



On The Step
Issue 15 -
October 2008



From the President

Recession! Financial Meltdown! World Economic Crisis!

If you are feeling just a little jaded by all the bad news, then I have the perfect solution to ease your worries! **Go fly a Seaplane**

So, let me begin with some good news!

SPAA Public Relations

We welcome Philip Dartnell to the SPAA Executive as our new Public Relations Officer. Feedback from a non-financial member last month suggested that the SPAA is a Sydney based "Old Boys" club and communication is poor, especially around notification of seaplane related events. Philip will help us address this deficiency.

Any willing member, irrespective of State, who is willing to assist our association, will be warmly welcomed by the "Sydney Old Boys". Just e-mail president@seaplanes.org.au.

Philip (Lake Renegade Owner) VH-WMW) will be giving attention to better communication on such things as "Splash-Ins" and events etc.

The enormous growth of the Recreational movement (RAAus) makes a closer link with this booming area of aviation essential, especially with those "lighties" who are taking to the waterways. We need to ensure that RAAus registered seaplanes are members of the SPAA and are aware of the environmental sensitivities of operating a seaplane, especially these days with many Government Authorities ready to ban seaplanes. Philip's contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Happy and safe alightings to all.

Rob Loneragan (VH-CRA)

More news from the President on page 3

From the Editor

Join the Family

When I was considering purchasing a SeaRey kit, Rob Loneragan told me I was not buying an aeroplane as much as joining a family of seaplane lovers.

And so it has proved for me. I have been welcomed into the homes and lives of SeaRey owners all over Australia and America.

I have recently returned from a business trip to the USA where I used a couple of free days to visit Seaplane colleagues. Firstly I meet up with Tom White and we had a great scenic flight over Los Angeles in his SeaRey which is based at Long Beach.

Later I spent time with John Spratt and his wife Carolyn near Reno. Unfortunately we could not go flying because John was waiting to replace a cracked muffler. However he took me to visit his colleagues at his home airport.

The aviation activity in the USA never ceases to impress me. At John's airport alone was one fully restored SeaBee and another in the final stages of being stripped and rebuilt - complete with a new corvette engine. There were numerous aviation projects underway, as well as active seaplanes, including various Lakes and a variety of float equipped conventional aircraft.

I was lucky to catch the Clear Lake Splashin at Lakeport, 200km north of San Francisco. On display were the Seabee, Grumman Albatross, Seawind, Lake Buccaneer, SeaRey and float equipped C185 Skywagon, Cub, Piper Aztec, Glastar, Northstar and others!

Is it possible to get drunk on seaplanes?

Gear UP to "kiss the water" # #

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)

New Member Profile Philip Dartnell

for the past decade or so.

I've flown Mooneys and Cessna 210s so have reasonable experience with the more complex singles, but this machine is a whole different animal and initially I was intimidated by it. With its high thrust line and unusual aerodynamics, it takes time to get used to.

Fortunately I had Kevin Bowe as my teacher, probably the best teacher there is for the Lake. It was one of the greatest pieces of flying training I've done.

I've now logged over 200 water landings and,

although I'm aware just how easy it would be to come unstuck, I'm feeling quite confident now and really enjoying the wonder of it all, but the need for diligence (and responsibility as a seaplane pilot) in operating this wonderful craft will always be there.

As the newly appointed Public Relations Officer for the SPAA, I'll be speaking with many of you in future. The SPAA is a friendly bunch of people, but like most voluntary organizations, just a few people carry the burden of running the gig and making it effective.

The SPAA has achieved many great outcomes and continues to protect the interests of ALL seaplane pilots, whether they know it or not. There's a very small core carrying substantial responsibility for keeping areas free from encumbrance and over burdensome bureaucracy. I want to make SPAA more accessible to more individuals, hence greater finances will become available to help with the admin and provide more time to those core people doing such great work.

Philip Dartnell has just been appointed to the SPAA Executive Committee as Public Relations Officer.

I first saw a Lake Buccaneer at Bankstown in 1984 when I was learning to fly. I was fascinated by it, with its boat-hull underside and pylon mounted engine. I kept reading about Lakes (and seaplanes in general) always thinking "**one day...**"

I joined the SPAA in 2007 after the Summerland Point AGM. Since then I've been to the Tiona Park Splash-In and the first Catalina Festival at Rathmines. Various SPAA members have generously taken me for rides and convinced me that this astounding and wonderful style of flying is something I could do too; but I knew that to be a competent seaplane pilot I'd need to fly one regularly.

My "**one day...**" finally arrived after a 20 year wait!

