

– THE INSIDE STORY

By John Davis (PC)



Matt Sheil's Amazing 747-400 Simulator - Scanno and Dean prepare for their flight

Many people ask me how on earth I managed to become involved with World Flight Australia.

Truthfully I'm not really sure what led me to join up, after all, I had never been to Australia, never even given it a thought in fact, only occasionally had it crossed my mind that it might be nice to go to Sydney, but then there are so many other places that grabbed my attention. I had no particular interest in raising money for The Royal Flying Doctor Service other than having admiration for their work in what was to me a huge, barren country on the other side of the world.

So how on earth did I end up sitting in a Flight Simulator in Sydney in the middle of the night, helping to fly it around the world!

Many people seem to think that the pilots of World Flight turn up on the Monday morning and go home on the following Sunday having spent a whole week indulging in drunken debauchery and their passion of flying flight simulators . . . nothing could be further from the truth . . . some of us don't go home until Monday! Seriously though, there is an awful lot more to World Flight than meets the eye and hopefully this article will enlighten you to the whole story. I have now taken part in World Flight twice and am about to participate in my third.

Three years ago I decide that I wanted to build my own 747 Simulator and had come across Matt Sheil's Simulator via the Aerowinx website. I had contacted Matt a couple of times with questions about how he had done things. I remember the first time, I thought I was reasonably prepared to start my project and it came as a bit of a shock when Matt practically blew me out of the water saying how unprepared I was and to go away until I knew what I was talking about!! This turned out to be the best advice he could have offered me as he was, as ever totally correct. So there I was one very wet Sunday afternoon sitting in my "Sim" (I had always called it that, even though it was nothing more than a collection of old computers and Monitors all over my spare bedroom) and my brother had just rung me and stunned me with the news that because of work commitments he would have to pull out of our planned Holiday to Barbados. We hadn't actually booked so I wouldn't loose any money, but I was pretty gutted, what should I do? . . . Go alone and sit on the beach ?, do a bit of diving? I thought that this was highly preferable to kicking around the house for a fortnight but there was still this nagging doubt . . . I stared out the window watching the rain run down the river, feeling depressed, then I remembered seeing a posting Matt had made inviting people to apply to crew World Flight so I started to think how much it would cost to go to Australia ? Some quick calculations revealed that I could afford to go for two weeks for the same price as I was going to pay to fly to the Caribbean. I would obviously have to sell my body to pay for spending money but I could afford to go!

I banged off an e-mail to Matt to see if there were any places left, he, in his inimitable style passed me on to Terry Scanlan (who shall be known as Scanno from now on) Terry is Matt's Right hand man, many believe he owns the Simulator because he spends so much time there and many rumours exist saying that World Flight Australia was his idea . . . nobody is really sure anymore it's all as blurred as a VATSIM weekend! Scanno is in charge of World Flight recruitment, the Beer and the Fridge . . . more on those later . . . he is also primarily responsible for drumming up support. No one knows his real age, but the fact that he is senior to everyone on Planet Earth will suffice.



"Scanno" . . . Older than planet earth and proving that a half empty glass is worth hanging onto !

Scanno mailed me back saying that if I was prepared to travel all the way from the UK they would be happy to have me (truthfully I don't think they thought I would turn up). I had Monday off work and rushed down to the Travel Agent to book my flights, and by mid-day I was booked into a Hotel in Sydney and on the Team. All World Flight Pilots donate a set fee to the cause to take part in the event, this year it is \$500, so I had to start saving my pennies to make sure I had it put by. Scanno also pointed me to the World Flight website www.worldflight.com.au and told me to log onto the Pilots forum, this is a highly entertaining section of our website for crew only where basically we slag each other off for 6 weeks prior to the event, and also answer questions and offer up ideas for the event, things such as how much the beer is costing to deciding whether we have web cams etc.

The website is compiled by John Golin who is our Technical wizard, a bit like "Brains" in Thunderbirds ! if you go to him and say "John put this picture on the site" within 2 minutes he has your camera apart, pokes about with wires and stuff and has your picture on the Net before the kettle has boiled !



"Brains" Golin doing something "Technical"

John is a quiet and confident guy, who exudes a great calm over the event and very rarely swears !, he is an IT manager for some big Aussie company. . . whatever that entails ! He also has a very dry sense of humour and you very often don't realise that you are the butt of his jokes. As you enter the building you will always find him at the top of the stairs tapping away on 4 computers at once looking after the web cam, live tracking and photos of the event.

