



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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NEXT MEETING Friday May 29th

Last Meeting

At the April meeting we were treated to two excellent speakers with stories related to Australian military service. Both were most appropriate to the meeting that took place on the eve of ANZAC Day.

First Speaker

First to speak was Dr Robyn Yeo (Daughter of Mal and Shelley) who spoke of her time in the RAAF and of her deployment to Rwanda as part of a UN medical team.

Robyn came out of a public hospital in Perth as a young doctor to start her RAAF officer training, which took six weeks. Then it was off to Pt Cook for executive training and next to Adelaide for an aviation medicine course where she studied health matters related to aircrew. Later she was assigned to the Roulettes for a week for exposure to the aviation environment, including high altitude flight, the effects of hypoxia, and high G flying – sustained 4G and non-sustained 6G manoeuvres.

Then it was more training on strategic and tactical medical support which included clearing the battlefield of injured personnel and repatriating them to safe areas.

Next she was posted to Townsville where after only a year in the service she received her commission. Almost immediately, she was assigned to the UN Assistance Commission, where 300 Australian personnel (100 infantry, 100 medical and 100 support crew.) were posted to Rwanda.



A Rwandan child receiving a 'jab'.

Rwanda was virtually in a state of civil war where the genocide between warring tribes resulted in dreadful injuries that needed treatment in the UN hospital in Kigali – the capital city. By our standards, the conditions were appalling both in the hospital and staff accommodation. Female staff, while moving between the hospital and living quarters, were required to carry a loaded rifle and be escorted by a male who was similarly armed. Abduction of females was a tool of the rebels.

Robyn's talk was outstanding and it left her audience stunned. Due to the restraints of time, Robin only delivered part of her story. We will have her back in a few months for Part Two.

Second Speaker

The second speaker of the day was Wayne Parsons who began with his induction into the RAAF in 1964, and his training on Winjeels, Vampires and Hercules before moving to the No 5 Helicopter Operational Conversion Course in early 1968. That course covered: general flying and handling, instrument flying, formation flying, night flying, winching operations, external load operations, confined area and mountain operations, and army cooperation. After two further months of exercises in Australia it was off to Vietnam.



The 'Huey' and crew on operations in Vietnam.

In the first month in Vietnam Wayne logged over 100 sorties – there was no let-up. It was the pattern for following twelve months – combat assault missions, insertion of troops and medical evacuations. Wayne finished his talk on a poignant note with the evacuation of a badly injured Australian soldier. It was a very moving story and most appropriate for our meeting so close to ANZAC Day.

Lest we forget.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting on Friday May 29th and will feature Bevan Marshall who will cover the early days at Jandakot Airport. Also, Richard Ewing will tell us what he saw at the Avalon Air Show earlier this year.

The usual parking arrangements will apply between 10.30 and 2.30 on Friday May 29th, so hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club just before noon for lunch. Come early for a chat if you desire.

Brian Hernan