



The Old Fliers' Group

Attached to the Royal Aero Club of WA (Inc).

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Speaker of the Day

The April *Speaker of the Day* was Rob Vaughan Johnson. He told us of his experiences while flying helicopters in a variety of countries, including the UK, Pakistan, Iran, India, Uganda and Australia.

Rob started his rotary wing career in agriculture, crop spraying in the UK. His record daily coverage of 1236 acres still stands.



Crop spraying in a Hiller 12E in the UK.

The lure of adventure (and money) took him to a number of countries and eventually to Uganda where he flew in the Police Air Wing, which consisted of eight fixed wing aircraft and ten helicopters. He gave us a brief history of Uganda which covered the role of Emperor Bokassa and the rise to power of President Idi Amin. Rob ferried both men, on often occasion to important meetings and events. On more than one occasion he was fired upon by warring factions and criminals.



Emporer Bokassa (with medals and decorations)

While in the employ of the Police Air Wing, Rob came to Australia for a holiday. It was then he received news that there had been a coup and his house and possessions in Uganda had been confiscated. He had to start a new life with what he had in his holiday suitcase. Fortunately he gained employment as a helicopter pilot in the north of WA. It was during that time that he became involved in the rescue of the crew of the *Key Biscayne*.

The oil rig *Key Biscayne* sank off the WA coast on 1 September 1983 while it was being towed from the North-West Shelf to Fremantle for repairs. Buffeted by a 50 knot westerly gale and 7 metre waves, the rig was pitching heavily, eventually breaking its tether with the towing vessel. As it took on water the crew were progressively evacuated as attempts to regain control were frustrated by the weather and the flooding. Rob made many trips to the rig as it pitched through 20° and more, making each approach and landing a most hazardous exercise. On a number of occasions he had no more than 10 seconds to land on the platform, pick up his passengers and depart.

In summary, the talk was a most interesting one which was peppered with moments of humour and even astonishment at some of the risky jobs he undertook.

There was no mini speaker at the April meeting.

Happy Birthday

It was noted that we completed our seventh year of formal meetings and started into our eighth. It was in April 2004 that we had our first Speaker of the Day, Stan Schur, and in the same month the first bulletin was mailed to members.

May Meeting

The next OFG meeting will be held at noon on Friday 27 May. We have invited Rob Vaughan Johnson back as our Mini Speaker to cover some loose ends and to introduce new material.

The Speaker of the Day will be Reg Adkins who will talk on the Qantas Catalinas on the Swan River and tell us how, due to the stipulations in the Lend Lease Agreement, they were flown to a point west of Rottnest and scuttled.

Come and hear speakers and enjoy a nice lunch.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan