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Memorial Page

Fiona McEachern Memorial Page

FIONA McEACHERN 22/04/1959 - 25/09/2010

Memorial Booklet - [click here](#)



Members of the Australian Parachute Federation are mourning the loss of one their friends and ambassadors, a true champion and an inspiration to all who met her. Fiona was involved in a fatal canopy collision at Tully on the 25th of September, whilst taking part in the FS 4-way event at the NQ State Championships.

Fiona made her first jump at Picton DZ in October 1984 and since then accumulated almost 7500 skydives, being a driving force in our community for over 26 years.

She has been an instructor in the sport for over 20 years, not only guiding beginners in their first steps in the sky, but as a coach/mentor to experienced skydivers in Australia and beyond.

As a team player, she competed in almost every Australian National Skydiving Championships

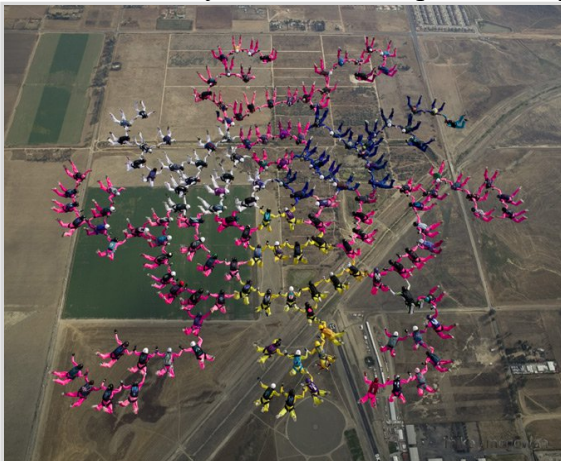
since 1988 – missing only 2004 due to an injury. She has represented Australia more than once including winning a silver medal in the women's 4-person team event at the World Cup in Portugal in 1998, for which she received an APF Achievement Award.



Most recently, in June 2010 she was part of contingent of skydivers who set three new largest formation Australian records in one day, culminating in a group size of 112 skydivers linking up in the skies of California – smashing the previous Australian record set in 1999 of 81 skydivers.

In 2005 Fiona was part of the previous World record for the largest women's formation at that time of 151.

Fiona has many hats in the sport of skydiving, taking on many volunteer roles at State, National and International levels. She was not only the Director of Competitions for the Australian Parachute Federation, but also the APF delegate with the International Parachuting Commission (IPC).



In her position with the IPC, she was honoured in 2002 with being elected to the position of Chair of the Formation Skydiving Committee – an international committee committed to setting competition rules in skydiving – and making them easy to understand.

Fiona has left a legacy of inspiration to all skydivers in Australia with her attitude of: "If I want to do good jumps with people then I

have to help them get there. You can't just turn up and expect to have a great jump without helping each other.”

Fiona was the 'Mother Hen' of Australian skydiving. Every Australian skydiver owes her gratitude and respect for what she has done for the sport in this very large country.

Citations

“Southern Aurora” Silver medal, Women’s World Cup 4-way Formation Skydiving
Evora Portugal 1998
Australian Sports Medal 2000

APF Achievement Awards

1998: “Southern Aurora”, An outstanding performance at the Women's World Cup In Portugal 1998, where the team set a new Australian women's FS 4-way record of 16 points.

2006: Largest Australian Women’s Freefall Formation of 47 Skydivers at Toogoolawah, Queensland on 21st April 2005

2006: Largest World Women’s Record Freefall Formation of 151 Skydivers on 30th September 2005 at Perris Valley, California USA.

2010: Future Fifties Award, For her energetic and enthusiastic coaching, to bring out the best in skydivers, and her tireless efforts to build the APF’s competitor base and competition standard both locally and internationally.



EXCERPT FROM 2005 ASM PROFILE OF FIONA McEACHERN

Love by the name of John Cusack brought Fiona to Picton DZ some 20 years ago and ultimately skydiving. Observing what she considered a beautifully feminine looking sport filled with lots of colourful canopies Fiona launched into skydiving. Her presence in Australian skydiving both in the air and behind the scenes has been strong ever since.

