



Flying "down under"  
*Read Nelson Barrett's story below*

*Winnipeg Area Chapter of RAA Canada*

*February 2009*

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***Bob Stewart – 853-7776***

**NEWSLETTER:** Bob Stewart Box 22 GRP 2 RR#1 Dugald, MB R0E 0K0  
Phone: 853-7776 Email: [stewart8@mts.net](mailto:stewart8@mts.net)

***CALENDAR OF EVENTS***

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>February 19</b> | Tour of Nav Canada Area Control Centre 777 Moray St. |
| <b>March 19</b>    | Tour Standard Aero                                   |
| <b>April 16</b>    | Still up in the air                                  |
| <b>May 15</b>      | Tire Kick – Lyncrest Airport                         |

**ACC Tour** - The YWG ACC tour is all set for Thursday Feb 19/09 from 1900 to 2100 at the NavCan facility on 777 Morey St. Winnipeg. For security, we need to know whose coming, how many vehicles and the names of the drivers. Please advise Paul Dyck at 668-2834 or email Paul at [cgrip@mts.net](mailto:cgrip@mts.net) to register for this free tour and he will coordinate with ACC.



## **406 MHz ELTs – Time to Start Shopping?**

Most aircraft owners and operators will have been following the 406 MHz ELT story for the past few years. Yes, the new 406 ELTs are clearly better technically and offer certain advantages to both crash survivors and rescuers but at a significant cost to purchase and install these devices. Other emerging technologies such as the SPOT tracking system look like they might provide the same advantages at a lesser cost and/or simpler aircraft installation requirements for light aircraft and homebuilts.

Let's just say the debate is largely over and the bottom line is that most of us will have to install a new 406 MHz ELT in the coming months/years to be able to do any useful cross-country

flying with our aircraft.

Thanks largely to COPA's lobbying efforts, the 406 MHz phase-in period will be extended considerably reducing the pressure on getting new ELTs installed and the installation requirements for certified aircraft will be simplified (an AME can do the sign-off vice requiring a visit to a certified avionics \$\$\$ shop). Even at this late date, the exact regs are still pending but TC reps at the recent Rust Remover suggested the required paper work is working its way through the bureaucracy and will come out "sometime soon".

The delay has had some benefits in that there are now a variety of more reasonably priced (but not cheap!) ELTs on or coming to the market that might appeal to light aircraft owners and homebuilders. Technically, 406 MHz ELTs come in three flavours. Let's start with the basic, plain-jane, ELTs that are detected by low earth orbit satellites just like the older 121.5 MHz ELTs. Then there are high-end ELTs that incorporate their own GPS receiver and (when activated) can determine a lat/long position and include this information in the coded signal sent to geosynchronous satellites above the equator that communicate the ELT's location immediately. In the middle can be found some hybrid ELTs that accept a GPS position from another source (such as a panel mount GPS) that is updated continuously and then incorporated in the ELT's signal if required. These are not quite as expensive but require some extra wiring and effort in installation. In all cases, the ELT sends out an individually coded signal so the user has to register with a national authority (the National Search and Rescue Secretariat for us in Canada) so there will be a point of contact in case of an emergency.

The various ELT manufacturers (notably Ameri-King, ACK, Artex, Pointer, and Kannad) all produce or are getting ready to introduce Canadian approved 406 Mhz ELTs and product information is readily available from vendors such as Wicks and Aircraft Spruce and Specialty. Another good place to start shopping and for 406 ELT information is <http://www.discountavionics.com/index.htm> which is a Canadian based vendor. This site also provides some useful CARs and other ELT/SAR related links.

As usual, shop carefully, as some units price the antenna and mounting hardware, etc. separately from the basic ELT. Make sure the battery is included as well, and not priced as an add-on! If you have an older Ameri-king or ACK ELT in your aircraft, these manufacturers are or will be selling units that use the existing mounting tray and wiring requiring only a new antenna to complete the

change over. The ELT manufacturer usually has to do the coding to designate the ELT as a Canadian-based unit, so check to see if this is an extra cost when buying.

Something to keep in mind is that TC has decided to require a fixed, impact activated, ELT in our aircraft and that past history suggests that these devices may not have the best track record of successful activation in a mishap. Thus in addition to the CAR-required ELT, it might be an idea to also carry a portable, manually activated, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) with you that provides the same 406 MHz signal with GPS location capability for something in the \$400- \$500 USD range. A PLB would also be useful to take along when boating or hiking in the woods. Another option would be to subscribe to the SPOT tracker service as another back-up means of getting help if you survive an aircraft mishap but your ELT doesn't.

