

Ross Stephen Watts

MILIFE 1

My Grandparents on my father's side were Charles and Flora Watts. They were both of Scottish descent and born in W.A. I remember them living at 28 Coldstream St. Leederville. I can't recall what Charles did for a living, but I remember him as a quiet, gentle man. Flora was a loving person and I clearly remember her in her kitchen at the rear of the house, where I always enjoyed the flat Scottish Griddle Scones she used to make. I think her maiden name was Wallace. I think Charles died sometime in the early 1930s. Flora was still alive in 1945, because I remember she gave me a wristwatch when I joined the RAAF in 1941 and Joan and I both visited her after I returned from England early in 1945.

On my mother's side, my Grandparents were John and Margaret Stone. They were of Welsh descent I think. John was born in Ballarat, Victoria and Margaret in W.A. They lived at 256 York St Subiaco. John was a Govt. Inspector of Machinery and used to travel all over the South West inspecting machinery at various timber mills. I always remember his beautiful 'copperplate' handwriting, which I saw in his book containing some of his reports on various inspections. All done with ordinary pen and ink. No fountain pens or ball points in those days. He died in the early 1930s and I remember seeing his body in his coffin in the front room of his house. This was a custom in those days for the friends and relatives to view the body.

I never liked Margaret very much. At times she was very unkind to me. She died some time in the late 1930s.

My father, Stephen Charles, was born on 4th July 1899 and he became a motor mechanic. I remember he worked for W.D& H.O. Wills, Wholesale Tobacconists, at the corner of Murray and Milligan Streets in Perth. He used to service all the Company delivery vans and Travellers cars.

My Mother, Vera Constance Stone, was born on 23rd July 1899. She became a florist and was always quite artistic and good at handicrafts.

MILIFE 2

I was born in a small hospital in Hammersley Road, Subiaco, on the 2nd Jan. 1923 and Christened, Ross Stephen. About three years later (7th April 1926) my Mother had twins, Alan and Douglas, but Douglas died at 7 months.

On 10th May 1931 my mother had another son, William David. My earliest memory is of living in Richmond St. Leederville. I remember that Bill Kell, who was a few years older than I, lived two doors away. I used to go with him to the

Chinese Market Gardeners at the bottom of the street where we would catch small fish with a hand net in the water canals around the gardens. Bill kept these in old cement troughs at the back of his home along with other gold fish. I would have been only about 4 or 5 years old at that time.

I lived all my school days in a few different rented houses in Subiaco and used to walk to the Subiaco Primary School in Bagot Road. I DID NOT LIKE GOING TO SCHOOL ! Some of my close mates at school were Alan Howe, who later played League Football with Subiaco, Laurie Sullivan and Les Pages-Oliver who later became an Inspector in the W.A. Police Force.

In about 1934 I had my first flight in an aeroplane. My Mother's cousin, Norm Hagan, took me out to Maylands Aerodrome - an all over grass field - by tram for a 'Joyflight' over the City which cost 5 shillings (50cents) for adults and 2 shillings and sixpence (25 cents) for children.

We were seated in a De Havilland 'Hercules' - a 3 engined fabric covered biplane which could carry about 14 passengers- but they could not get one of the engines to start, so after a bit of a delay, we were transferred to a Vickers 'Viastra'- a twin engined high wing fabric covered monoplane which also carried about 14 passengers. This aeroplane had just arrived in Perth from Adelaide, Ceduna, Forrest and Kalgoorlie. It was only a short flight, but I enjoyed seeing the City and Swan River from the air.

When I was 11 years of age, due mainly to the efforts and understanding of a wonderful teacher, Margaret Hinds, I won an Entrance to Perth Modern School. Each year exams were held for 11 year olds from all schools throughout the State. 1100 sat the exams that year. Of these, 50 boys and 50 girls were chosen. The top 50 won scholarships which gave them a certain amount of money towards the cost of books and the other 50 just gained the Entrance. I started at Modern School in 1936 when I was 12, but, I STILL DID NOT ENJOY SCHOOL !

MILIFE 3

Some of my fondest memories of my teenage years were when I used to go to stay at a dairy farm in Donnybrook owned by my mother's cousin Blodwin Walker and her husband, John. Uncle John and Auntie Bowie to me.

I loved it down there. I used to round up the cows to bring them in for milking twice each day, occasionally doing a little milking myself. Feed the pigs, pick fruit in the orchard and all kinds of chores. I also used to go with Uncle John's younger brother, Norman, on the milk round early in the morning.

We had a horse drawn cart with an axle running across the middle and rubber tyred wheels. Forward of the axle was mounted a large milk urn, about 70 or 80

litres, with a tap on it. Aft of the axle it was all open -almost like Ben Hur's Chariot- and we would jump off at each house when we stopped to deliver the milk. This meant carrying a smaller can -about 10 litres-to the house and then ladle the milk into the customer's jug or other receptacle, collect the money left alongside and back to the cart.

Every now and then we had to refill the 10 litre cans from the large one located up front.

It got quite exciting when it was time to return to the farm with the horse eager to get home. Tearing along the gravel roads and lanes hanging on as best we could behind the axle through the middle of the cart.

I was keen to leave school and a couple of month's after my 14th birthday my Dad got me a job in the Spare Parts section of Lynas Motors, who were Ford agents in Hay St., just west of Milligan St.

I was just the errand boy and used to ride a bike around the Metro. area, delivering spare parts to various garages.

About a month after I left school my Dad died suddenly from stroke. It was Anzac Day 1937. He had been out fishing in a boat in the river with some friends and as they returned to shore he stood up to get out of the boat and then just dropped down dead. This was a great shock to all of us. I had just started work. Alan and Bill were still at school. We did not have much money. I was only getting about 10 shillings and 7 pence (\$1.07 per week), so my mother had to go out to work. She used to go cleaning Govt. Offices for a couple of hours both morning and night. We were living with my Mother's Mother, Margaret Stone in York St Subiaco.

A few years later my Mother married again to Percy Vincent Birch whose wife had died some years before. He had two sons, Jack who was a couple of years older than I and Harold, who was the same age as Alan.

Percy was a carpenter/wagon builder who worked for the Govt. Railways at their big workshops in Midland. For a while we lived in McCourt St. Leederville, and then we moved to a semi-detached house, which Percy owned at 195 Churchill Ave. Subiaco.

MILIFE 4

At around the age of 15 I took up cycle racing because one of the chaps who worked with me at Lynas, Dick Hayes, had been a keen cyclist for many years. We used to go training together. In the winter, twice each week after work we would go around the '25 mile block'. Down Stirling Highway to the Fremantle Bridge, back along Canning Highway and over the causeway to Perth.

Sometimes we would extend this to go up to Guildford on the Great Eastern Highway and back to Perth along Guildford Road, the ' 40 mile block', then on a

Saturday, a race of anything from 10 to 25 miles out along Albany Road or from Fremantle to Armadale etc. I was under 18 so I rode in Juniors. In the summer time I would ride on the Track around the Fremantle Oval, but I preferred the Road Racing.

The Premier event each year for Senior Amateur Cyclists was the Northam, York, Perth in Sept. A distance of 81 miles (130 km). In 1940 even though I was still under 18 they let some of us ride in the race, because a lot of the seniors had joined up and gone off to war. I finished 5th, completing the 81 miles in 4 hours 4 mins. An average of 20 mph, which included a lot of very big hills. Cut Hill out of York was a full 3 miles and quite steep.

I was always on the bike. Bill Kell, whom I mentioned earlier in Richmond St. owned a bike shop and he built a lovely racing bike for me at a good price. The brand name for Bill's bikes was 'Flying Arrow' and he gave me a beaut Cycling shirt with Flying Arrow across the back. So I was in the Amateur (Unpaid) advertising business. On a couple of occasions I rode down to Donnybrook (208km each way) to visit the Walkers, stay two nights and then home again.

In my job at Lynas I had been promoted to a storeman serving on the counter selling spare parts for Ford Cars, Trucks and Tractors and was getting about 3 pounds 10 shillings (\$7) each week at 17 years of age. At that time the Basic Wage for a Male over 21 was only about 5 pounds. (\$10) per week. Milk was 3 pence per pint. Bread about 6 pence a loaf. Petrol was 1 shilling and 3 pence per gallon (13 cents for 4.5 litres.) Beer was less than 6 pence for a pint pot and you could buy a 'Penny Ice Cream'. At the cafe across the road from Lynas, we could get a 3 Course Meal - soup, roast, sweets and tea or coffee for 1 shilling and 3 pence (13c)

During the summer months I used to spend a lot of time at City Beach. It was here that I met Keith Cambridge, Ralph Gray and a pretty blond girl, JOAN EGGINTON, whose mother leased one of the small kiosks selling meals and refreshments and located just near the surf club. They lived in a house in the residential area at south City Beach. Quite often Keith and I would spend the weekend at the beach, sleeping in one of the shade houses on the beach on the Saturday night.

MILIFE 5

When I was about 16, I bought an old BSA motorbike and I do mean OLD! It had been built in 1923 - the same year I was born. It had only a single cylinder engine and a two-speed gearbox with a long lever as a selector. The tank was shaped like a long watermelon. I bought it from Ben Richardson in Jolimont for 2 pounds (\$4) and it would not go, so I had to push it home to Subiaco. I found that there was water inside the magneto, so I cleaned it up and then dried it in

my mother's gas oven. After a couple of adjustments I got it to go. It was never licensed while I had it. Someone gave me an old motorbike license plate he had found on the local tip and I put that on the back. I used to ride it out to City Beach. I did not have a license either.!

Sometimes, I would take Joan for a ride from South City Beach to North City Beach and she would 'borrow' one of her mother's cushions to sit on the carrier at the back. On one occasion, I rode it (solo) to Mandurah and return. After about 6 months I sold it for 2 pounds 10 shillings (\$5), so I made a profit on it, because all I had spent on it was 5 shillings for a new tube.

The war started in Sept 1939, but I was only 16 and too young to join up. In October 1940, when I was 17, I changed the year on my birth certificate from 1923 to 1922 and applied to join the RAAF. I was accepted as Trainee Aircrew and became a member of the Air Force Reserve. I then had to wait about 8 months before I was called up. During this time I had to study a course of 21 books on Maths etc. to prepare for the RAAF course on intake.

I went into Pearce Air Base on the 23rd June 1941 with 89 other Trainees on 16 Course of the Empire Air Training Scheme. We were Aircraftsman Class 2 the lowest rank in the RAAF. We were to do 8 weeks Initial Training School. Drill, Physical Training, Maths, Physics, Signalling, Meteorology, Air Force Law etc. (By the way, I have been told that of the 90 who went to Pearce that day, only 19 are still 'on deck' today. - April 2003.) We had a couple of weekends off and, on the first time I came down to Perth in my uniform, I took Joan to the Piccadilly Theatre in Hay St. where we saw 'The Thief of Baghdad'. Not Saddam Hussein. Just a small urchin boy!

About half way through the Course, I was one of about 10 Trainees who had to go to see the Adjutant. He told us that none of us could be pilots for medical reasons. It was probably our eyes, but we could go to see the Medical Officer to find out if we wished. I did not do so. It never occurred to me that it could have been my height because there was another chap on the course shorter than I and he was not among the group. I decided to try to become a Navigator, which meant getting good marks in the relevant exams. At the end of the 8 weeks I.T.S. Course I was selected for Navigator training at the school in Mt. Gambier in South Australia.

MILIFE 6

However, at that time, the Navigators school at Mt. Gambier in South Australia was a month behind and when our 16 Course Trainee Pilots went off to Cunderdin and the Air Gunners to Ballarat in Victoria, we were left at Pearce to wait another 4 weeks.

There were about ten of us and they kept us occupied doing Nav. Plotting Exercises and other studies. One Sunday afternoon I was called to the Adjutant's Office and he asked me what I wanted to be. I told him that I wanted to be a Navigator He said, 'Don't you want to be a Pilot?' so I replied that I had been told I could not be a Pilot for Medical reasons. He said ' We may be changing that '. He then took me down to one of the Hangars and they got me to get into a Wirraway and try applying the rudder each way. I did so, stretching as hard as I could and was able to apply full rudder each way. He then told me to report to him at 0900 next morning.

I did not sleep too well that night, wondering what was going on. Next morning, I reported as instructed and was taken in to see the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Brownell. He asked me if I would be prepared to go overseas to train as a Pilot without having the usual pre-embarkation leave. I said ' Yes, Sir '.

Within a couple of hours I was on my way in a service vehicle to the Embarkation Depot, located at the bottom Of William St. near the Esplanade in Perth. I then found out that, along with 6 other trainees from 14 Course who had been waiting there for 2 months, I was on my way to Southern Rhodesia to do my Flying Training. I later found out the full story. As well as the 6 waiting in Perth, there were another 114 waiting in Melbourne and Sydney. On the day they were all getting organised to get onto the ship in Sydney, one chap got meningitis and was put into hospital. So a replacement had to be found at very short notice as the ship was leaving Sydney that day.

In Perth all our 16 Course Trainee Pilots had already started training at Cunderdin. So they must have rechecked my medical records and decided to try me out for size.

This event changed my whole life and eventually gave me a great career as a Pilot after the war. I spent a busy week at the Embarkation Depot, having inoculations, Dental Treatment and getting extra clothing and equipment, but I was able to go home each night. My family and Joan would not believe me at first and a farewell party was arranged for me at the R. S.L. Hall in Townsend Road in Subiaco. We had not been told just when we were to join the ship, but on the Sunday night were all confined to the Depot from 2359 hours, so we knew that something was imminent.

MILIFE 7

Next morning were taken down to Fremantle by RAAF Transport. As well as the 7 of us bound for Rhodesia to train as Pilots, there were several other Fully Trained Aircrew on their way to the Middle East. We all boarded a large barge and were taken out to our ship in Gage Roads.

It was the Cunard "Queen Elizabeth", the largest passenger Liner in the world at that time. (84000 Tons)

Also in Gage Roads was her sister ship the 'Queen Mary' the second largest - (81000 tons). There were some 5000 Army men and several RAAF and Navy Personnel, most of them on their way to the Middle East. The size of the ship was incredible. We were located in double-decker bunks on the main deck up forward. We met up with the other 113 Trainees from the East. The Elizabeth had not been fully fitted out when converted to a Troopship, but I believe the Mary still had a lot of its magnificent furnishings because it had been operating as a Passenger Liner before the war started.

I met up with John Dobson from Sydney and Ron Turner from Adelaide on board along with many others. Over a period of time John, Ron and I became very close friends. That night (9th Sept) the Elizabeth and the Mary left Gage Roads accompanied by a navy Destroyer, which had difficulty keeping up with us because the two liners could cruise all day at around 30 knots. After several days we arrived at Trincomali in Ceylon, but we did not go ashore here. Just stayed in the outer harbour overnight then off again. Our next stop was Port Tewfik at the southern end of the Suez Canal in Egypt. The Elizabeth stayed overnight in the Gulf of Akaba while the Mary unloaded all its troops, taken ashore in large barges. Then it was our turn to change places with the Mary and unload the troops

We were taken to the RAF Middle East Pool at a place called Kasfaret, where we were put into tents with 4 persons in each. Surrounded by SAND. We ate in a large Mess tent and the food was not too good. After a few days some of us were transferred to Shallufa, about 5 miles away, which was the base for an RAF bomber squadron operating Vickers Wellingtons. A couple of us managed to get a ride on a test Flight in a Wellington, the first time I had been in an aeroplane since my flight in the Vickers Viatra at Maylands when I was about eleven.

On one occasion we decided to take a few days' unofficial leave' and we hitchhiked in a RAF transport vehicle up to Cairo, which was about 100 miles away. We spent about three days there, visiting the Pyramids, Sphinx and a couple of Large Mosques. Then we hitchhiked back to Shallufa again. Nobody had even missed us. Shallufa was only about half a mile from the Suez Canal and we often used to go to the canal for a swim.