As soon as I was accepted as a pilot I started to doubt my ability! I had flown my own simulator for years using Flight Simulator and also Aerowinx Precision Simulator (PS1) (The main software used in Matt's Simulator) I had also flown a British Airways 747-400 Simulator but only for 40 minutes. I was reasonably confident, but how good do you have to be ?? Approximately one month before World Flight begins all pilots are sent comprehensive information via e-mail as to the Simulator's operation. Although the Simulator flies as Qantas 25 the configuration and training materials used are United Airlines as Matt has flown many hours in their real simulator, we are also encouraged to buy a copy of Mike Rays Simulator Check ride book, which is well worth the read. Amongst the materials are a full manual for the Simulator which is as many pages as the Aerowinx Manual, full checklists and even a guide to exactly what duties each crew member has from start-up to shutdown.

When I first received this it frightened me to death and filled me with self doubt, especially the letter from Matt explaining that we have to be careful with the Throttles, Flap Lever, Fuel Switches etc. and that any breakages will be charged! Many Parts in Matt's simulator are genuine 747 parts including all the above, the Control Columns, Rudders and Seats, Matt flew over to the USA and extracted them himself, full details of the Simulator's progress can be found on his own website www.hyway.com.au/747/747.html Matt also makes it clear that if he hears any comments such as "The seat in the real plane is 4" further forward" you will be put on the first plane home, as he puts it *"Basically I don't give a woolly rats rectum, if you are not happy with what I have built up to now, go and build your own or sit at home in front of your 14" monitor and keyboard. ☺☺"* It's now a standing joke that you know World Flight is imminent when the "woolly rats" story is sent out !

12 weeks later I boarded my British Airways flight to Sydney, as I only had two weeks I flew directly via Singapore . . . 23hours on a plane is no joke. Leaving London at night means that during the flight when the sun finally comes up everyone wants to sleep so the crew pull all the window shades until you reach Singapore at which time it's night again and so you spend the whole flight in a darkened cabin watching 23 hrs of 5" Television!

Also if you fly direct you get served Breakfast, Dinner and Evening meal the last one just before arrival, you take off early evening Singapore time and get served the Evening Meal again !

Australia is such a long way from where I live that I think they should have just named it "Far" I arrived in Sydney at some god awful time of the morning on Saturday a slightly dull but warm day, as my bus drove into the city it was just like driving into Birmingham, and it didn't look very glamorous at all, but I was very tired. I checked into my hotel and tried to sleep however my body clock was all over the place.

Waking up half an hour later I decided to check out the local area. I was staying in a very old and small hotel in an area known as the Rocks, apparently it is where the first settlers landed and is right next to the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, Shopping Centres, Restaurants, Pubs and the Train Station, with all these amenities I can see why they chose to settle there.

Reading back on the history of the Rocks, at one time it was a very seedy area and my hotel was probably a brothel, however these days it is very comfortable and really suited my needs except for the lighting in the rooms, it had 15 watt light bulbs which when lit made the room darker. The great thing about the hotel was that you came out of the front door crossed a small bit of green grass and you were in Circular Quay in 1½ minutes.

Circular Quay is where all the ferries dock and has many café's and street entertainers, there is always something going on and is a fascinating place to sit and have a snack and watch the world go by. Shortly I was tired and went back for some sleep.

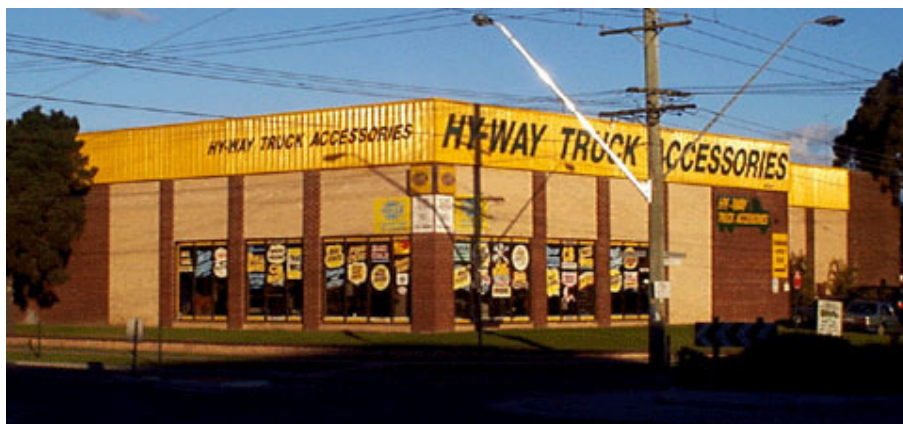
Sunday was spent doing some sightseeing around the Harbour.

