



James Williams' "BirdDog"
see page 3

On The Step Issue 23 - September 2010

Catalina News

Below is an edited excerpt from an interview with Phil Dulhunty on ABC radio in June 2010.

Many people don't recognize the vital role Catalinas played in preventing an invasion of Australia in 1942.

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, took Singapore and all of South East Asia, Philippines, and most of New Guinea, there were no airports left for us to counter attack from.

We relied a fleet of about 168 Catalinas. The main training base at Rathmines on Lake Macquarie became one of the biggest seaplane bases in the world. The CATS were fitted out there and crews trained before they flew on to forward operating bases. From these they dropped mines in the Japanese harbours, serviced Coast Watch sentries behind enemy lines and rescued downed airmen.

These daring young men endured many ordeals, and hundreds did not come back! Some of their stories are told in Robert Cleworth's books - **CATS at War** and **The Fabulous Catalina**.

Much has been written about the "Dambusters" in Europe. Our CATS and their crews did far more hazardous and difficult operations dropping mines in enemy held harbours - thousands of miles from base, at night in tropical conditions.

Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd is developing an operating memorial to these men and the Catalina at Rathmines. We raised \$300,000 to purchase the aircraft, and ferry it to Sydney. We need another \$200,000 to configure it to its original wartime role. Donations (tax deductible) would be appreciated. Contact me at Ph 02 9870 7277 Email philip@dulhunty.com www.catalinaflying.org.au

Editor: Slowly we are recognising the role of the Catalina in the defence of Australia. There are now 4 key displays

- ▶ *The Flying Memorial - see Phil's story above.*
- ▶ *The refurbished Catalina Museum at Lake Boga.*
- ▶ *Historic Aircraft Restoration Society - at Wollongong*

Qantas museum at Longreach - is in the process of acquiring a Catalina for display

From the Editor

Just say NO - I won't go!

Australia is a great place to fly, typically with good weather, and a whole continent to explore -an amazingly varied coastline, vast deserts, mountains, reefs, tropical forests etc. I love it.

For months I had been looking forward to my next expedition. I had a conference to attend in Sydney so had planned a circular loop from SA. The plan was to depart Adelaide, fly over the hills to Waikerie and then along the Murray River (with numerous landings) to Robinvale, then track up the Murrumbidgee River to Narrandera, then cross country to the Lachlan River and on the Sydney.

After the Conference I planned to fly to Bathurst then up the Macquarie River, on to Bourke, into south west Queensland to pick up Coopers Creek, and follow it all the way to Lake Eyre. Coopers Creek still has lots of water from the floods in central Queensland earlier this year.

It was a good plan, and I would have emergency camping gear, just in case.

Departure day dawned, the weather did not look good, but it just might be possible. I was SO tempted to head out and give it a try. Careful review of the weather predictions cautioned otherwise.

I chose to wait and see.

South Australia then had some of the wildest weather in decades. Dams overflowing, extensive flooding, trees uprooted, electrical wires down etc.

Because of difficulties with hangars, unfortunately my SeaRey was tied down outside on the tarmac and with wind gusts of 100km/hr, my beloved plane suffered some damage to the flaps.

So my expedition has been deferred.

But clearly, I made the correct command decision, though it was a difficult one.

Bugger!

Gear UP to "kiss the water" # #

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)

The Big Bight GASA The Wife's View Sue Bowe

Sue Bowe, with husband Kevin, took part in the Big Bight GASA earlier this year. You have heard lots previously from me and other pilots about that trip so I thought that Sue's perspective would provide a alternative viewpoint.

After Sue had written this she and Kevin went on to complete their flight around Australia. See map below.

