

# Song bird Klaus Horky retires from piloting with Tofino Air

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Skies of blue, clouds of white, bright blessed days, colours of a rainbow and the faces of people going by.

That's what Klaus Horky has enjoyed and will be bidding adieu to as he retires from working as a pilot for Tofino Air. His final day came this past week.

Klaus was there with Graeme Ireland when Tofino Air opened its doors on Gabriola.

He was flying a Cessna 185 float plane at that time.

"We used to advertise back then that we flew to all the islands," said Klaus.

"We would go to Galiano, Saturna, Mayne and even Valdez where there is no beach and you have to go on to where there is lots of logs."

He has logged over 15,000 flying hours in his 35 years of flying.

For Tofino Air he estimates he has around 4,000 hours. That's over 2,600 individual flights from Silva Bay to Vancouver.

With all those takeoffs and landings, Klaus said, "some were smoother than others. But I prided myself in having many passengers sleeping through an especially soft touch down."

While almost everyone who has flown with Klaus has a different story, almost every story involves someone singing a song during takeoff.

Klaus said, "The most fun I get is from passengers, especially the ones who haven't flown

before. Those ones I insist sit in the front and sing."

"What a Wonderful World" is by far the most popular song, but he said there was also "Good Morning Sunshine" and "Those Were the Days My Friend."

"I find, every time you ask someone to sing they say, 'You don't want to hear my voice' and then they join in."

Asked if Tofino will be requiring future pilots to sing to get the job Graeme said good-naturedly, "Well we have Brian and Sean filling in, neither of them sing and I don't sing. So it'll be quiet around here, peaceful."

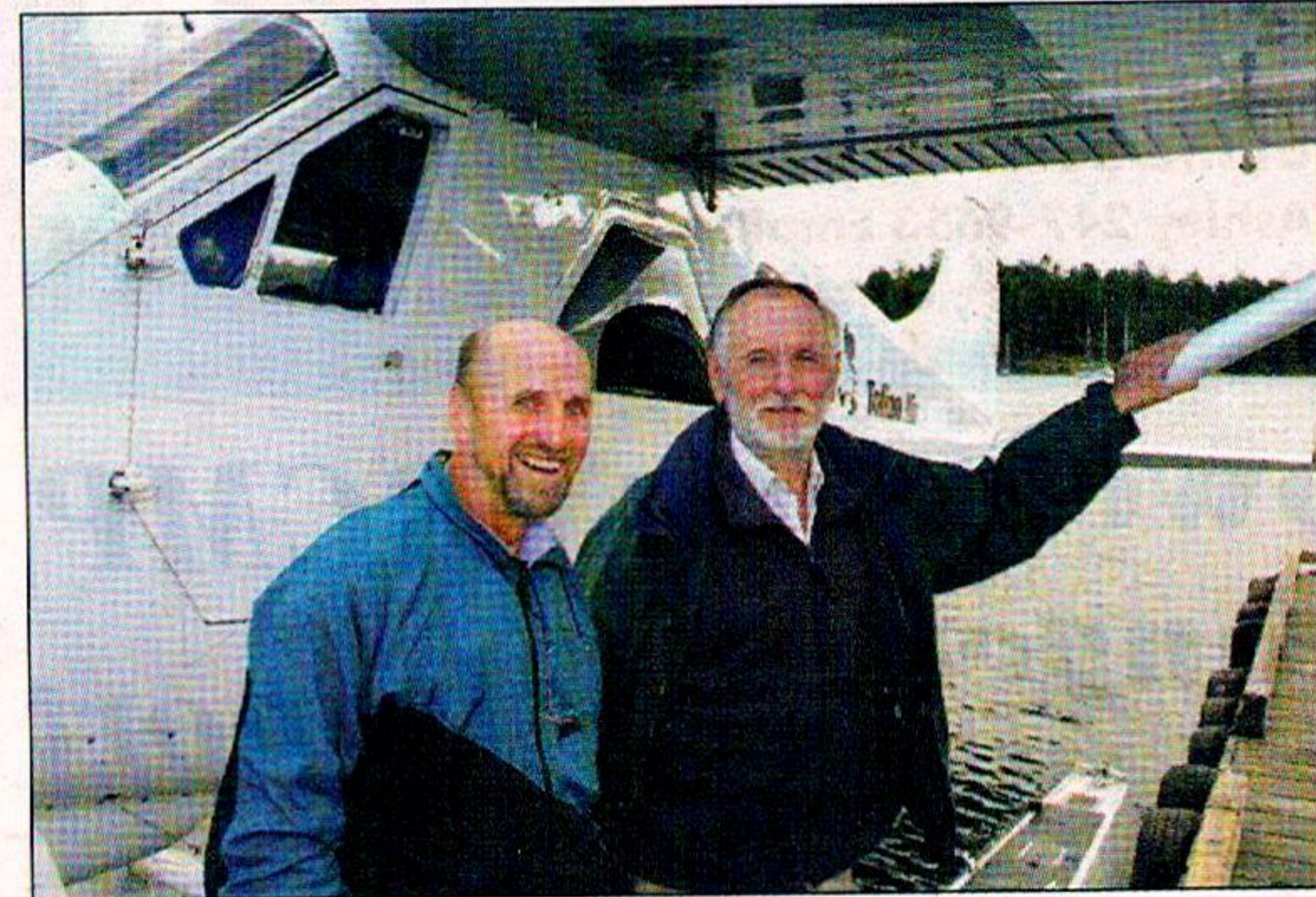
Weather is a challenge with flying seaplanes on the West Coast, and Klaus has plenty of stories, most of which involve detours either south around Valdez or farther north.

