



## Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia

### On The Step Issue 11 - Feb 2008

#### From the President

##### **Change! It is all around us!**

Welcome to 2008. We are off to a flying start with plenty of change around us.

Those of you who have an interest in the stock market will have noticed some serious changes in the value of your portfolio. We also have a change of Government headed by Kevin Rudd who has said Sorry, and another big change is that our new editor, Ross Vining, is moving from Sydney to Adelaide.

We were looking for a state co-ordinator for SA so Ross has stepped up to the plate to fill the slot.

Ross is a passionate planner and has his priorities absolutely locked in place. The very first thing he did was find accommodation for his seaplane at Parafield. The next step was to ferry his aircraft to SA and in typical adventurous style, Ross flew the Australian coastline from Sydney to Wallaga Lake on the south coast of NSW and then all the way around the Victorian coastline, calling in on Vic SPAA co-ordinator Jack Peters, en-route to the Coorong, Goolwa and Adelaide. We wish you all the best Ross and we are also delighted that, thanks to the net and our world of amazing communications these days, *On the Step* will continue under Ross's supervision, without a hitch.

As change is my theme for this Newsletter, we are confronted with plenty with seaplane operations under threat in many areas. **Please read the article on page 2 and take action.**

Happy and safe alightings to all.

**Rob Loneragan (VH-CRA)**

#### From the Editor

##### **Best laid plans!**

With my impending move to Adelaide it was the last chance my friend Murray would have for a flight in my SeaRey. Fine I said, let's take off early Sunday morning have a quick flight long R405 up Sydney Harbour, land at Pittwater for coffee then home by morning tea.

The flight up Parramatta River was spectacular, as always. There were storms to the north and to the south but we were well clear. We landed at Pittwater a little before the torrential rain.

Two cups of coffee and a long talk later the rain stopped. Low cloud blocked the south, east and west so we headed north for a change of scene. Landed in Brisbane Waters on the central coast, taxied up the boat ramp and parked in the car park! Went and had lunch in the Woy Woy bowling Club. More torrential rain fell, the bowling greens filled with water and looked like swimming pools. Rain eased after 2 hours so we departed to the south west following the Hawkesbury River. Half way to Penrith low cloud blocked forward progress so we landed on the river. Pulled up at a boat ramp and spent a couple of hours talking to locals, who all got on their mobiles and invited friends over to see "this funny little aeroplane/boat that has just pulled up."

By 5pm the weather was clearing. We waved goodbye and made our way back to Hoxton Park.

A great day. Not exactly as planned, but a lot of fun. Just demonstrates the considerable safety margin inherent in a seaplane's ability to land on water.

# # Gear UP for a water landing # #

**Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)**



*SPAA members at GASA07*



## **Ignorance threatens seaplane operations**

**Your silence will condemn them!**

**Act Now !**

**Rob Loneragan, President SPAA**

There are a number of favourite waterways that are currently under threat from "Agencies" that, mostly through ignorance, have imposed BANS on seaplane operations on these locations.

The fact is that a Seaplane once on the water is simply another boat or vessel that is capable of speed in excess of 10 knots. Other than for takeoff and alighting, seaplanes usually idle along at low power setting and around 4 or 5 knots. When on the step they create very little wake.

The floats and hulls of seaplanes being constructed of either aluminium or fibreglass are as environmentally friendly as a canoe or your typical tinny. Additionally with the outstanding visibility and manoeuvrability of a seaplane in the hands of a well trained pilot, a seaplane is arguably better equipped for operating on water than almost any boat. But then I don't need to convince you of this well known fact!

However, in order that we may arm ourselves to deal with the increasing incidents of "Authorities" who continue to impose bans and restrictions on seaplanes, we can no longer ignore this and we need to change our attitude from "she'll be right" to "seaplanes have a right to be here, we are just another boat".

**If we wish to retain our freedoms to operate we must ALL be PROACTIVE!  
We must rally SUPPORT.**

### **Steps to defend the future**

So here are two things that we CAN and MUST do.

**1** Join or interact with as many marine related organisations as possible eg Volunteer Coastal Patrol, yatching and boating clubs, Search and Rescue groups etc and get their support for seaplane operations.

