
www.adirondack.org/btb

Presented by **ANCA** with **USC**



Context | Environment | Craft

David Rommeyer Architects | **©2023**

24/7 Local Monitoring of your Home & Business

Operate your alarm system from your smartphone!

- Control locks, thermostats & lights
- Add user codes
- Check your cameras & history
- Arm & Disarm instantly



Celebrating 65 Years in Business!



Get a **FREE QUOTE**
for a customized
alarm system!

**SECURITY
FIRE
CCTV
ACCESS CONTROL
ENVIRONMENTAL**

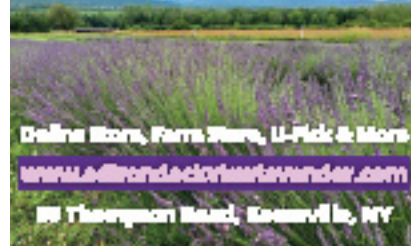


MAHONEY ALARMS

Local, Loyal & Trusted!

(800) 794-6277 www.mahoneyalarms.com

Adirondack View Lavender



Online Store, Farm Store, U-Pick & More

www.adirondackviewlavender.com

10 Thompson Road, Keeseville, NY



United Way of the Adirondack Region, Inc.

*Our Mission: To be a leader
in community partnership
building and to increase the
organized capacity of
people to care for one
another.*

518-563-0028

unitedwayadk.org

Mt. Marcy

MARKET PLACE

ADIRONDACK REGIONAL COUNCIL

ADIRONDACK REGIONAL COUNCIL is located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We are
located in the heart of the Adirondack Park, just
north of Keeseville, NY. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. For more information, please call
518-563-0028.

ADIRONDACK LIFE



ADIRONDACK LIFE

ADIRONDACK LIFE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. We are located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We
are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more
information, please call 518-563-0028.

ADIRONDACK LIFE

ADIRONDACK LIFE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. We are located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We
are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more
information, please call 518-563-0028.

ADIRONDACK LIFE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. We are located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We
are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more
information, please call 518-563-0028.

ADIRONDACK LIFE



For the entire selection of our
ADIRONDACK LIFE
products please go to
www.adirondacklifestore.com



Mt. Marcy

Text classified order form

Adirondack Life, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. We are located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We
are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more
information, please call 518-563-0028.

Item	Quantity	Price
Item 1	1	\$1.00
Item 2	1	\$1.00
Item 3	1	\$1.00
Item 4	1	\$1.00

ADIRONDACK LIFE, INC.

Mt. Marcy Marketplace
P.O. Box 418, Jay, NY 13154

Call (518) 563-0028 ext. 100

It's a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Adirondack Life, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization. We are located at the
10000 Highway 100, Keeseville, NY 13152. We
are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more
information, please call 518-563-0028.

NORTH COUNTRY

he and I delighted in getting to know each other. Niel had never been to the Adirondacks, but he wanted to know more about this place and my life here. I told him about caring for my grandmother, who had had Alzheimer's, and he touched on his relationships and the fears and joys he had experienced over the years.

The last time I spoke with Niel, just days before he died, he was astonished that I was taking flying lessons.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I want to," I replied. And it turned out that flying was what eased my grief over his death.


Clarence Petty once said that in the remoteness of the wilderness, everything is in balance. It's true. Beyond the exhilaration and terror of learning the how and the what—focusing your attention on your airspeed, altitude and keeping the plane's nose in the sweet spot—there's the sunrise beyond Whiteface and the stunning topography of the High Peaks. Like life and death, everything is in balance.

Flying over the Adirondacks changes your perception of the park and your place in it. Bodies of water become shapes; hikers look like ants on top of Mount Marcy. In winter you might spot a lone moose against the white landscape. Hamlets, rivers and mountains connect into one continuous, rolling landscape. Like the skies, there are no visible boundaries, no fences or road signs delineating one place from another.

Looking down, I'm struck by the ancientness of it all, that below is a billion-year-old landscape that will last longer than we will, ever rising. We are part of it, but we're here for just a moment. Up here in the sky, a gentle tip of the wing means a new course of your own choosing, where a beautiful equilibrium lives. ▲


IF YOU GO (UP)

The Adirondack Aviation Academy, based on Airport Road in Saranac Lake, offers flight instruction, pilot certifications and scenic flights. Learn more at (240) 461-1543 or www.adirondackaviation.com.



**ADIRONDACK
BUILDING RESTORATION**

**Pier & Foundation Repair & Replacement
Structural Jacking & Leveling
Boathouse & Dock/Cribbing Repair • & Much More...**



Pier & Foundation Repair Boathouse & Dock Repair Camp Jacking & Leveling

EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

From the beginning of every project to completion, our clients can expect professionalism. We strive for excellence from start to finish.

ASK ABOUT REFERENCES | RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL | FREE ESTIMATES | BONDED & INSURED

**Call: 315-339-4000 Visit: www.adirondackbuildingrestoration.com
Email: adirondackbuildingrestoration@nylnet.com**



**PLEIN
AIR**

**IN THE
ADIRONDACKS**

Saranac Lake: 8/14-19
The Adirondack Plein Air Festival

Malone: 9/13-16
Salmon River Valley Plein Air Festival

Tupper Lake: 10/4-8
Tupper Lake Plein Air Festival

**ART
WORKS**
SARANAC LAKE

- Watch artists work...
- View new paintings...
- Bring a piece home!

**3rd Thursday ArtWalks
ArtMarkets & Studio Tours**

**MORE INFORMATION AT:
SaranacLakeArtWorks.org**