Becoming one of the first students to go through and complete the AFF course, Fiona became the first AFF Instructor who graduated from the AFF program at Picton. With her husband just retiring from skydiving after 31 years in the sport and recovering herself from a knee injury prompted Fiona to reevaluate her own skydiving goals. Luckily, it took her one jump back to realise she is here for the long haul.



Excerpt from the profile of Fiona in the ASM from 2005, by Isabella Lipinski. [CLICK HERE](#) for the full profile.

Fiona McEachern, Chair Formation Skydiving Committee of the International Parachuting Commission

Fiona had been the IPC delegate for Australia since 2010 and the alternate delegate since 2000. Having been a FS Committee member since 2000 she has Chaired this Committee since 2002. For more on the role of the FS Committee and Fiona's role go to the [IPC web site](#).



Fédération Aéronautique Internationale
The World Air Sports Federation

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The FAI suffers a great loss: Fiona McEachern, IPC Committee Chair

It was with great sadness that we learned that Fiona McEachern, Chair of the IPC Formation Skydiving Committee, died in a tragic accident on 25 September 2010, at Tully airfield, North Queensland, Australia.

Fiona was Chair of the IPC Formation Skydiving Committee, IPC delegate for Australia, and Director of Competitions for the Australian Parachute Federation. She was best known for her exceptional organisational ability, and her warm and friendly personality. She was an inspiration and mentor to many skydivers, from the novice to the highly experienced skydiver, and was held in the highest regard in parachuting circles not only in Australia, but all over the world.

Fiona stood alone as a shining example of peace and friendship and there was always a place for her in any skydiving gathering. She was a quiet achiever and an excellent role model for all those that knew her. Fiona's death is an enormous loss to the sport of parachuting, her many friends, and to the FAI Family.

The FAI President, the Executive Board and all the FAI Community express their sympathies and condolences to Dr John Cusack, Fiona's husband, to their families, as well as to the Australian Air Sports community. Fiona will be remembered in the world of Air Sports as a leading figure who achieved great things. We have lost a great Air Sports supporter, contributor and friend.

Submitted by fca on Mon, 27/09/2010 - 13:33 | [news](#)



On Behalf of FAI

It was with great sadness that we learned about Fiona's tragic accident last Saturday

On behalf of the FAI President, the Executive Board and all the FAI Community, I would like to express our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to Fiona's family and friends, and in particular to Dr John Cusak her husband. Our thoughts are with them, as well as with the Australian Air Sports community who have lost one of its great supporter and contributor.

Even for those who did not have the chance to meet Fiona on a regular basis, we all have in mind her positive attitude, and we can appreciate why her friends and colleagues praise her warm and friendly personality.

Fiona will be recognized in the World of Air Sports as a leading figure who achieved great things with both the Australian Parachute Federation and the FAI. We shall remember her with affection.

With our sincere and deep friendship. **Stéphane DESPREZ. FAI Secretary General**

*I had the great pleasure of working with Fiona at a number of IPC competitions and also at IPC meetings over some years. I found her to be a wonderful lady, knowledgeable, calm, incisive and at the same time so willing to be helpful and advise, and all in a quiet unassuming way. I made two jumps with Fiona when I visited her dropzone, Sydney Skydivers, and I remember those two jumps with fondness. The shock of her untimely death leaves a void; one which will take a very long time to get over. Last weekend I made some jumps and in my mind I dedicated them to my departed colleague and friend. This Saturday, Irish weather permitting, I will jump, with a pink rose, and my pink rig, and bid a farewell to Fiona. It will not be a final farewell however, as she shall always be in my thoughts, whenever I jump and when I attend future IPC competitions and meetings. Good people are never forgotten. **Liam McNulty - Technical Secretary IPC***

*There is a candle burning in SALZBURG - for Fiona and for all mourning for her, silent regards, **Michael Egger, Chair, Para-Ski Committee, IPC***

*Such a tragic loss; Fiona was a lovely person and will be sorely missed. My thoughts are with John at this terrible time. Kind regards. **John Hitchen. IPC Chair of Style and Accuracy***

*Fi, May your spirit live on in each person and place you've touched and visited, and there are many!!! Thank you for your advice and the good times shared these past years, Africa will miss you dearly!!!! Our condolences to Dr. John and all her family and friends. **Jacqui Bruwer. IPC Delegate South Africa***

