



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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NEXT MEETING Friday September 26th

Last Meeting

The meeting opened with the news that the Old Fliers Group had been successful in obtaining a Lottery West grant for the purchase of new equipment. A new laptop and projector were used for the first time at the meeting and the improvement in projected image quality was most apparent. Sincere thanks to Lottery West.

Our two speakers at the August meeting were most informative and entertaining. Tom Lofthouse told of his D-Day reflections and Rob Turner talked about one of his student from the mid-1980s who caused huge problems as he progressed to first solo – and during the first solo flight as well.

D-Day Reflections

Tom Lofthouse told us that he first served in the Army in the 4th Field Regiment. Later, in 1941, he transferred to RAAF aircrew and in 1943 joined 466 Squadron as a tail gunner in a Handley Page Halifax. He was based at Leconfield, a busy airfield not far north of Hull on the east coast of the England. His first tour of thirty-six missions was followed by a further ten before the war ended. Missions included raids on Berlin, Nuremburg – and Normandy, which is where the D-Day landing took place.



The crew before departure on a mission.

Tom told us of the preparation for D-Day, in the months and weeks leading up to 6th June. The Allies carried out massive deception operations that had the Germans believing that the assault would take place at Pas-de-Calais, at the narrowest part of the Channel – and that is where they amassed their forces. Many tactics were used to carry out the deception, including fake equipment, double agents and fraudulent radio

transmissions. But the landing took place at Normandy about 150 miles to the south-west of Pas-de-Calais.



The landings took places at five locations.

Tom had a busy time in lead up to the Landing. His squadron bombed strong points, bridges, airfields, transport routes and coastal defence points. As a tail gunner in a Halifax he was always on the lookout for enemy fighters.

D-Day was originally planned for 5th June, but the weather caused a delay of 24 hours – so at 6.30 am on June 6th General Eisenhower, as the Supreme Commander, gave the order to move.



The crew on return from a raid.

Tom mentioned some of the numbers involved, which were outstanding: over 175,000 troops, over 15,000 aircraft and nearly 7,000 ships and watercraft.



Handley Page Halifax with D-Day markings.

Going Solo

Rob Turner had been Deputy Chief Flying Instructor and Chief Pilot at the Royal Aero Club in the 1980s. His talk was about a student who took well over 150 hours to make his first solo flight. In a humorous way, Rob told the story of the 72-year-old Japanese gentleman who had sold his business in Japan for a huge profit and moved to Australia. He arrived at the Royal Aero Club in mid-1980 and said he “wanted to learn to *fly*” (fly). For the purpose of the meeting, Rob called him Mr Kazami (of course it was not his real name).

After flying with a number of instructors, Mr Kazami was passed to Rob for special treatment. When he gave Mr Kazami pre-flight briefings on the various exercises to be carried out in the training area, Mr Kazami would make jottings on one face of a notebook in basic English. The jottings were then translated into Japanese on the opposite page. (Rob said the translation looked like a string of little houses mixed with barbed wire symbols).

Mr Kazami consistently referred to the notebook while flying. Naturally, his concentration was diverted and the consequences were often drastic and dangerous. Mr Kazami would usually respond with a single word, “Ooooooooooh”.

Rob gave some definitions as interpreted by Mr Kazami.

Reference Point: A point on or near the horizon that was to be avoided.

Altitude: A number on an altimeter that was passed on climb or descent.

Straight and Level: The prelude to a spiral dive.

Climbing: Similar to straight and level.

Descending: Similar to straight and level, only quicker.

Turning: An uncontrolled change of direction – to nowhere in particular.

As time passed, Mr Kazami’s skills improved to the point where he was introduced to circuit training. His radio work was not good and for each training session he contacted the tower with “Jandakot tower this is Romeo Whisky Foxtrot for ‘circles’, received Information Echo”. (It was always information “Echo” – every time). It got to the point where Rob rang the tower before each session of circuits to advise them that his special student

was about to take to the air – and to prepare for the *unusual*.

Finally, after eighteen months and over 150 hours of dual training, the time came for Mr Kazami to make his first solo flight. The tower was duly warned and all was in place for the big event. At the holding point Rob established the fact that the aircraft immediately in front of them was also for a session of circuit training, so after the usual pre-solo briefing Rob said, “Good luck and follow that aircraft in front of you”. He then got out of the aircraft.

However, Mr Kazami was very slow with his preparation for departure and the aircraft “in front” was long gone by the time he was ready to line up on the runway. In the meantime, another aircraft had taken off from displaced departure point further up the runway. You guessed it! Mr Kazami followed that aircraft – and in doing so he departed the circuit area and was headed for Fremantle and points beyond.

Rob was in a state of near panic, and so was the tower crew as they saw Mr Kazami depart the aerodrome. Bob ran to the club, rang the tower then got into another aircraft so that he could listen to the radio traffic and, if necessary, take off and ‘shadow’ Mr Kazami back home.

However, Mr Kazami was on the ball. He later said, “I knew somet’ing was w’ong when I saw the ocean under me”. He then turned around and flew back to Jandakot and, after being airborne for about three-quarters of an hour, made a spectacular landing before a large audience who were, by now, aware of the situation.

Mr Kazami ‘dropped it in from about twenty feet’ to the applause of the large crowd of onlookers after what could have been a national record for a first solo flight.

Alas, about three weeks later, when Mr Kazami had not returned to the club, Rob phoned his home to be informed by the housekeeper the Mr Kazami had been killed in a motor accident.

So ended a dramatic and sad chapter of Aero Club history.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting on September 26th will feature Richard Ewing who will tell us what he saw during a recent trip to the Temora Aviation Museum in New South Wales, and your editor will tell the extraordinary tale of Harry Baker’s forced landing in the Great Victoria Desert in outback Western Australia just before Christmas in 1932.

A parking fee exemption has been arranged for the meeting time slot 10.30 to 2.30 Friday, so hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club for lunch, just before noon.

Brian Hernan