



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF N.S.W.

PAPER No.:- 1

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DATE:- Monday, 23rd September, 1991.

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BRO. AIR COMMODORE SIR CHARLES KINGSFORD SMITH. M.C., A.F.C., Kt.

1897 - 1935

On a night in June, 1928, flashes of lightning bathed in an uncanny light, a new-fangled intruder in the skies above the storm-tossed Pacific Ocean - a lone monoplane - a "suicide crate" by today's standards, was battling for its life high over the boiling waves, its three engines roaring defiance.

The pilots, Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm fought to control the bucking "Southern Cross" as they headed for Brisbane on man's first attempt to fly the mighty Pacific Ocean from America to Australia.

Almost five hours out of Suva, on the last leg of their epic flight, they plunged headlong into a wall of water and electrical fire some 500 miles wide. Today, huge jet airliners fly high and above such storms along this path pioneered by Smithy. But, the "Southern Cross", with a ceiling of only nine thousand feet had to fly straight into the heart of the storm and fight its way through at a speed of only 85 knots. There could be no thought of turning back - they had to make it to Australia or go down into the mountainous seas with no chance of rescue. As they crashed through the storm, water forced its way into the cabin, soaking the Australian pilots and their American comrades, Harry Lyon the navigator and James Warner, the radio operator. Drenched and numbed with cold, they battled on as their battered plane climbed and dropped, climbed and dropped again, like a giant yo-yo, between 9,000 and 500 feet.

After nearly seven hours struggle the "Southern Cross" flew out of the storm as suddenly as it flew into it. The flight was now routine and at 10.13 a.m. on 9th June, 1928, they touched down at Eagle Farm Airport, Brisbane - history had been made!

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