*I am very sorry to hear that sad and totally unexpected news. I remember Fiona since 2004 during preparation for WPC in Rijeka, Croatia, we had a very good communication and cooperation. Deepest sympathy to her family and friends. **Goran Habschied, Croatian Delegate to IPC***

*It really is sad news and had us heavy hearted. We would like to give our thoughts and encouragements to Fiona's family. **Elsa Mai, Chinese Taipei Delegate to IPC***

*Es muy triste recibir esta noticia. Fiona fue una gran deportista y mejor dirigente. Es una gran pérdida, acompañamos en este profundo dolor a sus familiares, camaradas y a la APF, que pierde una muy valiosa representante. Con gran dolor. **Gustavo Eduardo Reyes. Federación Argentina de Paracaidismo***

*On behalf of the Dutch Parachuting Federation, and the old and present IPC delegates we would like to express our sincere condolences to John, family, friends, Australian skydivers and APF for the loss of Fiona McEachern. The world has lost an avid skydiver and kind person. We wish you all strength in these difficult times. **Ronald Overdijk, Henny Wiggers, Igor van Aperen, Marc Hoornweg***

*To the APF. Our deepest condolences. Fiona will be missed for her dedicated support for the sport and all jumpers, her unforgettable smile and encouragement she gave to everyone she met. Our condolences go from the New Zealand Parachute Industry to her family to the APF, and to all the skydivers in the APF. We have lost a true champion of our sport. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance at all. **Keith Gallaher CEO, New Zealand Parachute Industry Association***

*I am beyond words while tears are running down my face. My thoughts are going to John, her family and the APF. I extend my deepest sympathy also in the name of the Swiss Federation. My heart is bleeding. **Doris Merz-Hunziker, Swiss Delegate to IPC***

*Very sorry to hear this. **Pal Bergan, Norwegian Delegate to IPC***

*This is beyond senseless, I'm totally heartbroken. My thoughts go to John, friends, family and Aussie Skydiving community. Words can not express the tremendous loss! **Pia Berggren, Chair, Judges Committee, IPC***

*I have been informed by Mr. Desprez about the tragic accident of Fiona. I am very sad. I would like to ask you to pass all my condolences to her family. **Cosette Mast, FAI Office***

*Gill has forwarded your e-mail to me. I am devastated - you make a lot of acquaintances in this sport and a few friends, and Fiona was one I was proud to consider a friend. It is a very sad day. From **Susan Dixon, webmaster for IPC.***

*I can't believe it! Very, very bad news. My condolences to John, family and friends....**Ronald Overdijk, Chair, Artistic Events Committee, IPC***

*I can not believe the words that I have just read! I can not express what my heart is feeling! The world has lost a wonderful woman! **Marylou Laughlin, IPC Vice-President and USA Delegate.***

*There is nothing one can say. Too much - sad. **Thomas Tuominen, Chair, Canopy Piloting Committee, IPC***

*I'm very sorry to hear this news. She will be greatly missed. **Elisabet Pettersson, Judges and Technical & Safety Committees, IPC***

*I am absolutely devastated..... my most heartfelt feelings go out to John. **Gill Winter***

*On behalf of Russian Federation of Parachuting we express our deepest condolences to the family of Fiona and everyone who knew her. She was a very nice person, and this is a very big loss to our Parachuting. **Vladimir Gazetov, Russian Delegate to IPC***

*The tragic death of Fiona has hit hard, but I have some wonderful memories of her. Both Lena and I are thinking of you (John) at this difficult awful time and send our sincere condolences. **Buzz Bennett, IPC Treasurer***

Fiona was a lady and a jumper who touched so many lives within the skydiving and parachuting fraternity and will be so sadly missed by everyone who was fortunate to know her and as well those who did not have the

*opportunity to meet her. She was a legend in Australia and around the world and offered so much in her lifetime to the sport. On behalf of the ASIANIA Parachute Federation President Mubarak al Swailim, Executive Committee and all Asiana members please accept our most sincere condolences for Fiona 'soul mate Dr John and to her family. Fiona will be always be so well respected and remembered in everyone hearts. Most sincerely and respectfully,
Faye Cox (Asiana Secretary General and Australian delegate)*

A Selection of Tributes.

