On-the-Step

Issue 36
August 2013

Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Adventure, History and Memories

It has been concerning to see the number of adventure flights to some amazing locations over the past few months. That's concerning for me because I haven't been involved in any of them. As I sit in my office experiencing limited flying opportunities I see far too many reports on flights to some of Australia's most spectacular regions. We have had exploits around the north and west coastline as well as day trips over spectacular coastal scenery capped of with visits to some mouth watering eating spots. I live in hope that my turn will come up soon. Talking about spots though, it has been most heartening to see the use of SPOT GPS trackers on these adventures. I believe this practice is a substantial step forward in safe flying, particularly in such a vast country as ours.

One of the adventures is the subject of one of our stories. I am sure you'll enjoy following Andrew Maluish on his north & western Australia adventure.

- § -

It is great to see the SPAA membership continuing to grow with total membership now over 370. Members cover a wide range from owner operators and seaplane pilots through to those who just love seaplanes, but it is interesting to see a steady stream of new seaplane pilots are still appearing in the new membership. With the greater membership come the responsibility to involve new members in our activities and we will be creating and promoting more events through the upcoming summer. For the Facebook savvy amongst you, keep an eye on the SPAA Facebook site. While I, for one, am yet to get comfortable with this communication avenue, we will be using it more and more to let members know of many of our activities in the hope that we can meet as many members as possible.

- § -

A little amphibian that has had some wonderful and some sad times has become the subject of a series of stories that have, and will appear in On-the-Step. After starting life flying in cool thin air, and splashing in the cold fresh water lakes of Australia's alpine region, she spent several years gathering dust after the tragic death of her owner-builder-pilot, Richard Holgate. She was given a new lease on life when one of the most experienced and well known Searey pilots came out from the USA to purchase her for a planned round Australia adventure. This issues presents the story of her time with Dan Nickens prior to another change for her. Dan is a consummate writer as well as airman, geologist and much more, and his writing of his adventures with the little seaplane is so engaging that I felt it deserved reproducing in full. The story of Vee-Chee, as Dan referred to her, will be spread over the next few issues of On-the-Step.

- § -

It is not too late to register for our Inaugural SPAA "Splash-Down" Conference which will be held in the lead-up to the Rathmines Catalina Festival. Set the 7th and 8th of November aside and go to the SPAA website to register. Important topics that will be addressed will include seaplane operations safety, national parks and waterways access, aircraft maintenance, as well as hearing from one of Australia's most skilled and exciting pilots.

- § -

I shouldn't use this column to push personal issues, but I suspect I am not the only one thinking that the "commercialization" of our airports has gone crazy. I have just moved VH-ZRA to a small airfield some 80km north of Sydney having had my rent for a small spot in a Bankstown hangar jump to around $920 per month, that's $11,040 a year! GA has never been a very profitable business and costs impositions like this imposed by airport owners with little interest in aviation (just the dollar) must be killing the future of GA in this country. No wonder we are seeing some of the very few hangars available being used as warehouses for soft-drinks and the likes. Hopefully the positive outcome will be the rise in popularity of lovely little private airfields like Rylestone.

Fly Safe & Wheels Up for Water

AROUND AUSTRALIA IN A SUPER PETREL

by - Andrew Maluish

Whim: My new Super Petrel only has 40 hours on it but my "co-pilot" Rhonda and I were ready, both lucky to have time on our hands for a non-scheduled long flight, to live a dream I know many pilots have. The idea was to actually hug the entire Australian coastline, travelling in an anti-clockwise direction. My fundamental navigation was to make sure it was blue on my right and green (or red or brown!) on my left. Unlike the Cessna pilot I used to be, it was comforting actually looking for water as an emergency landing site rather than looking for anything except water!

There is no question that winter is the time to be flying around the top because even winter means above 30 degree days and plenty of thermal activity – not to mention the worse alternative of flying around the bottom in the cold, wet and windy weather.

The first legs took in Shute Harbour, Cooktown, Lizard Island and Cape Yorke/Thursday Island, when the weather was unusually wet and cloudy for a Queensland winter but still OK for flying. Back down inside the Gulf to Weipa then Karumba via Coen for fuel taught us Lesson 1. There are huge areas of tiger country up there where, I'm afraid to say, your emergency landing options will involve some damage. Even the temptation for a seaplane to land on a billabong brings in the prospect of the tallest trees for miles surrounding it. The winding brown rivers also look safe but there is apparently a big increase in the croc population up there too! All you can do is understand the risk – or don't head up there in the first place.

The leg from Karumba to Gove via Borroloola and Groote Eylandt revealed some long stretches of magnificent white sandy beaches, surprising when the rest of the Gulf is mangrove lined and muddy. From Gove, we headed to the Jabiru strip outside Kakadu for a couple of days, then across to Darwin, revealing Lesson 2. The only aviation chart up there is the WAC, and it doesn't show a great deal of detail. For instance, the closest an ultralight pilot can get to Darwin is the small MKT strip about 40 kms south. It has fuel and is a friendly place but you need local knowledge to find it! In fact, every day saw a preliminary phone call to someone at the next strip just to make sure all was OK. Checking the NOTAMs is important too, even though you are so isolated, because, for instance, the desirable runways at Derby and Carnarvon were both closed and that was only discovered in the NOTAMs.

