

## Tony Dignam

Our last newsletter informed members of the passing of Tony Dignam, who was for many years Finance Director and later Deputy General Manager of TAA until he retired in November 1981.

Few would have known the other side of Tony, who was indeed a private person, proud of his family, and compassionate in his endeavours to help others. Tony worked tirelessly within his community for the benefit of the underprivileged and for those people who had fallen on hard times.

I believe that it is appropriate that we recognise these efforts, and provide a little insight into the man that was Tony Dignam.

### *The TAA side of Tony.*

Tony joined TAA in October 1946, after serving with the RAAF during WW2 (and that's another story), and with the liaison between QANTAS and TAA in those early years, Tony met and later married Betty, who was at that time a secretary with Qantas. Tony was originally a Sydneysider, but moved to Melbourne in 1951 for a 6 months transfer that lasted for 51 years, retiring to continue his passion for "a game of golf". Incidentally, when Tony was considering joining TAA, his father tried to dissuade him, saying "This airline will not last 6 months", and I think this only stirred Tony on (along with all those other foundation members) to prove his father wrong, as the airline was to become the pride of Australia's skies.

### *The other side of Tony.*

Tony was a man who had a great deal of compassion for other people, and he worked tirelessly for both St Vincent De Paul and Ozzamon House, for the homeless and underprivileged. On many occasions he would take his sons along to assist and learn the lesson that life is not always kind, and that misfortune could only be one step away.



Photograph of Tony during the early years of retirement – Tony and Betty travelled extensively, seen here visiting the Botanic Gardens in Hong Kong, but his favourite passion was a game of golf, good conversation, and the comradeship of fellow golfers.

### *Highest Traditions*

The Museum has been provided with a copy of the book *Highest Traditions* in which reference is made to part of Tony's wartime experiences, and this contains many excerpts and references to many service people who later joined TAA. It is an interesting book, and will provide a source of information for future articles in our Newsletter.

### *Local Community Service.*

Apart from these two major institutions Tony also visited families in his local area who were destitute or down on their luck, ensuring that they had sufficient food and that the water and gas/electricity was connected, and in conjunction with the St Vincent De Paul Society, he continuously lobbied the government for funding to build a suitable nursing home in Box Hill. Like many things in Tony's life this was achieved without a great deal of fuss, as his persistence and stamina would ultimately win through. Another major attribute of his character was his efforts to assist overseas families, of which there were many, to settle into their new country, and assimilate as quickly as possible into the local area and society.

Tony was born in Sydney in 1921, passed away in Melbourne in 2002, and left a legacy of calm compassion and respect for his fellow man that he himself followed throughout his life. Tony was truly "the Gentle Man". RIP

# Boeing 727-300

## **Never heard of a Boeing 727-300!**

Well this was an aircraft considered at the time TAA was looking for a larger aircraft to take it into the '80's. As part of the submission from Boeing, they manufactured a model of the proposed aircraft painted in TAA's livery, which was the proud possession of Reg Bailey, who recently donated it to the Museum.

This again provides another part of our history, and verification of the period where TAA was expanding when the two airline policy was no longer in vogue, and TAA was able to assert its influences on the selection of aircraft without interference. Although this aircraft never saw production for TAA it is that little part of history when aircraft like the DC10, Lockheed 1011, Boeing 767 and Airbus A300 were all contenders to introduce the wide bodied aircraft to Australia. This model now joins "the contenders and unsuccessful" group of models in that segment of models on display in the Museum. Thank you Reg it has a good home amongst familiar friends.

**Another contribution** - Whilst fossicking amid the treasures of the "antique shops" at Bacchus Marsh, Peter Brocchi, who recently retired from his stint at QANTAS after serving many years with TAA, Peter located yet another rare framed photograph of the early TAA history.



The picture shows "our crew" inspecting their cargo of aluminium ingots after the arrival at Melbourne from Tasmania.

The date was 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1956, and the crew were (from left to right) Jim Murtha (F/O) Jim McMillan (Cpt) and Keith Goodheere (F/O), being ably assisted by 2 cargo staff.

## **Joke** - with a little imagination.

Three pieces of string were standing outside a bar in Collins St Melbourne. As they were about to enter the bar they noticed a sign that said, "No strings served here".

The first string says " Well, I'll get served, watch me", and blithely walked up to the bar and ordered a beer. "We don't serve strings here" came the reply, "Get out".