*So, so sad to hear about Fiona. What a terrific girl and a huge part of the skydiving community in Australia and across the globe. We will all miss her. Our hearts and love goes out to all our Aussie friends. Been thinking of all of you everyday and wishing you the best. **Dan BC***

*All of us on the Golden Knights are shocked and saddened. Some of us knew you for years, and some just met you in Russia. We will all miss you and your smile. **Eric Heinsheimer***

*"I felt so lucky and privileged to have met Fiona, and I realised immediately just how much she meant to skydivers. I share your shock and sadness." **Jean Burns - Australia's first female skydiver.***

That cute little smile, so genuine and kinda cheeky, the way your eyes would light up... All those boogies and competitions, all that mentoring, coaxing, coaching, critiquing and believing in people, all those meetings and



*all that volunteering, for all those years! All those people's lives you've touched, all those memo...ries you've given us, all that fun we've had.... Remarkable, truly remarkable. One of life's beautiful people. Legend. **Susie McEvoy***

*Fi, you are sadly missed. You have been my mentor and my friend for over 8 years. Every time I wear the jumpsuit you organised for my birthday and fly your old Crossfire now I will think of you.... and that once more you will be flying free. You will never be forgotten x **Kate Rogers***



*What a loss! Countless new jumpers learnt to fly safe with others under your protective wings - the smiles you put on the faces of the newly crested are as priceless as the loss we feel at your early departure. May your spirit fly free and continue to bring joy wherever it roams. For what its worth, my thoughts are with you Dr John - I can hardly imagine your loss :(**Hendrik Dik***

*One of the most inspirational people I have ever met. For one (tiny little) woman to have made such a big impact in all of our lives shows just how great she was. She gave so much to everyone - she especially had heaps of energy for new and novice skydivers. Such a loss to the world. **Sam Munn***



*Fi, there are so many of us that are in total shock and disbelief, your support, instruction and even more importantly the honour of calling you a friend will be sadly missed. The skydiving community's heart is broken RIP Fi. **Philip Jones-Hope***

*Such a tragic loss for a person who gave so much to so many people in a sport that she truly loved. RIP Fiona fly free forever!! Our thoughts are with you Dr John and the family. **Tony Maurer***

*This has indeed been a shocking month for ANZ skydiving. Met Fiona on several occasions over the past 5 years traveling about, and every time was a pleasure. A lovely lady, clearly a very motherly figure to the Aussie Competitors, and one who you could see had the respect of every one she met for the person she was...such a shame...I will always remember Cointreau tim tam straws at Picton!! RIP Fiona. **Liam Dunne***

*You were here 12 years ago, but still you are remembered, from all the people that were lucky to meet and learn with you. All The Portuguese skydivers are you with you at this moment, and hope the place you are now will be even better than this one you made even better. Blue skies Fiona. **Jorge Manuel Gonçalves Grade***

*There is no one word to describe the beauty and greatness you are. You taught me so much now only how to fly but to be a better person. You encouraged me to be a judge when injured for this and so many other things I thank you. You are forever apart of me, my you fly free with us forever. Sadly missed but will never be forgotten. I love you Fi soar free. **Deborah Hobbs***



*Fiona, you were a fantastic mentor to our group of Victorian skydiving girls in the 90's - you were our idol and it's only with your support and encouragement that I achieved what I did in the sport. You've obviously continued to be such an inspiration to so many. And such a lovely cool chick! RIP. xx **Fiona Cameron***

*Good-bye Fiona. Thank you for organising my starcrest jumps in 1997. Thanks for coaching us on how to approach a formation. Thanks for the jumps at Lower Light in 1998, and the great formatted caravan loads at Equinox 2000. Thank you for teaching the level 2 coaching section at Nagambie in 2006. Thank you for setting the goal so high, and then helping us to achieve it. Thank you for making me a better skydiver, and instructor. Good-bye Fiona. I will miss, and remember you, always. **Curtis Morton***

*The first time I landed in the experienced area at Picton (as an AFF student) I had this little woman come out to the beer line and tear me a new asshole.....I thought she was fantastic. I am a better skydiver from knowing you. Thanks Fiona. **Will Fredericks***

