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Keeping the Memory Alive

# THE TRACKERS' CROCNICLE

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## Memories of the Dedication of the Redstone Rocket

By the Editor



Photograph: Terence Kierans

Having had my original flight cancelled and changed to an afternoon one it was pleasant to be able to make a late Friday morning drive to Skippers. It was even more pleasant to meet up with Phil Youd and his wife Deborah and get an introduction to Gerry Griffin.

I was able to spend a pleasant half hour chatting with him and exchanging reminiscences of Capcoms and their teams from Gemini days. Gerry promised to forward a copy of the team allocations - material for a future edition of the CRONicle.

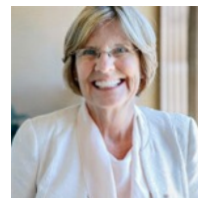
After a comfortable flight, via Shark Bay, I was met by Lauri Glocke (aka Teeny Bopper) and Kathy Franin for the drive to the residence of my host, Sue van Dongen.

Before I knew it, it was Saturday evening and time to set off for the movie "Mission Control". We were the first to arrive, misled by the Carnarvon Visitors' Centre's directive when booking tickets.

But, it was a blessing in disguise as I was able to strike up a conversation with Rick, the producer of the Australian tour of the movie with Gerry Griffin and Charlie Duke. As a result I was able to get one of the few remaining autographed copies of Charlie and Dotty Duke's book, "Moon Walker".



After a brief break, following the conclusion of an absorbing film, John McCloy introduced both Professor Lyn Beazley, Chief Scientist of Western Australia from 2006 to



2013, and Gerry Griffin. These two luminaries were to take part in a Q&A with the audience. Before the Q&A the opportunity was given for Gerry to introduce himself.

Gerry Griffin, "Yeah. I've said it before, and I'll say it again, Carnarvon has been a word in my vocabulary for most of my adult life. I'd never heard of it until I got into the space program, and from day one Carnarvon's very prominent.

*And the reason is because the geographic location fitted and the Australians knew how to track, knew how to communicate, how to ship things around the world.*

*And today when I went to the Museum, seeing those consoles particularly that had been ...some in great condition, a couple in not so great condition, it took me back to the, those days. It's really funny how time passes so fast. It was fifty some odd years ago now that we started all this and yet in many ways it's like yesterday. And today brought that to the forefront.*

*One of the things that Carnarvon will always be known for is that every trip to the moon we made, the call for the go/no-go decision was made through Carnarvon, to go to the moon or not; or to just stay in earth orbit and come on home.*

*And of course, every time we got into orbit, we went. And at first, we had people here that made those calls, and later, even though we were remoted, the site, all those calls came through Carnarvon. So, talk about playing a very, very important role, you did. And it was extremely critical to the success of the Apollo program.*

To be continued

## Whereabouts

**A**s a result of Paul Dench supplying his "staffing list", augmented courtesy the late Brian Milne, the "Whereabouts" table of those for whom we have no contact details has expanded to more than one page.

|                     |                       |                           |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| C Abott             | Cheryl? Dixon         | Ian Jones                 |
| Eric Ainsworth      | L Donkin              | Mike Keen                 |
| Gay Albon           | John Draper           | Jim Keenan                |
| Bill Arbery         | Mike Dresser          | John Kelman               |
| Allan Barber        | Bruce Duff            | Joy King                  |
| John (Allan) Barber | I Dunleavy            | Roy Mallinson             |
| Matt Barber         | Dave Elliot           | Bob Marr                  |
| Keith Barnard       | J Erickson            | Keith Mathieson           |
| Barrow              | Ian Few               | Alec Matthews             |
| Deidre Beaumont     | Ian Findlay           | K McCarson                |
| Elizabeth Beckett   | G Francis             | Ian McDonald              |
| Keith Beveridge     | Ben Franklin          | S McDonald                |
| Michael Billings    | David Froom           | Frank McGregor            |
| G Bond              | Jamie Gardiner        | Eileen McLaughlan         |
| S Boyce             | L Gardner             | Don McLellan              |
| B Bradley           | S Garner              | Nola Meiklejohn (O'Byrne) |
| Phil Brindley       | G Carrick             | R Miller                  |
| Hans Britz          | C George              | Ray Mills                 |
| Dave Brooks         | Joe George            | John Mogg                 |
| T.F.A Brown         | Richard Govern        | Sharon Morgan (Todd)      |
| W Brown             | Peter Hardwicke       | J Murray                  |
| J Burdett           | Ron Harmes            | Dennis Naylor             |
| R Burdett           | Anne Harvey (Brookes) | Gloria Neal               |
| Robert Burns        | D Hatch               | Ellie Nichols             |
| Joy Cameron         | Gail Heileman         | K Elton Nickerson         |
| Geoff Cardwell      | Stan Hills            | Graham Nielsen            |
| Brian Clifford      | Ernie Hindley         | John Noble                |
| Keith Clifton-James | Dave Hine             | ? O'Brien                 |
| Barbara Cobcroft    | A Holgate             | Joan Oats                 |