The second string, a little more confident, says "You may have failed, but I'll get served, watch me" and he too entered the bar, walked up to the barman and said " I'll have a beer, please", to which he receives a reply "We don't serve strings here. Get Out"

The third string considered his options and finally says "I'll get served, watch me", and at the same time he messed up his hair, twists himself into a knot, and strolls up to the bar and ordered a beer.

The bartender looks at him and says " Hey, aren't you a string", and the string replies "Nope, I'm a frayed (k)not".

## **Fly Boy** - A book by Jeff Litchfield - For sale through the club at a discount price.

Geoff spent nearly 30 years flying for TAA, and on retirement he decided to write a book of both his airline and military experiences. It will appeal to all who have a passion for military / commercial aviation and it covers his training with the RAAF, and nine aircraft types, combined with aircraft carrier operations, and of course those heady days flying commercial, and somewhat sedate, aircraft in the TAA fleet.

Book price is \$30.00 if collected from the museum / club or if posted \$ 36.00. Orders may be placed by contacting Ross Mc Donald at the museum - 86962692.

## **Aircrew Bulletin**

The museum staff have finally sorted the collection of these magazines only to identify that we are missing four publications, otherwise our set would be complete. The publications that we are missing are No. 177,390,403 and 406. So if amongst your duplicate copies you have a spare, then we would be grateful for your donation.

### **Did You Know? - Reviewing TAA's History 1946 - 1950**

Those early years from 1946 to 1950 were the perfect example of the foresight and methodical planning of our "early management pioneers" that established the trademark of the airline.

This foundation enabled "TAA" to continually demonstrate the calibre of both management and staff, with progressive foresight planning and the organised introduction of aircraft that were deemed necessary for the continual improvement of the travel product to the Australian people.

When the airline started in September 1946 it was only three months later that management placed orders for a new and improved civilian aircraft, the Convair 240. All the initial aircraft were either ex-military transport or leased second hand aircraft. It was only 2 years from the commencement of operations (9<sup>th</sup> September 1946) to the day that these new aircraft were introduced, and to be precise, the first aircraft arrived on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1948, with the second Convair entering service on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1948.

The early years were also learning and growing years. TAA was involved with the planning and development of B.C.P.A., another "international" proposed to operate in the Pacific region. Involvement with the Northern Territory Medical service also had TAA supplying pilots and aeronautical engineers to support this service. and the introduction of the DC6 on the long-haul routes. The loss of a DC3 freighter aircraft at Hobart in August 1950, was an event that stunned the airline.

When you consider the number of aircraft in the fleet, the travel routes covered, the speed of the aircraft types and performance capabilities, and staff numbers at that time, it was a very impressive record for the fledgling airline, who was endeavouring to overcome the criticism of the private enterprise operators and parliamentary disputation of "a government owned" airline. It is a credit to all those staff who, against all odds, set TAA on its way to being Australia's No. 1 domestic carrier.

### **Rambling – Go see Australia – I did.**

Some members were aware that I have for many years expressed the wish "to fish on every beach in Australia" and that I had managed to cover a vast area of the Eastern and Southern coastlines, but I thought that I would share with you the recent experience of fishing the Northern and Western coastlines, on a recent "junket" up through the centre via Broken Hill and down the "windy side" of Australia.

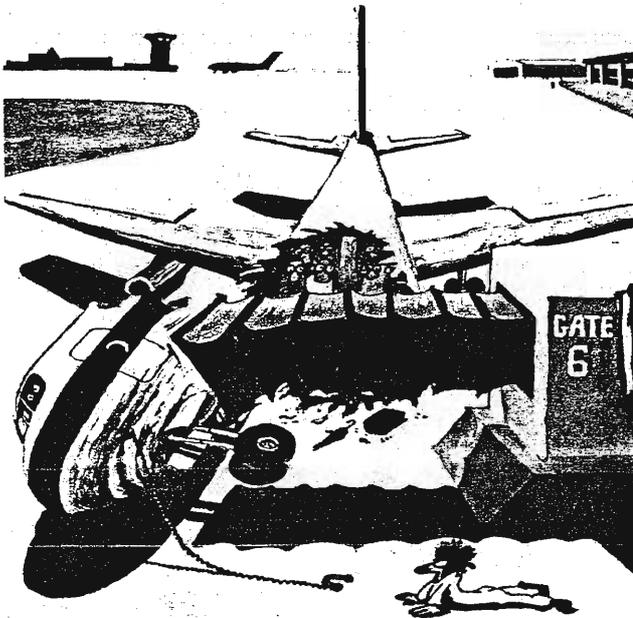
It was an experience that I believe we should all do as although I had flown over it many times, it was not until we (my wife and I) caravanned through this area did I really appreciate the vastness and variety of the countryside, the wild life, and the myriad of colour that the north-west corner has to offer. It is truly breathtaking, -- but back to the fishing trip.