He remembers one particular trip when he was taking a man who was going to Vancouver to chair a meeting at the Vancouver Aquarium. The chairman's cellphone rang with his office wondering where he was as the meeting was about to start. The chair told his office to start without him, he was sitting in a seaplane in the Georgia Strait playing cards.

Klaus said, "Sometimes, when the weather is not so good, you get certain cloud formations where the sun shines down behind them and it looks literally like God is reaching down with his hand."

Of all the planes, Klaus's favourite was the one nicknamed the black beast, which had the painting of a grizzly bear, tail number C-FHRT. Calling in to the Vancouver air control tower pilots would normally identify the plane

as 'Hotel-Romeo-Tango.' On occasion Klaus said he would identify the plane as 'Hormone Replacement Therapy.' Some of the traffic controllers, he said would get a real kick out of that joke, and would swap some jokes back at him.



**KLAUS HORKY** and Graeme Ireland on the dock at Silva Bay.

already had. Klaus accepted the permission though.

Klaus said, "Because he couldn't see me pop up on his radar, he called out the Coast Guard. He thought I flipped and drowned."

The incident was reported through Transport Canada he said and everyone involved came away properly spoken to.

Now that he's retired, Klaus is going to visit his son in Austria.

"I'm probably going to rent a plane there and fly around. Where I live in Vienna there are no mountains. My first cross-country solo was from Graz to Vienna and then back. We flew no-radio.

It was weird; I flew right over the middle of the international airport at 2,000 feet with all the airplanes taking off and landing underneath."

Small craft flying, he said, is one of the best ways to get to see what the country really looks like, although it used to be much cheaper.

"Back in '75 before I had my commercial license, my girlfriend and I flew from Vancouver to Toronto and back in my Cessna 150. It was cheap. \$20 an hour."

He wishes everyone safe flying as they continue to travel with Tofino Air saying, "To all the faithful passengers who flew with us in the last ten years, rain or shine, I'm happy they came with us and supported us in lean and

A single incident sticks out making Klaus famous amongst the seaplane pilots who fly the Vancouver airport route.

Klaus said it is referred to as a Horky One departure.

He was waiting his turn in the river to take off and was having an argument with the traffic controller.

"He gave the guy after me, who was behind me sequentially, the takeoff clearance.

"So I mated with that guy and took off at the same time."

When Klaus was then at the five mile markers heading out of Vancouver, the tower gave him permission to take off, not knowing he