

Our Mystery Photo last month asked for the story behind the photo above. It is an extraordinary one.

By 1941 Japanese troops occupied much of the East Coast and North Plain of China, but their occupation had reached a stalemate. Chinese communists held a number of enclaves in the occupied territory, and the Nationalist Chinese under Chiang Kai-shek had regrouped to the far west of the country. There, in an uneasy alliance with communist guerrillas, they limited Japan's control to cities and railway lines.

But supply lines to the east were severed, so every aircraft that could be pressed into service was priceless, including those of the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC). By then the company was based out of Hong Kong (still under the British), from which its heavily laden aircraft would fly into the hinterland of China. Most sorties were relatively routine, but one, under the command of Captain Hugh "Woody" Woods, was to make aviation history.

As Woods departed enroute for Chehgtu he was advised that Japanese warplanes were roaming the skies in that area. Communications were difficult, so Woods decided to land at Suifu, a small field where CNAC had a radio and field office,

to get information about enemy activity.

But the Japanese sneaked though the area warning system undetected to arrive overhead just as Woods landed. Woody hurriedly led his crew and passengers into a wooded area well away from his DC-3, which was immediately spotted by the Japanese. A number of bombs were dropped, including one which went through the starboard wing before exploding underneath it. The wing was blown to jagged shards and the remainder of the aircraft was severely damaged: in fact, hardly one square foot of it escaped.

The moment the Japanese aircraft departed, Woody moved the aircraft to a secluded spot and had it very effectively camouflaged. Knowing that every single aircraft was priceless, he then contacted his head office in Hong Kong to find a way to get his crippled aircraft home. The riddle fell to **P.Y.Wong**, CNAC's managing Director, and **Zygmund Soldinski** their Chief of Maintenance, to solve.

It was clear that the damaged wing could not be repaired, but Woody figured the aircraft would still fly if a replacement wing could be fitted. But where was one to be found, and even if it was, how could the engineers get it to Suifu? The only way open was shipment to Rangoon and a long drive over the

Burma road, but not only would that take months but was far too narrow and twisting for such a large load to traverse.

The two men retired to a bar in Hong Kong to consider the problem. There was no spare wing in country and, even if there had been, there was no way to get one to the crash site; but Soldinski told his associate he'd work something out – but what?

On the way back to his office he walked through the CNAC hangar, where a DC-2 was being overhauled. As he looked at its wings, an idea formed: could a DC-2 wing be fitted to the DC-3? It was five feet shorter, but if it could be attached the idea might just work. Critically, however, the new wing must not only mate with the centre section, but also allow all the control cables and electrical lines to hook up. Nobody had ever tried it, so there was only one way to find out.

Soldinski directed that one of the hangar DC-2 wings was to be removed and fitted to a DC-3, which was also undergoing maintenance. This was quickly done and, unbelievably, everything fitted. By sheer chance the company had used the DC-2 wing and centre wing-butt jigs to form the DC-3 angles. Douglas design engineers had called for a heavier angle with a wrap-around plus double the attachment bolts for the 3 but mindful of Donald Douglas' Scottish thrift, they simply drilled additional holes between the DC-2 mounting points. The CNAC engineers were therefore able to fill all the DC-2 holes and skip every other in the DC-3 centre wing. Douglas had built them strong.

Soldinski then turned to the problem of how to deliver the wing to Suifu, more than 800 miles away. Sea and road transportation was out, so it would have to be by air. But at over 25 feet the wing was too long and wide to fit inside the cabin, which in any case was needed to carry the maintenance crew to fit it.

Soldinski figured it could be strapped to the belly of the DC-2 courier aircraft. He had the wing partially disassembled by removing the tip and trailing edge, and a special fairing made to streamline the wing butt, which was facing forward. He also devised a method of suspending the load under the aircraft, as he didn't want a bubble of air forming under the wing to destroy the flight characteristics of the aircraft.

Hal Sweet, one of the most safe and reliable pilots in the airline, then joined Soldinski over a bottle of White Horse and, after careful consideration, agreed to fly the aircraft. When asked if he would test fly it first he shrugged. "You said it would fly," he said to the startled Soldinski, "so that won't be necessary."

Early next morning in darkness and rain the team set about loading the aircraft but found Operations had



Another Hybrid Build

The 1964 Hollywood movie "The Flight of the Phoenix" tells the story of a group of oil workers who are stranded in the desert after the aircraft in which they are travelling crashes. Realising that the chances of rescue are slim, they build a smaller craft out of the wreckage to carry them to safety.

But special effects were rudimentary in those days, so the filmmakers really did build the Phoenix using wing sections and one of the tail booms from a wrecked Fairchild C-82. They also decided it must fly, at least a short distance, to give realism to the movie.

The Phoenix's take-off was considered too dangerous to stage at the sandy filming location (its actual take-off was from a smoothed, compacted-earth runway), so legendary stunt pilot **Paul Mantz** was asked to do a "touch-and-go" landing in which he came in low, skimmed his landing gear along the ground, then throttled up to gain altitude, thereby simulating a take-off.

On the second take, as the landing gear made contact with the ground, the plane's tail section fractured, causing the aircraft to nose into the ground and cartwheel. Mantz was killed, although his co-pilot survived. They should have used Navy engineers.

You can view footage of the flight and the tragic outcome [here](#). ✪



already allocated a complete gross load without giving the spare wing or the maintenance team one iota of thought. "Don't worry," Hal remarked, "I'll take it all." They crammed every square inch of the DC-2 full, and Hal started up and taxied out. The sky opened with another downpour but he made his way across the small muddy airfield at Kai Tak, ran up his engines and started the take off. Watching from the sidelines, Soldinski and P.Y. were filled with trepidation as it disappeared into the blinding rain before lumbering off at the very far edge of the strip. She was airborne!