Monday morning dawned bright and clear and Sydney looked magnificent.

World Flight takes a week to complete and always starts on the first Monday of November which is Spring time in Australia. Generally speaking it starts at 3-4 pm Sydney local time so I decided to arrive early to meet everyone and check out the simulator.

The Simulator is sited at Matt's business premises in the outskirts of Sydney near Bankstown Airport. Matt runs his own company, Hy-Way Truck Accessories which has outlets all over Australia, and to get there I found the best way was to take the train, luckily the station is in Circular Quay. I purchased a ticket for a week which also allowed me to ride on the ferries, this was quite cheap around £15.00. The journey takes about 30 – 45 minutes and a taxi ride of about 20 minutes from the other station. The taxi driver knew what road the building was on but as it is a huge Industrial estate he had no idea where, luckily I had seen a photo of the huge green and white building and was able to pick it out as we approached.

I decided to tell the taxi driver that I was visiting friends rather than go through the process of trying to explain what I was really going to do . . . Later I realised a better way was to tell them all about it, invite them in to see the Simulator and extract a donation to the cause !



The Home of the Simulator

I hoped I had the right place and approached the main door, a very un-assuming note above the bell said "World Flight upstairs" and upon entering I found myself in, funnily enough a truck accessories shop full of anti-freeze, wiper blades and fan belts etc, "I'm here to take part in World Flight" I said with as much importance as I could muster, the guy behind the counter said, "roight, Jeez mate you must be the Pom!" Matt's upstairs mate (everybody soon becomes your mate in Australia !)

I climbed the stairs to find Matt and Scanno ready to greet me, as you reach the top of the stairs you find yourself in a reception area with Matt's office on the right and a reception desk on the left, this is World Flight Despatch. It is here that all the Air Traffic control is handled and also where "Brains" hangs out, In fact it is where most of us hang out especially in the dead of night. There are usually three computers set up here one showing Jeppesen Charts, and the other two for online flying and communications. Jeppesen are one of our sponsors and supply us with up to date charts in paper format and a Jeppview CD with all the world's airport charts. Matt prints these out for every airport in our route, every chart for each airport.



World Flight Despatch

Also in this area is a giant world map, a sky bed a monitor showing a Departure and Arrivals board and a TV and video recorder, this is linked directly to a video camera mounted in the back of the Simulator so that we can watch what is going on, all take off's and landings are videoed and any mistakes are replayed constantly with much laughter. There is also a TV downstairs in the "Crew Lounge" so no-one misses out.



No one misses out on the mistakes ! . . . looks like Ed Parker (far left) was the guilty one !

1255 DEPARTURES					
FLIGHT	FROM	TO	SCD	BRD	GATE
WF179	Ankara	Muscat	DEPARTED		6
WF180	Muscat	Calcutta	DEPARTED		40
WF181	Calcutta	Beijing	DEPARTED		16
WF182	Beijing	Seoul	DEPARTED		14
WF183	Seoul	Shanghai	DEPARTED		15
WF184	Shanghai	Hong Kong	DEPARTED		8
WF185	Hong Kong	Manila	DEPARTED		2
WF186	Manila	Singapore	DEPARTED		9
WF187	Singapore	Jakarta	DEPARTED		40
WF188	Jakarta	Bali	DEPARTED		40
WF189	Bali	Darwin	DEPARTED		32
WF190	Darwin	Alice Springs	DEPARTED		2
WF191	Alice Springs	Adelaide	DEPARTED		40
WF192	Adelaide	Melbourne	1505 1450		19
WF193	Melbourne	Sydney	1720 1705		18

All arrival times are SYDNEY LOCAL... Worldflight Australia 2003

Our Departure and arrivals board, this is updated by John, and also linked to the one on the website



The TV and Video showing Ed Parker at the controls, the picture is colour however the camera also records in Infra Red so we can watch the mistakes made in the dark !" John also saves stills from this camera to post on our website along with digital photos taken by the crews. Underneath is the Swear box . . . this becomes extremely full and Securicor collect it daily !