**2** Encourage these organisations and any other prominent individual or groups to write letters of support written to you or the SPAA.

One of the best ways to combat an Agency or Authority who wishes to impose bans or restrictions on seaplane operations is to counter them with documentation and evidence from another Agency or Authority who support our activities.

**Defend your  
right to operate.  
Take ACTION!**

Seaplane operations are under threat on many fronts. If you want the freedom to operate a seaplane in future you must take action.

You can make a difference.

All we have to do is CHANGE our attitude and TAKE ACTION.

Please forward your letters to me at [president@seaplanes.org.au](mailto:president@seaplanes.org.au) Thank you.

Happy and safe alightings to all.

**Rob Loneragan (VH-CRA)**



# Kevin Bowe - A Seaplane Life

As a small boy growing up in Cremorne, a harbourside suburb of Sydney, Kevin Bowe was fascinated by the Sunderlands landing and taking off from Rose Bay.

In 1961 he flew to Lord Howe Island in one and was totally captivated.

Describing it in 2008 it sounded like yesterday:

*"To ensure arrival at Lord Howe at the right phase of the tide, we took-off from Rose Bay before dawn. I can still feel the roar of the 4 engines at takeoff power, the noise of the water slapping against the hull, the entire ship vibrating, the water flying past the port holes.*

*The ship seemed alive.*

*Then she lifted off, the vibration stopped, the water no longer flew past the window, everything became smoother and quieter – we were airborne. And I was hooked!"*

On Lord Howe Kevin got his first lesson in seaplane flying. He saw a Sunderland taking off from the lagoon in a tricky cross wind. The aircraft was accelerating towards lift off speed when suddenly a cross-wind gust caught it lifting one wing up until the down wind float caught the water and the plane spun around and came to a halt in a cloud of spray. The captain then taxied the giant Sunderland out through a channel in the reef onto the ocean where he could take off directly into wind. Kevin says that was his first lesson in seaplane flying.

Kevin began his life as a commercial pilot on conventional aircraft, until he saw an opportunity to start a small seaplane operation in the Whitsunday Islands focusing on scenic flights. He bought a new Lake Buccaneer for the then

princely sum of \$33,000. The aircraft, VH-ETY is still in service (it belongs to John Daley).

Endorsement training was simpler in those days, Kevin describes how his endorsement consisted of just 3 hrs flying and only 8 water landings in about 2 ft swell on Tuggerah lake. He was then free to take paying passengers!!

Kevin and wife Sue would set up on a different Whitsunday beach each day with Sue on the beach in a purple bikini lining up the prospects for scenic flights. Kevin had a simple way of determining whether the sand was hard enough for the Buccaneer, "I would walk on my heels in bare feet – if I did not sink in past the bottom of my ankles, it was OK".



Kevin spent time developing systems to ensure sound business practices and safe flying.

After one year he got a second Buccaneer and could land people at Hardy Lagoon on the outer reef. Within a few years his fleet of 5 Lake amphibians was the largest fleet of Buccaneers in the world. During this period the biggest challenge was training pilots who would disappear to airlines as fast as he could train them.

By 1983 he needed something bigger and opted for 2 Grumman Mallards and later added 3 Beavers on floats. At the height of the operation "Air Whitsunday" had 13 aircraft, including Buccaneers, Mallards, Beavers, Islanders, a Partenavia, and a Tiger Moth.

Kevin has sold the company but retains his love of seaplanes. He still owns a Lake Buccaneer (VH-ASS) and says if he does not fly every couple of weeks he gets "twitchy".

Kevin has trained >120 pilots in seaplane operations and has performed >15,000 floating hull landings. He still provides floating hull training. His favourite seaplane places include:

- For training - Great Sandy Straits – inside Fraser Island, This offers simulated river landings, tidal currents, choppy conditions when needed and has a wealth of wild life including turtles and dugongs
- For sheer beauty – Whitehaven Beach – A spectacular white sand beach in the Whitsunday group - used in the Qantas ads.

For more about Kevin and the training he can provide see his website [www.flyingboat.com.au](http://www.flyingboat.com.au)

Kevin is one of our Queensland Coordinator's for the SPAA. He was interviewed by Ross Vining in December 2007.