*The quest continues; the list has got a bit shorter, thanks to George Allen; Sue van Dongen et al. I have been given information concerning the possible whereabouts of a few of these, but so far have not been successful in obtaining, or confirming, details. The last Reunion Dinner brought out some missing persons, but there are also a few who do not wish to be contacted.*

*Additions have been marked with an asterisk.*

## Whereabouts ctd.

|                                       |                                |                       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| W Oliver                              | Russell Schwarzer              | Alan Thomas           |
| Roger Ramsden                         | Dorcas Sefton-Bellion          | Christine Thomas      |
| A Rees                                | George Sefton-Bellion          | Howard Thomas         |
| Dave Rendell                          | D Selby                        | Jack Thompson         |
| Frank Rice                            | Ron Shand                      | Patsy Thompson(Nolan) |
| Doug Richards                         | Fred Sharland                  | Les Tink*             |
| D Richardson                          | ? Sheehan                      | Larry Tomkins         |
| Harry Richmond                        | Jeff Shuttleworth              | Frank Toomey          |
| Ralph Richmond                        | Ray Skender                    | Mike Travell          |
| Dave Rickards                         | George Small                   | Ernst Uhl             |
| G Riley                               | Lyn Smart (Willis)             | Tony Vingerhoets      |
| Brian Robinson                        | J Smith                        | Dave Walker           |
| Lynne Rosser                          | P Smith                        | Mrs B Ward            |
| Ted Rosser                            | Roger Smith                    | Tom Ward              |
| Lindsay Sage                          | Bill Smythe                    | N Wardle              |
| Stewart Sands                         | Hazel Snook (Howse)            | A Watermeyer          |
| Ron Sargeant                          | Dave Standbury                 | Irene West            |
| Bob Scott                             | John Stanton                   | Bernie Wilbourne      |
| Lorraine Scott-Malcolm<br>(Erlandsen) | Barbara Stephenson<br>(Vernon) | Jim Wilcox            |
| Michael Scott-Malcolm                 | Barbara Teasdale               | Garnet Wilmott        |

## LOS

### Vale Don Thompson

It is with much regret that I advise Don died from cancer  
on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 in a nursing home in Brisbane.

*Thank you to Ed Goldsmith for the information.*



## From A Carnarvon Viewpoint - ctd.

### Gemini IV

#### America's first EVA

##### White soars into space ctd.

There were some communications problems, but the Cape could hear White through McDivitt's communication system.

White, "Am I in your view, Jimbo?"

McDivitt, "Well, you know I can't see...."

White, "Don't sweat it. I'll come to you."

McDivitt, "Ooops - there goes your glove....well, we'll just let it go."

White, "All right."

White, "Okay, I rolled off and I'm rolling to the right now. Under my own influence. There goes a....looks like a thermal glove, Jim."

McDivitt, "It is, Ed."

White, "It really looks funny to see my glove out there, Jim."

McDivitt, "Does it?"

