

About

“Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been and there you will always long to return”

- Leonardo da Vinci

My hobby is flight simulation. My passion is simulated flight.

- Greg Whiley



This is about my encounter with the world of flight and engagement with the flight simulation community. Fascination with the world of flight began for me in the late 1950s, early 60s. On occasions as a child I flew with my parents from Tasmania to Melbourne and return. In those days it was a Trans Australia Airlines Vickers *Viscount* or Fokker *Friendship*. As a member of the TAA Junior Flyers Club I got to go to the cockpit which of course was a thrilling experience. I still have my Junior Flyers Club wings badge. Stories of my much older brother's experiences in the RAAF consolidated my interest in flying. My story continues.



My ambition to fly in the real world was realised in the mid-1970s. Flying out of Moorabbin Airport with Southern Air Services, I went solo on 26 May 1976 in Piper Cherokee, VH-PBF. I obtained my RPPL on 26 November that year and gained my PPL on 23 August, 1979. Incidentally, this was the year Microsoft released the subLOGIC Flight Simulator 1 for Apple II, the first of the Flight Simulator series.



At the time I was working as a paramedic on the Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) in Melbourne. There was a small group of us in the service who had PPLs. Interest was being expressed in our transitioning from road ambulance duties to the Victorian Air Ambulance Service. In those days, however, only female nurses were permitted to work with the Air Ambulance Service. It was during this time that I co-founded the Institute of Ambulance Officers Flying Group, a social off-shoot of the Institute, intended to be a lobby group to push for male paramedics' participation in the air ambulance service. Sadly, due to aircraft hire costs and my move from the ambulance service to university, I had to cease flying. My last flight was in August 1980 with over a hundred hours in my logbook.



My first encounter with simulated flight came in 1997 with the purchase of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 98*. I was instantly hooked and launched into the hobby with absolute gusto. While not the real thing I once experienced, I was nonetheless able to re-engage with flying in an environment 'as real as it gets'. I flew as many hours as I could and began amassing CD-ROMS of pay ware addons to supplement my growing collection of aircraft and scenery packages. Of course, as successive releases of the Microsoft Flight Simulator series became available, I quickly updated to the latest iteration. I remained loyal to the MS brand through to the FSX Acceleration pack. Today I fly using FSX Steam Edition but will soon be moving to the new MSFS 2020.



As well as flying I delved into the network of online social media outlets dedicated to flight simulation. The community I encountered here proved to be a friendly, cooperative and generous one. Simmers in the various forums have willingly provided support and answers to my many questions as I developed knowledge and expertise in the hobby.



CaptAus

The years between 1997 and 2009 were the heady days of immersion with the flight sim world. I was active in the online multiplayer rooms and developed the avatar of 'CaptAus'. Planning of detailed flights began, posting them in the multiplayer chat rooms. As a means of giving back to the community, in 2010 I launched the first website, *Aussie Star Hops*. This was the means of giving advance notice of dates, times and details of forthcoming multiplayer sessions. At the same time, I began writing support materials leaning on my experience as a real-world pilot. The intent was to provide a level of procedural realism and promote the idea of the 'serious' simmer while having fun at the same time.



In 2009, Microsoft closed down the Aces Game Studio, which was responsible for creating and maintaining the *Microsoft Flight Simulation* series. A casualty of this was the loss of the Gamespy multiplayer facility and the publication of multiplayer sessions ceased. Attention was turned to the writing and publication of an extensive series of tutorials, initially concentrating on the flying of the Boeing 737-800. The *Aussie Star Hops* website became redundant and it morphed into the *Aussie Star Flight Simulation* website. More time was spent on writing than flying as I found it educative and satisfying.



In 2014, Dovetail Games were granted the rights by Microsoft to port the Gold Edition of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator X* to Steam and publish *Flight Simulator X: Steam Edition*. Online flying became available. Enthusiasm for this development led me to build a number of desktop simulators, each one improving on the former.



Finally, in 2016 I purchased a JetMax 737-SKTQ simulator an enclosure for which was built. The technical requirements needed to maintain the JetMax proved to be somewhat challenging. At the time of writing it is for sale, to be replaced by the construction of a more generic general aviation twin engine aircraft cockpit to operate with the Microsoft *Flight Simulator 2020* application.

In the meantime, thoughts turned to the feasibility of forming an association for Australian flight sim enthusiasts. A paper entitled "Re-imagining the flight simulation community" was delivered on the topic at the Oz Flight Simulation Expo, Albion Park, NSW in 2018. The notion did not gain a great deal of traction at the time. For the time being no further moves have been made on the idea, but not totally discounted.



One proposed function of the association has been maintained however. A registry of Australian virtual pilots and cockpit builders has been established on this website, *Flight Simulation Australia*, which has replaced the previous *Aussie Star Flight Simulation* site. A small but not insignificant number have signed up to be on the register.

My interest in flight simulation remains at a high level. Now in retirement I have the opportunity to invest significant time into this pastime with passion.

Greg Whiley (CaptAus)
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