

Louis McQuade



Russ Allchorne writes a moving tribute to his friend and fellow Tiger, Louis McQuade, who died suddenly on the 26th September 2015.

The Tiger fraternity has lost one of its most enigmatic, talented and loyal fighter pilots following a fatal heart attack that none of us saw coming.

Louis was born on the 5th September 1954 in Scotland. The eldest of six children, he travelled extensively with his parents and spent the majority of his formative years in Kenya. Louis studied Humanities at university and was apparently the only child to send money back to his parents whilst he was there! Following university Louis joined the RAF and embarked on the career that would define his life and character. During his initial flying training, many of you who followed the BBC 'Fighter Pilot' series in the early eighties will have seen Louis feature as

he was part of the same pilot course as the pilots under the BBC spotlight. During his time at Basic Flying Training at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, it was rumoured that Louis managed to get himself banned from every Chinese restaurant in York for complaining about the food in one of the establishments! A taste of things to come maybe of Louis' endearing character? However, Louis successfully graduated to the front-line and was posted to the F-4 Phantom on 111 Squadron at RAF Leuchars.

After Leuchars and successful completion of the F-4 Qualified Weapons Instructor course, Louis was posted to the newly formed 74(F) 'Tiger' Squadron, flying the F-4J at RAF Wattisham. Louis was a passionate Tiger and stood out as one that epitomised the 'Tiger' spirit. This was without doubt one of Louis' finest tours of duty and defined his reputation as an officer, gentleman and an accomplished fighter pilot, a reputation that earned him selection for an exchange tour with the United States Marine Corps flying the F-18 Hornet in Hawaii after he finished on 74. Louis' time on the F-18 was notable for two main reasons: he saw active duty in combat in the first Gulf War and after returning from the war had to eject from an F-18 over the Pacific Ocean during a combat training mission. Both of these events were just seen as normal experiences for a seasoned fighter pilot as far as Louis was concerned.

At San Diego with a newly refurbished F-4J prior to the Tiger Trails back to RAF Wattisham.



Left to right: Louis McQuade, Selwyn Rodda, Jeff Yapp, Merv Paine, Ian Morrison and Noddy Morrison



Left. Louis, Steve Smyth and Ned Kelly (with a special -er- smile for the camera!)

On his return to the UK as a Squadron Leader Louis was posted to the Tornado F3 Operational Evaluation Unit (OEU) back at RAF Coningsby. It is fair to say that Louis' never warmed to the Tornado - who could? - and so his time on the OEU was characterised by mild frustration. That said, his professional outlook on all that he undertook never allowed his performance to diminish and he gave his all to the tasks that the OEU had to deliver upon.

With few operational options left for the RAF to offer Louis following his OEU tour and with the threat of being tied to a desk in a headquarters somewhere becoming more and more of a concern, Louis took the only sensible option left to him if he wanted to continue to fly and so he retired from the RAF to pursue his second aviation career in the commercial aviation sector. He started off by joining Airtours flying the MD-80 out of Manchester but was then soon recruited by Cathay Pacific

Airways where he remained until he retired, flying the Boeing 747-400 and then the Boeing 777 out of Heathrow and then Hong Kong. It was during this period of his life that Louis also formed a close friendship with Matt Potulski, of Hawker Hunter Aviation. Here Louis was able to keep his hand in flying Hunter jets in his spare time, not only as part of the company's contracted work but also on the display circuit around the UK and Europe.



Louis - First Officer on a Boeing 747-400

Louis remained with Cathay Pacific until one morning in 2013 when he suffered a series of near fatal heart attacks after a long tour away. Luckily he had just arrived home and so was surrounded by capable medical teams that could give him the medical attention he required. Regrettably Louis' condition following this event meant that he lost his aircrew medical and so could no longer fly. He retired from Cathay Pacific shortly afterwards.

After 18 months convalescing Louis returned to aviation, but this time as a ground school instructor at RAF Cranwell teaching avionics, performance and other technical subjects to multi-engine pilot students on No 45 Squadron. Again, in only a very short period of time, he became highly respected as an individual, an aviator and an all-round professional, a trait that he had never lost throughout his entire professional aviation career.

Louis always lived life to the full and it is fair to say that he achieved everything he set out to do in the time that he had. There are countless stories of Louis' more humorous traits, from jumping through first storey bedroom windows in order to scare a couple that were trying to have a peaceful weekend away, to falling asleep at a T-junction in his car (some years ago) due to being just a little bit too overcome by the influences of the drink that night, or to becoming completely and utterly comatose on over-proof rum at his niece's wedding in the Highlands of Scotland and not fully recovering until back at home in Lincolnshire some two days later!

Louis was always an incredibly determined man. He didn't do things because it was easy, he did them because he thought it was the right thing to do. Even from his early school days he apparently had always set his own standards and gone his own way. An old school friend of Louis' once said: 'while [he was] never part of the 'In crowd' that never bothered Louis. Strong willed and single-minded, he marched to the beat of his own drum, which was why, as I told him, it was no surprise to me that he achieved all his childhood ambitions and, as I have learned, he was such an outstanding pilot.'

Louis has left behind so many good friends and so many great memories. He leaves his wife Penny, an ex-RAF ATC Officer, whom he met whilst flying Phantoms in the Falkland Islands, three children Louis Jnr (now a student pilot in the RAF), Philip and Megan, a docile Springer Spaniel called 'Charlie' and a psychotic cat called 'Gerard'. He was always generous to a fault despite his dour Scottish character, loyal, a true friend to all that knew him, a consummate professional and an inspiration to others below him.

Philip, Louis' youngest son, asked him whether after cheating death quite so spectacularly the first time he had added anything to his 'bucket list' for the future. To travel more extensively? To see his grandchildren? Or to get involved more in politics....God forbid? His answer was that he had not: he had done everything he ever set out to achieve, there were no places he wanted to see that he hadn't already seen, no beer he hadn't already abused, no aircraft he wanted to fly that he hadn't already flown (he did have ambitions to fly a Spitfire but after nearly breaking a Mustang that put paid to that for him) and no more ATC personnel left that he had not already annoyed. Philip asked him if he ever wanted to see his grandchildren or see him graduate from any of the military academies. Louis replied that he already knew he would get there someday if he tried his best. And as for grandchildren, he knew Philip, Louis and Meg as kids and so why the hell he would want to go through that again was beyond him? Louis made it clear that if he died right now he would be happy. The fact he said that he had 'lived a great life and if he were to go, it would be as a happy man' has made Louis' passing so much easier for all of those that knew him.

If Louis could see us all now he would simply say 'I don't know what you're all so sad about, I'm perfectly happy up here!'

He will be sorely missed but never ever forgotten. Tiger, Tiger, Tiger!



Louis seen here with possibly an American F-18 pilot whilst on exchange in Hawaii.