The highlight of the whole trip so far was flying at about 1500ft around the Kimberley coastline and staying at the very modern new lodges up there. The new Berkeley River Lodge is only accessible by sea or by air, as is the Kimberley Coastal Camp. Naturally, a sideways excursion to the Bungle Bungles is necessary, and not just to practise some water landings on Lake Argyle.

From the Kimberleys down past the Pilbara mining towns to Exmouth and a timely chance to snorkel with the whale sharks, then further south past Carnarvon, Kalbarri and Geraldton, skirting Perth along the coast to Busselton.

Overall, an amazing 60 hours in the air and over 11,500 kms – so far. Come December, the plan is to head for Tasmania and, probably unable to resist the temptation, up the east coast to cross the Finish Line at Bundaberg!

- § -

ROSS VINING - A PLACE HE LOVED

The death of Ross Vining ripped a vacuous hole in the SPAA and we miss the violet and gold, the adventurous spirit, the immense depth of knowledge, his eagerness to share it humbly, and his fantastic productions of On-the-Step. Ross was always a joy to fly in company with, as he shared his observations, wonder and understanding of the world around us. Despite flying around most of Australia's coastline as well as through its centre, Ross still described the flight down Sydney Harbour's R405, a flight he made many times, as his favourite.

It was therefore most fitting that in some small way Ross became part of this amazing environment. When Linda asked if we would distribute some of Ross's ashes over Sydney Harbour we were honoured to do so.

On 29th July Ross's son Ben, flying with Rob Loneragan and in company with Ben Hunter and Keith Clark, spread Ross's ashes flying between Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney's golden Northern beaches. It was a moving moment to share that one last flight with Ross and Sydney put on one of its characteristic clear-blue-sky days for the event.

I for one will never fly down R405 without remembering the days I shared it with Ross and feeling that in some small way he is still flying in company.

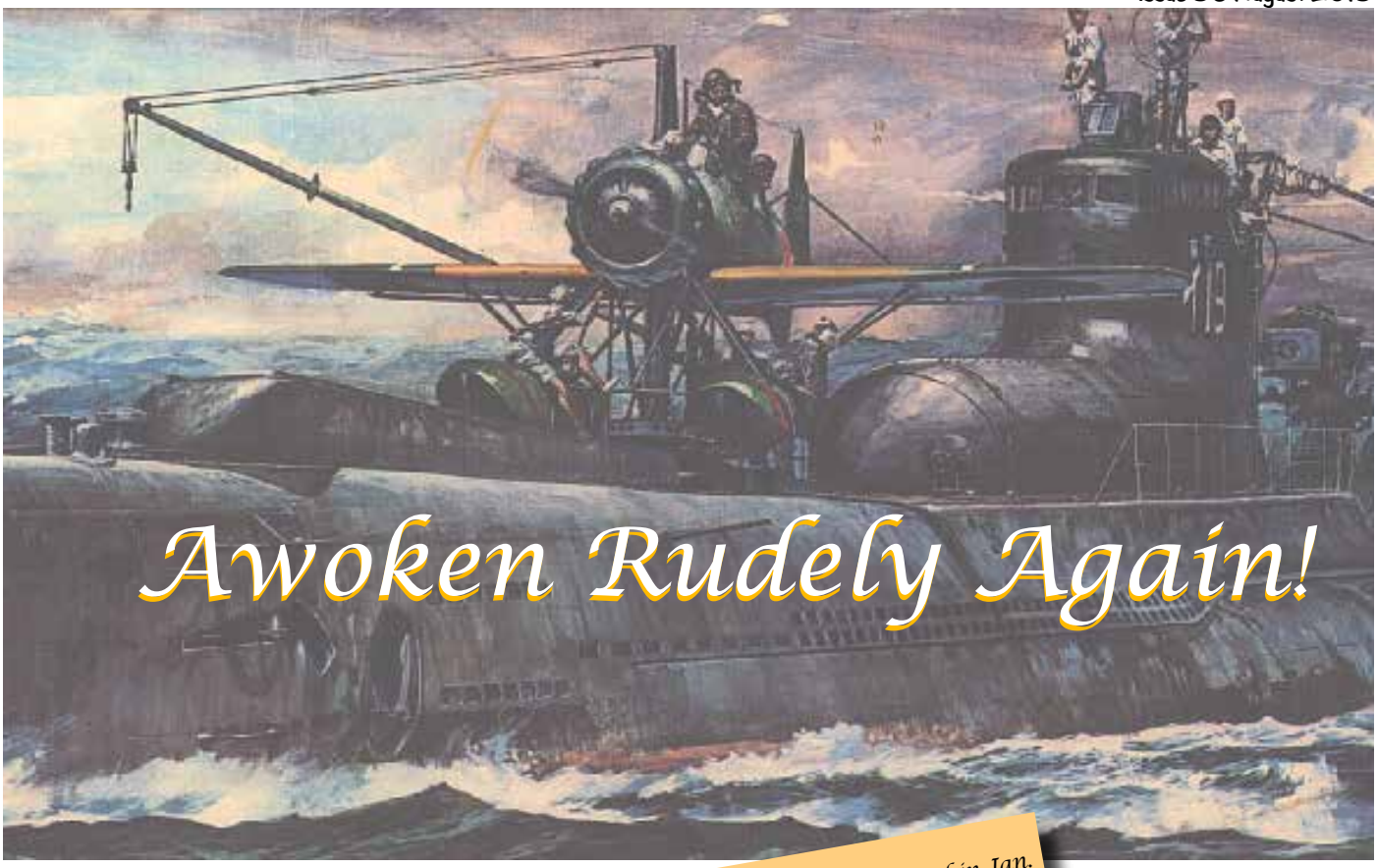
SEAPLANE PILOTS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA'S

INAUGURAL **"SPLASH-DOWN"** CONFERENCE

Rathmines 7th - 8th November 2013

Don't miss this unique opportunity to meet with fellow seaplane pilots, discuss issues concerning flight safety, waterways access, aircraft maintenance, latest technologies and more.

To register visit the SPAA website at http://www.seaplanes.org.au



Awoken Rudely Again!

A letter to our Chairman informed him that a man for which he had developed a deep respect and friendship had died. The news brought back memories of the story of Ito san who played a significant role in the Japanese intrusion into Sydney Harbour during WWII. My mother lived at Rose Bay during those days and I remember her stories of shells landing in her neighborhood but I learnt a lot more from the book by Peter Grose "A Very Rude Awakening". One thing I learnt from the book was that Ito san had be awarded an honorary membership of the SPAA. I guess its not surprising when we see that he had flown one of our favourite seaplane routes down Sydney harbour following what now is R405. He had taken off from, and returned to, a submarine in stormy seas off Terrigal on NSW's Central Coast.

Dear Mr. Dulhunty,
I have to tell you the fact that Ito san was really died in Jan. 7th, this year.
I called his wife yesterday that I really wanted to recognize whether Ito san was died or not.
She told me the following fact.
She received your letter the other day. But she could not answer it up to now. Because Her mind is upset and she don't want to write you until her mind will become calm, around this summer.
He worked at his office until 29th of Dec. last year.
He celebrated the new year 's day with their children. But after that, he felt bad condition on his heart and was taken to the hospital.
A few days later, his condition recovered a bit. So his wife said to him at the evening that see you tomorrow.
On the next early morning of 7th of Jan., his condition was suddenly bad and died at the hospital.
He died without being troubled, she said.
Ito san was truly the Japanese imperial navy officer until the last moment of his life, she said also
That is the whole story I heard from his wife yesterday.
Best regards,
Yoshi Okumoto

- § -

On 29th May 1942 the Japanese submarine I-29 catapulted Ito Susumu in his Yokosuka "Glen" floatplane off the deck to reconnoitre the allied warships lurking in Sydney Harbour.

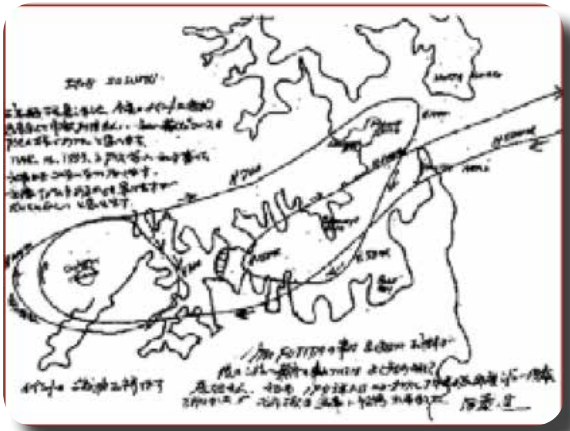
His mission was to record the positions and details of all the warships in the harbour so that the midget subs could be launched the following day to torpedo them.

Ito was flying an unmarked floatplane and carried an observer who sketched the position of the boom net across the entrance to the harbour and the location of all the battleships. Flying low over Garden Island he saw flood lights and oxy welding flashes coming from Cockatoo Island west of the Bridge. He climbed up over the bridge and circled Cockatoo Island and the battleships being repaired.

Coincidently, Phil Dulhunty was a rookie anti-aircraft gunner at Georges Heights that night.

Ito's plane was mistaken for a floatplane from SS Chicago, an American heavy cruiser moored near Garden Island. Ito returned to the Sub and crash-landed in the sea which was now turbulent in a southerly buster. He and his observer with his map were rescued and the Glen floatplane was sunk.

Some 20 years ago Phil Dulhunty contacted Ito who described his flight and provided a copy of his map of Sydney Harbour and the route of his spy flight.



More recently Peter Grose has written a book "A Very Rude Awakening" describing the seaplane and midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour.

In March this year Peter organised a reenactment of Ito's flight using Bill Lane's Cessna 182. The flight was recorded with cine and still photos

The route of Ito's spy flight coincides with the special seaplane and helicopter lane in restricted area R405 so that on 20 March 2010, a precise re-enactment was flown.

100 YEARS OF WATER FLYING - LAKE COMO

Way back in our SPAA Newsletter #14, Jack Peters told us about the Como Seaplane Base in Italy - the oldest continuously operating seaplane base in the world. Then later our editor, Ros Vining, visited Lake Como. He reported "*The base was busy with training, endorsements, renewals, and scenic flights, however I (on left) was greeted warmly and invited to hitch a ride with Como CFI Francesco Cereda (centre front) who was doing recency training with Paolo Vittozzi (from Rome Aero Club - front row, tee shirt). The 4 men in the back row were pilots from England doing their seaplane endorsements. The scenery was stunning. The base is a short walk from the historic Como city centre. If you are in Italy you simply must visit them. Allow time for some recency training with Francesco. You won't regret it*".

