

2009 MAY OUTBACK PATROL

PILOT - BARRY SMALL. TEAM – GARRY REYNOLDS (GOODNEWS THE CLOWN)

ONE MONTH OUT.

Les approached me to ask if I was available for a patrol in late April – May. I said Yep! but after 28th April as this was (Marianne & me) our 30th Wedding Anniversary.... so he figured May 4 – 8 to be OK.

Les said Garry Thompsons' plane was in parts in a hangar in Toowoomba but should be Ok in time for the trip.

2 WEEKS OUT

Garry T's plane not likely. We have to pray for new pilot and plane.

A very unique answer came after several days – a very qualified Qantas 747 pilot offered his plane and himself as pilot (no not the jumbo, a sporty twin engine French plane). This pilot also operates a training school and he said he would take 2 other trainee pilots on the trip to train them at the same time as completing our itinerary. What a great idea & answer of prayer – of course we said yes.

6 DAYS OUT

Our Qantas pilot is struck down with severe flu (not the piggy one) so we lost both plane and pilot (but good contact and resources for future)

Received email from Les – pray for new pilot and plane. Garry T's plane still not fixed.

4 DAYS OUT

Get word that we have yet another pilot, who started a patrol 2 months before but had to cancel after several days as the plane broke down (while on the ground), still no plane yet.

2 DAYS OUT

Get fax from Les, plane has become available a Cessna 210. I rang pilot Barry, he decided to get out of Sydney Sunday arvo and ready to leave Maitland airstrip early Monday morning. I said I'll meet you there and you can stay with us overnight and Marianne will take us both on Monday morning. Sunday night we went out for tea at Valentine Bowling Club, right on the shores of Lake Macquarie to show Barry what a beautiful lake we have. The next morning we drove around part of the lake on the way to the airstrip. We unpacked the car and Marianne said goodbye.

Barry brought the plane across to refuel, then we loaded it up and after the usual checks, flight plans etc we were on our way.

FIRST STOP COONAMBLE.

Flight a bit bumpy so we had to slow down a bit which put us about 10 minutes late. Landed at Coonamble in the midst of a severe grasshopper plague. Tens of thousands of the hungry, little destructive critters flying in all directions. People's faces told the story of the mass destructions. Barry stayed with plane to get more order going. As I was picked up and taken to the school. Kids were already in large shelter shed waiting. Took "Sin Bin" show, but as it takes about 5 minutes to set up I decided on my David/Nabal story. Went very well, chose volunteers who were a lot of fun, everyone very well behaved. Big school about 240 kids, finished show. Had a cup of coffee with some of the staff. Asked by one if they could put a picture and story in local paper – I said OK. "Come back we don't get visited like this". Taken back to plane, rang ahead to Collarenebri School then off, as the plane ploughed through the pest plague.

LANDED FINE IN COLLARENBRI,

No sign of grasshoppers here. Headmaster said they had a mouse plague. People here seemed a lot brighter, kids playing as we entered school, mobbed by a bunch, then into library to set up then over to the office, signed in & a cuppa before the show, back to the library for the show, about 40 kids giggled through the door as Goodnews dusted everyone off with his featherduster.



SIN BIN SHOW

This has a very unique 2 metre high tube that is made of clear plastic (it rolls up for carrying in the plane), about two thirds down is a trap door, on the bottom is a base that is full of pins. The idea is to get the "sins" that kids might commit at school, write them on balloons and have the kids throw them in the top of the Sin Bin (about 7 balloons will fit). Sins like bullying, swearing, disobedience, lying etc are drawn out of the kids and text'd onto balloons which are stopped inside the bin by the trap door. When full Goodnews says the "Sin Bin" is his invented system for removing sins. Trapdoor is released, balloons fall to the bottom and a series of "rapid fire" explosions occur startling everyone. Often times, kids just stamped to the Sin Bin to see how this happened. The "Sin Bin" show starts with "Goodnews" asking "what game or games do they use a sin bin?" The main answer is "football"... When a player does something wrong on field he is sent to the sin bin. "Goodnews" says from

this "one person" doing "one thing" wrong he lets down a lot of people... "Who does he let down?" – answers come in from the kids "himself", "the coach", "the team", "his family", "the fans", "the TV fans", "owners of the team", "trainers", it's a large list of let downs just from one man being sent to the sin bin for just one wrong doing.

This is why God hates sin, "it lets the team down", many others that footballer can potentially let down is "millions of people" if it is being televised. If this is the letdown caused by one person's sin in one game... it's easy to see why the world is such a mess.

The message goes from here to the real sin remover "the cross" and talks about how Jesus died to remove our sins – plus He offers a place in his family and a better way of life heading away from sin towards love.