The flight was long and eventful. Hal had two stops on the way to unload freight and cargo, one of which was on air raid alert, but he kept low until the all-clear sounded before making his approach. Eventually the wing and kit was delivered to Suifu and Hal took off for yet another sector before turning home. He had picked up a case of Dengue fever and was desperately ill, but made it back to Hong Kong.

On the ground at Suifu the engineers quickly stripped off the damaged wing and mated the replacement. The work was exacting and they were under constant threat of air attack, but at last it was done and Hal, the pilot, arrived to fly it back. The engines were cranked up and he took off.

After a few minutes in the air Hal trimmed the aircraft but in spite of full aileron tab it flew right wing heavy. No problem: his engineer had a large spanner in the repair kit, so they tied it to the spoke of the wheel and flew hands off.

The flight landed at Chungking for fuel and Hal found the airport teeming with people all wanting to go to Hong Kong. The traffic agent asked Hal how much he could load in his hybrid aircraft. "Hell," he said, "a full load." That meant 1000 kilos over gross.

He took off and flew non-stop to Hong Kong, and into the storybooks of legends.

Source: *Wings over Asia Vol II*. Story by Zygmund Soldinski. ✈



Top: Zygmund Soldinski, CNAC's Chief of Maintenance, posing with the wing section strapped to the underside of the DC2 courier aircraft. The fitting can be seen on the lower image, although the butt fairing is yet to be fitted.



Above. The DC "Two and a Half", as flown out of China. The right wing can be seen to be demonstrably shorter than the left. The story was to add grist to the already widespread belief that the Douglas DC series of aircraft were extraordinary workhorses.



By early 1982 I'd left the Navy and joined the National Safety Council of Australia (Victorian Division) as their Chief Pilot. The General Manager was a fellow called **John Friedrich** who, on the face of it, was an extremely bright and charismatic entrepreneur. Later, he turned out to be a crook and fraudster, but we didn't know that at the time.

On the 17th of July I was doing pilot consolidation in VH-FTD, the little Hughes 500D which had the name "Chicken Little" painted in tricky lettering near the door. More colloquially it was known as "The Sperm Germ" because it was the shape of one. Towards the end of the flight we were doing engine-off landings, which involved winding the throttle right back so the engine was disengaged from the rotors, and conducting autorotations to touch-down landings in a quiet corner of the airfield.

As an instructor I'd done hundreds of engine-off landings with students. They require some judgement as you are, in effect, using what energy remains in the rotor system to cushion you onto the ground, and once that energy is gone there is nothing left. Use it too early and you could drop like a stone from some distance above the ground; use it too late and you'll do a really heavy arrival. Either way, an engine-off is one of the most critical evolutions you do, and really fine (and fast!) judgement is required.

On this occasion we'd just touched down. The blades, with little energy left, had slowed and were 'drooping' closer to the tail. That's OK but you need to be careful on the controls. Al Smith, who was doing the flying, wasn't: he suddenly jerked the cyclic too far aft and I was unprepared for his action. One main rotor blade drooped enough to strike the tail boom, which caused both the tail section and the blade to depart the aircraft. With

the system now in massive imbalance, the helicopter started to thrash itself to pieces, with us inside.

They say that time slows in such situations, and I believe it. I watched as the Perspex bubble that was the front of the aircraft shattered, showering us in jagged particles. The aircraft lurched violently to the right, and the radios, which were fastened into the centre console by quick release screws, were ejected into the cabin like peas forced from their pod - one after

another, flying through the air on the thin umbilicals of their power cords to fall between the seats. Beside me Al's body was thrashing around like an epileptic, and I realised that the throttle had cracked open and the engine was now driving the shattered rotor system - but I could not get my hands to it. And so the torture continued, the aircraft crabbing sideways on its broken skid, bits falling off until, at last, I managed to get to the throttle and shut it off.

We sat for a moment, stunned. It felt as if someone had wrenched off my head and then stuffed it back on the stump. There was a smell of kerosene and a ticking of hot metal, and we realised we'd have to get out quickly, which was easy as the door still worked on his side. Once clear, we waited for the airfield response but everything was still. "Chicken Little" was still upright, but canted steeply to the right as the force of the vibration had fractured the forward cross-tube. Her tail lay a little distance away, like an accusing finger pointing at the wreckage. There was no sign of the missing rotor blade which had vanished at many knots over the boundary fence.

After a little while we realised that no one was coming as the airfield was slightly convex - we were on one side of the curve and the airfield buildings were on the other. Nobody had seen us, and still couldn't. And so we stumbled back, talking about how, in the movies, crash victims were always rescued by beautiful nurses who lay them gently on stretchers to carry them away - but here we were, battered and bleeding, having to walk.

Ray Jones, the duty pilot, was in our operations room and he looked up in surprise as we entered. "Hello," he said cheerfully, "didn't hear you come back." He peered out of the window. "Where did you park Chicken?"

The subsequent investigation concluded it was

pilot error and although I hadn't been on the controls at the time, I was the captain of the aircraft and the flight instructor so it was my responsibility.

I fretted about it - I'd been with the company for six months and had just destroyed one-third of its aircraft fleet. But John Friedrich took me aside. "Don't worry about it, Mac-us" he said. Being of German extraction he always pronounced my name that way. "Your job is safe".

I took some leave and after a week the headaches eased as my head re-established itself in its correct orientation.

