



We also sadly have to say farewell to Phantom Tiger **Chris Laidlaw-Bell**, known to all as Laidback or simply L-B, who died at home in Florida after a long battle with cancer on the 26th October. His squadron colleagues were quick to pay moving tributes to him.

Cliff Spink said: 'It is an incredible privilege to command a fighter squadron but I was doubly lucky because I had people like Chris on the outfit. He was a total extrovert with a heart of gold. He was also an outstanding aviator: keeping an F-4 airborne when he had asymmetric flap on finals was just one example of his skill. I won't pretend that his antics out of the cockpit didn't keep me on my toes, but these were just fun and a sheer expression of his love of life. Leading the boys and diving off the top of a cruise steamer on the Italian lakes with a cry of 'come on boss don't be a sissy' for example. And later borrowing his cowboy boots for a formal dinner when my dress shoes went 'missing'! Despite the wild side he had an old-fashioned charm and was unfailingly courteous. He was popular and loved by the whole squadron family and will be desperately missed by everyone. L-B was not tall but he truly was a giant of a man.'

And from Russ Allchorne: 'Chris epitomised everything that a fast jet fighter pilot should be: measured aggression, humility, empathy, a vicious sense of humour and razor-sharp dexterity. But most of all a true sense of comradeship, friendship and team spirit. He had an enviable and annoying talent of making the task of flying a fighter jet look matter of fact and routine. Nothing could be further from the truth, but Chris was known as 'Laid Back' for a reason and he excelled in carrying this reputation off. He was loved by us all and no-one will forget him riding his motor bike down the taxiway in his swimming trunks in the middle of the British summer at RAF Wattisham when he should have been on alert next to his fully armed Phantom. A classic L-B moment! He will be desperately missed by us all. We loved him like a brother. Move on peacefully Chris. You will always be in our hearts and minds.'