White commented later, "I tried to use the gun very sparingly. I just used it enough to satisfy myself that I could make manoeuvres, so in my own mind that I could control myself in both pitch, yaw and translation. If you can control your pitch and yaw and translate fore and aft you can go from point A to point B - the roll isn't very important. I wasn't trying to control myself in roll."

White, "See me yet?"

McDivitt, "No. Sure don't."

White, "Huh?...oh, there you are. I can spin around now."

McDivitt, "Okay. Just a second...you're right in front, Ed. You look beautiful."

White, "I feel like a million dollars. All right, we'll pitch up and yaw left. I'm coming back to you."

Initially McDivitt held the spacecraft steady, but as White began floating around he let it drift. Using his gun, White propelled himself down to the nose of the spacecraft, then back to the adapter end, but soon ran out of fuel, and reported: "It's very easy to manoeuvre with the gun. The only problem is I haven't got enough fuel. I've exhausted the fuel now and I was able to manoeuvre myself around the front of the spacecraft, back, and manoeuvre right up to the top of the adapter. Just about...came back into Jim's view. The only thing I wish I had more fuel. This is the greatest experience I've...it's just tremendous. Right now I'm standing on my head and I'm looking right down and it looks like we're coming up on the coast of California. I'm going into a slow rotation to the right. There's absolutely no disorientation associated with it."

McDivitt observed: "One thing about it, when Ed gets out there and starts wiggling around it sure makes the spacecraft tough to control..."

White then began to use the umbilical tether to move around, and continued, "The tether was quite useful. I was able to go right back where I started every time, but I wasn't able to manoeuvre to specific points with it... I also used it to pull myself down to the spacecraft, and at one time I called down and said, 'I am walking across the top of the spacecraft' and that is exactly what I was doing. I took the tether to give myself a little friction on the top of the spacecraft and walked about three or four steps until the angle of the tether to the spacecraft got so much that my feet went out from under me. I also realised that our tether was mounted so that it put me exactly where I was told to stay out of."

While McDivitt sat at the controls keeping the spacecraft as steady as possible with its nose pointing down at the bulk of the continental United States spread out below, White moved around while they both took photographs and discussed the view.

*To be continued*

## CROing about Carnarvon

*A personal reminiscence by John Ford.*

Each had a semi-trailer sized electronics and control centre, and there was also a house-sized administration building, with lunch room, toilets, etc.



This was also a great social environment, as the married staff had a well-established and very congenial network going. There seemed to be a barbecue, a party or a gathering of some sort almost every weekend.

As a young single man I expected to be somewhat scornful of all this family stuff, but I actually loved it. I envied these happy families and their affectionate bonds, and found myself hoping that I would find similar stability someday.

I am very glad to say I did, and I often think that part of the reason was the examples I was able to observe while at Carnarvon, both at R&RR and later. I also offer my tribute to the wives of my older colleagues: lovely, calm women - each unique, each loved and cherished.

I may have fallen a little bit in love with a few of them myself, or at least with the image of serene womanhood expressed by them.

After a few months of this I was reasonably settled, enjoying my work and getting to know the town, and of course the other singles at the Port. The social life was rich and varied, and we were all having a great time.

There were lots of parties; generous hospitality was the norm.

However, I must now confess to participating in some quite shameless duplicity, in company with certain other single males. The victualling at the Port was adequate, but it fell short of the delights of a home-cooked meal in the bosom of a loving family, all of which our married colleagues were clearly enjoying.

Mike Billings, John Rudkin and I developed a technique, which probably fooled nobody, but then again it never failed. Having selected our prey, we would invite a married colleague and his wife and family to a meal with us at the Port, presumably to be cooked in one of our fry pans, or whatever.

We would cheerfully and gallantly have delivered too, but the result was predictable: the blanching tracker would hasten to invite us to a meal with his family instead, an invitation we rapidly accepted.

So - a fine meal, the fine company of a respected mate and his wife, no doubt a "fine bird" herself, in the lexicon of the sixties, and we usually took fine wine!

