



Dee Bond and Kathy Haigh with the Catalina

Flying is an ongoing passion for Dee

It was during a holiday in Auckland that Dee Bond was first bitten by the 'flying bug.' She took a flight on Fred Ladd's Seabee from Mechanics Bay to Tryphena on Great Barrier Island in the mid '80s. "It captured my imagination completely. When we returned I drove straight to Ardmore where there was a Lake Buccaneer for sale – and bought it. It was a necessity – I was raised in Wellington and we had a home in the Marlborough Sounds and needed a direct way to get there. I learnt to fly and flew the LA4-200 from Paraparaumu, landing on the water in the Sounds. It was fantastic!"

From then on, it was all open skies for Dee, encouraged by her father Eric, a Kittyhawk pilot from WW11. Work was no obstacle to flying. While treasurer for a Wellington company Dee flew herself between branches. "I met others who also combined their business with their love of flying, including dentists and a doctor who flew to visit their patients. I have always wanted to fly for our national carrier, Air New Zealand, but the opportunities just weren't available. So it's ironic that I am currently working as Flight Instructor for a UK company based in Hamilton, training pilots for international airlines."

Dee was one of the founding members of the Catalina Club which brought the historic flying boat to New Zealand. "We were very excited to get Z-CAT – she was perfect, all ready to go in regard to taking people up to share the Catalina experience." For years Dee was the only female Catalina pilot and is now the only female Captain of a Catalina in the world. She graduated as a flying instructor, continuing her "ongoing passion" by flying

a Cessna 150 Aerobat. "I was introduced to Precision Flying and was part of a team of five to represent New Zealand at the World Precision Flying Championships in Texas in 1996, competing in the following years in New Zealand and Sweden. I also went to the first World Air Games in Turkey."

'Ferry flying' – delivering aircraft from place to place around the world included delivering an aircraft from New Zealand to England for the race from London to Sydney for Australia's Bi-Centennial celebrations. Dee was also one of the three international jurors for the race. Another ferry flight took her from Australia to the US in a Twin Comanche.

"Air racing is one of my major loves. These all-women trans-continental races are held each year across the United States. In 2003, 100 years of flight was celebrated by racing from Kansas to Kittyhawk. Racing is extremely intense, with fractions of points between the top 10. It's so close, a bit like yacht racing – completely addictive! I've finished in the top 10 for the past two years – last year I finished 6th. It's amazing flying over America – the scenery is spectacular, apart from striking thick fog over Maine! Others didn't finish that race but we were alright because we had weather radar on board – technology makes a huge difference. I am a member of the Airwomen's Association and look forward to their air rally each Queen's Birthday weekend. "Ultimately, my goal is to fly a jet and I want to get a helicopter licence for my 50th birthday. I know that I will be flying for an awfully long time – life is full of wonderful flying adventures."