

**Mike Rigg** hailed from Wallasey in Cheshire. He was born in June 1943 and often used to say that his parents lived at the end of the road beside the Wallasey TACAN. According to Mike his father pedalled the beacon round and his mother called out the bearings! Mike joined the RAF via South Cerney in the spring of 1966 along with another pilot destined for 74 Squadron, Russ Peart, and after initial training he gained his wings on Course 182 at RAF Acklington (which soon afterwards closed and became an open cast coal mine!) After completing the Gnat and Hunter courses at Valley and Chivenor respectively he moved on to Lightning Course 49 at Coltishall, graduating in the autumn of 1969 before arriving on 74 at Tengah on 14th October of that year. Mike brought his then wife Helen with him and also bought an old Ford Zephyr to get around Singapore. For those of a certain age, Mike's car was the model used in 'Z Cars' and for much of the time Mike would drive it as if he was on a police chase. There was one lovely occasion when he was going downtown with Helen alongside him and in the back were two Australian pilots down at Tengah on one of the regular 'Tiger Rag' detachments. As the car swept round a roundabout with the tyres squealing, Helen turned to the two in the back and said, quite innocently "...and he wonders why his balls are tired!" She couldn't understand why the three men collapsed with laughter!



On 12th August 1970 when night flying, Mike returned to the circuit only to find that his left main wheel would not lower and remained firmly in its stowage. Landing a Lightning with one mainwheel retracted was a 'no-no' and so Mike was sent off to the designated ejection area to

the east of Singapore Island beyond Changi. At 12,000ft he ejected and then almost fell through the harness when the stitching around the seat of the parachute failed after several years of pilots sweating profusely! He came down with the harness release box under his chin and many said afterwards that had he been a slim individual (Mike was built for comfort!) he might have slipped all the way through! Thankfully, apart from bruising to his thighs from the snatch as the harness failed, he was unhurt and returned to flying soon afterward. The Board of Inquiry formed and requested the salvage of the aircraft to ascertain the cause of the stuck wheel, only to be told that the designated ejection area had also been a designated ammunition dumping ground since the end of World War II, so any salvage attempt was swiftly abandoned.

After 74 disbanded in September 1971 Mike, along with three others - Nigel Holder, Roger Pope and Dave Roome - were posted to CFS at Little Rissington to become QFIs. While Nigel went on to instruct on the Jet Provost, the other three all went to Valley and instructed on the Gnat where Mike, along with his new wife Johanna (**Mike with Johanna pictured above**), joined 1 Squadron under Squadron Leader 'Boz' Robinson. This was Mike's last tour in the RAF. He retired in April 1976 and went to the civil aviation world and rose to be a captain on Cathay Pacific flying the Boeing 707 and 747-400 and Lockheed Tristar, ultimately becoming a Check and Training Captain.

In both military and commercial uniform Mike exhibited the same personal qualities. He was a punchy, quite outspoken character with a great love of life and family, always great fun to be with possessing as he did a great sense of humour. Good old-fashioned concepts of loyalty, integrity and honesty meant a great deal to him. He was of course a very skilled pilot and popular with his colleagues. He also had a great sense of adventure and this included racing cars for a while. Mike, together with 74's Trevor McDonald Bennett, was also in a group of predominantly ex-Cathay chaps who travelled most of Europe on large modern motorcycles. Mike predictably became a very popular and entertaining member of the group when he joined. He carried on riding big bikes until ill health intervened. A celebration of his life was held on December 16<sup>th</sup> at Newton Ferrers in a manner that Mike would most assuredly have approved of!

*With thanks to Dave Roome and Trevor MacDonald Bennett*

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