John decided a bigger replacement was required and so he contracted an agent to find him one. They did - a Bell 212 in a bonded warehouse in London. It was damaged, but the price was right and so he sent a couple of engineers over to have a look at it. They were enthusiastic, and a deal was done.

It was shipped to Bell Helicopters in Brisbane and a few weeks later I got a phone call from **Kevin Gosling**, a locally based pilot we used from time to time. "It looks OK," he said, "but I'm curious about the bullet holes along one side - and one of the exhaust stacks is all franged. It looks like it's been hit by something travelling very fast. What's the story?"

I asked John Friedrich who smiled in his enigmatic way. "Didn't I tell you Mac-us?" he said. "It belonged to **Idi Amin**, the Ugandan guy."

Having been born in Africa I knew all about Idi Amin - he'd been a murderous Dictator in Uganda until ousted from power.

"The helicopter was at Entebbe airport on the night the Israelis rescued their hostages," John continued. "And it got caught up in the crossfire."

"How did it get to London?"

He shrugged. "We don't know. The raid was in July of 1976, so we think it was eventually smuggled out of Uganda and seized by the finance company. It was sitting in the warehouse for years."



Bell 212 VH-NSC at Latrobe Valley with some of the parachute jumping team in the '80s. Photo: Open Source.

Whatever its history it was a great buy, and we had it completely refurbished. I flew up to Brisbane to bring it back to the Valley, now resplendent in its bright yellow livery and the registration "VH-NSC" on the tail (National Safety Council).

As I did the pre-flight check I remarked on the huge seat in the back, just like a throne, and the Bell Textron engineer told me it was Idi's seat. "He would have sat in it like a God," he explained, "tossing unfortunate rivals out of the doors, poor bastards. What are you going to do with it?"

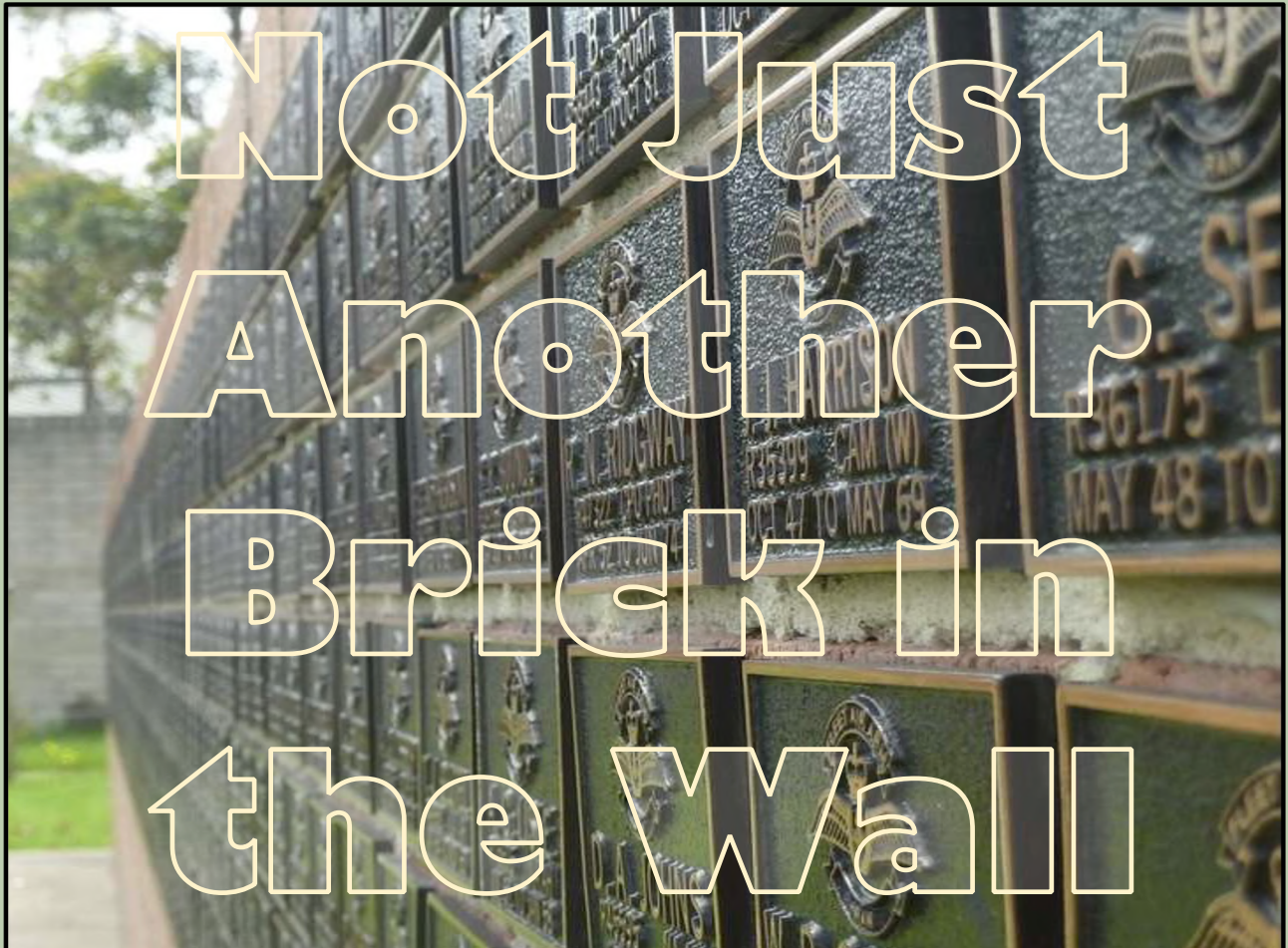
Back in the Latrobe Valley it was unbolting and stowed on a shelf in the hangar, where it sat in full view.

