

ALWAYS A PILOT - RICK

Rick Piacenzia is almost 62 years old and has been flying since he was 20. He didn't fly as much, as he would have liked to when he first started, but when he came to Australia, it all started to happen. Rick learnt to fly in Uruguay, in South America, in a Piper J3 Cub. It was a 65 horsepower machine, hand start, tandem seat - similar in a way to his Citabria.



Rick in the cockpit of his Citabria 115 Lycoming powered aerobatic tandem taildragger.

"I still talk often on the internet to the lady who taught me to fly, she's nearly 70. I send her photos and video of the Citabria and talk about the Aerobatics." said Rick. "I wanted to fly, and when you want something badly you will go and do it, you can't make it sometimes the way you would like to do it, but if you want it badly enough you will somehow do it."

Rick has a commercial licence for fixed wing, but has been mainly commercially flying helicopters for 27 years now. He's done various jobs, clerical work, labouring, and factory work. "I can remember doing the afternoon shift at Johnson Marine in Sydney, assembling outboard motors, just so I could study for my commercial licence during the morning. It all happened after I finished doing my subjects for my commercial, I never looked back." Rick said.



Rick first flew in Antarctic in 1988 and has been going most years. Above: VH-SRB and Rick near an iceberg in Prydz Bay.

Rick now works contract for Helicopter Resources working mainly in Antarctica. He flies air support from the ship to the Antarctic Stations and works within Antarctica providing transport for the scientists working in the field.



Rick has owned his 115 HP Aerobatic Citabria for nine years

"You've got to be careful, very careful with the weather, Antarctica is a challenging environment, you really have to see it to appreciate it." smiled Rick,

The Citabria is a 1976 vintage plane, the smallest in the family with a 115 horsepower Lycoming engine. The taildragger burns around 26 litres an hour, cruises at 95 knots, with around five hours endurance, fabric covered, tandem seating with the pilot flying solo from the front.

"You can do any sort of Aerobatics, including snap rolls and things like that, but it does not have an inverted oil or fuel system. Rick added. "I started flying model aircraft, doing Aerobatics and I thought



why don't I get into the real thing. I had the fixed wing licence, so I started to look around at aerobatic planes interstate. I had an opportunity to see a few and found the Citabria in the Hunter Valley and came back home with it!"

"I enjoy flying anything, I enjoy flying the model aircraft as well as the Citabria. Becoming a helicopter Pilot is a good job, but it wasn't something I was planning for but it became available to me and in turn

became my bread

"The Citabria has been fantastic, probably too expensive as a hobby, but I love it, every minute of it"

earning activity. "said Rick. "I was very lucky, when I did my helicopter licence, a week after getting my ticket, I had my first job."

"Everybody that flies, flies because they



have a passion for it. I enjoy every single minute I fly, either a fixed wing or a helicopter." Rick said.