

The Australian Women's Weekly

August 17, 1977

50c *
New Zealand 50c

Summer shape-up diet, plus an easy way to stay on it

Step-parents: the myth of instant adjustment

Do-ahead chicken dishes

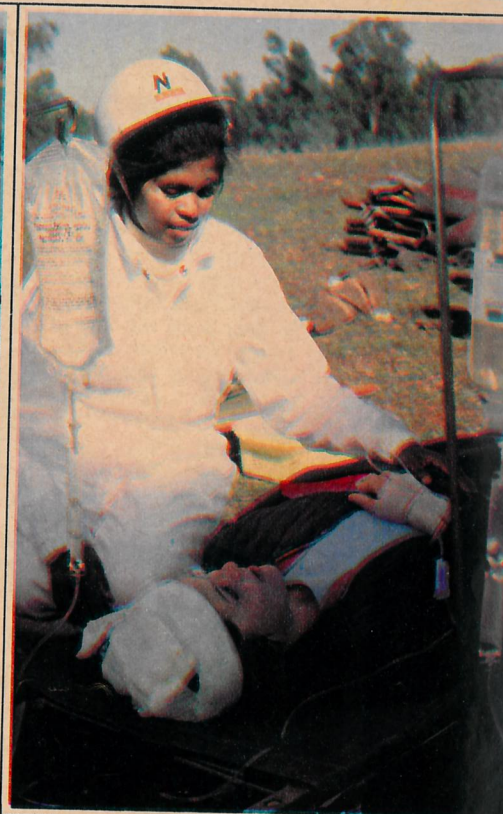
The astonishing transformation of Diana Rigg

How babies learn about love

Your carpet—how to buy it, how to care for it

Do we really know what our children are being taught at school?





The disaster site at Terramungamine Station near Dubbo, seen from one of the Iroquois helicopters. Pictures are by Keith Barlow.

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Sister Ella Baidya of the St Vincent's Hospital team treating a casualty.

EXCLUSIVE



LEFT: 5 Squadron RAAF Iroquois helicopters at the Dubbo "crash" site. BELOW: Inspector Ray Williams (left), director of Exercise Condor on the flight deck of the Hercules with Inspector Del Fricker and chief pilot of the Hercules Air Commodore Geoff Michaels, of Richmond RAAF Base.



"CONDOR"

an exercise in disaster

DISASTER IS an anywhere, anytime thing: Darwin devastated by cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974; Victoria ravaged by bushfires 1939; the Tasman Bridge in Hobart wrecked by the bulk carrier Illawarra, 1975; Brisbane inundated, 1974 — and this year in Sydney, Australia's worst train smash at Granville.

Disasters are inevitable, as are the chaos and agony that accompanies them.

But that chaos and agony can be diminished.

The NSW police believe that the price

When a jet "crashed" near Dubbo, NSW police, medical and military experts showed teamwork can save lives

of life after a disaster is continual rehearsal in realistic conditions.

That's why Senior Assistant Commissioner Brian Doyle gave the go-ahead for Exercise Condor — the biggest rehearsal of its kind undertaken in Australia.

The exercise was held at Dubbo in the north-west of NSW and involved the simulated crash of an international Boeing

707 jet with 143 passengers. In fact the Boeing 707 was merely an old semi-trailer on which six empty packing cases had been placed.

But there was so much realism in other aspects of the exercise that anxious members of the public contacted the police.

The 500 participants in Condor were briefed weeks beforehand on the broad outline of the plan. Everyone involved had been notified. Flight times were organized and all equipment was prepared.

But even so, people were impressed by the way the plan developed its own power to shock and teach, particularly at the crash

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"CONDOR"

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site where the most valuable experience was gained.

The rush on the morgue tent by "relatives" was spontaneous. Only the top leaders were prepared for the looters, or knew of the dubious passengers or the time bomb aboard the crashed aircraft, which was defused only one minute before it was due to explode.

Bodies were strewn across a sun-lit paddock. The smell of burning rubber was in the air.

Clattering helicopters beat the air to dust as they evacuated casualties.

Exercise Condor involved the NSW Police Emergency Response Group, a unit capable of operating its own communications, rescue projects and catering. Also involved were volunteer medical teams from Sydney Hospital, Royal Prince Alfred, St Vincent's, Prince of Wales and Prince Henry hospitals, doctors from the Dubbo area, the Air Force, the Army and the Navy in the person of Fleet Air Arm helicopter pilot Geoff Ledger.