Dave "Bombay" Palmer tries out the Sky bed

When sitting in Despatch looking forward there is a long corridor with a Kitchen and Toilet facilities on the left and the entrance to the Simulator on the right, along the corridor are the staff offices where Matt's office staff work. All the offices are glass partitioned so everyone can see each other. During World Flight all the girls give up their desks so that we can generally hang around and do the flight plans, they share one or two offices for the duration of the event "Thanks Girls". At the end of the corridor one room is blacked out and mattresses installed for crews to get rest, most of the crew come from various parts of Australia, and this is where they sleep for the week. Matt installs a bed in his office, and woes betide anyone who disturbs him when he is asleep.

"Have ya seen the Sim Pom?" Matt asks with a grin . . . go take a look, so off I go following him like an excited puppy, we turn right and I am confronted with a white box with a World Flight Australia sign on the door.



Matt and the entrance to the Sim, notice the Silver Air Conditioning unit on the right, through which Matt introduced the famous "Smoke in the Cockpit"

Matt opens it to reveal the most amazing simulator I have seen apart from the real ones of course . . . it's difficult to describe just how accurate it is. If you have flown a real simulator you will have some idea, it's very difficult to tell the difference. The whole place glows with the lighted panels and in the semi darkness the screens are bright and vivid. John Golin is in the captain's seat flying a practice approach into Hong Kong in a thunderstorm . . . "Hop in the front Pom and have a go" Matt says still beaming. After introducing myself to John I can see the boys are anxious to see how the "Pom" can fly, especially as Scanno pokes his head over my shoulder as well! Luckily I manage to land the Simulator on the Piano keys much to the horror of the team! "Bloody Pom show-off" can be heard throughout the Simulator, accompanied by much head shaking.



"The whole Simulator glows"

There is a vast difference to flying a simulator with a screen as large as the one Matt has, the image out of the window becomes life size and it is very different to flying with a small monitor in front of you, luckily I have my own projector so this effect was familiar to me otherwise I'm sure I would have botched the landing.

Whilst I was "having a play" preparations for World Flight were taking on a frantic pace and I was soon put to work, apparently some of the offsets I had done needed moving as some new scenery had been added. We are very fortunate to have a lot of commercial scenery donated, when I first signed up for World Flight I downloaded freeware scenery from various Flight Simulator sites and posted a message on the forum telling the other pilots where I got them from if they wanted to practice their routes. I immediately received an e-mail from Matt telling me that I had been volunteered to be the Scenery Director, and to get some sponsored. I contacted anyone who was distributing Scenery for airports along our route and they kindly donated copies for us, we also use freeware files as well. For those of you not familiar with Flight Simulators and Precision Simulator in particular, Matt's simulator uses Aerowinx Precision Simulator (PS1) for the 747-400 aircraft systems and flight displays and Microsoft Flight Simulator for the visual image projected outside the windows, these programs are connected over a network of computers via software called Broker which allows the programs to work together, it also uses a program called Visual 744 which takes the position from the Aerowinx simulator and marries it to the visual image.

Unfortunately these programs measure the earth in slightly different ways, which means that if left uncorrected one simulator sits on the Runway and the image shows it sitting on the grass! A clever file called an "offset" is used to correct the difference, and this is what Matt asked me to alter. Unfortunately I have been landed with this job on a permanent basis now having completed offsets for all airports in the Database, 1,500 airports and counting!

Matt shows me to the Instructors station in the rear of the simulator behind the captain's chair. There is an extra seat with its own table and monitors showing all the programs running the Simulator and online programs. Again for those of you out there who are not familiar with Flight Simulation, we fly the simulator "on-line" via the internet and are part of the VATSIM network which provides Air Traffic Control worldwide using real-life procedures. In other words if we fly into London for example we will be talking to VATSIM qualified Air Traffic Controllers in the UK, we also see other virtual pilot's aircraft on the scenery outside, added to this we also have real weather downloaded constantly and fed into the simulator so if it's raining in London, it rains in the Simulator ! (not literally of course) any weather and cloud effect is simulated including rain, fog, low clouds and even heavy snow, so our pilots have to be able to fly instrument approaches.

In addition to these main programs there are many other bits of software all running various systems approximately 50 programs over 15 computers at the last count.

