

Guest Speaker Captn Michael Condon (rtrd)



Stephen Swan welcomed old skiing buddy Michael Condon who retired as a pilot & captain from Qantas last year (March 2014 to be exact). Riveting guest speaker talking in our 'Day in the Life' Series.

Our Guest Speaker, Michael Condon, was introduced by Tony as well as Stephen to talk on the topic of a day in the life of a Qantas Pilot. Michael began by informing us that he had been a pilot with Qantas for 46 years and had flown all Qantas planes up to and including Boeing 747-300 and 747-400. Michael began by telling us how to become a Qantas pilot. In 1966 Michael became a Cadet Pilot with Qantas, a very selective apprenticeship where he was trained in aviation and continued to be trained right up to the end of his career. Some of the qualities required were, the need to follow orders eg. Pre-take off and the schedule of orders to follow at that time. When needed the ability to give orders, for example if something went wrong then the pilot gave orders to cope with the situation eg. Turn back or evacuate the aircraft, whatever was needed at that time. The ability to learn to cope in an emergency, to tolerate stress and remain calm was essential. There were approximately 10 checks per year on each pilot. Any of these tests could stop you flying for a period of time or permanently. These checks were medical checks or simulator checks or any other check thought to be required. The second way to become a pilot is to serve in the Air Force as a pilot and when finished there come over to Qantas. About one third of pilots enter Qantas this way. You could privately train as a pilot through small aircraft right up to aircraft used on International flights and then apply or there is a University Degree that is applicable to gaining entry to Qantas. The career of a Qantas pilot is one of continuous learning, learning about different planes, about different airports, different equipment and instrumentation as well as a whole lot of other things.

A pilot must cope with the loneliness of being away from family and loved ones for long periods of time. This has improved with different communication tools such as Internet and Skype. You also have to cope with food changes, time changes, weather changes and a whole lot of other things. Michael informed us that the busiest time for a pilot was the pre flight period, with Ground Control in your headphones, your engineer talking your

co-pilot, the cabin crew, but the best words heard were "Release Brakes" which meant you were ready for take off and you were then the Pilot. Michael showed many slides including his last flight in which he was given a water salute on his departure.