A year or so later we bought a second Bell 212, also from overseas. It duly arrived at the Valley and we slid open the rear door to be confronted by a huge seat, just like another throne. I turned to inquiringly to John Friedrich who was stood beside me, grinning.

"Didn't I tell you?" he said, "this is the helicopter that Pope John Paul II used in his tour of the United States. He sat in that chair and genuflected his way around the country."

So we unbolting it and put it next to Idi's on the top shelf of our hangar storage, and every time I looked at them I'd be reminded of how slender was the gap between good and evil.

*A couple of names have been changed to protect the innocent and not-so-innocent. **Next month.** The story of the National Safety Council's spotter pigeons. ✈*



Not Just Another Brick in the Wall

There's a common misconception that the **FAA Wall of Service** is only for dead people, or that you must be a member of the Association to get one - and that's just not right. So, what is it?

Back in '91 an idea had been rattling around in the head of member **Greg Wise** that a brick wall could be built just outside the doors of the then Naval Aviation Museum, on which people could have a bronze plaque mounted. It would be a way to record their service to the FAA and the nation.

Over the next few years the idea was developed and negotiated with the Museum, which was initially not in favour of the proposal: but that difference was eventually resolved and construction started in 2005. By then the design of the plaques had also been agreed, along with the rules for eligibility to avoid any arguments later.

The first batch of 91 plaques were affixed, together with the name plate, and the Wall was officially launched shortly afterwards.

Now, some sixteen years later, there are over 1000 plaques on the Wall – from Naval Airmen to Admirals, mixed together not by rank or status, but

simply by the fact they are all part of a unique and special group of people.

The FAA Wall of Service is, as far as we know, unique in the world. It offers you an opportunity to record your service with pride.

So, if you haven't already, why not get your name put on the Wall? It's easy to do, will never be cheaper, and is a wonderful and lasting gift from a loved one, or in memory of a mate who has passed on. More details on the next page.

Order Number 49 has now been submitted to the Foundry with the following names in it:

J.R. MACARTNEY R93356 POEAC Jul61-Jun73.
E.M. GANGLOFF S112549 CPOATA Jul72-Dec92
S.J. FLETCHER S125766 LSATA Oct79-May97
P. LEA O147812 LCDR Jun90-Dec11
J. NIARCHOS O42558 LCDR(AE) Jan62-Mar87
B.D. McCONCHIE A50134 LEUT Nov54-May58.
D.WARDEN S128583 LSATC3 Jan80-Aug93.
C.J. TIETZEL R42885 WOATA Jan64-Jan17.
E.S. REKSMISS S110896 POATWL Oct71-Apr95
A.R. BELDOM S119869 POATA Jan77-Jan97
J. SMITH S111830 POATA Apr72-Sep92
W.N. BRAMICH R37763 CPOAMAE Oct49-Oct69



Wall of Service Plaques are cast in heavy bronze and feature a 'Wings' Logo (modified) of the FAA Association, with the acronym 'RAN'. They display the person's name (with decorations and awards); rank/rate; official number and their date of entry and discharge. They are half a brick in size and are permanently fixed to the Wall.

Having your name on the Wall is a wonderful way to preserve your personal history, or perhaps you might consider it as a gift to someone who has everything. Plaques can also be ordered for deceased persons but require NOK approval.

You can apply for a plaque really easily by clicking on [this link](#), filling out the attached form, and then clicking the 'Submit' button. The cost is \$190.00 for financial members of the Association, or \$240.00 for non-members (who will then get a year of free membership).

As with everything prices go up, not down - so why not bite the bullet and get your application in now. If you have any questions, you can email the FlyBy Editor [here](#). ✈

New Members

The following new members (and the State in which they live) have recently joined the Association. Welcome, and thank you for supporting the FAAAA.

Don't forget, if you are reading this and you are not a member you can easily apply to join [here](#).

Trapp, Barry (QLD)
 Reksmiss, Eddy (NSW)
 Sausverdis, Ian (ACT)
 Sellers, Rick (NSW)
 Nicoll, John (QLD)
 Burdorf, Theodore (NSW)
 Craig, Shane (NSW)
 Hutchins, Stephen (VIC)
 Smith, Darren (ACT)

You can access the list of all our members on our website, including their contact email (unless they have requested otherwise). The link is [here](#). You'll need to log on to see it, which means you must be a current member yourself. ✈

† REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **Pieter "Dutchy" de Leeuw** and **Gary "Burt" Lancaster**.

You can read a little more on our Obituary pages [here](#), and, if you are a member of the Association, you can leave a comment if you wish. ✈



Why Women Live Longer than Men. Number 1.

Old Bar Vietnam Veteran's Day Abandoned

After a mighty struggle to keep the Vietnam Veterans Day (VVD) reunion on the calendar, FAAAA member John "Mac" Macartney finally had to call it a day when large parts of regional NSW were placed into lockdown just before the event was due.

He advises that the local school plans to hold a special service which will be recorded for those who wish to watch it. The Veterans' Day is regarded by the school as particularly special, as it was a part of learning and development for the school student leaders who hosted it.

Our thanks go to Mac for his sterling work over the many years he has arranged the VVDs, and in particular for his efforts to try and keep them going during the current pandemic. We all hope that 2022 will be an easier time. ✈

Charlie Rex Memorial Service Cancelled

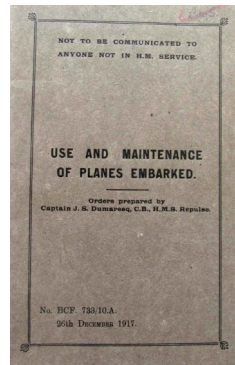


After wrestling with the ever-changing lockdown situation in NSW and the distinct possibility that it will get worse before it gets better, Charlie's sons have come to the conclusion that the most appropriate thing to do is to abandon the plans for a Memorial Service, and

to privately place Charlie's ashes in the Nowra Cemetery.