MILIFE 8

One tale I heard whilst in Egypt has always amused me, because it shows how stupid things can occur during war. Apparently, the Army needed a lot more sandbags, as used around trenches etc., so an order was sent to India for a few

thousand jute sandbags. Several weeks later they arrived in Egypt, 'already filled with sand!'

After about a month living in a tent (22nd Oct) we were told to pack up and were taken to Port Tewfick where we boarded another troopship, the 45000-ton 'Mauritania' to travel down to Durban. This was a very pleasant trip. Although the ship was only half the size of the Elizabeth it was very comfortable. There were only a small number on board. We had real beds in cabins and were waited on at the meal tables by Italian P.O.W.s, who were on their way down to South Africa to an internment camp after being captured in the fighting in Egypt. The trip to Durban only took about 10 days. On arrival at Durban we went to the Clairwood Transit camp. Durban was a lovely city and the people very friendly. We were often picked up and taken out to people's homes for dinner. Most of the people in the area were of British origin.

A week later, we boarded the train for Rhodesia, a trip of about 5 days. On the way we stopped in Johannesburg, where there was a fairly large group of people, who had been contacted by people we had met in Durban, waiting to take us to their homes, because they thought the train was staying overnight. They were very disappointed when they found out we were only staying about 3 hours and took us out to restaurants for a really good steak meal. Australians were thought of very highly by the South Africans of British origin in those days.

On arrival at Bulawayo in Rhodesia we were taken to the transit camp at the Hillside Show Grounds. (11th Nov). Here we lived in Cattle Pens. There were long rows of pens with corrugated iron roof and back wall. In front there were canvas blinds, which we lowered down to keep out the afternoon sun or any rain. The floor was made of red bricks and we slept on wooden beds made of 3 - 6 inch wide planks held up on 3-inch wooden blocks. On these we had a straw filled pallias and our own RAAF issue blankets. A bit rough! However there were good ablution blocks and the Mess Hall was a large corrugated iron building where we were served quite good food by black African waiters.

It was only about a mile walk into the town of Bulawayo where there was a lovely municipal swimming pool and we used to go for a swim most afternoons. There were plenty of good cafes around where you could get a good steak. I spent 6 weeks here, including Christmas. My first away from home. During this time, on Dec 7th, the Japs attacked Pearl Harbour and the Yanks came into the war on 7th Dec. 1941.

MILIFE 9

On the 1st Jan 1942, I left Hillside Camp and travelled overnight to an Elementary Flying Training School at Mt.Hampden near Salisbury (now Harare)

arriving there next day on my 19th Birthday. John Dobson and Ron Turner were in the group with me.

This station was a great improvement on Hillside. We lived in properly lined wooden huts, about 16 of us to each one, with real beds, sheets and blankets. The ablution block was very good and the Students Mess was a well-built hall with very good food served by the friendly black Africans. We were to start learning to fly in De Havilland DH 82 'Tiger Moths', a single engined fabric covered biplane with front and rear open cockpits. The Instructor sat in the front cockpit and the Student in the Rear one, because this was the normal position when this aircraft was flown solo. I had my first Dual session with Flight Lieutenant Jurdon, an elderly gentle Englishman who had been a pilot for several years before the start of the War. He was my instructor throughout my time at E.F.T. S.

I began my Dual instruction on the 5th Jan. I admit I found it a little bit difficult to see ahead of the aircraft, especially when the tail was on the ground whilst taxiing and the engine ahead of me, but I found I could overcome this problem by putting my head to one side and looking along the side to the front. On the 16th Jan, after 11 hours 55mins Dual I did my first Solo. A very proud day for me.

We continued training, flying early in the day before it got too hot and then all sorts of lectures after lunch. As well as learning to take off and land we had to do aerobatics, forced landings, Instrument flying, which was not easy in the Tiger, with a very limited instrument panel, and various other exercises. On the 24th Feb., I passed my Final Test at the school and then we had a few days leave before going back to Bulawayo to another aerodrome at Heany just out of the town.

By this time I had a total of 63 hours 55 mins flying in my logbook. At Heany we were to do our Service Flying Training in Airspeed Oxfords. These were twin engined fabric covered low wing monoplanes with retractable landing gear. Ron Turner was still with me, but John Dobson had failed some exams at Mt. Hampden and had to stay behind for another month to repeat them. I started my training on Oxfords with Flying Officer Salvesen on the 3rd Mar. I did my first solo on Oxfords after about 10 hours dual on 12th March.

On the 2nd May, when I had a total of about 134 hours I passed my Wings Test and a couple of days later we were presented with our Wings by the Station Commander at a Parade of all the students and Instructors. A very proud day ! We then had a week's leave and I think was when I first went up to the Victoria Falls with Turner and a few others.

MILIFE 10

The Victoria Falls were magnificent. One of the greatest natural sights I have ever seen. We stayed at the grand old Colonial Style Victoria Falls Hotel. Lovely spacious suites, high ceilings, large private bathrooms and only two of us to each room. The dining room was wonderful with excellent food and friendly native waiters. We had three large meals every day, plus early morning tea and fresh fruit served in our rooms. We also had morning coffee and afternoon tea if we were not out walking. Not only that, but, as Servicemen, all we paid was 12 shillings and sixpence (\$1.25) per day. So we were really spoilt

Each day we would walk down to explore and view the Falls, or we could ride down the hill about half a mile in a free wheeling trolley with an awning on top to keep off the sun. There were two natives who controlled it and at times it got up to great speed which they could control with hand operated brakes. It could carry about 6 or 8 people. Then the poor old natives would have to push it back up the hill, but we always walked back.

The Falls were formed over thousands of years as the Zambesi river flowed over softer Basalt Rock, wearing it away and forming a series of about 7 zig -zag gorges.

Where the falls dropped into the first gorge it was about a 350 feet (100Metres) drop to the bottom of the gorge. In the rainy season the spray rising above the Falls was about 100 feet high with a lot of it falling on the opposite side of the gorge and running back again, resulting in falls from both sides of the gorge. There was a bridge across the gorge about half a mile from the Main Falls, over which cars and trains could travel into Northern Rhodesia. Northern and Southern Rhodesia were separate countries then and are likewise now, being Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Zambesi is the border between them.

We walked across the bridge into the small town of Livingstone to have a look around on a couple of occasions. We enjoyed every minute of our stay at the Falls and later went up there again on a couple of occasions when we had a few days leave. Heany was a nice station. We lived, two to a room, in wooden huts. There were good ablution blocks and a very good mess hall with excellent food served by friendly African stewards. Ron Turner and I shared a room.

When we had received our wings we had been promoted to Acting Sergeant Unpaid, which meant we had the privilege of living in the Sergeants Mess, but we did not receive Sergeants Pay. There were plenty of good facilities on the station, tennis courts and the like and it was not far into Bulawayo where we could swim in that beaut municipal pool.

MILIFE 11

After the week's leave we went back to Heany to start Advanced Flying Training School, which meant that, after having learnt to fly the Oxford we were now to learn how to 'Operate' it for operational purposes. On the 12th May I started doing Formation Flying, with an Instructor of course, and then, after a week or two we were checked out as Safety Pilots so that we could fly in pairs with another pupil. Turner and I elected to fly as a pair.

The next two months we were doing Cross Country Flights, Formation Flying, Bombing Practice and of course Low Flying Practice. This was great fun in the Approved Low Flying Area. We flew low over the scrub where we often saw herds Khudu, Buffalo, Impala, Giraffe and, of course, elephants. We occasionally saw hippos in the rivers or crocodiles on the riverbanks. As well as all the flying, we were attending lectures every afternoon, had to sit for and pass many examinations and Flying Tests. Some pupils failed along the way. One or two were killed. A friend in the room next to me, Doug Weame from Echuca in South Aust. was killed in a collision with another Oxford one night.

Two of the W.A. chaps who left Perth with me were killed in another accident. They were both at another Station learning to fly single engined Harvard Trainers and collided whilst carrying out formation flying practice. As a matter of interest, of the six who had been at the Embarkation Depot with me, 2 did not pass their flying tests to become pilots, 2 were killed in the Harvards as above and 2 were killed at Operational Training Units in U.K. So I was the only one who got to be a pilot on an Operational Squadron. More good luck!

We completed our Flying Training at Heany on 27th July. I should have mentioned earlier that all of Rhodesia is on a fairly high plateau about 5000 feet above sea level. The vegetation is mainly scrub like that around Kalgoorlie and other areas of W.A. We had some leave when we finished at Heany and I think it was then that a couple of us went out to the Eastern Highlands around Umtali. Very pretty country. Green rolling hills where they grew tea and coffee.

We stayed at Glen Livet Farm where we rode both bicycles and horses. We went across to see the Zimbabwe Ruins. I think it had been a temple or a fort thousands of years ago. All built of stone with no mortar at all and a lot of it still standing quite high. No one seems to know who really built it, but one legend was that it had been a fort used by The Queen of Sheba when she was travelling across Africa on a journey to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem. I finally left Heany and Rhodesia in early August, after spending 9 months in that lovely country with its very friendly people, so much like ourselves.

MILIFE 12

Because we wanted to go into Coastal Command in U.K. some of us had elected to do a General Reconnaissance Course after completing our Flying Training. There were about 8 of us - including Ron Turner -who were going on the G.R. Course, which was located at a School at George near Mossel Bay, west of Port Elizabeth on the southern tip of South Africa. We had a long train journey -about 3 days- down through Jo'Burg and finally arrived at George around 22nd Aug.

George is located on the same latitude as Albany, about 32 degrees south and both being on the coast the climate is very similar. Quite often in the morning there would be coastal sea mist, which would not clear till about midday. George aerodrome was a few miles from the pretty little town of the same name. It was located on a fairly narrow coastal strip between the ocean and a range of hills. Rather like Perth, but the hills were much higher and steeper than the Darling Range, with practically no vegetation on them, so they looked very imposing from the town. Here we were in wooden huts with about 8 beds all in one large room. Not as good as Heany.

By this time we were all being paid as Sergeant Pilots, so we were a lot more financial than we had been when we first went into the RAAF on only 5 shillings (50 cents) per day. We often went in to the town for a good steak meal and also made a taxi trip up to Outshoorn at the top of the plateau to see the Cango Caves and several large Ostrich farms. Another time we stayed at a place called The Wilderness ', near to Fairy Knowe where we spent time at the beach or rowing on the river. It was very pretty country indeed. Very green after the winter rains.

The course was very intense. Lots of subjects related to navigation including Astro Nav. Apart from a few hours flown in a small Aeronca Chief (single engined high wing monoplane with a two person cabin and terrible brakes) at weekends, we did no flying as a pilot. We went out on shipping patrols in Ansons, due south of the Cape with South African Air Force Staff Pilots flying the aircraft whilst I was down the back of the aircraft trying to keep a plot and 'Navigate'. I never felt well doing this and on a couple of occasions was very nearly sick, especially if the pilot started to do steep turns around any ship we came across miles out to sea. I was very pleased when the course finished on the 23rd Oct.

We then travelled by train to Capetown where we went to the transit Camp at Polsmoor. We spent a week waiting here for a ship to take us to the U.K. Finally on 1st Nov. we boarded the troop ship 'Empire Pride'. After our earlier experiences on large passenger liners this was a real let down and disappointment.

MILIFE 13

When we boarded the 'Empire Pride' we were each issued with a hammock and shown to our quarters. We were in a deck with several dozen other servicemen. There were no portholes, so we could not see out at all. We were allotted to a long wooden table, which was big enough for ten people. We had to stow all our kitbags under the tables and at night we each had to tie our hammocks to rings above the table and the 8 of us were to sleep across the table side by side.

At every meal time, two of us, in turn, had to go and line up with containers at the galley and collect the food, mainly 'stewed stuff,' to be shared amongst the 8 of us. It reminded me of movies I had seen of prisoners in jails. It sure was a real Hell Ship ! After one night, whilst exploring the ship we found another deck completely empty, so, from then on, several of us used to take our hammocks to sleep there and no one ever found us to tell us to move. It was a terrible, slow, rough, long trip, zig zagging up the Atlantic to the west of Africa to avoid U-Boats.

We were very happy to arrive at Liverpool on 23rd Nov. and get off that Bloody Ship! We travelled by train from Liverpool to Bournemouth on the south coast. Bournemouth was a popular holiday city before the war and when we arrived at the Aircrew Reception Depot we were put into rooms in high-rise apartment blocks. Two or three to a room which were unfurnished apart from beds. We used to have meals in a large hall in one of the buildings. The Depot was scattered in different buildings over town and I believe there were usually about 1000 people there at any one time, waiting to be posted to various squadrons etc.

Every morning at 0800 there was a Parade in one of the Parks at which the names of those who had been posted were read out and then you had to report to the Administration Office later in the morning to find out all the details. Initially, they sent the 8 of us away on leave for a week or so. We all went up to London for the first of many visits to that City. Some of our 8 were recalled from leave to be posted away somewhere. Turner was one of them. He had met a girl in Bulawayo and was keen to get back to that area so had requested to go on to Catalinas and was posted to East Africa. Most of the rest of us had requested to go on to Sunderland Flying Boats, but a couple went to O.T.U. on Lockheed Hudsons, much to their displeasure. After a couple more weeks, waiting at Bournemouth, the names of the last 3 of us were read out at the morning parade.

When we reported later we were told that since the parade, two hours earlier, the posting had been changed. Originally, the 3 of us were going to O.T.U. on Hudsons, but about an hour before, 461 Squadron, Sunderlands, at Poole had requested two pilots and as one of the three had not requested Sunderlands the remaining two, Jimmy Leigh and myself would be going to 461 Sqdn.

MILIFE 14

SO, I HAD BEEN IN LUCK AGAIN! 461 was an Australian Squadron based at Poole only about 5 miles from Bournemouth. Just before the start of the war, 10 Sqdn RAAF had sent a group of aircrew and engineers to pick up some Sunderlands which the Aust. Govt. had purchased to bring to Australia. Whilst these people were waiting to pick up the aircraft, the war started and it was decided that the Sqdn. should remain in U.K.

It was one of the first Air Force Units to go into action in 1939. Later in 1942, it was decided to form another Australian Sunderland Sqdn. in U.K. 461 Squadron was officially formed on Anzac Day 1942. It became known as the Anzac Sqdn. The original aircrew members of 461 were all from 10 sqdn. The original C.O. was an English RAF Wing Commander by the name of Halliday and the ground staff were all RAF. For a few months both Sqdns were based at Mt. Batten Plymouth, whilst 461 gradually trained its first crews and then, in about September, 461 moved to Poole. Jim Leigh and I were taken from Bournemouth to Poole in a small RAF vehicle.

The squadron was all over the place. The maintenance section was on the waters edge at Hamworthy. The different Admin. sections were in lovely old homes around the town. The Officer's Mess was in a lovely waterside hotel at Sandbanks and the Sergeant's Mess in the Longfleet Hotel right in the middle of the town, two doors from the Movie theatre, with a bicycle shop next door.

The Sunderlands were at a place called Hamworthy, which was not ideal, because a lot of the waters around were very shallow and there were marked channels for use when taking off, landing or taxiing. We were in a dormitory in the Longfleet with about six aircrew. There were several dormitories throughout the 3-storey hotel with bathrooms on each floor. The dining room, small bar and lounge were all on the ground floor. So everything was under the one roof.

It was a very happy place. I met a few West Australians like Paul Bird and Harry Ovens who were both Wireless Operator Air Gunners. There was only one other pilot here, a Warrant Officer Bill Dowling, because nearly all the pilots on the Sqdn were commissioned. In fact, when we went to see the new C.O. an RAF Wing Commander Lovelock next day, he looked us up and down and then said "Sergeant Pilots, I don't know why they sent you here ! You will either get your commission or you won't stay on THIS Sqdn." This put us in a really great state of mind and we felt completely unwanted and unloved.