Most of these programs are accessed from this station.

During the event there is always a Second Officer seated at the instructor station, and his responsibility is to monitor all these systems and keep everything running.



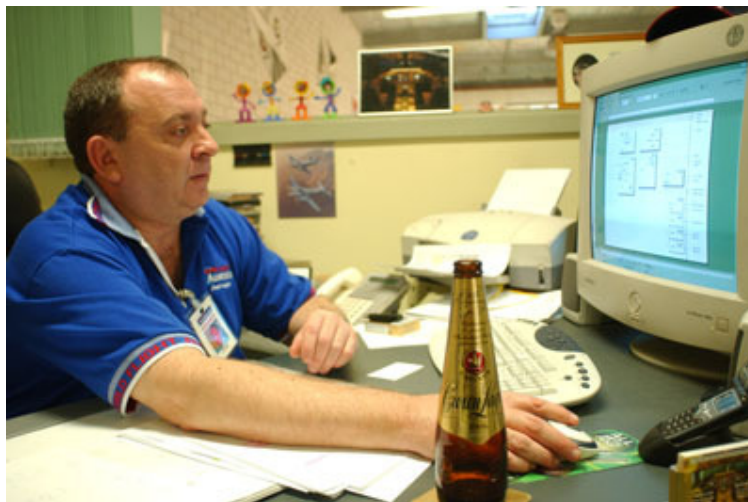
The Instructor Station

Once I have finished my work on the offsets, (I must admit Matt ended up doing most of it) I was introduced to a few more of the Pilots and was allowed to explore my surroundings, One of the things that strikes you from the start is how friendly everyone is, there is a lot of joking around and “Mickey taking” but everyone takes it with a pinch of salt, I was shown into the flight planning room and saw myself on a “Wanted” poster hung on the wall !



The joking begins way before World Flight even starts !

The flight planning room is directly opposite the entrance to the simulator, it is generally staffed by either Matt, Scanno, Dean Constantinidis or Ed “Shorts” Parker.



Ed “Shorts” Parker . . . Guarding a bottle of World Flight’s favourite drink Crown, Lager “A Crownie”

Long before World Flight starts, Ed prepares routes for us which are pre-loaded into the Simulators Flight Management Computers, then any of the above people take the route and use flight planning software and latest weather information along with the number of passengers , the passenger figures are taken from our website based on how many people have donated and booked seats on the flight in question, all this information is fed into the planning software and it works out the whole flight plan. The flight planner also gathers together all the Jeppesen enroute and Airport charts and briefs the crew.

Before each flight, crews are required to report for duty at least 1 hour before take-off. The route is planned to allow approximately 45 minutes between each flight for the crews to changeover and prepare for the next flight, not all pilots can manage to donate a week of their

time so this may involve travelling to the Simulator in the early hours of the morning as World Flight runs continuously for one week 24hrs per day.

All pilots are volunteers, and decide how much time they can give to the event, several months before World Flight James "La Paz" Lacey organises the crews and prepares the roster which can be viewed on our website. This is no mean feat bearing him mind he has to co-ordinate all the timings and try and incorporate requests for various routes.

This year there are 15 pilots taking part in crews of three, James rosters us so that everyone has a chance to fly as Captain and Co-pilot, the Second Officer is always someone who knows how to run all the systems at the instructor station, there are generally 5 people qualified to do this, so they have many extra shifts to cover, all this equates to each crew member generally flying between 4 and 6 flights each. James also tries to roster everyone so they get to fly at night and during the day. He is nicknamed La Paz after something horrendous that happened during his flight there, I'm not sure what it was as he won't talk about it! "La Paz" is the real joker amongst the group and is constantly taking the Mickey out of everyone, and especially Scanno. They have a sort of friendly love hate relationship and he can always be found with a beer day or night especially in the wee small hours when he is manning despatch.



"La Paz" doing something important . . . note the beer within easy reach !



La Paz and Scanno . . . a whole lot of love going' on !

Upon arrival the crew are fully briefed upon their route, weather and any relevant information. All three crew members have a chance to discuss the flight with each other and the flight planner, and must be ready to enter the Simulator once the previous crew have landed.



Dean Briefs the Crew for their next flight



Ed and Matt discuss a Flight plan . . . Ed doing as he's told !