Last December I purchased my own seaplane from Greg Taylor. It is a 1987 Lake Renegade LA-250 VH-WMW, in excellent condition and one of only 3 on the Australian register.

We bought it to use for private and business use.

I have clients in regional areas and interstate, and have already used it for a number of business trips to Port Macquarie and Brisbane. With a useful load of 468 Kg on 50 litres/hr at 120 knots, my partner, 10 year old daughter and I have travelled Bankstown to Archerfield/Redcliffe several times now in 3.5 to 4 hours flying time, (with only one toilet stop on the way). This aircraft can be used in a multitude of ways and offers similar speed and capability to many other mainstream light aircraft, but its amphibious capabilities make it oh so much more useable! It is a truly wonderful machine that Greg has lovingly cared for and had

maintained by Harry Mason at Coolangatta *Phil Dartnell's Lake Renegade VH-WMW*



News from the President

Clear Lake Splashin

Seaplanes Banned

Seaplanes are currently banned from all Hydro Lakes in Tasmania and the Great Lakes/Port Stephens Marine Park in NSW. Several meetings have taken place in the last 2 months and hopefully there will be resolutions soon.

National Boating Safety Regulations

In September we attended the NSW Maritime Regulation change meeting. Across Australia states are beginning to create a regulatory system for safety and vessel registration that conforms to nationally accepted standards.

Membership

We need your help to attract more members. Why? Because numbers give us power to influence gov't policy and prevent needless bans and restriction on operations.

Also, more members give us more funds to support our lobbying activities. Our membership is our main source of income.

We have a web site to maintain, postage for members' renewal correspondence, annual returns to Corporate Affairs etc. Please HELP us with any ideas you can think of that will assist in attracting more members in your state.

What is happening in your Neck of the Woods

Members like to know what's happening in your area. Tell us your stories, send me your news.

Support Letters

We are creating a register of support letters. These letters are important when we deal with complaints and Government authorities who wish to control or ban seaplane operations. I want every member/seaplane owner to get a quality letter from an influential person/authority/agency etc and send it to us, it will help us to combat the objections and those who want to keep us on the ground. Or should I say the water!

Australian Seaplane Register

SPAA is creating an Australian Seaplane Register. To assist us with this we are asking all seaplane owners to forward their names, aircraft type and registration details to us. Please take a moment to do that **NOW**. Please e-mail to me at rob@searey.com.au

California welcomed guests with the most beautiful weather you can imagine. Nestled in the hills of the world famous California wine country, Clear Lake is a spectacular gem. Surrounded by golden coloured mountains, the lake is a beautiful venue - once the alternate landing site of the China Clipper (it is said that the wreckage of one Clipper still hides on a nearby mountain top where she ended a tragic final flight). Exciting seaplane events demonstrated the skills of the water-borne aviators and showed off the beauty of their aircraft. From the patriarchs such as the Albatross, the C195s, and SeaBees, to Super Cubs, Lakes, and the unique twin Apache amphib, a full fleet of the seaplane world was well represented. This year's splash-in marked the 29th consecutive year at Clear Lake.



A few planes at the Clear Lake Splashin at Lakeport CA in September 2008

In the steps of the Black Cat - some reflections

Pete & Trish Stuart Smith

"Not much good having an aircraft like that around here mate". How many times have you heard that comment with reference to your seaplane on a dusty airstrip in our painfully dry continent? Well, having just completed our trip around the Australian coast, Trish and I would like to dispel the myth that seaplanes and Australia are odd companions, provided you and your aircraft are happy with salt water. We had an incredible time and one that was so much more enjoyable because we were in an amphibian.

The Australian coast provides an enormous playground for seaplanes equal to a third of the circumference of the earth. Between the Gold Coast and Shark Bay in WA, there is hardly a stretch of coast that you could not alight on if you had to. However, once you are on the water, sharks, crocs and tidal rips may spice up your water work a little.

If you don't like the water, there is always the beach. Abundant reefs, islands, tidal flats, lagoons, and mangrove-lined estuaries provided sheltered waterways and great a sense of security during our eight week adventure circumnavigating mainland Australia. We became so used to the comfort of water beneath us that the overland trip home to Goulburn from Lake Boga felt strangely insecure!

The trip provided us with many challenges, the biggest being weather and logistics. I am used to flying in southern Australian latitudes with its regular high pressure systems, cold fronts and depressions. I had expected northern Australia, with its widely spaced isobars in the dry season to be easy flying. How much I was to learn!