Ups

1. The scenery, of course. The cliffs of the Great Australian Bight are amazing. The isolated beaches with a lone 4WD and a couple of fishermen; our shadow close to the water and the dolphins.
2. The smooth ride. Not being a very good traveller, I'd hoped right up until the last minute that one of the many relatives or friends who proclaimed that it was going to be a wonderful trip would actually accept the offer of my seat. Whether it was the skilful pilot, the weather or the ginger tablets and wristbands or all of the above, the turbulence was never a problem and hence the trip much more enjoyable than I had feared.
3. The hospitality. There is nothing like the sound and/or sight of a different aircraft to attract pilots or enthusiasts out of the woodwork. Most places we stayed we were greeted and ferried backwards and forwards by either friends, people met on last year's safari or just people who stopped off to check us out and then offered rides or the use of a vehicle. We only hired one taxi and even there, at Denmark, a flying buff left the musical entertainment at a nearby vineyard to pop over and check us out.
4. The camaraderie of travelling together. Every evening chatting over dinner with old and new friends, even though it was mostly about flying!
5. Learning our esteemed leader likes a dash of red



wine in his Pepsi Max!

6. New fangled gadgets. Seemingly gone are the days of having two or three maps or charts spread across my lap until needed and searching for landmarks. Ross' "Spot Me" is a great invention and a real boon for family and friends at home to monitor progress.

7. The cafe on Kangaroo Island that we'd flown

in especially to visit to find closed that day. Bruce wandered out to tell us this and offered us cold drinks that he wouldn't accept money for and a long chat. I had no idea that Kangaroo Island is so big!

8. The great visit to the Tree Top Walk. The confidence of our team leader letting the Hire Car people at Walpole know that, yes, we had permission to land at the Airstrip well we rang and they didn't answer their phone (on a Sunday morning?) so didn't actually deny us permission, did they? The fact that the Hire Car people knew this perfectly well and allowed us to think we'd bluffed them and fortunately had a key to the gate!

Downs

1. Carried too much....too many clothes, too much food and water (though I'd do that bit again).
2. Head winds made it a bit boring, but not as bad as I'd expected. The Ipod Touch for Christmas was a big help. Each travelling day was actually shorter than I'd expected, which was a pleasant surprise.
3. A shame the other 3 Seareys couldn't accompany us. Must have been many long lonely hours for Ross flying by himself. Just as well he had all those water landing sites to find.
4. Big airports with control towers and too many other aircraft. Not used to those. Give me a water landing any day.

New Member Profile:



Tony "at the office" on a 747-400

I'm an Airline Pilot for Dragonair in Hong Kong, flying regional Airbus A320's now, but past 7 years flying long-haul Boeing 747-400's.

Tony Malins

I'll be returning to Australia (Brisbane) at the end of this year after 25 years in Hong Kong.

I did a float rating in Canada a few years ago and thought it was the best fun flying I've ever done. I seem to have always been 'at work'. I own a Kolb Mk3 ultralight in Thailand but haven't flown it yet. I hope to do that in Brisbane while awaiting the delivery of my 'birthday present' in about 2 years. My wife put the deposit on a Seawind 300C. I will need to find a place around Brisbane to park it and learn from some of the locals, what to do and where to go. I'm a novice at this sort of thing and look forward to learning the ropes.

Cheers, Tony Malins



William & Donna Handley

(& Bella the Dog) New Members' Profile



In early 2009 we started our journey to become the proud owners of our little bird.

We started locally, there was little choice, the Aussie dollar was only worth about US\$0.56.

The Australian aircraft register contained 17 Lake Aircraft. A mix of Buccaneers + Renegades. We wrote to all the owners. It didn't uncover any aircraft we could buy, but it did result in lot's of advice including a lead in New Zealand. The trip to NZ to check it out was great but the aircraft was only average!

We subscribed to Trade a Plane and became avid net surfers. In the meantime the Aussie dollar started to climb in value. We decided that if it reached US\$0.70 we could buy in Canada or the USA.

In July 2009 we travelled to Canada to visit Elton Townsend at Lake Central. Elton had limited stock and none of it appealed to us. But he gave us an excellent appraisal of a Florida aircraft listed in Trade a Plane. We headed for Florida and bought this aircraft.

Elton received no commission for this sale, but merely passed on his advice – a really dedicated Lake professional.

At the time of the sale, our dollar was .78 against the USD which we were very happy with.

Our new Baby!

It's a 1984 LA 4 200 EP. The EP has extras not included with the standard model ie: Cargo door, Wing Fillets, Aux fuel system, hull strakes. Total Time in service was 1502 hrs.

