

Opinion OURS & YOURS

Gatty flew into aviation history with his efforts

Tasmanian Harold Gatty deserves more recognition for his around the world flight, writes **John Livermore**

Standing on the wheel strut of the Winnie Mae, Tasmanian Harold Gatty had navigated the single-engined Lockheed Vega 5B aircraft, flown by pilot Wiley Post around the world in eight days, landing at Roosevelt Field, Long Island, New York, on the afternoon of June 30, 1931.

Harold Gatty was born in Campbell Town, in Tasmania's Midlands, on January 6, 1903.

His father was head of the local government school. In 1915, Harold entered St Virgil's College in Hobart.

In 1917, he enrolled in the Jervis Bay Naval College and ironically, in view of his later achievements, struggled with both maths and navigation. However, after joining Patrick SS in 1920, as an apprentice, he found he could navigate by the stars.

Working later with United SS of New Zealand – between New Zealand and California – he studied Polynesian seafaring and celestial navigation. Using the scents of guano and coconuts he could locate islands and even smell freshly mown hay 80 miles out from New Zealand.

In 1926, he married Vera McCulloch in Sydney.

Struggling to get a job, he applied for a US visa upon his arrival in San Francisco on Christmas Eve 1927 after finding his seagoing papers were only valid for the British Empire.

Eventually Gatty opened his own

aviation navigation school in Los Angeles where he came into contact with local aviators.

At the time air navigation was primitive and to work out locations in a plane you were required to check land-based features such as roads, rivers and railways.

Working for Weems, a naval officer, Gatty improved Weem's tables of calculated position which had been used by US polar explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd and Australian Hubert Wilkins in the Antarctic. Weem's curves could not be used at night so Gatty applied the well-known maritime system of dead reckoning.

Gatty also invented the air sextant, the aerochronometer to overcome the effect of rapid air speed on a calculation and the Gatty Drift Sight. This fixed the determination of ground speed of an aircraft and the angle of drift of the so-called crosswind effect.

All these inventions by Gatty were the basis for the modern automatic pilot.

In 1931, Wiley Post, who had lost an eye on his oil prospecting flights, offered Gatty the position of navigator on the Winnie Mae for Post's round-the-world flight. On June 22 the pair left Roosevelt Field dressed in suits, not flying suits, and with \$1 in their respective pockets.

The Winnie Mae had a cruising speed of 160mph and a maximum of

185mph as a supercharged Lockheed Vega 5B.

Post was the first pilot to use the fast-flowing eastbound jet stream which enabled the plane to reach 16,000 feet. After flying at times 50 feet above the Atlantic the pair reached Liverpool then went on to Berlin and on to Moscow.

In Moscow the aviators were met by the USSR Society for Aviation and Chemical Defence. A dinner at the Savoy tested the tired pair with nine courses of food and plenty of vodka toasts.

The next day the Moscow airport crew pumped 324 imperial gallons of fuel into the Winnie Mae's large tank instead of the smaller US gallons and before the plane flew out the extra had to be siphoned off.

At Irkutsk, in Siberia, the Winnie Mae got bogged in what was a muddy lake and had to be dragged out by tractor. Following the Trans-Siberian Railway east, the route taken was over the Kamchatka Peninsula, they then crossed the Bering Sea at dangerous wave height.

After refuelling at Solomon, in Alaska, the plane's propeller was damaged. Gatty temporarily fixed it with a hammer and injured his shoulder in an engine backfire but navigated on to Fairbanks where the propeller was replaced.

On the afternoon of June 30 the Winnie Mae finally touched down back in Roosevelt Field, on Long



Island, after a trip of eight days, 15 hours and 53 minutes.

Following their huge feat, both Gatty and Post were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross from US President Herbert Hoover at the White House.

In January 1932, Gatty was appointed a senior engineer in the US Air Corps with a waiver of US citizenship requirement. Gatty never

became a US citizen. However, in World War II he served in the US Army Air Corps and wrote the Raft Book for downed US flyers.

Gatty helped Trans World Airlines (TWA) develop a route to New Zealand in 1937 by challenging British claims to key staging post islands in the Pacific. This ensured an airlink from the US to New Zealand but upset the Australian government

Time for a digital policy that brings rural and tourism

The mobile and internet services which should support our community on the Tasman Peninsula are failing our emergency services, businesses, residents and visitors to our region. As one of our state's most visited tourism regions, the Tasman is a major driver of our state's economic fortune. Yet we are let down with services not fit-for-purpose in the 21st century.

Our community is calling upon the federal government to fund the rollout of NBN fibre-to-the-premise in our major towns and to increase the number of mobile phone towers to eliminate black spots and increase the mobile coverage footprint within our municipality.

Unreliable internet and mobile services on the Tasman Peninsula are continuing to fail our community, writes **Rod Macdonald**

As a major tourism destination the Tasman caters to international, interstate and intrastate visitors. Attractions such as the Port Arthur Historic site, the Coal Mines, Tessellated Pavement and many other spectacular landscapes bring more than 500,000 people, per year, to the region. The Three Capes Track adds more than 10,000 visitors to our region, and cruise ships bring in about 70,000 visitors per year. This visitation is an important economic driver and employment generator for

our region and Tasmania generally. Yet our mobile network doesn't cope and there are many black spots in these popular tourist areas.

The volume of tourism within the Tasman has exposed the shortfall in capacity of our mobile network. While there have been some upgrades, under-provisioning and many blackspot areas have highlighted the desperate need for service improvements and to provide coverage to the areas where people live and visit.

The lack of coverage in many areas has created problems for public safety as well as the day-to-day lives of our residents. The black spots and loss of access to data on the network impacts the ability of our emergency services – ambulance, fire, SES and police – to perform their duties. In January our local SES unit couldn't respond to a call-out because they were unable to receive the message. Similarly, our ambulance volunteers have devices, such as tablets, used to access medical data that are often rendered ineffective, as they are unable to connect due to both black spots areas and data shut-down for extended periods.

The Tasman is literally a 'one-road-in' and 'one-road-out' community

and our electricity grid also follows this path, through heavily forested areas. We are vulnerable to natural disasters such as bushfires. An underground fibre-optic cable will help to maintain connectivity and provide essential communication services required for people's safety during these events.

Within our municipality we have more than 200 short-term holiday accommodation businesses and hotels at Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck, as well as several caravan parks, to support a growing demand for visitors. Significant investments are also being planned to upgrade existing hotels. A further development – consisting of about 40 villas, with day facilities and a