Finish show at Collarenebri back to plane, remove makeup and off to Charleville for a quite night. Motel owner picks us up. Book into Waltzing Matilda Motel. Busy first day but we get to sleep in, in the morning.

TUESDAY

Barry and I did some shopping at the IGA supermarket for essential survival rations for the plane (desert flying and onboard snacks).

Did some PR work and met the Principal of the Charleville School and gave her a "Goodnews the clown" promo sheet and clock explaining that Goodnews and other acts are booked out very fast, so there is a need to book as soon as email comes, as it works first in first served and we can only fit in about 3 shows per day, thus about 15 a week depending on the distances between shows of course.

SHOWTIME MORVEN

Quickly back to the motel to get made up for school at Morven about 80 kms away. Taxi arrives to take us to strip, lady taxi driver gets a surprise when a clown jumped in the front seat. Touched down at Morven on dirt strip see 2 kangaroos at end of strip sitting on the side. Taxi plane back to parking area police and teachers aide waiting for us. Policeman saying "woops you beat us" – the police usually drive up and down



the runway chasing animals off just before a plane comes in, but he was about 2 minutes late... when you see the road, from the strip, to town you can understand why. Very, very, soft sandy road. We were taken back by a "Morven born" young

lady (teacher's aide) back to the school in a 2 wheel drive, doing some very strategic driving, the cop has a 4WD so he was OK... but I'm surprised we made it without being bogged.

Kids playing in schoolyard when we arrived, Goodnews waving as he carefully climbed the stairs in his size 32 shoes, most Queensland schools are built up high. Barry and I set up, as the teacher's aide moved the desks back to allow the kids to sit on the floors which are generally always carpeted. The bell goes, the kids come and line up at the stairs. "Goodnews" goes to the door with his featherduster ready to dust down excited kids as they enter. It's the Sin Bin show once again. Volunteers are great and we have and plenty of audience participation, the balloons are all named and netballed into the "Sin Bin" the trapdoor is released, but the balloons don't move.... they are jammed.

Goodnews says something "in order for God to remove our sins we sometimes need to go through a bit of a shaking", so several small children were picked to stand either side of the Sin Bin tube to shake it the balloons free and float down onto the very sharp pins, 6 rapid fire explosions occur. The head teacher who was testing several older students in the next room, ran into our classroom. "Is everyone OK???", she had a smile on her face, so I didn't know if it was for a bit of fun or she was truly concerned as it is very surprising when it happens.

The older kids joined the show after this. "I'll have to start the show again, how much time have I left?" A teacher replied "15 minutes"... "that's great – it's a half hour show it's gone for 45 minutes and I've still 15 minutes left"... so "Goodnews" did some juggling which also doubles as an object lesson. "Please come back we don't get people out here".

Barry and I head back to the car hoping to make it back to the plane without being bogged. Barry asked if anyone travels into Charleville daily, "the school bus goes in a about 7am and returns about 4.30pm". I said "do you want to fly into Charleville and catch the school bus back?" But she couldn't be swayed. In the plane and taxi back to end of strip "Hey Barry there's about 7 roos running throught the bush looks like they might come across", and sure enough about 6 hopped across about 50 metres from us "I'm not sure where the other one went" Barry said "this'll do" and turned the plane around then off we went carefully looking for more until we left the ground. In the air up to 4,000 feet to Charleville! On the radio an agricultural plane responded he was heading to Morven under us at about 1500 feet.

As we landed back at the near empty Charleville airstrip my thoughts went back to the "Federation of Australia Air Shows in 2001" when it was a mass of activity. The dolphin like



Qantas Constellation, DC3's, old war planes, Kingsford Smith Southern Cross replica and over a hundred other planes along with many aviation legends including Nancye Bird.

Landed, tied down and picked up by Rob Johnson, elder of Presbyterian Church and taken back to the motel, to get ready for a Bible study night at his house. Rob again picked us up and took us to what looked like the "SET" of the old ABC series "Step-toe & Son" ... We studied scriptures relating to "how to live" and use our gifts and Holy Spirit appointed positions in the church, using a "Mathias Press" study guide and referencing various scriptures. The main point was to operate in the position gifts that God has placed us, "make sure our house is in good order"... as "God is very big on order" and allowing Him to work His plans out through us. Finished about 9.30, dropped back to the motel by another attendee to get ready for busy day ahead.

WEDNESDAY

Taxi booked for 8.15am so busy getting ready early – same taxi lady not as surprised now! Barry does some plane checks as I pack all the gear in for another day. I phone Windorah "we're on our way" we'll fly over you so that you know that it is us.