This will be a disappointment to the many who had been hoping to remember him by gathering together, but it is in everyone's best interest to stay safe. So, regardless of our degrees of isolation, it is suggested that those who knew and loved him unite in that spirit and raise a glass of fine red wine in memory of Charles Robert Richmond Rex on Friday, 10th September. ✈

Historic Book



By 1917 Naval Aviation had advanced to the point where aircraft were being launched directly from warships. At the front and centre of this development was the Australian light cruiser Sydney, under the command of Captain John Dumaresq. An Aussie by birth, he had joined the Royal Navy in 1886 and was soon recognised as

one of the Navy's most innovative officers by developing a number of novel devices to greatly improve the accuracy of the Fleet's guns.

Dumaresq was a great believer in Naval Aviation. When he joined Sydney he was instrumental in developing a launching platform for the Sopwith Pups attached to the Fleet.



September Mystery Photo

This month's Mystery Photo is clearly from a bygone age as it depicts a nostalgic and somewhat romantic era – but can you tell us when and where it was, and why it has a connection to the Fleet Air Arm? Answers to the webmaster [here](#).



A stickler for doing things properly, Dumaresq developed what was arguably the first ABR (Australian Book of Reference) on Naval Aviation. Entitled "Use and Maintenance of Planes Embarked", the slim volume was released on 26th

December 1917 when he was Captain of HMS Repulse (Sydney was in refit).

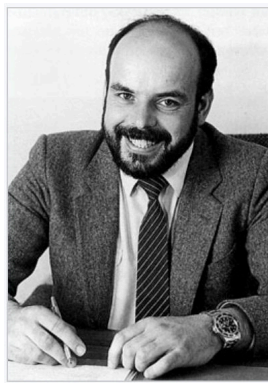
You can see a copy of the publication on our website [here](#), should you wish. ✈



Dear Editor,

With reference to your story "The Donkey's Dick" in the last edition, I was the Town Planning Manager at the Shire of Morwell from 1982 – 1990 or so.

I remember a few things about **John Friedrich** as our Shire along with Traralgon (Town and Country) shires owned the Latrobe Valley Airfield.



John Friedrich, executive director of NSCA 1982-1989

I recall a couple of interesting moments but the one that stands out the most was going to a meeting with all the attendant Councillors and lots of others in his meeting room at the airfield (police, ambulance etc. etc.). The room was filled and all of us were waiting for him to arrive.

The topic was a new swimming pool he wanted the Shires to fund so his pilots could be relaxed and all that pending the rigours of a mission somewhere – and by the way, I think a dunker was attached to it as well.

Anyway, we waited and waited for the great man to arrive. I suspect he was only a few yards away in an office somewhere. The noise of our discussions became louder as the time wore on until a door opened and in he came. There was a total silence and a pin could have dropped like a crash! He took the top seat at the long conference table and without any by your leave or anything proceeded to tell us all why he needed us to pay for his pool. The Councillors and all were just about falling over themselves to be the first to give him everything he wanted.

As an exercise in all sorts of things – power, leadership, sheer effrontery, gall, but above all charisma; he was a true believer (the right words fail me a bit here) but I do know that most present hadn't met the man but he sure had something about him that was worth studying. Easy to say now that it wasn't worth emulating but that is very much with the benefit of hindsight, most back then though he was close to God!

Cheers, Max Speedy. ✈

Dear Editor,

As usual, a very informative edition to those I look forward to receiving.

I was particularly moved by the Fort Ducker ANZAC Day video ceremony which, I am not ashamed to express, brought a few tears to this 92-year old fart's eyes!

Thanks, and Yours aye. Peter McNay ✈

Dear Editor,

Back in the days of the Gannet, we had a piece of marine rescue equipment called a "G Dropper." The container consisted of two compartments, a smaller one that contained a retrieval rope and the larger an 8-man inflatable life raft containing the usual survival equipment.

Carried either under-wing or in the bomb bay, it was fitted to the Gannet when operating in a marine rescue role.

Having assisted in the installation of this equipment on more than one occasion, it never occurred to me at the time, that later in life I would be involved in a marine rescue in a very different capacity.

On the morning of November 15th 1967, I was tasked with operating the scheduled TAA flight from Port Moresby to Misima, with a stop at Gurney, code named Falls River and an active RAAF base during WW2.

Misima is a volcanic island in the northwest of the Louisiade Archipelago, within the Milne Bay

Province of Papua New Guinea and some 2hrs 50mins flight time in the DHC-6 Twin Otter which I was flying at the time.

The island measures 40 km by 10 km and back in 67, prior to the discovery of gold, was a fairly sleepy place. It had a short, crushed coral airstrip and the weekly air service from Port Moresby was mostly to service the patrol post and the area administration centre that was based there.

At that time TAA (Trans Australia Airlines) was one of the first operators of the "Twotter" which was flown as a single pilot IFR operation in a nineteen-seat configuration, thereby avoiding the need for a cabin attendant.

On checking the NOTAMS for the flight, my attention was drawn to a report of an inter-island cargo ship the "Bev" which had been reported as foundering in a recent tropical storm and pilots of aircraft operating in the area were asked to maintain a look out for possible survivors.

The area given was between Gurney and Misima, and I decided to fly this segment lower than normal and check out the uninhabited islands along, and to the south of my track, after briefing my passengers accordingly and asking them to act as observers.