This year this historic aero club celebrates the 100th year of "water flying". On October 5th 1913, less than three years after the first seaplane flight by Henri Fabre, one of the earliest seaplane contests in the world took place on Lake Como, with the most famous European seaplane pilots of the time competing. Among them, the Frenchmen Roland Garros and Léon Morane, the German Hellmuth Hirth and the Italian Achille Landini.

In the years that followed, Lake Como became a popular test area for seaplanes produced by many aviation companies located in Lombardy, mainly in the Varese and Milan area.

A few important events took place in the '20s, such as the great air show of 1922 and the intense flight activity during the celebrations honoring Alessandro Volta in 1927, the Comascan famous for inventing the electrical battery.

In 1929 a realization of the possibilities for the role of seaplanes for the development of aviation and tourism emerged, and fundraising began to facilitate the setting up of a permanent seaplane facility.

In 1930 the Aero Club Como was founded and the construction of the hangar and the seaplane base began.

A flight school that produced hundreds of civilian and military seaplane pilots throughout the '30s was set up. The activity went on on a daily basis but had to cease in September 1943 due to WW2 events, but re-commenced with a vengeance in spring 1945 and continued until present times.

The Aero Club Como is the oldest seaplane operation in the world in existence and manages the only seaplane academy in Europe and the only water aerodrome in Italy.

Twelve float- and hull-type seaplanes are available for the flight school for rental by members of the Club.

Hundreds of pilots come from all over Europe to get their "SEP SEA rating" and fly regularly with the seaplanes of Aero Club

100 YEARS OF WATER FLYING - Continued

Como. Many people from the Como and Milan area obtain their PPL directly on the seaplanes of the Aero Club Como. There are club pilots who have never in their lives landed on a solid runway.

Pilots and passengers flying with the seaplanes of Aero Club Como have the opportunity to view from a height one of the most beautiful areas of the world, that of the Italian pre-alpine lakes.

The Aero Club Como also offers a consultancy service to operators and public agencies regarding the setting up of seaplane activities and on the regulatory background.

On Saturday October 5th 2013 the "Gran Premio dei Laghi" will be repeated with several seaplanes participating, to celebrate the 1913 contest and the spirit of the brave pilots of that time. The non-competitive celebration flight will start from Como, touching Bellagio, Lecco, the Adda river, the Ticino River, Pavia and Pallanza, and Lake Maggiore.

Other events will take place during the day and a "Centenary Party" will be held in the evening.

All pilots, representatives of the media and friends of aviation are invited to attend the celebrations.

- § -

OSHKOSH BY GOSH!

by Rohan Walter

EAA AirVenture Oshkosh to aviators is like Mecca to Muslims (excuse the comparison) – a once in a lifetime must-do. It is the world's largest aviation event.

Sensational is the word that describes this annual event put on by the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association).

EAA AirVenture is the name of the event and it is held every year at the end of July/early August at EAA's headquarters at Wittman Regional Airport, Oshkosh, Wisconsin – beside Lake Winnebago.

There were over 10,000 aircraft at the event having flown in from around the USA & the world.

EAA has over one million current and past members.

The Control Tower becomes the busiest in the world during the show and controllers volunteer to attend – the FAA still charged EAA $450,000 for the first time this year for their services. The Federal Government's financial belt tightening was also evident by the fact there were no current military aircraft there this year – however there are numerous ex-military aircraft that are privately owned that were.

More than 500,000 visitors attended to be spellbound by the diversity of aviation on display.

Most captivating is the daily afternoon airshow on the main runway which features low level aerobatics to defy belief plus pyrotechnics associated with a Tora Tora Tora re-enactment.

Two night aerobatic evenings were also a special feature complete with fireworks.

One formation fly-by featured 24 aircraft which was a true sight to be seen.

The Terrafugia flying car was one fascinating display plus Yves "Jetman" Rossy flying high above the crowd with 4 mini jet engines propelling his attached human wings. His return to earth was by parachute with him still wearing his wings.

The Seaplane Base provided an oasis for seaplane enthusiasts situated just a 10 minute bus ride from the main airfield. Set in a cove beside Lake Winnebago it featured willow type trees for shade to relax & watch the take-offs & landings plus an escape from the masses at the main event. Everything from LSAs to float planes are there.

An evening dinner get-together is organised by the Seaplane Pilots Association under a huge marquee where a corn roast was the menu. ICON Aircraft provided many prizes including a radio controlled ICON A5, A5 models & company apparel.

For Australians wishing to visit Oshkosh there are two companies providing packages. I went with AvTours with whom I have gone twice and who accompany the tour. They provided an add-on at the end of the show with a trip to the PIMA Air & Space Museum plus the aircraft "boneyard" at Tucson, Arizona. There are over 4,000 aircraft at the "boneyard" of which some are there temporarily, some for spare parts and some that are considered of no further use are scrapped. The collection is officially called AMARG – Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Group. There are over 600 aircraft engineers working there.

The other Australian tour group is Tori Tours. Both companies arrange accommodation at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh plus flights from & to Australia with connections in the USA to Oshkosh.

