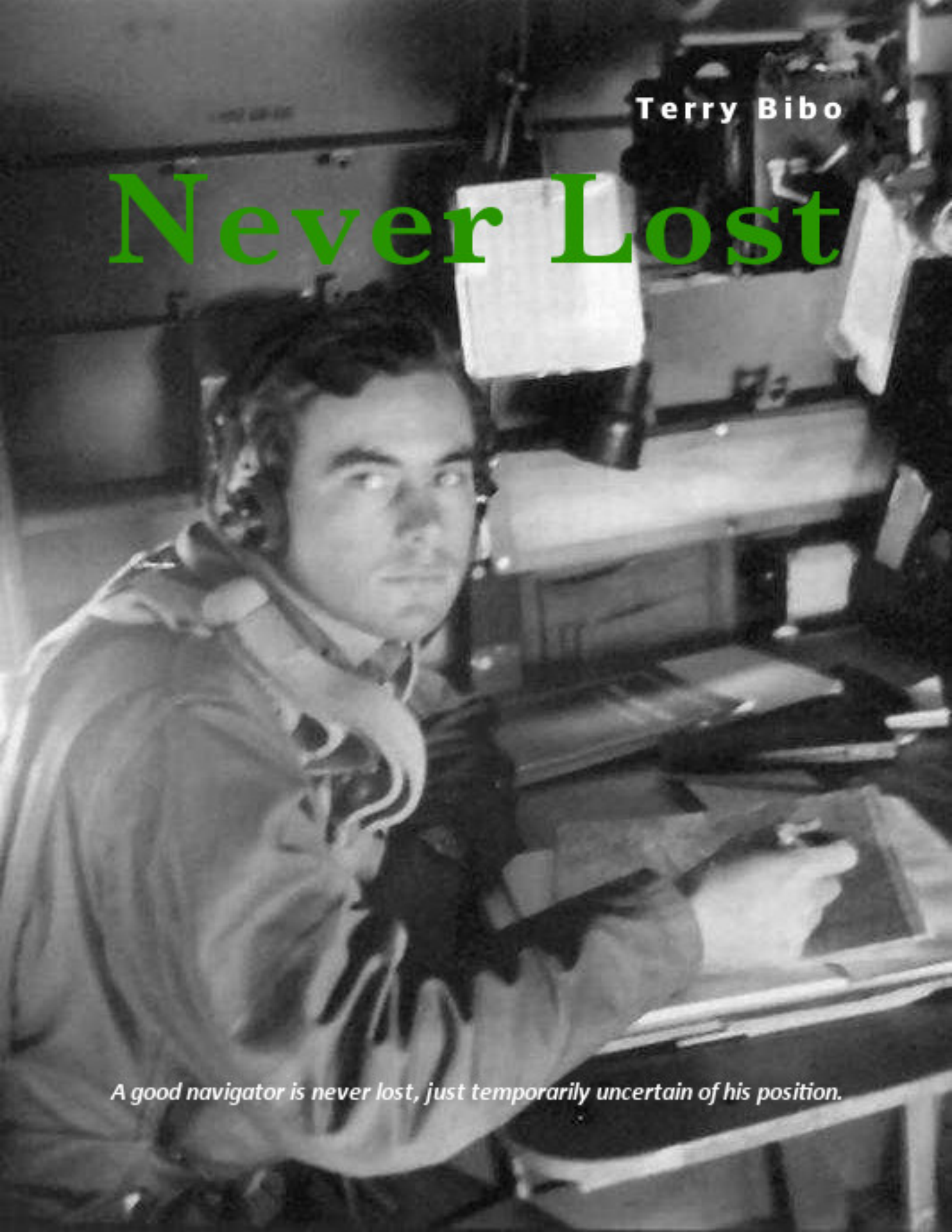




Terry Bibo

Never Lost

A good navigator is never lost, just temporarily uncertain of his position.

NEVER LOST

A Personal Account of My First Sixty Years

Terry Bibo

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This epub of “Never Lost” is a revision of the 1993 printed book. Included are additional photographs not shown the original print version and colour replacements of their black and white counterparts. New photographs have been chosen where they are relevant to, or inform, the text. One low quality photo has been removed. Minor changes to the text have been made, such as noting the dual naming policy of Uluru / Ayers Rock. And the chapter on the 1987 North Queensland tour has become a separate epub, otherwise the text, including the spelling, remains as printed in 1993.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any authority or organisation referred to in the text.

*Dedicated to Judith, who said,
'Why don't you write it down?'
And to all those who helped me remember.*

'A good navigator is never lost, just temporarily uncertain of his position.'

Anonymous

The Conventions of Flying.

The international language of flying is English.

Aircraft fly at altitudes measured in thousands of feet.

Distance is measured in nautical miles (n mile).

Speed is measured in knots (kn).

1 kn = 1 nautical mile per hr.

1 nautical mile = 1.85 kilometre.

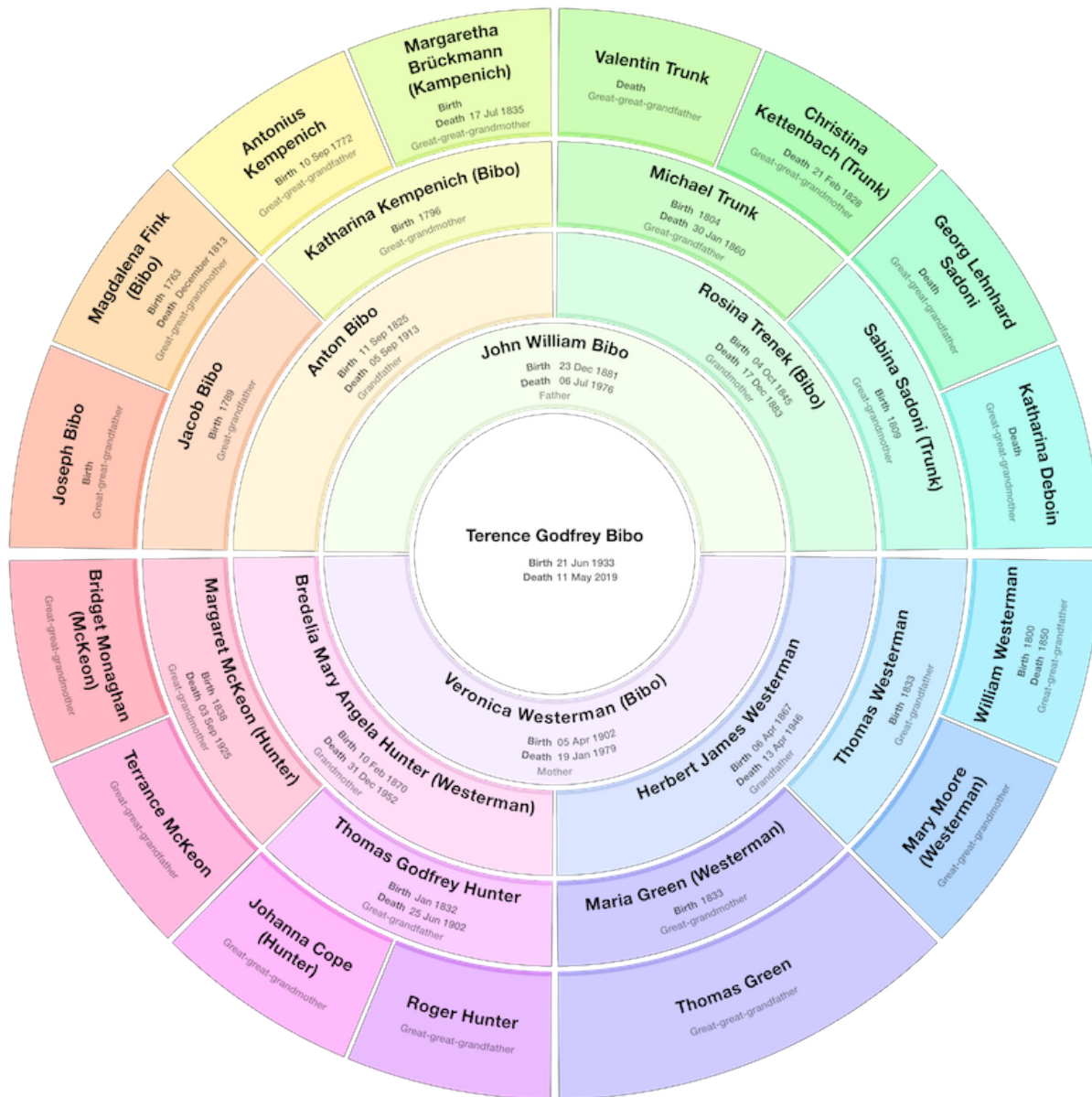
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Pedigree for Terence Godfrey Bibo



4 Galway Street, Greenslopes

As a small boy I used to stand on our front verandah in number 4 Galway Street, Greenslopes, wondering if anyone knew what was on the other side of the mountains out to the west.

The ‘mountains’ were mount Coot-tha, about 16 kilometres away, not much larger than hills on the Brisbane skyline. As a RAAF navigator in adult life I was to find out more about what lay on the other side than a lot of people already knew. And I have never lost my enthusiasm for travel.

Born on 21 June 1933 I was the sixth survivor in the family that was to include seven boys and two girls. The final family was: Mary, 1926; John, 1927; Len, 1928; Tony, 1930; Pat, 1931; Terry, 1933; Leo, 1936; Bernard, 1940; Ursula, 1943. A daughter, Veronica, died at childbirth in 1932 and a son, Paul, died soon after his birth in 1941.

Dad (John William ‘Jack’ Bibbo) was born on 23 December 1881, married at 42 on 16 December 1925, and died a wonderful old man on 6 July 1976. Mum (Veronica Westerman) was born on 5 April 1902 and died almost three years after Dad, on 19 January 1979. Dad’s parents were both German: his father Anton Bibbo was born in the wine country of Nassau, formerly a territory of Germany in the Prussian province of Hesse Nassau, in 1836, and arrived in Australia with his bride, Rosina Treneck, in 1873 aboard the [SS Great Britain](#). Rosina was born in 1845. Anton was naturalised on 13 January 1876. Mum’s father, Herbert Westerman, was born in Harrogate, England, in 1867, and married Bredelia (Bidelia) Hunter from Jimbour, Queensland, in 1900. Herbert James Westerman was, in turn, one of six children born to Thomas Westerman (a painter) and Maria Green. Thomas was one of seven children descended from William Westerman, also a painter, born in Yorkshire between 1796 and 1801.



Dad, John William 'Jack' Bibo, (year unknown).

I didn't know it at the time of course, but apparently I nearly died too when I was born. The doctor pronounced me dead but my grandmother Westerman wouldn't have this. She said that if I was dead she couldn't do any more harm, and swung me around by the heels until I breathed again. Len was there to see this. The other, short, Bibos maintain that this is the reason I stand taller than the rest of them. I really don't recall being an unhealthy child, but there are stories about my taking frequent fainting fits and having to be looked for or looked after. Although I can recall a couple of instances of fainting they

couldn't have lasted long because they didn't affect my playing school sports and eventually joining the Air Force. I had chicken pox and caught measles, mumps and everything else that was going around, but in that I was not alone. These swept through most families at the time. My earliest recollections of life are at about four years old: feeding the chooks at an uncle's house in Lismore; and when asked how old I was, replying 'I am not old, I am only young'. Whether these are genuine recollections, or reinforcements from having been told them later, I will never know.



Mum, Veronica Westerman, (year unknown).

The early 1930s were the Depression years, with unemployment running at 25% of the workforce when I was born and over 30% when I was conceived, and the average income was £209 (\$418). How Dad managed to raise us through those difficult times I will never understand. We were never hungry,

though the food was plain, and in the early days we ate bacon bones from Burns's store on Ridge Street with bread and dripping as a main course. A feast was a penny's worth of hot potato chips on fresh bread. When we went shopping at Burns's, either for Mum or one of the neighbours, Mr Burns sometimes gave us a free serve of lollies in a square of white butcher's paper he expertly twisted into a cone. Food was bought in quantity to feed the family. For a single dinner Mum would send one of us to the shop to buy 'a pound and a half of beans or three pounds of peas'. She would sit and string or shell these for the evening meal. Although I ate it I never acquired a lasting taste for the tripe and white sauce we were served; but I enjoyed baked or stuffed heart that I would hesitate to eat now, though I think it is reserved for pet food these days. Great enamel dishes of sago, tapioca, bread and butter pudding, and creamed or baked rice custard would disappear at one sitting. There were two treats when we had regular custard. The first was when we were allowed to 'scrape the pot'. The lucky one would be given the saucepan that the custard was cooked in, and allowed to eat the remaining warm custard after the saucepan was emptied into a bowl. The second came with serving the custard, and being given the skin after everyone had pleaded for it. Often, though, sweets were a lot more basic. Boiled rice with syrup, or milk and sugar, and bread and milk - just white bread with warm milk poured on it - were staple servings. Often there would be twelve to fifteen people for lunch when our friends like the Tooheys or Coes stayed, and we would share whatever meagre rations there were and cut more bread. Margarine was poor quality and was almost uneatable except for cooking but, to make the butter go further, we mixed margarine and butter together with a hand mixer. This also made it easier to spread straight from the icebox or refrigerator.