This aircraft also had numerous add-ons including: MT 3 blade propeller, digital fuel flow, 4 probe digital EGT, stand-by vacuum, auto + manual bilge pump, electric wing + rudder trim, cabin fresh air vents, 4 place intercom, digital RPM gauge, S-Tech starter. Avionics are King Audio Panel with dual KX-55 Nav/Comm etc

Amphibians Plus handled the export for us including, dismantle, corrosion treatment + container and shipping. They did a fabulous job.

The aircraft was re-assembled at Cessnock. Our maiden flight on 23 March 2010 was to Smith Lake (100nm North of Sydney)

We greatly appreciate the mentoring by Harvey Prior,

a very experienced Lake owner/pilot and fellow SPAA member.

Harvey has been involved with the Lake aircraft since the early 70s; his knowledge and advice have been extremely helpful.

Salt water ops were a big concern to us, however he has successfully operated his current Lake in salt water since 1978 which shows no signs of corrosion.

He has also been flying with us (Donna + Bella our Dog) taking charge of the water landings until I have my endorsement for the Floating Hull – Kevin Bowe will be taking care of this.

It seems that our life will now be planned around flying our little aircraft to as many places as possible.

Our thanks to everyone so far who has helped us realize our dream of becoming part of the "Seaplane World".

As new members we look forward to meeting with other members at fly-ins.

Bill + Donna Handley; MANLY VALE NSW 2093 Ph 0419-030019



This is James Williams' Birddog, also pictured on page 1. He rebuilt it to new from a wreck and mounted it on amphibious floats. The next SPAA Newsletter will have a story on this interesting aircraft. Editor

Totality

No one should pass through life without experiencing a total solar eclipse. It's not a "science thing". It's a profound experience. It's simply something that should be done. *(Lief Robinson - Editor in Chief, Sky & Telescope)*

In Dec 2002 I journeyed to Ceduna in South Australia to experience my first Total Solar eclipse.

What was it like?

To help you appreciate the experience I have adapted an extract from the book "Totality: Eclipses of the Sun" by Mark Littmann, Ken Willcox & Fred Espenak)

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First contact. A tiny nick appears on the western side of the sun, your eye can not yet detect it. But as the nick becomes a gouge in the face of the sun, your sense of anticipation begins. This will be no ordinary day. It takes a leisurely half a hour for the moon to cover half the sun, then the pace picks up and extraordinary things start to happen. The sky is still bright, but the blue sky is a little duller and the sun does not seem quite so warm. Over the next 10 minutes the landscape takes on a steely-gray metallic cast.

With 15 minutes to totality the western sky is darker, regardless of where the sun is. The shadow of the moon is approaching, and you can feel that something amazing is about to happen.

With 10 mins to totality, the sun is but a crescent, it is still fiercely bright but without heat in it and the blueness of the sky has deepened into a blue-gray or violet. Five minutes to totality, the darkness in the west is gathering strength, a dark amorphous form rising upward and spreading out along the horizon. It builds like a massive storm, but in utter silence.

Now the darkness floats up above the horizon, revealing a yellow/orange twilight beneath. You are already seeing through the Moon's shadow to the resurgent sunlight beyond.

The pace accelerates, the crescent sun is a blazing white sliver, like a welders torch. The darkening sky closes in around the sun.

The ends of the bare sliver of the sun break into individual dots of intense white light - Bailey's Beads; the last rays of sunlight passings through the deepest lunar valleys.

A ghostly silhouette looms into view, it's the dark limb of the moon framed by a white opalescent glow that creates a halo around the darkened Sun. The beads flicker, each lasting an instant and vanishing as new ones form, then there is only one left, set like a single diamond in a ring. The remaining one small dot of sunlight fades as if it were sucked into an abyss

Totality!

Where the Sun once stood, there is a black disk in the sky, outlined by a soft pearly white glow of the corona.

You are standing in the shadow of the Moon. It is dark enough to see Venus and Mercury. Looking towards the horizon in any direction you see an eerie yellow/orange twilight coming from the land beyond the shadow.

