



Flying “down under”
Read part 2 of Nelson Barrett’s story
below

Winnipeg Area Chapter of RAA Canada

March 2009

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 19** 7:30 RAA Hangar for a discussion on the bulk purchase of new 406 ELTs and other aviation related topics. Tour of the new Lyncrest Flight Centre
- April 16** Western Canada Aviation Museum – Ghost of Charron Lake presentation
- May 15** Tire Kick – Lyncrest Airport



Join us Thursday March 19 at 7:30pm at the RAA Final Assembly Hangar for a discussion on a bulk purchase of the new 406 MHz ELTs. If it is not muddy, we are planning a tour of the new Lyncrest Flight Centre due for official opening 9 May 2009.

RAA Final Assembly Building Is Under New Management

As of December 6th, 2008 I, Ben Toenders have taken over as Hangar Manager. I am following in the tracks of Ken Podaima who has done a marvellous job as the Hangar Manager since the facility opened in 2002. Ken has made sure that the facility was used to its fullest capacity as witnessed by the many satisfied aircraft builders who have used the hangar to complete their projects. I hope to continue providing that same level of service in the future.

As many of you know, we have acquired a few new tools in the last year or so. We currently have an English wheel, a phlanishing hammer and a 12 ton shop press and various other tools in the hangar available for club members use. If you can think of other tools we should acquire please let me know.

We have adjusted the rental rates for the winter months to account for the higher heating costs involved during those months. The summer rate for an aircraft spot stays the same at \$150/month. April to September is considered the summer months. October to March rates will rise to \$200/month starting October 2009. Daily rates, summer or winter are, \$10 per day. Weekly rates are ¼ of the respective monthly rates. The hangar has room for 4 full aircraft spaces and two smaller work spaces. Rates for the workspaces are \$55/month in the summer and \$75/month in the winter.

Currently there is room available in the hangar. If you would like to arrange a spot in the hangar for your project please contact me, Ben Toenders at 895-8779 or btoenders@shaw.ca

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 continued

Nelson Barrett

Part 2 of 2

Sunday: We rolled out of our rickety bunk beds (we are travelling economy at only \$125 per night) at 6:15 AM. I lay in until 7:00 AM as I know I absolutely no flying duties today (crew rest...ahhhh!). My plan is interrupted when Kim rustled me out of bed to go hunt down a real coffee (and "not that Nescafe instant stuff..." she quips). My hunt was unsuccessful. Kim muttered something about men being hunters but women gatherers having to get most of the family's food. I resolved to find an emergency Bodum coffee press to add to the aircraft's emergency equipment.

The day itself dawned brilliant blue with a cloudless sky (a developing trend you will note). We booked our tour for this afternoon and hit the radiant red earth walking trails. I misread the map (again) and we end up standing in an opening free of spinifex grass and desert oaks: the resort helipad. Kim grew concerned as she immediately sensed a helicopter on the horizon. I pointed out that it's just another building. We got back on the path and walked to the lookout and took too many photos. Along the way we found lizards, bugs and all sorts of creepy crawlies. Liam found a "worm". However, the "worm" lifted it's head into a strike position....FREEZE!!!! Yes, we had our first experience with a poisonous Aussie snake (a Tiger snake for those who know snakes) albeit one only 4 inches in length. We took a few photos and leave it in peace. Kim's camera, apparently paralyzed with fear, committed hari-kari. We walked to the shopping plaza to buy a "souvenir" Nikon.

At lunch, we spotted a couple we'd first met in Coober Pedy and who had left for Ayers Rock by van the morning we did in the airplane. Almost 30 hours later, they had just arrived by road (and look like it). They tell us the story of their trip: vehicle breakdowns, heat, dust, camping at night in a snake-infested dustbowl, fatigue, lousy water, etc. They looked envious (to the point of murderous) when I told them we arrived yesterday just after lunch. After they left, I took the opportunity to remind Kim that we'd look just like them (or worse) if we'd driven as well. One must keep reinforcing the value of flying this trip if I am ever to get another chance in the future. Kim agreed, albeit grudgingly, that flying is a good way to travel. I secretly met up with the couple later and paid them \$25 for participating in my elaborate ploy)

After a lunch of Goanna meat, witchetty grubs and bush tomatoes over an open fire (at least this is what I imagined my beef roll and fries to be); we joined our tour of "The Rock". Ularu was returned to the area's Aboriginal clan by the Australian government years ago. The resort itself and access to the monument is now arranged through a lease agreement with the Government. We started by visiting the Aboriginal heritage center and learned some of the history of the area and the culture surrounding "The Rock". Middle son Graeme watches a video on Aboriginal ceremonies and sees a painted "Abba-nidge-inal". Of course, they are completely naked but for the paint. Kim and I watched our oldest turn beet red in embarrassment. I muse that the local "Jenny Craig" franchise must not be doing to well here. Kim comments on the bright colors worn by the staff working at the center. I point out that the outfits look suspiciously similar to Chicago Bulls and LA Raiders sports gear to me. We looked at some souvenirs but Kim doesn't think we need a 10 foot Aboriginal spear and spear launcher (in good working order). I pondered how quickly it would solve our noisy possum problem back home in Melbourne.