Upon landing, the first place the crew heads for is the keg for a celebratory beer. As you exit the Simulator there is a metal staircase on the right which descends into the workshop, this is where trucks get fitted with parts and is basically a huge garage, it can be a quiet and dark place in the middle of the night, but it is down here that the three most important pieces of equipment are kept . . . the beer, the food and the barbeque. During the event a huge mobile fridge is hired, to store all the food and soft drinks and a keg of beer set up through a refrigerated pump (Scanno's bucket of ice) also a huge barbeque is wheeled into place and I must admit Scanno makes a wicked sausage and bacon breakfast.



The Beer !

Keeping 15 Pilots fed and watered is a mammoth job and we have been fortunate to have Gate Gourmet as one of our sponsors and they supplied us with real airline meals. This year Qantas Flight Catering are taking over, the food comes packaged exactly as it on real flights and adds to the realism of our event.



Ed prepares Gate Gourmet meals for the crew, he has to beat pilots off with a stick apparently



Jeroen Hoppe tucks into a well earned meal

The meals are picked up fresh everyday by one of Matt's staff and kept in the mobile fridge.

The area next to the fridge is the crew rest room and is directly below the Simulator, this is where the planned motion platforms will stand. The Simulator is already equipped with hooks so that when ready it can be lifted, the current roof will be removed and it will be lowered onto the motion platforms. I believe that Matt has already poured concrete here so World Flight 2004 may be having a different crew room this year. In this area is a bed, sofa, chairs , table and a TV set showing what is going on inside the simulator.



Hoppie and Matt have a serious discussion about "Blocky" FMC fonts over breakfast in the Crew Room



Scanno cooks an excellent breakfast, watched closely by his life-long friend "La Paz" Who is lurking by fridge and beer as usual ! , the stairs on the right lead up to the rear of the Simulator

An event such as World Flight takes an awful lot of work to prepare and this actually starts during the current event, last year pilots were asked to place pink slips on the giant world map suggesting destinations for this years route. It takes many months of work for Ed Parker to work out a round the world route that can be completed within one week, using real charts and navigation data to plan each leg and collate all the information for each Airport.



The Suggestions Map

During the months leading up to the event the route is test flown in the Simulator. Matt's simulator is in use all year round and has been used in television adverts and programs. Matt also has many visitors throughout the year, in fact the Simulator is very seldom turned off, all the computers and screens are left on 24hrs per day only the projector is turned off to conserve bulb life. The Simulator is run on 15 computers and approximately 50 programs but surprisingly can be started up in about 15 minutes !



The Simulator inside and . . .



. . . Outside ! World Flight joke . . . Matt's First Simulator !

A simulator of this magnitude is of course very complicated, however Matt has put a lot of thought into its construction to allow access for repairs and upgrades which is amazing as the whole cockpit is built to within millimetres of the real dimensions of the 747-400 flight deck.



Adjustments being made to a sticking Rudder Pedal . . . and you thought the back of your Stereo looked bad !



*Dean Constantinidis Captains the Sim through the dark night.
Dean was 16 years old during the First World Flight and now working for Virgin Blue! Congratulations Dean !*

During off duty periods, pilots either sit around talking or help out with flight planning, or if like myself you are a visitor to Australia you can get out and about and view the sights. One of the highlights last year for me was to go flying with one of the World Flight Pilots, Rodney Redwin, "Roddez" as he likes to be called. Roddez Joerg and myself rented a Piper Cherokee from Bankstown Airport and went flying over Sydney Harbour. Roddez let me fly the plane most of the time and was even trusting enough to let me land it in a crosswind !



Me over Sydney Harbour on a misty day



Approaching the Harbour



Sydney Harbour, The Rocks and my hotel are the other side of Circular Quay just above the Opera House