Kevin & Sue with their 1st Buccaneer, 1973

# THE “GOOSE”

A condensed history  
Compiled by Ben Hunter  
**(Ben is the SPAA c'tee member  
responsible for merchandise &  
marketing)**



The Grumman Goose was designed in 1937 and built in Bethpage, New York, initially seeing duty as a flying yacht for Manhattan millionaires. But its potential was rapidly recognized and it became the plane of choice for several air services.

Civilian models normally carried 2-3 passengers and had a bar and small toilet installed. Because of its amphibious nature, generous interior space, and rugged construction, the Goose can go just about anywhere.

The Goose caught on and was used as a Coast Guard rescue plane and in 1938, the U.S. military started using them for general transport, search and rescue and anti-submarine warfare. It also flew with Britain's Royal Air Force, Royal Canadian Air Force and many others.

Grumman ceased production of the Goose in 1945. The total production was 345 planes.

After WWII, most were bought by civilians as passenger aircraft. To generate more revenue, many airlines put one passenger in the co-pilot

seat making the capacity 8-9 passengers.

Alaska Coastal-Ellis Airlines boasted the largest fleet of Gooses in the western hemisphere with 17. After Alaska Airlines bought them out in 1968, seven of them were bought by Charles Blair's Antilles Airboats based in the US Virgin Islands.

In the mid 1960's, many Gooses were refitted with powerful PT-6 turboprops, retractable floats and modern avionics and have flown for many more years, most as private planes. The cost can be well over US\$500,000 today. There are only about 50 Gooses still flying now with a handful in museums all over the world.

The Goose has shared in the pop culture of the late 20th century by being immortalized in a number of movies and television shows.

The Goose was one member of a family of amphibious aircraft manufactured by Grumman. The family includes

The Widgeon - smaller than the Goose

The Mallard - Larger than the goose.

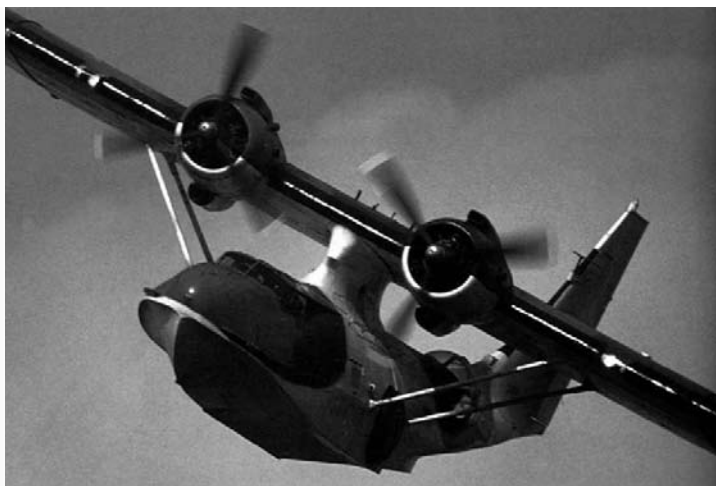
Albatross - Larger than the Mallard.

## Technical Specifications

- ▶ a high-wing monoplane,
- ▶ two wing mounted 450 hp Pratt & Whitney Wasp Jr. radials engines.
- ▶ retractable landing gears for amphibious use.
- ▶ wingspan = 50 feet, 10 inches,
- ▶ length = 39 feet, 7 inches.
- ▶ fuel consumption= 30.2 gallons per hour.
- ▶ maximum speed: = 201 mph (323 km/hr),
- ▶ cruising speed = 191 mph (307 km/hr)
- ▶ service ceiling = 21,300 ft (6,492 m)
- ▶ range = 640 miles (1,030 km)
- ▶ empty weight = 5,425 lbs (2,461 kg)
- ▶ maximum take-off wt = 8,000 lbs (3,629 kg).



# In the Shadow of The Black Cat



My father was a Catalina captain during WWII so flying boats and Catalina's in particular have always held a fascination for me.

