

On-the-Step

Issue 34
February 2013

Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fly-ins, AGMs, surviving power loss, people of interest, and upcoming conferences.

Hopefully, despite still not having an editor, we have an issue that will grab your interest.

This is our first issue for 2013 and, although it now seems like ages ago, our first since Christmas. I hope everyone had a relaxing Christmas break and got some wonderful flying in. I must admit that it seemed that the weather wasn't as conducive to flying around the central NSW coast as I had hoped it would be, in fact the past few summers seem to have been less than ideal, or maybe I am just becoming less comfortable flying in windy conditions. When you spend most of your flying time puddle jumping at less than 1500 ft you are more exposed to the winds and the turbulence and tumblers off hills and headlands. It's one of the thrills, and risks, of seaplane flying.

I hope it is not too obvious, but this issue is the second since the loss of Ross Vining who built On-The-Step

into such a popular, interesting and informative read. We are still looking for an editor to pick up the reins from Ross, so if you have some flair in that area, or know someone with those skills please make contact with me.

Complete loss of power is something that sends chills through any pilot, not to mention the passenger. Two articles in this issue relate to just that occurrence, one dealing with how we should respond in those short seconds before a possibly fatal outcome when power is lost on take-off, the other relating to an unexpected outcome of trying to ensure clean fuel reaches the motor.

Mind you, if you are going to have a loss of power a seaplane (preferably amphibian) has to be the best aircraft to be flying in, with such a choice of

strips, rivers, lagoons, lakes etc. to put down on.

The Annual General Meeting of the SPAA was held on the night of 25th February. Hopefully everyone received notice of the meeting and the Agenda. Only one additional SPAA member joined the executive for the meeting, which is fairly consistent with previous AGMs. I am sure that the SPAA is not alone in this phenomenon, but if you have any thought on how we can improve on this in future AGMs, please don't hesitate to let me know. Possibly the member who did turn up didn't know that no one walks out of a SPAA AGM without being landed with some title and function. I guess he knows now. But we are very grateful that Lyn



Williams did turn up with his great experience and enthusiasm and we look forward to his advice as the Swan River (Perth WA) contact. Following the AGM and the election of SPAA office bearers, there are only minor changes. You can see a full breakdown on the back page of this news sheet.

We are very excited to see a major seaplane gathering developing around the Rathmines Catalina Festival on the 9th November this year. As happened last year, it will be followed on Sunday 10th by the Wedderburn Open day and Fly-in

with the Buccaneers and Wenches party on the Saturday night. To get the weekend off to a strong start, and to make the flight to these events all the more worthwhile, the 7th and 8th will be the first of our annual SPAA Conferences. More details of this will be available in following issues of On-the-Step but make sure you keep the 7th to 10th November free.

The SPAA Code of Operation is available on the SPAA website and will be included in our next issue.

One item recently added to the

Code of Operation and addressed in this issue is the recommendation to carry a Spot GPS tracking device and to register its URL address with the SPAA. I can't recommend this highly enough.

Another policy item is the need to include undercarriage checks in your downwind, base and final checklists. We are seeing the results of wheels down water alightings too often. Fortunately injuries have not yet been serious, except for the pilots pride and to the owner's bank balance.



RATHMINES

The Black Cat Cometh

The weekend of 3rd November 2012 was a special one. The annual Rathmines Catalina Festival was held on Lake Macquarie and, as in previous years, a contingent of seaplanes were there to maintain the spirit of what was one of the major war time Australian Catalina bases. While Judy Hodge provided joy-flights in her C182 floatplane, three Lake Buccaneers, three Petrels and two Seareys put on a static display and the

traditional flypast to honour the Catalina crews of WW2.



More than 15,000 people turned out for this the 6th annual Catalina Festival and were delighted to see the HARS Catalina fly in and alight on Lake Macquarie, then taxi up the ramp utilized by 100s of Catalinas during WW2.

While the appearance of the Catalina enthralled the crowd, it had a huge emotional impact on a group of 19 ex-Catalina crew, by now well into their 80's and 90's.