The SE Trade winds that dominate northern Australia in winter are something to be reckoned with when flying low and coastal. Between Bowen (QLD) and Shark Bay (WA) these winds hardly let up on our trip, reaching gale force at times. Along the Queensland coast the wind is further strengthened during the day by sea breeze effects, but is calm over water. We shot up to Cape York in smooth air at 500' with a 20kt plus tailwind.

The Western Australia coast is quite different.

The SE trade winds supplement an offshore land breeze that springs up in the early hours of

the morning and dies down in the late afternoon when a local sea breeze may counteract it. With our desire to fly low and coastal and a TAS of 75kts, figuring out head wind components was essential to fuel management and flight planning.

With legs up to 300 nautical miles we planned decision points and target times, once having to proceed to an alternate destination. Turbulence at low levels along the leeward coasts forced our flying levels up to 4500' on occasions. It was calm at those levels, but no fun or chance of marvelling at our unspoilt coastal wilderness populated by whales, dolphins, turtles, manta

rays, dugongs, crocs and sharks.

One of the main purposes of our trip was to visit and document the sites of the RAAF Catalina WWII operational bases. It added a dimension to the adventure that was at times emotionally overwhelming. In particular, to alight on Trinity Inlet,

Cairns where my

father had done so many times before in a Black Cat during 1943. This was an experience like no other.

To discover the well hidden remains of the Melville Bay Base in its idyllic setting brought to life the black and white grainy images that record the base's brief history. In some ways the unchanged emptiness, raw beauty and vastness of Australia's northern coasts constantly reminded us of the Catalinas' flights to and from operations in Papua New Guinea and beyond. How haunting the coastal views must have been heading out up the Cape and leaving Horn Island for hostile territory, and how welcoming they would seem on return. (con't)



VH-PAZ over the Great Australian Bight





Pete & Trish Stewart-Smith with their SeaRey

An unexpected and inspiring aspect of the trip was the interest and assistance we received from complete strangers. Often someone would turn up at the airstrip or beach and offer transportation or assistance with refuelling, mending a flat tyre etc. On four occasions we were given the keys to a vehicle by a stranger.

We finished the trip, lives enriched with a new set of friends in every corner of the country.

The trip was a triumph for the SeaRey, possibly the smallest Seaplane to have undertaken such a journey. The aircraft behaved faultlessly and handled the range of weather thrown at it. The rotax powerplant didn't miss a beat. On tucking up the aircraft in its hangar in Goulburn, apart from the extra 30 odd lines in the logbook, the 112.5 hours added to the airswitch and a hint of red dust, you wouldn't know the aircraft had left the hangar two months ago.

SPAA Returns to Rathmines

Ben Hunter (Merchandise & Mktg)

After a huge success in 2007, the SPAA was again invited to attend the Annual Rathmines Catalina Festival held on October 4, 2008.

Unfortunately a mixture of pilot & aircraft unavailability, together with 'lousy' NSW east coast weather on the day resulted in a reduced number of SPAA members attending. With the SPAA merchandise stand and seaplanes entertaining the crowd on the day, aerial displays also included a RAAF Hawk Jet fighter and a group of six Tiger Moth/Chipmunk aircraft.

The SPAA continues to support the Catalina Flying Memorial and hopes that the 2009 festival will SPAA Returns to Rathmines celebrate the return of PBY Catalina Operations with VH-CAT to the Rathmines Base.



The SPAA stall at Rathmines festival 2008

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New member Profile

Peter Barker

A lover of Catalinas

Peter (pictured with his wife) isn't exactly a new member – he's a former or lapsed member returning to the fold.

"I just forgot to pay my dues a few years back. But I have rejoined, I just love seaplanes. One day I WILL have one But not yet!" Peter said.

Peter's father was in the Fleet Air arm and worked on Catalinas so he grew up with aircraft and seaplanes in his blood. He has had a pilot's licence since the 1970s, is a member of the Peninsula Aero Club on Mornington and runs an aerial photography business.

Peter is a friend of SeaRey owner Doug Thomas and watched Doug build his SeaRey and has flown in it a few times.

"In addition to being a really fun aeroplane, the SeaRey, when viewed head on looks a lot like a Catalina and that's my very favourite aircraft," said Peter.



"I actually do have my very own Catalina," Peter chuckled. "I don't own her, but I do pay for her upkeep, she's in perfect working order, has required no restoration and has lovely lines..."

Peter is referring to his wife, whose name is, coincidentally, Catalina.

I asked Peter for a picture with his Catalina for the newsletter. He said he would send the best picture he had!

