



Broken Hill? In Your Dreams!

This is a fairy tale with an extraordinary ending – one which proves that mixing old and young dreams can be inspirational.

Nancy-Bird Walton facilitated this visit. It cannot be repeated. Ed.

By Tamlyn Gresser
Work experience student and a current NSW AWPA member.

I grew my strong love for aviation from the moment that I first stepped foot onto an aeroplane, a few years ago now. It was the day of my fourteenth birthday, the day of my very first skydive. I was greatly attracted to the idea of skydiving, but I never would have imagined what such a natural and thrilling direction it would lead me. The skydive itself was exhilarating. It was a truly uplifting and meaningful experience. But I soon realised that as much as I loved the skydiving, what I was really drawn to was the aeroplane itself. The distinct sound of the engine alone just thrilled me. I felt the plane ever so lightly leave the ground as I took to the skies for the very first time. I really loved the feeling that I had there in that plane. I loved the sound, I loved the view, I loved the whole atmosphere. It evoked a

feeling within that I just could not ignore.

I spent the next few months in the backyard watching planes fly over. And whenever we were driving near an airport, I would make Mum stop the car so that I could watch a few planes take off and land. I began to read books and magazines on aviation and I was interested in absolutely everything to do with flying. After reading Allana Arnott Corbin's book I realised just how possible it was for me to become a female pilot. I was extremely inspired by her story and her book fuelled my burning desire to fly.

It was no surprise that I found myself at

Richmond air show in 2006. By the end of the flying display, I was absolutely buzzing. It was here that I was introduced to the Australian Air League. Needless to say, within two weeks I had become a member of the AAL and was out at Camden Airport having my TIF. I knew even before we had landed that flying was going to be a major part of my life. I had never felt so alive. Unfortunately I was not in the position to continue my flying lessons at that stage, but I spent every Friday night go-





ing to Air League, working hard through the AAL diploma in the theory of flight, in which I was awarded both the squadron and State Education awards. I volunteered my time at the airport, helping out wherever I could. I also was given the opportunity to go on a couple of flights with other people. It was during this stage that I realised my future dream of becoming a pilot for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The idea of flying for the RFDS just stood out to me so strongly. I went to RFDS open days at Bankstown Airport and spoke

to the staff about their moving experiences. I believe that entering into this career would be extremely fulfilling knowing that you are helping to rescue and save lives every time you step into the cockpit, as heartbreaking as some moments may be. I have always said that I am going to work in a job that I love, a job that I have a passion for. And to combine my passion of flying, with helping people in such a huge way, to me, would be an absolute honour.

I became a member of the AWPA, where I was fortunate enough to meet a group of very courageous and inspiring women. I have gained a lot from attending the various AWPA

meetings and it has encouraged me to strive for my goals even more. In October this year, I was lucky enough to have Nancy Bird help make possible a week of work experience for me at the RFDS Broken Hill, and for that I was extremely appreciative. I previously wrote to the RFDS asking if there would be any possible chance of work experience, but understandably, it wasn't possible. However, with the precious help from Nancy, a few weeks later I found myself coming in to land at Broken Hill Airport ready for a week of work experience at the RFDS. I was told strictly that the RFDS do not offer work experience as a general thing and in fact, I would be the only exception. I completely understood that, and I was ever so grateful.

I had the most wonderful week. The majority of my week was spent in the hangar with the engineering department. I thor-



oughly enjoyed my time inside the hangar. I witnessed many procedures of aircraft maintenance as well as had the opportunity to get my own hands dirty. I was given the task of drilling a couple of aircraft skins back onto the wings after routine maintenance inspections. I was quite impressed that the engineers trusted me enough to give me a power tool on my first day!

The engineers were all fantastic. They explained everything they did and they taught me a lot that I didn't previously know. One of the tasks that I most enjoyed was the complete engine change of one of the aeroplanes. The fact that I was able to take most of the engine apart myself helped to reinforce my

basic knowledge of aeroplane engines that I have gained in my diploma in the theory of flight. Whilst I was there, we were lucky enough to have an unexpected visit from the Governor General. Once she stepped off the immaculate aeroplane, the media rushed towards her whilst the engineers rushed towards the aircraft. I could totally relate to that. I couldn't help but smile.

On my last day I was extremely thrilled to be able to go on a clinical flight to Wilcannia and Ivanhoe. Of course I talked my way into sitting up front in the

cockpit with the pilot. As we flew towards Wilcannia, our pilot radioed ahead to request a 'roo run'. There's nothing like flying in the outback. As we landed on the 900m dirt surrounded airstrip, I was amused to see that the 'airport' was a deserted and very small tin shed. We dropped one doctor off and continued on to Ivanhoe. Once at Ivanhoe, the remain-



ing doctors went to the clinic while I spent the day with the pilot. We refuelled the plane as soon as we got there before it got too hot. It was strenuous work, but I was determined to finish pumping the fuel myself. We then drove back to the clinic and had lunch. We were served some of the biggest and best hamburgers I have ever seen. The day was extremely valuable. I soaked up any information about flying that I possibly could from the pilot as well as heard his own story of how he came to work for the RFDS.

I had the most exciting and wonderful week. I am just so thankful to all whom made it possible. My experience has confirmed my dream to fly for the RFDS, and it has made my goal even more reachable. The whole experience was extremely valuable to me. I have taken so much with me that I did not have before. Now that I have had a small taste of my future,

it has motivated me even more to work even harder.

My parents have been a fantastic support with my interest in aviation. They have always encouraged me to follow my dreams. Although, when they first realised how serious I was about flying, I'm sure that Mum was secretly hoping that I would choose a safer

interest. She has however since realised that I am not going to change my mind and therefore she has also begun to develop an excitement about my flying. I have very recently begun to continue with my flying lessons. I am thoroughly enjoying my time in the sky and I spend all week looking forward to my next lesson. I know that this is only the beginning and I will have to work hard and strive to achieve my goals, but I know that I will get there one day.

This offer of student work experience by the RFDS sadly can not be repeated.

Editor