It was now the 23rd Dec., two days before Christmas -the second since I left home - and I had a total of 218 hours and 20 mins flying as a Pilot.

MILIFE 15

About this time I was promoted to Flight Sergeant. The Sunderland Flying Boat, built by Short Bros. was an all-metal high wing monoplane with four Bristol Pegasus engines. It had a large float fitted near the end of each wing. Maximum take off weight was 58,000 pounds. Normal cruise speed was 130 knots and a Maximum speed of 200 knots. It had an upper and a lower deck throughout most of the aircraft.

At the front of the lower deck there was the Mooring Compartment with a flush toilet and hand basin in a small cubicle on the starboard side. Aft of this area was the Wardroom, which had two bunks and a table in between. Next came the Galley, complete with two-burner kerosene stove and a sink. Aft of the Galley was the Bomb Room where the bombs or depth charges were mounted on racks. These were run out below the wing on each side prior to dropping the depth charges. There was another area aft of the bomb room, which had two more bunks. From here it was a fair distance aft to the rear gun turret under the tail.

On the upper deck, the two pilots seats were at the front, then a position for the Wireless Operator on the Port side and on the starboard side was the radar position, with the Navigator's table just aft of it. Aft of this on the starboard side was the Flight Engineers Station and on the port side there were steps leading down to the Galley.

Aft of this area again was the mid upper turret position and then more steps down to a position just aft of the two rear bunks on the lower deck. There were 3 gun turrets, all power operated. In the bow, the nose turret originally had a single Vickers machine gun, which was later, replaced by twin Brownings. There were twin Brownings in the Mid Upper Turret and four Brownings in the Tail Turret. The nose turret could be wound back so that a crew member could lean over the front and, with the aid of a boat hook, pick up the ropes attached to a mooring buoy. There was an entrance door on the port side in the mooring compartment and another door on the starboard side just aft of the rear bunks. Under the floor of the lower deck were the bilges with electric Bilge Pumps fitted in various locations.

The aircraft could carry up to 2400 gallons of fuel (Petrol) and had a range of up to 2800 miles. Normally the crew consisted of Captain (a pilot), 1st Pilot, 2nd Pilot, a Navigator, a Flight Engineer (Engines), a Flight Rigger(Airframe), two Wireless Op/Air gunners, and 3 straight Air gunners. 11 in all.

The Flight Engineer and Flight Rigger also took a turn in the turrets. A new pilot started as 2nd Pilot. After a period about 3 months became 1st Pilot and then later, with more experience, finally became a Captain.

MILIFE 16

All the Captains in 461 were commissioned and most of the Navigators also. About 30% of Pilots got a commission at the completion of their Flying Training, but most were Sergeant Pilots. I said earlier that John Dobson went back a course at the end of E.F.T.S but I kept in touch with him from time to time in Rhodesia. About a month after I joined 461, I heard that he had arrived in Bournemouth, so we arranged to meet.

He was very keen to get on to Sunderlands, so I spoke to our Flight Commander, Tom Egerton, and told him about John. Within 2 or 3 days, John arrived on the Squadron. We were both very happy about it. However, John had been made a Pilot Officer at the end of his Flying Training, so he was in the Officers Mess and I was in the Sergeants Mess. We still saw a lot of each other.

For the first few months on 461, I flew as 2nd Pilot on several different crews. The patrols were usually 11 hours long and very tiring. The Sunderland was not heated and there was no internal insulation or soundproofing, so it was both noisy and cold, especially as we flew with the cockpit side sliding windows open during daylight hours for better vision. We were usually on anti submarine patrols in the Bay of Biscay between England and Spain.

As well as flying on these patrols it was an RAF requirement to have two crewmembers aboard as Boat Guard when the aircraft were on the moorings at base. The Officers never did this duty, so it was shared by the other NCO crewmembers. Additionally, if there was a Gale Warning in force, there had to be a Pilot and two crewmembers on board. So, being a Pilot and also non-commissioned, I got both duties.

During the winter months of Jan and Feb when I first joined 461, I never seemed to be ashore for days on end. I was either Flying on a Patrol, Boat Guard or there was a Gale Warning in force. In a gale it was very rough and uncomfortable aboard the aircraft because of the strong wind and choppy sea. On some occasions it was necessary to run the two outer engines to take some of the load off the mooring. At times many crewmembers suffered seasickness and could only lay on one of the bunks all day and night.

In really rough weather it was difficult to get fresh food, because they could not get a small boat alongside for fear of damage to the boat or the aircraft. However every crew had a good supply of tinned food in the galley. At this time, each crew had their own particular aircraft. It sure was not great to have spent a couple of days aboard during a gale and then after only a few hours ashore, to go out on an 11 hour Patrol.

MILIFE 17

Poole was really a very poor operational base, only a small slipway at Hamworthy and no proper Hangars in which to service the aircraft. They had a couple of high half-sheds where the engineers could get a small amount of shelter when changing an engine. All the accommodation and various sections of the squadron were scattered around the town in large houses, plus a couple of hotels, which had been taken over by the RAF. However, British Airways continued to operate their once a week Boeing Flying Boat Service from Poole, across the Atlantic to USA all through the war.

Early in April it was decided to move 461 to Pembroke Dock in South Wales near to the town of Milford Haven. Milford Haven was actually a large estuary, about 6 miles long and the RAF Base was about 6 miles from the mouth of the estuary. Pembroke Dock had been a Naval base since the days of Lord Nelson and it had been an RAF Flying Boat base since the 1920s. It had excellent facilities. There was a large slipway and two very large Hangars, each of which could accommodate a complete Sunderland for major overhauls. Most of the accommodation blocks were two storey brick buildings. There was a lovely Officers Mess and a very good Sergeants Mess.

There was a large grass parade ground, which was also used for cricket and football etc. There were tennis courts and a squash court. A large recreation hall used for concerts, dances and movies.

The small town of Pembroke Dock was alongside the Base. It had a cinema and a couple of small pubs, which we often visited. It also had a Chinese Laundry. 'Yip Bings' where they did a good job on our shirts. It was a standing joke that they got such a good shine on the collars because of all the rice they ate before spitting on the collar whilst ironing it.

Next to our base there was a Naval Dockyard. The Sunderlands were on moorings around the area. There was another Sunderland Squadron there as well as 461. It was RAF No 228. Later on, an American naval squadron joined us with their Catalina Flying boats. This meant it got a little crowded with over 50 aircraft on moorings around the base. It was possible to take off and land in the area nearby during daylight hours, but for night operations we had to use Angle Bay near the mouth of the estuary because there was a lot more water area and better approaches away from surrounding hills. So prior to a night take off with a heavy loaded aircraft before a Patrol, we had to tow the aircraft behind a large launch, the six miles from base to Angl.

MILIFE 18

Just after we arrived at P.D. I was promoted to 1st Pilot and was to join a new crew with Flying Officer Russell Baird from northern New South Wales as the

Captain. John Dobson from Sydney was to be 2nd Pilot, which we were both very pleased about. Doug Hughes from Sydney was the navigator. Paddy Watson (RAF), an Irishman of course, was the Flight Engineer. Ken 'Lofty' Field (RAF) was the senior Wireless Operator. Ron McKellar from Sydney was the other Wireless Operator. Harry 'Junior' Weeks from Adelaide and Johnny Temple from North Queensland were both Air Gunners. I can't recall the names of the Flight Rigger (RAF) or the other air Gunner.

Of the 11 of us there were only 3 who were not Australians. I was 1st Pilot and as such I was the Captain's 'First Lieutenant'. Russell was very good to me. He gave me plenty of responsibility and he let me do a lot of the Take-Offs and Landings. As Russell, Doug and John were all in the Officers Mess, the remainder of us shared a dormitory type room in one of the large two storey buildings in the Sergeants quarters and Russell left it to me to see they all behaved themselves. I was only 20 years of age at the time. We spent a few weeks doing all sorts of operational exercises, practice bombing etc. Even here, Russell let me do several of the bombing runs. All this was great experience for me for when I was to be a Captain later.

On the 3rd May we did our first Operational trip as a crew on an Anti Sub Patrol down in the Bay of Biscay. We had been flying for about 5 hours when the front Gunner sighted a Submarine on the surface about 8 miles ahead of us, so it was 'Action Stations'. At the time I was in the Right Hand Pilots seat and John was in the Left Hand seat. Russell was talking to Doug at the Navigators table and it was amazing how quickly he changed places with John to get into his Captain's seat.

I should explain here that the Sunderland would only reach a speed of about 160 knots in a shallow dive, which was only about 2.5 miles each minute. A U-Boat on the surface could Crash Dive very rapidly in about 60 seconds just leaving a Swirl on the surface. In a further 60 seconds it could change its heading 180 degrees. If the U-boat had submerged for over 30 seconds we were not allowed to attack because it would be very unlikely that we would do any damage to it.

MILIFE 19

As we were diving down from about 4000 feet Russell pulled a lever to the left of his seat which operated a mechanism to open the doors in the bomb room and then run the bomb racks out under the wing.

It was my job to start a stopwatch on the panel in front of me the moment that the submarine disappeared below the surface. Then every 5 seconds after the sub had disappeared I would call out a distance that it was expected to be ahead of the swirl. This was shown on a disc mounted around the stopwatch. Russell would then aim to drop the depth charges that distance ahead of the swirl.

On this occasion, because of the distance we had to travel after the sub was first sighted, it was well over the maximum of 30 seconds before we were over the swirl, so the depth charges were not dropped.

Russell decided that we should apply 'Baiting procedure', whereby we would leave the area and return about two hours later. This we did and, to our great surprise, the U Boat was again on the surface. This says a lot for the skill of our navigator to get us back to the same area over a featureless ocean. On this second occasion we started another attack from a slightly closer range and dropped the depth charges 26 seconds after the U Boat had submerged.

We circled around for quite a while but did not see any evidence of damage (like oil rising to the surface). However we must have given them a Bloody Great Fright! Those sailors in the U Boats must have had a dreadful existence. Most of the U Boats were rather small, only 500 tons, and carried a crew of 40 in very cramped conditions. They usually remained submerged during daylight hours, just surfacing at night to recharge their batteries. So they could go for days on end and never see the sun. Any close attacks on them must have played hell with their morale, even if no damage was done.

We never considered that if we sank a sub we would be killing about 40 men. We just saw the U Boat as something that had to be destroyed by the Sunderland! They did a terrible amount of damage to Allied shipping and could have cost England the war if supplies did not arrive from USA. So, even if we were not facing the terrible losses of Bomber Command, we were doing a very important and worthwhile job in keeping the U Boats away from the Convoys. Some crews did a full Operational Tour without ever seeing a U Boat. Others were lucky to see and sink one. Still other crews were lost on these patrols, either from being shot down by German aircraft or bad weather. It was all in the luck of the game. We were all taking the same chances.

MILIFE 20

After this quite eventful day for a first trip with a new crew, I only saw a U Boat once again during my 800 hours Tour of Operations. On a couple of occasions we were shot at by enemy aircraft, but each time there was only one of them and they were not close enough to do any damage.

The Sunderland had a rather fearful reputation amongst the German Aircrew for, as well as the front, mid upper and rear Turrets we later had a single Vickers machine gun at each of the Galley windows and there was someone to man these and give us a little protection from below.

These guns were loaded with a high percentage of 'tracer' bullets, which left a visible trail in flight to aid the gunner in seeing where his shots had gone, but

they had the effect of looking a lot worse than they really were and helped to stop the fighters from attacking from the blind spot below the Sunderland.

Actually, these 'galley guns' were the brainchild of a 461 squadron gunner and we fitted some without official approval from Group Headquarters.

Shortly afterwards, when Colin Walker and his crew were attacked by eight JU 88 long range fighters, of which they shot down three and damaged two others, in the later Combat Report to Group they took every opportunity to mention the Galley Guns' part in the action.

A message came straight back from Group 'What are these Galley Guns?'

So detailed drawings were duly submitted and Group came back to say 'A good idea, have them fitted to all aircraft immediately'. Later they were a standard fitting in all Sunderlands.

Now that I have mentioned Colin Walker and Crew's epic battle for which he received a Distinguished Service Order and other crew members got a Distinguished Flying Cross or a Distinguished Flying Medal - AND ONE CREW MEMBER WAS KILLED. I suggest you read Ivan Southall's Book 'They Shall Not Pass Unseen' (This was the Motto on the official 461 Crest) or Norm Ashworth's Book 'The Anzac Squadron' for full details of this and other outstanding events in the history of 461. I get a brief mention in the former and a couple of pages in the latter. Walker's episode was regarded as one of the finest of all the aerial encounters during the war.

We carried on as a very happy, well-organised crew. The patrols were still long and we were always cold when flying. We all wore long thermal underwear, full length 'Long Johns' and long sleeves, then our normal 'Battle Dress', which was trousers and a waist length jacket which was very comfortable. We also had thick polo neck woolen pullovers down to our waist and a fur lined leather jacket to top it off. Plus silk gloves under chamois leather gloves. It was still cold alongside those open windows!

MILIFE 21

In late May, Russell recommended me for a Commission and I later had interviews with the Station Commander, a Group Captain, and then a visit to 19 Group, Coastal Command, at Plymouth to be interviewed by other Senior RAF Officers. In late June I was promoted to Pilot Officer, backdated to early June. So I moved into the Officers' Mess and John Dobson and I shared a room. John and I first met on the Elizabeth and, apart from the time when he went back a course in Rhodesia, were together for all the time we were overseas. He was about 8 years older than I, but we got on well together. After our time on 461, we went to Scotland together to instruct and finally came home on the same ship.

He was home when we arrived in Sydney, but I still had the train journey across to Perth.

All the time I was overseas Joan and I corresponded regularly. At times, when I was moving from Perth to Rhodesia or South Africa to England, her letters would all arrive together after a fairly long delay, but they arrived regularly while I was in the one spot with 461. She also sent me food parcels containing lots of Goodies, fruitcake, tinned fruit, woollen gloves etc.

In July we saw another U Boat and made the attack 17 seconds after it submerged, but after circling around for an hour, saw no evidence of damage. We also had the starboard outer engine seize up when we were about 300 miles from land on one occasion. Because it was not possible to 'feather ' the propellers on the Sunderland, the prop on this engine kept windmilling causing a great deal of drag and considerable loss of performance. We had to reduce our weight to maintain height, so we dropped all our 8 depth charges, which weighed 250 pounds each. Then we threw out the anchor and anchor chain, which were a considerable weight together. Shortly after we did this, the prop gave a bit of a wobble and then fell off. This reduced the drag and we were able to return to base on three remaining engines without any more difficulty.

As Operational Aircrew we got 16 days leave every three months. We also got free rail travel on leave. Dobson and I would go to London for about a week, see several stage shows, which were very good and then we would go to stay somewhere in the country. There was a scheme whereby people would open their homes for us to stay in several of the most beautiful parts of England. We liked going to stay at a lovely old home near Lake Windermere, owned by Kitty Mather, a 50 year old Spinster whose father had been the local Magistrate in Kendal before he died. She was wonderful to us.

MILIFE 22

Kitty always had 3 or 4 servicemen staying at her home. I met Canadians and Americans as well as other Australians from Bomber Squadrons every time we stayed there. With food rationing, we were given a certain number of coupons when we went on leave. We gave these to Kitty. Sometimes we would go with her to the local Village store to buy food and we always had to fight with her to pay for it. Often we would take her out to dinner with us to one of the Local Pubs. She had a very small car and we would give her our petrol coupons, so that we could all go out to dinner in it.