- § -

ICON A5 OSHKOSH 2013 UPDATE

Having placed an order for his Icon A5 Rohan Walter used his visit to Oshkosh to meet with the team behind the A5 and get an update on its progress towards commercial production

1. Orders so far – just under 1,200. ⅓rd have no aviation experience.
2. Production start date – estimated April 2014.
3. Deliver start date – estimated mid to 3rd quarter 2014.
4. FAA has granted a 250lb weight increase but ICON will only use 80lb initially – taking Gross Weight to 1,510lbs/685Kg (an 80lb/36Kg increase).

   The FAA believes it achieved an acceptable balance between enabling innovation & regulating safety in the regulations covering the certification & operation of light sport aircraft.
5. The first LSA to fully meet the FAA Part 23 Spin Resistance criteria. Full aileron control in stall.
6. Engine will be the Rotax 912iS (100H.P.) fuel injected – this adds approx 13lbs/6Kg

   Fuel consumption is approx 16.4 litres/hr @ 75% power.
7. The BRS parachute recovery system (required by FAA) adds a further 35lbs/16Kg.

   Consider safety benefits if eng. failure over inhospitable terrain/heart attack incapacitating pilot, structural damage etc.
8. The estimated price has risen from $139K + CPI (in 2008) to $189K + BRS – only 18 cancellations so far due price increase.
9. Carbon Fibre fuselage & wings (to be manufactured by Cirrus), composite undercarriage, anodised rims, sealed s/s bearings.
10. Angle of Attack (AoA) Indicator & Artificial Horizon standard. The instrument that shows the most precise information between the wing & the airflow – bank angle/weight/C of G independent.
11. VSI (GPS) is incorporated in Map Mode of Garmin aera 796 GPS.
12. Water Rudder is retractable.
13. Wings can be folded manually & lock onto tailplane - takes 5 minutes each side.
14. Aircraft trailerable - probably with “Wide Load” displayed for Australia.
15. Seawings™ (sponsons) have replaceable tips if damaged.
16. Aircraft can taxy up 9.2° ramp.
17. Canopy side panels are removable before flight. Canopy is lockable.
18. Membrane fuel tank (20 US gal/76 litres has coarse foam cell filling only occupying 4% of tank – stops fuel sloshing).
19. New factory to be built at Nut Tree Airport (KVCB) near Vacaville (between San Francisco & Sacramento) – max capacity 1,000 a/c per year.
20. Aircraft fits in a 40’ container.
21. Indication of confidence in project - US$60m non-controlling partnership capital just invested in company.

Everyone interested in avoiding a stall click on the following.

http://www.iconaircraft.com/news/icon-aircraft-releases-production-details-of-a5-aoa-system.html

Then for a look at the A5 at Oshkosh a couple of years ago –

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGm2GapV3fs

SAFE PENETRATION

Jack Peters

We would all understand that's Safe Turbulent Penetration wouldn't we.

We need to understand the simple facts about turbulence penetration to grow old as pilots, particularly when flying a light amphibian like a Searey or Petrel.

General Chuck Yeager once said, "To grow old as a pilot you must know when to push and when to back off " (when pulling back). As we fly along into turbulent conditions, we must be aware that our aircraft must not be stressed beyond its ability to continue undamaged, and how we can achieve this happy state.

When our aircraft enters a turbulent area it must be at a speed that will enable it to stall rather than break up, this stall would be of very short duration and would not be noticed by the pilot.

Va is a speed we are all aware of, it is the speed that we can deflect a control surface to its full deflection without over stressing aircraft (in smooth air).

Now we could assume that this speed Va would be a good turbulence penetration speed.

However during turbulence the speed will fluctuate up and down, so we might exceed this Va speed, leading to over stressing of the aircraft.

So we establish a speed less than VA (70 kts in the Searey) and use this as our Vt (Turbulence Penetration Speed) say 55/60kts.

This means that at 55/60kts when we strike turbulence our aircraft will momentarily stall but not suffer damage.

Let's look at Load Factors of different aircraft;

Remembering that if an aircraft flies straight and level it will experience a load factor or g of +1, if it flies straight and level inverted it will experience a load factor of -1, so we subtract 1 from the total g limit.

Standard Category (Searey) 3.8 positive and 1.5 negative, BUT we already have 1 g (gravity) so in effect we only have 2.8 positive and .5 negative.

So a g meter will indicate 1 in straight and level flight.

Utility Category (Beech Baron) 4.4 positive 3.0 negative or in real terms 3.4+ 2.0-

Boeing & Similar Transport Aircraft 2.5/3.5+Positive 1-negitive ….or 1.5/2.5+ & 0 (be very careful rolling a 707 Tex)

Aerobatic Category 6.0+ positive 3.0- negative or 5.0+ & 2.0-

Some Military aircraft 9.0+ positive 9.0- negative or 8.0+ 8.0-

Airbus aircraft of course can only be flown with the auto pilot engaged (a sort of control wheel steering) they are in most cases protected, but that's another story.

And remember your Vt will change as will your best lift drag speed with weight.

That's why you travel further on descent heavy than when light, if you maintain the same descent speed, big jets also use this all the time on climb cruise & descent, ATC permitting.

So let's try and simplify a very complicated subject.