Undoubtedly the fact that we were a united and loved family carried us through adversity. The years of the second World War (1939-45) were almost an extension of the Depression, and from about mid-1942 we had ration books for clothing, footwear and all essential foodstuffs. Rationing was to continue through until 1950 when butter and tea were the last items removed from the list. I am sure the tradesmen at Greenslopes were kind to us and gave us more than our rations allowed on many occasions. But it is also possible that, with such a large family, we had a marginal benefit in terms of ration coupons. The determining factor in our case would have been finance, not coupons. Certainly we were given marked fruit, either gratis or at reduced cost, and broken biscuits that were left in the bulk tins when all the whole ones

were sold. We were undeniably poor, but so were many of our friends, and only in retrospect can we subjectively appreciate our situation then.

For most of my childhood life new clothes were a luxury, and generally the subject of birthday or Christmas presents. But we always got presents at Christmas time, not knowing then that they often came from charitable institutions. As a variation on the Christmas stocking theme our presents would be put in pillowcases hung on the ends of our beds. Most things were hand-me-downs, patched or altered to fit. Underpants were unheard of, and we wore coarse, lined serge school trousers. I don't think we were 'dirty', though Mary can remember dirt ingrained into elbows and knees, and stiff, sweat-caked All Hallows school uniforms. The older boys would have gone barefoot to school most of the time, and only in later years would we regularly wear shoes to school. There was a family pride, though, that ensured we all had a set of good clothes and a tie for going to Mass and other major occasions. Early photographs only show us clean and well dressed. Mum showed the strain of living under these conditions more than Dad because she packed a suitcase and left home, or threatened to leave home, a few times. She always came back soon.

We rarely used the roads to get access to the shops on Logan Road. It was easier for us to go up a short laneway choked with stinging nettles leading to the back of the bakery. Here we had the choice of going through the horse yard and the bakery grounds, then on to Logan Road through big corrugated iron double gates; or following the lane a bit further and walking through the yard of Morris's shoemaking shop. On weekends when there were no bread deliveries the double gates were locked and we had to climb the high fence to get out of the yard. Going up the laneway in the early years of the war I met an American soldier eating grapes out of a packet. I asked him if I could have one. 'You can have the lot' he said, and gave me the packet. I was so indoctrinated about taking things from strangers that, when he was out of sight, I threw the packet away in the weeds and long grass. I have felt guilty ever since. And I never again asked strangers for food.

I do remember the washing facilities, both types. For the household laundry there was an upright 44 gallon (200 litre) drum with a hole cut in the base for inserting wood and lighting it, while the whole top was cut out to allow a copper basin to sit in it over the fire. It was known generically as 'the copper', and I suspect everybody around our way had one. Every Saturday we'd fire up the copper and boil the laundry, with Mum poking it with sticks and rubbing it

on corrugated washing boards. It was a long time before we graduated to a hand mangle to wring clothes, and eventually a washing machine. White clothes were always rinsed with Reckitts Blue to improve their whiteness. The Blue, in a small cotton bag shorter but fatter than a 35mm film, was also used as treatment for bee stings. Clotheslines were long wires stretched between crosspieces of T-frames. The top of the T could be rotated to put the line close to the ground for loading. To raise it we had long branches with small V-shaped ends to catch the line. These were sold by men carting them around the streets in horse and cart, or Dad would collect his own from the bush when he could. The only pegs in those days were the big wooden dolly pegs, so called because they resembled a child's doll in miniature. Mum and I didn't have the same approach to washing, and from the time I was 14 I was doing all my own washing and ironing.

Personal washing was a similar routine to the household laundry, and in my early years we generally bathed once a week too and only washed with a wet flannel in between. We'd fire up the copper and carry buckets of hot water up to the bathroom. The house was typical Queensland, built on tall wooden stumps. Baths were always shared. Tiny children bathed together, as they still do. But bigger children had to share the bath water one at a time. It's an experience getting into used, lukewarm bath water, but it was the norm for many years for us. Len must have done something to really annoy me one bath day, because I distinctly remember getting out of the bath crying and going naked, with a kitchen knife, after his blood downstairs. Mary remembers that Len was a bit of a torment in those days. I was quite old before we got a chip heater that mounted over one end of the bath, and permitted us to heat up bath water with newspaper and wood chips, giving us individual and clean baths. But I remember the chip heater as a cantankerous thing that did not always work as an instant water heater. I think Tony was the expert on making it work. We never knew the luxury of a personal towel, and all used the one or two supplied in the bathroom.

Personal hygiene was less rigorous then than now, and Mary remembers Mum going through her hair and cleaning it of nits, like monkeys at a zoo. For her it was a time of intimacy and communication with Mum. I remember the nit comb that was used on us, a fine-tooth comb like that used for removing fleas from household pets.

Laundry and bathwater weren't the only things boiled up in the copper. There were Christmases when Mum cooked massive boiled plum puddings wrapped

in calico, and too big for any utensil except the copper. And the puddings had silver coins - threepences and sixpences - in them. Sometimes Dad would kill a chook by chopping its head off on the chopping block. When it had finished running around the yard headless and was properly dead he would dunk it in hot water in the copper to make it possible to pluck. I'll probably never forget the smell of a wet chook carcase being plucked, but it hasn't put me off eating chicken. Chicken was a rarity for a meal, and plum pudding a luxury only available at Christmas time.

The Bibos had a 'working relationship' with Lingard's bakery up on Logan Road whereby we could help on weekends in exchange for having a small personal loaf cooked for each of us. We would then delight in sitting in the shopfront window on Logan Road, like goods on display, eating our own fresh bread. When the wood fired ovens were cool we would play hide and seek in them and around the big mixing bins. I had a real job during school holidays at one stage, working for Manahan's Grocers. My main activity was to prepack potatoes and onions and sugar and that sort of thing into standard quantities. This was done out the back of the shop away from the counter and the customers. I used to stuff myself with jelly jubes while I was working, because they were a real luxury I could rarely afford. A little corner shop introduced me to another luxury of the time when they started making iceblocks out of jelly and custard. What a treat they were. Then coloured ice creams came onto the market, pink and chocolate. And Paul's *Have-a-Hearts* with chocolate coated ice cream on a stick. All sorts of commodities were wrapped in brown paper after sale and tied with string. There was a real art in being able to twist the string around a finger and double it back on itself to snap it rather than having to cut it, and most shopkeepers were experts. Butchers and fish shops used newspapers, and we could get a few pence per pound for clean newspapers from them.

Sometimes Dad worked with Oscar Norup from two houses up Galway Street but, as I remember, he largely worked alone or with his brother, Uncle Gus (Augustine Bibo). Oscar had a little white dog he called *Sporty 1*, and when this died its replacement was named *Sporty 2*. I only remember Gus as a formidable, gruff character with a big grey moustache, unlike Dad who was always clean shaven with a cutthroat razor that he used to strop sharp. The razor strop was a threat to misbehaviour but I don't recall that Dad ever used it in anger, though Mum wielded it quite well. Misbehaviour was more liable to invite a dose of castor oil administered by Grandma Westerman, and bad language was dealt with by washing the mouth out with soap. Castor oil was

also used as a medicine, as was olive oil that was warmed and poured into ears to treat earache.

As little children we loved to meet Dad before he entered the back yard, and get a ride on his bicycle as he came home from work. That was before he had a car or when he couldn't afford to run one. On some of these days he would have spent most of the time riding around looking for work, legs straddling the long tool bag strapped to the bar of the bike. Even on the coldest winter mornings he would be out, bare hands on cold metal handlebars, looking for a job. His bike had a carbide lamp that burnt a powerful smelling gas produced by dripping water onto calcium carbide granules. When he came home he always had an honest workingman smell, and would go straight to his enamelled washing dish on the bench under the house to clean up before going upstairs.

Gus was not always available to assist Dad when an extra hand was needed, and one of us would lose a day at school. Being well down the line I didn't get to help very often. Considering the nature of the work it wasn't something that we could be expected to look forward to; mostly restumping houses in my experience, but the elder boys were probably employed on more skilled jobs. These stumps were large tree trunks averaging around 2 to 2.7 metres above ground, and probably almost a metre into the ground. Tony worked with stumps 6 to 7 metres long on houses that were built over sloping ground. Dad had an uncanny ability to estimate levels, and could install these stumps with only minor adjustments using a Wallaby jack. Some of his contracts took him away from home, and he lived in a tent when he was too far away to come home every day. He was building a house at Redcliffe, and some of the family was with him when little Pat got lost. This was before my time. When an extensive local search failed to find him he was feared lost in the bush or marshland. He turned up in the bottom of one of Dad's stump holes, quietly sucking his thumb and giving no indication of where he was. On the job or at home Dad drank his tea scalding hot from a tin billycan or enamel cup, at temperatures that should have brought up blisters.

Dad had not always been a carpenter. In his younger days he had worked as chauffeur for Marshlands Station at Wondai, in Queensland. Marshlands is described today as one of Wondai's historic homesteads. It had been the meeting place of pioneering families who gathered for social and festive occasions, and its New Year's Day picnic was a gala event. Apparently he either developed or refined his carpentry skills when he built a house in Rochdale

Avenue, Tarragindi, for his own father's declining years. When Anton died, Gus took the house and Dad built again at Galway Street. Around show times before the War Dad would pick up work at the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds. These were exciting times for us kids because he would bring home sticks of sugar cane that we peeled the hard, purple skin off and cut up to chew for its sweet juice. Or sometimes he would bring home a watermelon for real luxury. Even this could not provide for a growing family and Dad had to go sometimes to the local police station at Coorparoo to get ration tickets for free food. The value, or even the availability of the ticket depended on how much work the person had been able to get in that week; the fewer the days the bigger the value. When the policeman on one occasion asked how many days Dad had worked he said 'Two'. The policeman said 'Half a day's work' and started to write the ticket. Dad insisted that he had worked two days. The policeman again said 'Half a day's work' and gave him the ticket. He knew how hard Dad worked and how poor we were. 'Slam' Sullivan was the local policeman and he came to our house a few times to report us for climbing over the steamroller that was parked in Drummond Street for road works. That was a natural toy for inquisitive Bibos.

During the war Dad worked with gangs in the Civil Construction Corps because he was too old for call-up into military service, and this would have been a period of regular employment for him. The Greenslopes Military Hospital was built relatively close to home; we would often go for walks into that part of the country before development. Dad got a job building the hospital and this gave us privileges not enjoyed by our peers. We got official, escorted tours over the various stages of construction, which appealed to our inquisitive natures. A big part of the thrill of the Greenslopes Hospital was climbing through the chimneystack before it was erected. This must have stretched for about fifty feet along the ground and was a bit frightening, imagining getting stuck halfway.

Not many Queensland houses were built on the ground, and the space underneath was a large cool area used for the laundry, carport, toilet, or just for storing junk. Ours ended up after a number of years housing three cars, Dad's, Pat's and Tony's; a small tool room that was just the space between the toilet and the outside wall; a large grindstone for sharpening chisels, axes and things, set in a frame with a handle; a flushing toilet eventually; an open laundry with washing machine and cement tubs; a corrugated iron tank for rainwater (and mosquito larvae); a workbench; racks of Dad's timber; and still room for junk, or for playing marbles in rings or holes, or spinning tops on a

cement path. The cement slab at the foot of the front steps, between the gate and the house, was intriguing because Dad had made red cement. It wasn't just painted. This was where we held our fireworks parties on Guy Fawkes Day; small explosive crackers - tom thumbs - or big bungers, sparklers, rockets and Catherine wheels. There was a permanent mark on one of the front gateposts, burnt in from the Catherine wheel spinning on its nail.



Home, 4 Galway Street, Greenslopes, Queensland, 1950s.