Since there will quite a few of us all looking to buy 406 MHz ELTs in the coming months, one thought is to try and arrange a group buy to try and keep our costs as low as practicable. RAAC member Tom Stoyka is investigating group buy option for local pilots and has contact three manufacturers directly regarding a bulk purchase. If you would like to participate, e-mail Tom at [tstoyka@mts.net](mailto:tstoyka@mts.net) or phone him at 444-3838.

Here are a few more useful links:

<http://www.discountavionics.com/elt%20406%20sales.htm>

<http://www.kannad.com/en/safety/index.php?id=42>

<http://www.pointeravionics.com/>

<http://www.artex.net/>

<http://www.ameri-king.com/>

<http://www.ackavionics.com/index.html>

<http://www.life-raft.com/dept.asp?id=9858&l1=9858>

<http://www.globalcomsatphone.com/spot/>

*Jim Oke*

**For Sale:** One RV 6 or 6A wooden fuselage jig. Excellent construction and in excellent conditions. 6 – 6s and 6As have been built using this jig. For more information, contact Bob Stewart at 853-7776.

## **O'er The Big Brown Land: An Aussie Outback Adventure (Part 1 of 2)**

*Nelson Barrett*

### **Prologue:**

*From 1997 to 2000, I was fortunate to be stationed in Melbourne, Australia on an exchange posting with the Royal Australian Air Force. Under a bi-lateral agreement on pilot licensing, Canadian private pilots can obtain an Australian private pilot license after a license flight check. Having a co-worker with an under-utilized Cessna C177, the opportunity was too great to pass up. In 2000, our family (my wife Kim and sons Calvin (10), Graeme(7) and Liam(4) ) went on a 9 day trip from Melbourne to Ularu (previously referred to as "Ayers Rock") necessitating flying across the Australian Outback. The following narrative covers off the adventure of a relatively low-time pilot flying his family across some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world.*

Flying the Outback requires special equipment, planning and considerations not covered specifically in the text. To anyone wishing to fly in such austere areas, thorough planning, adherence to regulations, and an abundance of caution are the best survival techniques available. In the weeks leading up to our trip, three separate fatal accidents occurred involving general aviation aircraft flying in the Outback thereby increasing the angst of my lovely wife as to our upcoming trip. While each accident was unique, the common failure in each was poor planning. While the following text takes humorous editorial license with my wife's reactions and ways/tools

to address, she played a pivotal role in making me plan not only for my survival but my whole family's in the event of problems. She still reminds me when we fly that "Never take a small plane if you absolutely have to be there" so the lessons we discussed still ring true today. I hope the story is of interest.

*As to those with access to the internet, follow along on Google maps using the following waypoints: Melbourne (Essendon Airport), Kilmore ("The Gap"), Shepparton, Echuca, Swan Hill, Broken Hill, Leigh Creek, Cober Pedy, Cadney Homestead and Ularu. Reverse the route and add a diversion through Bendigo to Port Phillip Bay and the mouth at the Yarra River for low clouds and you have the trip.*

Nelson

## March 2000 – Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

The final decision to go was made the 31<sup>st</sup> of March and, with a niggling medical problem cleared up, it was off to the local pilot's shop to buy over \$140 in maps. Boy, this trip is longer than I thought. As it always seems though, my route often cut just into the corner of several maps meaning you bought very expensive note-paper for the trip. What did jump out was the phrase "Uncharted Region" across several of the maps. Reinforced the need to get the navigation right and check, double check, and triple check.

My wife Kim spent the weekend packing, trying to keep the baggage weight down to less than 100 lbs. This is not an easy task with 2 adults and 3 small kids. But remember that we don't need any winter gear but that savings was offset by the need to carry emergency water and rations per the regulations. I spend a few nights scouring over the maps and flight supplements, programming the GPS, and calculating, calculating, calculating (and calculating again for good measure). Kim wondered why it took me so long.... Could it be that I didn't know what I was doing? Her fears were unfounded of course.

On the Sunday, I went up with my friend, the plane's owner, for a final check ride. Just a normal ride from Melbourne's Essendon airport to Point Cooke air base for some circuits I thought. Things got a little more exciting than planned with a C172 trying to share our airspace a little too closely. I then proceed to almost shut down the engine on down wind (oops... wrong knob). I joked to my friend that I was just making the practiced forced approach a little bit more realistic. After the flight, I reviewed my flight plans with my instructor and he blessed them (again the plane's owner.... He has an interest in getting me or at least the airplane there and back in one piece). Once again, my wife wondered what she's gotten herself into when I recap the day for her.