*Fi must have held more skydivers hands in freefall than anyone else in Australian skydiving, but this was only one of the ways in which she touched all of our lives. You will be missed! **Michael McGrath***

*Fiona organized my first jump at the Skysisters boogie in 2007. I told her that I had not jumped in over three months but she put me on a starcrest jump. I was not sure that I could handle an 8 way but she was confident that I could and I believed her. I was the fourth person in the base, opposite her. I approached so slowly to avoid going low. I will forever remember her sweet smile as I approached, beckoning me to take my slot. When I finally did, she beamed and I felt a sense of accomplishment like never before or after. Fiona embodies everything that is good in skydiving. She loved the sport, shared her knowledge freely and just made every jump really fun. My deepest sympathies go to her husband and the Australian skydiving community. Fly free and I hope to meet you in the base again one day. **Ariana (USPA)***



*I met Fiona in Menzelinsk this year at the WPC. I was attending the FAI judge training course and she had the stressful role of FAI Controller. I was so impressed by her quiet, unassuming, yet no-nonsense manner and the efficient way in which she handled each challenge. World skydiving is definitely poorer for having lost someone so dedicated to the sport. We'll miss you, **Fiona.Chantelle (South Africa)***

*Dear Fiona . You approached me at Equinox Boogie in 2000 and said I looked scared as hell. You grabbed my hand, hustled me into the door of the Skyvan. It was my 15th jump and i had an absolute blast! That day I met DR John and got fitted for a new rig and suit. For the next 2 weeks I watched you execute some of the best airtime I had ever seen. I feel so privileged for having shared the air up there with you. My heart goes out to you Dr John and all the Aus jumpers who knew you. Blue skies and white fluffy clouds. **Gills***

The shockwaves are being felt around the world at the loss of a great and wonderful woman.

Fi, you mean the world to me, you are my big sister and my best friend and you have been there for me through so very much. I cannot begin to imagine never seeing your smiling face again in this life.

You gave people the strength and the belief to achieve greatness and you were right alongside them being great yourself.

Your big heart was open to everyone and you were always there to help people in any way that they needed it, be it coaching skydivers, organizing boogie jumps and big ways, or there as the best party buddy. You could easily convince others to party, and it wasn't really that hard to get Narelle out to party with us. I do remember many, many amazing party nights with you.

Thank you for being my best friend and my big sister Fi, thank you for always remembering my birthday and Christmas with a present and lovely words, thank you for being my awesome team mate, thank you for always being there whenever I needed someone, thank you for all your words of encouragement and wisdom, thank you for your hugs and love. Thank you for being you Fi.

I will cry for you a lot, I will ache for your loss, it will take time, but I promise I will get over it as I remember all the great times, the laughs and the fun. The ache will get easier to bear and the tears will lessen, but you will always be in my heart. Say hi to PJ for me, I know you are with him now.

*Fly high, fly hard and crank those 360's. I will love you and miss you forever. xxxooxxx" **Jo Boniface***

*My mentor in skydiving and wise counsel on the ground. You were beautiful from head to toe - no matter what YOU thought about your toes!!! Gracious. Compassionate. Giving. (Perhaps a little too generous when I didn't NEED more red wine!) I will treasure the quiet late night chats with my friend Fiona as much as the rowdy ones with Narelle. I will miss your quick-fire emails and sparkling smile. Thank you for everything. Xxx **Kelly Brennan***

*A very special woman and a great friend. May your spirit fly free now Fiona, you'll never be forgotten. - **Sara Sacchet – IPC Italy***

*“Forever flying. Forever loved. – **Gail Bradley***

*Fi, You were an inspirational woman. Thank you for your guidance, mentoring, companionship in Russia and all the good jumps we had with friends. You will be missed but never far from our minds - **Peta Holmes***

*The meaning of your name “FIONA – a person of great strength and substance”. You touched the lives of all who met you. You had time for everyone no matter who they were. Your friendship and support was always unconditional. You will always be in our hearts - **Lindy and John Williams.***