When we fly along in turbulent conditions at a speed less than Va we must remember that when we apply full or near full control deflection to correct a turbulent diversion from straight and level flight the particular control hinge and wing fin or tail plane could be stressed at something approaching its G limit, especially if there is a gust factor present, then we could be overstressing the aircraft, this could lead to failure then or sometime in the future.

Of course on final with flap extended, controlling our airspeed with throttle and position on the approach path with flight controls (as per the USAF flying manual) we are at a low speed that will permit increased control movement.

We all know that flying with an experienced pilot we notice how easy and small the control movements are, these pilots allow the natural stability of the aircraft to return it to the flight attitude it was in before the gust hit, with the minimum of control impute.

Developing this smooth technique is very important when flying in turbulence; we can then like General Yeager live to a ripe old age.

For those interested the load factor "g" = Lift/weight. S&L say 1600kg/1600kg =1g

Further reading with all sorts of formulas can be found on the net, however we can keep it simple and we should.

NEW LIFE FOR VEE-CHEE

Part 1 of an adaption of a story by Dan Nickens

The first sight of my new Australian SeaRey was disconcerting. I had purchased her unseen based on discussions with my flying mate, Rob. He had accurately described her technical features. What he had not known was the sadness stuck to her.

It wasn't that there was anything obviously distressing about her. She was a simple SeaRey, painted a uniform white. She looked older than her age. That she was a bit dusty and dingy wouldn't ordinarily be of concern to me. It highlighted, however, that she had not known flight in more than a year and half.

Despite my first impression, I was committed to changing her extended grounding.

The trip to the dusty shed at the Polo Flats airport was long and tiring. "That probably accounts for my poor impression of the airplane," was my quick rationalization.

For me the trip started late night in Los Angeles. The sparkling new Boeing Triple Seven was an elegant transport west through the night. We flew right on through from Saturday night to Monday morning with no evidence of a Sunday.

My mate, Rob, retrieved me from the Sydney airport for a three and a half hour drive through the mountains into the interior. The dramatic scenery slipped by with little enthusiasm stirred in a sleep-deprived brain.

The day looked brighter after a brief nap. The sun sat brilliantly over Rob's aerodrome development. Dinner was found in a country pub after a quick trip into the nearby little town of Rylestone.

The next morning came early for me. I waited restlessly for my Aussie mate to awake. The beautiful, quietly breaking dawn offered solace for the hardships of travel.

We flew Rob's immaculate SeaRey south along the eastern spine of the mountains past Canberra [Lithgow]. The wind in our faces forced an unplanned stop for fuel. It was mid-afternoon when we finally touched down on the narrow blacktop at Polo Flats.

We were immediately greeted by a slight, elderly gentleman. David had been my newly purchased SeaRey's caretaker since the death of his son.

Rob had told me that the sale of the airplane was necessitated by the tragic accident. The father and son, previously estranged by a divorce, had forged a new relationship by building the airplane together. His son [Richard Holgate] was killed in another seaplane, leaving a wife and young children to Dave's care. The money from the sale of their SeaRey was needed for their support.

After brief introductions, the three of us turned to the SeaRey. The only break in its white dress was the registration, VH-CHI.

The landing gear system was unlike anything I had ever seen in a SeaRey.

Dave did his best to explain the complex operation. "First, you've got to select the proper position for the over-centre lock," he explained. "Then, you open these two valves below the seat, turn on the power, and select the proper position for the gear. Mind you that I can't get the micro-switches to work anymore. You'll just have to stop it manually when the gear gets right. Then, you close the two valves."

"What about the other four valves?"

"I can't be sure. I'd just leave them alone if I were you."

A careful inspection failed to find anything that would render the

airplane unairworthy. Unkempt, oddly crafted, and drab to the point of despair, true enough, but seemingly in flyable condition.

A high speed taxi down the runway was the plan.

I thrust the throttle full forward and the airplane accelerated down the runway. In the still air the high speed taxi was an easy matter. When a sudden gust of mountain wind hit, however, the taxi ended. In short order the sad SeaRey jumped into the rushing air.

As long as I was flying on one good module, I decided to climb in a circle over the airport. After full throttle to a safe altitude I tried the bad module again. The result was the same: a badly running engine. I tried several times with nothing changed.

Our plan to fly out the same day with two SeaReys was clearly dashed. Dave went off to make arrangements for overnight accommodations.

As Rob and I stood around pondering the problem a frantic lady came driving up. "Is the pilot okay? I heard the engine stumbling. I was scared there would be a crash."

"No crash, maim," Rob answered. "We're just doing a bit of testing."

"Well, blimey! You've scared me near to death. I'm an old lady and hearing that trouble I expected a crash."

"No crash. It's all good."

"That sound is no good. As a girl I remember the German bombers coming overhead in England. That airplane in trouble reminded me of those Germans."

"Hmmm. Well, the engine is made in Austria."

"That might it explain it then. After the bombers came, a reconnaissance plane would fly by. That sound was as scary to a young girl as yours was now. It brings back the nightmares."

She paused and we were quiet. Finally, she said, "I rang my son when I heard you. He said, 'Mum, don't you worry about that pilot. He can take care of himself.' I almost rang the emergency number anyway. Then I decided to come over and see for myself."

There wasn't much to say to her. I simply promised not to test the engine in the air again.