Apart for the obligatory snake or two, this fishing story cannot be exaggerated, and at the time it was not funny.

It was at Daly River (not to be confused with Day Waters – a place of unique historical important in our early history) that I decided to try to catch a "Barra"; and so armed with my trusty rod and appropriate bait I headed for a wire mesh pontoon pier where a number of small boats were moored. As I went down the bank I casually glanced along the riverbank to make sure that there was no 'hidden' menace, just a lazy goanna, and a few birds, so I proceeded out along the pontoon, which extended about 18 feet into the river. I cast out and returned midway along the pontoon, and dutifully laid my bait and surplus gear on the wire mesh decking, only to see what appeared to be 2 jungle green eyes about 6 inches apart looking up at me. I immediately knew that it wasn't my wife keeping an eye on me to make sure that I didn't come back with the story of the "one that got away".

I must say that although we had seen crocodiles on our journey, I had never been this close (about 5 feet – separated by the heavy wire mesh). Slowly but precisely I moved back until I had my feet on "terra (terror) firma", and gazed directly along the back of the crocodile, and initially it must have been 30 feet long. But realising this would immediately be construed as an exaggeration, I decided to measure the gaps in the mesh and count the number of gaps that were directly above the "fright of my life".

After leaving my line in for 30 minutes, no bites from the fish, I reeled the line in (some distance down the bank and away from the pontoon pier) only to retrieve a line that was devoid of bait. Needless to say all other expeditions to fish were treated a little more cautiously and with a little bit more respect for the wildlife.



## Did it really happen?

Don't laugh. If you asked some flight crew about Traffic Staff using the controls of the air-bridge, (when they were first introduced), they would agree that some staff were a little over zealous when moving the air-bridge out to the aircraft, and that this may have been the result, if the air-bridge did not have a limit as to how far it could go out.

The copy we obtained was from the collection of Alistair McKinnon who passed away recently, and his mother Rachelle, donated this along with other items to the museum, for which we are eternally grateful.

## Notice the Date? 4<sup>th</sup> November 1946

This typed schedule containing handwritten notes has been recovered and restored by the museum.

Note the flight number have been hand written above the proposed operating schedule and flight times.

Clearly documented on this are the directions that "even" flight numbers go north and "odd" flight numbers go South, but interestingly all flights use Melbourne as the axis point for all aircraft operations.

Also noted on this document were the initial cargo rates applied at that time and an example was Melbourne to Canberra \ Sydney 6d per pound, and Brisbane to Hobart 1/- per pound.

*By Hand*

TRANS-AUSTRALIA AIRLINES  
OPERATING FROM 4TH NOVEMBER, 1946  
AIRCRAFT DOUGLAS DC3 (C-47 TYPE)

*Even nos NORTH bound flights  
uneven nos SOUTH*

1. TIMETABLES:-  
MELBOURNE - CANBERRA - SYDNEY - BRISBANE SERVICE

MILES	AIRPORT OF	D	402	404	406	486	408
312	Melbourne	Dep. 5:45 a.m.	8:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	2:30 p.m.	5:30 p.m.	
	Canberra	arr. -	10:00 a.m.	-	4:30 p.m.	-	
	"	dep. -	10:15 a.m.	-	4:45 p.m.	-	
454	Sydney	arr. 8:35 a.m.	11:20 a.m.	12:50 p.m.	5:50 p.m.	8:20 p.m.	
0	Sydney	dep. 9:00 a.m.	11:45 a.m.	-	6:15 p.m.	-	
454	Brisbane	arr. 11:55 a.m.	2:40 p.m.	-	9:10 p.m.	-	

MILES	AIRPORT OF	D	402	404	406	486	408
0	Brisbane	dep. -	3:30 p.m.	12:20 p.m.	-	5:05 p.m.	
454	Sydney	arr. -	9:35 a.m.	3:25 p.m.	-	5:10 p.m.	

MILES	AIRPORT OF	D	402	404	406	486	408
0	Sydney	dep. 6:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	3:50 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	6:35 p.m.	
148	Canberra	arr. -	11:05 a.m.	4:55 p.m.	-	-	
	"	dep. -	11:20 a.m.	5:10 p.m.	-	-	
450	Melbourne	arr. 9:05 a.m.	1:30 p.m.	7:20 p.m.	5:05 p.m.	9:40 p.m.	

MELBOURNE - HOBART SERVICE

MILES	AIRPORT OF	D	402	404	406	486	408
0	Melbourne	dep. 6:30 p.m.	-	-	-	-	
381	Hobart	arr. 4:30 p.m.	-	-	-	-	
0	Hobart	dep. 6:00 p.m.	-	-	-	-	
381	Melbourne	arr. 7:40 p.m.	-	-	-	-	

**Membership renewal** – Our club has a growing membership, but it is the surviving partners of members who we continue, and will continue, to support. This has led to a greater need to rely on the financial members of the club and their continued support to assist with our endeavours to retain, maintain and obtain components of our history that must be preserved, along with members volunteering to help in the museum.

If you have not as yet renewed your membership for the year 2003, then please endeavour to attend to this as soon as possible. If you don't intend to renew your membership. Then it would be appreciated if you could advise the museum staff so that we can re-organise our listings and reduce postage and the stationary and administrative costs.

## Competition

In 1953 TAA had a competition for the naming of the new Viscount fleet to enter the Australian service, and in response, in the staff magazine "This Air Age" of February 1953 was published a letter to the editor that I thought might put a smile on your face.

Quote " Dear Sir, I am very interested in your competition to name the New Viscount aircraft, and herewith submit my selection and annotations.

NED KELLY – (Designed the first all-metal fuselage).

SQUIZZY TAYLOR - (Shot through Richmond like a jet).

Capt. THUNDERBOLT – (Started the first Cannonball service).

GARBETT – (Invented the Tasmanian lunch service – a leg with lettuce).

KILLARNEY KATE – (more records than a Convair).

SPRING-HEELED JACK – (Remarkable take-off)

Please send the prize to Kew Asylum.

Yours Faithfully, "Vickers" (Gin)

## Do you know this face!



To answer this question you would have had to have been employed in the "early" days for TAA, but it is not without some significant recognition that I include this photograph.

The face is that of IAN SABEY, Publicity and Public Relations Manager. Ian's claim to fame was not limited to the position he held within TAA, but also for writing the book "Challenge in the Skies" (the early years of TAA) and for locating that eternal icon of TAA, Nola Rose - The public face of TAA – an image of a young airline, attractive and efficient, and ever friendly.

It was an image that was to remain throughout the years and the name TAA The Friendly Way was a household saying.

## Statistics

TAA's operations really got down to operating as a schedule in October 1946, and as a point of interest it is amazing to note that we have the statistics regarding passenger comment over this month.

126 letters and comment cards were received; mostly recording good comment, but 35 were classified as complaints.

It would appear that (lost) baggage was the biggest problem, either lost or arriving on a later flight (remembering the problems DC3 aircraft had with hot weather, restricted loads, and airport limitations).

Not surprisingly there were numerous comment registered about the friendliness of the cabin employees (Hostesses) and for the friendliness and manner of the flight crews who took the time to talk to passengers prior to take-off

The stage was set, and I am pleased to say that our theatre of operations improved its performance with every curtain call.

**The last Bus Trip for 2002**

We have organised a 2 day bus tour of Phillip Island and surrounds, including an overnight stop at an all-inclusive cost. Seats will be limited to the capacity of 1 coach, and reservations should be submitted early.

Departing Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2002.

Returning Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2002.

**Tour includes –**

All coach transport.

Lunch and dinner on the Thursday (including complimentary drinks, tea, coffee).

Overnight accommodation (Bed and Breakfast)

Plus

Admission to the following attractions

Koala Park

Penguin Parade

Churchhill Homestead

<b>Total Cost</b>	- Member/partner	\$ 120.00
	Non Member/ or guest	\$ 135.00

Pickup points

Airport West	Skyways Hotel	08.30 am
Therry St.	Rear Qantas House	09.00 am

Closing Date for acceptances = 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2002.

Please return this section with your remittance to –  
**Ross McDonald** Events Co-Ordinator  
 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 50 Franklin St.  
 Melbourne 3000.

Preferred pick-up point

Airport West

Therry Street.

Circle preferred point

Members Name/s

.....

.....

Non members \ Guests

.....

.....

Enclosed is my cheque / money order / other  
 Made payable to TAA 25 Year Club to  
 the value of \$.....