

Early Days

Wendy was born in Essendon, not far from the original Melbourne Airport, now called Essendon Fields, which still has an aviation industry operating out of the old runways.

In her childhood days, in the late 40s to early 50s, passenger planes were still propeller jobs! One of her favourite things was to hear the engineers revving up and testing the engines late at night, as she lay in bed. The sounds rattled across the empty paddocks in the still night air, creating a comforting, mesmerizing drone, which helped her to get to sleep.

Little did she know that many years later, she would be involved in the industry herself.

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Dave, as a child, lived on a farm near the Royal Airforce Base at Leuchars, in Fife, Scotland.

Again in the late 40s and 50s, there were the old prop aircraft movements, followed later by the Vulcan Bombers flying overhead when Dave was playing or working in the fields below.

Little did he know that he was going to spend thirty-two years in this exciting industry.

It was this industry that brought Wendy and Dave together!

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In 1962, Wendy's school had a week's excursion to Tasmania, flying out of Essendon Airport to Hobart. The group was divided onto two separate flights. Wendy was one of the volunteers to go on the old DC3, whilst the rest of the group went on the newer Fokker friendship, which departed half an hour later.

It was a fun flight for Wendy, as it flew at a low altitude, and bumped through the clouds over the mountains in Tasmania. A few of the other girls were rather green by the time the aircraft arrived at Hobart. To everyone's amazement, the rest of the group, who had flown out half an hour later from Melbourne, were already standing at the fence in Hobart waving a greeting.

Such was the difference in the speed of the older prop aircraft versus the more modern aircraft that the other half of the group had flown on!

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Dave's first commercial flight was in 1963 on a Viscount aircraft from Heathrow to Edinburgh. He bought a standby ticket for two pounds and was lucky to get one of the last seats.

The unfortunate thing, when he landed in Edinburgh, was that the airline had misplaced his baggage.

The baggage finally arrived the next day and was delivered to his home in Fife in a damaged condition. He put in a claim for the damage and received back the princely sum of seven shillings!

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Wendy's first international flight was out of the then new Tullamarine Airport, on a Boeing 707 to Honolulu via Sydney.

It was during the first few months' operation of the airport. Everything was sparkling new.

It was certainly a new experience for Wendy, as she was quite used to flying domestically on only the older prop aircraft and the newer small jet aircraft. The 707 seemed enormous to her at that time.

Taking off from Sydney was a fantastic experience; flying out over the Sydney Harbour Heads and over the Pacific enjoying the longevity of the flight, the meals, and of course, the movies, which were screened onto the large screen located on the bulkhead at the front of each cabin section.

Just as well Wendy had an aisle seat to see the movie, because of certain heads blocking the view! Also, the movie was screened at a certain time, and there was basically no choice of what was screened.

On hindsight, the aircraft was so small, compared to the new A380s which have all the benefits of individual entertainment kits with music, games and a huge choice of movies available.

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Back in the mid 60s, when Dave was in the British Territorial Army, he did a few flights on RAF Britannia aircraft, where the passengers always sat backwards for safety reasons.

The cargo and baggage was stowed between the cockpit and the passenger section.

On one particular flight, from Sharjah (Trucial States, now known as UAE) via Limassol (Cyprus) to Lyneham in England, he was first on board the aircraft, and so had the cargo at the back of his seat.

For the whole flight, he could not put his seat back. He was also suffering from sunburn, which he'd gained from the hot desert sun. As a result, he had to lean forward in his seat to stop the pain from the blisters on his back.

Wow, what a terrible flight!