

March 2010 Outback Patrol

Pilot: Steve Ward

Presenter: Goodnews the Clown



Saturday March 20

www.goodnewstheclown.com

Colourful canopies gracefully falling from heaven, on my 1.30pm arrival at Maitland Airport. Steve and Darelle already loading, as I made my way through the variety of parked aircraft to our hired Piper Lance – a single engine low wing, 6 seater. Just for us two. Just Steve and me... plus all my gear. My props box, my giveaways box, my show suitcase and my personal luggage plus a small bag of nibbles.

Goodnews is larger than life, Steve only had a few small bags.

Goodbyes said to Darelle then rolling, gaining speed faster & faster, then the law of lift, taking us up and away heading skyward north to Mungindi.

Dick Ferguson, looking rather like a jolly swagman, with long grey beard and bush hat arrived shortly after my phone call to him around 4.15pm. How did they manage all of this arranging pre-mobile phones? Dick took us back to the church manse, to our quarters, met the mrs, then stories of all our journeys around a cuppa.



They were African missionaries for 10 years then remote Western Australia and now remote NSW/Queensland. Mungindi is a town that straddles the border. We discussed the morning messages to be partly in church and partly in Sunday School.

Sunday March 21

Quite a large attendance for Church in a little town, in fact 10% of the population. Dick interviewed Goodnews the Clown. I encouraged him to ask anything. "Goodnews doesn't need any prewarning, the trickier the better". It lead of course to a lot of fun. Then kids and Goodnews went out for the kids program, as a growing number of kids turned up as the show progressed. A bit of a mingle after morning tea and then back to house for lunch then get ready to fly to Bourke.



Due to floods Bourke terminal has been taken over as an SES command centre. Six various size choppers are on the tarmac. Two about to leave on various missions rescuing stranded people and sheep and other animals, dropping food etc. As we are taking it all in, the Koinonia school bus arrives with Allan Amos at the wheel and a bunch of his grandkids hoping to get first glance at "Goodnews the clown" but just Garry and Steve emerged from the terminal. Back to the modest school house, a room each tonight. Time for a cuppa then costumed and off to the Apostolic Church for the evening message. Lots of visitors, some from Bali, also some from Sydney. Goodnews mixes it with the band then presents evening message, lots of fun then across the road to check out the progress of the massive new church building. Still a few things to believe for, carpet, sound equipment, office furniture, ring Pastor George with a pledge.



Steve receives a phone call from the Wanaaring principal who was in Bourke and asked “as we were doing a show at her school in the morning can we take her with us to Wanaaring as it is now an island cut off by flood waters”. “Our pleasure” Steve says. Within minutes came another phone call, for another rescue lift to Wanaaring.

Monday March 22

We arrive at Bourke airstrip. Goodnews in costume. Steve finished the refuelling about the same time the teacher and the other passenger arrived. She had never flown in a small plane before and she looked pale just thinking of it. All passengers in and secured on a picture perfect morning. We gracefully ascend up and across the enlarging inland sea that has isolated many towns. A very nervous looking principal in the back seat. A smooth landing met with a sigh of relief from our passenger. Met at the strip by our lift into town a bit early but time for a cuppa while the kids arrived for our show.



The message this year is a pre Easter Palm Sunday based message about Jesus heading towards Jerusalem and the Cross on a donkey colt. That he came to a crossroad, a place of decision. Should he head for the hills, turn and run, or in obedience to the father head for the cross to die for sins of the whole world, a sacrifice and ransom for all, the Saviour of the world. We know he struggled with the decision later even sweating blood. He chose life for me and for you and all whosoever will come to the cross and receive his work there alone.

The story was aided by making palm trees. Leaves made of toilet roll paper which was streamered into the audience by way of a high powered blower, to the ecstatic screams of joy from all the kids. This was then gathered up and stuffed into cardboard rolls to resemble palm trees which later in the message were pulled apart to make a ticker tape parade of leaves mimicking the crowd on that first Palm Sunday, all to the loud cries of Hallelujah and Hosanna from the kids... All this as Goodnews yells “Let’s trash the joint”. Talk about enthusiastic audience participation. A little while later Goodnews asked for a clean up team and is surprisingly met with the same enthusiasm once again making the room spotless. Goodnews ends the show with questions, with prizes of balloon twisted animals to be won.



