

## **ADRIAN CLEMENTS**

(27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1943 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022)

John Adrian Clements was known variously as Adrian, Clemi (by his mates), Clemo (by the aviation community), Clemo San (by the more respectful Japanese friends) and in earlier days his regular and lengthy contributions to the Northam Aero Club magazine were simply signed 'JAC'. He was a family man, a farmer, an aviator, a wonderful orator, and a friend.

Adrian farmed the family property at Noggojerring and supplemented his farming endeavours with hay and straw contracting works. Myself and others variously worked for him, while he supplied high quality produce to mushroom farms, and to some thoroughbred racing entities including John Roberts of Multiplex who was a close friend.

He discovered aviation in the days before the Northam Aero Club, and was indeed a driving force in its formation, as well as being a Foundation Member. Although his training didn't progress to a fixed wing Pilot's Licence, he was a significant servant of the Club. A very regular contributor to the Northam 'Fly About' (locally known as F-about), he diligently researched the history of aircraft and aircraft types that had flown at Northam, or had relevance to early air mail to the Town. When he became Editor, he held the position across two decades. Adrian knew the flying training area so well, that on one occasion, arriving too late to enter for a mini air-trial, was able to answer all the questions and win the competition without taking to the air.

The Aero Club moved from its temporary airfield on Southern Brook Road to its current location and was required to service a loan raised by the Shire of Northam to purchase the land for the new airfield. Clemo took control of what was to become known as the Northam Aero Club Farming Wing, in order to crop the land, sell the produce, and discharge its financial obligations. He relied on contributions from farmers such as Ron Posselt, Niels Hansen and Brian Overton, with the labour provided by the flying instructor and numerous other members of the Club.

Adrian was made a life member of the Northam Aero Club in 2002 for his editorial and farming contributions to the Club. In the late '90s he initiated a Clubman Award for those club members who had contributed without the glamor of the flying competitions etc. The trophy, (supplied by him) was typically an aviation book accompanied by a bottle of quality red.

Adrian was an extremely skilled Orator and had been recognised as a Freeman of Rostrum. During any Awards presentation or formal event, he could always be relied upon to deliver the right words for the occasion. His command of formality in business and club dealings were a genuine benefit to the NAC in its formative years.

He discovered aerostation in the 1970's, and he talked me into a partnership owning Rainbow Lady (originally christened Rainbow Baby, but with a lightweight envelope and black top she was sometimes a bitch to fly, hence the change). The partnership was called

Grenade at Clemi's suggestion, and it lasted until last week. He was the supreme organiser, and that led to a long list of adventures in many parts of the west. These included a magnificent film making safari over the Stirling Ranges for the Department of Tourism. The film, called 'The Five Faces of Western Australia', was extraordinary and won awards across the globe. On one occasion we had taken a balloon to Paraburdoo for 'Paragala' and tethered at the event for most of the day. Next morning, we did a free flight from the town centre with a plan to fly to the Nanutarra Road. After flying for about an hour a man on a postman motorcycle appeared on a fence line and shouted, "Is there a Mr Clements up there?". After an answer in the affirmative he called up "I have postage for you from New Zealand, Mr Clements", it was labelled simply *Adrian Clements, Balloonist c/o Paraburdoo*.

We had enormous fun with projects that Adrian was regularly inventing, including dropping sky divers, altitude records, flight from Rottneest Island, and even the two of us flying a piano and pianist to 6,000 ft over Northam. The achievement for which he was never really recognised was a World Distance hot air record for all classes. That flight was as a co-pilot with Geoff Green from Northam to Zanthus on the Trans Line in the Nullarbor. Commencing at dawn, flying generally at ~16,000 ft, and landing after last light (in some trees, oddly enough for the Nullarbor). I ran the retrieve, which took two and a half days to get us back to Kalgoorlie and civilisation. On ratification of the record Clemo had some small yellow badges embroidered, with the logo simply 674.532. It stood for the total distance covered setting a world outright distance record. A great bit of achievement understatement.

Adrian was dedicated to the formation and success of the Australian Ballooning Federation. He served in a number of capacities with the ABF including Pres, and was their long-term Operations Manager, for which he was recognised with Life Membership of the Organisation. He took over that role from me and worked tirelessly to make sure of the viability of the ABF. In retrospect I think the efforts of the folks from the west were valuable to the ABF in those formative years. He formed a balloon flying school and delivered training to many of the new WA aerostation community, and to a number of those from HK.

The Clements Family have continued the tradition in aerostation. All of the team have licences and continue fly in various capacities. Sue is now the Hon Sec of the Aero Club, while Andrew (Bob) is a regular at Canberra and other events. John, Mick and Peter know the Avon Valley airways backwards. The involvement extends further to extended family and grandkids, perpetuating the dynasty.

During the coming weeks, I expect that many of us will reflect on good times in the company with this man.

By coincidence, on the day of his departure, Damien flew his 'Asthma' balloon over Perth. He flew directly over Clemi's Nedlands home. Bob has a picture of the crown-ring from underneath, perhaps was a salute to a significant aeronaut and friend. **GP**