

ANNIVERSARY GUEST SPEAKER ADDRESS

GOOD EVENING ALL. IT HAS BEEN A GREAT PLEASURE FOR SONIA AND I TO SPEND SUCH A MEMORABLE DAY AMONG YOU, AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE SOME OF MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU AGAIN TONIGHT.

YOU ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE PRESENT DAY HIGH TECH WONDERS THAT HELP YOU WITH YOUR SOARING EXPLOITS SO PERHAPS YOU MAY CARE TO KNOW A LITTLE OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF YOUR CLUB.

I PROMISE NOT TO BORE YOU BUT THIS IS HOW IT ALL BEGAN. ONE DAY IN OAKEY I HEARD THAT DR MERVYN HALL, A PRE WAR GLIDER PILOT OF THE ORIGINAL TOOWOOMBA GLIDING CLUB, THAT HAD BEEN MOTHBALLED FOR THE COURSE OF THE WAR, WAS AGAIN FLYING HIS GLIDER AT THE AIRSTRIP, AND BEING A WARTIME PILOT WITH SEVERE FLYING WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS I JUST HAD TO INVESTIGATE. I ARRIVED AT THE AERODROME JUST IN TIME TO HELP HIS LITTLE GROUP PUSH HIS BEAUTIFUL LITTLE HIGHLY POLISHED BRIGHT RED GLIDER IN TO THE HANGAR. I WAS VERY IMPRESSED, BUT I CLEARLY REMEMBER OBSERVING THAT THE EFFORT DR HALL EXERTED IN THE HANGERING EXERCISE LEFT HIM QUITE BREATHLESS AND DISTRESSED.

SADLY, SOME LITTLE TIME LATER, HE WAS KILLED WHEN HE SPUN IN WITHIN THE CIRCUIT AND MY CURIOSITY ABOUT GLIDING HAD TO BE PUT ON HOLD. THE TOOWOOMBA GLIDING CLUB NEVR RECOVERED. ABOUT 12 MONTHS LATER WHEN I WAS IN OAKEY TO COLLECT THE GROCERY SHOPPING FOR OUR FARM HOME AT JONDARYAN I LEARNED THAT THE NORTH COAST GLIDING CLUB FROM NAMBOUR WAS OPERATING AT THE AERODROME. ONCE AGAIN, I JUST HAD TO

INVESTIGATE.

THIS VISIT INTRODUCED ME TO MAX HOWLAND AN EX PRU (PHOTO RECONNAISSANCE UNIT) MOSQUITO PILOT AND WE JELLED. HE GAVE ME MY FIRST FLIGHT IN THEIR KOOKABURRA AND I WAS HOOKED. THIS WAS GOING TO BE MY THING AND WHEN MAX ASKED IF I WOULD ACCOMPANY HIM ON HIS FIRST X/COUNTRY TO DALBY AS A GUIDE, I COULDN'T RESIST AND THE PROBLEM OF THE GROCERIES WAS IGNORED.

IT WAS GETTING LATE IN THE DAY WHEN WE ARRIVED OVER JONDARYAN RAPIDLY RUNNING OUT OF AIR SO WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT LAND ON OUR PROPERTY IT SEEMED A GOOD IDEA AND THAT WAS, FOR BOTH OF US, OUR FIRST OUTLANDING RIGHT BESIDE OUR HOUSE.

WHEN I WALKED IN TO THE KITCHEN SONIA LOOKED SURPRISED AND SAID "I DIDN'T HEAR YOU DRIVE IN. WHERE ARE THE GROCERIES". MY HALTING EXPLANATION THAT I HAD COME HOME IN A GLIDER WENT DOWN LIKE A LED BALLOON BUT AFTER A FEW PHONE CALLS WE WERE SOON JOINED BY MAX'S FAMILY, OUR CAR, AND THE GROCERIES AND ALL WAS PUT RIGHT. WELL ALMOST ALL! THAT STARTED A LONG ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MAX AND MYSELF AND GLIDING, AND WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY CRUSADE TO SOLICIT THE HELP OF A NUMBER OF EX AIR FORCE GROUND STAFF, FRUSTRATED WANNABE PILOTS, AND ANY OF THE LOCALS WHO WOULD LISTEN. THE LOCALS WERE LESS RECEPTIVE, ONE I REMEMBER ASKING ME, AFTER I HAD RELATED AT LENGTH THE VIRTUES OF THE GLIDER, "YEAH, BUT CAN YOU THROW A SADDLE OVER IT?".