I like to think that we rewarded our hosts a little with our humorous and sometimes hair-raising tales of life in the singles lane, particularly at the slightly raffish Port Hotel. To all our benefactors, I thank you for your hospitality, and your generous forbearance.

I was a little hampered by the rotating shifts we worked at R&RR, due to the 24x7 cover needed, and I did miss the odd event, but the warmth of the R&RR social life compensated for that.

Then one day I was asked by John Huysing if I wanted to play in the hotel band, as he now had a drummer but lacked a bass player. I sat in the miraculous new "cocktail bar" which had materialised in a front corner of the Port Hotel and pondered this.

*To be continued*

## Extracts from "Recollections From My Years At Carnarvon"

David Johns

### The Flybys ctd.

Evans's efficiency and pleasantness left a lasting impression on me. Ten years later my wife and I called our first son Evan. We both liked the name in its own right but we had both met Evan Gull and were impressed and I think that had something to do with it.



Roger Glass leapt at the chance to come on the plane and we left for Perth about midday. We met the pilots at the gate at the appointed time and then went to the plane (I might add that the gate was unlocked, but that was 1972).

Other crew were already busy getting the plane ready and Roger and I were made very welcome on board. The full crew was five air crew (two pilots, engineer, navigator and load master) and about fifteen NASA telemetry/computer/communication specialists, about ten of whom were at Carnarvon.

The load master was very friendly and introduced us to the rest of the crew, showed us our seats and then showed us a chest refrigerator that contained countless cans of drink, numerous cold chickens, salads, ice creams and other nice food and then he left the aircraft because he had things he needed to do in Perth, but not before assuring us to "eat as much as you can because I've got more food ordered for tomorrow."

I stood behind the Captain and co-pilot to watch their pre-flight checks. They were soon running up the engines and the engineer was fiddling with a panel of oscilloscopes and he was worried about a misfiring in number three engine. There was some discussion to the effect that the engine would probably settle and we commenced taxiing.

I knew that aviation regulations required that I should by then have been in a seat with the seat belt fastened but I wanted to stay on the flight deck as long as possible and I told the Captain I wanted to watch their procedures but I would go to my seat as soon as he gave me the signal.

As I hoped, he never did give me the signal and Roger and I were standing behind the pilots for all of the take-off and for most of the next two hours. Modern planes take off by gaining speed and then

rotating the nose upward and climbing away from the ground.

The Super Constellation was heavy with fuel and came from an era of less powerful engines and it did not have the power for a steep take off. During the take-off, it gained speed until it was flying and gradually flew away from the ground without rotation. The initial climb was so gradual that it was not possible to recognise the moment that the plane actually left the ground. We departed at about 4:30 am local.

About five minutes after departure, the navigator took sextant readings on some stars through a Perspex dome in the roof of the plane and gave the Captain a heading to steer. We climbed slowly to about 13,000 ft and tracked direct for Carnarvon at about 190 knots.

The pilots were in their late fifties and joked about having been too old to convert to jets and both intended to finish their careers in the Super Constellation. They were a jovial pair and told some very blue jokes.

We talked about aircraft performance, life at Carnarvon, their life in the Flyby circuit and they told us the history of the aircraft we were on. It was manufactured in the late 1940's for the USAF and was assigned to be General McArthur's personal aircraft. It was fitted out especially for him and he and his entourage travelled in it wherever they went.

When McArthur was sacked the plane was returned to the Air Force where it was used until the 1960s when it was assigned to the Bendix Co. to fit out for flyby work on the Apollo series.

Its current configuration was toilets and storage at the back, then a well appointed galley near the back door, then there was the old First Class area with about 24 roomy comfortable seats and a few small reading tables which finished with a partition about half way along the aircraft. (the First Class areas were always at the back in the big piston engine planes, less noise and vibration than across the main wing spar).

The mid area was about 25-ft long with a row of NASA computers and communication consoles along each side of the aisle and then another partition.

Forward of the partition there was an exit door, more storage space, then four flight crew bunks (an upper and lower bunk on each side of the aircraft) and then a seat and console on each side, one for the navigator and one for the flight engineer.