Dad also had a short length of hollow tree with the ends boarded up, which was home to a colony of native bees. These were harmless little black things like houseflies. I only ever saw the hive opened once that I remember, when David was there as a little boy and Dad gave him some honey to taste, but the one I knew was the last in a series. Dad did collect the almost black, native bee honey when he and the boys went bush for firewood, and apparently had a succession of these hives at home. The yard was an interesting wedge shape because we were at the junction of Galway Street and Drummond Street, which was called Hill Street for a while. There were four houses across the top of the wedge in Ridge Street and below them two houses stretching across the wedge until we formed its point. As a small child it seemed a long, long way

around 'the block' as we called it, and being allowed to go around it alone was almost a sign of graduation from childhood. Later on we would use the block as a circuit for belting bicycle or car tyres around in games. We must have made ourselves nearly sick at times by riding curled up inside the car tyres as they were belted around the streets. Games were simple, and we made the most of what nature had to offer.

Galway Street was originally a dirt road, and the milkman used to drive his herd up it occasionally. We would buy milk in those days from a horse-drawn cart with cans of fresh milk. It was poured into any container you took out to the cart. No such thing as pasteurisation, bottles or cartons then. When pasteurisation did come Dad wouldn't accept it and wanted his regular billy of fresh milk. We had to connive with the milkman to overcome this. Coming down Drummond Street the milkman would leave bottles of pasteurised milk at our back steps. Then when he turned the corner to go up Galway Street he would empty a bottle into Dad's billy at the front steps. If Dad ever knew he was being conned he never let on. Bread was also delivered in two-wheeler horse carts, and to earn pocket money I would sometimes do the rounds with the carter. I remember him as Wal, but no surname. We delivered the loaves in cane baskets about the size of a small washing basket. There was white, light brown, dark brown, malt and cerevite, the last being distinguished from white by having two skewer holes baked in the top crust. Loaves were full or half, with the halves baked separately and only joining by expansion in being cooked too close to each other. There was no sliced bread or even wrapped bread. Getting 4 shillings (40 cents) for probably a week's work was a major boost to finances. By comparison with today Coca-Cola cost 2½ cents; *'Buy Coca-Cola, 3d ice cold'* was the slogan. At other times I mowed lawns with a hand mower and dug gardens for two dear old ladies, Miss Healey and Miss Foley, who lived in a big house a short walk down Ridge Street, with massive camphor laurel trees in the yard. For this I only received pennies, but I also got biscuits and cordial that were just as welcome.

Both Drummond and Galway Streets sloped down to our address, and I must have been 15 or 16 when I still enjoyed sliding down the gutters on the green slime that sometimes grew in them. We also used the hills as obstacle tracks, riding down them on bikes as others of us tried to belt tyres across the road to collide with the bike. We made wooden revolvers out of Dad's tongue and groove timber offcuts. With a piece of wire as a trigger, passing through a hole bored through the handle and ending bent back in a hook, we shot 'bullets' that were rings of rubber cut from bicycle tubes. These were cheap to make

and harmless. The rings hooked over a nail in the front of the barrel, stretched along the groove in the wood, and were held by the hook in the trigger. Pulling the trigger released the ring to fly off under its own tension. With footrests nailed to long pieces of slender timber we made stilts that provided lots of entertainment and probably helped our sense of balance. I remember walking around the yard on stilts in the summer time with our puppy Baigal tucked in my singlet. Poor Baigal, whose name, Dad told us, was aboriginal for *black*, died of distemper at an early age. Baigal was a bitch who got on heat and attracted all the local dogs in the neighbourhood. We boys used to collect stones and line them up on the front verandah to throw at the unwelcome visitors, but we probably had no idea why the dogs were there. Later on we got a Pekinese called Nelson that was Leo's pet. Nelson had a peculiar eye, which had popped out and been put back, and probably accounted for his name. I wonder was it on the same side as the Admiral's? Ursula had a black cat called Mischief around about the time Mary got married, which always raised a laugh when Mum or Dad told us not to get into mischief.

Some of our other animals were harder. Our bantams were aggressive little monsters, but held an appeal, and once proved hard to get rid of. Bernard swapped one with a friend of his one day, only to have it back within the hour. The boy's mother wouldn't have 'that Catholic bantam' in her house. There was a time when we had an aviary for finches and budgerigars. The finches were zebras and nutmegs, mostly, which I used to save up to buy.

We had a productive mango tree about four metres tall near the sharp end of the wedge, and I would often retire to its upper branches with a book, reading in the cool shade and probably imagining myself in some tropical paradise. Tiny, green tree frogs also loved the big, cool leaves of this tree and were often to be found there. Besides mangos we grew loquats, oranges, and macadamia nuts that we only ever knew as Queensland nuts. I would grind the nut shell down on a cement path or gutter and then smooth the edges to make a ring. Being a Phantom fan, at some stage I carved a skull and crossbones on one ring with a pocketknife. Ours and other fruit trees in the neighbourhood attracted fruit bats, or flying foxes, and these would make a noise and a smell when they were feeding. But they paid the price occasionally when they electrocuted themselves on the overhead power lines, and their carcasses would hang there until they wasted away. In the front yard we grew a date palm and an aloe plant, a fleshy cactus-looking thing with tough green skin and soft interior. It was used as a poultice on sores, and its bitter juice was rubbed on fingers and thumbs to discourage sucking them, particularly for Pat who was

called '*suck a thumb*'. Bernard used to fool his mates by telling them the juice was delicious. He would split the leaf and wipe his finger through the juicy flesh, and then lick a dry finger. His mates didn't see the change of fingers and would lick the bitter juice. They only ever did it once. The date palm never produced mature fruit but did carry bunches of yellow, immature fruit at times. Near the aloe plant was a *monstera deliciosa*, a small plant that produced a long, green, segmented fruit with a reputation for tasting like fruit salad. I never ate it and only rarely saw fruit on it, but Len remembers it as being delicious. Probably because of the risk of spreading plant disease the council did not permit ladies-finger bananas to be grown in back yards. Dad had a prolific plant at the foot of the back steps. Apparently he had come to some agreement whereby he traded off a small part of the end of our yard the council wanted, in return for their turning a blind eye to his banana plant.

In the latter years of the war we had an air raid shelter near the mango tree. Prior to this I think we had planned to use the storm water pipe as refuge. Dad dug a room into the ground and used the dirt to form an earthen roof over the top. It had steps down, and a bench inside for sitting on, and a good solid wooden door. Without pumping equipment it was wet a lot, and I can still recall the wet clay smell of being inside. We never had to use the shelter and Dad eventually dismantled it and restored the yard.

Dad was a self-taught builder, a perfectionist, and proud of his work for which he charged only reasonable rates, putting himself in financial difficulties sometimes as a result. I remember one particular occasion when I earned £1 (\$2) for missing my day's schooling. Considering I later started work on about £4 a week, that was like winning a lottery. Looking back on records I find that £1 extremely generous, as the basic wage in 1945 was only £3.17.0, the old age pension was £1.12.6, and child endowment was 7/6 a week. There were 12 pennies to the shilling and 20 shillings to the pound in the days of Imperial currency, and with decimal currency in 1966 the pound became two dollars. One of the offshoots of Dad's re-stumping houses was that he usually got to keep the old stumps. These he sawed into manageable lengths and then cut up with an axe for firewood. Occasionally our Saturday afternoons would be given over to helping him saw the stumps. For this he had a crosscut saw about two or more metres long, and with him on one end and one of the boys on the other he would reduce long stumps to oven size lengths. It is quite an art to develop the rhythm and coordination necessary for good work with a crosscut saw. Dad always sharpened and set his own saws, both crosscut and carpenters. Saturday was also the day for haircuts and we were regularly shorn,

sitting on a kitchen chair with a towel over our shoulders to stop the clippings falling inside our shirts. Dad used hand clippers that he sharpened himself, and did a fair job of cutting hair until after I joined the RAAF, by which time his hand and eye were a little unsteady. As a final touch to the haircut he would singe the back with wax matches. A few Saturdays were given over to boxing lessons, but I don't think any of us saw the sport in this and, while Dad might have had the best intention in teaching us self defence, his boxing lessons didn't catch on.

Besides the copper, the stove also was fed with wood. It was a cast iron affair in its own recess built out from the kitchen wall, and we used to cook toast directly on its top or over its coals for breakfast. Toast was never wasted, and if we overcooked it we simply scraped the black burnt layer off and ate the rest. Mostly breakfast - which we ate standing up around the table - was toast and cereal, or rolled oats, or Breakfast Delight. And Syrup - known as *bullocky's joy* - in seven-pound tins. Or plum jam in any of a number of guises: myra plum, dark plum, light plum or greengage plum; whatever was cheapest was what we ate. But Queensland was the only place I know of that had Rosella jam, a rich, tangy jam resembling plum in colour but much more tasty, and made from the dark red fleshy leaves of the fruit from the rosella bush. Sometimes on Sundays, after Mass, we would come home and cook up a massive pan of sausages. Bread was unsliced, and we would cut our own slices if we were competent and confident. Otherwise one of the older members would cut it. Slices were not always even, and the end of the loaf would finish up as a wedge. Dad always had Epsom Salts - crystals of hydrated magnesium sulphate - with his breakfast. He would open the little packet and pour the crystals into a saucer of hot tea from which he drank the solution. They kept him 'regular'. Sal Vital was another of his drinks, and we were sometimes given fizzy Sal Vital drinks as a treat.

There was a shelf beside the stove with a tin of dripping on it that Mum used for a lot of cooking. I don't think it was replaced often, just recycled. Consequently it had a richness from all the meats that had been cooked in it, and it was delicious spread on bread and sprinkled with salt and pepper. Puftaloons, or fried scones, were standard fare, but I never liked them, especially when they were soaked in Syrup, which others saw as a great treat. I did enjoy fritters though; diced leftover roast meat mixed into a batter and fried. Beside the stove there was a wooden kitchen chair on which stood a bucket of fresh water for drinking or washing up, and it was Len's responsibility to keep this filled. We would dip a tin pannikin into the bucket

for a drink. For a long time the bathroom was the only room in the house with running water. The washing up was done in a tin dish with a little hand mop, and suds were created from soap blocks inside a little hinged wire cage on a wire handle. Grandpa Westerman would make whiskers for us from the soapsuds and put them on our faces. I remember Grandpa as being always impeccably dressed in a suit, with fob watch chain across his midriff attached to a watch in his waistcoat pocket, and with a walking stick. He had white hair and a large white moustache. Grandma Westerman was slightly built, always dressed in ankle-length black dresses, and wore her black hair parted in the middle and pulled tightly into a bun at the back.

Dad came across all sorts of things in his jobbing, and we seemed to have a second-hand bicycle or two at some stage in our youth. Bikes were not as well appointed then as they are now, and we never knew gears. There were three basic types: fixed wheel, where the pedals turned the wheel with no ratchet; ratchet, with freewheeling; and a rear-axle brake that was quite a luxury. Often our bikes didn't have brakes of any kind, and it was necessary to hook a foot over the rear tyre and press down for braking. We didn't know the luxury of mudguards. As little boys we couldn't straddle the bar and reach the pedals, but we still managed to ride big bikes by putting our right legs through the frame rather than over it. During one lot of school holidays I managed to get a job as telegram boy at Annerley and Moorooka and, because I had my own bike, was paid a bonus to use it instead of one of the official bikes. Telegram boys had to sign a form promising not to disclose the contents of telegrams to unauthorised persons, and up to now I have observed that. Now, well over forty years later, I can say that the only telegram I can remember from that time said 'My name is not, repeat not, Skinner. I am lonely Joan'. Must have been important to warrant a telegram. In those days it was common to get a tip for delivering a telegram, especially if it was good news, and I would sometimes get threepence or so or a cold drink, which was always welcome after a long ride.

But before I ever had a bicycle I owned a scooter that I was given by one of my better-off school friends. I don't remember how old I was then, but I was still at primary school and I used to ride this scooter to Mass on weekdays. I was an altar boy - I think most of the Bibbo boys were - and weekday Masses and Friday night Benedictions and Stations of the Cross were a regular feature of my life. Being an altar boy meant I had good altar clothes, and my red soutane and white surplice with black and red slippers were certainly better quality than my everyday clothes. We looked after our own altar clothes and

my surplice was always stiff with starch we had to make up from a powder we bought in small boxes. Masses were said in Latin and we were coached by the nuns to know it off by heart. Missals were promoted with the urging *Pray the Mass by using the Missal at Mass*, and Masses had a ritual and ceremony that I think has been lost with the vernacular Mass. Latin Masses were easy to follow, with the Latin being on one page or column and the English on the adjoining page or column. Father Dee was the parish priest for a long time, and a real martinet. He tore strips off me for not volunteering to serve on his altar one weekday when his rostered altar boy didn't turn up. I didn't volunteer because I wanted to get away early as I was going on a short holiday with a school friend, John Gill, to a logging camp. Being 'kept in' after Mass and called an 'impudent little puppy' did not increase my love of our Father Dee. Without his housekeeper at one time, he asked Tony how to boil water. He could not have been entirely stupid though, because he went on to become at least a Monsignor in the church hierarchy. Women had to have their heads covered in churches in those days and there was consequently a parade of hats - or at the very least scarves - on Sundays. Men didn't wear hats in church but often dressed in them. One of my proudest acquisitions around that time was a grey felt hat like Dad's that was a symbol of growing up. The first time I wore it to Mass I forgot it, and had to walk back and get it.