In June to August this year my wife, Trish, and I are planning to circumnavigate Australia in our SeaRey VH-PAZ. The trip is a combination of adventure, holiday, pilgrimage, and hopefully, a fund-raiser for the "Catalina Flying Memorial" to be based in Rathmines, on Lake Macquarie, NSW.

The trip will commence at Rathmines on Saturday, 7 June (long weekend), and proceed anticlockwise around the coast over about 8 weeks. We will be visiting all the other Catalina WWII sites of significance including Bowen, Cairns, Thursday Island, Karumba, Groote Island, Darwin, Exmouth, Perth and Lake Boga.

The trip will be recorded by video with the aim of producing a documentary, and a 'coffee table' book. Emphasis of the film will be on visiting the historic sites and interviewing locals wherever possible.

Any proceeds of the documentary and book will go to "Catalina Flying Memorial".

My particular interest in the trip is to experience some of the places my father operated from as a Catalina captain during WWII. To do this with my wife, a history buff, amongst many things, and in a small seaplane I constructed myself, adds to the experience.

Trish and I would welcome anyone who would like to join us for part of the trip. It would be good to have a send-off in June at Rathmines, with perhaps a real cat in attendance. Perhaps we could also have a fly-in to Lake Boga in the first week of August to coincide with

the completion of our trip. The Catalina Festival at Rathmines in October may be an opportunity for an 'official' trip completion.

We would welcome offers of assistance or suggestions for accommodation around Australia and any other advice or help you can give – we need it!

**Pete Stuart-Smith** (ACT Coordinator SPAA)

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# Aviation alive and well in SA

## VH-RRZ flies to Adelaide - Ross Vining

Linda and I are moving to Adelaide in March so I had to move the SeaRey to its new home. SeaReys are born to fly and they love water so there was really only one way to go.

It seemed easy enough, head south out of Sydney, just keep the right wing over land and the left wing over water and eventually we would come to Adelaide. Here's how it went:

**Day 1** - Departed Hoxton Park Sydney at lunch time. It took 1.5 hours to get to Wollongong due to strong headwinds and the zig zag track needed to avoid thunderstorms and low cloud. At Kiama I was confronted with cloud right to the sea so back to Wollongong for coffee. Tried twice more that afternoon but each time was confronted with cloud to the sea with very heavy rain. And ATC were reporting worse conditions further down the coast.

With the old maxim *"It's better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here"* ringing in my ears I booked into a motel in Wollongong.

**Day 2** - In the air before sunrise, conditions much improved. The south coast of NSW is beautiful with golden beaches, abundant rivers and lakes, rocky headlands & national parks. Rob Loneragan calls it "SeaRey Heaven" – Gosh I am going to miss it!

I flew at 500 ft and at each lake or river I passed I dropped down for a quick touch and go.

Landed on Wallaga Lake at Ted Munckton's caravan park. Beautiful spot. I had planned to spend the first night there but the weather at Kiama had put paid to that. Ted provides great support, I had coffee, refuelled the aircraft and was away.

Around the point, landed at Orbost for lunch, the "terminal building" is a lovely wooden building left open for pilots, good facilities for tea and

coffee.

Lakes Entrance is ideal for seaplanes. I landed on the channel and taxied over to a sand bar. It's only 50 metres to a McDonalds and 100 metres to a Caltex service station. By the time I had fuelled the plane a crowd had gathered and the reporter and photographer from the local paper had arrived. Dozens of questions and photos later, I departed.

My original intent was to follow the coast all the way but strong headwinds meant I was way behind schedule so I cut across to Melbourne via Latrobe Valley, dodging rain and cloud along the way.

Stopped at Tooradin on Western Port Bay for a break, great little strip with a high quality seafood restaurant right on the field – just 50 metres from your aircraft. Next time I need to arrive there at lunch time.

Flew up the eastern edge of Port Phillip Bay past Melbourne to Penfield airstrip where Jack Peters (retired Qantas pilot & Vic coordinator of SPAA)



*Spectacular coastline near Port Campbell on the Victorian coast*

## VH-RRZ flies to Adelaide - Continued

keeps his SeaRey. I spent the night with Jack and wife Margaret discussing the relative flying qualities of SeaReys vs 737's!

