

Tribute to Ray Pike by Peter Pine

Ray was a key member of the electric flight community in Australia, indeed in the world. He will be sorely missed. He passed away in April this year after a 6-year battle with cancer. His funeral at Wangaratta on 1 May was attended by a large number of aeromodellers – in fact, there were too many to form a guard of honour as his coffin left the funeral parlour. Many of the great names of Australian aeromodelling, and three AEFA Presidents, were there to pay their respects to Ray and his contribution to aeromodelling in Australia.

I first became aware of Ray and his enthusiasm for things aviation at the Horsham MAAA Nats in 1982. We were not electric fliers then, but attended the winch-launch gliding event. I was conscious of this young man from country Victoria running around the flying field in the extreme heat trying to launch his glider when most of us were wilting, and some had even given up! Ray's enthusiasm was evident right from our first meeting! I'm not sure when Ray became interested in electric gliding. He may have been a witness to the F3E event held at the MAAA Nationals in January 1986 when the event was staged in a farm paddock outside Wangaratta. This was the team selection trial for the first Electric Glider World Championships – Wayne Haddkins, John Adams and myself were selected there as the first Aussie team flying with very rudimentary electric flight gear. Maybe it was the convenience of self-launching a glider using electric power rather than a winch that attracted Ray.

It was not until 1989 when the 2nd National Electric Flight Rally was held in Nowra (thanks to Ian Avery and his hosting skills) and Phil Stevenson was the registrar that Ray became involved. Subsequent to the Nowra event, Ray offered Wangaratta as the venue for the NEFR at Easter. The first Wangaratta NEFR was held in 1990 – Phil Stevenson was still the registrar, but Ray's name appears on the brochure as a contact. After that, Ray took over the organizing of the rally in conjunction with his wife, Erica, and continued to do so for the rest of the 1990s. Many southern fliers were attracted to the event at such a convenient location; Ray's initiative was the catalyst for the growth of electric flight in Victoria that led to the establishment of the AEFA in Phil Connolly's garage. Many of the current events we offer at our rallies were developed during those years, including the popular 7-cell electric glider that has now become Limited Electric Glider with the advent of LiPos.

Ray developed his electric gliding skills to a high level and became a champion in LEG – he often battled for the winner's podium with Bob Hickman both at the rallies and in the postal competitions. By 1992, it was evident that Ray was an accomplished flier and competitor and he became part of the 4th Aussie electric glider team to contest the World Championships in Papendal in the Netherlands, along with David Hobby and myself. Erica was the team manager and I think Jocelyn and Kerryn were the mascots! That was the beginning of Ray's long involvement with peak level electric glider competitions; he competed in several World Championships.

The Jack Black trophy was conceived to commemorate Jack's contribution to electric flight in Australia up to 1985, and is awarded each year to the Nats winner in F3E, now called F5B. Ray first won the Jack Black trophy at the Bundaberg Nats in 1993, just before his trip to the World Championships in the Netherlands, and his name appears on the trophy no less than 9 times between 1993 and 2009. No other person has been so successful at top-level competition in Australia and this

speaks volumes for Ray's talent and dedication. The accompanying photo shows Ray receiving the trophy from yours truly at the 2009 Nationals at Cootamundra. He was still champion only 3 years ago!



One of the most significant events in electric flight in Australia took place in 1994; it was the F5B and F5D Electric Flight World Championships held at Drage's Airfield near Wangaratta. Ray and Erica were key players in organizing and running this very well received and financially successful event; in fact, Erica was awarded the FAI Sports Medal and Diploma for services to Aussie and International Aeromodelling for their joint efforts in running this event. It has always been a duo; Ray and Erica have been a combined and inseparable force in electric flying. It is safe to say that electric flight in Australia would not be where it is today without their efforts.

Ray continued to encourage participation in international, peak level electric glider competition. He has mentored many F5B pilots, organized many flying sessions and team trials to further this branch of the sport and been an enthusiastic and competitive player himself. He was a significant player in the links with Japan and the Aussie-Japanese F5B challenge. The saga does not end there. Ray's enthusiasm led him to fly in many interesting events, including helicopter and free flight scramble events. He set a number of Australian records including electric duration and electric distance and World Records for electric helicopter. He managed an internet portal for F5B news. He managed the MAAA web site right up until this year. He ran the LEG postal competition for the AEFA for some time. He was only the second person to be awarded life membership of the AEFA. He was chairman of the MAAA Electric Flight sub-committee for many years. He wrote articles for this newsletter. Any phone conversation with Ray was a protracted affair because of his extreme involvement in model aviation. As I said, he will be missed!

We extend our condolences and support to Erica, and to Ray and Erica's daughters, Jocelyn and Kerryn. We hope to keep contact with them for many years and honour Ray's memory. It is a symbol of Erica's bravery and devotion that she is continuing to assemble this newsletter – the Pike contribution goes on! Long may it live!