*To be continued*



## 12<sup>th</sup> Picnic Day



L-R Terry Kierans, Tito Teraci, Judy Watters and Ken Watters  
*Photograph by Trevor Mosel*

Yet again we were blessed with fine weather for our annual picnic.  
 Attendees were:

|                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ted Cockram                     | Barb Mitchell         |
| Kathy Franin                    | Trevor & Val Mosel    |
| Lauri Glocke (aka Teeny Bopper) | John Preece and Anne  |
| Terry & Valerie Kierans         | Tito Teraci           |
| Barb King                       | Ken and Judy Watters  |
| Derek Major                     | Phil and Deborah Youd |

The annual prize for having travelled the most distance was, once again, awarded to Derek Major. (Kalgoorlie is a fair hike from Perth). Runners up were Ken and Judy Watters.

Cakes, as usual, were supplied by our gifted cake lady Barb Mitchell.

Hopefully, next year, we may have a 50th Anniversary Reunion luncheon in place of the annual picnic. It all depends on the amount of proposed support.



## **SOCIAL CLUB NEWS April 1967 ctd.**

It is understood the Director of W.R.E. Dr M.W. Woods, will visit the station on or about 5th April with a party from U.K. Although the precise nature of the visit is not known, rumour has it that it may have something to do with CRO participating in a future WRE/UK Satellite launching.

The original Gemini-10 space capsules may come to Carnarvon. It is noted that the spacecraft which has been on display at Honeysuckle Creek, may form the basis of an interesting station display at this year's Tropical Festival on September 4, 5, and 6th.

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SOCIAL NEWS

by RON SARGEANT

We take this opportunity to wish Alex Stevenson farewell and all the best for his future in his new position.

There were two birthday parties during March the first being Fred and Jack's combined party on the night of Friday 17<sup>th</sup> and Sharron's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party on the following night. Fred turned 23 on Saturday and Jack 22 on Sunday. Sharron's was a somewhat more formal party attended by some 70 guests. Sharron who recently became engaged to Col Todd, a member of the SOAP team, is getting married on Easter Monday. Congratulations. Barb King will be one of the bridesmaids. Col and Sharron will eventually make their home in Maryland. On behalf of the Tracking Station staff we wish them farewell and bon voyage.

The Carnarvon Target Pistol Club invited the Apex Club to a shoot on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. At the time of writing this shoot had not come off, however it should prove to have been an enjoyable night with possibly the Pistol Club gaining some new members. Local sharpshooter, Barry Buzolic who is a member of both clubs will be shooting for the Apexians.

- 8 -

*To be continued*

## Answer to March Question

Linda Dorras née Meyer  
(Stadan)



## Guess Who?



????????????????

## Quotations

*"There's always something to do in the space program. It's so varied. You don't do the same thing twice in any given moment of any day."*

~ John Young

*"Purdue eventually would be able to list among its alumni both the first and the last men to walk on the Moon."*

~ Gene Cernan

*"Houston, this is Apollo 10. You can tell the world we have arrived."*

~ Thomas Stafford

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# Keeping the Memory Alive



## KEEPING THE MEMORY ALIVE

### Carnarvon Tracking Station 1964 - 1975



**CARNARVON TRACKING STATION**

Thinks the entrance to the site of the former Carnarvon Tracking Station which operated from 1964 to 1975.

It was a joint venture between the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States of America.

Maintenance and support services were provided by Air-Generated Wireless (Australia).

The Carnarvon Tracking Station was closely involved with the NASA space program which included the Gemini, Apollo and Skylab missions.

For more information please visit the Canberra Space and Technology Museum just a few kilometres south to where is the old OFC Satellite Earth Station site.

**Present Day** [Click for full size](#)

*Mick and Sue Coffey's Carnarvon Steel Supplies of Cornish St Carnarvon fabricated and donated the sign*  
*Signwriting generously donated by W&K Painting of Egan St, Carnarvon*  
*Photograph by Phil Youd - Edited by Terence Kierans*

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