THE REAL STRENGTH CAME FROM MY AIR FORCE MATES, REX TEAKLE,

DENNIS McCaffery, Peter Walker, Sam Johns, but also there was Perc Kummerow, John Bell, Murray Shannon, Jim Weatherspoon and our first secretary Vern Iles. We really got stuck in to it, guaranteeing a loan to buy the first Kookaburra, drawing up plans for a winch for launching and negotiating with the then DCA to be able to use Oakey Airfield and an unoccupied wartime hangar.

Rex, Murray and I drove nonstop down and back to Adelaide and collected our MK3 Kooka and we were in business. It all might sound so easy but it was fraught with difficulties. Pardon the pun but we had our ups and downs, as well as trying to carve out our own family and postwar futures from scratch.

As an example of practical difficulties was our first day of flying. Peter Walker and others had devised a winch made up of war disposal bits and pieces, including an automatic gear box from a Bren gun carrier. It was decided that we would use a good size paddock offered by John Bell on his Bowenville property. Tests to simulate a launch were done winching fence posts hurtling across the field at great speed. But finally we had to bite the bullet. We had to launch our Kookaburra.

At this stage I had been to Kingaroy to be checked by Max Howlwind to get us into action. I had gone solo in 44 minutes after 9 winch launches. With the princely total of 1 hour 48 minutes involving 26 winch launches. We had the modus operandi and we were on our way. I doubt that you would

GET AWAY WITH THAT TODAY.

STRAPPED IN, TAKE UP SLACK, FULL POWER AND WE ARE AWAY, TWENTY FEET AND THE AUTO GEAR BOX DECIDES TO CHANGE GEARS, A TWO OR THREE SECOND SAG, IN WHICH TIME I GET A CLOSE UP VIEW OF THE CHUTE, THE CABLE ALMOST COMES OFF, AND WHOOMFFF WE ARE AWAY IN SECOND GEAR. A FEW MORE LOOSE, SAGGING SECONDS IN A WEAK CLIMB AND THE GEAR BOX DECIDES TO CHANGE GEAR AGAIN ONLY THIS TIME AS I GRAB FOR SOME SPEED I GET A NOSE FULL OF PARACHUTE AND DECIDE IT'S TIME TO QUIT.

BACK AT THE LAUNCH POINT, HAVING RECOVERED AND STOPPED SHAKING, SOME CONSULTATION DETERMINES TO LOCK THE GEAR BOX IN GEAR, BUT WHICH GEAR? MUCH MUMBLING AND A SELECTION IS MADE. I AM HOOKED ON FOR ANOTHER TRY.

FULL POWER AND I AM AIRBORNE AGAIN AND INTO THE CLIMB, I NEED MORE POWER AND SIGNAL. THAT'S A BIT BETTER BUT I NEED MORE POWER AND SIGNAL AGAIN. THE CABLE IS BEING USED UP EXTRAVAGENTLY AND I'M ONLY ABOUT 250 FEET WHEN I CAN GET A GOOD LOOK OVER THE NOSE AND THERE IS THE WINCH IN A CLOUD OF BLUE SMOKE BURSTING IT'S BOILER, GUTLESS. SO MUCH FOR THE FIRST DAY, WITH CHIEF ENGINEER PETER WALKER ASSURING US ALL, THAT HE "WILL SLIP A BETTER MOTOR IN"!!

THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED WINCH LAUNCHING HAVE REALLY MISSED SOMETHING. WITH WINCH LAUNCHING YOU CERTAINLY LEARN TO KNOT WIRE. CABLE BREAKS ARE ALMOST RITUAL. THE REALLY SORE POINT WITH THEM IS THAT ONE ALWAYS SEEMED TO OCCUR ON THE LAST LAUNCH WHEN YOU ARE WANTING TO RACE HOME, AND OFTEN IT WOULDN'T JUST BE A BREAK BUT AN ENORMOUS TANGLE.