We used to talk of it as being a mile (1.6km) to school or church, and would often walk this four times a day; once to morning Mass at St Joachim's then back home for breakfast, then back to school for the day and home in the afternoon. It used to take about half an hour to walk it. As an adult I measured the distance at 1.9km and walked it easily in 20 minutes. There was a tram that terminated at Holland Park where the school and church were located, but we could not always afford the regular penny fare (1.2c). Anyway walking to school had its advantage. Besides keeping us healthy and saving household money, it got me taught how to tell the time. In going to school we would often pass an elderly (to me at the time, anyway) gentleman school teacher going the other way to teach at the State school in Greenslopes. He took it on himself to teach us all about the 'little hand and the big hand' on the clock face and what it all meant. For a while I was paid one shilling a week to escort a younger child from a better-off family to and from school. Bernard tells me that I walked him home from school one day during class time to change his trousers. He remembers it well, and I suppose I would too if I had been the one to walk the distance with trousers sticking to my backside. He also remembers our frequently being waylaid on the way to school by boys from

the Hunter family who went to the State school. Hunter Brothers had the contract for emptying the dunny cans, and anybody working on their trucks had a smell that only time could eliminate. Why we were at war with the Hunter boys I don't know.

It was many years before I saw a refrigerator, and the first was a kerosene-driven one that Tony had control of. It had a reservoir underneath, and a circular wick that had to be kept trimmed to burn with a blue flame. Tony was the only one who could control the beast. Before that it was an icebox that was kept downstairs because it dripped water. This had a galvanised tin trough with a lid, built over a single-door cupboard. Blocks of ice went into the trough and food into the cupboard. Anything that had to be kept really cold went in with the ice. Carters regularly delivered ice around the streets, and we would rush out to buy a block or half-block as required, and ask for any broken off pieces that we would eat. Meat was sometimes kept in a gauze meat safe hanging in the relative cool of under the house. Mum actually used to make a magnificent ice cream from a recipe she got from Mary after Mary married and moved on. The family rated it highly.

There was always a small piece of gauze mesh on Dad's workbench. He used it with hydrochloric acid for soldering, and the acid was kept in the bottom of a broken bottle; or at least some of it was. I had three warts on the back of my right hand for years; one on the index finger, and two widely spaced below the knuckles. I found that hydrochloric acid burned these warts away, and that's how I eventually got rid of them after what must have been years of trying every proprietary cure available at the chemist. That was a potential health hazard, but there were others. Being a carpenter Dad always had odd pieces of wood lying around, many with nails in them. I know I frequently had nails puncturing bare feet, and the worst I remember was when I put one completely through my right foot between the big toe and its neighbour. The wood was literally nailed to my foot. For that I got a tetanus injection, and treatment with a black antiseptic cream the name of which I can no longer remember. There were worse accidents at Galway Street. Neville Coe, from over the road, was sitting on our back fence with me when he fell off frontwards and onto his arm. It broke completely in the middle of the forearm, so that when he stood with his elbow parallel to the ground his hand and wrist pointed to the ground. For some reason he didn't call for help to Mum but screamed for Grandma Westerman. In 1942 Len had a nasty accident on a bike near the junction of Galway and Drummond streets. He was doubling Bernard down Drummond Street from Ridge Street and lost

control in loose gravel. In protecting Bernard he suffered a severe head injury and concussion that took him out of school for years. He finished his scholarship in 1942 and then worked with Thynne and McCartney solicitors for a while, before becoming Dad's permanent helper until he joined the seminary at Banyo in 1945 for eleven years of education and training for the priesthood.

The toilet was originally an outdoor dunny with wooden seat and lid over a black tin that was removed through a small door in the back. Ours had a covering of fresh-smelling honeysuckle while it was out in the yard, but that really didn't compensate for the smell inside. For that we used things like a black liquid cleaner with the propriety name of Phenyle, if we used anything. Most of the time it was a matter of throwing in a handful of sawdust after doing the job, and using the newspaper or torn-up magazines that served as toilet paper and hung on a big nail in the wall. Luxury was the soft paper apple wrappings that preceded our adoption of commercial toilet tissue. There were always plenty of cobwebs in and around the toilet, and I remember enormous webs that spiders would build overnight between the dunny and the clothesline. These were directly across the access to the house through the back gate. Coming home from Benediction or wherever at night, we were likely to walk into one of these webs. Though probably harmless the spiders were big and ugly, and I never liked them. Grandpa Westerman used to bat them out of the web with a long piece of wood. The dunny and the timber of Dad's stacked around it provided a haven for rats. Periodically the council rat catchers would arrive with their fox terriers to mount an attack. They rarely left empty handed. At times Pat helped in rat elimination by shooting them with a .22 rifle from the rear bedroom window.

Aunties and Uncles used to drift through our lives. But I am not sure that many of them were true blood relatives. I think we were encouraged to call our elders by those titles as a mark of respect. We did have a pair of very ancient aunties who were spinsters. They were Mum's aunties, Liz and Jo Hunter (Isabella and Johanna Hunter), and lived at Kangaroo Point in a house that seemed perpetually dark inside and suited the sombre mood of their existence. Visiting them was necessary every once in a while but never truly enjoyable. All of us recall the cracked and dirty teacups as being the most significant feature of any visit there, with the water being boiled on a single gas ring with its peculiar smell pervading the house. Auntie Jo seemed to have a permanent bandage on one wrist and would give us lollies from a jar in her front bedroom. Auntie Liz died at Eventide Nursing Home at the age of 102, but I

think it was years since she had been aware of her surroundings. A cousin, Francis 'Frank' Kilpatrick, spent a lot of time with us. Mum's younger sister, Ursula, died at the age of 25 a week after giving birth to her only child, and he was brought up by Grandma and Grandpa Westerman. Frank was nine months older than I was, and lived up the hill on the corner of Chatsworth Road and Henzell Terrace, Greenslopes. I suppose he was lucky in having a home to be brought up in, but having 'parents' who were over 60 years older than yourself must have been a strain on both parties. Synthetic fibres assumed prominence after the War and I was fascinated when Frank bought a pair of sharkskin trousers. Made out of fish skin? They were probably made of Dacron or Orlon. Synthetic materials had a fascination in the dry atmosphere of Brisbane. In total darkness they could produce brilliant lightning across their surfaces when undressing. This was from the build-up of static electricity in the fibres.



The Westerman Grandparents, Bredelia Mary Angela Hunter & Herbert James Westerman who brought up cousin Francis Kilpatrick, 1915.

Frank and I were both courting Delaney girls at one time, and Frank married Shirley Delaney in 1953. They were not destined for a long sojourn on earth and Frank died in 1985 of a heart attack, with Shirley dying in 1989. A real auntie whom I did see frequently was Mum's younger sister, Alma. She and my uncle Victor Lionel 'Vic' Wilson lived at Annerley on the corner of Franklin and Aubigny Streets. I had little occasion to go over there, and only remember a back verandah, dining room and under the house. Mary and

others spent more-frequent and longer times with Auntie Alma. Vic and Alma were childless, having lost their only daughter in 1932 when she was only three years old. Vic and Alma kept cropping up in my life as Auntie and Uncle until 1980 when Vic insisted that we were both old enough then to use first names. Auntie Alma was always Auntie to me until she died on 21 March 1993. Vic had died on 1 May 1987.

Some babies were born at home and were always a source of mystery, being associated with doctors and black bags because they were never there before the doctor came running up the front steps with his black bag. Others were born in the Janolma Hospital not far from the eastern side of Logan road near Ridge Street. Uncle Tom (Thomas Westerman, son of Thomas Westerman and Maria Green) died in Dad's bed in 1942 while I was at home, and a story went around among us children that he died of lead poisoning because he was a bookkeeper and chewed his lead pencils. Grandpa Westerman died there too in 1946, quietly in his sleep after dinner. But I don't remember being there then. Mary had to arrange for Grandma to be brought down from Chatsworth Road and be told the sad news. I was about eight years old when Paul died after only weeks of life, and I cried when that happened. I really missed him. The stories that persist about Paul's death are that he died of pneumonia after being bathed and left near a draughty window in Janolma Hospital, or that he died on a respirator after being taken to Janolma Hospital with pneumonia. It seems that Paul was a victim of the disease and not of inept nursing though. He was taken ill at home and treated in the hospital. Treatment for pneumonia in those days consisted of cool bathing and none of the modern medication we have now. Almost certainly he died despite the treatment and not because of it. The fact that he was born and baptised on the same day, 27 April 1941, lends substance to the argument that he was not expected to live. Dad took one of the metal crucifixes off the tiny coffin and mounted it on a wooden support and base that I still have.

Holidays were mostly spent at home, and I used to go walking barefoot in the local countryside; climbing little mountains, swimming in creeks with the occasional snake, chasing frilled lizards that would turn and threaten us with wide-open mouth and flared neck, and shooting lorikeets that we called blueys and greenies with shanghais made from a forked tree branch and strips of rubber cut from old car tyres. There was quite an art in making the perfect shanghai. Firstly the chosen tree branch had to be nearly a perfect Y that was stripped of its bark and smoothed and rounded. The rubbers had to be cut parallel so that they looked nice and had no nicks in them that might lead to

premature failure. The pouch for holding the stone was best made from the tongue of an old shoe, and there never seemed to be any shortage of these. Tying these together so that they did not slip, or cut into the rubber, was the true test. One method was to use thick twine with an elaborate binding; another was to use leather thongs cut from old shoe tongues the same as the pouches. We were never very successful at hitting the parrots but had a lot of fun shooting at anything that took our fancy as a target in the bush. There was a lot of bush and open country within easy walking distance of Greenslopes, and I would often go out all day with one or more friends from school, both boys and girls but mostly just boys. We never went skinny-dipping in mixed company, but sometimes did when there were just boys, occasionally getting caught out by other groups arriving while our clothes were on the bank of the creek. Bernard acquired a canoe made from a sheet of corrugated roofing iron that we used in creeks and water holes. Nail holes in the iron were patched with bitumen from the road surface.

In my last year or two at primary school I used to visit sisters, Lynette and Mary Hobbs, who had a stepfather. For someone so caught up in a large family a stepfather seemed to me a remote relationship, but he always made me welcome. I always, or almost always, went with another school friend, probably Brian Philipson, and we would sit under their house and talk or, as I remember on one occasion, dissect frogs. A favourite spot we visited was White's Hill, a wilderness then with a long rope hanging from a tree, and a crossbar in the rope to put your feet on for swinging out over the slope of the hill. To get up White's Hill we had to crawl under and through a barrier of lantana, but we never viewed that as being an obstacle. Brian and I caught buckets full of yabbies in the creeks, using raw meat on a piece of string and pieces of mosquito netting on a wire frame. Frequently for my walks I would just go around the streets admiring the neat yards and nice houses. I don't believe I ever felt envy, just admiration, which must have been a comment on the security I felt at home.

There were paddocks with paspalum grass and canna lilies just over the back road where we hid and smoked some sort of weed that dried with a hollow stem. Our own yard and front footpath at times were overgrown with paspalum so thick we could safely throw ourselves into the clumps. We thought it fun to play and roll in this, and chew on the fresh green stalks of the grass. Occasionally we found skink's eggs in the grass; little rubbery white eggs that I suppose we squashed. If they were manhandled by the tail the skinks would shed it and run off. The tail would continue to wriggle like a living

thing. Apparently this is a ruse the skinks employ to escape predators like birds, which would be attracted to the tail while the skink made its escape. Use and storage kept the back yard cleared some of the time, but it occasionally had to be cut with a hand reaping hook (sickle) or a scythe until we eventually acquired a hand mower. A water main for storm water ran directly through our yard and we had a manhole of our own. This had a big, heavy, studded steel cover. With Dad's crowbar we were able to remove this and climb down steel rungs set in the concrete walls and play in the drain. It housed the biggest and healthiest cockroaches in Greenslopes. They could fly and were a constant plague through the house, and nothing would get rid of them except floods. Heavy rain in Brisbane often flooded our yard and, if particularly heavy, would choke the drains and lift the manhole cover and float it to another part of the yard. The cockroaches always came back. Because of this manhole Dad eventually appealed for a reduction in rates, and in 1963 the rates were reduced from £500 to £425. Dad had asked for them to be reduced to £150.