St John Ambulance personnel, fire brigade units and country rescue teams, including Dubbo's own, took part, as well as members of the State Emergency Service, Customs, and Immigration.

More than 100 volunteers from Dubbo and the surrounding district acted as casualties in the exercise.

In command of Exercise Condor was Inspector Ray Williams, whose rescue work at the Granville train disaster won him a Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Granville reinforced Inspector Williams' belief in the value of training exercises. "I estimate that we saved eight lives at Granville because we had trained and trained again in rescue techniques," he said. "Exercise Condor is meant to be a tutorial in disaster."

Senior Assistant Commissioner Doyle put it another way when he said at a pre-exercise briefing: "I hope we make many mistakes, because we learn from our mistakes."

It all began at 11 am on July 23 with a telephone call from Mrs Ros Walters of Terramungamine Station, eight kilometres (five miles) from Dubbo.

"A plane has crashed on our property just west of our house," she told Police Sergeant Fred Logan. And the massive operation swung into action as two RAAF four-engine Hercules C130 transports under the command of Air Commodore Geoff Michaels left Sydney for Dubbo, carrying police and medical teams.

Photographer Keith Barlow and I flew



Doctors Robin Higgs (left) and Julian DeJager discuss the exercise.

with the teams for the Australian Women's Weekly, the only publication invited.

At the crash site, police patrolled.

Other police and local rescue workers began to assist St John Ambulance personnel in the evacuation of injured marked with the green labels signifying that they were ready to be moved.

Again the power of the exercise to involve and to teach was seen. Women police officers held their hats to shade the faces of the injured from the bright sun.

As I moved among the injured I saw delirious casualties struggling with the Army Reserve stretcher bearers carrying them to ambulances and helicopters.

And all the time policemen and rescue workers carried battered suitcases to the growing pile of luggage from the aircraft while smoke drifted from the ring-barked gums it had set on fire.

The medical teams undertook im-

mediate treatment — bandaging, splinting and giving saline drips.

The police Disaster Victim Identification unit had also begun its work, moving from casualty to casualty recording the physical characteristics of the victims. These details would in a real emergency involving local and/or overseas passengers, be passed on to Interpol to help international identification.

A realistic confusion marked their work. Despite the crashed aircraft's passenger list of 143, the final count was 120, 12 of these "dead." Flight list numbers are often not exact but the realism here was brought about unexpectedly because some volunteers did not show up.

Main evacuation of casualties was to Dubbo Base Hospital, where 14 local doctors were helping hospital staff.

Among the volunteers playing these casualties was Mrs Coral Rioff of Dubbo.



Army Reserve volunteers carry a stretcher while Constable Clare Brittain helps with saline drip equipment.

"I have 10 children," she said. "One of these days one of them may be involved in an accident. This is my way of trying to help."

Nearby Customs officers were checking other casualties and their possessions. Neither Customs nor Immigration knew the nature of the various ruses built into the police master plan.

They missed a single-shot pistol which looked like a fountain pen. But Supervising Preventive Officer Don Guy found one of the casualties was carrying a vacuum flask of bull's semen, potentially lethal to the Australian cattle industry.

Immigration officials detected two illegal immigrants among the passengers.

Looters dressed in white overalls, a surprise in the plan, had by now penetrated the police security cordon and were robbing the dead.

"Looting is always a problem at

crashes," said Inspector Williams. "That's why we took special steps to test our officers. They won't forget the lesson."

One of the joint Prince of Wales-Prince Henry medical team, Englishman Dr Robin Higgs, said he thought the NSW police rescue teams had lessons to teach the rest of Australia.

"They are terrific," he said, "among the best I have seen."

Dr Higgs is an expert on rescue. He commanded a British Army parachute field surgical hospital before he came to Australia in 1974.

At 3.05 pm on Saturday the last entry in the log of operations was made.

Sunday was given over to official de-briefings of police and medical teams.

The operations log will be studied along with film and video tape records of the exercise to provide lessons for the future.

Lesson: old army-style stretchers do

not fit into the RAAF Iroquois helicopters.

Lesson: senior co-ordinators need to wear some special kind of identification.

The film and video tape records of Exercise Condor would be available to any other police force in Australia who wanted to study them, Senior Assistant Commissioner Doyle said.

He has already scheduled another mock disaster for November — a simulated collision between a Sydney Harbour ferry and an ocean liner resulting in 200 casualties.

The value of Exercise Condor was best summed up by the chief of the Dubbo Rescue unit, Max Walters.