The Horizon to the west is brightening, warning you that totality is drawing to an end.

Suddenly, a dot of sunlight appears, totality is over, quickly this heavenly diamond broadening into several jewels and then a sliver of crescent Sun once more. The dark shadow of the Moon silently slips past you and rushes off toward the east.

It is then you ask

"When is the next one?"

Some people see a partial eclipse and wonder why others talk so much about a total eclipse. Seeing a partial eclipse and saying that you have seen an eclipse is like standing outside an opera house and saying that you have seen the opera. In both cases you have missed the main event.
Jay Pasachoff
(US Astronomer)



The next one is coming in 2012

If you want to experience this most profound of phenomenon you will have to plan carefully. Total Solar eclipses are rare. On **Nov 13 2012** there will a total eclipse in Far North Queensland. If you miss that one, you will have to wait until 2028 for the next one to pass through Australia.

I will be leading a GASA to experience the 2012 eclipse. Mark the date in your diary now. More details in future SPAA newsletters



New Member Profile Robin Hilliard

Greetings SPAA members!

I'm not yet a Seaplane Pilot - but I'm working on it.

So far I have a PPL. And I have aircraft plans, clecos, a 4 foot bending brake, a rivet gun, numerous tools and 9 hours of instructional videos.

I'm scratch-building a Zenith CH750, the new scaled up LSA cousin of the venerable 701. I plan to put it on floats.

I've been planning to build an aircraft for years, and have considered many designs. My first decision was construction method - wood, composite or metal?

I've built two wooden boats, and I was confident with wood. But I was sick of sneezing sawdust and getting a phone call half way through a gluing job.

I believe composites are the material most suited to aerospace applications, and Burt Rutan is one of my heroes. But Burt says that the best building setup is to have separate areas for cutting and laying up, and I'm working in a single car garage.

This leaves metal. You can walk away from it and come back a week later, and it hasn't moved, absorbed moisture or set in the wrong position. Welded tube was out as I am not an aircraft welder and don't think shipping it all off to someone else would be that interesting. I considered WWI riveted aluminium tube designs and almost settled on a Sopwith Tabloid replica (all Australian seaplane pilots should know about this aircraft), but after reading Tony Bingelis and back issues of the RV-ator I became comfortable with sheet construction.

A visit to the SAAA Cowra fly-in last year convinced me that RVs are wonderful aircraft, and that I owed it to the genetic diversity of the SAAA to **not** build one.

I wanted an aircraft with a low stall speed, to allow cross country flights at the scenic lower levels with some options in the event of an engine failure. STOL and seaplanes were high on the list.

I looked hard at the SeaRey, which I admire, but I wanted to scratch-build. I've been an amateur aeronautical engineer for a long time and I want to get experience building from plans, so that I can build my own design one day. It's also an excuse to buy lots of tools (because you're saving money from the kit, see...)

Zenith offers many options for scratch-builders. You can

Editor's note: I could not find a picture of a Zenith CH 750 on floats.

Above is a picture of a Zenith CH 701 on floats.

You will just have to use your imagination, a 750 is really just a 701 on steroids.

build from plans or buy anything from a rib to a whole firewall forward kit. Initially I bought the plans for the 701, but Allan at Zenair Australia convinced me that I'd prefer the 750. The construction guide is relatively clear and the aircraft uses 6061, an alloy with good corrosion resistance.

These STOL aircraft are well suited to float operations, there are some amazing videos on YouTube showing Canadian 701s on floats getting off the water in a few seconds. They are boxy, utility aircraft, but as long as the cowl is nicely shaped the look has grown on me.

With a bit of squinting there is something of the Pilatus Turbo-Porter in the 750. I haven't decided on an engine - perhaps a lighter, lower hp option as long as it had a large prop for high static thrust and rate of climb.

Anyway, as proof of my bona-fides below is a photo of me with a piece of bent aluminium. Advice on operating a straight-floats aircraft in the Sydney region would be appreciated, amphibious floats would destroy the useful load!

Regards, Robin Hilliard HILLIARD
robin@rocketboots.com.au

See Robin's flickr site - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7960153@N04/sets/72157624388781193/>



Greetings SPAA members!