**Day 3** – Away early – South over Bellarine Peninsula to pick up the coast again.

Landed at Torquay for a break. Great spot, has an adventure park with refreshments, putt-putt golf and canoes right on the airfield.

The Great Ocean Road and the 12 Apostles/Port Campbell area are truly spectacular. A strong wind gave me more time to appreciate them and generated heavy seas breaking on the beaches and headlands for increased spectacle.

I was unable to land at Apollo Bay (looked beautiful) or Port Campbell due to very strong cross wind and severe turbulence. Question – Why would you build an east west strip in an area where there is usually a strong southerly wind?

The airstrip at Millicent is only 1 mile out of town so it seemed like a good place to stay the night. What a good choice. No sooner had I arrived at the deserted airstrip than the first visitor arrived saying **"I heard you fly over the town and came out to have a look."**

There is a very active gliding community at Millicent and within 30 minutes 4 more club members had arrived and insisted I put the SeaRey in one of their hangars for the night. One fellow loaned me a car to get to and from town and invited me to the club monthly dinner that night. We had a great night talking about aviation in all its forms. I decided then and there I am going to like South Australia!

**Day 4** – Away at dawn into absolute calm conditions. Did a few glassy water landings on the numerous salt lakes. Also did a few landings on the dead calm waters of the southern ocean beaches along the way.

Landed at Kingston for a break – within 5 mins, Victor arrived at the airstrip – "Heard you coming in etc" Victor opened his hangar to show me his Aircraft

On to the Coorong – spectacular – a 100km long, very narrow (mostly less than 1 km wide) lake separated from the ocean by 200 metres of sand dune. It is mostly very shallow and is home to millions of seabirds. I will be back to explore this more fully later.



*At 100 km long The Coorong lake system is a seaplane paradise*

Landed at Goolwa. The airfield is centre to a thriving aviation community, numerous new hangars, Jon Johansen has his assisted RV building operation here and an airpark is planned. Spent an hour talking to owner / manager Geoff Eastwood about his plans for the airpark and improved facilities. He also briefed me on the dozens of small private strips within 30 minutes flying of Adelaide. He assured me that almost all of them welcome visiting pilots.

Another 20 minutes and I was at Aldinga airport - and what a surprise! The most attractive aviation community I have ever experienced. It's a family run airstrip operation. Not 2, not 3, but 4 landing strips going both ways gives you 8 optional runway directions.

A selection of large modern hangars, a delightful café/briefing area and a menu that includes good coffee and home cooked pasties and cakes 7 days a week, make this a delightful flying destination.

Not surprisingly they have a thriving pilot training business and they also provide joy flights in a magnificent Waco biplane and have a variety of modern aircraft on line for hire. I was in pilot paradise. I had to drag myself away, but I plan to visit often.

Then on to Parafield Airport where I have arranged to hangar the SeaRey.

A fascinating 4 days and a delight to learn that aviation is alive and well in South Australia.

I look forward to becoming part of it.

# Seaplane Pilots Association Australia

## CODE OF OPERATION

### INTRODUCTION

Members of the Seaplane Pilot's Association of Australia have, in the interests of promoting safety and the respectful use of Australian airspace and waterways, proudly adopted and agree to promote the following Code of Operation as a guideline and general policy for the operation of Seaplanes in Australia.

### TRAINING

In accordance with CASA and the Australian Federal Aviation Laws, all Seaplane Pilots are required to undertake additional and specialized flying training in order to safely carry out water operations in a Seaplane.

### LICENCING

All Seaplane Pilots are specifically licensed to operate a Seaplane in accordance with the Australian Federal Aviation Laws and additionally are required to hold a Maritime License to navigate a vessel in excess of 10 knots.

### APPROVAL TO OPERATE

Seaplanes are generally approved to operate from Australian waterways and in so doing are required to observe all the CASA operational regulations relating to the safe operation of aircraft. Seaplane pilots are also required to observe all the Maritime regulations relating to the safe operation of a vessel on a waterway, "distance off", speed limits and giving way to other boating traffic.

Seaplane pilots embrace and promote additional training and awareness of the respectful observance of the Maritime environment in which they operate.