The festival is designed to celebrate the significance of the Rathmines RAAF base, which reached its peak strength of 3,000 personnel in 1944-45.

It is hoped to use this annual event as the cornerstone for a series of events that we hope will bring a large contingent of seaplane pilots and owners together for 4 days of conference, displays and

socialising. We will be letting you know more very soon but don't make any other arrangements for the 7th to 10th November 2013.



The Wedderburn open day was held the day after the Rathmines Festival. Most of the seaplanes from Rathmines finished the day with a short, but wonderfully scenic flight down Sydney's Northern beaches, up Sydney harbour, past the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge along the Parramatta River and then down to Wedderburn. That evening, something strange happened to pilots and passengers alike, with the pilots transforming into dastardly pirates and any female passengers more

than compensating for the unpleasant fearsomeness of the pirates by transforming into the most beguiling wenches. So delighted were the dastardly pirates with the wenches transformation that they celebrated and partied (along with the wenches) very late into the night. A very special thanks to Bill and Donna Handley for facilitating these transformations and providing fabulous food, drinks, music and accommodation for all. It really was a top night me hearties.

After a rather slow start the following morning a

parade of 8 amphibians made their way to the Wedderburn Airfield display area to become part of a fabulous aircraft display with 50 to 60 aircraft. Later in the day we provided a seaplane flypast with Buccaneers, Petrels and Seareys to cap off a wonderful day before flying our various routes home.



In our last issue of On-the-Step we included an article strongly recommending the use of Spot GPS tracker devices when travelling unaccompanied, particularly over sparsely populated areas.

Earlier we mentioned the Seaplane Code of Conduct, which now includes the recommendation to carry, and use, a Spot device. The realisation of the need for such a device hit home with Ross Vining's tragic accident. It became evident that, without the Spot, Ross's crash site would most likely not have been found for many days or even weeks. Although he was carrying an EPERB, Ross never had time to activate it.

We can't recommend strongly enough that you purchase one of these relatively low cost devices and get into the

habit of using it.

In addition to using the Spot device, you need to send colleagues and/or family the URL web address at which your track can be viewed on a Google Earth type map.

To help insure that your Spot URL web address is available if anyone becomes concerned about your progress, SPAA is proposing that we keep a register of the Spot trackers and their URL addresses.

If you have a Spot tracker, or are purchasing one, you may want to let me know so that I can send you instructions if you want to register the details of your device with SPAA.

It is early days, but I do hope to see a wide adoption of these devices over 2013.



FROM FUN TO FRIGHT

That First Second After It ALL Goes Quiet

Jack Peters is one of most experienced pilots and a pilot for whom safety is always number one. Taking off after a refueling stop while ferrying a seaplane from Victoria to Queensland Jack with the new owner, Joe Zahra, whilst on climb departing Port Macquarie experienced complete loss of engine power. He managed to put the plane down in a tiny clearing with minimal damage to the plane and the only damage to the occupants being an unpleasant wetting from falling into a stagnant pond while walking away from the aircraft. The event has prompted Jack to reinforce in our minds those actions we should be taking in those short seconds immediately after power loss. Jack and Joe had about 12 seconds from power loss to being on the ground!

The quickest thing in life? Its not turning on a light switch, or a thought. Some think it is diarrhea, well there is something even quicker, it's an engine failure when you're not expecting it.

You are flying, just after takeoff, an event that "could affect the safety" of flight occurs;

Whether you are flying a Seaplane or an A380, what are your first thoughts?

It should be the three **P**'s

1; **Have I got POWER?**

NO? then **PUSH THE POLE FORWARD** & land under control. Multiple bird strike on the A380, engine failure in the seaplane the response is the same.

YES? Go to performance;

2; **PERFORMANCE:**

a.) If you have sufficient power, maintain a positive rate of climb,

b.) Keep the Ball in the centre

c.) Keep the Wings level

3; **PROCEEDURES;** You are climbing away; if in an A380 you then start fault evaluation, confirmation and check list procedure; in the Seaplane you start looking around and decide am I going on, or back.

