



Tasmanian Aviation Giants – The Holyman Family Part 5 – Flying for ANA, Innovations, New Ventures and the End of an Airline

Author: W. Dearing, March 2022

At the end of the Second World War, ANA was the major domestic airline. The Federal Government then establishing TAA in 1946 as a direct competitor. The post-war expansion of aircraft travel, in a tough commercial environment, placed a lot of strain on the operation of ANA. With the death of Sir Ivan Holyman in 1957, ANA had lost its leader and ANA was subsequently sold.



This is our final article in the series on the Holyman Family.

Flying for ANA

At the end of the Second World War, ANA employed 65 pilots, which had risen to 300 by the late 1940s. After the rapid growth of the company during its first ten years, the insecurity caused by the rise of TAA and the assault on the company by the Chifley Government had a greater impact on the pilots than any other group of ANA's workforce.

The concern over the future of the company was compounded by the fact that most pilots were young married men who wanted continuity in their employment. It was not surprising that with ANA entering a lengthy period of uncertainty, that pilots were tempted to gain more secure employment with TAA, Qantas, or even overseas airlines like Cathay Pacific and Swissair.

The constant drain of pilots meant ANA was continually recruiting and training new pilots through the 1950s. Although there was constant turnover of pilots at the junior level, the experience of the airline's senior pilot's ranks was probably greater than any airline in the world. ANA Management showed great consideration to long serving pilots who found it difficult to adapt to the changing requirements of airline flying during the late 1940s and early 1950s, many of whom were moved sideways to some of the company's plum ground jobs.

With the new bigger planes that operated after the War, the role of the pilot was restricted to time in the cockpit. Nonetheless the old style still lived on to some extent in the DC-3 services to the outback. With the DC-3s flying slow and low, the pilots would often perform many a detour for passengers to enjoy the sights. Due to the intimate nature of this aircraft the airline's instructions to the captain was "to go back and chat to the passengers during the flight" meaning the pilots were involved with the passengers far more than they are today.



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File photo of the iconic ANA DC 3 VH – ANH Tulluna

Innovations

ANA always prided itself on its role as an aviation pioneer. (Some of these achievements are listed at the end of the article).

This enthusiasm for innovation remained strong throughout the life of ANA as they pioneered many new systems and methods, particularly in the field of air freight.

Freight became a major part of ANA's culture and was particularly strong in Tasmania, where the absence of road competition and frequent industrial disruption to sea transport placed air freight in a very favourable position.



Australian National Airways Freighter Service Van

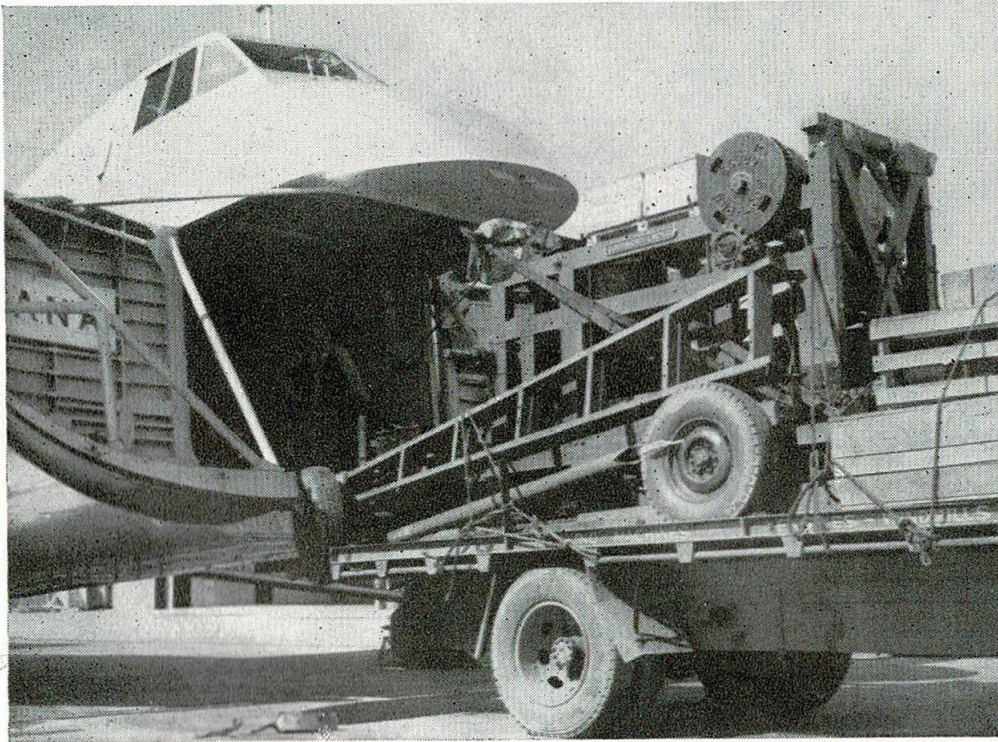
Launceston freight supervisor, and later airport manager, Ron Roach recalls that freight became an enormous business for ANA in Tasmania. The airline worked closely with the textile industry and filled the Launceston hangars with wool bales and wool from Coats Patons, blankets from Waverly Woollen Mills and goods from other textile businesses in Launceston. In the mid 1950's Coats Patons was sending up to 200,000 cartons of wool to the mainland annually.