We visited the Rock itself and learn about the paintings, the lore, the religious significance, the geology, and the flies. Moreover, we learned that after 30 minutes, we are all experts at the "Aussie Salute" (waving flies away). Graeme and I took a walk around the base of "The Rock" as Kim and the other sons stayed in the air-conditioned and fly-free coach. Graeme spotted another snake: this time a full grown Tiger at an estimated 28-36 inches (sorry, I didn't stick around to take an accurate measurement). It was the same type as the baby we saw earlier. Maybe he'd told his Mom about us and she was out to get us. Fortunately, and as we've been told repeatedly by snake experts here, the snake feels us coming and makes his/her way off the path into the bush well before we were anywhere near it. We watch it with interest for a couple minutes until we lose site of each other.

We then reached the base of "The Rock" climb. While it is possible to climb it, it is frowned upon by the Aboriginal owners as Ularu is considered a spiritual site. More and more, tourists are respecting this concern which is a good thing. Imagine if tourists showed up a church, rang the bells, pumped the organ, drank the holy water, a took goofy pictures at the altar. Well, that's what climbing their Ularu is viewed as. Anyway, sons Calvin and Graeme wanted to climb it. Kim and I didn't. We took a vote: 2 to 2. I lobbied youngest son Liam with promises of never-ending candies and ice cream to secure his support. Calvin countered with a promise of letting Liam play

his playstation game (after he saved up enough money to actually buy one that was). Liam considered the relative financial strengths of Calvin and I and our respective ability to deliver on the promises. Kim and I won 3 to 2 and we were back on the coach.

The sun was starting grow low on the horizon and we were how headed to the viewing site along with ½ of all Europeans under the age of 30 and 1/3 of all Americans over the age of 60. Our cheapie tour didn't have all the frills like champagne and nibblies but does have cold water and a fold up chair to watch the sunset alight on Ularu. As the sun dropped, "The Rock" began it's color transformations. Cameras clicked continuously. Just as the colors really hit full stride, rogue clouds stopped the show. Nonetheless, it was impressive while it lasted.

As we left the park, Liam was quietly singing a goodbye song to "The Rock" and waved. Kim and I have no idea why he did this but it was very cute. Calvin, in turn, wanted to know what time it was. Maybe they had "The Simpsons" here at 7:00 PM too. We arrived back at the resort and had a quiet cold plate dinner outside our room under the Southern Cross sky. I grabbed the maps and started the planning for the trip home.

Monday: The Wx looked good except for winds blowing on the nose at 15 gusting to 25 kts. Working against us, they would make this a long day. I calculated the fuel requirements and it was going to be a maximum allowable take-off weight kind of day (almost 2400 lbs in total). Kim commented on the pretty little cloud puffs scattered evenly across the sky at about 5000 feet. They looked like little mushroom tops about ½ mile in diameter. I found them less enthralling as I suspected these meant it will be a not only a long ride today but a bumpy ride as well. The shuttle dropped us at the airport at 9:30 and by 10:30 we were sitting on the active ready to start the trip home.

At 2400 lbs all up, the plane's run down the runway was anything but "peppy". Fortunately, we had 2.5 kilometres of runway to use to get up to a good safe "unstuck" speed in the gusty winds. After what seemed like an eternity, the Cessna left the runway, settled back slightly as if to complain in hopes of a change of mind, and then, returned to normal behaviour. With the gusty conditions, we held higher speeds down low so we got a low & shallow climb out with "The Rock" to our right. Kim, at this point, asks if we had ejection seats in the plane (that's a good sign if she is joking about flying now!). With the view, Kim tried her new camera to capture some shots of Ularu on the climb out.. The autofocus features resulted in her taking 8 clearly focused shots of the scratches in the Cessna's window with a vague, reddish blob off in the distance.

The ride was unfortunately even bumpier and slower than expected. Fortunately, no one is sick although Kim taught me a few new names to call turbulence. A little over three hours later, we were back on the ground at Cadney Homestead for a nice long lunch and rest. We almost succumbed to the place's charm (and the pool whose rules state "Bathing Suits Must Be Worn At All Times.....At Least Bottoms") and stayed the night. We decided to press on to Coober Pedy in the end. One hour more and we were on approach to Coober Pedy's runway 04. Kim took three more crystal clear pictures of the Cessna's window only this time with fuzzy grey and red shapes in the distance. This landing was almost as hard as the last time we literally "dropped in" here. Must be unstable soil due to all the mineshafts (rationalization on my part perhaps?). The German fuel lady/taxi driver/tourist guide met us again and gave us a ride to town. She had her taxi this time so we had to pay her: \$10 total round trip.

We booked into an economy backpacker's underground hotel. We got a family room for \$100/night. We were told it's normally \$100 per person. I guessed they only deal with rich, affluent backpackers at this place! All said though, it was veritable mansion or at least a nice 2 bedroom apartment. However, any opportunity for Outback romance was overcome by fatigue by today's flight. I was knackered from trying to keep the flight as smooth as possible by compensating with the flight controls and Kim was equally knackered from worrying about why I

was making the flight so rough by moving the flight controls all the time. Hopefully tomorrow was going to be better.

Tuesday: The Wx is "Fine" again with those nasty headwinds still there but the gusts and "pretty" clouds absent. A local miner (a friend of the hotel owner) gave us a ride to the airport at 8:00 AM. I mused that it is easy to see why no male supermodels are found in the Coober Pedy area. Plus, by this point we were used to seeing boxes of dynamite in the back of people's vehicles. We got airborne early in hopes of avoiding that rough air of yesterday as the heat normally comes on later in the day. The flight to Leigh Creek was thankfully smooth and uneventful other than Kim re-discovering her fear of mountains as we flew the approach in the lee of the Northern Flinders Ranges ("You do know that the hills are below us?"). After fuel and ablutions, we were airborne for Broken Hill. We notice that the vegetation seems more lush than we recalled on the way up. This is odd as we'd noted that this was where the vegetation appeared to be "Outback-like". Still it's just hardy spinifex grass and reddish, brown sand but we were now able to see the amazing flora and fauna for what it really was.... an amazing eco-system. We continued to hunt for wild kangaroos from the air but saw none (they are smart enough to stay out of the sun I guess). Next time we'd have to fly over a zoo I guess.

We arrived in Broken Hill (pop 24,000) on schedule and put the airplane to bed and headed off to our hired 100 year old cottage for a few days. We arrived to find a 1 year old Huntsman Spider on the ceiling (imagine something hairy and sticky about the size of your hand). I did the "hunter" thing and captured it while Kim stood on a chair (which oddly put her closer to the spider but introducing that logic in the midst of a spider incident was useless). Once resolved, we walked the city for a couple hours and saw "The Palace" hotel as made prominent in the cult movie "Priscilla Queen of the Desert". We rented a car for the next day's adventure and found we had to fill in a lot more forms than usual: most relating to all the things we are not allowed to do with the car or where we could not take it. Seemed odd until you started to drive out of the town on anything but the major highway (and the use of the definitive article "the" was intentional). Driving the car seemed very odd after all the flying we'd been doing. I keep pulling back on the steering wheel going up hills and leading turns to the left with a tap of brake....I mean...rudder pedal.

Wednesday: We were up early and on the road to Silverton, or so I thought anyway. Kim diverted me to Safeway to buy some real coffee as the cottage had a Bodum coffee press. Trip to Silverton was delayed by 2 cups of mocha java.

Silverton is a semi-ghost town about 25 km northwest of Broken Hill. Once a town of 4000 people, less than 20 live there today. It consists today of a famous pub (seen in over 40 movie and television productions) and a number of artists' galleries. We spent the morning walking across the place and ended up buying some art to take home. Kim said it was my birthday present and I said it was hers. Her birthday is first up so I know I'd win this debate! Silverton is also semi-famous as the site for much of the filming of productions like "Mad Max", "A Town Called Alice" and "Priscilla Queen of the Desert". The only hard part would have been finding enough people to be extras in the films. Wild camels outnumber the people by about 5 to 1. The only airplane reference in the area is the nose of B-17 bomber inexplicably lying in the middle of the Outback just on the edge of the area.

After Silverton, we drove to the lookout 5 km away and see the Outback stretch out to infinity. This was no surprise to use as we had flown over this very spot both inbound and outbound from Broken Hill airport. Nonetheless, it's like looking at a red vision of the tundra in Canada. To some degree, it looked more inhospitable from the ground. I reminded Kim how nice it was to fly over this rather than drive through it. I suspected however that she was catching on to my ploys and I resolved to keep quiet.