**I'm not yet a Seaplane Pilot
- but I'm working on it.**

MTOW Musings

Peter Stuart-Smith

I enjoyed Dale's articles on takeoff distance, delta ratio, salt water vs fresh etc in recent SPAA Newsletters.

Another important factor in water takeoffs recently became very evident to me – MTOW is not a constant.

It was the most perfect Autumn day : 20° C, not a breath of wind and not a single cloud. So good that Trish and I thought it was the ideal day to do a trip that we had long planned, taking in all the Snowy Mountain lakes.

I had landed on the highest water bodies in Australia before but had not had a chance to do them all in the one go and Trish had not been to them at all.

We planned to take a full day to do the ~ 4 hour round trip from our base in Goulburn. We set out with full fuel and a gourmet picnic lunch with all the trimmings. We were close to MTOW as we departed through the remnants of the early morning fog at Goulburn.

We headed anticlockwise, dropping in at Burrinjuck then hopping over the Brindabellas to Blowering Dam alighting on the still waters between the Skiers that had flocked to the Dams during the Easter break. We then tracked up the Tumut River, alert for power lines and skimmed over the spillway at Talbingo onto the peat-stained brown waters of Talbingo Dam. Continuing on we climbed through the narrowing gorge and climbed to 7000' to clear the range near Mount Jugungal .

It was probably the combination of the cooler cockpit temperatures and the elapse of about two hours of flying, that made it essential that our next alighting would have to be a full stop. Lake Eucumbene was a few minutes ahead and there was no chance that Trish or I could wait until our planned lunch stop at Lake Jindabyne.

Dropping down in a deserted spot in the dam we were soon 2kgs lighter and ready to continue onto Jindabyne for lunch.

I applied full throttle only to succeed in creating a nice big bow wave. Stop - check flaps, trim and wheels. OK, all set let's give it another go. As all were in there correct settings I knew what our problem was, however it was worth another shot. This time full throttle, "Trish shift your seat as far forward as you can and I will jiggle the elevator". Again all we could manage was a few knots and a futile attempt at pushing one end of the

Alert readers will note that this is not Pete's SeaRey. Its the editor's (the Violet Crumble). The pic was taken from Richard Holgate's SeaRey. But it is on Lake Eucumbene!

lake up to the other end.

The simple fact was that even though we were at least 20kgs under MTOW (having burnt off 30L of fuel) we just couldn't produce enough thrust at 3500' altitude in freshwater to get out of displacement mode and onto the plane.

With the possibility of this problem in mind, I had originally planned to avoid full stops at the higher lakes But had forgotten in the emergency.

There was only one solution – I would have to jettison some cargo. I knew Trish would not be amused.

Our salvation appeared in the form of a fishing boat who had observed our failed take off attempts. They offered to take Trish to Anglers Reach and I would proceed to the grass strip at Adaminaby (a few kms from Anglers reach) and wait for her there. Minus my pax I was up and away and only had 10minutes to wait until Trish turned up having hitched a ride with some fisherman from Ballarat.

By this stage we amended our schedule, had lunch and resumed our adventure to Lake Jindabyne, and back to Goulburn via Captains Flat and Lake George.

We were fortunate that the inconvenience caused by my lack of knowledge of the aircraft's take off performance at altitude on the water was so easily solved this time.

Lessons Learned:

- ▶ More thrust is needed in takeoff from water to get out of displacement mode than is needed to actually takeoff once on the plane.
- ▶ Aircraft performance data refers only to take off distance varying with altitude. It is clear that MTOW on water also decreases with altitude. I expect that there is a linear drop off in performance with altitude, however, there must be a particular altitude for an aircraft when MTOW becomes limited. From my experience this must be between 1500 and 3500' for my aircraft.

Pete



Sun'n Fun Phil Dulhunty

SPAA was well represented at the recent Sun'n Fun Airshow in Lakeland Florida by Ted and Jenny Munckton, John (Delay) Daly and Phil Dulhunty.

This show is second only to Oshkosh and is well attended by Seaplanes and Warbirds from all over USA.