Being unsuccessful on the outbound leg I repeated the exercise for the return trip, but this time taking a more northerly route to examine some islands that lay on that side of the direct track. Sure enough, whilst passing over the uninhabited island of "Bunora" - not much more than a sand cay - six survivors were sighted, one of whom lay immobile on the sand.

After making a couple of low passes to check out the logistics of the island, and the condition of the survivors it was clear that their situation was not good. The island was void of any useful vegetation, or signs of fresh water and the immobile person was obviously seriously injured. As I climbed away to continue the flight to Gurney, I passed this information to Port Moresby on H.F.

Moresby acknowledged and advised that due to a lack of suitable aviation resources being available it would be some time before a sea rescue could be organised.

My thoughts immediately turned to the Esky full of sandwiches and soft drink sitting down the back of the aircraft - in-flight catering - which so far had been untouched by the passengers - and how I could get it to the survivors.

By the time we landed at Gurney a plan had been conceived...

With the unanimous support of the passengers the Esky and its contents along with any other suitable items that we could add would be air-dropped to the survivors.

Having completed our preparations, refuelled, and with the small rear baggage loading door removed, we headed back to Bunora Island to complete the mission, which went off without a hitch.

Mission accomplished and with a last wave to the survivors it was back up to cruise level for the return to Port Moresby.

By the end of the day, I had logged just under eight hours of total flight time and felt very satisfied with what had been achieved.

The Sequel:

Many years later - now a check captain on the B-747 - I was enjoying a sun-downer at the Changi sailing Club in Singapore and was approached by a fellow aviator who wanted to introduce me to a friend who was accompanying him. The friend turned out to be the captain of the Bev, one of the survivors from Bunora Island who insisted on buying me dinner.

As he put it, "You bought the last one."

Anson E (Ted) Goater. ✈

Dear Editor,

To answer your "Where are you now?" question, I thought I'd just give you a heads up on my time in the Navy and since.

I was employed in ATC as penciller and witnessed LT Brian Dutch & oppo eject from their Sea Venom - saw two flashes & chopper on way to rescue same.

Another was a touch & go by LT Roberts returning to RANAS after a collision over Sydney Harbour involving another jet which ditched in same. He could only fly right hand turns (or I should starboard).

Being on Melbourne re Voyager incident all those years ago - one minute of time.

Since leaving the Navy as an ex-LAAH in 1968 I've had no contact until the 1998 reunion. What a buzz meeting others after all that time...say 30 years. Have no returned service. Served 22/8/1959 - 22/8/1968.

There is another standout - in 1991 my brother & I met our mother after 46 years, and finding out I have two birth certificates & one extract. See being born out of wedlock all those years ago. This was divulged as being adopted by my parents. There

was a split after WW2 brother & myself raised by my grandmother & dad's brother & sister.

On leaving the Navy I took casual work in Brisbane with Brownbuilt - one job was at RAAF Amberley installing compactus storage for incoming F111 spares.

After 12 months or so I moved back to Sydney to buy a tip truck. That lasted a couple of years, then a turf truck until 1973. After that it was to Mt Isa in mines, but only surface work.

Back to Brisbane 1974 - a big year as I got married. Started a new position at APM Petrie Mill or Amcor. Signed for redundancy January in 1998 after 24 years of shift work. Started Golf 1976 and gave it away in 2005. Volunteered Riding for Disabled for 20-odd years, and also Meals-on-Wheels 1998/2021. I did a few overseas tours, but now in lockdown 5/8/2021.

So, 53 years have passed since leaving Navy at 30 years of age. Still married but no children though.

Yours Aye, John (Tug) Wilson R55813.

By Editor. I asked Tug for a photograph or two and he's advised they have been sent by snail mail. Unfortunately, they didn't arrive in time for this publication but I'll be sure to add them to the next Edition when they do. ✈

Dear Editor

I thought I'd flesh out a few details from a report made in your newsletter recently regarding the loss of Sea Fury T20 near RNAS Yeovilton UK in April this year. Perhaps of interest is one of your FAAAA members was onboard - me.



Unexpectedly available due to a Covid-induced end to an airline career, I had been recently appointed as Chief Pilot for Navy Wings, the UK FAAs operator of historic naval aircraft based at Yeovilton. Now run on a charitable basis, we currently operate Swordfish, Harvard T6, Wasp helo, Stinson Reliant AT19 (go on Google it - I'd never heard of one either) and Chipmunk. Coming very soon is a Supermarine Seafire, another Swordfish, Seahawk and an FB11

Sea Fury, albeit re-engined with a Pratt. Some interesting stuff and a growing stable with some interesting read-across to RAN historic operations.

Back to the T20. We had only just had the aircraft delivered back from annual maintenance two days before, and this was our first operation of the type for 2 years. Not qualified on type, I hopped into the backseat as a pure passenger, while my CFI flew himself a refresher from the front. A standard smoky start saw us onto a smooth take off. I was particularly impressed with the power and rate of climb - especially after just having flown a Chipmunk. Three minutes later my pilot checked oil pressure with me and, now below normal (but still at 65psi), declared a pan and immediate return to Yeovilton. Set up nicely in a forced landing pattern, it became apparent we had too much energy to stop on the runway, and with engine behaving normally and positive oil pressure we lowered the u/c and flap to get down toward a glidepath.

At the worst possible moment (700', approaching glidepath from above) the Bristol Centaurus produced almighty vibration and bang, and seized solid producing an extraordinary drag. It was like putting a speedbrake and spoilers out together. Shoving the nose down about 30° to maintain a glide speed of 130 knots, we had just 5 seconds to put out the mayday and brace for impact straight ahead.