*Dearest Fi. For over two decades, opponent, peer, confidant, fellow traveler, coaching partner, team-mate - you have been one of my heroes. You have helped pick me up, let me know all was OK and even got me back in the air at times by reminding me just what we do! You're the only one who could have got me back after a 10 year break from Nats comp - and made it seem like the passing of time was just a blip. I have watched you bring care and inspiration to so many - at all levels of our beloved sport. You are the epitome of a true sports person. No one else comes close. Thank you for everything you are and everything you gave. I will treasure our gumboot win now more than ever - our last comp. Save a slot for me on yr leg! xoxox **Kim Hardwick***



Messages from POPS around the World

*On behalf of all Dutch POPS we express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Fiona. A great loss for “the skydivers in this world” Fiona stays in our memory for ever.....**Ronald van Rijn World Top Pop 8***

*Why Life seems to be sometimes unfair? Zen masters say that we should not be sad and cry because we've lost someone we've loved, but smile thinking about all the memories we've share with him during his life time ... Sure we have to do so for Fiona. All French Pops express their warm and sincere condolences to her family and friends. **Frank YOH (FRANCE Top Pop)***

Deeply struck on hearing about your loss, we would like to express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Fiona.

*We feel privileged for having met her, Fiona was a wonderful and kind person. She will always live on in our memories. **Lamberto and Claudia Serinelli World Top POP #7 Italy***

*Ce n'est pas un vide. C'est un nouveau lieu spéciale dans nos cœurs qui permettra à l'esprit de Fiona à rester avec nous pour toujours. **Neil Fergie. Top POP Saudia Arabia***

*Our Sincere condolences to her family, her friends and any Australian POPS from all POPS Poland we will remember her. **Zibi Matczuk. Top Pop Poland***

*Thank you for sharing. Hugs, **Renata Pearson San Francisco USA***

*Many thanks for the info regarding Fiona... sad that she's gone... what an inspiration to fellow skydivers and friends alike. She seems to have had boundless energy. It's tragic that so many good skydivers are killed each year in needless canopy collisions and/or fatal high-speed canopy ground contact. This never happened until the appearance of high-performance canopies. **Russ Manhold Florida USA***

*Kathy and I are sorry to hear of the passing of your friend Fiona. Blue Skies. **Karl & Kathy Proruben Pennsylvania USA [Karl – World Top POP #5 2004-2006]***

En 2008 pour les World POPS à Toogoolawah, Fiona m' a séduit par sa grande compétence sa disponibilité et sa gentillesse. Je garderais un souvenir ému du VR 15 féminin qu'elle a organisé à cette occasion.

In 2008 for World of POP to Toogoolawah, Fiona m ' seduced by her big competence her availability and her kindness. I would keep a touched memory of the VR 15 feminine which she organized in this opportunity.

Je présente mes plus sincères condoléances à sa famille, ses amis et à tous les POPS Australiens.

My Sincere condolences to her family, her friends and any Australian POPS.

Fiona laisse un vide qui ne se comblera pas.

Fiona leaves a space which will not fill.

Joëlle PERRIN POPS FRANCE

*POPS AUSTRIA wishes to extend our most sincere condolences to the friends and family of Fiona Elizabeth McEachern. Organisation POPS Austria I.KFSC. Angelika und Valentin Huhs
The passing away of Fiona McEachern is a loss for the whole Skydiving Community. The Italian POPS, remembering her great contribution to the success of the Toogoolawah International POPS Meet, take part to the mourning and express to her Family and to the Australian Parachute Federation their sincere condolences. **Bruno Imberti. Top POP Italy***

*We are stunned. Fiona was a gem and will be sorely missed. Please give our regards and sympathies to the family and friends. We are so sorry - we can't express it properly. Just a shame.....**Pat and Alicia Moorehead USA***

There the four of us with Fiona at the Closing Ceremony Dinner, Toogoolawah World POPS Meet 2008. Our deepest condolences. She was a fantastic Skydiver!



Volker Cornils [Top POP], Charly Haeusler, Horst Flieger and Walter Steinlehner POPS Germany

*RIP Fiona. All your Danish POPS friends will miss you. You were a role model for all of us. Our thoughts goes to your relatives. Fly high forever in your new world. What a tragic loss for all of us. **Jørgen Jensen Skov***

*POPS USA wishes to express our most sincere condolences to the friends and family of Fiona. Her memory will remain in the hearts of Mary Ann and I, as well as many others for a long time. Sincerely, **Tom Zukowski TopPop USA***

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