

## FOUNDER AND CEO OF SAMOA AIR AND CPSAS

Chris Langton was born in Sydney in 1942 not far from Rushcutters Navy base where his father would come and go during the war.

Post war deployment to the Navy Torpedo Station at Pittwater coincided with Chris being one of the first Students at Avalon Beach Primary school in 1952 and shortly later the family found themselves aboard the ex troop ship SS Strathmore bound for England.



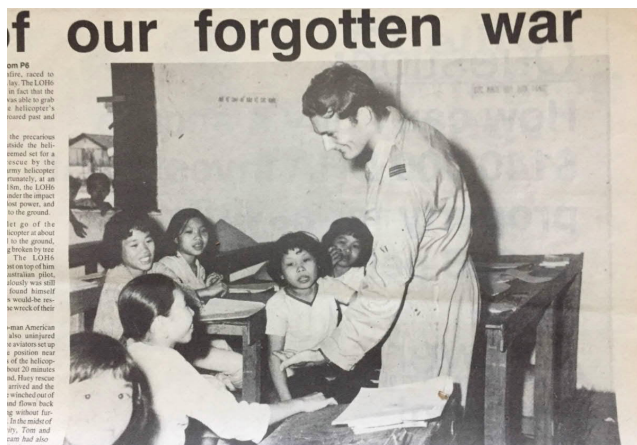
Four years later and a harsh winter or two found them back in Australia and with a broad Jordi accent Chris bounced between local schools before graduating from “Shack Town” (BBHS) in Balgowlah to study Medicine at the University of New South Wales foundation year in 1960.

A coincident interview seeking student support with the RAAF Recruiting Office in Sydney led to a successful application to the RAAF as a trainee Pilot and a week later he was stepping off the Southern Aurora train to Melbourne where he joined his classmates on Number 47 Pilots Course. He went on to graduation from AFTS in Pearce WA a year later and was then posted to Fighter Pilot training at Williamtown Air Force Base north of Newcastle in NSW.

Fighter Pilots in that day were trained on the Vampire and then the Avon Sabre and there was a lot happening throughout the sixties firstly with confrontation with Indonesia, the Emergency in Malaya flying out of the Butterworth Air Base and the SEATO operations from the Ubon base in Eastern Thailand (the Australian Zulu's) indirectly supporting the USAF.

Back in Malaya the squadron would also conduct operations from Singapore and “tangle” with the RAF for practice and for Langton he also volunteered to undergo a British ground based Forward Air Controller course in support of the British Gurkha regiment based in Penang.

In 1967 he was recalled to Australia and joined Number 9 Mirage III conversion course and also qualified as a Military Parachutist with a SAS group at Number 2 PTF before being posted again to Malaya and in early 1969 had volunteered to become a Forward Air Controller in Vietnam. He was posted to support the 1<sup>st</sup> US Infantry Divisions 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade then located at Dau Tieng in III Corps ARVN to the North West of Saigon which had once been part of the Michelen Rubber plantation.



He took on a voluntary role as an English teacher at the local school until the area was overrun. The location to the Border was considered very active as it was a regular supply route coming from the Ho Chi Min Trail.

From that base and other forward support bases he flew over 300 missions including many of what the

FAC would refer to as TIC (Troops in Contact) where the worst of outcomes could be a “short round” where the ordinance they were putting down could cause the loss of friendly lives on the ground.

He says that FAC pilots suffering a short round “probably never recovered”.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1970 his Aircraft was shot down on an extraction Mission very close to the Cambodian Border and both he and his American back seater were forced to eject from the Aircraft and were later picked up by separate Helicopter forces. Chris first rescue Helicopter was also shot down and he helped the two crew from the wreckage. Chris was later flown to Saigon for medical checks and after an extensive debrief he flew a TIC mission the next day when returning to Dau Tieng with a replacement aircraft.

About a week later he was forced to take down time due to injuries to the throat.

The back seater Captain Tom Coker USMA and a West Point Graduate was the highly regarded Company Commander of the Black Scarves Battalion who Chris had supported on operations previously and he survived without significant injury. His Company and his men were the subject of a well known book about the “Black Scarves” of the Battalion titled “Callsign Dracula” which includes a picture of Sidewinder 13 (Langton) and a snap taken by one of the troops of the OV10 inverted above their position.

Flt Lt Langton flew over 300 missions and over 500 hours on the USAF OV-10 Bronco Forward Air Control aircraft including being one of a few who flew the Bronco aircraft now Exhibited at the Australian War Memorial (OV-10 Number 649).

A picture of Flt Lt Langton teaching at a local Vietnamese School is also depicted at the AWM (the picture taken by a French War Correspondent).

Upon return to Australia he completed another three years at Williamtown including flying the Mirage Solo Display during the 1972 RAAF Air Pageant tour across Australia of which he says the display done at Laverton under trying weather conditions was “probably the best of all”.



In 1973 he responded to an advert for a Pilot in Fiji and for the interview he bought a copy of the Pacific Island Monthly for pre study and shortly thereafter arrived in Suva with Air Pacific starting a Civil Flying Career. He said he carried that book around for years and reckoned it was the best pocket guide to the Pacific you could get.

The next 45 years of Civil Flying included bases in Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, USA, Australia and New Zealand and many brief deployments across the entire Pacific and South East Asian theatre culminating in a return to Australia with Impulse Airlines (later Jet Star). With a posting to Melbourne on the cards he responded instead to a request from a long time Air Force Fighter Pilot friend to help set up an International Aeromedical Service using long range jets. Chris describes this 5 years of flying as being the most fulfilling of all.



In 2012 the opportunity arose to start an Airline in Samoa (Samoa Air) conducting Regular Public Transport including International flights and he brought in the “pay by weight” system which aroused much debate across the world. He recalls “The Japanese flew down about a dozen people including a huge wrestler just to get weighed and charged by the Kilo”.

In 2013 he responded to a local request for SAR and Aerial Surveillance to support the Navy PMPB in the Pacific which eventually gave rise to the Contract which is now the centre of this dispute with IPDIV and the Government of Australia.

Over the years he had recorded some 30 Aircraft in his Pilots Log Book and over 23,000 hours of flying.

Chris says that the prospects for Aerial Surveillance in the entire Pacific and what a Civilian Operation could do where a Military could not were “limitless”. He says that in his opinion the “disregard and the wilful neglect of this program by the IPDIV

bureaucrats will one day be recognised as one of the greatest peace time failures of the Australian Government and certainly since the Pacific Countries moved to become independent.”

“Their actions tell us they had no idea what they were doing or what they were not doing, they were in my view clueless when it came to the Pacific...”

Langton concludes that the Phrase “Dogfight in the Pacific” perfectly describes the ongoing events since the day on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015 when it will be alleged that IPDIV as the Commonwealth of Australia has broken the Law and should be held accountable.

“Go to Google Earth.... Spin the globe .... It’s all blue.... It’s Half the planet ...It’s the Pacific Ocean“

### **Chris Langton**

Founder & CEO, Samoa Air and CPSAS