My pilot did a great job of maintaining speed and flaring for touchdown, and despite hitting a telegraph pole we made a reasonable touchdown in an equestrian field ½ mile short of the runway. Sadly, a hedge hiding a sizeable ditch and berm lay ahead, and impact with that tore the engine off with the hedge removing the wings. A wild ride in the 'canoe' fuselage finished with us inverted but no fire (engine now 50 metres away thankfully) and physically intact. Cuts and bruises and some helmet impacts for my pilot saw us to hospital for various minor treatments.

I've heard almost everyone telling me how lucky I was. Perhaps so, but I'd argue the timing of the engine seizure was desperately unlucky, and I consider my previous 19200 logged hours accident-free flying as the lucky ones (the best hours 1500 in the old S2 Tracker - embarked in Melbourne and night decks ops survived). Air Accident Investigation is still ongoing, but having seen the engine disintegration, the cause appears to be a major failure of the rear cylinders orbital gearing. And that on a pretty new engine just out of overhaul. But then I remember a similar situation in a Tracker with a Wright Cyclone giving up on me just after overhaul in Bankstown. Happily,



Andy "Mum" Davis kindly provided this photo of two of Navy Wings' other historic aircraft – the Harvard and Stinson Reliant. He's in the latter. (Navy Wings).

Grumman had the foresight build an aircraft with another engine onboard to save the day!

I'm very far from the first victim of Bristol Centaurus unreliability, as I'm sure a number of our FAAA members will know from experience. I've been bowled over by various ex-Sea Fury pilots getting in touch and recounting their tales of disappointment in the reliability of this highly strung and nervous thoroughbred of an engine (one pilot had 5 failures in 5 years!). My unenviable record on the Fury is 1 failure for every 6 minutes of flight time. Not a lot for the logbook then. Perhaps you will understand why we are looking to re-engine our FB11 with a Pratt despite the loss of authenticity, as many Americans have done.

Anyway, anyone interested in the work we do at UK Navy Wings can follow us at www.navywings.org.uk. Better still, when lockdowns permit, come visit us at RNAS Yeovilton next time you're in good old Blighty!

Aye, Andy 'Mum' Davis. Ex-RAN S2 1979-84. ✈

Dear Editor,

Whilst never a serving member of the FAA, I worked for many years for the Aircraft Maintenance & Repair Branch and met and formed friendships with several serving NCOs and Officers of the RAN during that time, 1970's and 80's.

I remember a few Superintendents (SAMR) such as **Oscar Hughes** who went on to become DNAE, **Frank Spong**, who formalized the defect investigation process and **Peter Brown**, all at the time holding the rank of Captain.

Other personalities who may be remembered are **Rod Manuel** who was the Chief Aeronautical Engineer (CAE) and **Lou Gardiner**, Senior Aeronautical Engineer (SAE).

I joined the branch from Nirimba where I was a Technical Instructor in the WEE School, teaching hydraulics to Mobies and SAMR wanted someone with hydraulic experience, and I came to Nirimba after leaving the RAAF where I was an airframe fitter and ex-apprentice from RSTT at Wagga in the early 1960's.

I started with SAMR as a Technical Office grade 2 (TO2) working on Trackers

and Skyhawks but was transferred to the rotary wing section when the Sea Kings entered service. I was studying at the time and working for **John Kingston** who was the STO1, under **Graham White** STO2.

Graham was a personality, having served originally in the RNFAA as the Fifth Rigger on Vickers Vimies in North Africa during WW1. His middle name was Cedric and was the proud owner of a Nissan Cedric motor car.

Aircraft we had were Bell 206, Bell UH1B, Wessex and Sea Kings. **Ken Greenaway** was part of the Section as an STO1 and amongst all the pretty technical stuff we had to deal with, there was always time for a laugh.

When Graham White retired, we gave him a "paying off" pennant which I think was an inch long for every year of service and as I recall it ended up being about five feet long.

John Kingston was promoted to STO2 and I was moved up to STO1, with responsibility for Wessex and Sea Kings. Other names that come to mind are, **Stan Martin**, **Len Edmonson** both civilians and **Alan Fairbain** and **David Prest**, both CPOATA4.

I keep in contact with David who sponsored me to join the Association which I enjoy very much.

Kind regards, John Bone. ✈

REMEMBER THIS?



here, is extraordinary enough; but in a sequel fifty years later the sole remaining survivor, Mr Sam De Vries, donated footage and newspaper clippings of the incident to the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra. When he learned that the two helicopters involved in his rescue were still in existence, he made the journey from Whyalla to see them and was reunited with the family of his long-lost mate, whom he had not seen for almost fifty years.

It is a heart-warming story, not unlike the one aired on the ABC's "Australian Story" this week about the rescue of MG-99 – a tale of heartbreak and overwhelming odds, of the intervention of the Fleet Air Arm; of survival and reunion decades later.

By Editor. If you missed the "Australian Story" airing on the MG-99 rescue you may wish to look it up on ABC I-View. It is compelling viewing. ✈

Op Bursa Update for FlyBy – 26 Aug 21

The previous edition of "FlyBy" advised that presentations of the Australian Service Medal for Operation Bursa had been postponed, other than in Perth and London. The intention is still to conduct those presentation ceremonies scheduled for Nowra, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane when COVID-19 restrictions are eased. This may be in December or January, but clearly, the situation at the moment is somewhat "fluid".

The delay in presentation ceremonies will not impact the receipt of medals. All medals are despatched through Australia Post to the postal address notified on the application form.