And there was no point to more testing in the late afternoon. We left the airport as depressed at the poor prospects for a morning departure as Dave.

There was a lot to think about in the dark hours before dawn. The balky SeaRey was complicating and revising plenty of plans.

Dave had given us his "ute" (his name for the sport utility truck he drove). He arrived at the airport by "push" bike shortly after we did. He brushed off our concerns about such a long trek. "Do it every day without fail," he told us.

We turned back to the engine. The new plugs failed the test. The engine still wasn't right.

"Well, Robert," I said with some resignation, "my choice now is start looking for a problem with the connections to the modules. That's a tricky thing. If I can't get it back together then I'll have to stay with the plane until a mechanic can get here."

"Now hold on, Dan. What would your friend Richard Bach say? 'There's a reason for it', and it's probably a simple one. Let me just take one more look."

It took Rob about a minute. "Got it! There's a line that's sparking."

A simple little wire rubbing up against the carburetor box had worn off the insulation. It was a quick fix to apply new insulation and resolve the rubbing.

Running up the engine found it to be performing flawlessly. I was sure enough that the problem was solved that I invited Dave to fly along with me. He quickly agreed.

As soon as we were off and climbing, I asked if Dave wanted the controls.

"I'd like that," he said quietly.

"It's your airplane."

At first he was tentative. He told me he was used to flying in the left seat. His son, the flight instructor, was more accustomed to sitting in the right.

"Would you mind if I fly over to the hills?" Dave asked.

"It's your airplane, sir. Fly it where you like."

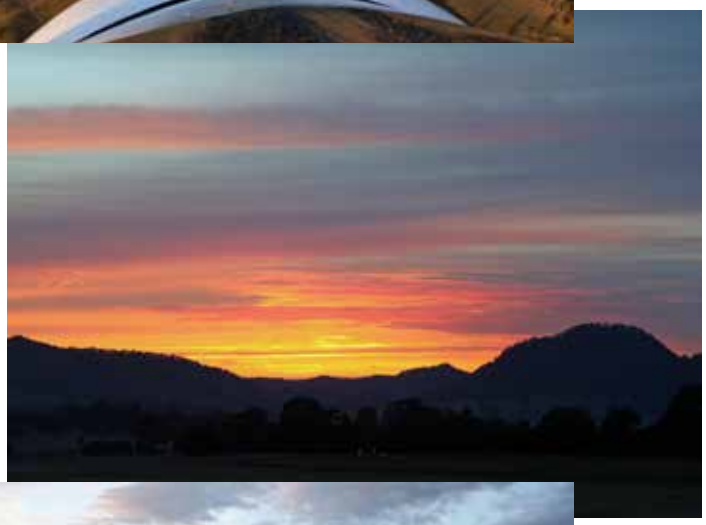
"My son and I loved to fly along the hillside. I'd like to do that just once more."

It was beautiful. The mountains rose steeply at the edge of the green valley. Dave maintained a conservative distance from their slopes. He flew the airplane mechanically while staring off into some infinite distance.

A thermal with a sharp jolt broke the spell. Dave snapped back to the airplane. "We should head back," he said.

I landed the SeaRey and pulled it up to the shed. Rob came over with smiles and handshakes for everyone. Dave stood staring at the airplane and quietly said, "That was my last flight."

There was an awkward silence that followed. Finally, Rob said we should get going. We loaded up and prepared for departure.



The airplanes were pulled out and facing the runway, ready for departure. We were saying our farewells. Dave looked particularly somber. He was staring at VH-CHI.

"She's a good girl," he said quietly. "She's not pretty, but she's honestly built. I'm glad you have her. I know you'll take care of her."

It would have been fine if he had stopped there. He didn't.

"Since my son left, I haven't been able to care for her properly. It's all I can do to help his wife and kids. I can't do much there."

He paused. "Last father's day, the kids all gave me cards." His knees buckled and he crumpled forward in sobs. Rob just managed to catch him before he fell into the SeaRey.

Rob held him for a moment then Dave backed away, turned and walked off to the corner of the shed.

Rob and I just looked at each other. "It was such a stupid accident, Dan. His son was getting a demo flight with a factory pilot for another light seaplane. The fuel had run out of one of the tanks. It stalled and spun in while he was trying to turn on the other tank.

A accident with long lasting effects. With that in mind, Rob and I left Dave to his grief and flew off.

VH-CHI performed as Dave had said she was built: not pretty, but honestly. Mechanically, I'd have to say. There was no gaiety in her path.

Back to Rylstone. We flew a direct path through the mountain valleys. The gear held for a late afternoon landing on the grass.

It had been a long, dry flight. Seeing the VH-CHI's gear might be good for a few more landings, Rob suggested, "Let's go for a splash." No additional encouragement was needed.

It was a short, weaving path through the hills to Lake Windamere. Waiting for us there smoothly rippled water glittered in the low sun. After playing follow-the-leader with Rob through some beautiful water I was beginning to feel better about VH-CHI.

I noticed a small island and suggested a beaching. Approaching the shore it was clear the beach was really just a grassy area with rough cobbles along the shoreline. I picked what I thought was the best looking place and nosed in at idle power.

VH-CHI shuddered as she bumped into a submerged rock. Having a strong carbon fiber hull I wasn't concerned.

I should have been. After a quiet time ashore, I came back to find water in the hull. A fine crack under the seat was letting it in.

