

contributed by Jill McCaw

Bob Henderson MNZM

New Zealand Order of Merit for Bob Henderson for Services to Sporting Aviation



BOB Henderson of Auckland was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit as part of the Queen's Birthday and Diamond Jubilee Honours this year, for Services to Sporting Aviation. We at KiwiFlyer congratulate Bob on his honour and in this article, take a look at the volunteer work that earned him the award and the various aviation roles Bob has held over his career.

BOB Henderson is involved in sports aviation at an international level. He is currently Chairman of the newly created Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) Air Sports Marketing and Events (FAME) Board of Directors. The aim of FAME is to promote Air Sports and create economic value for FAI and its events, by actively exploring the sports market and developing new and more attractive events.

Until recently, Bob was President of the International Gliding Commission (IGC), a role he had held since 2004. The IGC is the gliding arm of the FAI. Eric Mozer who worked as his first Vice-President says, "Bob was a joy to work with. His organisational and communication skills, as well as his ability to lead the IGC Plenary session, were as good as any I have ever encountered. Bob brought long-range planning skills to the IGC that has served us very well. He kept the IGC Bureau members and chairman of the various committees involved throughout the year."

In spite of his work for FAI, Bob Henderson is a full time B737-300 Training Captain for Air New Zealand. He has been with Air New Zealand since 1994 and has

also instructed on the B737-200 Simulator, piloted the A320 and worked in Human Factors.

Bob started his flying career with RNZAF, joining the service in 1972 and following a course of university training did his Pilot training course on the Harvard and Devon in 1974. His Air Force career highlights make interesting reading. He was, among other roles, HS780 Andover Instructor and Instrument Rating Examiner, C421 Golden Eagle Instructor and Instrument Rating Examiner, Commanding Officer No. 104 (VIP) Flight, Commanding Officer No. 40 Squadron, C130 Instructor and Instrument Rating Examiner, and Senior New Zealand Military Officer, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Gulf War I.

Air Commodore Steve Moore, RNZAF, and fellow MNZM, remains friends with Bob. "It is evident to everybody that had contact with Bob that he is passionate about flying," he says. "His passion rubbed off on those who flew with him, and even today those still in the Service remember him as somebody who they enjoyed flying with because of his love of flying and his relaxed manner on the flight deck - he was always one for a good joke."

"During his service and especially when in positions of command, Bob was renowned for supporting his 'troops' and their families. As Commanding Officer of No. 40 Squadron during a period of heightened activity and numerous short-notice, overseas tasks of indeterminate length, he put welfare amongst the top of his priorities. He set up support networks to ensure any issues with the families of deployed personnel were dealt with quickly and without fuss, thus ensuring low stress levels for all involved. Bob was also known as a tolerant commander. He believed in giving people another chance, as long as his loyalty was respected. All in all, his leadership style resulted in a squadron with high morale, and the fantastic results that No. 40 Squadron achieved during the time Bob was in command are a reflection of Bob's leadership and commitment. Since leaving the RNZAF, Bob has remained a good friend of the Service and No. 40 Squadron in particular."

For his exemplary service as the Detachment Commander, Bob was

awarded an Air Force Cross, the citation for which highlighted his outstanding leadership abilities. Bob sought release from the RNZAF in March 1993 to pursue a career in civil aviation. He served his country and the RNZAF for over 21 years.

Bob began working for Air New Zealand in 1994. He has an interest in Human Factors, successfully applying for a position in Air New Zealand as a Crew Resource Management (CRM) Instructor, subsequently re-titled as Human Factors Instructor. Bob became the Human Factors Manager for Air New Zealand, with responsibility for human factors training of all crew. Like the instructor position, this was a secondary responsibility while still operating as a line pilot.

Bob assisted brother-in-law and fellow Air New Zealand pilot Arthur Gatland with the development and delivery of Air New Zealand's Threat and Error Management Course, which has become a mainstay of Air New Zealand's operating risk assessment and briefings.

It was because of family that Bob became interested in aviation, more correctly it was meeting his wife Eileen who came from a family of mad keen glider pilots. Bob became a glider pilot and has been involved in the sport, as both a pilot competitor and as a volunteer ever since. Not only has Bob held executive positions for Gliding New Zealand, including President, he has also been Contest or Operational Director for the two international gliding contests held in New Zealand. He has worked in various capacities for the IGC since 1997. Bob was the Event Director of the World Air Games held in Wanaka in December 2007.

TV producer and entrepreneur Peter Newport has been working closely with Bob Henderson since the Gliding Grand Prix in Omarama six years ago. He says, "Bob represents a very unique and special mix of talents, in that he is both a very professional and prudent manager of complex, new aviation events - but he is also someone who is prepared to embrace and front up to the risks associated with experimental advances in staging such events."

"Without people like Bob, there would be little, if any, progress in the attempts to popularise gliding and other air sports. Bob

is a bridge between the work of people like me and the understandably conservative world of the FAI. Ironically, the world of established sport and money is also highly conservative - those people hate to lose money - so without Bob, we'd never stand a chance of staging safe, professional events that prove the viability of new sports formats. Bob and I are working together on the upcoming NZ International Air Show, as well as on initiatives in the U.S. to bring air sports and air shows together. I know we will eventually succeed in these endeavours - and it will have been Bob who has been the vital catalyst between the worlds of commercial entrepreneurship and professional aviation risk management. He has true, true courage - and works harder than any person I've ever met."

Bob is an extraordinary man who has served not only his country, but sports aviation for many years. And yet, when asked for a comment on being awarded the MNZM he said, "Our sports are served by so many willing and capable volunteers and I am humbled by the award of the MNZM for my small part in furthering the development of air sports."

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