



Yindi Newman lives in a house in Broome that was inspired by the houses on Cockatoo Island. It was on Cockatoo where she met her husband Pedro who had already built that house. This is not a love story about two people; it's a story about flying!

"I was studying teaching as I thought they had great holidays, that was attractive to me. In my third year at Uni they reduced our study time and I thought why not learn to fly. I had some money, as I'd worked for mining companies during my Uni breaks. It was about \$3,000 then for an initial private pilot's license. I had always wanted to fly helicopters or seaplanes. After I got my private license, I went cray fishing to earn enough to do my commercial license. I ended up choosing flying over teaching – though I did put a proposal to the Education Department about becoming a flying teacher for School of the Air – that never came to fruition", says Yindi.

"In 1991, I heard there was a flying job at Halls Creek so I drove out to Jandakot Airport where I abandoned my "yellow stickered" Austin 1800 and hitched a ride to Broome on a Kimberley Coast Airways aircraft. On arrival I immediately fell in love with Broome and never did get to Halls Creek", says Yindi

What did you do when you first came to Broome?

"When I arrived in Broome I stayed at The Last Resort Backpackers. Broome at that time had a North/South runway, (where Sandling Drive is now) plus an East/West runway. Each day I would take backpackers to the airport for a scenic flight. I think I got around 15 bucks for flying them! One day Steve Tucker asked if I'd take him and Nerrie and a few other locals for an extended flight over the Kimberley. Kimberley Coast Airways thought that was a flight that the more experienced Chief Pilot should do but lucky for me the Steve and the others decided they wouldn't fly unless I took them. After that Kimberley Coast Airways gave me a job!"

Tell me how flying has changed since you learnt?

"When I first started flying you'd do a flight plan, then go and have a good ol' yarn with the weatherman. Mostly the planes I flew had no navigational equipment so you'd just be flying with a compass and a map. Not long after that the weather offices were closed but it was possible to ring the met man and still have a good ol' yarn and then later the met man disappeared and you'd ring and get an automated voice, (who was never up for a chat) briefing you on the weather that you had to quickly write down as you heard it. Then with the arrival of the fax machine things became really modern, you'd dial a number, punch a few buttons and out of the machine would appear printed weather on that crazy paper that curled up and faded. Now a day the Internet is used for everything and GPS's and Ipads have made the navigational side of flying so much more accurate.

After a couple of years I was offered a job by a consort of station owners and locals including Peter and Pat Lacy from Mt Elizabeth to start up King Leopold Air and be based at Mt Elizabeth Station. I went to Adelaide to pick up the company aircraft and rather than fly from there direct to the station I detoured to Broome to grab a few belongings. On arrival back in Broome I ran into Pedro (my husband to be) who immediately asked for a years contract of flying Maxima Pearling Crew changes through Cockatoo Island. Within the day I also had picked up another contract with Clipper Pearls for their crew changes, so I never ended up at Mt Elizabeth."

Any memorable flights?

"Yes, I was asked to fly to Punmu once. No one seemed to know where it was back then – they just said it was out in

the desert somewhere. I rang Port Hedland RFDS and they said it was somewhere near Lake Dora (think salt not water). I got the chart out, found Lake Dora, so thought I would head off in that direction – they had mentioned that they had just built their first house. I found the dry salt lake but couldn't see any signs of a community. I flew around until I spotted a reflection from the roof of that single house, and landed on the airstrip that was quite away from the house I'd seen. On the edge of the airstrip was a shed that was full of paint tins and when I rubbed the dust off the top and it said Yilgara Aboriginal Community. I was beginning to think I should depart but nature's call had me in search of a bush where I was surprised to find a 44-gallon drum sunk in the ground with a toilet seat and a smiley face painted on the lid. Heading back to the plane I noticed a dust storm in the distance coming my way and no sooner a ute full of white smiling faces pulled up beside me. One person got out and hopped into the plane and off I flew back to Broome."

"I once hit a Mackerel when I was flying seaplanes. Coming into Kuri Bay in the Mallard a Mackerel jumped out of the water straight into my starboard prop – when I got out it was all mashed along the side of the plane. I put in a 225 form with CASA to report the fish strike and it took a couple of years before they got back to me and asked if that was for real!"

"An interesting phenomenon that I've seen in the air is a Double Circle Rainbow though I've never been able to take a decent photograph of it. It is magical."

What is your favourite plane?

"One of my jobs was to fly a Grumman Mallard for Paspaley to all of their pearl farms between Darwin and Broome. To have the privilege to fly a Mallard is the ultimate, it's been hard to top that. The Mallard is an older plane and only about 59 were ever built. They are a flying boat, so they land on their belly, they just don't make planes like that anymore. Seaplanes are awesome."

What are you doing now?

"These days I'm back flying out to Cockatoo Island during the spring tides where I offload my passengers to do an amazing day cruise to the Horizontal Falls and back. I see it as a bit of a retirement job – I love it. I would still love one day to fly helicopters but feel I've left it a bit late, as I don't have the career life left in me to make it profitable. "

If someone was going to give you a plane for a day where you would go?

"Christmas Island. Of course, I would have to have a decent plane with lots of fuel and a very generous person!"

So, what is the future?

"Once the kids leave home and are fully independent I can see Pedro and I travelling more of the world. We have always travelled with our children but last year we went to Vietnam and Cambodia – our first holiday without them and hired motorbikes and rode the Chinese Vietnamese border. It was the most free I have even felt. So good that I didn't want each day to end."