Finished at Wanaaring and back to the strip and off to Eulo in Queensland.

Kids lining the fence waiting for Goodnews, very excited, Goodnews has been here many times. About 22 kids, same reactions to the message.

From here to Thargomindah. The flood has gone down but the river is still raging. Kids all very focused on the story as elsewhere. After the show Steve shows me the river walk which semicircles the town. Puddles and washouts everywhere, evidence of the recent flood. A couple of kids still in school uniform sitting at road level, feet dangling over the bridge, fishing, the raging torrent just below their feet. Steve asked of the catch. I kept quiet, as if I spoke, they would immediately recognize me as “Goodnews the clown”. A shaded walk down the main street back to the motel.

After dinner we had a good pre evangelism foundational fact and faith building talk with a young man who had been fighting cancer for years – he’s searching for answers and has looked at numerous options in religions, diet, natural remedies, very open to the word. Spent our time building a case for a true and trustworthy God, heaps of questions answered. On departing he said I had raised his interest in the Bible. Left him with a list of scripture references and an Ultimate Questions booklet.

Tuesday March 23

Early start on Tuesday. Off to Eromanga. Oilfields are here. As our volunteer patrol flies over a very large and wealthy outback station 200 oilwells, a large runway and a Cessna Citation parked in the hanger. Things aren't too tough around here. Fifteen minutes later landing at the town strip Council workers from Quilpie hard at work, rebuilding the roads washed out in the previous week's flood.

Arrive at school, a few photos in front of the sign. The carpet is gone on the lower level, more evidence of the big wet. Up to classroom level to await my audience, 3 very well behaved children surprisedly enter the class. The teacher rings her mum who brought 2 more small children. They all heard the gospel presented Goodnews style.

Past the road crew, to the plane, then to Jundah. A larger school of about 20 kids. Traditionally I've found Jundah a very lively bunch, but this time fairly reserved. Got them moving ok though, once the "funny paper" came out. Asked about Blue Card here and had all info and webshots that showed why most volunteers aren't able apply for one. *It's good they keep an eye on things though.*

Descending into Birdsville from 10,000 feet – water as far as we can see, in and over the dunes. Upon landing Steve stays to refuel, I walk to the school. The show is in the rear classroom, 5 kids, mainly girls, 3 staff. Lively bunch.

Back to the motel in the new room section, very nice. Steve had been chatting with the pilot of a "twin engine Baron" who took off just after that.

Steve also told me he had "booked Goodnews" for a show at the pub. Birdsville has been cut off now for 8 weeks, no traffic just the occasional plane but tonight a clown show. My message "The flood" with a very strong gospel tie in. Trust in Jesus to be saved from the flood of fire that's predicted. About 20 people including 60% of the school had further conversations after the show and handed out tracts to all who wanted one.



Wednesday March 24

A very early start as we fly through 50 or so eagles, who slowly get out of our way on the Birdsville airstrip as we head for Tibooburra. This is where 50 years ago Outback Patrol was born.

Usually do the show in the studio but in a classroom this time. About 12 kids hear the message of Jesus for Easter. Photos with the kids after the show.

Now to Olympic Dam airstrip new Roxby Downs Uranium Mine for shows at Andamooka. We stay with Ray at his house then head down for a show at Andamooka Bible Church. Not many extra kids at show, as night clashes with parent teacher interviews, but still about 20 in audience.

Back to Ray's house channel surfing on his Christian satellite stations, we stumble on an interview with David Nixon, Les and Martha's media mogul, movie making son, talking about his new film.



Thursday March 25

Up reasonably early to a first time show at the Andamooka Primary School, about 25 kids plus staff. A very happy bunch. Good to finally get a show here.

