

**Bill North—A216401—Airframe Fitter**

After Wagga I was posted to 2AD. In 1958 I move on to 86 Wing in Canberra and in October of that same year 86 Wing was transferred to Richmond. In 1959 I was posted to 38 Squadron on DC3s. In October of the following year I was involved in a crash and burn landing in Wau, Papua New Guinea. Although the aircraft was totally destroyed, all of us on board survived, suffering minor injuries and second-degree burns. Mick Hoban and I get absolutely pissed with the locals at the hospital. Matron and the sisters were not impressed. Mick and I flew back to Townsville and then took the next aircraft back to Richmond. To this day I have not suffered shock.

I was promoted to corporal in 1963 and posted to 9 Squadron, Canberra in 1964. In October of that year I was posted back to 2AD, Richmond. In 1967 I was promoted to sergeant.

In March 1968 I began flight engineer training on C130As with 36 Squadron and graduated in September. I was posted to 11 Squadron for flight engineer training on the Orion in January 1969 and completed the ground school in May.

Unfortunately, family circumstances saw me posted back to 486 Maintenance Squadron, Richmond. In 1970 I commenced flight engineer training on C130Es with 37 Squadron and remained with the squadron until discharge. However, prior to discharge, Bob Wark, Peter Kropman and I began flight engineer training with TAA on their B727 aircraft. Bob and I returned to Richmond for discharge on 25 January 1974.

A new life began for me in civil aviation; what a great way to fly and so many doors to open. I stayed with TAA until 1977 when I was offered, and accepted, a flight engineer position with Cathay Pacific Airways based in Hong Kong. As a CPA flight engineer I operated B707, L011 Tristar and B747-200 and 300 aircraft which took me to many interesting countries and cultures.

My wife Ruby, twin daughters Joanne and Jennifer and I lived in Hong Kong for sixteen years. Our son Glenn remained in Australia to complete his education, but would join us during his holidays. Today he is a senior captain with Qantas.

It is Cathay's policy that when you turn fifty-five you must retire. So on 8 March 1993 the North family reluctantly left Hong Kong and returned to Sydney.

Fifty-five is too young to retire and I was like a caged lion forever getting under Ruby's feet and driving her mad. Relief came in March 1994 when I was offered a job with Air New Zealand to fly the Haj out of Jakarta to Jedda for three months. This proved to be a very interesting time even though the contract concluded in June.

But because we had been operating Malaysian B747s and had Malaysian licences, and as Air New Zealand needed the aircraft for their expanding routes, we remained employed. This lasted until December 1997 which I figured was the right time to retire.

I amassed almost 18,000 operating hours during my career in aviation. It was a great life.

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