If the loss of power occurs on climb-out remember "push the pole forward" and land where you can. All good pilots should be able to fly a circuit without looking at the ASI. Seaplane pilots are good "attitude" pilots, so hold an appropriate low nose attitude to stabilize the airspeed.

You have little time to waste looking at instruments so know the feel of your aircraft at different speeds; know the sounds of flight at different speeds.

You may have been caught flying downwind at the time of the incident, giving the impression that your speed is high when in fact it's low, always watch the flight instruments in your scan during visual flight. I have an AH maybe you should have one.

PUSH the pole forward (no matter how low you are) so you can **LAND IN CONTROL**.

REMEMBER in a forced landing you get 99% for walking away, 1% for procedures.

Fatalities occur when pilots delay pushing the pole forward or try to extend a glide or fly an aircraft that has no flying speed, always land IN CONTROL.

Unusual attitudes;

Nose high; PUSH, lower the nose

Nose Low; LEVEL the wings, then and only then raise the nose. Some aircraft in a low nose attitude with high angle of bank will spin or spiral dive if the nose is raised before the wings are leveled. Remember your stalling speed, as an example at 1g it could be 40KTS at 60 degrees angle of bank it will be 56KTS !

Control of speed;

We are talking about unusual flight conditions, control speed with the pole (control stick) now let's talk about "on final" and IN control.

The modern approach to control of speed on final is by the throttle, (*Modern Airmanship, by Major General Neil D Van Sickle USAF*). Van Sickle states "the throttle sets the speed just like in a car" "set final flap setting and adjust the throttle to control the recommended airspeed"

This is the only way that you can complete an ILS or a GPS approach and is the only way that modern aircraft are flown, wind shear must be controlled on a 3d approach path, use the throttle.

There are many different levels of experience in our ranks; however the basic rules apply, in the case of small aircraft like ours the most important aspect of our safety is that transition from the wonderful world of flight to the shock of an engine failure, AND HOW WE THEN PERFORM.



Fuel cleanliness is something that probably occupies the mind of seaplane pilots more than most. The advantage of seaplane operation, namely the ability to find landing areas in a multitude of wonderful places, also exposes us to risks in securing fuel supply from a wider variety of sources than would be the cases for regular aircraft. This is particularly the case for the increasing number of small seaplanes powered by Rotax and similar power plants fuelled with ULP Mogas.

On a flight from the NSW mid north coast one of our members experienced a partial, and

intermittent rough-running engine failure condition whilst flying his seaplane. With using the auxiliary fuel pump, carburettor heat, and switching ignition systems making no improvement, the situation deteriorated with the engine only running smoothly at a power level insufficient to maintain altitude.

He was able to make a successful landing into a nearby airstrip with minimum power available. After landing, the engine idled and operated to 2,500rpm as per normal, thus enabling him to taxi and shutdown in the parking area.

On inspection it was found that the primary reason for the engine's rough running and lack of power was identified as FUEL STARVATION.

This was due to a 'near totally blocked' in-line fuel filter element, fitted downstream of, and in addition to the standard fuel system gascolator.

On closer inspection, the element was observed to be choked with a very fine particle matter. And tests showed that the maximum fuel flow, with auxiliary fuel pump on, had been reduced to around half of that required in normal level flight.

The filter element had been replaced at the last annual inspection, and had been in service for approx 10 months / 60hrs of flying.

The incident raised two questions. Where did the contamination come from and what would have happened if the additional in-line filter had not been installed.

Inspection of the fuel in the tank showed that it had been contaminated with a very fine fibrous



material. The material appeared so fine that it would most likely have passed through the carburettor jet without any problem. It had already passed through the mesh filter in the gascolator. The question then has to be asked, was having the additional filter more likely to reduce the risk of fuel blockages or increase it. The evidence from this experience was that the additional filter probably increased the risks of fuel blockages.



So what were the owner's conclusions?

- The use of a fine mesh (non bypassable) in-line filter will block quickly in the presence of contaminated fuel, and warrants frequent inspection/replacement.
- The additional in-line fuel filter mesh can be too fine and too small in surface area depending on the specific filter model. These filters may have no micron rating, and will likely pick up (good), and block up (not good) with very small levels of contaminant. They also will likely have no fuel bypass feature.
- The fuel system gascolator mesh is sufficient in size to block out large contaminant, but still allow small contaminant to pass, which

will not foul the Rotax engine carburetor jets. ROTAX recommends a filter size of 100 micron.

- Preflight fuel sampling from a 'stationary' tank is not the most accurate indication of clean fuel. The tank needs to be agitated to better sample any contamination.

- Shaking/swirling of pre-flight fuel samples will visibly show up more/different possible contaminant. A static sample may only show water or large particles.

The owner removed his additional in-line filter, and his experience has led others to do the same.

While we are discussing fuel cleanliness a source of potential contamination has been brought to my attention and I feel it is important to pass it on to you. There is at least one brand of drum fuel transfer pump



being sold on eBay that, while advertised as suitable for petrol, has been found to be incompatible with ULP Mogas. Apparently the rotor of this pump becomes soft when exposed to ULP and has been found to distort and swell to the point where it rubs on the pump case. In rubbing on the housing the rotor has been found to fine filaments of the plastic which could contaminate the fuel being pumped.

If you are transferring fuel from a drum using a pump similar to the one shown, or any pump for that matter, make sure it is actually compatible with the fuel being pumped (if that is

possible). Regardless of your conclusion about the pump's compatibility, it is recommended that you should always transfer through a filter.



One of our members has found a filter that he has trialled and found suitable. It inserts into the aircraft's fuel filler when refuelling, and ensure no particulates enter the fuel tank with the fuel. These filters are produced in Tasmania by Profill Australia and appear low cost and effective. Check them out at <http://www.profill-australia.com/e-store/HOME.html>



As a footnote, the supplier of the failed drum pump was notified of its unsuitability for petrol and that fact that it could have caused a serious accident. I was assured that a note would be added to their eBay site to the effect that it was unsuitable for petrol. On rechecking as I was writing this article I notice that the pump is still being advertised as suitable for petrol.

Judy Hodge

WITH a soft rumble the engine of the Cessna 182 purrs to life as we skim along the surface of the Hastings River - ripples stretch out across the sheet of glass

and spray shoots from the pontoons slicing through the water.

At the helm of the magnificent flying machine, pilot Judy Hodge is in her element, expertly beginning our journey into the open sky.

Feeling the wind beneath her wings gives Judy a sense of freedom often hard to describe.

Her passion for piloting is almost tangible in the way she confesses her long-time love of all things flying.

"The flying is what it's all about," she says. "Even when I'm flying on a commercial flight in a big jet and you're up 30,000 feet among the clouds – it still brings tears to my eyes."

Staying true to her passion – despite the difficulties that may come with following your dreams – has always been her mindset.

"You have to be free, you have to do what's right for you. If you want to be a doctor then that's great, but if you want to be a barefoot pilot then you need to do it."

Judy has had anything but a dull life. Her smile is contagious and at 56, she still frolics along the boardwalk like a young girl with an insatiable zest for life.

Her secret she says is simply doing what she loves.

Judy was born in a remote mission hospital in northern South Africa. At the age of 19, her dad would offer her an opportunity that would change her life forever.

"My dad said to me 'Pud' – he used to call me Pud – 'do you want to learn to fly?'"

And from her first flying lesson Judy was hooked – line and sinker – on a new past time that would one day become her dream job.

As a "gunna do" pilot for the first 50+ years of my life, I find the story of Judy Hodge particularly heartening. Gaining her PPL in 2004 and now running a successful commercial seaplane operation should silence us when we find ourselves saying "I would have loved to ... but I'm too old now". The story below has been reproduced from an article about Judy in the Port Macquarie News



MEMBER PROFILE

In the 1980s she moved to Melbourne, Australia and in 1991 moved to Port Macquarie and became a real estate agent.