**Monday:** The Wx is beautiful with blue skies and favourable winds. The forecast for tomorrow is for more of the same. The plane is fuelled and serviceable. The bags are packed. In theory at least, everyone was ready to go (or at least willing to go to the airport in Kim's case) so we're off to bed early for dreams of the Australian outback.

**Tuesday:** We wake early. Kim was sick, clouds filled the sky, and rain was forecast for the rest of the morning. So much for Monday's forecast! All in all, it seemed like a great day to watch TV and relax so we decided to delay our departure for 24 hours.

**Wednesday:** Wx was much improved so we went off to Melbourne's Essendon airport before a change blew in. I play pack mule to load the plane: bags, the mandatory emergency water and food, a relief bottle for boys (no toilettes at 7000 feet), 10 different maps, a back-up GPS, an emergency radio.....oh yeah, the kids too. I filed the flight plan, gave Kim a sedative (chocolate!), started the engine, did the checks, radioed the tower and we were on our adventure! After

takeoff, the controller kept us under the Melbourne International airspace just above us as it is filled with B747s and away from the Whitman Chocolates' Blimp that seems to always be filling my windscreen. During our departure north from Essendon airspace, Kim is leaning so far forward looking around for other traffic that I'm worried she's going to put her head through the windshield. She routinely spots buildings on the ground and declares them to be aircraft on a collision course. Despite the threat of being ambushed by flying buildings, we successfully followed the VFR route north from Melbourne through the "Great Dividing Ranges" (a bit self-important that title but like all mountains, they are very solid so they get our respect). We traverse "the gap" at a town called Kilmore and shoot out to the north and are met with azure blue skies, zero clouds, and favourable tailwinds. As we climb to 5500 feet, we can see the very edges of the Outback start to show themselves with a green strip representing the famous Murray River traversing east-west across our nose. After many short flight legs to Shepparton - Echuca - Swan Hill (only to prove to Kim that the GPS does actually know where it is and that, in turn, I can use it to give headings and times), we arrive at Swan Hill for a leg stretch/lunch break/fuel stop. It being my first landing with the whole family on board, I was just a little nervous. Uncomfortable with my first approach to the grass runway, I decided to overshoot from about 700 feet. Kim responds with a few choice words. Why? I'm not sure but I learnt later that she was silently humming the "Lord's Prayer" song in her head. The 2<sup>nd</sup> approach is uneventful and I make a mental note to up Kim's chocolate ration on the next trip.

After fuel, it's off to Broken Hill, New South Wales. Navigation is simple: take-off, turn northwest, track 335 degrees, land 2 hours later on a big 2.5 kilometre long runway. Once north of the ranges, the airspace quickly becomes very empty perhaps as a precursor to the land that awaits us in the Outback. We tied the plane down at Broken Hill's Royal Flying Doctors Service ramp for the night, we got a cab, found our hotel, and we jumped in the pool (and then jumped right back out really quickly....it wasn't heated!). We took a walking tour and saw the downtown sites (McDonalds and KFC). Our son Calvin begged to be back in the hotel by 7:00 PM: "The Simpsons" must be really good in a town like Broken Hill.

**Thursday:** We rose at 6:00 AM and I was on the phone for the Wx. The forecast consisted of one word: "Fine". We opened the hotel door and can understand why: deep blue skies from horizon - to - horizon and refreshing south-easterly winds. We grabbed some breakfast, packed up the kids, and headed off to the airport. We bought a little fuel (okay.... A lot of fuel...some 140 litres... but it was actually cheaper than auto fuel in Melbourne due to some freak in pricing at the time). After filing, we were wheels off the ground by 9:30 AM.

10 minutes later we're over the Outback. The big brown land, the nothingness, the GAFA..... not much of anything but reddish dirt and weeds too stubborn to die (but we learn later that first impressions are always wrong). Despite the barren landscape (think "Mad Max" movie landscape), navigation is quite easy as there are massive salt lakes about every 60 miles and we have the GPS to fall back on. Of all the days, this was the leg where the lack of alternate aerodromes was a concern. Between start and end of the route, there was exactly 1 publicly licensed aerodrome: miss that and it's a long walk for fuel.