Other favourite playing grounds were the Tin Factory, the Crown Stove Factory, and later, the American Army Hospital. I don't know what was made at the Tin Factory but it had shaped offcuts underneath that we found useful. The Stove Factory never provided us with material goods, but was a place to visit out of hours. During the war the Americans built an army hospital at Mount Gravatt, and this was an endlessly fascinating place. It was here I saw my first ballpoint pen, or biro - named after their Hungarian inventor, Laszlo Biro - before they were ever available on the market; they were only licensed for production in the USA in June 1943. And I watched soldiers playing 'catch the greasy pig' and 'climb the greasy pole' at entertainments that were held in hospital grounds. The thought of rummaging through rubbish bins in an army hospital horrifies me now, but it was just another inquisitive pastime then.

The Greenslopes Military Hospital was built on land I used to walk on and so I lost that area for recreation. But it was not without recompense as it was an education to watch the construction of so big a complex. A Chinaman had a vegetable garden over this way. He had a small ramshackle wooden hut, and his gardens were laid out just as I was to see them eventually in southeast Asia and China itself. On some Sunday afternoons we would be sent over to buy a fresh lettuce and shallots for a salad tea. I can vividly remember the day I stole one of his shallots while Len and Tony, the other boys I was with, were down at the other end of the gardens with him. He was watching me, probably expecting this, and was after me like an express train with his knife in his hand. I dropped the shallot and took off faster than he did. Fortunately he couldn't

chase me far because that would have meant abandoning his gardens. I don't think I was ever game to go back there for vegetables.

Somewhere along the way Dad got a tent and we did go for a holiday to Caloundra. Dad had an open tourer car with crank handle, and spark advance on the steering column, with a running board the full length of both sides. He put a fence along the sides between the front and back mudguards so that tools, timber, house stumps or camping gear could be secured on the running boards. This was not in the days of his model T Ford, but was probably started with a later car like his Buick tourer. John remembered that the first words he could ever recall reading were inscribed on the steering column of the model T. They were *Bat Dim Off On Mag* to cover starting procedures and, probably, headlights. Bernard remembered that Dad had a succession of cars: Model T Ford, Model A Ford, a Buick, a blue Pontiac that followed a 1927 Chev, and his final Hillman. We all headed off to Caloundra on what I recall as only one day and night of a torrential downpour that ruined any thought of staying for a holiday. The centre post of the tent broke, the tent collapsed and we all got wet. I wasn't totally deprived of holidays away from home, though. There was one with the Philipsons at Bribie Island, which became a favourite resort for me. Houses were spartan, shops were few, transport was almost nonexistent except for a ramshackle bus across to the ocean side of the island, and life was uncomplicated. I enjoyed its basic offerings and used to go there with school friends for day trips on a ferry, *The Koopa*, from the city, fascinated by the expansive schools of jellyfish we would plough through on the way. Those one-day trips to Bribie were undoubtedly among the most memorable enjoyments of my outings while at Greenslopes.

It was probably only about 15 km from home in the southern suburbs to Banyo Seminary in the northern suburbs to visit Len on the occasional Sunday when visiting was allowed, probably about four times a year. As an early teenager I thought I had better things to do than visit a mere brother, and I can only recall a few visits there in the old Buick with the fold back roof and the isinglass windows. Going to Mass first and then getting a picnic lunch ready after breakfast seemed a major ordeal in those days. It was a big day for Dad though, going to see his son who was training for the priesthood, and he was obviously very proud of the situation. What I remember of Banyo is the bell tower and the refectory and the seminary's cows after they had been dehorned. On one of these visits Len rolled Dad's Chev while driving with some of his fellow seminarians.

One of the most remembered cars was Tony's Chrysler Coupe with a dickey seat behind the driver, where the passenger sat out in the open. Tony painted this Chrysler with a paintbrush and, to get a good finish, he heated the paint so that when it dried it shrank and pulled out any ripples, giving a smooth gloss surface.

Petrol was rationed from October 1940 right through the war and for a long time afterwards, and this gave rise to innovative ways of coping with the shortage. I can vaguely remember Dad having a gas producer on the back of a car. This burned charcoal and fed the resulting gas to the cylinders instead of petrol. Though cumbersome they were apparently effective, giving up to 100 miles (160 km) from a single firing of the gas producer. I have no idea how much charcoal this would have been, but I do remember the contraption as being large in my boyish estimation. When petrol was available it was from manually operated pumps. These were like a fat metal cylinder over two metres tall with the top section made of glass. The glass section had a gallons scale in it, and the operator pumped a long steel handle pivoted at ground level to put the desired amount of petrol into the glass section. From there it was fed under gravity into the petrol tank of the car. We were blacked out during the war and had all windows pasted over with black opaque paper. Streetlights were hooded so as not to be visible from the air and so were car headlights. Searchlights probing the night sky were a regular affair. The war provided us with a lot of 'toys' at the time; gas masks, water bottles, tin helmets and bayonets. I don't know where we got them from, but all the boys traded in them as toys.

Grandpa Westerman provided us with a real toy on his visits. He had a windup bird like a canary that hopped around the table and made as though it was pecking up seed. He must have valued that and looked after it well, because it was going when I was a child and yet Mary can remember it from her childhood. For a hobby I kept silkworms in a shoebox, monitoring the growth from tiny eggs about the size of pinheads through the caterpillar stage and into the pupa and moth, and then the whole process repeated. The little larvae from the eggs were fed on mulberry leaves that I got from a couple of trees on the way home from school, and of course I had to eat some of the mulberries and get the purple stain on my hands, and sometimes clothes. In about a month the larvae would have grown to about 5 cm, and they would then attach themselves to a branch and spin a yellow cocoon of silk. Eventually the cocoon would hatch into a moth that laid more eggs.

The Hollywood Theatre was just up the road from Galway Street, on Logan Road. It had a floor sloping from back to screen, rows of canvas deckchairs in the centre, first class section, and slatted benches in the side sections, and a lolly counter inside the theatre. The sloping floor was so that people at the back could see over those in front of them, but it had the additional effect that soft-drink bottles released during movies rolled towards the screen over a noisy cement floor until stopped by someone's feet or other obstacle. It was probably a roughhouse for those who wanted to make it so, but all my experiences were innocent. We had to be old enough and good enough before being allowed to go to the Hollywood for the first time, and I think I was taken there first by Mary. Saturday matinees were noisy and crowded, and always had a serial running. Marshall Palmer was the owner, and would stand in the foyer during ticket sales to let everyone know he was there to police any misbehaviour during the movies. Though a gruff looking character, he would buy children penny ice creams at interval time. Ice creams came in two sizes: penny cones and threepenny cones. During at least part of my interest in the Hollywood it showed Tarzan with Johnny Wiesmuller. The serial always preceded the main features, of which there were two; the worse first with an interval in between. In those days the national anthem, God Save the Queen, was played before every movie session and the public had to stand for the duration of the anthem. Besides being responsible for us in our first visit to a movie Mary helped Mum in trying to make us feel less deprived. At Easter we would usually get a hard lolly Easter egg, with a flat 'conversation lolly' inside it with a pithy saying printed on it. To supplement these Easter eggs Mary made her own out of icing sugar and mashed potato, I think.

Television didn't reach Australia until 1956, and was unheard of in my childhood. Of an evening we would cluster around a console radio to listen to shows and soapies. Those were the days of Bob Dyer and his 'Pick A Box'; Roy Rene (Mo McCackie) with Hal Lashwood in 'McCackie Mansions' (Roy Rene died in 1954, remembered as one of Australia's best comedians); the Australian Amateur Hour; and the British show 'Take it from Here' with Dick Bently, Joy Nichols and Jimmy Edwards. That era with its classic Australian soapie 'Dad and Dave' would become known as the 'Golden Age of Radio'. Pat and I had a particular interest in world famous tenors, and used to follow all the programs where the singer had to be identified, and names were not given until the end of the program. We collected bakelite records, (precursor to vinyl) 78 rpm, and played them on a big, old, windup gramophone with steel needles and a big speaker cone. Grandpa Westerman had built the cabinet for

this gramophone and it was very professionally finished to house the speaker and the windup mechanism. Ten-inch records played for three minutes, and twelve-inch records for four. We bought these mostly from Palings in Queen Street. I didn't have a great interest in popular music, but remember the advent of 'The Top Ten' radio program where the most popular tunes were played in half an hour, and voted on by the listening audience who could win a prize by forecasting the 10 most popular tunes for the week. Pat cultivated my musical interests, and in later years we regularly attended symphony concerts and recitals at the City Hall. At interval we often went backstage to get autographs of the artists. I felt a personal sense of loss when artists like Richard Tauber, Joseph Schmidt and Beniamino Gigli died.

My interest in radio must have begun about this time because I put a lot of time into building the perfect crystal set. A piece of masonite as a base, a galena crystal and cat's whisker, a bakelite former wound with insulated copper wire as a coil, and an aluminium variable condenser from army disposals was all that was needed. With an old pair of earphones that would be regarded as crude and heavy these days I would tune in local radio stations, and spend hours probing that crystal with the wire cat's whisker looking for the perfect connection. Crystal sets needed a long aerial and I found that the wire mattress of my bed was as good as anything. This was convenient as most of my listening was done in bed anyway.

Beds varied with our age and size and there were times when I slept in 'proper' beds with frames and sprung mattresses of the era. We had some magnificent old bed-heads and bed-ends with brass knobs and black lacquered frames. But a large part of my life was spent on an ex-army stretcher, a tubular frame with folding legs and a mattress of the same stuff that chainwire fences are made from. On top of this were a horsehair mattress and grey ex-army blankets. There were times when we needed newspaper under the mattress and between the blankets to provide insulation and warmth. In those days I never knew you could wash blankets, and I think ours must have been used continuously for many years. Not for us the luxury of sleeping between sheets. We each had a single sheet we slept on. Bedbugs were a constant problem in early years, and probably weren't eradicated until after the war, when DDT had been developed and was widely used. Grandma Westerman used to supervise washing the wire mattresses and frames with a cloudy solution of water and Phenyle, and seeking out and squashing the smelly things. They lived in the cracks in the interior walls as well as in the mattresses, so they would always return to the beds, and eliminating them was a continuing process. I was to

become more acquainted with Phenyle in primary school where, for pocket money from the nuns, I cleaned the toilets every week.

Until we were all grown up Mum and Dad always went to bed early, Mum to read and Dad to work on estimates or plans for jobs he was doing. He kept his accounts and calculations in small notebooks. Dad had no formal schooling and had apparently been taught all his arithmetic by Mum who still helped him in his calculations at night. Photographs in his early manhood and at marriage show Dad as a strappingly handsome man and well dressed. So his lack of formal education had obviously not been a barrier to his development. He had an excellent command of figures as applied to his building trade, and though I didn't know what he was talking about I used to listen to him and Mum creating measurements in linear feet and super-feet for orders from the sawmills. Most of his timber would have come from Weatherhead & Co. who had a mill in Camp Hill and lived in Drummond Street. He was meticulous in his estimates of costs for jobs. If he determined a cost at £7.9.10 he would not let Mum round it up two pence to seven pounds ten shillings. As late as the mid-50s he was still charging only £4.0.0 a day for his labour costs. Newspapers must have been Dad's window to the world; he slowly devoured every word in them and followed the racing form. Tony and he became keen punters in later years. Dad smoked heavily and rolled his own from Log Cabin tobacco he would transfer from its packet to a leather tobacco pouch. He never wasted even the tiny butts, and would save them in a tin upstairs or on one of the rafters downstairs until he had enough to make more cigarettes from. And yet he had healthy lungs when he died at 93. Among the bric-a-brac of personal items Dad kept on top of the lowboy beside his bed was his bottle of Golden Malts, boiled lollies that were a simple treat. He also had a mouth organ that he played in happier times and tried to teach us how to play, though none of us ever mastered it.

We would all gather round their double bed after a while and kneel and say our evening prayers. I think we were allowed to fit them in between any popular radio shows we might have been listening to. Mum sometimes developed asthma or cramps during or after prayers. For her asthma she burned a powder in the tin lid of a wide-mouthed bottle and inhaled the smoke. Her cramps were always in the feet, and Dad had to massage them with one or other of us helping. I never liked doing it. Without lights, and with long grass and spiders, there was a definite disincentive to use the dunny at night. If we had to go we would go in pairs. But just to urinate we boys would go to the top of the front steps and piddle between the railings. We shared this practice with the big

green frogs that gathered on the front steps and left their hard droppings behind. Mum was better served. She had a chamber pot under the bed and would use that. It fell mostly to Mary, as senior girl, to empty this when necessary, but others of us had to do the job when Mary wasn't around. Naturally there was an identifying smell between use and emptying of the potty. We lived with it and didn't know any better.