### GENERAL OPERATIONS

#### Seaplane pilots shall:

- Belong to and be current members of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia.
- Observe the state, federal and international laws relating to the safe operation of marine craft.
- Carry their License to navigate when operating the aircraft on water.
- Be vigilant of and consider as an operational practice, to maintain as a minimum the safe "Distance Off" (30 Mtrs) relating to other water vessels, swimmers, Safe Speeds & Speed Limits.
- Give way to all other vessels even if the seaplane has Right of Way.
- Provide assistance to other persons or vessels in distress.

#### In the air:

- Abide by all CASA Rules
- Maintain a continuous radio watch and make all necessary calls.
- See & Be SEEN

#### When taking off and alighting;

- Maintain and avoid wherever possible reasonable clearances from residential areas.
- Brief Passengers fully on emergency procedures.
- Consider possible wind shear, downdrafts and hazardous wind conditions in the lee of terrain.
- Be aware of and anticipate the movements of other boating traffic and conduct manoeuvres and an operational procedure that maximizes safety and separation from other water traffic

#### On the ground/beach:

- Be aware of public safety and the safe movement of persons near and around a seaplane.
- Wherever appropriate request the assistance of a responsible individual to observe safety and security relating to the movement of a seaplane when it is approaching or leaving a beach, jetty or mooring.
- Maintain vigilance for animals whenever operating a seaplane on or near beaches and other public areas.
- Appoint a beach marshal wherever appropriate and necessary to ensure the safe movement of a seaplane.

#### Aircraft maintenance;

- Strive always to maintain their seaplanes in good and safe condition to the highest possible standard.

#### Safety equipment;

- Always provide for and brief passengers on the use of Personal Floatation Device PFD or Safety Vests.
- Carry all other mandatory and appropriate safety equipment required for safe Seaplane







seaplane pilots should seek specific information & guidance from local community & relevant authorities when planning to operate into marine areas in which seaplane operations are uncommon.

### Special operations

Depending on specific locations (special built up areas and control areas) there may be special operational requirements that apply to Seaplane operations, for example R405 A & B in Sydney Harbour.

In this regard Seaplane pilots wishing to operate in these highly sensitive and "built up" areas should ensure that they be fully aware of the special operational requirements that relate to these areas.

Additionally – the Seaplane Pilots Association has a network of State Co-ordinators. Seaplane Pilots wishing to operate in other states and outside of their usual area of operation, should contact the relevant State Co-ordinators or local operators to obtain appropriate briefings on any special requirements that may apply to those areas.

### SPAA - Code of Operation - Continued

Operations.

- Seaplane Pilots will wherever possible carry VHF Marine Radio.

#### Environmental:

- Ensure that all re-fuelling and maintenance does not present a risk of pollution to a waterway.
- Seaplane Pilots shall observe awareness of environmental NOISE relating to the operation of Seaplanes and have undertaken training in and practice NOISE ABATEMENT procedures.
- During all water operations Seaplane pilots shall be particularly vigilant and aware of the specific environmental impact an operating seaplane presents to any type of land, wildlife, waterway or community.
- Pilots at all times to "fly neighbourly". Concentrated operations in one area/waterway to be avoided, mix it up, spread the operation around and minimize the "nuisance factor".



#### Community

- Seaplane Pilots shall whenever called upon, lend assistance to Water Police, State Emergency Services, and Voluntary Rescue Organizations and provide such assistance wherever possible and safe to do so.
- Assist and participate in the promotion of safety and awareness of Seaplane operations by involvement in advisory and appropriate voluntary groups, agencies and associations.
- Join and/or be involved in appropriate local water user clubs and associations to promote the safety and benefit of seaplanes to the community - eg. Sailing, fishing, rowing, water skiing.
- Handle Complaints respectfully, courteously and with diplomacy, even when the complaint may be unreasonable.
- Wherever appropriate and whenever possible

#### Safety Policy

POLICY RELATING TO THE USE OF PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICES – PFDs - SAFETY VESTS

Seaplane Pilots and operators of Seaplanes shall as a general policy, wear PFDs during all water operations.



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Joining the Seaplane Pilots Assoc is easy, visit the website, click the **JoinHere** button. Payment is via all the normal methods including PayPal.

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