But the freight business didn't stop there. Their innovative attitude resulted in the construction of special pens and facilities that enabled the airline to carry horses, sheep, and cattle to shows and sales on the Australian mainland. ANA also would fly ice cream into Tasmania for Peters and additionally the Wander company-chartered flights for Ovaltine from Devonport.



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After a humble beginning in 1947 when one car was carried to Launceston on a Bristol Freighter by the airline, by the mid-1950s ANA was bringing 100 cars a month into Launceston, such was the enormity and diversity of the air freight business.



Australian National Airways recently flew this water-boring plant weighing 5 tons 5 cwt. to King Island, in the Bass Strait, in a Bristol freighter. The machinery will be used by the Land Settlement Board to develop irrigation schemes on new farms

The amount of freight carried by the airline in the post war years grew at an incredible rate from 3,500,000 lbs in 1944/45 to almost 100,000,000 lbs in 1956/57. The revenue from the air freight was estimated to be over 30% of ANA's income, while being only 14% of the revenue for TAA.

Another of ANA's innovations was the introduction of helicopters to Australian aviation. The first Bristol Type 171 Sycamore helicopter was test flown by Captain Max Holyman in Hobart on 11 May 1956. The helicopter was used for a wide variety of purposes including surveys, crop seeding and spraying, lifting people and machinery into remote areas. In October 1956 and again in March 1957, the ANA helicopter performed lifesaving extractions moving injured Tasmanian patients quickly and safely to hospital.



File photo of ANA's Bristol Type 171 Sycamore helicopter VH – INO (Yarrana) at Tasmania's Queenstown airport

ANA's pursuit of excellence pervaded in every area of the company's operations. Even though the financial situation of the company worsened, the reaction was to invest more in the business. From the introduction of a fleet of sixty ground transport coaches, the purchase of five DC-4 aircraft (which by now were flying the major trunk routes), refurbishing of airport lounges, new buildings for the technical divisions at Essendon and the development of the ANA travel service.

One of the largest and most innovative investments was made in the late 1940s, the teletype system that was used in Operations, Reservations and Administration.

Although Ivan Holyman often retained loyal workers from the airline's early years, he was aware of the need to attract quality executives. His solution was long term, rather than short-term, by instituting a management cadet scheme to train young executives, with one or two being appointed each year.

The Post War Business Environment

The post-war Chifley government was determined that post-war Australian aviation would be a state monopoly and ANA now faced severe competition in the form of the state-owned airline Trans Australian Airlines (TAA) which was created in 1946.

Prior to TAA's arrival, ANA had enjoyed a near monopoly on domestic air transport.

From the viewpoint of history, it is generally agreed that TAA was a better run airline that made better choices of aircraft than ANA.



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Ivan Holyman stuck to his relationship with Douglas by buying the non-pressurised DC-4 whilst TAA opted for the revolutionary pressurised Convair. Later Holyman's loyalty to Douglas again was apparent when he bought the pressured DC-6B, while TAA bought the Vickers Viscount turbo prop aircraft.



ANA DC-4, VH-ANB "Lackrana"

ANA was floated as a public company in 1949 and the tough competitive aviation market did not result in a profit being recorded until 1954/55.

In 1956 Ivan Holyman was knighted for his services to aviation and it appeared that ANA had recovered from the losses of previous years, but the stability was an illusion and short lived.

Toward the end of the 1950's TAA had driven ANA close to collapse. Holyman himself wanted to expand overseas but the government's ownership of Qantas prevented this so he bought shares in Cathay Pacific and Air Ceylon.



File photo of ANA DC-6B Kurana



The End of the Airline

The end of ANA is the subject of much misunderstanding and misconceptions, but it is generally accepted by knowledgeable people that the reason for the demise was one key event, then death of Sir Ivan Holyman on the 18th of January 1957 whilst holidaying in Honolulu, at the age of 60 years. The company was a product of his imagination, drive, skill and experience.

He was indeed an enigma in Australian business. He was a man of charm, vitality and a sense of fun who believed in the old-fashioned values of loyalty and trustworthiness and as a result he had a close and almost paternalistic relationship with the staff of ANA.