Bans on seaplane operation in many USA lakes may be lifted

*Excerpts from a newsletter by James McManus,
the Executive Director US Sea Plane Association • September 24, 2008*

For the past two and a half years, seaplane pilots have been prohibited from many waterways by the Public Conduct Rule (PCR), published by the Bureau of Reclamation (BoR). Much confusion arose between local reservoir managers and the BoR with respect to the effects of the PCR on seaplane access. Communications were exasperated by the fact that many "BoR" reservoirs were co-controlled by "Managing Partners". Efforts to sort out the status of these 450 lakes became almost impossible - even for the BoR.

After months of SPA negotiations and efforts to mitigate the unfair effects of the PCR, the BoR has announced they will restore the regulatory conditions in effect before the PCR was published. This should neutralize the confusion and negative effects on seaplane access.

BoR officials thanked the SPA and its members for their patience and hard work in achieving this goal.



Photo by Neils Seaplanes • www.airplane-pictures.net

DORNIER SEASTAR

All Composite, 14 Seat, Twin PT-6 Turboprop, Amphibious Seaplane



On October 4, Conrado Dornier, grandson of Dornier Aircraft founder Claude Dornier, announced the formation of the Dornier Seaplane Company, which will manufacture, sell and support the SEASTAR in the United States.

The Company is independent of other Dornier Aircraft businesses and is wholly owned by the Dornier family.

The German engineered, US manufactured SEASTAR is an all composite aircraft with two Pratt & Whitney PT6-135A engines mounted in-line above the wing to achieve a cruise speed of 180 knots. The commuter version will seat 2 crew and 12 passengers and has been given FAA Part 23 and EASA certification.

The SEASTAR's all composite airframe is intended to be corrosion free, leak proof and to be able to operate in higher wind and waves than float-modified landplanes. Additionally, the in-line twin engine configuration should provide an extra margin of safety.

The company intends to establish a factory in the Southeast US and aims to produce 48 aircraft per year. The aircraft price is expected to be about \$5.5M and the Company is taking deposits for delivery positions.

"I am proud to continue the legacy of my grandfather and my father - Dornier has built more than 1,000 seaplanes over the last 100 years" says Chairman Conrado Dornier "

For information see www.dornierseaplane.com.



Dornier doX

The Dornier DoX was perhaps the most dramatic flying boat ever built. Conceived by Dr. Claudius Dornier, the giant flying boat was launched in 1929. When complete, the Do X was the largest, heaviest and most powerful aircraft in the world.

Shortly after its maiden voyage, the plane took off carrying 169 people consisting of 150 passengers, 10 crew and 9 stowaways, easily breaking the world record for the number of people aboard a flight.





The white Falcon with a flat battery!

Michael Smith

Hi Folks,

Thought I'd share a collection of photos from a trip Melbourne to Port Douglas via the Outback over the last school holidays. I was enamoured by the wonderful patterns that occur along the way, some natural, some the result of man's touch; all part of a rich and diverse tapestry of countryside we have, from rich red soil, to dense bush, desert and of course the reef.

I flew Melbourne to Port Douglas, via Penfield - Bourke - Longreach - Hughenden - Georgetown - Wonga Beach. Flying time 18 hours. Return, via Wonga Beach - Longreach - Cunnamulla - Cobar - Deniliquin - Penfield. Flying time 21 hours

With a ferry tank I had a 7 hour range with an hour reserve. My longest leg was 6.4 hours, & yes, I needed the special bottle with the long neck!

Longreach in Western Qld, the home of Qantas, and its museum and the Outback museum, was great.

Port Douglas and the Great Barrier Reef was stunning. The many hues of blue a vibrant change from the brown and green of the inland flying. Swimming on the reef with my family amongst the tropical fish was a real highlight.

I stopped at Cunnamulla - recalling Dennis O'Rourke's controversial documentary about life in the outback town at the start of this century, I was intrigued to see what the town was like. I refuelled and popped into town for lunch and was concerned when I saw that nearly every shop was closed, "Oh my gawd," I thought "The place has died in the aftermath of the film." When I stopped in Cobar (a copper mining town) later that night, I discovered everyone had been closed as it was a public holiday in NSW.... phew!



Cunnamulla is known for its famous character, the Cunnamulla Fella, brought to life in a song by Stan Coster and immortalized by the late Slim Dusty

Heard a few times "what are ya doin out here mate, yurs a long way from the water.."

I have lots of stories highlighting the great spirit of our Outback kindred folk. At one town the refueller having sorted out my fuel said: "Here mate, take me ute, head out to the motel and I'll pick it up there later." I subsequently learned he had a meeting at the motel with a local tribe - not only was he the refueller, but also the Mayor!