WINDORAH

Small group of small kids, so balloon blowing for sin bin won't work. Switched show to "Know a good family" about Noah's Ark. This show still spooks me a bit, as every audience that sees it remains focused and quiet. Made everyone a balloon animal. Back to plane and off to Stonehenge

STONEHENGE

4 little kids at this school & 1 older, probably about 5th class. Did the Noah's Ark presentation again. Made all balloon animals. Taken back to plane. Teachers Aide moved here with her husband, so they could afford a house 10 years ago. It's the only double story house in town and 10 years ago they bought it for \$7000. Blocks of ground currently sell for between \$1500 and \$2500 and houses about \$25,000.



LONGREACH

Short flight to Longreach. Barry fills up plane ready for big day tomorrow. Barry parked the plane and did some paper work, while I started to unpack our plane tiny C210, that's in the shadow of a large Qantas 707, which is in the shadow of a larger Qantas 747. These are part of the Qantas Museum display of which I still haven't managed to see...maybe next trip. I rang up the Cavills' to ask about tonight's meeting, Lorraine answered and offered to pick us up and take us to motel. Steve and Lorraine are in Longreach as flying missionaries to remote schools and now operate 2 planes. Lorraine spoke with Barry Edwards the Pastor at the Baptist Church who said he'd pick us up at 6pm for dinner at his house and take us to the Bible study.

Arrive and a whole bunch of grey nomads were in a circle outside the room next to Barry's where they invited me into their circle but I stayed joking with them and telling them what we do. One older chap said he was part of a circus fan club group, when he found out I was a clown. They have a monthly newsletter and he said he'd send me a copy. I joked with them for about 15 minutes 'til Ps Barry arrives and told them they'll see me made up in full costume at about 7.30 in the morning.

Barry and wife Jenny have 4 boys are originally from New Zealand and now call Longreach home. Jenny prepared a buffet of chicken, roast potatoes, salad and we finished up with some left over cheesecake that Lorraine had dropped over earlier in the day – delicious.

Barry the Pastor has a keen interest in flying (often flying with Steve) so the two Barrys had plenty to talk about. Off to Bible study and looking at the reliability of the Bible and how it has been preserved through thousands of handwritten manuscripts in times past. Cuppa and then back to the motel and early night ready for busy day.

THURSDAY MORNING

Have breakfast and get made up. A high 4WD Bus is outside hosted by a lady in safari clothes and all the grey nomads are lined up to board for a days adventure. Goodnews appears to say hello much to the crowds delight and snapping of lenses. By this time Barry the Pastor had arrive to give us a lift to the airport. We wish the oldies well, throw the gear in his van and we are off to get ready for a busy day.

Phoned ahead to Jundah. Barry does a few checks of the plane, we pray with Barry Edwards and one of his sons who are there with us, encourage Barry to go for his pilots licence.

JUNDAH

Lively bunch of kids at the school ready and eager for the show. Sin Bin show here. All good. Headmistress thanks us for the show as did the school captain. Goodnews gives them an Outback Patrol clock. Teachers Aide takes us to the strip then a long flight into the outskirts of the Simpson Desert to Bedourie. Greeted by an amazing

sight. The flooding earlier in the year has made the ground around Bedourie very green. Thousands of acres with water still flowing in the rivers – it was a rare sight.

BEDOURIE

I hadn't been to Bedourie School before but the Teachers Aide was openly a Christian lady who runs a Sunday School in the town for the kids. Most kids come. Another Christian lady has recently joined her to help – good to see this in such an extremely remote place. Kids very appreciative and Sin Bin show goes its course. Shown by principal where "Kevin Rudds infrastructure spending" has repainted the walls and carpeted and renovated sections of the school. Then back to strip, very windy out here probably 25 knots. Now we are off to Birdsville, another town in the desert. I told Barry that Birdsville strip is just across the road from the pub and right between a couple of sand dunes.

BIRDSVILLE

A large black helicopter was off the side of the strip, near the refill area, probably there to cover the rodeo event that weekend. Barry taxied up for some fuel as I walked across the road and round the corner to the school. Set up while the kids were in another room. Sin Bin show for about 9 kids. One little girl sat in the lap firmly hugging the lady teacher the whole time watching the show from a distance. Barry turned up and I could



see him asking the staff for access to the computer and internet. This is very handy now. Finished the show and back to the plane but first a quick cool soft drink at the historic Birdsville Pub in full costume. Talking with the barmaid, we said "Barry was from Sydney I was from Newcastle" she said "she was from Cessnock". She took a picture of "Goodnews" then Barry took one on her camera of her and Goodnews.