She had 6 or 8 bicycles, which we would use to ride around the lovely Lakes District during the day. On a few occasions we used the bikes to play Polo on her Croquet Lawn. She did not mind. Occasionally, we sent her tinned fruit, which we had received in parcels from the Aust. Comforts Fund. She would

never use it until the next time we stayed with her. I wrote to her for a while after the war, but she died shortly after it ended.

When Joan and I went to UK in 1966 and were touring around in our Camper Van, we visited the lovely old house and were welcomed for tea by the people who then owned it. But it was not the same without Kitty.

Like my days with Aunt Bowie and Uncle John down at Donnybrook, I will always have fond memories of that lovely old home at Stavely, near Kendal. The name of the house was 'Sidegarth'. It was surrounded by several large fields, which had been leased out by her father for years to local farmers to grow crops and feed stock. Kitty's only home help was an old Gardener-Handyman who looked after the property for her. He lived, with his family, in smaller house, also belonging to Kitty, about half a mile away. We also stayed in other country homes from time to time and the English people were wonderful to us.

When in London we saw all the regular Tourist sites. Buckingham Palace, Tower of London and even went to see two stage productions in the one day. We often used to go for a few drinks and lunch at 'Ye Olde Watling'. This was a very old Pub in Watling St., near St. Pauls Cathedral, Watling St. was one of the old original Roman roads into London. Christopher Wren, the famous architect, used to house all his workmen in the Watling during the rebuilding of St. Pauls after the Great Fire of London in the 1600s. There was not much bomb damage to St. Pauls itself, but nearby there were several blocks that had been completely flattened.

MILIFE 23

In September I left Russ Baird's crew when I was made a Captain. At the age of 20 years and 8 months I was in command of a four engined, 30 ton Flying Boat with a crew of 10 to look after. It was said that, at that time, I was the youngest Sunderland Captain in the RAAF. Naturally, I was very proud, but realised I had a lot of responsibility to train and look after my crew. At that time each crew had their own aircraft. In fact, I had to sign an Equipment Card for -

“ 1 SUNDERLAND AIRFRAME MARK 3 -
4 PEGASUS ENGINES - 72 SPARK PLUGS”

Don't ask me why the spark plugs were a separate item. There was no separate mention of all the radio gear and other items on board. I would never have been able to pay for it if I had lost it !

Later on, when we had a greater number of crews, we each did not have our own aircraft. Crews were allotted to whichever aircraft was at the front of the serviceability line. Whilst this may have been better for administration and maintenance purposes, it was not as good for the crews as it had been when we had our own aircraft. We used to look after 'Our Boat' as our personal property. The day after an Ops Trip we would be cleaning it inside, washing the floor with

petrol soaked rags whilst the gunners would be cleaning and servicing the guns and the Flight Engineer assisting and supervising the ground engineers.

Our squadron ground engineers did a fantastic job, servicing the aircraft under very difficult conditions. Working in the cold out in the open. The only time an aircraft came out of the water and into a hangar was for major servicing, such as a complete engine change. They often had to change 3 or 4 individual cylinders of the radial engines out over the water. Forward sections of the wing on either side of each engine could be lowered forward to support stands on which they had to work. If they dropped a spanner from their half frozen hand it was gone forever! Not on to a concrete floor below, but into at least 30 feet of very cold water.

The Sunderland was a delightful aircraft to fly. It was 'My first and Greatest Love Among Aeroplanes.' In later years throughout my career in aviation I was often asked by young Pilots "What was the Sunderland like to fly?" I always had the same reply "BLOODY MARVELLOUS "

It was very manoeuvrable for its size. The greatest difficulty with all flying Boats was in handling them on the water. There were no brakes and, with a strong wind in the opposite direction from a fast flowing tide, it was difficult to slow down enough for the poor bloke in the nose to pick up the mooring ropes without being pulled overboard himself. Later on, when instructing, I often had pilots who were completely competent to take-off and land the aircraft, but were not cleared for 'Solo Taxying'.

MILIFE 24

Originally, Derek Syme was my 1st Pilot and Reg. Allardice my 2nd Pilot, but these were both replaced by others over a period of time as each one moved up the ladder to become a Captain. Henry Turnbull was my Navigator and, in accordance with 461 policy, we shared a room. They always liked the Captain and Navigator to work closely together. Henry came from Victoria and had been studying to be a doctor before he joined the RAAF. He was a couple of months younger than I and was a bit on the heavy side and quite tall. He was a great bloke and we got on very well together. Often going on leave together.

At this time, John Dobson and I, being on different crews, did not get leave at the same time. John eventually took over Russ Baird's Crew when Russ completed his Tour of Operations. Other members of my crew were Tich Cox, Fred Reed, Dick Criddle, Colin Cottier, Paul Brewin, George Toose and Jim Cottam. Only Henry, Derek Syme and I were commissioned, so all the others were in the Sergeants' Mess. However, we all spent a lot of time together both on and off the Station at the local Pub or the Cinema in Pembroke Dock.

At first we spent a couple of weeks training together as a crew and then I did my first Ops Trip as a Captain on the 18th Sept. Actually, I had a fairly uneventful Tour as a Captain. We did not see any U-Boats and were not attacked by fighters. Being the winter months the subs were not staying on the surface for long periods in daylight hours. We still had the long, cold patrols with occasionally some engine problems or diversions to other bases when Pembroke Dock was closed due to bad weather.

The minimum time for promotion from Pilot Officer to Flying Officer was six months, so in December I became a Flying Officer and a few of us had a 'Bit of a Do' in the Mess to celebrate my promotion. Two days later the Flight Commander, Squadron Leader Harry Cooke said to me -

" Ross, your promotion to Flight Lieutenant came through today, but if you have another party like the one two nights ago, you will be back to AC 2". So we just had a couple of 'Quiet Ales' to celebrate. Therefore, I had some fairly rapid promotion from Flight Sergeant to Pilot Officer, to Flying Officer, to Flight Lieutenant in only 6 months.

Christmas 1943 was my third away from home, but I was pretty happy with my lot, a Flight Lieutenant (best rank in the Air Force) Captain of a Sunderland and living in the lovely two story brick Officers Mess. Pretty good food and a batman to tidy our room for us. On 2nd Jan. 1944, I had my 21st Birthday and we had a bit of a celebration with Russ Baird, John Dobson, Henry Turnbull and several others.

MILIFE 25

An example of how luck plays a part in all things. On one Saturday afternoon another Captain, Don Howe, and I went for a ride in his little car across to Tenby, a pretty little seaside town. Before we left P.D., he and his crew were rostered to do an Ops Trip on the Sunday and my crew was to do an Ops trip on the Monday. When we arrived back at P.D., later that afternoon, we were told that his aircraft was unserviceable and that my crew and aircraft would be doing the trip on the Sunday and Don's crew would then do our trip on the Monday.

We did the trip all OK on the Sunday, but were diverted to Mt. Batten, Plymouth on our return because of fog at P.D. Don and his crew left on what had originally been our trip on the Monday and were never heard of again. So, perhaps I had been lucky once again!

I completed my 800 hours Tour of Operations on the 11th Feb. 1944.

Because I had done about 400 Ops hours as a 2nd Pilot and 1st pilot when I was made a Captain in Sept. and most of my crew were just starting on their Tour, it meant that when I completed my 800 hours, they still had 400 hours to go. My

1st Pilot at that time, Marsh Godsall took over as Captain. Henry and the other crewmembers were sorry that I was leaving them after having got them through about half their Tour, but that's the way it was to be.

Tragically, several months later when they were operating from Sullom Voe in the Shetland Islands, they went out on a night patrol towards the coast of Norway and were never heard of again. Whether it was enemy fighter aircraft or the terrible weather around at the time we never found out. I was quite upset to hear of the loss of Henry and all 'My Crew'

At the time when I completed my Tour of Ops, I admit that I was disappointed that I had not had the luck to sink a U Boat, but that's the way it goes. A few sank a U Boat, some had great battles with enemy fighters, some had a tour where there was practically no action at all, and some - TOO MANY - went out on trips and were never heard of again.

Having completed my Tour, it was decided that because the Squadron Training Officer, 'Wonk' Kennedy was a Navigator, I was to stay on the Squadron to carry out any Pilot Training that was necessary.

Even though many of the pilots who joined us had already been to an Operational Training Unit on Sunderlands, we needed to give them more training to operate just the way WE liked.

MILIFE 26

I should include some information about Night Flying Operations at P.D. As I mentioned before, we could not operate close to the Station at night because of limited area, so we had to use Angle Bay near the mouth of the estuary. If the aircraft was going to take off during night hours for a Ops Trip, it was usually heavily laden with fuel and depth charges and, therefore, could not take off and land a few minutes later, because it would have been in excess of the Maximum Landing Weight, which was several thousand pounds less than the Max. Take Off Weight.

On the afternoon before, the 1st Pilot and a couple of crewmembers would go on the aircraft whilst it was towed down behind a large launch, the 6 miles to Angle Bay. These crewmembers would sleep aboard the aircraft until the rest of the crew arrived for take off. This was often 2AM or 3AM next morning.

Departure was varied in order to meet the particular requirements to be in the patrol area, often 3 or 4 hours from base, at the required time next morning. We never had brightly lit Runway Lights as at a normal land based aerodrome. Various methods were used at different Flying Boat bases.

At P.D. we had 4 small launches anchored about 600 metres apart in a line into the wind blowing at the time. This gave us about 6000 feet (1800 metres) of take

off and landing run. After a night landing we would leave a couple of crew members aboard the moored aircraft and the next morning, two of the Pilots would go to Angle Bay by small launch to bring the aircraft back to base. This meant only a short 5 minute flight, but on some occasions we would "Taxi on the Step" for the 6 miles. This was great fun !. You would open up the throttles and accelerate until the aircraft was riding on just the very bottom of the hull (on the step) at 60 knots and then reduce power again so that the aircraft did not become airborne. Racing along the surface of the water like a giant speedboat. - Wonderful! But you had to make sure that the wing tip floats were not damaged in any way. Unfortunately, a Pilot from 228 Squadron damaged and lost a float on one occasion. . The aircraft rolled over on its side and eventually it sank. SO NO MORE TAXYING ON THE STEP! It was prohibited by Group Headquarters.

We had lots of Marine craft on the squadron, as below.

DINGHIES. These were actually about 18 feet, powered open run-abouts, with plenty of cushioning around the gunwales, to take crews and engineers to the side of the aircraft near the front hatch on the port side.

LAUNCHES. About 25 feet, for all kinds of work, with a small half-cabin.

PINNACES. These were large 45 feet cruisers with powerful twin engines, used to tow the aircraft or take crews to and from Angle Bay.

MILIFE 27

During the time I remained on 461 to instruct new pilots joining the squadron, I spent a lot of time doing take offs and landings with them at Angle Bay. Most of this was at night. I see from my logbook that I checked out about 30 pilots during this time. I also took several of them around to other bases for familiarisation flights in case they were diverted to these bases at some later stage, when they were unable to return to P.D. due to bad weather. Amongst these were 10 Squadron's base at Mt. Batten, Plymouth, Poole, Lough Erne in Ireland and Oban on the west coast of Scotland.

On one occasion I had to take an aircraft up to Lake Windermere where Short Bros. had a small factory. Naturally, I did a few tight turns over Kitty's home, Sidegarth, at nearby Stavely, before landing on the lake. After I had handed the aircraft over to Shorts, we all got in a taxi (about 5 of us) and went to Kitty's to stay overnight. Next day we travelled as passengers on a Sunderland, flown by chaps from Ferry Command, to Stranraer on the South West tip of Scotland, where we picked up a brand new aircraft and flew it back to P.D. the day after.

The D Day Invasion of Europe took place on 6th June (Dobson's Birthday) and a few weeks later I was posted to No. 4 Coastal Operational Training Unit at Alness in Scotland. John Dobson had also finished his tour and we both went up to Alness together. At Alness the Officers Mess was a lovely old Country Lodge, but we slept in Nissen Huts. 8 Officers to each hut. Nissen huts were made of

corrugated iron. Rather like half of a large water tank on its side. They were unlined and Freezing cold during those winter months. We only had one small potbelly stove in each hut and 1 bag of coke per week! I was instructing pilots on how to fly the Sunderland and some times going on Operational Training Exercises with new crews out into the north sea or up to the Shetland Islands, well north of Scotland..... and even colder! During December and January there was snow everywhere.

Alness was fairly close to Inverness, a lovely town on the east coast of Scotland at the North Eastern end of the Caledonian Canal, which ran right across Scotland through several Lakes (or Lochs) including Loch Ness, down to Oban on the South Western end. Even though I had a couple of lovely flights down the Canal and back, I never saw any sign of the famous Loch Ness Monster!

About the third week in January, John and I were posted back to Australia and we went down to the Embarkation Depot at Brighton to await a ship home. We finally left Liverpool, where I had arrived in the UK just over two years earlier, in the 12000 Ton ship the RANGITIKI' on the 9th February 1944. It had been a great experience and I will always remember my service in UK.

MILIFE 28

The trip home was rather long and, at times, very rough. We went from Liverpool across the South Atlantic to the Panama Canal where we hoped we would get ashore for a few hours. But we had some children aboard belonging to N.Z. Naval Officers and their wives and some of them had Chicken Pox. Therefore, the ship was quarantined and we had to stay aboard.

The trip through the Panama Canal was wonderful. We started at the Atlantic end (which is further west than the Pacific end!) . After quite some distance the ship was raised 120 feet through a series of locks and then travelled through a lake, which was 120 feet above sea level. At the other end of the lake the ship was lowered again through locks to travel the rest of the Canal at sea level. It was then a long trip across the Pacific to Wellington in New Zealand. Here we were able to get ashore for a few hours and thoroughly enjoyed a few beers for the first time since we left UK five weeks earlier.

At that time all Troop Ships were 'DRY' ships. This had been in force ever since a large contingent of Americans crossing the Atlantic to England had been drowned after a U Boat attack when a large number of them were drunk. So the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, declared that all Allied Troopships should not have alcohol available for the troops on board. We finally arrived in Sydney six weeks after leaving Liverpool. All the N.S.W. blokes went straight on leave, so it was 'Good- Bye' to John Dobson after a great friendship for almost

three years. I did see him a few times after the war when we visited Sydney or he came to Perth, but sadly, in about 1993, he suffered a stroke and, after several years in a nursing home, he died in 2000.

After a long journey by train from Sydney across the Nullarbor Plain to Perth I arrived home on 23rd March, 1945. It had been 3 and a half years since I had left home and it was great to see my family and, of course, Joan, again. She was even more beautiful than when I had left. I had a couple of weeks leave and then one day when I called into the RAAF Personnel Depot in Wembley, to get some beer and ration coupons, I must have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, because I got trapped to go up to Pearce for a couple of weeks to relieve the Catering Officer who had gone on special leave. I knew absolutely nothing about the job, but I had a very efficient Sergeant to organise everything and I just had to sign all the Leave Passes he put before me each weekend.

After two or three weeks at Pearce I was posted to 37 Squadron at Essendon in Victoria to get Transport experience, prior to joining 40 Squadron (Sunderlands) at Port Moresby in New Guinea.

MILIFE 29

37 Squadron was equipped with Douglas C 47 all metal, twin engined, low wing monoplanes. It was the Military version of the DC3. I was a Co-pilot and did several trips carrying service men, mail and cargo to Brisbane, Darwin, Adelaide and to Noonkanbah in the Kimberleys - with overnight stay in Perth on the way. I was able to see my family and Joan, and it was on one of these overnights that we decided to get engaged. The war in Europe had ended in May and it ended in the Pacific when the Japs surrendered in August.

