

JIM BRIERLEY INTERVIEW



AN INTERVIEW
WITH
AUSTRALIA'S
OLDEST
ACTIVE
SKYDIVER

**With Top POP Downunder, Ian (Robbo) Robertson
Aerial photos by Shane Sparkes**

Robbo: This may be your last chance to get some non-posthumous publicity in a skydiving magazine, how do you feel about that?

Jim: Pretty damn good actually.

Robbo: Our spies tell us you were born in a foreign country, were a presenter on the ABC, and refused to wear ties even at the height of your career in business. Is this all true? Tell us a bit about yourself. Less than 500 words please Jim.

Jim: Gee Rob, there's a lot to fit in....oh, well, I'll summarize for you:

Born 1924 in Lahore, Pakistan.

Joined British army as a boy soldier (Royal Engineers) 1939.

Completed parachute course at Kabrit, Egypt in 1942. Became a parachute engineer.

Served in Middle East, North Africa and Central Mediterranean finishing up in Italy at the end of the European War.

Returned to UK in 1945. The Squadron disbanded and I was transferred to East Africa. Purchased release from the Army in 1948.

Moved to Uganda for a construction company in 1949 and later joined British Colonial Service.

Left for Australia 1963 some months after Uganda became independent (Collected Uganda Independence Medal to add to wartime gongs.)

First job in Australia was with the ABC as an announcer. Second job was with Monash University working as an assistant to the Buildings Officer developing the new campus.

Joined Australian Wool Board as Property Director. AWB became Australian Wool Corporation from which I retired in 1985.

Robbo: Did you get any kickbacks?

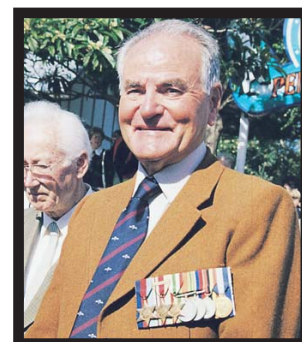
Jim: That's wool, Rob, not wheat.

Robbo: When and where did you do your first parachute jump? Who was your course instructor, at what DZ and when did you start jumping in Australia?

Jim: My last jump was in 1944. My first wife died in 1982 and in 1983 I decided to become a skydiver. I started at Labertouche under Claude Gillard. Several jumps and accidents later Claude relocated to Pakenham and I was absorbed in to the Commando Skydivers. The Commandos have since relocated to Tooradin and I have now amassed a total of a few jumps short of 2800.

Robbo: You have been touted as the oldest living fossil, er, skydiver still jumping in Australia. Is that true? Do you know of many/any jumpers your age or older?

Jim: I am, apparently, the oldest active skydiver in Australia, assuming, of course that George Craig, who has been a static line jumper for many years over in WA, and is nearly 10 years older than I am, is no longer active.



JIM BRIERLEY INTERVIEW

"During a TV interview in the mid 1990s, explaining his gear piece by piece, he stopped at his AAD installed, paused, and with the slightest hint of disdain (and notably not explaining the item to the viewers) said, "and this is a cypres, in case I can't hack it!" **Shane Sparkes**

Robbo: Do you want us to take out a contract on him?

Jim: Sounds tempting...

Robbo: What have been your best, most memorable skydiving experiences so far?

Jim: Memorable jumps I recall were a high altitude jump at Pakenham; a jump into Wadi Rum in Jordan (where Lawrence of Arabia was filmed); an accuracy jump at the Masters Games when, for the one and only time in my skydiving career, I scored a zero-zero; a jump into the MCG on the eve of the AFL Grand Final; a 4-way in Canada with other over-seventies and creating a world record; a roundie jump into the Hazelwood Power Station Cooling Pond; a night jump for my Night Star Crest from 12,000ft and all docked by 9,000ft; and my 80th birthday jump at Toogoolawah's Equinox Boogie with eighty other jumpers who kindly agreed to jump with me.

Robbo: Jim, we thought you were paying for that jump!

Jim: There was also the jump, organised by Dave Benson, into the International Airshow at Laverton.

Robbo: And your worst malfunction, off DZ landing, accident or injury?

Jim: Less than memorable jumps were having to cutaway from a canopy rigged back-to-front and opening my reserve at a very low altitude; jumping into a winery in the Yarra Valley for Alan Stevens and stuffing things up by coming in downwind and finishing up in the local hospital; cutting away over Tooradin and landing in the middle of the freeway; various jumps by which I incurred bone fractures including a broken back.

Robbo: What? No unintentional water, or should I say, mangrove jumps?

Jim: Haha, yes and that one.

Robbo: How many times do you reckon you have lied to Barbara when you have been laid up in hospital as a result of a parachuting incident, while she was overseas or interstate?

Jim: Never! I would never do anything like that.

Robbo: You have been the subject of many, many TV and radio interviews and newspaper articles over the years. For example, there was the night of the Masters Games in Melbourne in 1995 when you were interviewed by radio 3AW on your mobile and we had to tell the crowd to be quiet because you couldn't hear the interviewer; and there was the interview with that attractive lady for the Channel 9 Today program, at Toogoolawah on the

"I personally remember seeing Jim on my first jump course. He was shutting down his canopy all the way down. My first jump instructor shook his head while describing this old fart, known as "Mad Dog". Well, I'm not sure if that tag ever stuck, but Jim kept shutting down his canopy like that for a few more years until he moved down to smaller canopies. We all still shake our heads, but the man is truly a living treasure in our sport." **Kelly Graham**



occasion of your 80th birthday jump - did Dave McEvoy deliberately stuff up the spot so you would be the only one to land within coo-ee of her? Jim, how many bloody interviews and articles have you had? What one stands out for you?