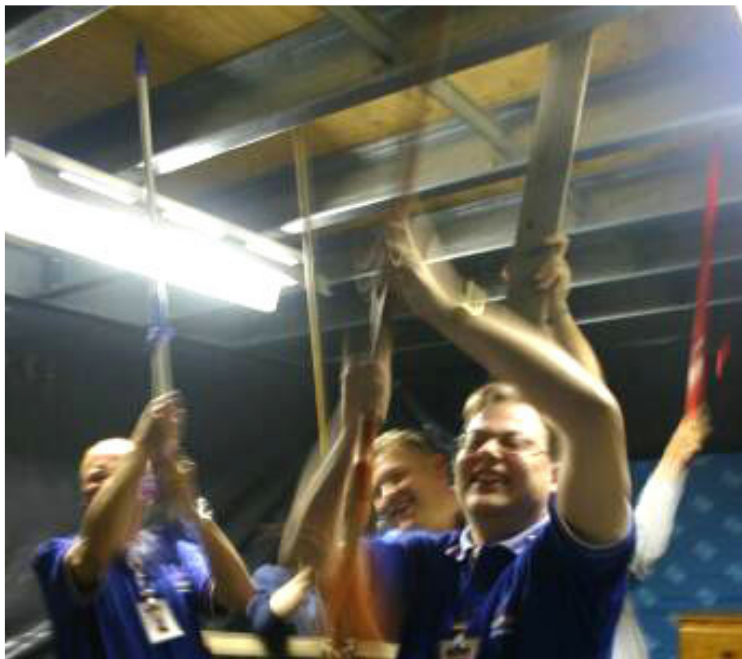
Concentrating on my Crosswind landing !

Whilst World Flight is a serious event, there is an awful lot of fun to be had, there is always some plot going on to delight the present crew's day. These have included "smoke in the cockpit" where Matt used a party smoke machine to fill the Simulator with smoke. La Paz handled it brilliantly to the point of going through the proper drill ! This year Matt has installed an Instructor station which enables the Second officer to fail anything at any time which we are all delighted about ! . . . no , really !



"La Paz" handles his smoke in the Cockpit Drill

I was also the victim of the "building rubble" on the runway scam as pilots in the crew lounge used broom handles to bang on the floor of the Simulator to simulate a rough landing !



Even the girls in the office get in on the act by spraying our hair multicoloured if we don't cough up more donations !



Becky and Bronwyn Spray My hair !



The final result Scanno, Dean, John and Myself looking like Cockatoo's !

Some crews like to dress up as well



Dave and Dean in their Pilots Uniform

And as for ATC in far away places, if it is not available we provide our own !



Joe Corrigan is Muscat Centre !

And of course there is a need to watch out for other Aircraft !



So what is it like to take part in World Flight ?

For a simulator addict like myself it is one of the best, friendly and entertaining weeks of your life ! I won't go into a push button description of a typical flight as you can already read that in Terry Scanlan's excellent article on our website. Once the final preparations are completed the first flight takes place, most of the pilots on the team have taken part before and are familiar with all the procedures and so they climb into the simulator and do their stuff with the first and last flights usually flown by Matt and Scanno. All pilots need to be fully up to speed with Aerowinx Precision Simulator (PS1) which simulates all the functions of the 747 cockpit operations, this software is very complex and can take many months, even years to learn to use properly so there is no time to learn on the job. As I mentioned previously the procedures used are based upon United Airlines operations and pilots use all the correct checklists and flow patterns to prepare for their flight during all it's stages. As a Simulator pilot, this is one of the best parts of the event as it is very rare that you get to operate properly as a crew unless you take part in something like this. Also, as in real life it can show up your strengths and weaknesses. The roster groups us into crews of 3, however it is not the same three people each time and each person has varying skills, this can even differ depending on whether they are flying as Captain or First officer. Because all crews are familiar with PS1 things go very smoothly and flights come and go throughout the week with no real problems.

One of the joys of flying a Simulator as complex as this one, is the satisfaction it gives you when you get it right. All crews use up to date airport charts and fly real life procedures, departures, arrivals and approaches. Because we are receiving real world weather in the Simulator this can involve the crew flying an Instrument approach to minimums, when the weather permits, crews are encouraged to land manually, and this year Matt is trying to get us to disconnect the autopilot at 10,000 ft !

That should make life interesting !

Once the first flight is underway, the flight planning starts for the next crew so that they can be fully briefed and ready to go. Flights vary in length, some may be as short as 1 hour and others can be 6-7 hrs, James also rosters pilots so that they have a mixture of these.