Ray's brother Paul had an appointment in Roxby so he drove us to the airport. The refueller was an attendee of Paul's Sunday School many years ago but not walking with the Lord. We tried to reintroduce him but he quickly and politely moved the conversation to things more general.

Onto South Australia destination Hawker in the Flinders Ranges. Show performed in the newly renovated hall, "part of the stimulus package", very nice "thanks Mr Rudd" for busily building nice new facilities across Australia for Churches to rent on Sundays must be a huge revival on its way Hallelujah.



Now to Broken Hill to meet Travis, a family friend of Les & Martha's from Sydney. He runs the youth group and we are going to stay with him tonight in his trendy little miners cottage. Travis is also the morning DJ on a local radio station. After seeing the night show he invited Goodnews to co-host his morning show. This means a very early start.

Friday March 26

Up at 4.45am ready at studio for pre production then on air at 7am. Able to fit in 1 ½ hours with him on air, then costume on, ready for the days first show. Steve turns up in taxi and takes us not far away to the school. Infants only today, as primary at sports carnival. Quite a lively show with about 120 kids and teachers.



Steve once again gained us an extra booking in Wilcannia at St Therese's Infants Mission School. Met with a great bunch of kids and the new principal. Kids very interactive as they had heard the same story from the teacher a week before. He was very pleased that they remembered it so well.



Now onto Parkes for family night event. Picked up by Andrea. Steve dropped off in town to see a friend. I had time for a cuppa then we picked up Steve and off to the Christian School function. All very excited. We set up backdrops and ask what they had planned. They were thinking of testimonies and stories to encourage the kids to be "mission minded". I spoke with Steve and decided to do the usual message but Steve was to interrupt the message every 10 minutes and we would banter about our trip and other stories – this worked well. After the show I met John, an Aviation Engineer who runs his business from a large hanger at the airport. John does a bit of clowning and was there to pick up some ideas. He also wanted to get together in the morning with me for a mini training chat.

Our hosts were very generous towards us, taking us out for dinner & putting us up at a B&B type house owned by an old couple from the Methodist Church. I blessed them with a copy of "the five love languages" as a token thanks.



Saturday March 27

Morning – Headed to the strip at 10am. Steve cleaned the plane and I had about ½ hour with John in his office talking through some ideas for his act.

I rang ahead to Orange to Gwenda to let her know we'd be there in about an hour. Trevor and Gwenda met us at the strip and we head to their house. Mal from Fusion came over to meet me and talk about the event and also watch a short DVD. We were to stay with Gwenda and Trevor, but as things turned out, Steve's brother was in town so Steve went there, and my sister Lynda and brother-in-law Arthur invited me to stay with them. These modifications on accommodation were good and I was able to help Arthur work on a 2 minute PowerPoint show, which took hours to put together.

Sunday March 28

Arthur dropped me at the Church of Christ Church (which is located across behind his church Christian Outreach Centre) for my morning show. Did same story but churched it up somewhat for extra fun. Packed church probably about 110 with 30 or so kids. Goodnews jammed with the band and gave the main message. Time for a quick cuppa then off to Fusion event.



The event was running ½ hour behind. Les Nixon came up on the XPT to see us & to join in the fun. Goodnews did some walk around fun with balloons, then presented a ½ hour show combining his act with some puppeteers. This was good as puppets hold a transient crowd heaps better than just a clown. We were hoping to get another show in before we left at about 2pm, but due to the day running late we had to cut and run. Hopefully this might have brought the times back on target.

Gwenda and Trevor took us all to the strip.



Les in the pilot seat, Steve co piloted, me now as passenger. Cloud cover kept it cool on the way back to Maitland with heavy storms on either side but we stayed dry. Fine weather in Hunter Valley once over the ranges. Only about 50 minutes from Orange to Maitland... about 4 1/2 hours by road.

Steve's wife Darelle, my wife Marianne and daughter Melanie there to greet us and help unpack the plane. Plane refueled and cleaned with vacuum then waved bye to Les who was taking it back to Camden airstrip.

9 days, very busy patrol, Good to go, good to be home.

Thank you Lord.