The following batches have been approved by the Governor General and are in final processing/engraving/despatch:

- Batch 5 - notified between 15 Apr 21 and 28 May 21
- Batch 6 - notified between 29 May 21 and 29 Jun 21

By way of background into the process: after applications are vetted by the Op. Bursa Team, they are sent to Navy Honours and Awards (NH&A) for quality control checking. The end date on your batch is the date the batch is sent to NH&A. The batch is then sent to the Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A), for processing with other submissions to the Governor General for authorisation of each award. The lists include everything from

The Editor was perusing old copies of "Navy News" the other day and his eye fell on the June 10 edition of 1966, which featured an article on a rescue by 723 Squadron.

The doomed vessel was the dredge "W.D. Atlas", which in mid-May of that year was enroute from Whyalla (SA) for Sydney, where it was to be overhauled before leaving for New Zealand.



The vessel had a history of problems: most notably its steering, which was so bad that the dredger sometimes

had to turn a full circle to get back on course. A larger rudder had been fitted with little improvement. It also had a tendency to roll heavily in even moderate seas.

As the dredge tracked up the east coast of NSW it struck appalling weather. It was shipping water and could not maintain steerage. Eventually the engine was swamped and it began to list. A mayday call was made and the crew ordered to lifeboat stations, but the ship suddenly began to sink, leaving the men aboard little option but to leap into the dark waters. Just 4 of the 17 men aboard were saved.

The story of the rescue, which you can read

Australian Active Service Medals and campaign medals through to clasps for Defence Force Service Medals.

DH&A have found some missing awards during Op Bursa processing. A number of personnel had not been awarded the Australian Defence Medal (due to leaving the Navy before the ADM was established in 2006 – the eligibility was backdated to 1945) or were missing clasps to the DFSM. These were processed on behalf of members without any additional paperwork. If you believe you are missing an award, contact DH&A directly.

So, when will medals arrive? DH&A are currently indicating a time of **APPROX** 12 weeks from the end date on your batch. Note that the engraver is in Melbourne and may be impacted by the lock-down.

A notice in the most recent DVA newsletter has flushed out another half dozen applications, but there are still more out there. So, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, **TELL YOUR MATES** who you served with, to apply. Jump onto Facebook, Instagram or any social media and tell people that you have received your ASM for Op Bursa.

Details of how to apply can be found [here](#). The Op Bursa Recognition Team is contactable [here](#).

Andrew Whittaker, CAPT RAN ✈

Royal Commission Message

A message to everyone in the Defence and Veteran communities

My name is Nick Kaldas and I am the Chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

I am writing to you to let you know who we are at the Royal Commission and what we hope to achieve as we deliver on the very important task that we have been set.

As you may know, on 8 July 2021 the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), issued Letters Patent which established the Royal Commission.

I and my fellow Commissioners, the Hon James Douglas QC and Dr Peggy Brown AO, will produce an interim report by 11 August 2022 and a final report by 15 June 2023. Our terms of

reference are broad, and we are empowered to investigate a wide range of issues, themes and factors.

And to do this we need your help and your stories, so that we can learn as much as we can about the issues and situations surrounding the deaths by suicide of defence personnel and veterans. We want to hear, learn and then act, informed by your accounts and your experiences.

We will also review previous inquiries and research, as well as look at experiences in other comparable countries.

We will do our best to ensure that everyone, including individuals, family members, communities, organisations and their members, are supported to tell their stories. There will be a variety of ways in which this can be done: written submissions, private sessions, public hearings, and more.

We will support you with counsellors, if you need that as you engage with our process, and we will work to ensure that your own support networks, including health and family networks, are there to assist you, as they are best placed to know what works for you.

As we are currently in the establishment phase of staffing-up the Royal Commission with a group of dedicated people who will assist us to deliver on our important task, we appreciate your patience as we get things underway.

We will periodically post updates on the activities of the Royal Commission on our website. However, to ensure you are kept up to date with the latest on the Royal Commission activities, please go to our website www.defenceveteransuicide.gov.au and sign up to receive our regular email updates.

I look forward to working with you to ensure lessons are learned that will prevent future deaths by suicide.

Yours sincerely, Nick Kaldas APM. 26 Aug 21 ✈

For the interest of Readers, this is the last edition of "FlyBy" that will be typeset in Microsoft Word. From October, our 50th edition, we will be using the considerably enhanced features of a Desktop Publisher. See if you can spot the difference!

Next Month... Special 50th Edition



October's 'FlyBy' is the 50th Edition since its inception in June of 2017, and will feature a Heritage Article on the HS748, a bit about the first Hunter-Killer submarine, the extraordinary story of the Council's Pigeons and a raft of other material including our regular features. Help make this Edition special by sending your letter, story or photo to the Editor [here](#). ✈

The cartoon below from an unknown artist was forwarded by John Macartney and no doubt will evoke some fond memories of Harry's famous café. One such memory was from the Editor of 'Slipstream' who remembered: "I had some great times at 'Harry de-Wheels' none more interesting when as OOD on a ship slightly-worse-for-wear sailors would return and say: "Evening Sir, I bought you a pie with peas at Harry's". After declining the offer, one often found the sailor had slept on the pie and squashed it when returning to his bunk. Then, again I most probably was just as bad going to Harry's!

No doubt you know the story of why Harry took the wheels off the van? It became very popular amongst 'Sydneyites' in later years by which time I believe Harry had sold it to some large company. I don't know how true this was as my last involvement with Harry's was when completing my FBWC in the late 70's and he still owned the van with he and Mrs Harry working in it. The exchanges between the sailors and Mrs Harry were priceless!"

We'd love to hear of any other memories of Harry's. Simply email the Editor [here](#). ✈

