

Captain Clambacks Second Voyage of Discovery into the Pacific

Having survived a night ditching and prolonged sea immersion East of Hawaii in 1999 to be rescued by a determined US military and a passing ocean freighter, veteran ferry pilot Ray Clamback has been forced to ditch a Cessna 182 to the SW of Hilo.

This current forced landing could have had worse consequences as the high wing aircraft flipped onto its back on touch down requiring the 67 year old pilot to evacuate the machine without his life raft. An accompanying aircraft flown by Lyn Gray stayed over the ditching scene until forced on by fuel requirements but could not see Clamback who had floated some distance from the impact point in his life jacket.

Aminta Hennessy flying a Cessna Caravan on the same route transmitted and raised the US Coast Guard via San Francisco airlink. A United States search & rescue aeroplane from Hawaii finally located Clamback in the water and dropped a life raft from which he was located and picked up by a ship en-route to Melbourne, Australia.

The aircraft, a Cessna 182R series fitted with the Lycoming IO-540 engine and registered VH-DDS, had a total time of 600 flight hours and was to be delivered to a Brisbane owner. It had been collected in Seattle and flown down to Torrance, a suburb of Los Angeles for tanking. The Cessna 182 in which Lyn Gray flew was a new machine out of Wichita.

During the flight from Seattle no

evidence of excessive oil consumption or any other mechanical problem was observed. As is customary during its ferry tank installation the aircraft would be assessed for any signs of fluid leakage or mechanical soundness.

The aircraft departed Santa Barbara for Hilo in the Hawaiian island chain for the longest leg of a Pacific crossing and after a lengthy but uneventful flight the aircraft arrived 15 hours later without any sign of mechanical malfunction.

Departing Hilo at 0620 hrs on October 4th for the 1068 nm and approximately 8 hour flight to Christmas Island the Cessna 182 was 600 nautical miles from Hilo when Clamback noted rough running. He said that falling oil pressure followed by engine seizure caused the subsequent dramatic chain of events that so closely resemble his first near disastrous night ditching.

On this occasion the high wing aeroplane upon contacting the water in a one to one and a half metre swell, went over onto its back and with the Cessna rapidly filling with water Ray made a speedy exit. However in the haste to avoid going under with the aeroplane, he could not reach the life raft and found himself for the sec-



Captain Ray Clamback

ond time floating in the Pacific with only a life jacket for support. It is probably fortunate that Clamback was using the expanding "bag" ferry system that Ray prefers which is less likely to break away on impact and crush the pilot as has previously happened with metal ferry tanks.

After 6 and a half-hours floating in the water he was located by elec-

tronic means from a US military C130 which, upon its second attempt managed to drop a life raft with a parachute trailing line thus allowing Ray to drag the raft and he together. A long 9 hour, wet night followed.

The cargo liner P & O Nedlloyd ship "Los Angeles" was notified and steamed many hours to an exact rendezvous where a genuinely

caring and skilled crew positioned the huge vessel close to the life raft and assisted Ray Clamback aboard. The Captain offered to divert to drop his guest off at one of the many islands en route, Ray elected to go to the ships destination of Melbourne reckoning that to recuperate from prolonged immersion would take many days of rest.

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