Outside were a bunch of oldies (grey nomads) and a few 4WDs ready to head off to tackle "Big Red" a large sand dune hill. Back to the plane, I got changed then we were off to Thargomindah just before dark.

THARGOMINDAH

Unloading the plane and I called the motel to see if they'd pick us up they said yes and also told us we could borrow their car if we wanted – we didn't need to though. Into our rooms



then bit of a walk around town to stretch our legs. The motel has a small bain-marie with lots of already cooked dinners. We decided to have a shower then come back later for some lamb cutlets and veggies. They were very yummy and tasted like a home cooked meal. Barry went back for a few more – man can that guy eat, then back to the room to prepare for another busy day. Barry had lots to do pre planning the fights. Up early ready to be at “Thargo school” for a 9am show.

Michael the headmaster popped in as I was starting to get made up, he said he’d send someone to pick me up about 8.45am. So I stood outside the motel enjoying the sunshine in full costume. The police car came down the street and did a u turn just up from the motel and pulled over in front of me – he got out and as he walked up towards me I yelled “What!!!... you’re going to book me on a loitering charge”. He smiled in response. I figured he was my lift as I’d already met his wife who works at the school on a previous trip. Off to the school. Half hour special school assembly for kids with many parents also in attendance. Then Goodnews is called in, most parents stay for the show which needs to be kept right on time as show in Tibooburra is at 11am.

The policeman escorts Goodnews off the premises, bundles him into the patrol car. Back to the motel, load up the motels car with our gear. Where’s Barry? He was up the road at the shop using their internet for weather and flight plans. Arrive back after 5 minutes then motel lady takes us back to the strip, Barry has already brought the plane around and warmed it up knowing that time would be tight. Barry rings ahead to organize fuel at Tibooburra.

TIBOORBURRA.

As we land a helicopter is being refueled & my lift has arrived as they heard us fly over. But a couple of guys from the chopper came over to me and started snapping photos and asked could I sing Happy Birthday to their mate as it was his birthday. I agreed. Lots more photos as I head into town as Barry waits for refueling.

Show is “Know a good family” Set up in their studio to about 6 kids and 4 online distance education kids on camera. Goodnews twisted balloon animals for all the kids. Said goodbye once again to the kids and back to the strip. Helicopter took off then we started rolling down the runway, them heading northwest and us heading southwest . Next stop Menindee.

Heard on the radio a helicopter reporting that he was flying around Menindee doing surveying work and to keep an eye out for him.

MENINDEE

Coming into Menindee we could see the lakes having a bit more water than usual, we flew over the school then back to land. The surveying helicopter was on the ground we touched down



and parked the plane. About 8 support crew were with the chopper, with a truck loaded up with equipment and fuel for the chopper. Between us and the chopper was a big Meccano set looking frame bolted together to make a circle about 20 metres diameter and had cables stretching into the centre. Our lift arrived, took us to the very echo-ee and noisy hall where the kids and teachers had already assembled numbering about 80. Last time was in the new acoustic AV room but the crowd was smaller then. Set up for the "Sin Bin show" at the same time organizing the volunteers for the balloons while coping with the bad acoustics. Show went fine, I suppose they are all used to their hall. I released lever for the balloons and they floated down and just sat on the pins. So again I picked a couple of small kids pointing out that usually we need a bit of a shake up in order to get rid of our sins. BANG! BANG! BANG! to the surprise of lots of startled people.

Finished the show then back to the plane. The crew took photos of Goodnews near chopper. The head of the crew came over to chat with us and check out the plane. I told him further what we do and gave him an "Ultimate Questions" booklet. No more shows – heading home so I cleaned up and put on my civvies – the chopper started up and hovered over the big metal bangle, lowered down and a rigger hooked the frame under the cables to the bottom of the chopper. It slowly rose up as the frame twisted and buckled as it lifted off the ground. It straightened up once in the air. Strange looking sight this large circle flying through the air.

With the all clear we jump into the Cessna and were rolling. Barry said we would need fuel at Dubbo on the way home so we set that course. It was dark as we touched down in Dubbo, but there was almost a full moon and clear sky as well. We fuelled up rolled the plane forward as a large twin prop plane pulled up behind us. Barry checked a few things then we were taxiing down the side of the strip. Two large "hares" skipped across in the headlights of the plane. Then we were flying into our star filled homeward bound road. Very pleasant flight home down the Hunter Valley. The lights and the moon and the stars about – it was very nice.

We see the runway lights at Rutherford, down we come, Marianne was waiting at the gate, we unpack. Offer Barry to spend the night but he is keen to do some more night flying back to Sydney.

The Gospel went out.