Because everybody knows what they are doing, funnily enough it is hardly noticeable that we have started, this being a great testament to the hard work and professionalism of everyone involved. It soon comes round to my first time to fly the Simulator and to be quite honest even though I had been using the same software for years just sitting in a fully working flight deck completely phased me ! All the Checklists I had learned went completely out of the window and I sat there like a blithering idiot, luckily I had a competent first officer to keep me in check and in no time I had settled down to the job in hand. It is amazing to listen to the sounds of the simulator especially as it is made from metal and plastics, it smells, looks, sounds and feels like the real aircraft. The panels gently vibrate, we hear the sounds of the engines starting up, the flaps and speed brakes moving, the wheels being raised or lowered and even

the hostesses making their announcements. Matt has gone to great trouble to research the volume levels of sound and ensure speakers are placed so that the sound comes from the correct direction, he has also fitted sub-woofer speakers and shaker units into the simulator to gently move the seats to the vibration, the effect is simply stunning. Add to this the live Air Traffic Control, weather etc. it makes for a truly realistic experience, so much so that during one of my flights I was flying at night in South America watching the stars and twinkling city lights pass by, occasionally talking to actual South American Controllers. I had been in the Simulator for 3 hrs and I left my first officer in charge whilst I took a toilet break, when I stepped out of the cockpit door I was plunged into mid-day Sydney with all Matt's office staff answering calls, typing and going about their business, talk about a shock !



Long Nights spent in the Sim . . . superb night shot !

Once the first few flights have been completed everything slips into a steady rhythm, most of the pilots stay on site and even those who return home usually stay long after their flights for a beer and a laugh. During the week we have many visitors, some are Journalists or Television crews reporting on the event, some wives, girlfriends and general visitors. Sometimes we have an open day where anyone can come and sit in the back of the Simulator whilst we fly, and we answer their questions, it's very much like the cockpit visits people used to enjoy before September 11th.



Many visitors come and go, Dave Palmer shows his Nephew the controls . . . Either that or he has taken up Ventriloquism !, caught on the web cam.

As the week continues the simulator gets further away from Sydney, because the time of day in the Simulator is the same as wherever it is on the earth you may find yourself arriving for your flight in the middle of the night (Sydney Time) to find that it is daylight in the Sim, this can add to tiredness in a similar way to jetlag if you have a lot of flights close together.



By the end of the week crews can get very tired, Matt gets some well earned rest on the floor of the Simulator

Outside the Simulator other crews come and go, but there is always a constant core of Pilots around the Despatch where we constantly check and answer messages left on both our own website and the Aerowinx Support Forum, and John can be found updating the photographs on our website when he isn't flying or sleeping.



With Scanno in command the crew realise they've had their Chips !

During the wee small hours (Sydney time) my thoughts tend to wander to those at home especially as it is daytime there. Sunday (the final day) comes all too soon and depending on our route we will finish between 4 – 8 pm. Last year Matt was given permission for a fly-by of Sydney Tower, as he flew overhead he pulled the nose up and executed a perfect Barrel Roll, there were 8 of us crammed into the Simulator all whooping with delight !

After we had posted the “that’s all folks” picture on the website, those of us who were left downed a few more beers, watched some replays of the best landings. Matt then allowed us to use the Simulator to try some of those more difficult approaches such as the old Hong Kong, Innsbruck in heavy snow and that kind of thing, at approximately 3 am he turned the whole Simulator off to give it a well earned rest and we all slept like babies . . .



The After-show party begins !

Monday morning dawned with the mother of all hangovers, but there was no time for slacking. Most pilots had gone home now and the few of us who were left were put to work turning Hy-Way Truck Accessories back to normal. As we cleared up all the rubbish, removed the computers, towed away the fridge, pulled down the bedroom blackouts and returned the staff to their offices it made me realise just how much of an upheaval they have, and although they are being paid, I must admit I never heard one single grumble, they all enter into the spirit and fun even though they have important jobs to do, my thanks go to them all.

Well, I think I have rambled on for long enough now and I hope I have been able to give you a taste of what it’s like to be a crew member on World Flight. This article doesn’t even begin to touch on the effort and hard work of so many people of who I am proud to be a small part. This year I will be staying at the Simulator which should be a whole new and tiring experience, one of my flights this year takes me from St. Maarten to Barbados . . . wasn’t I supposed to be going there when we started this . . . oh well never mind !

See you all in November at www.worldflight.com.au and don’t forget to hit “Donate Here” because that’s what it’s really all about !

And my own Simulator ? . . . it’s not such a collection of old computers anymore, it’s not as good as Matt’s but I’m catching him up . . . cheers mate !
<http://www.matthewlewisdisplays.co.uk/page100.html>

John Davis (PC)



Me as Captain (left) with my Sydney Harbour Flying Instructor "Roddez"