"We have been through an exercise," he said. "God forbid we should ever have to go through the reality, but at least we are better prepared for it." □

— JAMES MURRAY



Photograph by Bruno Kwas, 1971



What year Sambo, I did one with them all strapped in with tie down running the full length of the bou. Had to stand on the loading ramp and use me boots as a perswader for heaps not to get on. Using the same oxy mask that old mamma sans had spewed in was a bit rough. Maybe Tom miles the loady. Be right near the end. Wal

Hi All

At the last Wallaby lunch, we had a discussion about the maximum number of passengers the Caribou has carried at any one time. It was thought it was an evacuation from a village which was under attack. It was mentioned that it was 84. Can anyone assist with details and the number of passengers carried?

I hope everyone is staying safe during this crisis.

Cheers

Sambo

From: [William Pike](#)
To: [John Sambrooks](#)
Subject: Re: Passenger maximum passenger on board
Date: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 2:52:03 PM

Dear John,

My logbook keeping wasn't that hot when I was 23 but as best I can tell that was Bill Baggett and I on the 29th Oct 1965 in A4-210. I now regret that I didn't log Loadmasters or Crew Chiefs or whatever we called them then. As I recall the number was 82. I remember that as it was 28 reversed and I think the aircraft was configured for 28. It was Mang Buk to Plateau G (as I recall and according to my log book shorthand) The weather was so bad that the Special Forces Sergeant (Roberts I think. We did correspond for a while but this was about 55 years ago.) didn't think that we would get in. . He was still in the hooch when we landed as he was of the opinion that we wouldn't get in. I was of the opinion that we might not make it again that day. He said that there was an NVA attack headed down the valley and any we left behind were likely to be slaughtered. We put the seats up and they filed in and remained standing. Some were babes in arms, little children etc. The aircraft flew OK. Didn't feel as heavy as the day they loaded double cargo of ammunition for Khe San (ammo is heavy. Didn't look like much. They were only adding up the weights of the top pallet as i recall.) I perhaps did not log the number as it might be seen to be illegal or dangerous and the then CO and I didn't get on well. I wasn't sure how he would take it so said nothing. I once reported battle damage including hits on both engines and rudder control shot away and his response was "So what? Looking for a medal. This is a war" I thought "Fuck you" and never told him anything after that. Also didn't laugh at his jokes so didn't qualify for a medal. Apart from Wing Commander CJ Sugden DFC and Bar I had little time for the wartime blokes sent to be CO's in VN by their mates in postings. The RAAF would have benefited by sending some keen young up and comers in my view Anyway that is my recollection after more than half a century. With a few "personal opinions" thrown in gratis Maybe Billy Baggett remembers better or logged more details. (Or not!)
Cheers

Bill Pike

On Tuesday, March 31, 2020, 01:44:57 PM GMT+11, John Sambrooks <wallabysam14@gmail.com> wrote:

RTFV 35SQN

Hi All

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Cheers

Sambo

From: [Chas Van Hulsentop](#)
To: ["John Sambrooks"](#)
Subject: RE: Passenger maximum passenger on board
Date: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 3:20:22 PM

Hi Sambo,

I guess it depends on the average weight of the passenger. 84 +3 crew is 87 x a very light 100lbs is 8700lbs. Women and kids - make it 75lb each =6500lbs. I believe absolute max auw could be around 32000lbs. So yes it would be interesting to find out exactly what was carried. It would have to be for a very short flight.

Cheers

Chas

From: John Sambrooks <wallabysam14@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2020 12:41 PM
To: John Sambrooks <wallabysam14@gmail.com>
Subject: Passenger maximum passenger on board

RTFV 35SQN

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Cheers

Sambo

From: [Stewart McAlister](#)
To: "[John Sambrooks](#)"
Subject: RE: RTFV 35Sqn
Date: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 2:00:03 PM

Hi John,

The maximum pax I carried was 42 Combat Troops combat loaded sitting on the floor between tie down strips across the cabin (I think, US Special Forces) when we were evacuating Pleidejerang (Not sure of spelling). We had around 4,000 feet of strip available, taking off flapless using nearly all the strip. If my recollections are correct it was just after the Tete Offensive JAN 1967.

Cheers.

Stew..

W. Stewart McAlister
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Mob: 0419 214 585

-----Original Message-----

From: John Sambrooks [<mailto:sectres@rtfv-35sqn.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 1:25 PM
To: bsmcalister@bigpond.com
Subject: RTFV 35Sqn

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Cheers
Sambo