At one town the refueller took me into town to get some lunch, in another town the owner of the motel I bunked at drove me to the airport at 6am as there was no taxi in town.

In one town I managed to flatten the battery trying to start on a very icy cold morning, with no one in sight, I sat for a few minutes wondering "what now".... I called the NRMA (RAC) and vaguely said I was "at the aerodrome in a white falcon with a flat battery" and the dispatch girl happily sent me the roadside assistance. Upon arriving and finding no Ford in sight, the guy just laughed and got on with getting the plane jump started, agreeing that it was white; but maybe more of an albatross than a falcon! Try that one in the city...

Cheerio, Michael.



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Recreational pilots need a great deal of information before they can fly. Flight planning is essential, but calculating headings, times and fuel consumption is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many aeronautical information sources that need to be considered - charts, airfields, restricted areas, weather observations, forecasts, daylight hours and many more.

Pilots also need to find accommodation and local attractions at their destination. And after that, they want to tell their friends about where they went and show them the photographs.

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Thomas Wedderburn-Bisshop

HELP ! Perth Air display / Splashin

Werner Bulhman from Perth is the organiser of a big air display over the Swan River on 26th January (Australia Day long weekend)

He wants a seaplane there; 2,3 or 4 seaplanes would be even better.

Werner can arrange accommodation both in Perth and up at Abrolhos Islands if desired.

Sounds like great fun.

Phone Werner's on 0438973524
or email vontiger@hotmail.com

SPAA Office Bearers

Chairman:

Phil Dulhunty. . . (02) 9870 7277 . . . Mb: 0413 431 441 . chairman@seaplanes.org.au

President:

Rob Loneragan . (03) 9418 3456 . . . Mb: 0411 816 300 . president@seaplanes.org.au

Vice-President:

Graham White Mb: 0403 625 445 . vpresident@seaplanes.org.au

Secretary:

Suzanne Dehlsen (02) 9638 0100 . . Mb: 0408 860 971 . secretary@seaplanes.org.au

Editor of On-The-Step Newsletter

Ross Vining . . . Editor & Ass Sec. . . Mb: 0418 493 220 . editor@seaplanes.org.au

Treasurer:

Jim Moline. (02) 9953 0587 . . . Mb: 0418 235 879 . treasurer@seaplanes.org.au

Brian Dehlsen . . Asst Treas & Memb Co-ordinator Mb: 0418 860 970

. atreasurer@seaplanes.org.au

Public Relations:

Philip Dartnell . . (02) 8920 9744 Mb: 0411 745 595 philip.dartnell@synergymanagement.com.au

Qld Co-ordinators:

Perry Taylor. Mb: 0401 003 161 . qldco@seaplanes.org.au

Kevin Bowe. . . . (07) 5474 4745 . . . Mb: 0414 744 799 . qldco1@seaplanes.org.au

Peter Gash (07) 5599 4509 . . . Mb: 0412 644 497 . qldco2@seaplanes.org.au

ACT Co-ordinators:

Richard Holgate. (02) 6241 3879 . . . Mb: 0418 251 16 . . actco@seaplanes.org.au

Peter Stuart-Smith Mb: 0419287201 . . pstuartsmith@srk.com.au

Vic Co-ordinators:

Jack Peters (03) 9690 5398 . . . Mb: 0414 737 400 . vicco@seaplanes.org.au

Doug Thomas Mb: 0410 560 324 . vicco1@seaplanes.org.au

WA Co-ordinator:

Craig Muir. (08) 9168 1333 . . . Mb: waco1@seaplanes.org.au

Tas Co-ordinators:

Kyle Gardner. . . (03) 6237 0094 . . . Mb: 0419 363 731 . tasco@seaplanes.org.au

John Williams: Mb: 0428 450 108 . tasco1@seaplanes.org.au

SA Co-ordinator: .

Ross Vining Mb: 0418 493 220 . editor@seaplanes.org.au

Committee Members:

Ben Hunter : . . . Merchandise & Mkting Mb: 0417 022 712 committee1@seaplanes.org.au

Neville Kennard : NSW Liaison

Bill Lane : Training & Commercial Operations

Sydney Basin Commercial Representatives:

Col Evans: Mb: 0418 872 584

col@seaplanes.com.au

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Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia
Unit 2, 35-41 Waterloo Rd
North Ryde, NSW 2113 Australia
Ph +61 2 9870 7277 Mob 0413 431 441



From his kitchen window overlooking Sydney Harbour, our chairman Phil Dulhunty has a super view of his C180 on floats, moored just outside, waiting to go!