His feeling towards Tasmania sometimes overrode his business sense. He maintained his home in Launceston always voting in his home city and when travelling overseas and asked where he was from, he would always reply “Tasmania.” The airline gave far higher priority to Tasmania than the volume of business warranted. The first helicopter was based in Hobart for many months and the first DC-6B was flown to Tasmania to “*show it off*”.

Following the death of Sir Ivan Holyman, the shareholders offered to sell out to the Australian Government to merge with TAA and smaller airlines, an offer the government declined. The ANA board then commenced negotiations with Reginald Ansett of Ansett Airways and finally on 03 October 1957, ANA was sold to Ansett for £3.3 million pounds.

Ansett – ANA was formed on 21 October 1957 and the ANA name was retained until 1968 when the airline was renamed Ansett Airlines of Australia. The contribution made to the airline by ANA and Sir Ivan Holyman was quickly forgotten.

Whereas the history of TAA, Ansett and Qantas have been analysed in minute detail the history of Australia’s first modern airline, its creator and its people have been either distorted or ignored.

“Sadly, ANA is truly the forgotten giant of Australian aviation.”



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IVAN HOLYMAN was an Elizabethan—at least he would have liked to have been! A modern Sir Francis Drake or Sir Walter Raleigh, ranging in search of the enemy. Engaging in ventures and enterprise. A Knight tilting for a cause, too, and taking victory or defeat with his characteristic laugh.

In his career what he will be most remembered for was championship of free enterprise, and his practice of it, not only in aviation, but in numerous business ventures mostly in his native Tasmania, and which he pushed with his characteristic energy.

He represented one swing of the pendulum. An uncompromising entrepreneur, he fought for the free rights of business, and championed this cause at a critical period—at a time when the pendulum swung hard in the opposite direction.

In commercial aviation Ivan Holyman will be remembered for his refusal to admit defeat after the death of his brother Victor and tragic aircraft losses in Bass Strait in the early nineteen thirties, and when the present A.N.A. was formed.

Despite these crushing setbacks, he went on, with his colleagues on the Board of A.N.A., to introduce the now-famous Douglas aircraft to Australia, and for the first time give Australian capital cities the type of service we have today, complete with air hostess and meals in the air. With the application of business principles to the enterprise, A.N.A. went from strength to strength till it became the great airline that it is today.

Ivan Holyman will be sadly missed from the Australian scene, but what he stood for and what he accomplished at a critical time in Australia's development will always be remembered, and passed on to those who will follow him in the tradition and the pioneering spirit of that great character, the original Captain Holyman, and of Holyman Bros.

HUDSON FYSH,
Chairman,
Qantas Empire Airways Ltd.,
Sydney.

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A Tribute to Sir Ivan Holyman, from another Tasmanian Aviation Giant,
Sir Hudson Fysh, the co-founder of Qantas.

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ANA – SOME OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS and ADVERTISING

- In 1936 ANA introduces the first DC - 2 aircraft into Australia.
- The same year saw the employment of Miss Rita Grueber of Hobart and Miss Blanch Due of Melbourne as Australia's and ANA's first air hostesses.
- In November 1939 "Matron Hazel Holyman" took over the role of hostess superintendent of 18 hostesses with that number growing to almost 200 on her retirement in 1955.
- ANA's belief in, and dedication toward, safety produced the reputation of having one of the finest engineering and instrument repair shops in the world pioneering many new methods.
- 1936 saw the purchase of the Victorian Flying School to train commercial pilots to ANA's high standards. The barnstorming days for pilots were over with ANA requiring First Officers to have a minimum of 1000 flying hours before being part of their aircraft's crew.
- By the mid 1940's ANA was carrying 80% of passengers, 80% of Air Mail and 86% of air freight carried on commercial aircraft.





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- ANA were the first Australian airline to provide both pilots and hostesses with uniforms.
- ANA introduced auto pilots, co-pilots and radio compasses, air to ground radios and many new flight and navigational aids to ensure increased safety.
- ANA's second DH 86 (VH - URT) was named "Loina" starting a practice that saw all of ANA's aircraft carrying a one-word Australian aboriginal name.
- Employees in 1936 totalled 80 but by mid-1940's this number had grown to almost 4000.
- Late 1940, saw the introduction of the revolutionary "*teletype*" system to handle reservations and operational matters and by 1951 the system covered 4300 miles, had 50 machines and 90 operators throughout Australia.
- 1950 saw the introduction of Australia's first commercial helicopter.
- Between 1945 and 1949 ANA boasted not only the largest internal network in the world but also became the world's 9th largest airline.
- The early 1950's saw another innovation in the establishment of the ANA Travel and Holiday Centres the forerunner of today's travel agents.

