

# Flying High - by Jeannie Gregory

I'd seen the townships along the river, from Murray Bridge to Loxton, a hundred times or more from the riverbank. It was brown. Not sparkling and effervescent, but brown and murky.



When Diana asked me if I'd like to join her for a pleasure-flight I accepted with alacrity - I like flying; I like airports, 'planes, helicopters, gliders, even airline food. I love taking-off and landing; I like the thrills and turbulence.

As well as being excited about my impending adventure, I was very, very proud of Diana for her achievement. We had ridden horses many times together in our younger, slimmer days, and she had been a classy rider at the canter. Now, she had her wings as well as her spurs.

The anticipation of a maiden flight with a good friend at the controls is unique, everyone's going to have their own thoughts about that, and I never had one moment's doubt that I was in safe hands. Well, one, but that was later.



From the sky, the river is no longer brown and bumpy. It is serpentine; green, greasy and viscous, like newly - pressed olive oil with its sediment yet to settle. The surrounding countryside that day in October was brown - reddy - yellowy, criss-crossed with sealed roads, dirt-bike tracks and

power lines. For some misguided reason Diana decided that I would be navigator for a while, and gave me a map, strange, foreign-looking and unfamiliar. Diana is aware I have trouble finding my own feet at times, (I have the navigational skills of a mentally deficient gerbil), so I was slightly

# Flying High - by Jeannie Gregory

perturbed by her unheralded confidence. I found out later she was joking, and knew exactly where she was.

I made the grave error of asking Diana; “What happens if the engine suddenly stops”? She demonstrated by way of cutting the throttle, which threw me into a tail spin and the Jabiru into a gentle glide. “THAT’S what happens”, she smirked at me. It’s going to be a while before I get my revenge on her for that one, if ever.....

The contrast on the return journey to Murray Bridge was astonishing – nothing but trees punctuated by hills, dams and more dirt-bike trails. The lushness of the bush slap up against the scrubby no-mans-land of the desert can only be appreciated from several thousand feet above sea level, with or without the comfort of a drinks trolley nearby, which proves a point and brings to its conclusion this testimony to the joys of the open air, and Diana’s skill as a pilot.



Never make your mind up about something before you’ve seen it from more than one angle: What is dingy and lumpen at ground level is sinuous and beguiling up in the ether.

Make a New Year’s Resolution: Fly with a friend – it’s great!

Jeannie Gregory, December 2009, Adelaide