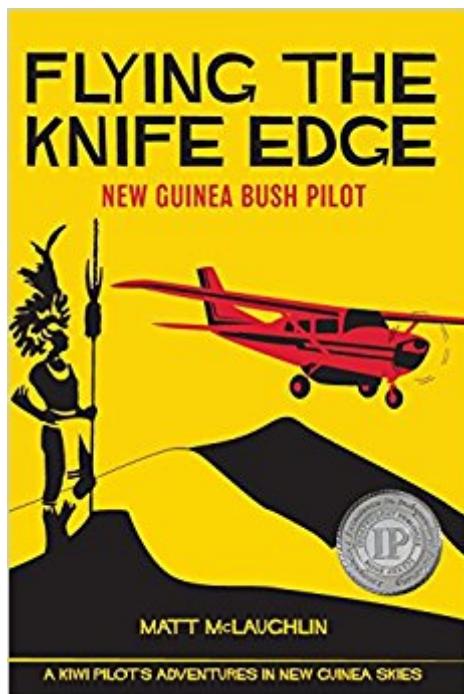


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# Flying The Knife Edge: New Guinea Bush Pilot



## Synopsis

Silver Medal Winner at the 2017 Independent Publisher Book Awards in New York, NY, USA. Sometimes it's not about the destination...it's about the journey. *Flying the Knife Edge* is the story of an ordinary man experiencing extraordinary things as a pilot in Papua New Guinea in the 1990s. After an untimely exit from the Royal New Zealand Air Force, Matt McLaughlin took a leap into the unknown, travelling to Papua New Guinea to work as a missionary pilot. He soon switched from missionary to mercenary, and over the next three and a half years, as he built up the necessary experience to chase his goal of becoming an Airline captain, his life was a rollercoaster ride of adventure, risk, near-misses, and tragedy. Matt lived on the knife edge of bush pilot ops in one of the world's most dangerous flying environments. Along the way he soaked up some fascinating local history: the country's vital role in WWII's Pacific Theatre; the disappearance of aviator Amelia Earhart; the chaos of the Bougainville civil war; the Morobe gold rush of the 1930s... "The gap in the cloud became smaller and smaller as I descended, a shrinking tunnel twisting down the gorge. In a matter of seconds I was so low my wheels barely cleared the trees on the valley floor as I passed, and jungle-clad walls closed in on me until I was a mere wingspan from both sides of the valley. And then, in an instant, the gap was gone and I was flying blind. In cloud. In the bottom of a gorge. With terrain on both sides rising thousands of feet above me. Time stopped. The passengers started screaming, anticipating the aircraft impacting the side of the mountain. And their deaths. I had the capacity for just one other thought: Will I hear the sound of the airframe smashing into the trees as we crash, or will I be dead before it registers?"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book is absolutely great...it is a true, gripping account of the life of a bush pilot in New Guinea...it is beautifully written...and should be required reading for all who have an interest in that mysterious land." James Sinclair, author of the 'Balus' trilogy, Wings of Gold, KIAP, Sepik Pilot. "A delightful, well-written memoir. 4/5 stars" South China Morning Post "Five Star plus book...Hair raising!" Aviation Book Reviews "A great book with many historical links to the past of such an interesting country...the author's brutally honest account is definitely worth a read." The Log - The Magazine of the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA)

Great book could not put it down. This is the story of the authors flying career predominately in Papua New Guinea. The book is full of the authors flying stories written in a very Robert Mason (chickenhawk) style interspersed with humour that keeps it very enjoyable. The author has done his research there is some great history about the islands of PNG and the explorer types that have graced its shores. The analyses of a few of the aircraft accidents is also a reminder to the reader why this country has such a reputation. It brought back a lot of memories and laughs particularly the characters that were flying in PNG at the time. The book is very readable and anyone who has an interest in aviation or a bit of adventure will enjoy it.

As a private pilot myself and a survivor of the Kai Tak heart attack, I highly recommend this book. The author is a very good storyteller and lucky PNG bush pilot. He recounts not only his adventures but the stories of many Papua New Guinea pilots from the early days up until he took a position flying the big jets with Cathay Pacific. Non-pilots, pilot wannabes and anyone else should enjoy his tales. Buy it, you won't be disappointed. If you want to see the "airports" he describes, get yourself to YouTube and search on The Worst Place to Be A Pilot. This short series on flying concentrates on the Indonesia side of flying in New Guinea. The planes and the territory are the same as this book.

This is the best and comprehensive description of light aircraft operation in Papua New Guinea I have ever read. The author has also given an insight into personalities and living conditions in his story. I operated Dc3"s for 3 years there and am well aware of the terrain and weather hazards of

the Highlands but at least WE had TWO engines and we only had a few airstrips that were marginal for approach techniques. I flew over many of the light aircraft strips and can visualise the author's approaches as he describes them so accurately .This book is a wonderfull read from first to last page and recommend it !

I just finished Matt's very well written book, it wasn't quite what I expected, the author has combined an autobiographical account of his aviation career with a parallel history of Papua New Guinea, before, during and after WW2, this adds significantly to the depth of his account, while I found the historical aspect of his book a bit long winded, it does provide more perspective and knowledge about a country most of us know little about, myself included. My interest was in his bush flying experiences and these were truly fascinating, not to mention his success as a professional pilot after a serious set back early on. Great book.

As someone who to a large extent "copied" Matt's career 10 years later, and knowing a lot of the people mentioned, I found his colourful accounts very entertaining. His research filled in a lot of gaps in my knowledge of people and places and stories that I've heard over the years. I think this book will join others as an authoritative account of a certain time in PNG's aviation (and wider) history. I would recommend it especially to any aspiring young pilots, but also to some older pilots who need a refresher in the highs and lows of aviation. I would like to see the book in paperback one day.

Written as it happened. Well researched and extremely readable with historical asides filling in gaps probably unknown to many readers. The way the author describes his initial passion and attitudes on entry into flying, the lingo used by RNZAF aircrew recruits and the antics they got up to, the grind onwards to get a toehold in commercial aviation area are all accurately recorded. Luck undoubtedly gave Matt a huge break but he obviously had a good pair of hands and had a clinical assessment of risk which kept him safe. Having flown several decades in remote areas myself in both fixed wing and helicopters (see 'Memories not Dreams') I believe this is one of the best reads to come out in recent time about general aviation in remote locations. Not too much embellishment and a lot can be learnt from the experiences of others. Well done Matt .

One of the best books I have ever read as an aviation enthusiast. Started from the first page and held me to the end. Great to know that we have people like this flying wide body jets after gaining

their skills on this knife edge! Thank you Matt

A great read of some interesting and challenging times. The authors experience spans many different aspects of aviation from military to flogging around the jungles of New Guinea when the bulk of the bush flying was still in underpowered light aircraft then onto a mid level airline and finally a major world class international airline. This a a real pilots story and makes for enjoyable and interesting reading. I liked the cover art as well.

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