My fears were naïve. The airplane is a lifeline to many of the cattle and sheep stations (i.e. farms) here. Each station out here has 2 or 3 good runways. At one point, I'm in easy gliding range of no less than 4 (and possible 7) emergency runways. However, this day none were required as the Lycoming up front hums nicely as we proceed to our next stop at Leigh Creek. Leigh Creek sits behind the Northern Flinders Ranges (peaks to 4000 feet AMSL) that run north-south up from Adelaide, South Australia. Cruising at 6500 feet AMSL, Kim blurted out, "You're a little low aren't you?" I make a note to buy some gripe water at the next stop.

Fuel and lunch at Leigh Creek was followed by the national pastime of Australia: fly swatting. They don't bite but their search for moisture leads them into the most personal of spaces.

Thankfully, the lady in the flight trailer opens the terminal for us and allows us some respite. Airborne again and we were off to Coober Pedy (Pop. 4000). Another uneventful 2 hours and we were approaching the air field. Kim and I marvel at the moon-like surface around the town. This is caused by the town's industry: opal mining. There are supposedly over 1 million mineshafts down there and that translates into 1 million piles of tailings. Why here? I have no idea but Coober Pedy is the world's source for opals. It is also therefore the home of the largest population of Opal miners. Suffice to say that opal fever has captured many a visitor to this forsaken area and it is impossible to not meet a lifetime full of characters in a day in Coober Pedy.

Approaching the airport, I talked with a commuter aircraft about 15 miles northeast of the airfield. Kim immediately concludes that we're on a collision course. She starts to act like she's had a few too many cappuccinos. Who needs TCAS when you're got a caffeine-fuelled sensor in the cockpit? The winds at the airfield are a bit blustery and don't favour any of the runways available (not possible I know but it is always the case). I have a landing that one would politely call "Firm" (okay so maybe I should say that both the landings on that approach were firm). The airport facilities consisted of a shed (rather ambitiously called "The terminal"), a fuel pump, and a pay phone. The German-speaking lady (was my navigation that bad?) filled the plane with fuel, gave us a ride into town, and provided an impromptu tour. She was also the town's taxi driver (as in the only one in the town) but as she was using her own car today so she didn't charge us. I mentally noted that this was certainly a small town.... We would have paid dearly in any other place.

We checked into our hotel: a complex of underground caves dug into the gypsum-based soil. We quickly changed into our prospecting duds and headed off to explore... the opal stores! Within minutes, the VISA card was under siege. On the walk back, the boys started collecting the valuable "gems" on the ground. I mentally started to calculate the added weight in their pockets and how it would affect my flight planning. We found a nice restaurant (at least by Coober Pedy standards anyway) and headed in for dinner. Kim asked for milk for the kids and some salad and raw carrots as a starter. Our wonderful Greek hostess paused... then agreed. Moments later she walked across the street to the small supermarket and returned with lettuce, carrots and milk. I marvelled at her grasp of just-in-time inventory management. Perhaps she should work for Boeing or Airbus. As night fell, Kim and I realized we're a little over-dressed for the locality..... we both have all our teeth (again, it's a rough mining town full of characters who spent hours toiling in the sun). Coober Pedy is a town of dreamers who live under "Opal Fever". It's a hard life but anyone who we spoke to loved it. But dental care was not a priority! We retired to our underground cave hotel where the kids made a horrible racket wrestling. Thankfully, when you're walls are 10 inches thick, the neighbours can't hear a thing.

**Friday:** Everybody was up early and is ready to go.... except me. A headache combined with a forecast for rain at Ularu, lead to a decision to stay put for the day. The rain forecast puzzled me: rain in the outback? The sky is brilliant blue, not a cloud in sight for hundreds of miles but it is better to trust the Wx guys. We spent the day searching the tailings behind the hotel for the illusive \$1000 opal missed by the professional miners. After 30 minutes, my middle son Graeme concluded that mining is neither as much fun nor as profitable as he had imagined. Older son Calvin had hoped to find a Playstation hidden in the pile I think. Meanwhile, little Liam hovers behind me hoping to "find" some opals seconds after I do. I find myself getting a mild case of "Opal Fever" and want to look just a little bit longer. I found a few little sparkling things but nothing worth a planeload of fuel unfortunately.

Our "noodling" (looking through tailings) completed, our pockets full of quartz masquerading as opals, and picking red dust-encrusted "opals" from our nostrils, it was time to had back to town for lunch. We toured an old mine, visited a few underground homes, and bought more opals. Graeme pestered us to go see some "Abba-nidge-inals". We pointed out the groups of them sitting on every corner. Confused, he stated, "No, I mean the ones with all the paint." I

explained that the paint is only for special occasions. He understood immediately: "Oh... you mean like their birthday and Christmas".

After an impressive dinner (emu tenderloin in bush plums), it was back to the hotel with the kids to watch that classic Outback video: Disney's "Lady and the Tramp". Liam will consider this to be the highlight of our trip. As Kim and I watched the sun set to the west, I recalled the Wx forecast of rain unfulfilled.

**Saturday:** Today arrived with 20 knot tailwinds, a clear sky, another forecast of "Fine", and the chance of rain now stated at 0% (apparently it had last rained 6 months ago). Chocks were pulled at 8:45 and we were airborne at 9:00 AM. Ularu here we come! First though, we had a fuel stop at Cadney Homestead located about 45 minutes north of Coober Pedy. The homestead consisted of a runway, a fuel pump, a pub, a pool, and 6 hotel rooms. It was like landing in a Foster's beer advertisement. We topped up the plane as there was little else between here at Ularu but aboriginal settlements with no fuel guaranteed services. After bladder patrol with the boys, we grabbed some drinks, played some Xs and Os in the red dirt and enjoyed the moment. I was in great spirits: had a great landing (Kim's compliment was "That wasn't too bad at all"), the scenery could not be more "Outback", the people are very happy to have a visitor, and I won most of my Xs and Os games. Within 30 minutes, we were off on our final leg to "The Rock".

One hour out of Cadney, we approached another 4500 foot AMSL mountain range. Kim was quiet again so I assumed the Chocolate that I added to her cereal this morning is soothing her nerves as well as her motion sickness. We cross the hills and I notice a large rock in the distance. We were still a good 110 nms from Ularu but there is nothing on the map that looks that big... but it can't be Ayers Rock already can it? I was wrong. It was Ayers Rock. Navigation became very easy all of the sudden: "Keep big rock on nose of plane". We had a great view inbound for the next hour and the kids enjoyed the watching it grow. Kim perked up due to the view too but got a little nervous with all the radio chat (I am threading between Qantas A320s and Ansett/ANZ B737s who operate charters regularly into the airport there). In the end, we flew a straight in approach and have a nice nose-high, soft and "cushy" landing. We were there!

We grabbed the free shuttle to the resort, settled in, and we were off to explore (the pool that is... very posh but not much warmer than the one in Broken Hill). As we left, the sun was setting and you could see "The Rock" and the Olgas range turning brilliant red. We decided that we'll book the sunset tour for tomorrow. We headed off into the Outback on foot (okay, the kids think we're doing this... We're actually just crossing the resort which is horseshoe shaped). My navigation/survival skills proved up to the task. I found the "Outback Pioneer BBQ" restaurant. Graeme ate kangaroo and begged to try crocodile. Calvin and Liam were fooled into eating kangaroo and refused to trust Kim as to the origin of anything else. We had a great meal listening to an Aussie singer doing covers of American 70's soft-rock music while surrounded by German and Swedish tourists.

We made our way home in the dark across the resort. Kim and the boys were worried I would get lost. I chuckle at their concern. Heck, I got us all the way here didn't I? Moments later we were on the wrong path and taking the long way back to our hotel. I guess I should have brought the GPS along tonight after all.

*Nelson*

Read part 2 next month

**2009 Membership Form**

**Winnipeg Area Chapter RAA**

Trial (\$25)

Student(\$25)

Full (\$50)

**Required Information**

Name		<b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b>
Mailing Address		Renewal Date
Phone(s)		Chq.      Cash Other
E-mail		Initials
Are you an RAA national member? <sup>(1)</sup>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you give permission for your information to be made available to other Winnipeg RAA members?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**Optional Information**

Do you own an aircraft?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Make/model: Registration:	Are you a member of other aviation groups?	EAA: <input type="checkbox"/> COPA: <input type="checkbox"/> Others:
Are you building or restoring an aircraft?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Make and model of project(s):	What Pilots licences and ratings do you hold?	

Please make cheques payable to: RAA - Winnipeg Chapter  
Mailing Address: RAA c/o Steven Smart, 27 McCreedy Road, Winnipeg, MB, R2K 3W8

**Notes:**

- 1) RAA Winnipeg contributes \$15 per member towards the insurance program maintained by RAA national. This program provides liability insurance to cover local chapter events. The \$15 does not provide membership in RAAC.