The first day featured a special Seaplane Pilots Association Splash-in at Lake Agnes, the site of Kermit Weeks' Fantasy of Flight Museum.

The Richter family (Owners of Progressive Aerodyne - who make the SeaRey kit) were there and were delighted to Meet Ted Munckton, one of the few men who owns 2 SeaReys. (flying his old one while he builds his new one.)

There were 48 different types of seaplanes amongst over 100 visiting, that's more seaplanes than in all of Australia.

The Kermit Weeks *Fantasy of Flight* Museum is close by and it houses the worlds's largest private collection of antique aircraft. We met Kermit, a very approachable guy and a great pilot who demonstrated many water and air manoeuvres in his wartime Grumman Duck.



I loved the Sunderland Flying Boat, its one of only 3 remaining in the world. It's a pity the Sunderland is in America, where it never operated during the war, whilst Australia, where they played an important role doesn't have one.

The directors of the SPA and Jim McManus the General Manager were most hospitable to us.

The SPA had an active booth at the Sun N Fun Airshow the following few days and there were many more seaplanes (mostly amphib) parked around the field.



These included some of the newer all composite varieties which are available as complete aircraft or homebuilt kits.



America and Canada are blessed with myriads of fresh water lakes and rivers and this accounts for the fact there are so many seaplane operators.

After Sun & Fun I attended a Power & Energy Expo in New Orleans where I also managed to fit in a visit to Southern Seaplanes Inc. They are the biggest (only?) seaplane operator working in SALT WATER. They operate on a canal alongside a tarmac airstrip in Belle Chasse, Louisiana. They have about 20 seaplanes there and a large maintenance crew continually washing the aircraft to combat corrosion.

Their recommended product for fighting salt air corrosion is Corrosion X - www.corrosionx.com For further info contact brian@towermarketingusa.com

Southern Seaplanes run a Seaplane Safety Institute giving seaplane endorsements and advanced courses to would be seaplane captains. This includes egress training for capsized seaplanes and short courses for spouses.

How about a game of golf?

Ever thought it might be fun to play

THE WORLD'S LONGEST GOLF COURSE 1,356 KM CEDUNA TO KALGOOLIE?

What if you could take a mate/wife/partner, even in a Searey, due to all overnight baggage and spare fuel travelling by car?

How good would it be to do a 5 or 6 day trip along the Nullarbor coastline, staying either in outback hotels, motel/roadhouses or camping (brave...cos it'll be between May and September 2011) to catch the whale watching in the Bight?

The plan is to organise 4-5 caravans and 3-4 aircraft to start out from Ceduna, fly to each roadhouse that

has a golf hole (about 14) and finish in Kalgoolie about 5 days later. Each flight, from one hole to the next, we would take a different passenger, so the ground crew (caravaners) have aerial sightseeing, and passengers who flew in have a chance to see the wildflowers and animals close-up. Longest distance between holes is 100nm.

Ross (our Editor) has great experience in this geographical area and the seaplane and sightseeing possibilities, but IT'S A GOLF TRIP, RIGHT?

It's still in the planning stage, so anyone interested, with any suggestions or ideas, please email me, John Daley, delay@optusnet.com.au or phone 0412434765

New Member Profile Bruce Avery



Bruce Avery with his Jabiru. (Editor: Bruce, it's a nice plane, but where are the floats?)

Bruce tells me that his experience includes 50 years as a racing sailor and 30 years as a powerboat dealer, and he loves flying. He has a jabiru (see pic) but he says that a seaplane just seems the logical way to join all of his passions together.

"It just seems such a natural combination of the various elements I enjoy." He said.

"The Jabiru does allow me to land on farm strips and other sand/gravel surfaces that an amphibian may not be comfortable with, however, the huge attraction of being able to land the seaplane on lake, river, estuary etc is certainly overwhelming."

"I am a member of Holbrook Ultralight Club where my plane is hangared and also a member of Tumut Aero club. There are no seaplanes in either club. Need to change that."

Bruce said he has been flying with James Williams of Albury in his Cessna Birdog Amphibian onto Lake Hume just outside Albury. They are planning to fly our planes to the Lake Boga Museum opening on 13th August. Hopefully he will meet up with some SPAA members there.