I was in Perth for a couple of days leave at the time the Pacific War ended and I decided I had better look for a post war Job. I went along to a small Company, Airlines (W.A.) Ltd and spoke to the Managing Director, Captain Snook. He was a great old bloke who had been a pilot in France on Word War 1.

He told me to send him some details from my logbook when I got back to 37 Sqdn at Essendon. This I did. A couple of days later, I was on my way up to join 40 Sqdn at Port Moresby.

The day I arrived at 40 Sqdn there was a telegram from Captain Snook offering me a job and asking how soon could I start. I immediately applied for my discharge. I knew almost all of the blokes on 40 sqdn because they were old 10 and 461 people. We flew transport services from Moresby to Madang and also to Cairns. We only had 5 Sunderlands and four Martin Mariners which were American built twin engined Flying Boats. We had 10 Sunderland Captains and only 5 aircraft, so we felt that we were surplus to requirements. However, even

though we kept sending signals to the RAAF in Melbourne, there was no sign of my discharge. Finally, at the end of January in 1946 my discharge came through.

I phoned Capt. Snook immediately to tell him that my discharge was approved and I would be in Perth as soon as fast as I could. However, this took some time, as I still had to travel from Melbourne to Perth by that train across the Nullarbor. I arrived back in Perth in early February and I was finally discharged on the 11th Feb 1946.

So I had served in the RAAF from 23rd June 1941 to 7th February 1946 .A total of 4 years and 7 months. I had been around the world and seen some wonderful places. I had met some lovely people and, sadly, lost some great Comrades. I had a total of 1882 hours and 10 mins in my log book and had flown in 52 different Sunderlands - those WONDERFUL OLD AIRCRAFT! There had been a few close shaves, but I had come home unscathed. It had all been a Magnificent Experience and I had some wonderful memories. I also had the basis for a great career in Aviation in the years ahead.

MILIFE 30

I started work with Airlines (W.A.) Ltd. on about the 15th Feb. It was only a small Company. At that time they had 2 De Havilland DH 89' Rapides', which were 8 seater, fabric covered, twin engined bi planes, with a fixed undercarriage. A very nice little aircraft. They also had 1 smaller De Havilland DH 90 'Dragon Fly' which was very similar, but only carried 4 passengers. Both of these were only single pilot aircraft, so we had no Co-pilot and no radio in those days. Nor did we carry Hostesses (Flight Attendants). It was a big change from the Sunderland to these much smaller aircraft.

We had 8 pilots at that time. It was a very friendly and happy Company. We flew to Albany, Mt. Magnet, Cue, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Kalgoorlie, Norseman, Esperance, Roy Hill, Nullagine, Marble Bar, Port Hedland, Wittenoom Gorge, Yinnietharra, Yalgoo, Mullewa, Rottneest, Leonora, Agnew, and several other smaller towns or pastoral Stations.

I spent the first few months flying the 'Dragonfly' all the time, mainly to Kalgoorlie, Norseman, Esperance and back to Perth. Or in the reverse direction. Each of these trips took about 8 hours in those slow little aircraft (110 m.p.h) and I was home every night.

When I was discharged I did not have a car, nor a Driving Licence. I had been too young before I joined the RAAF and we did not have a car anyway. Keith Cambridge came with me and I bought a small second-hand 1939 Standard 9 H.P. sedan. I paid 230 pounds (\$ 460) for it. We then went over to the police Traffic Branch to get a Learner's Permit The examining Police Sergeant said,

"If you have been flying aeroplanes for over 4 years you should be able to drive a car!" He gave me a very short test around the block and I had my licence to drive.

I asked for a weekend off early in May and they gave me a week off. Joan and I were married at St. George's Cathedral in Perth on 3rd May 1946. Alan Howe, my friend from early school days (when we were only 6) was Best Man and Joan's close friend, Linda Foster, from the State Saw Mills (where they both worked in the office) was the Bridesmaid. Next day Joan and I drove down to Mandurah and stayed several days at the Mandurah Hotel in the centre of the town. We went for picnics each day.

By this time I was flying the Rapides as well as the Dragonfly and did flights to Yalgoo, Meekatharra, Roy Hill, Nullagine, Marble bar and Port Hedland and stayed there overnight. Next day I returned to Perth via Marble Bar, Wittenoom Gorge, Yinnietharra and Mullewa.

MILIFE 31

Joan and her Mother owned a house out at City Beach, but, because of the poor bus service out there during the war, they had leased the house and were renting half of a Duplex at No. 289A, Cambridge St., Wembley, opposite Nanson St., so that they could travel easier to and from work. When we were first married, Joan and I lived in the Duplex for a few months and her Mother lived with us. Later, we decided to move back to the beach and this we did after giving the tenants suitable notice.

Some things were still rationed or hard to get in Perth, but available in some country towns. I often bought rice or tinned fruit in Port Hedland. In Wiluna there was an excellent butcher where I bought pork and other good meat I used to get a large bag of fresh vegetables from a market garden near the Kalgoorlie Airport for 5 shillings (50 cents).

My salary with Airlines was 13 pounds, 17 shillings and sixpence (\$27.75) per week, which was not too bad at that time. Airlines (W.A.) Ltd. operated from the old Maylands Aerodrome where I had that flight in the Viastra years before when I was 11 years old. As well as the regular flights carrying passengers, mail and cargo we sometimes did something completely different!

On one occasion, the W.A. Dept. of Agriculture asked us if we could carry out some 'aerial baiting' to kill dingoes which were ravaging sheep on stations around the Gascoyne River area north west of Meekatharra. This was to be done from a small Tiger Moth, which Airlines had bought from Air Force Disposals.

Nelson Hill had joined Airlines a couple of months after I had, and, in the middle of July, in terrible winter weather, we departed from Maylands in the Tiger Moth. There was low cloud, 40 M.P.H. headwinds and it was very turbulent. The Tiger Moth only cruised at 80 M.P.H. and because of the 40 M.P.H. headwind we only had a ground speed of 40 M.P.H. Cars on the road below were passing us! TRUE. We were both sick before we reached our first refuelling point at Moora. We then pressed on to Three Springs and Mullewa, where we were very happy to stay overnight and have a couple of cold beers and a good hot roast dinner.

Next morning we left Mullewa to fly the 400 Kms to Landor, which was located on the Gascoyne river about 100 Km due south of Mt. Augustus. The wind had dropped a lot, but there was low cloud and heavy rain with poor visibility. We found it very hard to identify any thing on the ground below us. Due to all the rain there seemed to be Rivers everywhere.

WE WERE NOT LOST! JUST TEMPORARILY UNSURE OF OUR POSITION!!

MILIFE 32

After flying for about two hours we saw a Station Homestead below, but there was no one around, so we decided to land in a very small clearing about a mile from the homestead. We then walked along a track to the Homestead, stole some lovely oranges off a tree in their orchard and walked inside to see if we could identify the name of the Station. Behind the kitchen door I found a number of accounts all on a large spike holder. They were all made out to ERONG STATION. So now we knew just EXACTLY where we were!

We filled a couple of empty 20 litre kerosene cans with car petrol from a drum in their shed and carried them back to our clearing. We topped up the Tiger's tank and then took off again and flew on to Landor.

Very happy to arrive there.

I told Bill Darcey, the manager of Landor, about landing at Erong and that we owed them for some petrol and oranges. He was amazed that we had found a clearing large enough in which to land and said that he would arrange payment for the petrol all OK.

The baits were made of beef brisket cut into small cubes, laced with strychnine and individually wrapped in plastic. They had been prepared at the butcher's shop in Meekatharra and sent out to Landor and Milgun Stations about a week earlier and, therefore, were a bit 'on the nose'. Next morning Bill Darcey filled a 20 litre container with baits and using his wife's flour scoop, got in the front cockpit, with me in the rear cockpit and we took off to spread the baits.

The first scoopful got caught in the slipstream when he threw it from the front cockpit and came back, hitting inside the rear cockpit just near my head, so I had

to adopt the procedure of side-slipping the Tiger each time he tossed out the baits, to avoid being hit in the face by them.

We dropped them in the area around Mt. Augustus. Nelson Hill and I took turns doing several short flights over a day and a half. We then we flew to Milgun Station, where we did more flights with the owner, Bill Butcher, dropping the baits for a day or so. After this we flew back to Perth via Meekatharra, Yalgoo, overnight Three Springs and next day back to Maylands.

I am pleased to say that the journey home was not as eventful as our outward trip, but there was really no pleasure in it for us, because flying in open cockpits was never comfortable. This had been an experiment, 'Aerial Baiting' - First ever in the world! I never heard of any positive result. Fortunately, I never had to do it again! In later years it was repeated using an Anson or a Dove, where there was a chute fitted to the door of the aircraft and the baits shovelled out through it. Another of our Pilots, Frank Properjohn, liked doing it each year and the rest of us had no wish, whatsoever, to spoil his enjoyment!

MILIFE 33

Joan and I were very happy, living at City Beach and her Mother lived with us. During the summer months we often had friends come to stay with us to enjoy the beach. On one occasion, Linda Foster and her Fiancée, Bill Hales, from Melbourne, still in the Navy at the time, came to stay with us for a week -end. Joan and I both liked Bill very much from then on. In the other months of the year we would sometimes go for a trip down to the south-west in our little car, which took us everywhere. We went to Kalgoorlie, spending a night en route at Merredin where we stayed with one of my pre -war mates, Les Pages-Oliver and his wife, Nancy. Les was then a Sergeant in the Police Force.

The road as far as Southern Cross was sealed bitumen, but from there to Coolgardie it was unsealed, corrugated gravel and in some places very sandy. From Kalgoorlie, we went down to Norseman, stayed overnight then on to Esperance, all on unsealed roads. We liked Esperance very much. Beautiful bays and beaches all nearby. Then back home again over the same roads. We only travelled at about 35 M.P.H (56Kms) in our little car. Another time we went down Donnybrook, stayed the night with Uncle John and Aunt Bowie and then on to Manjimup. Next day back on unsealed roads again down to Walpole, then Denmark, then Albany, before we got back on sealed road again for the trip home to Perth.

In July 1947, Airlines got a contract with the Evening Newspaper,' The Daily News' to drop papers at several towns throughout the South West. The idea was to drop the bundles of papers in cleared paddocks, close to these towns. The little Dragonfly was to be used and a hole was put in the floor. A hinged flap was fitted over this hole. We usually left Perth about 1 pm.

One of the apprentices from the Hangar came along to drop out the bundles of papers when the pilot called out, as the aircraft was flown at about 200 feet above the chosen paddock. There the local newsagent was ready to collect them. We dropped papers at Pinjarra, Waroona, Yarloop, Harvey, Collie, Brunswick, Bunbury, Capel, Busselton, Nannup, Manjimup, Bridgetown, Greenbushes, Balingup and finally, Donnybrook.

By this time, the Walkers had moved to another property at Argyle, about five miles from Donnybrook. I always had a single paper, rolled up tightly, which I threw out the front window of the aircraft to them, after first flying over the house to bring them outside. They must have been the only farmers in W.A. to have their evening paper delivered by air. It gave them a great thrill and I thoroughly enjoyed it too! Every time I saw them waving up to me, I had wonderful memories of those times when I had stayed with them as a boy.

MILIFE 34

In early 1947 Airlines bought some ex RAAF Avro Ansons from Disposals. These were twin engined fabric covered monoplanes with retractable undercarriage, which had to be wound up and down by hand - 139 turns. Also the engines had to be 'hand cranked' to start them. So they were not as nice to fly as the Rapide.

In early 1948 we got our first De Havilland DH 104 'Dove', which was a lovely twin engined, all metal, low wing monoplane, retractable tricycle undercarriage, which meant it had better forward vision on the ground, with a nose wheel instead of all the previous aircraft with tail wheels. It was one of the first post war aircraft built. A beautiful aircraft to fly. We were still using the Ansons and Rapides of course, but we all preferred to fly the Dove. It could carry 8 passengers and was about 50 M.P.H. faster than the 110 M.P.H. Rapides or Ansons. It had radio fitted and we carried Hostesses who were also Radio Operators. Most of the time they looked after the passengers in the cabin, but were in the cockpit to operate the radio before and shortly after take off and again during final descent and landing.

By this time Linda and Bill Hales had been married in Perth, and had gone to live at Strathmore in Melbourne, where Bill worked in his father's Confectionary Factory. Joan was Matron of Honour at their wedding.

As I said earlier, Airlines was a very happy little Company. We all knew each other well. We often had Social Club picnics or dances at the Perth Rowing Club Rooms on the banks of the river near Barrack St. We had 10 Pilots and we worked fairly hard. As well as flying the aircraft we refuelled them, loaded and unloaded luggage and any cargo at each stop away from Perth. But it worked

both ways. The company gave us free travel for ourselves and our wives if we wanted to go to one of our ports of call for a holiday.

However, I was getting 'itchy feet' to fly larger aircraft again. I applied for a job in Australian National Airlines in Melbourne, but at first they would not accept me because they did not like to 'steal' pilots from other smaller Companies. I persisted with my applications and finally, with some help from Keith Nichols, a Senior A.N.A. Captain who lived at City Beach, they accepted me in late 1948. Airlines did not object, they said they would not stand in my way and wished me well in A.N.A. The job meant living in Melbourne of course, so Joan and I decided that she would stay at City Beach until I organised some accommodation for us in Melbourne. Joan still had a good job with the State Saw Mills Office in Perth.

MILIFE 35

I joined A.N.A. at the end of November 1948. I was to be a First Officer on Douglas DC 4 Airliners, based in Melbourne. The DC4 was a large 4 engined, all metal, low wing monoplane, which carried 44 passengers.

It had a normal crew of 2 pilots and 2 Hostesses for operations within Australia. At first, along with several other new pilots who had just joined ANA, I lived in the Essendon Hotel, not far from the Airport. We went to various lectures each day at the ANA School at the airport to learn all about the workings of the aircraft and also did some circuits to get our endorsement on the type. As a 'Probationary First Officer' my salary for the first three months was only 8 pounds 10 shillings (\$17) per week.

After several weeks of 'House Hunting', I managed to rent a small flat in North Essendon, not far from Bill and Linda's house in Strathmore. So Joan resigned from her job and came over to join me. We also arranged to have our little car brought over by ship. Joan's mother stayed at City Beach. We lived in this tiny flat for about 12 months. During this time I was flying in the DC 4 to all Capital Cities in Australia. Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Launceston and Perth. Some of the worst flying conditions I experienced throughout my entire career were in these unpressurised aircraft, flying below 10,000 feet over the Mountain country between Melbourne and Sydney. Heavy rain, hail, icing and severe turbulence. Not much fun at all!

At home in the flat I was busy doing a Flight Navigation Course by correspondence. It took me about 18 months all told to complete the course and pass all the exams in Maths, Spherical Trigonometry, Navigation plotting, Meteorology, Magnetism and compasses, Astro navigation and several other subjects. I later had to carry out 100 hours flying as a Navigator on our longest sectors Adelaide to Perth and return. I had to take Astro Shots with a Sextant and fix our position by the stars on 30 occasions. Then a final Check out by an

approved Navigator before I qualified for my Flight Navigator Licence, which gave me an extra \$200 per year whilst I was with ANA.

We got around a little in our car. Down to Lorne on the coast west of Melbourne and up to Mt. Donna Buang, where Joan saw snow for the first time.

We saw a lot of Linda and Bill and also Bill's father, Bill 'Pop' Hales and Bill's Step Mother, Claire. They were all wonderful to us. Took us out to several functions and to meet many of their friends. Bill was a keen sailor and I often went to the St. Kilda Yacht club with him. I also became a 'NON PLAYING BOWLS MEMBER' of the Essendon Sporting Club, where we could have a drink after the 6 o'clock closing time in Melbourne in those days. Thus we avoided the notorious 'Six O'clock Swill', which occurred at the pubs daily.

