

record of their smaller airlines. Jack was very interested. After a few phone calls the job was his. He remained in Fiji six years and managed to make it a world leader in civil aviation.

This came about due to an incident six months into his contract. He ran into an old friend, Grant Biel, at Auckland airport while picking up an aircraft to ferry to Fiji. Grant showed him an early GPS receiver (a first for Jack) and loaned it to him for his flight. What a marvelous stroke of good fortune that turned out to be.

Halfway to Fiji his fuel pump burned out (someone had installed a 12volt pump in a 24volt aircraft). Jack was unable to transfer fuel from his ferry tank to the mains, leaving him unable either to carry on or go back. His only option was a detour to Raoul Island, which had an emergency landing strip. Jack wasn't confident of being able to find this dot of land. However it so happened the airstrip had been built by Grant Biel, and because of this Grant had programmed the island's coordinates into the GPS. Jack believes he would never have found the place otherwise. After refueling at Raoul he flew on via Tonga to Nandi.

This experience convinced Jack that the Global Positioning System was the answer to navigational problems. The GPS had been developed for the US military and was still something of a state secret, but Jack was determined to introduce it to Fiji. After many battles with bureaucrats saying things like, "You can put the receivers in your aircraft but you must not use them to navigate with," the Americans agreed to supply enough receivers to fit all the aircraft in Fiji (there were 15).

After the standards were written, rules drawn up and a data collection system established to enable the standards to be updated, Fiji became the first country in the world to approve the use of GPS in civil aircraft.

At the end of his time there, Jack added yet another nation to his CV — Mongolia, where he spent six months teaching the local aviation industry the merits of GPS and enjoying the diverse cultures there. As a direct result of his GPS knowledge, Jack was offered several employment opportunities, accepting one with Airways Consulting Limited, a subsidiary of Airways Corporation of New Zealand, helping sell GPS systems around the world while supporting his Mongolian project. It didn't work out, and Jack parted company with them after he returned to New Zealand.

Still giving grass no chance to grow, Jack next went to Tonga as Director Civil Aviation. This was funded as a New Zealand aid project, and he helped there with the introduction of GPS. Tonga had rather limited aviation facilities, most of them sponsored by foreign governments. With only six airfields and a dozen pilots, work was rather limited.

Jack recalls one example of how the system worked in Tonga. An airfield needed a new terminal. Upon completion with the help of foreign aid, it was decided a second terminal should be built solely for use by the king. This was done, again with foreign aid. When time came for the official opening, the grass at the airfield needed cutting, but there was no

money left in the coffers to buy fuel for the tractor.

Next in Jack's global career came the Maldives, a Muslim country situated SSW of India. It is made up of about 1,200 coral islands with a population of some 300,000. His role there was to help the Civil Aviation Department, and involved upgrading the flight operations inspectorate and training aviation inspectors. With only five land based airfields, much of the flying round the islands was by floatplane — the Maldives boasted a fleet of 26 Twin Otters, flown by very professional pilots. Once again Jack had the opportunity to enjoy an exotic way of life, and had by now developed an educated palate with all the diverse cuisines and beverages.

Next on Jack's itinerary was Kiribati, or as it was previously known, the Gilbert Islands, a group of tiny islands on the equator close to the International Date Line. In 2003 he was appointed Director of Civil Aviation for this underdeveloped country. He found the islands had some interesting features. For instance, Tarawa atoll was the scene of terrible fighting in World War II when US Pacific forces made their first opposed beach landing there, and still has war debris visible, including a B24 lying offshore on a reef.

Surviving on international aid, Kiribati had been given aeroplanes at various times, which were operated until they stopped working then simply discarded. As just one example of how things were, the airfield runway frequently had potholes in it, with no real effort made to repair them. But at least the basic nature of organisation meant that when pressure was applied things could happen quickly — thus when Air Nauru decided not to come until the runway was fixed, the repairs were done the same day. The government leased an ATR 72 for international operation through Tuvalu to Fiji. However, Fiji would not allow its airspace to be used until Kiribati upgraded its safety standards. With Jack appointed as director, Air Kiribati got the go-ahead. The ATR 72 however didn't generate sufficient revenue to pay its way and was returned to ATR about the time he finished his contract there.

Jack has finally decided to settle back in New Zealand — well, for now anyway. He is still working, with the CAA in Wellington. Jack's stories would fill a book, and, never one to back off from a challenge, he is having a go at it. There isn't space here, for instance, to tell of his microlight flying and skydiving. His collection of pilot's licences is unique. He is a remarkable role model for anyone thinking of entering the aviation industry.

Top right: Ladi Marmol Pawnees over Libya, 1964. Jack is flying G-ASVX.
Middle right: Jack flying Fletcher H4-AAY as part of a flypast over Honiara to celebrate the Solomon Islands' independence, 1969.
Right: Jack in Eipper Quicksilver ZK-FIT, 1984.



Above: a Kiribati runway, circa 2003.
Below: a result of many landings on Kiribati runways; part of an aeroplane graveyard.