KEVIN DOLLERY, THE CFI OF THE AERO CLUB WAS AT THE STRIP ONE DAY AND I INVITED HIM FOR A LAUNCH. HE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN INVOLVED WITH DR HALL IN THE AERO TOW OF A GLIDER, A HUTTER, I THINK, FROM SYDNEY TO TOOWOOMBA BEFORE THE WAR, BUT THIS WAS HIS FIRST WINCH LAUNCH . AT ABOUT 200 FEET STANDING ON OUR TAIL I ASK " WHAT DO YOU THINK KEV, YOU CAN HAVE IT" ,. HIS INSTANT REPLY WAS "NO THANKS, THIS IS POSITIVELY FRIGHTENING, YOU CAN KEEP IT".

FROM THAT BEGINNING WE SLOWLY CRAWLED OUR WAY AHEAD WITH ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT. AERO TOWING WITH THE GREAT HELP OF JOHN GEDDES AND HIS TIGER MOTH VH-RJA, AND MY TIGER PUI, LATER UPGRADED TO A PAWNEE 150, SFG, THEN THE PAWNEE 235 AND OF COURSE THE MAULE M4. OH YES, THE MAULE, THE AIRCRAFT THAT ONCE IT TOUCHED THE GROUND, AS A NUMBER OF PILOTS WOULD CONFESS, HAD A MIND OF IT'S OWN.

I HAD CONVINCED REX, DENIS AND PETER AND SOME OTHERS THAT WE NEEDED MORE TUG PILOTS AND ARRANGED WITH BOBBY KEOGH, A POWER INSTRUCTOR FROM THE WARWICK CLUB TO SCHOOL THEM EN MASS. ONCE AGAIN THEY ROSE TO THE OCCASION TO SOLVE A PROBLEM.

THE ATTRACTION TO OUR FOLD OF LOCAL AERO CLUB MEMBERS, WHICH INCLUDED STALWART EX CATALINA PILOT WALLY MILLS, EX LANCASTER PILOTS SAM JOHNS AND PETER PAULL BOOSTED OUR RANKS WITH EXPERIENCE AND DISCIPLINE. TREVOR BANGE, A NATURAL PILOT AND GREAT CARER OF THE FINANCES AS TREASURER, FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF YEARS THAN ANY OTHER MEMBER IN ANY OTHER ROLE, IS

PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY.

SPEAKING OF MONEY, I AM REMINDED OF THE TIME WHEN ONLY 12 MONTHS OLD, WE WERE BLESSED WITH A LOCAL BUSINESS POWER PILOT WHO FLEW WITH CROSSED LEGS AND HE WIPED OFF THE KOOKABURRA AND ALMOST KILLED HIMSELF AND THE LOCAL DOCTOR. WHY BLESSED DO YOU ASK? WELL WE COLLECTED THE INSURANCE, BOUGHT THE WRECK FROM THE INSURANCE COMPANY FOR A PITTANCE, AND WITH THE AMAZING SKILL OF CLUB MAINTENANCE OFFICER, FRANK MAIDEN, REBUILT IT AND MADE A HANDSOME PROFIT.

THERE ARE TWO GROUPS OF MEMBERS THAT I WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SPURRED THE CLUB GROWTH. FIRSTLY THE BRISBANE GROUP. I WAS ALWAYS ASTONISHED AT THEIR TENACITY TO OVERCOME THE DISTANCES THEY WOULD TRAVEL, WITH ROADS NOTHING LIKE THEY ARE TODAY, THE QUALITY OF THEIR SERVICE AND THE FORWARD LOOKING INSPIRATION THEY CREATED TIRELESSLY. I COULD NAME DOZENS BUT MOST NOTABLY TO MY MIND WOULD BE JOHN MOORE AND PETER GRIFFITHS WHO WOULD LEAD THE WAY WITH NEW ADVANCED AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT, ALAN LATIMORE, WHO, JOINTLY WITH OTHER MEMBERS LIKE BOB WARD TAUGHT AND CULTIVATED THE X/COUNTRY AND THE COMPETITIVE ELEMENT OF SOARING. I REMEMBER ALAN LATIMORE CAME HESITANTLY TO THE CLUB FEARFUL THAT BEING BLIND IN ONE EYE FROM A SCHOOLBOY ACCIDENT, HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FLY AND WHEN THE PROBLEM WAS GIVEN TO OUR MANGEMENT COMMITTEE, I REMIMNDED THEM THAT WILEY POST FLEW SOLO AROUND THE WORLD WITH ONE EYE, AND SO ALAN WAS ON BOARD TO THE GREAT BENEFIT OF THE CLUB. IT IS ALSO PLEASING TO ME THAT WE HAVE WITH US HERE TONIGHT, AL GERBER, WHO, AMONG OTHER THINGS, AS A SIGNWRITER, CREATED OUR HUGE