Lunch a broken Hill consisted of that international substitute for real food....anything purchased from an internationally known pizza chain that will go nameless! It was as undercooked and inedible as always (but you have to appreciate their worldwide consistency at least). After lunch, we were off to the Royal Flying Doctor Services base for a tour. The RFDS is just like the TV series of the 70s except there's a lot less kissing and romance stuff between the pilots, doctors and nurses (or so they would have us believe anyway). I expected a more rustic operation but found that they are a very up-to-date bunch with nice King Air aircraft and modern, professional facilities. The only "Outbacky" touch was the denim uniforms. Kim found the visit really interesting and made a comment that she'd love the work there given her midwifery, community health and airmedivac qualifications. I'd love to work there too but I'd need a minimum of 1500 hrs and a multi-engine IFR commercial rating just for them to look at my resume. Maybe I could settle for the mail pilot job flying Cessna 170. The route takes 7-10 days apparently. After the tour, we left a nice donation, bought enough shirts and hats to at least look like we work there and now headed back to Broken Hill. Everybody hit the bed early. Calvin was excited as the next day would get us home to Melbourne and he can finally have some fun with his friends (parents are boring I guess).

Thursday: Melbourne was today's stop and I sensed the Wx would be bad. The Wx briefers advised that it should be "okay". That's like saying that kissing your old batty aunt is "not bad". We got airborne a 9:00 AM and arrived in Swan hill for gas 2 hours later. A quick turn had us approaching the mountains north of Melbourne where the clear skies almost instantaneously became a wall of low scud. PIREPS of the conditions at the Kilmore Gap sound a bit too "scud-runner" for me or my experience so we diverted to Bendigo to the west of Melbourne, descended below the cloud base, and did a leisurely end run of the weather system to the southwest. Throughout the diversion, Kim's earlier nervousness reappeared. "Where are the lines on the map?", "Do you know where you are going?", "Are you using the GPS?", and "Is that a pland?" give you a sense of our conversation approaching Melbourne airspace. It was like doing my pilot's license check ride all over again! When I pointed out Port Philip Bay to the south and the mouth of the Yarra River, she relaxed and expressed that she trusted me all along.

Scooting to the west of the airspace Melbourne International Airport at Tullamarine (remember those big B747's?), Kim was back into plane-spotting mode as the radio was full of normal chatter. Kim finally spotted a real aircraft (2 in fact) low and to our left. She brings them to my attention but I can't see them. Finally, I see 2 white dots a thousand feet below us about 3 miles away. I gave them wide berth so that Kim remained calm. Kim was content but watched those aircraft like a hawk. She felt the power of her gaze alone will stop any impending airspace conflicts. Thankfully, her attention is diverted from the "heavies" operating what seemed too close for my comfort at times. Melbourne's downtown area quickly revealed itself in front of us so we introduced ourselves at the airspace entry point over the Yarra bridge, got our sequencing for Essendon, and proceeded on in with the usual "Traffic is Whitman Blimp at 3 miles".

The landing at Essendon was a smooth "greaser" with the nose held high as we rolled along the tarmac. A very nice and satisfying end to the trip. Nothing was left but to cancel my SAR watch, put the plane to bed for one last time, load up the car, and head home. We were home (and alive Kim would have added). Calvin begged to call his friends before we even got to the car and Graeme and Liam jumped on that bandwagon. Once in the door at home, Kim made for the kitchen and asked "Cappuccino?". The trip of a lifetime was over.

Friday: We awoke after a great relaxing sleep in our own bed. Today, I am still revelling in the success of the trip. I added up the numbers: 27 hours total flying, about 4300 kilometres flown, 8 nights in hotels, 9 days of food, aircraft rental fees, fuel fees, landing fees, air traffic control fees, taxis, rental cars, tours, souvenirs, a replacement camera, candy and ice cream bribes, bottled water.... the list goes on. So was it worth the time and money? Absolutely. Would I do it again? Absolutely.

Epilogue:

Financially, the trip could have been completed for the same price by flying in an A320 or B737 from Melbourne to Ularu. We could have done it in a week instead of 9 days and we would have had a nice sandwich or peanuts to enjoy on the flight. And while "The Rock" experience would have been no less impressive, we'd have missed what made this trip so memorable: sleeping in underground hotels, walking through spinifex grass and feeling so alone in the world, meeting the incredible characters of Coober Pedy or the dedicated staff of the Royal Doctors Flying Service, or bringing back a handful of "gems" that to this day reside on my children's desks, and for one mildly colourful but otherwise unremarkable example, has been polished and mounted to become my wife's favourite piece of jewellery.

Personally, the trip marked a watershed for me. While I left as someone who could fly a plane, I returned to Essendon with a strong sense of having become a pilot. I'd taken the people I love most in the world, created an experience that will be unique in their lives, and I'd done so safely.

Now I just have to find a friend with a bigger and faster plane to borrow.....

Nelson Barrett

2009 Membership Form

Winnipeg Area Chapter RAA

Trial (\$25)

Student(\$25)

Full (\$50)

Required Information

Name		OFFICE USE ONLY	
Mailing Address		Renewal Date	
Phone(s)		Chq.	Cash
E-mail		Other	
		Initials	
Are you an RAA national member? ⁽¹⁾		<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.**