Dear SPAA

Sydney Seaplanes have submitted plans to NSW Maritime to replace their old shed at Rose Bay with a new terminal building.

Like any development in Rose Bay there is negative sentiment from some community members.

I would very much appreciate any letters of support from the SPAA and its members.

The facility includes an artefact display room which will commemorate the fascinating aviation history of Rose Bay. They have a close relationship with the Museum of Sydney so we will be able to utilize many of the display pieces from the 'Flying Boats' exhibition.

The facility also has meeting facilities and they have offered to host SPAA meetings in the new building.

Sydney Seaplanes business is currently carrying about 30,000 pax per annum so needs this space to appropriately accommodate their customers. The facility is designed to service seaplane operations from Rose Bay for the next 30-40 years and will be open to all seaplane operators, both private or companies.

For more info contact

Aaron Shaw
Managing Director
Sydney Seaplanes Pty Ltd Ph. 02 9388 1978

www.seaplanes.com.au



Chapel in The Sky

New Member Profile

Rosemary Arnold

After a lifetime of flying, everything from flying boats to helicopters, veteran pilot and new member of the SPAA, Rosemary Arnold has started Chapel in the Sky. She is a civil marriage celebrant who conducts wedding ceremonies above Sydney Harbour in a 7-seater helicopter. She is negotiating with Melbourne Seaplanes to do weddings above Port Phillip Bay in their aircraft.

She writes about her exciting flying career . . .

My first flight was from Grafton to Sydney in a Sunderland Flying-boat in 1949. As a shy 15 year-old, I surprised myself by asking the Captain if I could go see the cockpit. Up I went, up those windy spiral stairs, causing my dress to fly over my head. Further surprise was that I spent the entire 2-hour flight sitting in the front seat, even stayed in the cockpit for the landing.

It gets better; the captain was PG Taylor, whose fame was unknown to me, just his wonderful charm. In later years I became good friends with Captain Bryan Monkton, who was best friends with PG, was the godfather to his daughters, and Bryan was the owner of Oceanic Airways. I also met Susie Arnot, one of PG's daughters, when she visited Bryan at his home in Exeter NSW, and I was helping Bryan with his book manuscript "The Boats I Flew".

As a teenage bride I was in awe of Philip Dulhunty who was a business associate of my then husband, Keith Arnold. This dashing Philip flew a seaplane, even commuting to work!



Another business associate was Hockey Treloar, a realtor who flew his own amphibian, landing at Terrigal where we were holidaying in the 1960s.

This early exposure gave me a passion for seaplanes.

I started flying in



1962 and soloed on my 28th birthday. I first flew Cessnas and a Chipmunk, then got a float-plane endorsement at Rose Bay. I took to helicopters in 1965 and became Australia's first woman helicopter pilot.

I got my commercial licences, fixed and rotary-wing, with ambitions of a career as a pilot. But that was not to be. In 1967, a 33-year old woman "married with 4 kids" was unemployable.

In 1977 I bought an old Bell 47J2A 4-seat helicopter and operated my own air charter company as Chief Pilot, mostly doing the joyride circuit. I carried more than 5,000 passengers in those days, doing a record of 75 take-offs in one hot 8-hour flying day. Lived in the USA for

15 years but my Las Vegas Helicopter Charter business was short-lived when I got sued for \$10million (not my liability).

Back in Australia, I taught 5 aviation subjects at UWS for their Bachelor of Aviation degree (2004-2006) having just graduated only a week before, at age 70. Not bad for a 15-year-old high school drop-out.

More recently in my late 70s, I went on a blind date, flying across Australia in a C172, for 18 days, had a fabulous time and married the pilot/owner (photo above) and moved to Melbourne.

Rosemary is currently writing an historic aviation book "First Females Above Australia", recording 100 Australian women pilot "firsts" in the first 100 years of Australian aviation. She would be delighted to receive information on any women aviation firsts from readers.

You can contact Rosemary Arnold, The Flying Celebrant on 0413 832 058
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