Flying had been put on the back burner, after her first lessons in South Africa with two littlies and a family to look after. But a quarter of a century later and the flying fever struck again, and this time Judy was determined to hold on to her passion.

She earned her private pilot's licence in 2004 and her commercial licence (no easy feat) at the age of 54. Slowly spending precious pennies and countless hours perfecting her skills to get where she is today.

In 2005, she had the ultimate sea change - made a bold move and spent some 18 months living on the beach in Vanuatu.

But she would come back to pursue her dream of attaining a commercial licence and begin establishing a solid career with her seaplane business.

With the help of acclaimed instructor Bill Lane, she managed to achieve her goal and is currently working on receiving her instructors rating.

She manages her long-time real estate business, and alongside Mr Lane creates magical moments for the countless number of people who fly with her. If that's not enough to keep her busy she manages holiday rentals, too.

These days it's all about doing what she loves - and it seems Judy has that pretty well figured out.

She wakes up most mornings, walking the few steps to her seaplane on the river and joining the birds and her amazed passengers for a day of magic in the sky.

"I always say 'What does your heart want? What makes you happy?' People always regret

more in life what they haven't done than what they have done," Judy says. "I can't not do what I love."

Even today, after countless take-offs and landings, Judy gets an absolute thrill from coming up out of the water.

She laughs as we complete our picture perfect glass water landing: "What a way to start the morning," she says.

And from the mile-long smile stretched across her face, I get the feeling that every day ahead is going to be the best day of Judy's life.

From article by Melissa Pretorius - Port Macquarie

MY SEAPLANE BUCKET LIST

Once in a while you meet a person that stands out as someone who you wish you'd known all your life. Ed Peck is such a man. I first spoke to Ed after answering the ad that he has run in the American "Trade-a-Plane" magazine for at least 30 years to my knowledge.

It says something like - "Float parts from Piper Cubs to Beavers. Ed Peck, Bear River, Nova Scotia." This simple ad conjured up all kinds of exotic thoughts. Were there really bears in the river"? Did he live in a cabin by a lake?

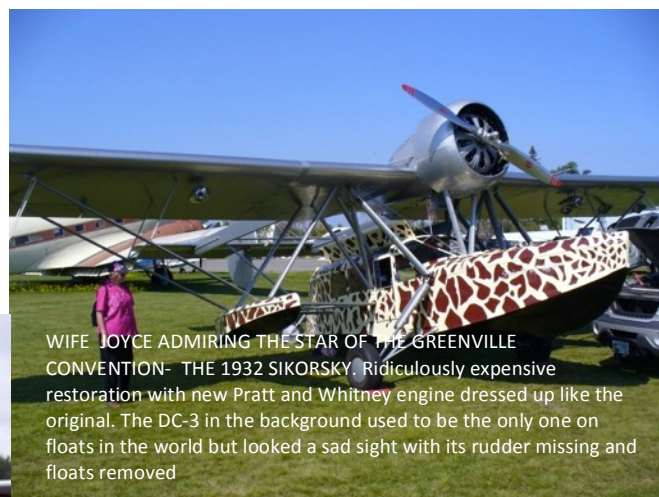
It was only after more than 20 years of doing business over the phone that I finally had the thrill of meeting Ed and his delightful wife, Jean. He was everything I just knew he would be - a genuine, honest guy whose word was his bond. I had no hesitation in sending him \$ 50,000 once, although I had never met him, such were the vibes and rapport developed by phone over the years. I remember one night, when I told him I was a bit of a musician, he played his "fiddle", "Bluegrass" style, to me over the phone! What Eddie doesn't know about floats isn't worth knowing. He has a property of many acres where he has built a gravel strip of over 2000ft and has been working on a "Ditch" beside it with a faithful old excavator for as long as I've known him, or so it seems. When EDO went belly-up, he acquired a huge amount of their stock and machinery, so if Eddie can't supply you with a float part, there probably aren't any in the world. I remember one time when I asked him to send me the parts I needed to put a Maule M-5 on a



DECORATED STORAGE HUTS AROUND LAKE HOOD. For skis, wheel landing gear, fuel, etc. Also useful as emergency accommodation when wife gets sick of hearing about your flying exploits!

set of PK 2300 floats that we had re-built. He sent me literally EVERYTHING, down to the SPLIT PINS, which staggered me!

