

REVIEW

Paul Edgley

This is an excerpt of the Preface to "Into The Wind" written by Associate Member Paul Edgley.

In 1966 when I was eleven, I flew with my school to Canberra. While the day turned out even better than our school organisers imagined, it was significant in another way. After the Ansett-ANA Lockheed Electra dropped us back at Sydney airport, I made a decision. As I walked to the terminal, I paused and looked back at this magnificent aircraft. One day, I vowed, I would become a pilot.

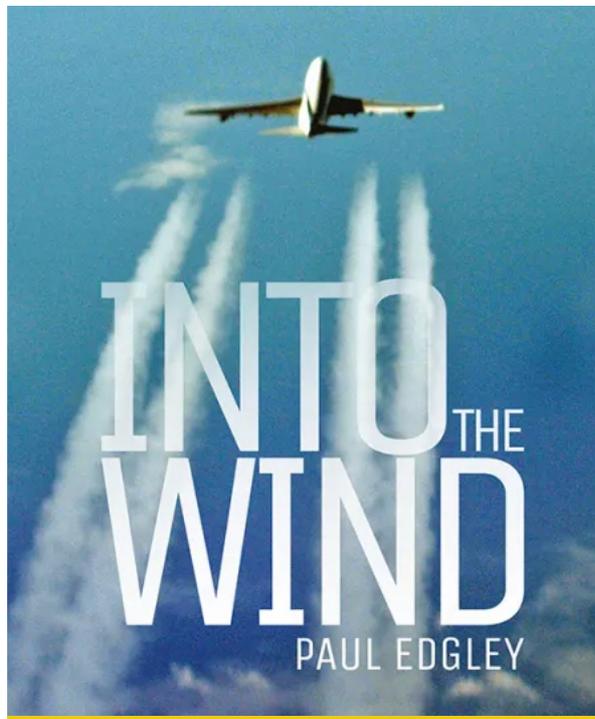
I didn't much enjoy school and my lack of effort was reflected in school reports. When I expressed my desire to be a pilot, the school career counsellors shook their heads. In my final two years of senior, I played drums in a rock 'n' roll band. Concerts and the music of top international and local acts became my world. Bruce Springsteen and Bob Seger were favourites and I remember gigs savaged by AC/DC's pulsating aggression, and Angels' concerts where the crowd chanted in response as Doc Neeson's musical question lingered. It was always great to see their faces again. Our band latched onto the idea of becoming rock stars. It could be a long haul to reach the top and while it worked out for AC/DC, it didn't for us.

A couple of years out of school, our band broke up so, at twenty-one, I decided to chase my dream to fly. After gaining my Commercial Pilot's Licence, I took to Highway 1 in my blue Holden panel van. I planned to drive from Sydney to Perth, stopping at every airport along the way, in search of work.

In South Australia, I struck some luck. In my first job, I flew fish-spotting aircraft for the tuna industry based in Port Lincoln. When the tuna season ended I returned to Sydney and after upgrading my qualifications set course for Darwin, accompanied by my good friend, Ari. I could fill a section of a book (and have) on Darwin and 'The Territory', but it's here that luck for both Ari and me changed for the better.

We both landed jobs. Ari started with the Darwin Aero Club, then moved to Arnhem Air Charter, and I slotted into Northern Territory Air Charter (NTAC). Two major events occurred while in Darwin. I met my partner Sharon, and after amassing enough flying hours and experience, I was granted a final interview and accepted into Ansett Airlines of Australia.

When Ari and I had left Sydney, the first tape I slotted into the much-used cassette player was one of my favourites. The sound of rubber against bitumen knitted with the rich harmony as Bob Seger's 'Against the Wind' spilled from the van's rear mounted speakers. I'd always been conscious of which way the wind blew, and this song seemed to depict my life since I began pursuing aviation.



The autobiographical book "Into The Wind" is available for order online from [Boolarong Press](#).

But the winds that buffeted my old blue panel van as we cruised down Highway 1 were nothing compared to the tempest that erupted in 1989. Australian pilots had felt goaded for many years prior, and believed that the airlines were only waiting for an opportunity to attack our professional association, the Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP).

The 1,647 pilots involved in the dispute ranged in age from their early twenties through to their late fifties. Many older pilots were more conservative, both politically and in their attitudes to life. While they may have swung a tad to the right, the tactics of our adversaries were too much for even the most staid of my senior colleagues. We marched in the streets as one.

The dispute involved Australia's two major domestic airlines: Ansett and Australian Airlines, as well as regional carrier, East - West Airlines, and the air cargo company, IPEC Aviation. ... In industrial terms, our 'limited industrial action', or 'go slow' paled in comparison with the turmoil caused by airline management and owners, the Government, and the ACTU, along with the focus of a media empire run by the person who owned 50 per cent of Ansett.

As the alliance of pilots who were involved, we refer to the event as 'The Airline Dispute of 1989-90', as the airlines' industrial baton far outweighed our short-lived campaign of restricting our working hours to match those of airline executives.

This story is that of an ordinary pilot, a 'grunt on the ground', and how a young family navigated what became one of our country's most bitter industrial disputes. The magic involves how such a diverse group held firm against the gale force winds that changed each of our lives forever.