We flew back to the airfield to tuck the airplanes away in their hangar as the sun set. We sat on the clubhouse veranda watching another outback sunset spectacular.

Not long afterwards a huge orange moon rose slowly above the hills to the east. It was an early evening for me to turn to bed. In the moonlight as bright as day, however, I couldn't sleep. I was thinking of VH-CHI and her first pilot.

Does his little bird remember him? From her sad demeanor it would seem so. "Could she be happy with a mostly absentee owner?" I thought. Probably not. Especially not one that had just banged her hull.

It occurred to me that VH-CHI needed an attendant pilot, not one that would leave her for long months alone in a hangar with her old memories. I decided to sell her. With that resolved, I quickly fell asleep.

-To be Continued-

SPAA OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman				
	Phil Dulhunty	(02) 9870 7277	Mb 0413 431 441	Chairman@seaplanes.org.au
President				
	Keith Clark	(02) 9654 9125	Mb 0419 237 831	President@seaplanes.org.au
Vice-President				
	Rob Loneragan	(02) 8003-3130	Mb 0411 816 300	rob@searey.com.au
Vice-President				
	Graham White		Mb 0403 625 445	anserties@hotmail.com
Secretary & Merchandising				
	Ben Hunter		Mb 0417 022 712	secretary@seaplanes.org.au
Treasurer & Public Officer				
	Jim Moline	(02) 4360 2993	Mb 0418 235 879	treasurer@seaplanes.org.au
Assistant Treasurer				
	Brian Dehlsen	(02) 91812499	Mb 0418 860 970	brian@kelvindale.com.au
Public Relations & Advertising - Membership Coordinator				
	Philip Dartnell	(02) 9331 3668	Mb 0458 605 168	membership@seaplanes.org.au
Editor "On-the-Step"				
	Vacant			editor@seaplanes.org.au
QLD Coordinators				
	Kevin Bowe	(07) 5474 4745	Mb 0414 744 799	bowekw@gmail.com
	David Geers	(07) 3352 4311	Mb 0418 103 535	david@computerdrive.com.au
ACT Coordinator				
	Peter Stuart-Smith	(02) 62585803	Mb 0419 287 201	pstuartsmith@srk.com.au
VIC Coordinators				
	Jack Peters	(03) 9690 5398	Mb 0414 737 400	jack.peters@optusnet.com.au
	Rod Gunther	(03) 95474454	Mb 0417 688 388	rod@seaplane.com.au
SA Coordinator				
	Jamie Dantalis		Mb 0412 848 608	dancorp@chariot.net.au
TAS Coordinator				
	Kyle Gardner	(03) 6224 9424	Mb 0419 363 731	Kyle@islandice.com.au
WA Coordinator				
	Lyn Williams		Mb 0416 153 796	lyndenwilliams@bigpond.com
Safety Officers				
	Jack Peters	(03) 9690 5398	Mb 0414 737 400	jack.peters@optusnet.com.au
	Kevin Bowe	(07) 5474 4745	Mb 0414 744 799	bowekw@gmail.com
RAAus Liaison Officer				
	Jack Peters	(03) 9690 5398	Mb 0414 737 400	jack.peters@optusnet.com.au
National Commercial Representative				
	Adam Holt		Mb 0402884811	anhaviation@gmail.com
Victorian Commercial Representative				
	Rod Gunther	(03) 95474454	Mb 0417 688 388	rod@seaplane.com.au
Training & Commercial Operations				
	Bill Lane		Mb 0401548581	guruaviation@gmail.com

Local & Special Area Contacts

National Parks & Waterways Officer	Kevin Bowe	(03) 95474454	Mb 0417 688 388	bowekw@gmail.com
Great Sandy Straight Marine Park	Kevin Bowe	(03) 95474454	Mb 0417 688 388	bowekw@gmail.com
Moreton Bay/Stradbroke Islands	David Geers	(07) 3352 4311	Mb 0418 103 535	david@computerdrive.com.au
R405 – Sydney Harbour	Rob Loneragan	(02) 8003-3130	Mb 0411 816 300	rob@searey.com.au
Central Coast (NSW)	Jim Moline	(02) 4360 2993	Mb 0418 235 879	treasurer@seaplanes.org.au
St Georges Basin/Nowra (NSW)	John Daley	(02) 4443 4092	Mb 0412 434 765	delayx747@bigpond.com
Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park	Rob Loneragan	(02) 8003 3130	Mb 0411 816 300	rob@searey.com.au
Smiths/Wallis Lake (NSW)	Steve Ridley	(02) 6554 4953	Mb 0408 284799	steveridley52@yahoo.com.au
Wallaga Lake (NSW South Coast)	Ted Munckton	(02) 6493 4055	Mb 0407 934 055	egmsearey@gmail.com
Victorian Waterways	Jack Peters	(03) 9690 5398	Mb 0414 737 400	jack.peters@optusnet.com.au
Swan River Trust – Perth (WA)	Lyn Williams		Mb 0416 153 796	lyndenwilliams@bigpond.com

On-the-Step On The Step is distributed free to all members of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia (SPAA)

Stories, articles, photos and news are welcome and should be sent to: editor@seaplanes.org.au.

Joining the Seaplane Pilots Association is easy, visit the website, click the **Join Here** button.