MILIFE 36

After we had been in Melbourne for about 12 months we managed to buy a newly completed weatherboard house at 15 Ryder St., East Keilor, not far from the present day Tullamarine Airport. At that time it was very difficult to buy or rent any kind of house or flat in Melbourne. We sold the house at City Beach and Joan's mother came to live with us in Melbourne, so we were all settled together again.

ANA had a 49% share in AIR CEYLON and began operating flights for that Company early in 1950. In February and March I went out on one of these operations. Alf Farch was the Captain, John Hooke the Senior First Officer and I was the Junior First Officer. We flew from Sydney to Darwin to Singapore, where we stayed overnight. Next day to Colombo where another crew took over to fly the service onwards.

We lived in Colombo for a month, flying across to Singapore and return, or up to Bombay, Karachi and Cairo, where there was another crew change. We had a couple of days in Cairo whilst the aircraft was flown to Rome and London and return, then we took it back to Colombo.

After about a month operating from Colombo, our crew had a month based in Cairo, where we flew to Rome and London, had two nights and a day there and then back to Cairo, to await the next service a week later.

Whilst based in Cairo we took the opportunity to visit the Pyramids, which I had already seen in 1941 when I was in Egypt en route to Rhodesia. On this occasion, we were able to climb (over the large blocks of limestone of which it was constructed) to the very top of the larger Pyramid and from there, look down on the Sphinx. It was a rare experience, which I will never forget. In order to save wearing them away, it has not been permitted to climb the Pyramids for several years now.

I returned to Melbourne in late March and continued with the usual flights around Australian cities. On the 21st Aug.1950, our first son, Kenneth Ross, was born at St. Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne. It was a very proud and happy day for Joan and me!

In October I did another fairly quick trip out to Cairo and return with only short overnight stays in Singapore, Colombo and Cairo and several long stages as a passenger. We had bunks in the forward upper cargo lockers where we were able to get fairly good sleep.

Joan and I were fairly happy in our home in East Keilor, but there was no sign of any promotion in the near future. What is more, when promotion did come around it would be to the position of a DC3 Captain and this may have meant moving to Adelaide, Sydney or Brisbane. So we decided that we would prefer to move back to Perth as soon as we could.

MILIFE 37

In early December 1950, I wrote to MacRobertson Miller Airlines in Perth and applied for a job as a First Officer flying on the DC3 aircraft, which they operated. MMA used to fly up the coast from Perth to Darwin via all the towns en route, whilst AWA covered the inland towns as far as Port Hedland. They offered me a position, so I resigned from ANA. We sold our house in Keilor and the four of us, Joan, her mother, Kenneth and I flew back to Perth in January 1951. At the time Kenneth was only 5 months old.

We stayed with my Mother and Step Father in their house in Subiaco. My brothers Alan and Bill and my stepbrother, Harold were also living there, so it was rather crowded, and Joan and I were constantly on the look out for some place to rent. I started work with MMA flying as a First Officer on DC3s in Jan. 1951. But it did not turn out well. I was never home!. Out of 43 days I had more than 20 overnights, and always seemed to be in the MMA Company Hostel at Derby, which was pretty rough.

About the middle of April I approached AWA, and they said they would love to have me back. So I resigned from MMA, which did not please their Managing Director, Cyril Kleinig, very much and I was happy to rejoin AWA. It was great to get back in those lovely little Doves again, flying as Captain with a Radio Operator/Hostess as crew.

Joan and I bought a block of land at 114 Grovedale Rd., Floreat Park. We paid 475 pounds for it (\$950). The same block now is worth well over \$300,000. We tried to get a Builder to start building a house for us, but they were all too busy and told us to come back in about 12 months. So I decided to try to do it myself by employing different contractors for the various trades. It was a lot of hard

work for me. Building supplies were still hard to get after the war, which had ended 5 YEARS EARLIER.! However, I stuck at it. Arranging with different contractors to do the work, as it was required and often doing a lot of the physical unskilled work myself, with help from my friends.

I completed the house to a stage where we were able to move in to live, in about 11 months. It took many more months to completely finish it. We moved in a week before Kenneth's second birthday. Fortunately, I was home most nights. We had 10 pilots and, apart from Nelson Hill, who was now the Chief Pilot, the other 9 of us would spend one week in every nine based in Meekatharra, to operate the northern section of our flights. The other pilots would bring the aircraft up to Meekatharra, spend the day resting, and then take the aircraft back to Perth that night. They also operated other routes, which did not go north of Meeka. So, apart from our week at Meeka every 9 weeks, we were home every night.

MILIFE 38

Airlines had 3 Doves at this time and all was going well. I had my one week in every nine at Meekatharra, where I got to know several of the locals, including Stuart White, who worked in the Bank of N.S.W. and has been a close friend ever since. At home Kenneth was growing up quickly and we were very happy. Joan's mother lived with us and she worked at Foys Department Store in Perth.

However, on the 15th October 1951 a tragedy occurred. I had flown the Dove VH-AQO to Kalgoorlie and back that morning, arriving back at Perth Airport at 1130. At 1 pm, with pilot Charles 'Robin' Hood and Radio/Hostess Dorothy Riley as crew, it departed again for Kalgoorlie. 90 minutes later it crashed about 30 miles west of Kalgoorlie Airport. The crew and 5 passengers were all killed instantly. The cause was failure of the main spar due to metal fatigue, resulting in the port wing falling off. An example of metal fatigue can be seen if you get a piece of wire and keep bending it back and forth. After a while it will break.

This particular Dove had flown more hours than any other in the world at that time. What is more, a lot of the time it had been operated on our routes where there was always a lot of thermal turbulence, especially in the Marble Bar, Nullagine area. This turbulence caused buffeting and flexing of the wing, which brought on fatigue in the main spar located across the aircraft cabin near the second row of passenger seats.

I had been very lucky. The morning flight to Kalgoorlie and return had been in very smooth conditions, which existed before the sun heated up the ground. On the afternoon flight, on the descent to Kalgoorlie around 3 pm, the turbulence was quite considerable and this was 'The last straw that broke the Camel's back'

Our other two Doves were thoroughly examined and cracks were found in the main spars of each of them, so all Doves throughout the world were grounded. The metal used for the construction of the Dove main spar was a new type of alloy, which needed further development. Another fatigue problem in the De Havilland Comet (the first Jet Airliner built) caused fuselage failure and several bad crashes overseas, around the same time. Since then, all new types of aircraft are 'tested to destruction' in large water tanks before being certified for construction.

With our remaining two Doves grounded, we had to borrow a couple of Ansons from MMA and get some of our old Ansons out of 'Mothballs' in order to keep operating. So we had several months flying the slower, noisy, drafty, cold Ansons again. De Havilland designed a new, stronger, main spar, but we did not get our Doves back into service until January 1952, after the new spars were fitted.

MILIFE 39

It was great to be back on the Doves again, but, because we only had two of them, we had to use Ansons on some flights until we got more Doves later on.

I forgot to mention earlier, that before we left Melbourne we sold our little 1939 Standard 9 H.P. car. I had paid 230 pounds (\$460) for it when I bought it in 1946. I sold it for 250 pounds (\$ 500). A few days after we arrived back in Perth, I bought a second-hand 1948 Standard Vanguard sedan. A very comfortable 4-cylinder motorcar.

On the 1st Feb. 1952, when he was only 2 years and 6 months old, I took Kenneth to Rottnest in an Anson. He sat in the Co-Pilot seat on the right side of the cockpit. After that, on several occasions before he reached school age, he used to fly to Rottnest with me in the Doves, sitting in the Co-Pilot's seat with my cap on his head. He thought it was great! If I had to do several trips consecutively, I would often leave him over there whilst I flew to Perth and back again. 'Tiny' Love, a genial giant of a man who drove the truck to carry passengers between the aerodrome and the settlement, would look after him whilst I was away. When I got back to Rottnest, often Kenneth was standing near to the aircraft parking area, with a big smile on his face and a BIG ice cream in his hand.

I remember another occasion one morning, when Tom Buckingham, the groundsman at the Rottnest aerodrome gave me a parcel with a couple of crayfish in it. All well wrapped in newspaper. When I got back to Perth Airport I had to do a trip to Kalgoorlie and back, so I put the parcel in the large fridge at the hangar until I returned later in the afternoon. I took it home to Joan that night and while I was changing my clothes, she decided to rewrap them up in cleaner

paper. There was a scream from the kitchen, so I dashed out to see the crabs walking across the table. They were both still alive ! After being in the fridge all day! I had thought they were already cooked when Tom gave them to me. Joan was not pleased, but enjoyed them later, after I drowned them and then cooked them.

On the 1st of June 1953, the day before the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth 2nd, our second son, Neil Stephen, was born at King Edward Memorial Hospital in Subiaco. We were delighted to have the two boys.

I remember taking Kenneth to see a film 'The Sound Barrier' (all about aeroplanes, of course) and I bought him a little toy Tractor which he held up outside the hospital, so that Joan could see him from her room. At that time, children were not permitted to visit Maternity Hospitals. Don't ask me why!

MILIFE 40

For the next couple of years everything went along smoothly. Airlines gradually got more Doves until we had 5 of them. We still flew the normal routes and often had to do small running repairs on the aircraft when away from Perth. Changing spark plugs fairly often. On a couple of occasions I had also changed a tyre after a puncture at one of the bush airstrips.

Keith Cambridge and John Verrier, two friends I had known for many years, were both Freemasons and, in July 1951, I joined Adastral Lodge (mainly ex Air Force blokes) with them. Stuart White joined the Lodge in Meekatharra shortly afterwards. A few years later, when Stuart returned to work in Perth, I nominated him into Adastral and we all had several happy years together in that Lodge.

I often met some very interesting people on flights I flew. On one occasion I carried the W.A. Governor, Sir Charles Gairdiner, and he sat in the cockpit for quite some time with me. He was a very friendly and interesting man.

Burl Ives, a well-known American singer and actor went to Kalgoorlie with me. He was a VERY large man and the company had a special large seat made up for him. This was announced in the press and I don't think Mr. Ives was too pleased about it, because, as soon as he got in the aircraft at Perth, he asked me if he could be my Co-Pilot and sit in the right hand seat in the cockpit. I could not refuse! He was a lovely man. Had his own aircraft in USA. We chatted all the way to Kalgoorlie. So he never sat in that special large seat.

In December 1953 I took a team of reporters up to Learmonth when Wapet first struck oil while drilling at Rough Range. We carried a small motor scooter in the Anson with us. The Wapet manager would not let the Press use the company radio to send out messages. Later that night, after he had got the story, Lloyd Marshall (a well known reporter) and I went back to the strip on the scooter to try

to send a message back to DCA Aeradio at Carnarvon. We had difficulty getting through and, finally, I had to start one of the Anson engines to keep the battery charged while I sent the message using the Morse key. Not at all easy, but we got the story to Perth for next day's newspaper.

In March 1954, when Queen Elizabeth made her first visit to W.A., I took several journalists to Kalgoorlie to be there when she arrived from Adelaide. She and the Duke were only a couple of feet away from me as they walked past to get in their car to visit the towns of Kalgoorlie and Boulder. They both nodded and smiled. Of course, I smiled back..... but I did not bow to her !

MILIFE 41

In about July 1955, MacRobertson Miller Aviation Company merged with Airlines (W.A.) Ltd. to become MacRobertson Miller Airlines Ltd. This did not please too many of the Staff. Airlines (W.A.) Ltd. would no longer be the small happy Company it had been in the past and several of the First Officers in MMA were upset because the merger would reduce their prospects of early promotion to DC3 Captain. We had 5 DC3s and 5 Doves and about 35 pilots, I think.

Because I had previously flown DC3s when I had been with MMA back in 1951, I was put under training straight away and a couple of months later I was promoted to DC3 Captain. The DC3 was a twin engined all metal aircraft and was the best-known aircraft in civil aviation for many years before and after the war. The normal crew was two pilots and one Hostess. I was flying our normal routes up the coast to Geraldton, Carnarvon, Learmonth, Onslow, Roebourne, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby, Wyndham and Darwin as well as the inland towns of Mt. Magnet, Meekatharra, and Kalgoorlie.

We stayed overnight at Port Hedland, Derby, and Darwin. Occasionally, I still did a flight in a Dove to Rottneest.

In July 1956 I had a month based at Glenroy Station in the Kimberleys. MMA was involved in the Air Beef Scheme, where cattle from various surrounding stations were brought into Glenroy during May to October. An abattoir was set up at Glenroy with a team of butchers based there for the season. MMA had two crews based there during these months. After the cattle were slaughtered, the carcasses were chilled overnight and then were flown in to the large Meatworks at Wyndham, prior to export. On the return trip we would bring back all kinds of supplies, including diesel fuel for Glenroy. There were usually 3 flights each day, hence the need for two crews.

We lived in Nissan Huts, similar to those I had lived in when I was in Scotland several years before. However, on this occasion they were open-ended and there was certainly no need for a potbelly stove!. Conditions were a bit primitive,

but the food was good, the weather ideal and, at times, we had a lot of fun. Nevertheless, a month was plenty long enough and I was pleased when it was my turn to go home.

MILIFE 42

In February 1956, Kenneth started school at Floreat Park Primary. He liked school and soon settled in very well - not like his Dad! I often had time off during the week and would take both boys in to Perth to go to the newsreel theatre during school holidays, to see cartoons, which they both enjoyed. Neil used to call them 'tooncars'.

Nothing outstanding occurred during the next couple of years. I was flying the DC3s around W.A. and, every so often, I would have a couple of nights away from home at Port Hedland or Derby.

Neil went to kindergarten a couple of days each week after he was about 5 years old. He seemed to enjoy it. He started school at Floreat early in 1959, but was not too keen about it.

In Feb.1959 I spent a month out at Giles, a weather station south west of Ayer's Rock, just inside the W.A. Border. We were doing high level Aerial Photography for the W.A. Dept. of Lands and Survey. There were 2 MMA crews plus a camera expert and a navigator from Lands and Surveys. We had to fly at about 30,000 feet, so, as the DC3 was not pressurised, we had to have oxygen masks on for several hours each trip. Occasionally, lifting the mask a little to stuff a sandwich in our mouth. A couple of days before we were due to come home, I had a fall playing Badminton one evening and landed with my fist and the bat under my right ribs. I was in agony for those last few days and found out, after seeing a Doctor on my return to Perth, that I had cracked a couple of ribs. I had a week off flying and it soon got better again.

In late April I was told that the Company wanted me to go up to Derby for TWO YEARS ! I was not at all happy about it and told them so. However, after a couple of hours arguing with the Managing Director, Cyril Kleinig, he told me I had to go - or else! So we were off to Derby to live! There was a Company house for us in Derby. Joan's mother stayed in Perth living in our house at Floreat. We had to take Kenneth and Neil away from Floreat School, where Neil was just starting to settle in a bit.

When we arrived in Derby in late May it was still quite hot. The house had been empty for a couple of weeks and there were large cockroaches all around the place. The Kerosene Fridge was not working properly and I had to get Kenneth to ride down to the MMA office several times each day to fill our thermos with cold water for us to drink. After a couple of days I got the fridge to work a bit

better and we used lots of insect spray to get rid of the cockroaches, but we had to do this regularly.

MILIFE 43

Kenneth and Neil started school in Derby a couple of days later, but Neil did not like it at all. On one occasion, he came home mid-morning, saying, " I am never going back to that school again. They sat me next to Betty Oombagi (an aboriginal girl), and she had a runny nose !" Fortunately, he was moved next day.

The flying out of Derby was quite good. Dick Evans, an Englishman who was once in the Indian Army was my First Officer. He was single and lived in the MMA Hostel, which was used for staging crews and also several traffic staff lived there. Apart from an occasional argument, Dick and I got on well together.

