

## **Oral History Program: Biographical Notes**

**K.N.E. (Bill) BRADFIELD (1910 - )**

### **Civil Engineer**

- Birth & Family:** Born 25<sup>th</sup> December 1910 in Gordon, Sydney. Father an engineer, mother a teacher. Youngest of 6 children, 4 brothers, 1 sister.
- Education:** Attended Gordon Public School 1916-1921, then Sydney Church of England Grammar School ("Shore") 1922-1928. Sydney University 1929-1933.
- Qualifications:** B.Sc 1932, BE 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours 1934
- Memberships:** FIEAust.
- Awards:** Rhodes Scholarship, Oxford 1935-38  
25<sup>th</sup> Edward Warner Award, 1991, the highest award in the world of civil aviation. Presented by Dr Assad Kotaite, President of the International Civil Aviation Organisation Council (ICAO) in recognition of Dr Bradfield's eminent contribution to the development and provision of the technical and operational requirements of the ground-based infrastructure of international civil aviation.
- Work History:** Following graduation, Bradfield worked in his father's company, Dr J.J. Bradfield & Son, on design of the Brisbane River Bridge in Queensland and studied Law at night. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford 1935-38 and during his third year there was able to further his interest in the development of airports when he worked for Norman & Dawbarn of London who specialised in airport planning and design. While with this company he worked on Birmingham Airport and designed and supervised construction of the Airport at Guernsey. Bradfield joined the Oxford University Squadron in 1935 and obtained his pilot's licence in 1936.
- Bradfield returned to Australia in July 1939 and was offered a position in the the Bureau of Industry in Brisbane designing flood gates for the Stanley River Dam, however following the outbreak of World War 2 in September of that year, he was transferred to the Department of Main Roads in Queensland to help design extensions to airports at Bowen, Mackay, Rockhampton and Bundaberg.
- Shortly afterwards Bradfield joined the Department of Civil Aviation as an Aerodrome Inspector, and together with another engineer (Norman Fricker) faced the task of getting 22 airfields operational as soon as possible. Bradfield was later appointed to take over the development of aerodromes in Queensland, New South Wales, part of Victoria and the Northern Territory, during which time he worked closely with the RAAF in the development of aerodromes in capital cities and on 'ferry' routes; he also helped establish flying-boat bases in New Caledonia and Portuguese Timor in 1939 and 1940.
- In 1945 Bradfield was appointed Chief Airport Engineer, a position that involved the preparation and planning of airports. The following year he was asked by the Director General of Civil Aviation to prepare a master

plan for Sydney Airport in conjunction with the Department of Works. Bradfield was also on the committee involved in the town planning for post-war reconstruction of Darwin.

Bradfield was appointed Australian Representative on the Council of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada, from 1947-1952, and was a member of its Air Navigation, Air Transport and Administrative Committees as well as Chairman of the Joint Support Committee. This latter Committee had the responsibility (together with the Secretariat) for the development and administration of such projects as the Ocean Weather Station Ships in the North Atlantic. At that time, the ICAO dealt with matters that covered the whole spectrum of civil aviation.

The members of the Council worked very well together under the leadership of Dr Edward Warner and during those first five years produced 14 out of the 18 Annexes which exist at the present time, as well as producing Regional Air Navigation Plans for all over the world.

During his time with the Council, Bradfield took the opportunity to learn as much as he could about airport development in North America; this involved travelling within the United States and Canada and keeping in close touch with Australian offices in New York, Washington and Ottawa. As the only Australian 'official' in Montreal at that time, Bradfield was also called upon to occasionally perform 'unofficial' Consular duties.

Bradfield returned to Australia in 1952, where he spent the next 16 years with the Department of Civil Aviation before his second appointment in 1968 as Australian Representative on the Council of International Civil Aviation Organisation. In this second period, new subjects were dealt with, such as unlawful interference of aircraft, aircraft noise, and systems planning. Bradfield and his wife also visited meteorological communication stations in Iceland and Greenland.

Returning to Australia in 1972 Bradfield retired briefly, then accepted an appointment as Civil Aviation Adviser to the Papua New Guinea Administration, to help with the transition of civil aviation activities from Australia to Papua New Guinea in preparation for that country's forthcoming independence; the position included being Controller of Civil Aviation. He also had an advisory role with the Papua New Guinea Delegations to the General Assemblies of ICAO in 1977, 1980 and 1983.

In 1978 Bradfield was appointed to the ICAO List of Arbitrators and remained on this List until 1988. The List of Arbitrators was set up to resolve any disputes that might arise between two of the contracting states of ICAO regarding anything involved in, or operations covered by, the Chicago Convention. From inception to the time of the interview, the List of Arbitrators has not had to be used.

A very proud moment came for Bradfield in 1991 when he was awarded the Edward Warner Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the safe and orderly development of civil air transport – only the second Australian to receive such an honour. In his acceptance speech, Bradfield dedicated the award to his wife, Jeannette.