Life seems to have been a lot simpler in those days and people more trusting. It was not necessary to lock the house to go shopping, and houses would be left wide open and unattended for long periods. Dad built the house himself. It was weatherboard with a corrugated iron roof, with all interior walls of wood. At first it was three bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, verandah with bare corrugated iron roof, and bathroom. In its final configuration it had four bedrooms, front and side verandahs with ceilings, lounge, dining room, kitchen, and bathroom. Mum had a Singer treadle sewing machine at one end of the dining room. We had linoleum on all floors except the verandahs, but in its latter years the front verandah was laid with masonite panels to give it a smooth, continuous surface. Most of the time it had a wooden paling fence all around, but the front was renewed with wire panels in its later years.

Mary was still there when Ursula was born, so there was a time when all nine children were living there. Sleeping arrangements then would have been: Mum and Dad in the main bedroom that was open to the front and side verandahs and the hallway but had doors that could be closed; two boys in the large front bedroom (three when cousin Frank stayed with us); Mary and a baby in the second bedroom; John in a back bedroom; two boys on the side verandah; and two boys on the front verandah. In the early days the verandahs were open, but as I remember them they were firstly closed with wooden venetians and then with glass louvres. The door at the top of the front steps, which we always called the 'lattice door', was open latticework in its top half. So it could never keep out insects and mosquitoes or the cool of winter, and we must have roughed it sleeping out there. Some of the beds, with bed-heads and ends, had mosquito nets, but not all. The door from the front verandah into the hallway had a dark, heavy door with what looked like a stained glass picture of birds in it, and we always called it the 'bird door' when we wanted to be specific. Actually it was beautifully executed oilpaper stuck to glass, and was probably a work of art. The door itself had a large, solid, green handle made of quartz or something similar, right in the middle. The birds were probably wrens or swallows on small red, green or golden panels alternating with panels of plain colour. In the lounge room there was a large heavily framed portrait of

grandpa Westerman in the formal attire of his Hibernian Lodge. Decorating the picture were items of Lodge regalia and quotations. In the hallway, opposite the doorway to Mum and Dad's bedroom, there was a portrait of Anton Bibo as a stern Prussian figure with a big moustache. These pictures just disappeared in the chaos of selling the house after Mum and Dad moved into a nursing home, along with other heirlooms we should have kept but, for a variety of reasons, didn't.



Dad, John William 'Jack' Bibb, 1946.

Not everything disappeared though. I have an old clock of unknown vintage plus Dad's worn, gold watch. I have two Mass books, one in excellent condition and in its box. This book is Made in Belgium and carries the Imprimatur of Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop, New York, August 8th. 1924. The second is well worn, and carries the hand written inscription *'To dear*

Mum, In memory of her Silver Wedding, 25. 4. 25. with love from Vera. This was printed in Czechoslovakia and carries the Imprimatur of Patrick J. Hayes, Archbishop of New York, July 26, 1921. I also have a ceramic mug celebrating the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in May 1937, and an iridescent purple glass bowl that we used to fill with nuts for Christmas. All of these items certainly have historic and sentimental value if not actual monetary value, and I know other family members have their heirlooms from Galway Street.

In his last years there Dad enjoyed sitting on the front verandah absorbed in his newspaper, and was not easily distracted. He seemed to be hard of hearing at times. Both Mum and Tony called him to dinner one day and he had ignored them both when Tony said to Mum in a low voice 'Silly old bugger's deaf'. Nothing wrong with his hearing, Dad said 'Silly old bugger's not deaf' and went to dinner.

Tony and Pat, along with the O'Neills and Tooheys, friends of the time, sat up with Dad playing cribbage and other card games for most of the night when they were both working and family finances were healthier. Dad enjoyed these nights that often extended into entire weekends. Somewhere in the mid '60s he burst a blood vessel in one eye, making it blind. He refused to have it removed and continued driving his Hillman, NAN-743, even to Benediction at night when he was in his 80s. On some of these nights he drove on the wrong side of the road, criticising the other 'stupid' motorists. Nothing Tony could say would persuade him to give up driving. Registration certificates dated 1960 and 1962 show the car in Mum's name, with total fees in 1962 being £20.7.6. Finally, when he had a minor accident in daylight Tony organised the disposal of the car to a wreckers, telling Dad that it was not economically repairable.

Dad had been a tough character in his time, and unlucky. Tony remembers three accidents he had. Working opposite St Laurence's school he fell off a scaffold with a pinch bar in his hand and it penetrated his thigh. He pulled it out, strapped up his thigh and went back to work. Closer to home, he broke three ribs working at Sampson's who owned the tennis courts over Drummond Street from us. He ignored this too, and didn't find out they were broken until the next day. In early 1955, helping Tony to build his house after he had formally retired from work and accepted the old age pension, he fell off the roof on his back across a cement wall about 60cm high. He got up and went back to work. He was luckier in these accidents than he was in the Golden Casket. Whenever he could afford it - which was often in his later

years - he bought either a half share or a full ticket in the Casket. Being naturally courteous he once stepped aside and ushered a woman to the ticket counter in front of him: she won first prize. I'm sure he is a saint in heaven now; perhaps he was never meant to have material wealth.

After I joined the RAAF in 1951 I only occasionally lived back at Galway Street, and had little to do with its disposal, so that it drifted out of my life. Only in later years did I feel nostalgia for the place for its memories of growing up in that large-family atmosphere. It broke Dad's heart to have to leave it when he and Mum were no longer capable of looking after themselves. It fell to Tony to arrange for Dad and Mum to shift and it must have been very difficult, knowing how devoted Dad was to his little patch of territory that he had put so much of his life into. Nobody would have been more appropriate than Tony because the rest of us regard him as the nearest to Dad in temperament and family outlook, and Dad would have gained most from Tony out of all of us.

Dad and Mum moved into a small unit at Symes Grove Retirement Village in Handford Road, Zillmere, in 1974, and they were in there by 23 July when Tony accepted power of attorney for Dad. They were still physically active and could cook and fend for themselves, or else eat in the communal refectory. With David, Paul and Andrew I was able to visit them there in Christmas of that year by which time Dad was looking very old and walking with a stick. He was doing pretty well for a 93-year old though. Deteriorating health meant they had to move to Canossa Hospital in Oxley in 1975, and Dad moved on 22 March with Mum following on 8 April. Most of the family were present to celebrate Dad and Mum's 50th wedding anniversary in December 1975, which was Dad's final union with the family. He died on 6 July 1976 and is buried in Mount Gravatt cemetery in a site he chose on a hilltop because 'it has a good view from here'. Mum was moved within the hospital to a different section on 21 February 1978 and died there on 19 January 1979. She is buried with Dad, and I hope they both have an excellent view from where they lie. I am sure they are 'In God's Hands' as their headstone says.



The Wedding Party. (L–R): John William ‘Jack’ Bibo, Veronica Westerman, Herbert Westerman, Alma Westerman, Victor Lionel Wilson, 16 December 1925.



The children of Herbert James Westerman & Bredelia Mary Angela Hunter, Alma b1905 (left), Veronica b1902 (back), Ursula b1907 (right), Frances b1904 (front).

School Years – Work – RAAF

Primary School — St Joachim's Church School

Primary school was St Joachim's in Holland Park, being the underneath part of a two-storey building with St Joachim's church upstairs. We were taught by the Sisters of St Joseph who all wore long dresses and capes of dark brown or rusty black material for their uniforms that were known as habits, and lived in a convent over the road from the school. Writing commenced on slates which were literally that; smooth, flat, rectangular pieces of grey slate that we wrote on with a slate pencil presumably made of soft grey clay. To clean the slate for reuse we'd use a piece of old damp rag or sponge specially reserved for the purpose and kept in a tobacco tin. That didn't always work as it tended to dry out, and we'd often spit on it to moisten it again. The long-term smell from these tins with their captive, damp sponges was almost invasive. The slates had wooden frames a bit like a picture frame, and these were always falling apart. I don't remember a lot about school except that it entailed a lot of learning, both by study and by rote, and a lot of homework. I think Dad always hoped that we would do well, considering his own lack of education, but Mum always expected us to do well and demanded that we perform to our highest capability. She was a pretty hard taskmaster at times, and I can vividly recall having my ears pulled as punishment for criticising Ursula one night.

In class we would stand in groups reciting synonyms or times-tables until we knew them without thinking. We rarely had nights when we didn't have work to do at home for presentation next day at school. School bags then were very formal; knapsacks made of leather or a hard compound like moulded cardboard. Besides knapsacks there were ports, like little suitcases. Knapsacks were preferred because ports were suspected of stretching the arm that carried them. On the way to school we could sometimes call at a small grocer's and get a paper bag of broken biscuits, perhaps by saving our tram fare and walking instead on those days when we had fares, or when there was genuinely money to spare. The occasional threepence we were given for real spending money would buy three cupcakes, four blocks of liquorice and one frozen orange.

Punishment was meted out for all sorts of wrongdoings, in the form of a cane. This was a lawyer cane about a metre long, used to hit the palm of the hand held upward at arm's length out from the body. Six 'cuts' were standard

punishment. We tried all sorts of remedies to reduce the hurt, like resin rubbed into the palm first if you had sufficient time and could do it without being caught. I don't think it really did any good. Perhaps it was my objection to corporal punishment that occasioned my first reasoned conflict with authority. I know I hadn't been in school a lot of years when it happened, and it was on the verandah of the church being used as a classroom during the war. I was in a rear seat in class, and later that day I had a dental appointment. The Sister in charge must have made some remark about my appointment that I didn't like, because I left my seat and marched to the head of the room. I told her that I was going on my appointment despite what she might have to say about it, reducing her to tears. Of course I went on the appointment, but I had to apologise afterwards.

The war came to school too, and we had air-raid drills, and at least one alert that sent us to the trenches dug zigzag into the playground. While we huddled in the trenches with our heads down, the nuns walked up and down the zigzag lines saying the rosary with their big beads they wore on their waist. That was almost certainly when the Japanese attacked Darwin on Thursday, 19 February 1942. The first attack occurred from carrier-based aircraft at 10.00 a.m. and was followed by a second from ground-based aircraft two hours later, killing at least 238 people, with enormous damage to the town, the port and the RAAF base. It was Australia's Pearl Harbour and would have sent shock waves around the nation. The carrier attack, from the *Akagi*, *Soryu*, *Hiryu* and *Kaga* about 400 kilometres north-west of Darwin was led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida under the command of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo. Both of these men were prominent in the attack on Pearl Harbour less than three months earlier. The ground attack was launched from captured bases in Indonesia's Celebes and Ambon.

World War II came to an end in two stages. The European theatre closed when Germany surrendered unconditionally at Rheims on 7 May 1945 under pressure from the Western and Russian armies, and ratified this in Berlin on 8 May. The war in the Pacific was brought to an end after America dropped two atomic bombs on Japan: the first on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, when the blast destroyed about 13 sq km of the city and killed an estimated 70,000-100,000 people; and the second on Nagasaki three days later, destroying about 5 sq km and killing around 40,000. Japan announced its surrender on 14 August and this was officially signed aboard the US battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945.

Archerfield aerodrome was not far from Greenslopes as the crow flies, and aircraft flying over were common. I remember seeing a Wirraway so low I thought it was going to hit the roof at Galway Street. I didn't know then that I would indulge in a lot of low flying in later life that would have put the Wirraway to shame.

School sports were encouraged, but I don't think they were compulsory except for the annual sports where schools competed against one another in formal contests held in the Woolloongabba cricket ground and such places. I have never liked cricket. The reason may be that I was hit in the right eye by a cricket ball that I missed in a high catch. Father Rosenskjær treated the immediate problem with raw steak but I think there were long-term problems. I had to wear glasses for years after that. I hated them because they were plain steel framed, all we could afford and an obvious sign of poverty. When I started work I haunted the public library and followed a course on *The Art of Seeing* by Aldous Huxley. Finally I lost one pair of glasses and sat on a second pair, and freed myself of their burden. I was accepted into the Air Force with 6/6 vision and didn't need glasses again until I was forty years old. The period with glasses had other traumas besides the embarrassment. I would have to go to the General Hospital on the other side of Brisbane, to the outpatients' department for periodic treatment. Even today I would regard this as an adventure; then it must have been an ordeal, especially by tram. Treatment required dilating the pupil and I wasn't given treatment to counter this afterwards, if such treatment existed in those days. On one occasion I had to phone Dad to come and get me while I waited for ages, miserable and half blind at the tram stop. Other interesting episodes at the General Hospital involved dentistry. We had our teeth done at the Dental Hospital where the training was done. Probably it cost little or nothing. On one of these visits I was in a dental chair with John in another chair on my right, both of us probably having teeth out, or at least drilled. Local anaesthetic was a big needle in the jaw. I saw the student dentist put the needle in John's mouth. Then the point came out his cheek and squirted fluid over the floor! We both survived the treatment. I can easily recall the taste of cloves, used so much with fillings then.