Every Tuesday we left Derby to go to Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Flora Valley, Ord River, Nicholson. Wave hill, Victoria River Downs, Daly River and Darwin. Next day we would go on the Mission Run out east of Darwin. One week to Millingimbi, Elcho Island, Gove, Groote Eylandt and return and the next week to Oenpelli, Croker Island, Goldbourne Island, Snake Bay, Bathurst Island and back to Darwin. Then on the Thursday back to Derby via Port Keats, Ivanhoe, Wyndham, Gibb River. Quite often we would go to other Stations as required. Once a fortnight we would do a run around all the stations along the Fitzroy River and stay overnight at either Halls Creek or Wyndham. Usually more than 30 landings each week, so we were getting plenty of practice.

On one occasion Joan and the boys went to Darwin on the direct service and came out with me on the Short Mission Run to Croker Island etc., then home through Port Keats and Wyndham on the Thursday. On another occasion, they came on the River Run and stayed overnight at Halls Creek. It was the weekend of the Halls Creek Races, which we attended on the Friday afternoon. Joan and I stayed at the Halls Creek Hotel and the boys were in the dormitory at the Methodist Inland Mission School, which they both enjoyed very much. Once a month we had a trip to take supplies out to the lighthouse keepers at Cape Leveque. Joan and the boys came on one occasion and were able to have a swim in the lovely clear ocean water out there. At Derby, the water was always muddy and had plenty of crocodiles!

There was a town pool at Derby, but it was not too good. Both Kenneth and I got ear infections from the pool. Kenneth had a couple of days in the Derby Hospital. I flew up to Darwin on the three-day run whilst I had an ear infection and burst my left eardrum. I was in agony with my ear in Derby for a week or so and finally had to go to Perth for Specialist treatment.

MILIFE 44

I saw the ear specialist in Perth and, after a few days of the proper treatment the infection was cleared up OK, but I still had a small hole in my left eardrum. The Specialist told me he could put me in hospital and try to graft some skin on it, but, in those days, it was not always successful.

He suggested that, as the hearing in that ear was still normal, perhaps I should leave it alone. I agreed. Having the hole there was an advantage for flying, because there would be no pressure build up on the ear drum, but I would have to take care not to get another infection there. Ever since then, I have had to wear an earplug when swimming and could not do any diving. Kenneth and Neil often used to say that, if I were to get a hole in my right eardrum, you would be able to see right through. CHEEKY BEGGARS!

Some time later Joan's Mother broke her ankle, so Joan and the boys went back to Perth to look after her for about a month. There was not much to do at night in Derby. No TV in those days and the radio reception was not too good. Once each week we would go to the movies at the outdoor pictures. Sat in deck chairs. One of the two films shown each time was always a Western, to keep the Aboriginals happy. During the 'Wet' season often our evening pastime was to sit on our front verandah and watch the spectacular lightning in the nearby thunderstorms.

I mentioned that we often did 30 landings in a week when I was based in Derby. It may be of interest to know that in all my service with Airlines and MMA over the years, I landed at well over 100 different aerodromes throughout W.A. and Northern Territory.

Allowing for my annual one month's leave, I spent 22 months living in Derby. What with going down to Perth when her mother broke her ankle, plus trips to Perth during school holidays, Joan and the boys probably only had a total of about 12 months. But none of us liked living in Derby. It was very hot and humid during the 'Wet' and we did not even have ceiling fans, just oscillating table fans. For quite a while we only had that terrible kerosene fridge, but finally the Company sent us a real electric one.

However, it gave Kenneth and Neil the opportunity to see a bit of the north west and helped to make us a very close family. We finally came back home in the middle of April 1961. By this time, after 15 years in civil aviation, plus my 4 1/2 years in the RAAF, I had a total of just over 15,000 hours in my logbook.

MILIFE 45

Shortly after we returned from Derby, I was appointed as a DC3 Training Captain. This meant I would be training pilots, who had just joined the Company,

to become proficient First Officers and Senior First Officers to become Captains. I enjoyed it very much, teaching them all I had learnt over the years.

Nelson Hill used to say, " Flying is a strange business. You start off in the right hand seat. (as a First Officer). After some hard work and experience you move to the left hand seat (as a Captain) and then after more work and experience, you finish up back in the right hand seat!" (as a Training Captain)

Around this time we bought our first boat. An 11 foot blue Lightburn Fibreglass Dinghy with a 5 H.P. Johnson Outboard Motor. We carried it on a small Lightburn box trailer. We had lots of fun in it. At first we used to go up the river as far as we could. Well past Midland. Then we used to launch it at Cockburn Sound and go across to Carnac Island and the northern end of Garden Island. We even went right around Garden Island on a couple of occasions when the weather was OK.

We went fishing in it and often caught lots of herring and skippy. We also used it out from Safety Bay and in Shoalwater Bay. Joan liked it and the boys loved it! Great family fun together.

Whilst on the subject of boats, we had several cars over the years, as below.

A second hand 1939 Standard Nine bought in 1946.

A second hand 1948 Standard Vanguard. bought in 1951

A new dark green Standard 8 H.P. Cadet in 1953

A second hand 1956 grey Hillman Minx, bought about 1958

A second hand Green 1964 Holden Sedan, bought in 1966

A second hand cream 1966 Triumph 2000, bought in 1969

A new bamboo coloured 1973 Triumph 2500

A new white 1978 Triumph 2.5

A new white 1987 Holden Camira

In July 1998 we bought a new Silver Mitsubishi Lancer, which we still have today (22nd April 2003)

Additionally, Joan had her own Hillman Minx, Subaru, Morris Mini and her all time favourite, a yellow, 3 cylinder, Suzuki Hatch - automatic!

In about 1962 Joan and I drove the Hillman to Kalgoorlie, put the car on the train to Port Pirie and then drove to Adelaide, Mt. Gambier around the coast to Melbourne. We then went through the Snowy Mountains, Canberra, & Sydney. We returned to Adelaide via Mildura and then up to Port Pirie, back on the train to Kalgoorlie and then drove home to Perth. It was a most enjoyable trip all round.

MILIFE 46

In 1963, Ansett Airlines in Melbourne bought a controlling interest in MacRobertson Miller Airlines Ltd. and in November of that year I went to

Melbourne for a month, with about six other MMA Pilots, to do the Endorsement Engineering Course on the Fokker F27 'Friendship', at Ansett's ground school at Essendon Airport. It was a fairly intensive course, but I managed to achieve very good results. Back in Perth, I did the flying Endorsement on the F27 in February 1964

The Fokker F27 was a very nice aircraft. It carried 36 passengers (the DC3 carried only 28 passengers) and was a high wing all metal monoplane with two Rolls Royce 'Dart' Turbo-Prop Engines and a tricycle undercarriage, which I much preferred to the older tail wheeled aircraft like the DC3.

For some reason, it was late June before I was flying the F27 regularly on our routes. I enjoyed flying the F27 much more than the DC 3. It flew faster (250 knots instead of 150 knots like the DC3) and, being pressurised, much higher. Up to 18,000 or 20,000 feet. So we could fly above the turbulence, which we often experienced in the DC3 below 10,000 feet.

We used to fly the F27 from Perth to Hedland, Broome, Derby and there we would change crews. The next crew took the F27 up to Darwin and back to Derby and a third crew would fly the aircraft back from Derby to Perth.

Occasionally, I would still do a trip in a DC 3, which I never enjoyed too much after flying the F27

In 1966 I had 4 1/2 months Long Service Leave. Joan and I went for a long holiday trip overseas. We got very generous discounts with several International Airlines and had previously been to Fiji. On this trip we flew to Rome, had a few days there and then flew on to London. After a week in London we picked up a Dormobile Camper Van and travelled around southern England, where we visited some places I had been to during the war, such as Bournemouth, Poole, Plymouth etc. We then took the Dormobile to Europe by ferry and drove to Paris, Luxemburg, Munich, Austria, Venice, Geneva, Amsterdam, Brussels and several other places

We returned to England and visited Scotland before flying back home with a day stop over in Singapore.

Soon after we arrived home, I took Kenneth and Neil over to Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. We also had a bus trip all around the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme, where the boys saw snow for the first time.

We had a wonderful time together, while Joan enjoyed the rest at home.

MILIFE 47

In later years, Joan and I flew to several places throughout the world. We went to South Africa, Kruger Park, Jo'Burg, Capetown and, of course, to Joan's

Favourite, the Victoria Falls. She was so excited she almost fell over the edge into the Gorge below when she first arrived there. We had the best room in the lovely old Colonial style hotel. Right at the end of one long corridor with a view straight up the Gorge to the Bridge and Main Falls behind it. When I made the booking, I told them I had stayed there several times during the war. We flew around the falls in a light aircraft and had magnificent views of them.

We have also been to California, where my brother Alan was living near San Francisco, to Disneyland, the Grand Canyon, Los Angeles, Las Vegas. On another occasion to Madrid, Barcelona, Nice, Cannes, Corfu, Athens, The Greek Islands of Rhodes, Kos, Mykonos. To Copenhagen in Denmark. Oslo and Bergen in Norway. A lovely trip all around New Zealand. To Honolulu which did not impress us very much.

We have been to Cairns and Townsville on several occasions and we both enjoyed snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef. Heron Island was another lovely holiday. We have been to Alice Springs and Ayer's Rock, but did not climb it. On several occasions we flew to Melbourne to stay with Linda and Bill.

We have also been to Bangkok and Hong Kong and to Bali So we could almost sing,

" WE'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE MAN!"

Shortly after our return from Long Service Leave, I was appointed as a Training Captain on the F27 and carried out these duties for several years.

Later I became a Check Captain on the F27. A Training Captain is appointed by the Airline and does all the en route training of both First Officers and Captains. A Check Captain is appointed by the Company, but has to be approved by the Dept. Of Civil Aviation to carry out both En Route and Local Proficiency Checks for renewal of Licences.

Every six months a Captain has to pass a Medical Exam, A Route Check and a Local Proficiency Check, which means demonstrating his ability to handle all kinds of emergencies such as Engine Failure at a critical time during Take Off on instruments, single engine instrument approach and go around from minimum altitude, flapless landings, rejected take after engine failure just before reaching minimum take off speed and a few others. Usually, a newly appointed Check Captain had to check another pilot on all these things whilst under supervision of a D.C.A. Examiner of Airmen.

MILIFE 48

A Check Captain also carried out all the Endorsement training when a pilot was converting on to another type of aircraft. D.C.A. only required First Officers to have a Route Check every 12 months, but, as far as possible, we liked to give

them both a Route Check and an abbreviated Local Proficiency Check every 6 months. It was a good investment.

In 1958, Joan's mother retired from Foys and built a small house at 68 Fifth Avenue, Shoalwater Bay. Even though she lived down there, Joan spoke to her on the phone every day. She often came up to Perth for a couple of days and we would often spend a weekend down with her. About this time we sold our Lightburn Dinghy and bought a new, grey, 14 ft. Glasscraft Runabout with a 40 H.P. Johnson Outboard. We all learnt to Water Ski. Kenneth picked it up first day he tried. Neil was proficient next day and I took a few more attempts. Shortly afterwards Joan was OK as well.

We used to Ski in Shoalwater Bay and at Chidley Point in the Swan River. We all progressed to a single ski in due time and we taught several of our friends how to ski also. In this boat I made a couple of trips to Rottnest on days when the weather was suitable. After about three years we traded this boat in, on a 15 ft. Carribean Cobra, white fibreglass with red trim. It had a 100 H.P. Mercury Outboard. A lovely little outfit. Really great for Water Ski-ing. We made several trips around Garden Island or over to Carnac and sometimes to Rottnest.

We had this boat for about 8 years and, like all our other boats, it helped keep the family together around the time when the boys were getting other interests.

After Kenneth finished primary school at Floreat, he went to Christ Church Grammar School at Claremont. Neil followed him a couple of years later. After High School, Kenneth studied Dentistry at the University of W.A. After Neil finished High School, he studied Pharmacy at the W.A. Institute of Technology. So they both finished up with good Professions behind them.

I flew the F27 until early in 1970 when I converted on to our latest aircraft the Fokker F 28. This was a lovely aeroplane. Next to the Sunderland it was my favourite. It was a low wing all metal aircraft with twin jet engines mounted on the fuselage near the tail. It had a cruising speed over 500 M.P.H. and could operate at altitudes up to 35,00 feet. After my conversion and a few weeks of Route Training, it was only a month or two before I was appointed as a Training Captain on the F28.

MILIFE 49

In July 1970, I went to London and then to Amsterdam with British Airways and K.L.M., to ferry our second F28, FKB, out to Perth, with John Whitcomb of Ansett and Syd Goddard, our 2nd top Pilot in M.M.A. This was a great experience. After a few days in Amsterdam we flew down to Brindisi on the toe of Italy, then to Ankara in Turkey. Next day to Teheran and Karachi. Next day to Calcutta,

Bangkok and Singapore and the last day to Bali, Port Hedland and Perth. So it took 4 days all told.

A few weeks later the Company got me to go back to Amsterdam to ferry out an F27. Kay Patterson and George Bailey came with me as co-pilots. We also had a Navigator and an Engineer from Ansett. The F27 trip was much slower and at a lower altitude. First day to Brindisi, next day to Ankara. Third day to Teheran and Karachi. Fourth day to Delhi and Calcutta (Worst city I have ever seen in my life)

Fifth day to Bangkok and Singapore. We had a pleasant 'free' day there. Last day, No 7, we flew to Bali, Port Hedland and home to Perth. So, because of the lower speed, it took 7 days, instead of the 4 in the F28.

Early in 1971, I was approved as an F28 Check Captain and later that year I was approved to do Jet Conversion Training. This I enjoyed very much. It usually meant 10 hours conversion for each Captain and 6 hours for each First Officer. A lot of it at Perth Airport, but because of noise restrictions at that Airport, I often had to take the aircraft up to Geraldton for both day and night circuits. Sometimes doing as many as 26 circuits in an afternoon and evening endorsement period for two Captains.

In 1972, I was appointed to the position of F28 Flight Captain. This meant I was responsible for all the Checking and Training on the F28. I had to keep the F28 Operations Manual and Flight Study Guide up to date. Over a period of time I virtually re-wrote both of these. All the Check and Training Captains were responsible to me. In turn, I was responsible to the Flight Operations Manager Syd. Goddard.

I used to attend regular meetings of all Ansett Flight Captains (Boeing 727, Douglas DC9, Douglas DC 4, Fokker F27 and Myself F28) and other Senior Ansett Management Pilots in Melbourne.

Shortly after I was made F28 Flight Captain, Syd. Goddard gave me a DC 9 Test Flight Schedule and told me Ansett wanted me to write a similar one for the F28. There were about 35 or 40 pages in it, I think. I had to adapt each section to fit in with all the different systems of the F28 instead of the DC9. It took several weeks, but I finally completed it.

MILIFE 50

As F28 Flight Captain, in addition to my personal 30 hours flying each month, plus route Checks and Local Proficiency Checks or Endorsement work with other pilots, it was necessary for me to spend a lot of time in my office in the Operations Section at MMA, catching up with all the paper work I had to do-amending manuals etc.

When FKA, our first F28, had its first 12,000 hours Major overhaul, it took the engineers about six weeks, I think. The aircraft was stripped right down and almost rebuilt. As Flight Captain it was my job to carry out the very comprehensive Test Flight required after such an overhaul. Using the Test Flight Schedule I had written, it took about two and a half hours checking various items and systems on the ground before take off and then the actual Test Flight of all the different systems took a further three hours. The engineers had done a fantastic job. There were only a few minor items that required rectifying after the test Flight.

