



... With "RME" before the flew out, from left, pilots Capt. Alex McNaughton, Capt. John McRobbie and Capt. Arthur Lovell, flight engineers Mark Perry and Alan Williams and navigator Bill Kennedy.

Senior pilot, Capt. Arthur Lovell, who flew the jet from the U.S.

Farewell Romeo

Out flies
that
first jet



The 727-100 after its delivery flight to Australia in October, 1964

The aircraft that gave Sir Reginald Ansett one of his early triumphs over TAA took off from an Australian airport for the last time today.

The 727 series 100, call sign VH-RME, (Romeo-Mike-Echo), became Australia's first domestic jet airliner when it touched down at Essendon airport on October 16, 1964.

Captain Arthur Lovell, the Ansett captain who flew the spanking new Boeing from the U.S., recalled the historic arrival at a farewell ceremony at Tullamarine yesterday.

"It was a toss-up job between Sir Reginald and the late Jack Ryland (then chairman of TAA) as to whose 727 would land first, he said.

By **BILL GRAY**

"Sir Reginald won, and we come in a few minutes ahead of TAA."

The jets flew brotherly fly-pasts over Melbourne before landing.

RME cost Ansett \$3.3 million. A Miami-based brokerage firm has snapped it up for \$3.7 million, probably to sell to a developing nation.

Capt. Lovell, now retired, yesterday met his crew from that first flight at Ansett's Tullamarine service hangars to farewell the "grand old layd".

"It is not such a sad occasion as a nostalgic one," he said.

"We have fond memories of this plane. She never gave any trouble and she notched up a lot of hours."

Ansett officials claimed that when RME was grounded after 43,110 flying hours in December, she'd recorded more flying time than any other 727 in the world.

Capt. Lovell said "The 727-100s were beautifully-built aircraft, real workhorses and very safe.

"This one will go on indefinitely. It's only obsolescence, the devel-

opment of more efficient airliners, that makes it necessary to change her over."

While the original crew, some retired, some still with Ansett, discussed the merits of the ageing aircraft, technicians fussed over its final maintenance check before the four-day flight back to the U.S. . . . along the same route it took out here.

There is a different crew this time, and they will be returning with a new \$10 million 727-200, a faster, bigger, version.