POLAR CURVE

LOGO BOARDS THAT HUNG IN THE CLUBHOUSE, ONE OF THEM OF A LUSCIOUS GIRL WITH APPROPRIATE SLOGAN (WHICH I CONFESS I HAVE FORGOTTEN) AFTER THE STYLE OF THE VARGA GIRLS THAT BEDECKED MANY AIRCRAFT DURING THE WAR.

THEN THERE WAS INGO, A YOUNG MIGRANT WHO DROVE UP FROM BRISBANE, AND QUIETLY WENT ABOUT ASTONISHING US ALL, WITH HIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO STAY UP, FROM THE PUFF OF A CIGARETTE. TIME AND AGAIN WHEN EVERYTHING WAS PACKED AWAY SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE THAT INGO WAS NOT BACK, BUT SURE ENOUGH, TO OUR CONSTANT ADMIRATION THE LITTLE KINGFISHER WOULD BE SPOTTED AGAINST THE SETTING SUN ON FINAL GLIDE FROM WAY OUT.

FINALLY IN THOSE EARLY DAYS THERE WERE, AS I'M SURE THERE ARE NOW, THE LADIES, THE WORKING SOUL OF THE CLUB. WITH EVERY REASON TO BE GRUMBLERS THEY YET SUPPORTED, THEY ENCOURAGED AND THEY WORKED. THEY NOT ONLY DECORATED, COOKED, CLEANED, THEY ALSO WALKED WINGS, LAUNCHED AIRCRAFT AND DROVE RETRIEVES . ONE SUCH MOTHER, LAVERNE BROWN, RELIGIOUSLY DROVE HER 15 YEAR OLD SON TO THE STRIP TO FULFIL HIS DREAM. HE IS HERE WITH US TONIGHT AND WHEREAS, I, AS HIS INSTRUCTOR WAS LOOKED UP TO BY HIM,--- NOW WHEN I WANT TO TALK TO HIM I HAVE TO STAND TO ATTENTION.

NO DOUBT I HAVE MISSED A VAST NUMBER OF INCIDENTS AND NAMES THAT SHOULD BE MENTIONED. A FEW TRAGEDIES DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS TO MINIMISE RISKS. COL NORMAN, FIRST QUEENSLANDER TO BREAK THE 1,000 KM X/COUNTRY DISTANCE, CAUGHT BY THE MURPHY OF THE DOUBLE BLIND SPOT IN A COMPETITION X/COUNTRY.

WHAT, YOU MAY ASK, IS THE DOUBLE BLIND SPOT? JIM WEATHERSPOON, OFF THE TOP OF A LAUNCH, TEACHING US YET AGAIN, IT IS NOT THE ONE YOU CAN SEE THAT YOU HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT, IT'S THE ONE YOU CAN'T SEE.

BUT THE REWARDS ARE THE THINGS WE LOOK FOR. THE MATESHIP, THE COMMON INTEREST, THE CHALLENGES AND THE PURE JOY OF FEELING THE LIFE COME INTO AN AIRCRAFT AS IT BITES IN TO THE AIR UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF YOUR FINGER TIPS. THE GRACE OF IT, THE SCENIC BEAUTY OF IT, IT NEVER CEASES TO ENTHRAL. WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO SEE IT ALL ABOUT US TODAY AND I WILL CLOSE, THANKING YOU ALL FOR ALLOWING ME TO FLY WITH YOU DOWN THE CLUBS MEMORY FLIGHT PATH.

THANK YOU ALL.

FINALLY, IN THIS FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE CLUB'S LIFE, I SPEAK CONFIDENTLY FOR THOSE EARLY MEMBERS WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US, AS WELL AS FOR THOSE FEW REMAINING EARLY MEMBERS, WARM CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL, CONTINUING TO CARRY THE CLUB FORWARD WITH OUTSTANDING PROGRESS. ALL MEMBERS OF THE DARLING DOWNS SOARING CLUB HAVE A DESERVED PROUD RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS.