



Inspiring leader, mentor

By Andrew Stackpool

AN F-111 and a former Army UH-1H Iroquois helicopter joined four civil aircraft in a flypast over Coolangatta airport as a sombre but fitting farewell to former Wing Commander John Woodman on February 5.

The aircraft conducted flypasts of the airport as part of a memorial service to WgCDR Woodman, the instructor pilot of an Aerostar that crashed into the sea off Byron Bay on January 27.

Two Cessna 172s, a Stinson and a Waco biplane joined the F-111 from No. 6 Squadron and the former No. 9 Squadron Iroquois.

WgCDR Woodman was born in Subiaco, WA, and educated at Geraldton High and Christchurch Grammar before attending the University of Western Australia.

His Air Force career began at No.1 Flying Training School on March 30, 1971.

He also underwent training at No. 2 Flying Training School. He was posted to No. 5 Squadron in 1972 after graduating from No. 81 Pilots Course.

Much of his early flying career was spent on missions in the Top End and in Papua New Guinea.

Another professional challenge came in 1974 when he contributed to the Defence Force's aid to civil community relief operations during severe floods on the east coast.

In 1981 he was posted as Training Flight and Gunship Flight Commander to 9SQN at RAAF Base Amberley.

The rapport he developed with the support personnel ensured they became a highly effective team.

Other postings included Brigade Liaison Officer with 6 Brigade in



Wing Commander John Robert Woodman (ret'd) August 21, 1947 - January 27, 2004

Brisbane, the Canadian Staff College, and the Australian Contingent Multi National Force and Observers in Sinai in 1982.

Several policy positions in Canberra followed before he served as CO of 2FTS at RAAF Base Pearce between December 1991 and January 1995.

More than 120 pilots from courses 158 to 165 graduated during his tenure.

Posted to No. 306 Air Base Wing in January 1995, after 24 years in the full-time Air Force he transferred to the Reserves in July that year and continued to provide specialist and project support until 1998.

He then continued his love for flying as an instructor at Coolangatta Airport.

WgCDR Woodman has been described as an inspiring leader and mentor, a consummate team player and a person who could be relied on for frank and fearless advice.

He was also noted for his sociable but humble nature, integrity and loyalty to friend and workmate alike, and deep love of the Australian bush.

On social occasions he was renowned for reciting Banjo Paterson's The Man From Snowy River.

He is survived by his wife, Jenny, and son Alan. CAF Air Marshal Angus Houston, a former 9SQN CO and long-time friend of WgCDR Woodman, gave a eulogy at the memorial service.