John Gill was the boy who gave me the scooter. He was much better off than we were but didn't seem to care. John caught polio and ended crippled on one side, with a spindly leg. Poor John was too early for the Salk vaccine that radically cut back the incidence of poliomyelitis from 1955. Another friend was Shaun Skillender. Shaun's parents ran a poultry farm out past Mount

Gravatt. On a visit to his farm one day, for his birthday I think, I watched the eggs being cleaned with spiral rollers. One had a soft shell, something I had never seen before and couldn't have believed. Anyway this egg didn't get cleaned. It got sucked up in the rollers and disappeared, but nobody would believe me when I told them. I think it was Shaun's finger I broke when I kicked it in a schoolyard fight, but we stayed friends. I know it was Shaun I co-opted to try out a new game I heard about. The idea was to take ten deep breaths and hold the last while someone squeezed your chest in a bear hug. I passed out peacefully and woke up on the dirt playground feeling pleasantly remote. The nuns were not impressed, and I was forbidden to do it again.

Neil McCrae lived close to the school on the main road, Logan Road. Two guava trees in his yard kept us supplied with fruit in season, much of it with worms in. But with so much to choose from a few worms were no trouble, and wormy ones made good missiles in friendly skirmishes. His father had an interesting tool shed - a corrugated iron water tank laid on its side with a door and window in the end and a flat wooden floor. Neil taught me how to make little bombs by shaving the heads off matches, sandwiching them between the matchbox sides with the striking side in, and wrapping the sandwich in foil from a cigarette pack. When hit with a hammer on a cement path these would explode. But it was more fun to put them on the tramline and hide to watch. They went off with a bang, and the driver always stopped to investigate. We got caught a few times but the driver couldn't leave his tram to deal with us. Another dangerous pastime was taking two similar bolts with one nut, screwing the nut partly onto one bolt, filling the nut cavity with match heads, then screwing the second bolt in on this. When this was thrown into the air so as to land on a bolthead it exploded. It's a wonder none of us was ever hurt by the pranks we got up to.

There were innocent pursuits too, like potato guns made from bamboo. Looking very like a bicycle pump, these were bamboo cylinders with wooden dowelling fitted into a handle and sliding tightly down the cylinder. With the dowel we would force a piece of raw potato down the cylinder, then follow this with a second piece. The potato made the chamber airtight, and as the second piece was forced down it compressed the air behind the first one, eventually causing it to explode out the open end like a soft bullet. I wasn't always good. Coming home from Benediction one night with another brother, probably Leo or Bernard, I threw stones on the corrugated iron roof of a house on the corner of Logan Road and Ridge Street. What a noise. Somehow I didn't escape unnoticed, and Dad sent me back next day to apologise.

Brian Philipson and his sister, Dawn, were long-time friends, and I spent a lot of time at Brian's house in Holland Park. His mother was like another mother to me, and tolerated us beyond expectation. She (Doreen) and husband Claude played a lot of tennis on weekends, leaving Brian and me in the house. Sundays were truly days of rest with no organised sports permitted, and tennis games were only social. We made the most outlandish sandwiches, putting things like jam and beetroot together with cold meat and mustard. We always ate them and didn't waste them. Brian had a much better record player than I had; an electric one with diamond stylus that we put to good use with his father's records including now rare, humorous classics such as *Here's Hooley* and *Here's Hooley Too*. The tennis court was just over the back of Brian's place and we had access to it whenever we wanted. I think the Philipsons must have controlled it through a club, or maybe knew the owner. Whatever the reason it cost us nothing to use, and I played a lot though never well. It's a pity I didn't know at this time what Claude Philipson worked at, because I bought my first watch from a sidewalk display in Brisbane. When Claude saw it he was disappointed. He was a watchmaker and could have got me a much better one for the same price if I'd asked. I learnt from that. Claude had a big walk-in aviary for finches, and I admired that compared with the rough cages I had. When I joined the workforce Brian and I played a lot of golf; on a course that no longer exists out towards Eight Mile Plains, where we drank double-sars - sarsaparilla cordial in sarsaparilla soft drink; and at Victoria Park near the General Hospital. I didn't follow the game after I joined the RAAF. Brian was killed in a car accident in Brisbane when I was on my navigator's course at Sale and I lost a good friend.

Jim 'Dux' Downey was also a good friend from school, and we spent a lot of time together until 1951 when Jim joined the Navy as I joined the Air Force. Jim and I used to go to Coolangatta together to get sunburned, and it was with Jim that I first flew. We went on a holiday to Tasmania in a DC3 from what was probably Ansett Airways in those days, and stayed in Hadleys Hotel in Hobart. Jim married Leonie Frampton, a lovely girl who was ready to marry whichever of us asked her. When Jim went off to sea in the frigate, *HMAS Murchison*, and I took to the air our paths never again converged.

Secondary School — St Laurence's College

I stayed at St Joachim's for all my primary schooling that took me through scholarship at 14 years old. From there I went on to St Laurence's College run by the Christian Brothers at South Brisbane. This was no longer walking

distance but a definite tram ride. Sister Mary Imelda, Mother Superior at St Joachim's, looked after my interests for a while even at St Laurence's. I'd had my tonsils out at the Mater Hospital in January 1948, about the time I started secondary school or just before. It was a local operation and I was sent home after it. Sometime that night or the night after I woke up in the middle of the night with my pillow soaked in blood, and blood pouring from my throat. Dad raced me to the Mater Hospital where the sister on duty stemmed the bleeding by forcing a cottonwool bud down my throat on the end of a pair of surgical tweezers. I know I objected at the time, but got no sympathy. I'm sure there were more humane ways of stopping it. It was while I was still recovering from this operation, and apparently looking the worse for wear, that Sister Imelda gave me a shilling a day to buy a milkshake on the way to school. That must have lasted a couple of weeks until I was considered fit to last.

Brother McElligot was my main teacher; a solid, old, balding man, but well spoken, intelligent, and generally fair. He always looked scruffy, and had a permanent spittle on his bottom lip. Amongst other things I remember his teaching Shakespeare and classical poetry. I did get the strap from him more than once. The strap, known to some students as *Dr Black*, was to the Brothers what the cane was to the Sisters. It was about 25 or 30 cm long I suppose and made of laminated leather, and could be carried hidden up the long sleeves of the brothers' uniforms. It hurt just as much as the cane despite our continued use of resin and other devices. My science teacher was Brother Ramsey, who died in a science experiment one Saturday afternoon when his experiment exploded. Lessons were hard, and we always had plenty of homework. Desks were equipped with inkwells in the top right corner. These had to be kept filled with ink for using with the long quill type pens that had slide-in nibs, of various widths depending on the style of writing required. Other than these we had fountain pens, with an internal rubber reservoir that was filled by suction, using a lever built into the barrel of the pen. For sports we had handball along with the usual disciplines. Handball was played in an outside court and can only be described as playing squash without a racquet. I soon decided that my hands were not made for playing handball because they swelled and bruised too easily. How other kids managed not to damage their hands I don't know. I did play in the football team for at least one season, Rugby League, playing in such diverse positions as front row forward and winger. The brother in charge of sports was Brother Mee, which led to confusion at times in trying to determine whether it was *me* or *Mee* being referred to.

I had only two years at St Laurence's, completing the Junior exam in November 1949 with 6 As and 2 Bs. My First Class passes were in English, Latin, Algebra, Arithmetic, Geometry, Bookkeeping and Business Methods. My Second Class passes were in Physics and Chemistry. To go on to university it was necessary to do two more years and pass the Senior exam. John was the only one of us to go to university, and he did aeronautical engineering. The rest of us were probably encouraged, and also probably wanted to, go out into the work force. Every little financial contribution to housekeeping made it easier for Mum and Dad to lift our standard of living. John was brilliant, and the priests in Downlands College in Toowoomba arranged for a scholarship. With the influx of American servicemen to Australia and their occupation of the premises in Toowoomba, Downlands moved to Dalby. There John's black hair was turned to rust from the heavy mineral content in the bore water they had to use. Academically John was to be a jewel in the College crown, but it must have been sheer hell for him as an impoverished student among the rich grazier sons of the district.

The English, Scottish and Australian Bank

The problem on leaving school was not to find a job, but which job to take. I didn't even know what I wanted to do for a living and was easy pickings for a smooth-talking salesman. Despite the fact that I hated bookkeeping, and had never really understood the principles of double entry despite my first class pass, I was conned into signing up for a correspondence course with the Blennerhasset Institute of Accountancy, and I got a job with the E S & A Bank. At this time Pat was working in the T & G Insurance and doing accounting also with Blennerhasset. It was through Pat the salesman found me, and probably because I had a brother involved that I was so easily recruited. The problem with the accountancy course was that, once signed for, it had to be paid for whether it was completed or not. I couldn't manage the subject under correspondence, took it up at night school, paid for both and finished neither.

The bank lasted about twelve months, during which time I worked at two main branches, Fortitude Valley and Woolloongabba, and a couple of agencies. The training was excellent and conditions not bad, but my interest did not lie in banking and bookkeeping. Servicing the agencies was interesting in that I got to carry a gun. There were revolvers in two sizes and I preferred the smaller one. I was never taught to fire it but was taught how to handle it. Presumably I was expected to put theory into practice quickly should the need arise. Two of

us would take a suitcase full of money and paperwork out to little agencies on Saturday mornings to give customers a wider benefit of the banking service. Had we been held up in the agency I might have had a chance to try out the firearm theory, but on the way to and from the agency we carried the gun in the suitcase with the money. The bank did not have a car, and we travelled to and from the agencies by tram with our money and our gun. So much for security. One old fellow brought a suitcase of florins (2-shilling coins) into the agency at Camp Hill. The pound, worth 20 shillings, had been devalued to 18, and his logic was that by cashing all this silver money for pound notes he was going to make a profit of 2 shillings in the pound. Having tired of banking I wrote out a strongly worded letter of resignation. Fortunately, perhaps, a senior teller with whom I worked asked to see it first. He thought it advisable for me not to phrase it the way I had, and rewrote it to be less critical of the establishment so that the bank and I parted friends. The bank at Woolloongabba was near the five-way intersection of Logan road, Stanley Street, Main Street and Ipswich road. This complex intersection was complicated even further by having a train line across it running in to marshalling yards. When a train crossed, all traffic was halted and banked up while a man with a big brass bell and a red flag walked in front of the train while it slowly negotiated the crossing. These yards have since been dismantled and built over, and that line no longer exists.

Commonwealth Steel

From the bank I went into Commonwealth Steel, a subsidiary of BHP, as a clerk. I did enjoy this job, which had a lot of practical learning and handling of steels, and some of the best colour brochures I have ever learnt from. We handled specialist, mainly stainless steels in sheets, rods and bars. After an introductory period I was allowed to select and cut these in our warehouse without supervision besides doing my clerical work. It all helped in knowing the product. With large lawns backing onto the Brisbane River at South Brisbane, Commonwealth Steel had a pleasant working environment. How I got the job is worth mention. During a tram strike in Brisbane I walked to Buranda station and caught a train into the city, probably to a class at night school when I was doing accountancy for the bank. On the way home I was picked up and given a ride by a man in an Austin A40, a smart little car of the time. A week later the same thing happened, and he told me he was John Hucker, Assistant Sales Manager for BHP, and in talking about jobs he could get me a better job than I had. I took him up on his offer, took the job in

COMSTEEL and we subsequently became friends. I spent occasional nights over at his house in Coorparoo that he shared with another man, and we went on a few outings in his A40. I remember going to Toowoomba once and thinking it was a long way to go for one day. In his elevated capacity he had access to top quality cigarettes and kept me supplied with the best, imported brands. I think they were Peter Stuyvesant, but I know they came in a quality cream flip top box not the usual soft pack. They were a real status symbol. I was still very much under my mother's influence at 17 years of age, and when we discovered that my mentor was a practicing homosexual I was obliged to cease any further contact. In his defence, he was a good man, had never made any overtures to me, and had been a friend. Perhaps he was cultivating me for later.

