

Message from Rev Len Wilmington

The End of an Era

Marie and I served as the McKay Patrol Padre from January 1997 till January 2004.

I was appointed mainly because I already had a Commercial Pilots License, not because of any religious expertise that I had. Our records show that in that time we flew nearly 3,000 hours total and drove 50,000kms per year in our own 4wd. Also, we had to supply our own vehicle. The McKay Patrol area was as large as Germany.

We received no funds except a stipend of \$30,000 per year. All maintenance on the aircraft and our 4wd had to be supplied by ourselves. Here is where Marie (my wife) shined. Every month she sent over 100 monthly reports to various churches and individuals. She NEVER asked for funds. She just told tales of our adventures, and she told every gift-giver exactly what their money had bought. For example, a pensioner in Bega sent a cheque for \$10.00 and Marie informed her that her gift had bought 3 O-rings for the latest service on the aircraft. In her mind that giver now owned part of the aircraft. Our records show that Marie raised over \$20,000 per year this way. When we left the aircraft was fully serviceable and there were enough funds for a new propellor when required.

We had a lovely 7 years and I “hatched”, “matched” and “despatched” all over our patch. The then Mt Isa School of the Air allowed us to be deeply involved with them, and we volunteered to take teachers for remedial training to the outlying properties.

The call-sign of the aircraft. Mike Juliet Zulu, was referred by many as **Much Joy and Zeal**, and that was what we felt as we did the Lord’s work. We learnt very early that, in the bush, you do not run around with a Bible in your hand spouting the Gospel but live the Christian life as an example to others.

Leonard and Marie Wilmington - 20 Nov 2025