Jim: I have been interviewed many times by the media but only on the basis of my age and certainly not my skill as a skydiver.

Robbo: That's true – just kidding! Jim, you have certainly proven yourself a competent skydiver, you didn't have any trouble docking onto rel jumps at the last POPS Meet this year.

Robbo: You are a member of POPS, SOS, JOS and JOE. Will we see you as the first Aussie to be a JON?

Jim: Through the POPS (Parachutists Over Phorty Society) organisation, I am now recognised as a member of their sub-set, Jumpers Over Eighty, having previously been a Skydiver Over Sixty and a Jumper Over Seventy. I hope, in course of time, to become a Jumper Over Ninety.

Robbo: Jim, mate, we can only hope so.

Robbo: With your years of experience, both in the sport and of life generally, what advice would you give to a) the people who currently run skydiving in Australia?

Jim: Renew my licence.

Robbo: b) Jumpers who have already turned 40, or are about to turn 40 and are fearful of joining POPS?

Jim: You think that's bad, wait'll you are about to turn 80!

Robbo: c) Any CI or DZSO who tries to curtail your skydiving?

Jim: Don't even try....

Robbo: What does Jim Brierley do outside of skydiving? Are there plans for the future that don't involve jumping out of perfectly good aircraft?

Jim: When I do decide to give up jumping I hope I will be fit enough to continue with golf or even bowls. For that you've got to be really old!



Gordon Turner, Pete Hannaford, Jim Brierley, Norm Hocking & Graham Burgess

Robbo: If you could do it all again what would you do differently?

Jim: Not a damn thing, actually.

Robbo: Who do you admire, or would like to be?

Jim: Myself, who else?! How many people do you know who've had an accuracy competition named after them?! If pressed for an answer... certainly not John Denver!

Robbo: Any regrets, missed opportunities, things you'd rather not have happened insofar as skydiving is concerned?

Jim: Skydiving has given me many years of pleasure and I hope that it will continue to be regarded as a sport for young and old. I would have liked to have jumped from 35,000ft and been part of a group creating a new Australian record. I would have liked to have been skilled enough to be involved in a new POPS formation record. I have jumped out of many different types of aircraft, gliders and balloons but not yet out of a 727. That would be fun.

Robbo: Jim, you are an inspiration to skydivers everywhere.

Jim: I hope I have been able to inspire older people to take up jumping, even though, in some cases, it has been a tandem jump.

What the Tooradin jumpers have to say about Jim:

- He's on every load that he can get on, rain hail or shine.
- He supports all club and APF activities.
- He may well be an old bugger, but he's always there pushing the plane in the hangar at the end of the day while others are too busy drinking.
- He rings the DZ every weekend to check the weather before coming down (lives an hour away on Phillip Island) and even if it's bad he comes down anyway.
- He's a member of the Lounge Burgers (a bunch of Tooradin POPS who 'do lunch and lattes' at the local café in between jumps). They even had their own jumpers made with 'Lounge Burgers' written on them.
- He always does a few Hop'n'Pops every weekend, weather permitting, or if the Lounge Burgers are around they might do 4-way.
- He takes about 5 minutes to get up, turn around and get into exit position in the Cessna these days, so you have to spot short.
- He is an absolute gentleman and an outrageous flirt, but does it with such class that all the women love him.
- DZSOs are scared of him!



Spirit

www.spiritskysports.com



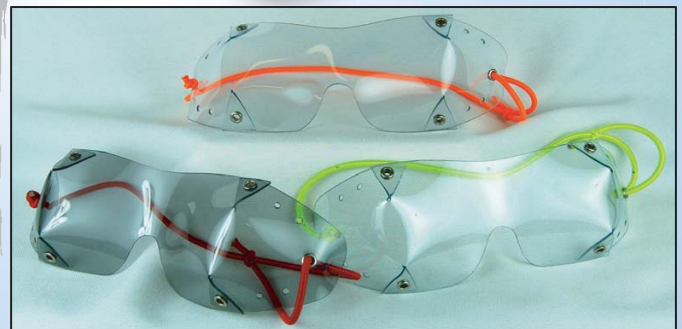
Custom made Jumpsuits

New Ultrastrong Fabrics
freely camera relwork
pants skysurf freestyle

23 Hackett St Ultimo NSW 2007
Ph:02 9281 3558 Fx:02 9281 4224
mickle1@iinet.net.au

Razorflex

Goggles



\$20 EACH

PACK OF 10 - \$170

OVER-GLASSES GOGGLES - \$25 EACH

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER ENDS JUNE 30TH

ph: 0432 209 380 email: jason@razorflex.com

Razorflex goggles are manufactured using the highest quality polished plastics for distortion free viewing. These low profile goggles have a soft comfortable lens that fit your face perfectly and can be folded and stored without cracking or crazing. Razorflex adds long lasting, 'slide-lock' bungee strap for superior comfort and adjustment with ease. Available in clear or tint.

• UV STABILIZED • AUSTRALIAN MADE