In July of 1972, Joan had to go into hospital for a Hysterectomy. She went into Avro Hospital, a small private hospital in Subiaco. We expected she would be there for about ten days maximum, but everything went wrong. She got some sort of infection in hospital, then she had Deep Vein Thrombosis in one leg and finally, after three weeks, she had to be moved by ambulance to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital where she remained for a further six weeks before they would let her go home. It was a terrible time for Joan. I made over 100 trips to hospital to see her. During this period I did not do any overnight stays. We were both very pleased when Joan finally came home from Hospital.

I forgot to mention before that in 1968 we bought a Mirror Dinghy Kit. The Mirror Dinghy was about 11feet on length. It was built by wiring ply wood panels together and then gluing them together with resin and fibreglass tape. It had a mast, a mainsail and a jib. Also a spinnaker for racing. We built it on our back veranda at Floreat. We painted it yellow and called it 'MIRRIFIC', meaning 'a shining example'!

We took it down to Safety Bay for a test sail. Kenneth and Neil toppled it over the first time they took it out, but it was easily righted again. We had a lot of fun with it. We used to put a small outboard on it, to go fishing in Shoalwater Bay. Neil joined the Safety Bay Yacht club and raced the Mirror there. One year he was Club Champion. He kept the Mirror for several years.

MILIFE 51

I also forgot to mention that I became the Master of Adastral Lodge in 1967. I served a second term as Master in 1981 and finally resigned from the Lodge in about 1992.

In Sept. 1974, as the F28 Flight Captain, I was sent to the F28 Operators' Conference in Amsterdam. I took the opportunity to go to London a week earlier, so that I could go to the Farnborough Air Show. Every second year this Show takes place to demonstrate the latest in aircraft production. Every other year, the Paris Air Show does likewise. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I travelled by train from London to Farnborough (about 50 miles) for 3 consecutive days, to see all the static and flying displays.

I had an invitation from Fokker to attend the Show each day and also enjoyed a very nice lunch in the Fokker Hospitality Pavilion each day.

After Farnborough, I flew across to Amsterdam for the F28 Conference. I was Ansett's Operational Representative and Arthur Taylor and Tony Musca were Ansett's Engineering Representatives. I knew them both very well from our associations at work in Perth. We had a great time. There were F28 Operators from many Airlines throughout the world. Fokker looked after us very well indeed.

Arthur, Tony and I flew home with Singapore Airlines after the Conference and we spent a very enjoyable day in Singapore on the way.

After the F28 Conference, I resumed my duties as F28 Flight Captain, which kept me pretty busy all the time. By 1976, I had grown tired of all the time I seemed to be spending in the Office and I resigned from the position of Flight Captain and became just a Check Captain again.

In 1977, we sold our 16 foot Carribean Cobra and bought a 19 foot Pacemaker Ensign with a 110 H.P. Mercury Outboard and a small half cabin with two bunks. The boat was white fibreglass with red trim. We also bought a second hand 1969 Holden to tow it to Perth Flying Squadron to launch it.

We were able to go to Rottnest in it with more comfort and safety than our earlier, smaller boats.

Keith Cambridge and John Verrier had larger diesel boats and, for several years, both had moorings in Rocky Bay, Narrow Neck, near the western end Of Rottnest With Keith's help, I later put down my own mooring in Narrow Neck.

MILIFE 52

Kenneth had graduated as a Dentist and, after a few months working for the Department of Health in their Mobile Clinic around the Murchison and at Towns in the Pilbara, he worked with a couple of different dentists in the metro area and finally settled in with a group of dentists in his own a practice in Hay St., Perth.

After graduating as a Pharmacist, Neil was working in a Pharmacy in Bunbury. He used to travel up to Perth each weekend and go sailing at Safety Bay Yacht Club each Sunday in the summer. Of course he stayed with Joan's Mother at her little house in Shoalwater on these occasions.

In March 1978, Joan's mother died very peacefully in her little home at Shoalwater Bay. A few years later, Joan sold the house, because we all had other interests at that time.

For some time, I had not really enjoyed my flying as much as in earlier days. Whilst I still enjoyed carrying out Local Proficiency Checks, I found the normal trips carrying passengers were a little boring.

Also, I had become a quite fed up with the Pilots Federation. In the very early days of the Federation, I had been W.A. Branch Secretary for a couple of years and worked quite hard at it, when we were trying to get much needed improvements to working conditions. However, like most unions, the Federation seemed to become more militant and unreasonable each year. Many of the newer young pilots were far too selfish and wanted too much.

There were a couple of occasions when I did not feel too well in the aircraft although, apart from slightly elevated blood pressure, there was nothing really wrong with me. Ever since my father died of a stroke when I was only fourteen, I had worried about it a bit, in case something similar was to happen to me whilst carrying a load of passengers.

Finally, after many sleepless nights, I decided that the time had come for me to 'Give it Away'.

The Company told me to take some sick leave and have a rest for a while, which I did for a couple of months, but I was still not comfortable about going back to flying and I finally retired in August 1978.

MILIFE 53

So, I had enjoyed a wonderful career in Aviation, flying from 1941 to 1978, a total of over 37 years. I had 25,875 hours and 45 minutes in my logbook. I had flown 13 different types of Aircraft, from fabric and wire biplanes to modern Jet Transports. I had been extremely lucky, on several occasions, just missing out on being involved in a tragedy, such as when the main spar failed in the Dove. I had been all around the world, met some great people and seen many wonderful places. Although there had been occasions when I had to spend time away from my home and family, there were other times, when I did not have to work during the week, and was able to take the boys to see all kinds things of interest.

Because of great discounts with other Airlines, Joan and I had visited many countries around the world.

IT HAD ALL BEEN A GREAT EXPERIENCE!

A couple of months before I retired we had sold our Pacemaker Ensign boat and bought a lovely 26 foot Penguin Striker (1st June 1978). All white fibreglass with some blue trim. It had twin Volvo Penta 125 H.P. Stern drives.

It had a small cabin with V-Berths up front, then a saloon area with table and seats that could be converted to a small double bed. There was a fridge, a stove, and a sink with cupboards underneath. Also a small lock up toilet compartment with a Porta Potti and washbasin. Aft of the saloon there was a reasonably large cockpit area with a canvas awning above and canvas blinds down each side. We did most of our entertaining there.

Behind the transom there was a large 'Swim Board' across the stern. It also had a small Flying Bridge, which could comfortably seat three.

Like our earlier boats we named it 'JONI'

J was the first letter in Joan

O was the second letter in Ross

N was the third letter in Kenneth

I was the third letter in Neil

It was too large to be a 'Trailer' boat and, at first, we kept it in a Pen I rented at Coleman's boat building factory at North Fremantle. After about 6 months we moved to a Pen at Claremont Yacht Club, where I was a member with Keith Cambridge.

MILIFE 54

After I retired Joan and I took every opportunity to go to Narrow Neck in our boat. During the months from December to April we would often spend 5 nights over there, then 5 or 6 nights at home before another trip to N.N. We had several friends who had boats moored nearby. Keith and Jean Cambridge, John and Eileen Verrier, John Kuring, who was at Modern School in the same class as I was in 1936 and 1937, and his wife, Laurel, and Colin and Vina Garnaut, plus several others. It was a great life over there. We would set our cray pots each day and pull them early next morning, usually getting enough for a feed of crays each day.

We always tried to pick the best weather to go forth and back, but sometimes we had a bit of a rough trip.

We would leave home early, about 6 AM, go to Claremont Yacht Club, load up all our gear that I had not put on the boat the afternoon before and get on our way. It usually took about 40 minutes to go down the river to Fremantle harbour, then about 50 minutes across to Thomson's Bay at Rottnest and then another 30 minutes around to our mooring at N.N. So, from leaving home to being moored up at N.N., took about 3 hours all told. It would usually take me another two hours to get the boat all organised and the craypots set. Just in time for a swim before lunch.

After lunch and a bit of a snooze for an hour or so, we would often go fishing for herring to use as bait in the craypots next day.

About 5 PM, we would either have friends aboard, or go to their boats for a 'couple of drinks' before our evening meal. Occasionally, we might have a meal aboard another boat. After tea, we would sometimes watch the TV for a while on our small black and white set, or listen to some audiotapes. We were usually in bed by 9 or 10 PM, ready for an early 'get up' to pull the pots next day. It was a wonderful life. We were always busy and time went very quickly. Keith Cambridge used to say that there were 24 hours in every day, except at N.N., where there were only half that number. On some occasions we took Kenneth or Neil over with us or another couple like Joan and Don Williamson or Nan and Stuart White.

A couple of times Nelson Hill and Syd Goddard (ex MMA Pilots) came with me for a few of nights, while Joan stayed at home.

MILIFE 55

After pulling our pots early in the morning Keith and I used to go for a walk on the Island. Often, in the afternoon, we would all go for a walk somewhere. Joan was a great swimmer and used to swim all around the nearby reefs before lunch. She had her own pet fish in some areas. It was a very healthy and relaxed life and I am sure that it increased our life span by several years.

During 1979, both Kenneth and Neil met lovely girls who were later to become their wives. Kenneth had met Vivienne Johnston, a Dental Nurse who came from Hobart. Neil had met Marie Saw, an Occupational Therapist, whose family lived in Shoalwater Bay. Neil and Marie were married in Christ Church School Chapel in Sept 1979.

Shortly afterwards, Neil found a lump under one arm and, after further surgical investigation, he was diagnosed as having Hodgkin's Disease, a cancer of the Lymph System.

We were all devastated !

At first Neil had several months of Radiation Therapy at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Marie and Neil lived in her unit at Attadale and Neil had to go for treatment every weekday. He was often very ill after the treatment. Around Christmas time, the doctors said that Neil was clear of the Hodgkin's and we were all very happy to hear that news, but he still needed time to build up his strength again.

On the 16th February 1979, Vivienne and Kenneth were married in St. Mary's Cathedral in Hobart. My Mother, Marie, Neil, Joan and I flew over for the

wedding. Our close friends, Linda and Bill Hales from Melbourne, also came down for the wedding.

Shortly after we returned to Perth, Neil bought a small Pharmacy in the Warnbro Shopping Centre near Safety Bay. Marie and Neil also bought a block of land in Barter Place, near the Pharmacy.

Joan and I bought Marie's Unit from her shortly afterwards. They were then able to start having their house built in Barter Place. Joan and I kept the unit as an investment property for several years.

MILIFE 56

At the end of the year Marie and Neil were very happy when they moved into their new home in Barter Place.

In order to help Neil as much as possible, I used to go down to his Pharmacy a couple of times each week to do his banking a few miles away and save him closing the shop to do the banking himself. Marie was still working at her job in Fremantle. All through Neil's illness, her love and support for him were absolutely magnificent. About a year after we had been told that Neil was clear of the Hodgkin's, he was told that there was evidence that it was recurring again.

It was another very sad day for all of us!

Even though Neil had various types of very unpleasant treatment over the next few years, he still managed to run the Pharmacy with the occasional help from a relieving Pharmacist, we finally lost him on the 22nd July 1984.

These past five years had been the worst in all my life!

In the final few weeks of Neil's life, Marie was home looking after him night and day. Joan and I were staying with them a lot of the time in their home at Warnbro. Joan helped Marie to look after Neil and I spent each day running the Pharmacy. We had a relieving Pharmacist working in the shop, but he was rather old and had spent all his life working in Hospitals and had no idea of how to run the business. So, even though we had to pay him as a Managing Pharmacist, it was I who had to manage the shop. We tried to sell the Business, but could not find a buyer for a small Pharmacy in that area. Finally, we had to close it down, sell a lot of the stock at greatly reduced prices and pay a penalty to get out of the 3-year lease we had on the premises.

After Neil left us, it took a couple of months, unsuccessfully trying to sell the business, then selling the stock and, after this was done, I painted all the walls inside, before we finally vacated it.

One thing occurred during these years to help brighten up our lives. On the 8th July 1982, Emma Claire was born to Vivienne and Kenneth. It was wonderful for Joan and me to have our first grandchild.

MILIFE 57

A few months after Neil left us, Viv and Kenneth presented us with a Grandson, Samuel Neil, on the 2nd Oct. 1984 so we then had a granddaughter and a grandson, which pleased us immensely.

Marie sold the house at Warnbro some time after we lost Neil and bought a home in Park St. Subiaco. We have always been very happy that we still see a lot of Marie to this day. She will always be one of our family.

For some time I had been getting a bit short of breath whilst cutting the lawn or some other fairly strenuous exercise. My Doctor, Harold Dicks, whom I had consulted since 1946, sent me to see a cardiologist, Dr. Barry Hopkins. (a great Bloke) He gave me an angiogram and told me I had a couple of blocked arteries, so, in March 1987 I had Bypass Heart surgery in Royal Perth Hospital. A few months later I felt good again.

In 1988 my Mother died in hospital at the age of 89 years.

Joan had a right hip joint replacement the same year. She had a lot of trouble with it afterwards and over a period of about 18 months she had the hip joint reset 4 times. Finally, they put a larger ball joint in it.

The same year on 8th June 1988, Viv had another baby, Amanda Joan. So, we had 3 lovely grand children.

Joan and I both got a lot of enjoyment from Emma, Sam and Mandy.

I took them to several places of interest, as I had done with Kenneth and Neil. In particular, Sam, being a boy, spent many times with me, doing jobs on the boat. He was very helpful, lending that extra hand when I needed it.

In the summer, it was great to have Emma, Sam, or Mandy spend a few days on the boat with us at Narrow Neck. They were able to swim all around the bay with Joan to look at the coral and coloured growth on different sections of the reef. Or they would come fishing with me to catch Herring for cray bait

We had a lot of fun trolling for herring in our 12-foot dinghy, with only a small piece of coloured plastic tubing on the hook as a lure.

MILIFE 58

In June 1993, I was diagnosed as having Prostate Cancer with a PSA of 21. At first, I had hormonal treatment with Zoladex. After about 5 months my PSA was reduced to less than 1, so I then had seven weeks of Radiation Therapy, five days each week. After this, the doctors considered that the cancer was well in remission. Thankfully, it has remained that way ever since. I have checks every six months.

In 2000 I had a Pacemaker fitted to help my heart keep a regular beat and all seems OK in that area at present.

Joan still has a lot of pain from her arthritis to this day.

We were very pleased in May 1993, when Marie married Ian Pitman. He has fitted into our family very well. We all like him very much, even if he does 'Rubbish' me a lot..... I get my own back!

On 23rd June 2000, we sold our boat 'JONI' we had owned it for 23 years. It had never let us down.

We had done 294 round trips to Rottneest. Never once had to be towed home. We had 22 summers and a total of 1083 overnights in it at Rottneest. It had been a great investment and gave us many happy years.

Joan and I are now both 80. We have our aches and pains, but not too bad.

We have been fortunate to have had some very happy times, but we have also had some very sad and devastating times in our life.

I will end this record of MILIFE here, for now, but may add some further pages at a later date.

Love you all,

Ross. - June 2003

MILIFE Appendix 1

SUNDERLANDS IN WHICH I HAVE FLOWN

461 Squadron - U.K.

T9109 - T9111

W3984 - W4033 - W6050

DD866

DP196 - DP199 - DP200

DV960 - DV961 - DV962 - DV968 - DV989

EJ133 - EJ134 - EJ138 - EJ142 - EJ154

EK575 - EK577 - EK578 - EK590

JM675 - JM676 - JM678 - JM683 - JM685 - JM686

ML735 - ML741 - ML744 - ML747 - ML748 - MI757 - ML818

Sub-Total 36

4 Coastal O.T.U. - Scotland

W4033

DD834 - DD850 - DD856

DP183 - DP184

DW111

EK581

JM679 - JM713

ML738

Sub-Total 11

40 Squadron - Port Moresby

A26-1, A26-2, A26-3, A26-4, A26-5

(Australian Reg. Numbers)

Sub-Total 5

TOTAL 52