In 2006, I finally was able to tick off some of the items on my seaplane pilot's "Bucket List"- a trip to Alaska to see the Lake Hood-Lake Spenard Seaplane Base in Anchorage, with its 500 floatplanes on every available spot around its circumference; cruising through the Inside Passage to Vancouver; the Seaplane Harbour in Victoria on Vancouver Island, with the Butchart Gardens an extra bonus; a visit to Greenville on Moosehead Lake in Maine to their annual International Seaplane Convention and to finally visit Eddie and Jean, and see the mystical "Bear River" that had fascinated me for so long. I finally saw Eddies workshop and huge stock of float machinery and parts and "THE



WIFE JOYCE ADMIRING THE STAR OF THE GREENVILLE CONVENTION- THE 1932 SIKORSKY. Ridiculously expensive restoration with new Pratt and Whitney engine dressed up like the original. The DC-3 in the background used to be the only one on floats in the world but looked a sad sight with its rudder missing and floats removed



EDDIES' AIRSTRIP AND DITCH NEARING COMPLETION. Note the Autumn Colours. Bear River at back.



HOME DESIGNED AND BUILT AIRCRAFT AND FLOATS, with a snowmobile engine! Larrikin pilot offered my wife a ride which she eagerly accepted till told to sit on the wing, it being a single-seater!

DITCH" he had been digging for years, picked buckets of blueberries growing wild and drooled over his cabin and floatplane beside the proverbial "Lake in the Woods" where, of course, we took a flight. After a few days with Eddie we set off for Greenville.

In fact, Eddie had booked us into the motel where he and his friends and family were staying so we had the benefit of a guide who had been to the Splash-In every year for the past 25 years. We left with Eddie's ute (Sorry! "Pick-Up") loaded with a set of floats to demonstrate at the Splash-In and then deliver to a buyer on the way home. There were well over a hundred seaplanes with some moored on the lake but many amphibians on Greenville's excellent airport with many RV's lined up around the strips. A continuous shuttle service runs each day between the lake and the airport.

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE. I hope I have whet your appetite for the seaplane scene in North America!



SOME OF THE 500 FLOATPLANES AROUND LAKE SPENARD AND LAKE HOOD



WITH EDDIE AND JEAN PECK AT OUR GREENVILLE MOTEL

SOME GOOD WEBSITES FOR SEAPLANE FANATICS:

Get onto "GOOGLE EARTH" and look up "[Lake Hood, AK.](#)" Note the lakes, the international airport, and light aircraft strip all connected by a road system where aircraft have right-of-way and all three are controlled by the Tower on the International Airport. Lake Hood and Lake Spenard were joined by an artificial canal divided by a long narrow island, with a runway on one side and taxi-way on the other giving access to the "fingers" which allow dozens of aircraft docking space. The latest satellite image appears to have been taken in about April. The snow on the ground has gone but the lakes are still frozen over. Take a "drive" around Lakeside Drive on the Street View and look at the cute little huts they have to store their fuel, under-carriages, skis etc. The Millenium Hotel is right by Lake Spenard.

Google "[Alaska Airmen's Association](#)" and look for their Webcam of Lake Hood. It shows a new photo every half minute or so and has an audio of the Control Tower transmissions.

Google "[PECKAERO](#)". You will find Eddie's website and an article recently added about a Super Cub fitted with a 300 hp engine which Eddie fitted with his floats and flew out of his "Ditch".

Google : "[Seaplane videos from Dave Quam](#)". these include great footage of the DC-3 floatplane taking off from Moosehead Lake.

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