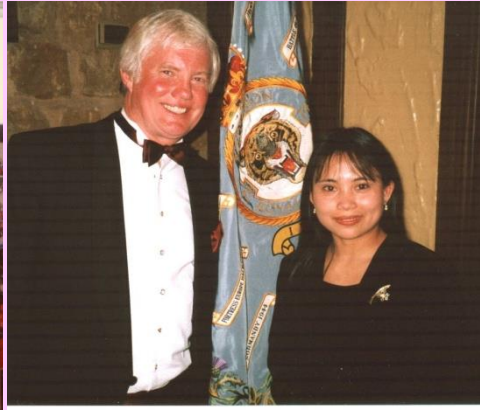


John (Tiger) Crow (ex Webmaster)



Our former webmaster John Crow lost his long and painful battle with cancer in April 2014, but it was a battle he fought courageously and inspirationally with his beloved Margie alongside him, fighting with him all the way. At times like those it is inevitable that you look back over the life that you have led and John certainly did that, a process which led to the publication of his autobiography 'Something to Crow About.' It was a title that was so very apt because John led a remarkably full, busy and adventurous life and I make no apologies for sharing the highlights of that life here (writes Bob Cossey). Some of them many of you will already know about. But my experience was that there was often something else that John would suddenly tell me that I was unaware of and I suspect that the same went for many of his fellow Tigers too.



The obvious place to start is with the 74(F) Tiger Squadron Association which is where I first met John and Margie when we reformed the Association in the early 1990s. From that time on they were both ever present. John's RAF career, having joined in February 1959, was very unusual in that it was spent, after training, with just one squadron, No.74. John reported for duty at RAF Coltishall when the Tigers were in the process of working up on the Lightning F.1, the first squadron to be so equipped. And thus began a love affair with this aircraft which endured until the very end and which, after leaving the RAF in 1970 having served ten years and still only 26 years of age, included playing a part in restoring a Lightning at Cranfield prior to its being flown out to South Africa: and more recently buying a spare Avon engine for the Lightning Preservation Group at Bruntingthorpe

where Thunder Runs are regularly held. John's name will soon be displayed on the cockpit sill of XS904 in recognition of his extreme generosity.

A few years ago John produced the following précis of his life as a Tiger. He wrote:

"When I joined 74 Squadron at Coltishall in 1960, having joined the RAF at a very early age I was actually too young to hold a 'mans' rank upon completion of my basic training and hence too young to be let loose on aircraft: so it happened that I was offered to the SWO's army, given a road sweeper, and set to work cleaning the streets of the officers married quarters. Fortunately I was rescued by the Station Commander's wife on the first day who immediately had me back on the squadron and working on those lovely shiny new aircraft under supervision. There are so many experiences that come to mind but two of note are firstly a near fatal motorcycle accident and, secondly, times spent in the WAAF block and evading detection!

The squadron's move to Leuchars was to bring new experiences and many new friends, but it was very hard work with many detachments, shift schedules and QRAs to contend with but which was not really a problem for a young single chap. In my spare time I would go off into the mountains, climbing and skiing. By now I had made the transition from motorcycles to cars and so became a very popular guy for trips to all manner of places, and with the girls of course. More adventures into the WAAF block followed and still I was never caught!

Then came Tengah. To ferry an entire squadron of Lightnings out to Singapore was a monumental logistics nightmare requiring in-flight refuelling and chaps being dropped off around the globe to maintain the aircraft en route. My stop off was Masirah, a small island off the coast of Muscat. I will always remember the hot air blast as I walked away from the aircraft, thinking it was from the aircraft, but soon realising it was the wind. Apart from working in extreme conditions we also had some fun. I 'borrowed' an old jeep and set off out into the desert to chase camels, but the suspension collapsed and a wheel came off, so we had to walk back, debating who would advise the MTO that his jeep was no more and sitting somewhere out 'there'. I was also privileged to see giant turtles lay their eggs during the night. I can also recollect saving the day with a temporary fix to send an aircraft on its way to Singapore, thus saving the necessity of flying equipment out to remove a hatch and engine. If memory serves me correctly, I had an altercation with the Engineering Officer - not a wise move really, but I was adamant and eventually proved to be correct.

In Singapore the most memorable experiences were perhaps cycling about sixteen miles to work every day; pickup taxis; unimaginable smells; the Long Bar in Raffles and the swimming pool at Tengah. During my detachment to Butterworth I was almost arrested for wearing flip flops and daring to question a snoop (military policeman) when he said in a very broad Australian accent 'ya can't walk around here with ya thongs on'. I advised him of my understanding of a thong which was the point at which I was nearly put in a cell. It seems there were some horrible creatures called bootlace snakes which took a liking to nibbling between young airman's toes, so I had to put my shoes on rather quickly.

Probably the most vivid memory of my entire nine years was to fly in a Lightning. The reheat take-off and subsequent climb was something I will never forget, even surpassing my flight in Concorde some years later.

The RAF and 74 Squadron undoubtedly gave me the opportunity in life to make good and led to many interesting career paths, each one building upon the initial experiences I gained during those early years."

There were snakes a-plenty in Singapore and Malaya and John found one!



**Two of the loves of John's life come together - Lotus cars and Lightnings (left).
In the cockpit at Bruntingthorpe in May 2013 (right).**

Asked to compile a list of his proudest achievements beyond his time in the RAF, John inevitably came up with a long one! Here are some of them in no particular order.

Climbing and expeditions to faraway places including to the summit of Mont Blanc and Base Camp Mount Everest where he met Sir Edmund Hilary. Expeditions wise he made it to Antarctica and to the actual North Pole where he proudly wore his Association sweatshirt (right).

Learning to fly which he described as a big challenge but a wonderful experience.

A very successful career in computers after his time in the RAF with IBM and Honeywell.

Working for the European Space Agency in Cannes, Holland and the USA with all the out of hours opportunities those places presented!

A very successful sales career with GADC where despite no previous sales experience John carried off the Salesman of the Year award both in the UK and Europe.

Becoming a director of two datacom companies.

Restoring Lotus cars. Association members John Yeo and Debbie Parker (below right) now own one of them - John was so pleased that it went to a very good home.



Another has gone on display at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon (above).

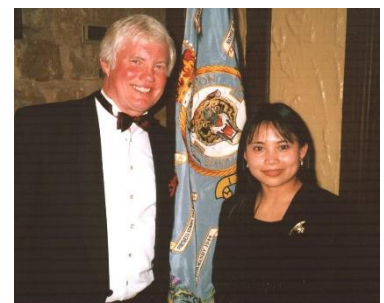


And of course, of huge benefit to the 74(F) Tiger Squadron Association was John's taking on the job of webmaster for our website. In true Tiger John fashion he approached this in bullish style having had no experience of designing and maintaining websites before. The result is what we have been enjoying and applauding for a long time now. It's the envy of other Association websites.



There is so much more that we could add to this. But all that we can say now is that we were all privileged to know John and that he was an inspiration to us all in the way he dealt with his illness. We will miss him.

Rest In Peace Tiger John



The last word from Tiger John...

A Website has been created by Martin Edwards in my memory. It is especially important for **ALL** men to read, as it could just save your life....