National Service and the RAAF

The job with Commonwealth Steel lasted only six months because of National Service. The National Service Act of 1951 made it compulsory for all 18 year olds, unless they had a good excuse, to do a term of 176 days in the Services. On my 18th birthday in June 1951 I was called up, and applied for pilot training in the RAAF. My service number was A114006; A for airman, 1 for Queensland as my state of enlistment, and 14006 as my serial number. When I was commissioned the A was changed to O for officer. In their wisdom the authorities equated my job with steel as an interest in mechanics and, on 30 July, I ended up at Amberley in the engine bay of the aircraft maintenance squadron. National Service was, for me, the beginning of the rest of my life. It is the best thing that could have happened to me from the point of view of a career and useful, interesting employment.

Working at dismantling the massive Rolls Royce Merlin engines off Lincoln bombers and washing the parts in kerosene baths was my main function, but we also had drill and firearm training. George Stirzaker, my brother-in-law who had married Mary in November 1946, was drill instructor, not that that got me any favours. George was always available for advice and encouragement though, and may have been influential in my decision to join the RAAF.

On one of his drill sessions we had to break off to get some injection or other. We were treated to a number of injections while on training, and even more so during the rest of my Air Force career. Anyway, after this injection George asked if we wanted to resume drill on the parade ground. Reckoning that this

was the best way to get the stuff circulating through the body, I said yes, and we did. Nobody else agreed with me, and I paid the penalty that night when I found out what being blackballed means. Literally. I was apprehended in the shower block and treated with a tin of black boot polish. That sorted me out for a while, but I don't think it had any long-term effect.

Pay was good; food was good and regular; clothes were free and plentiful; I had a sister on the base; I was being educated in classrooms and in the real world; what more could I want. As servicemen we were issued with coupons that entitled us to a generous ration of cigarettes or tobacco, and we got a discount on these at our canteen on the base. About this time I lost interest in smoking and used my ration to supplement supplies for both civilian and service friends. Those were the days of darning woollen socks, and we were issued with sewing kits containing a thimble and one of those wooden mushrooms. I carried these around and used them for many years afterwards.

We went on long route marches around Amberley, carrying rifles and packs past the graveyard of decaying World War II Liberators. But because George did not approve of route marches as a form of training these were never strenuous. Boots never seemed to fit anyone first off, and we would soak new boots overnight in a bucket of water so that they would mould to our feet the next day and reduce the wearing-in time. We spent a lot of time on the rifle range using Lee-Enfield .303s, the single-shot, bolt-action rifle with a small magazine that was the mainstay of Australian forces in the second World War. They had a kick that wanted to break a shoulder bone if not held correctly. We were also taught to fire Bren guns and Thompson submachine guns. The Thompsons (Tommy guns) fired .45 calibre bullets at up to 600 rounds per minute, and kicked up and to the right as they were fired. Bren guns were bigger, and generally fired lying down with the gun on a bipod. That wasn't all we were taught. There were graphic and vivid lectures and films on the symptoms and treatment of various venereal diseases. For the naive and innocent like me it was only of academic interest, while the hardened warriors regarded it all as a bit of a joke. They still came back after a night out boasting of their conquests in the park.

I was so impressed with Service life that I applied to join the permanent Air Force as a radio technician after only 73 days of National Service, and enlisted on 12 October 1951, becoming the first National Service trainee to do so. This was at the time of the Korean War. The Brisbane Courier Mail carried a photo of a returning soldier with the caption 'Had Enough', and of me with the

caption 'Wants More'. At the time I was trying to be a young adult and was cultivating a moustache. When I saw my photo I shaved clean and have remained that way ever since. I was enlisted as an ACR(M), (Aircraftman Recruit (Minor)) being under 21 years of age.

With my acceptance into the RAAF as a trainee radio technician I was taken out of the engine bay and put to work in the radar section of the Maintenance Squadron. I stayed here until I was posted to Ballarat, absorbing atmosphere more than anything else and being coached by the technicians in some of the ways of service life. Radar was still at a comparatively primitive stage after development during the war, and consisted of many boxes of components with lengthy, multi-coloured cables and heavy power supplies. Having an introduction to this in a practical atmosphere before starting to study it was both fascinating and useful. I think the first RAAF aircraft I ever flew in was a longnose Lincoln in Amberley. Lincoln bombers had been taken, and the nose turret extended to house tactical navigation gear for anti-submarine work. These were in use in Townsville until they were replaced with Neptunes.

RAAF School of Radio, Ballarat

In January 1952, I think the evening of the 3rd, I arrived in Ballarat, Victoria, by train to join No. 4 Radio Technician (Air) Course at the School of Radio. I wore my greatcoat from the train to the base it was that cold. The next 21 months were a true education, in more than just radio and radar. The Commanding Officer of the base was Wing Commander Joe Reynolds. It was said of him that he hated three kinds of people - Catholics, aircrew, and Irishmen. Woe betide the man who was all three. We believed then, and I still believe, that he was at least mildly psychotic. Our accommodation initially was Nissen huts, semi-cylindrical galvanised iron with broken caneite lining; hardly fit for human habitation. (Caneite was a precursor to chipboard and was made from the fibres of sugar cane, I think.) But we lived in them 16 to a hut, with eight beds each side separated by metal clothes' lockers. My first hut was number 19 and it is strange how that number followed me. My first home was at 19 Parkin Road, St Marys, and after retirement I moved into 19 Blacket Street, Downer. Beds were army stretchers with horsehair mattresses, five blankets, two sheets, pillow and pillowcase. Every Tuesday morning we had to stand to attention by our beds, with blankets folded on them and everything spotless, while Joe did his inspection. On my first Tuesday inspection Joe found a hole in a pillow of a man in my hut. He put fingers of both hands in the hole, tore the pillow apart spreading its stuffing over the floor and said,

'Now clean that up'. On later inspections he was liable to ask randomly chosen airmen technical questions. Obviously he either didn't know the answers or didn't care, because we soon learned that a confident answer was all that was needed, right or wrong. His questions ranged from 'How many spokes in the back wheel of a bicycle?' to 'How does a cyclotron work?'



There was a delay in the start of my course, and I ended up doing a few weeks work in the Officers' Mess kitchen. I was well fed, and put on weight and condition during this time, but it all had to come to an end. Trainees were treated pretty lowly at Ballarat and subjected to severe discipline. Besides doing class work we had to do manual labour cleaning the base grounds in what we called Emu Parades, marching around the base bobbing down and up like emus, picking up rubbish off the ground. We also worked in the messes serving meals and washing up, and did guard duties at night. Danny Trout was

a Leading Aircraftman, which meant he had at least a few years of Air Force experience, and he would assume the position of foreman over us for any menial work. We got his measure pretty early though. The time taken for all the things he had done with his life added up to more than his lifetime, so we soon stopped taking him seriously. I lost my Recruit status and became an Aircraftman on 30 January 1952. I found theoretical classroom study difficult unless it involved active discussion or involvement, and I used to fall asleep regularly during lectures. The instructors must have gotten used to it and one instructor once said of me, 'Every time I look at Bibbo he is either asleep or just waking up'. I had to study a lot at night to make up for it.

The huts were refurbished gradually, and we moved into rooms with only four to a room and reasonable furniture. Shortly after this we had our first suicide when someone off a senior course put an end to it all with a .22 rifle, between breakfast and the beginning of lessons, while he had the room to himself. It was at Ballarat that I first saw snow, but it didn't have to snow to be cold. The rooms had small electric radiators that were inadequate but served us as toasters, and for warmth we often put our bedside mats or newspapers between our blankets. Toilets and showers were in separate blocks removed from the living quarters and connected by cement paths. They were wartime construction, galvanised iron, with partitions that didn't reach the ground in the toilet cubicles, and were windy and cold.

Wal Harris from Victoria joined the same course, and we became firm friends. Wal was a telecom technician before he joined the RAAF, and an electronic genius. He didn't have to study. From some strange inborn ability he knew electronics. Late in the course, when we were close to graduation and studying radar, Wal sat down one night and designed a complete radar transmitter/receiver with values for all the circuit components; not just a block diagram. This was far beyond what was expected of us at the time. He topped the course, but I wasn't far behind him. I did well on theory but never mastered the practical aspects. It wasn't for lack of training. The workshops were well equipped for the time, and training was good. Transistors had only been invented in 1948 and were not in common use, and most of the equipment was bulky and heavy, with big glass vacuum tubes and impressive dials and knobs. Course notes were available for all subjects and there was a library. We also bought manuals from technical bookshops, and Wal was knowledgeable on what best to buy. Some of the American technical manuals were as interesting and as easy to read as good novels; and a thick yearbook, *The Radio Amateurs' Handbook* I think, was excellent technical and background

reading. I made the public eye again on course when the local paper promoted Air Force Week celebrations. Peter Booth, Danny Trout and I were shown in two photographs working on radar equipment. We have berets on, but overalls unbuttoned at the neck, and I can see that I am wearing my pullover under the overalls for warmth. Wal had crates of old radio parts in a workshop at Dandenong, so we were never far from the environment we were studying. Often we would sit in this cold workshop and drink a bottle of beer or a few Canadian Whiskies after coming home from a show or a square dance, listening to short wave radio - especially the Voice of America Jazz Hour with its *Moonglow* theme music.

Guard duties were tough. Nominally we did two hours on shift and four off for the week or whatever that we were on duty. The duty cycled through all the courses current at Ballarat and classes were suspended for that time. Most of us used to change the roster to do four hours on duty and eight off to get a better rest, but that depended on the whim of the guard commander who was a permanent non-commissioned officer, generally a Sergeant. There was picket duty and main gate duty. Picket duty required patrolling the base that was in two sections; the training/living area with its layout of huts, and a separate distant area with hangars and workshops left over from the war. Ballarat was not a functional aerodrome, and was only occasionally used as such. At night we were required to patrol these areas continuously on foot, carrying a .303 rifle. The duty officer would do his rounds irregularly on bicycle and expect to see us every time and be challenged. That was very formal. The challenge was, 'Halt! Who goes there?' And when he gave his identity it was, 'Advance one and be recognised!' upon which the guard would satisfy himself as to the person's bona-fides and let him pass. Wal used to break into the hangar and go to sleep in the cockpit of an old Avro Anson in there, doing rounds occasionally. For whatever reason I was more conscientious, but not truly dedicated.

To supply hot water to the shower blocks and messes there were boilers in small boiler rooms located in a few places around the base. Another guard duty was to stoke these boilers with wood supplied. On my picket duties I would do occasional rounds and spend at least part of the time hiding in these boiler rooms where it was always warm, keeping a lookout through a crack in the door for the duty officer. If he went past I would sneak out and try to get ahead of him on his rounds so as to be seen. The base was plagued with cats, and one of my course mates, Eric Davis, took sadistic pleasure in catching them and feeding them into the fireboxes along with the wood. While we got

away with these antics they didn't go unnoticed. After a while we had bundy clocks installed at strategic points, and these had to be punched at regular times or they would send a signal to the guardroom. That made evasion of duty harder to achieve. The other guard duty was on the main gate. We would occupy a small guardhouse on the road into the base and log every vehicle entering or leaving, checking that they were authorised. This guardhouse was on the other side of the airstrip from the living and study huts and quite isolated. Of course, in the early hours of the morning it wasn't very active and so it was hard to stay awake. Walking back to the guardroom about two or four o'clock in the morning, across a black airstrip in total darkness and silence, was a pleasantly eerie sensation.

Ballarat was not always cold, but it was always disciplined, which inspired camaraderie amongst the students. It was always *us* against *them*. Even in midsummer we had to wear our overalls buttoned to the neck and wrists, and berets at the right angle. Drill instructors are not popular in any service, and even George Stirzaker in Amberley was known as 'Little Hitler', or 'The Runt With The Big Head'. Being disliked is part and parcel of the job of a drill instructor, but those at Ballarat seemed to excel. They would hide behind buildings or anything suitable in order to catch us out, and discipline us for such minor infringements as a top button undone. As the course progressed we were given liberties like one afternoon a week for unsupervised sports. Sometimes we would play tennis on the bitumen courts; other times we would go running in the local countryside, then call a stop as soon as we were out of sight and spend the afternoon lying in the sun just relaxing, or make a photographic expedition out of it. The more adventurous would head off to hotels in nearby towns where they could reasonably expect not to be caught.

Food in the Airmen's Mess often left a lot to be desired. I used to say that we were fed cottage pie eight days a week, we seemed to have it so frequently. We had individual sets of cutlery and used to line up for meals, collect a plate and file past the servery where food was splashed on the plates by whatever team of students was on kitchen duty. Then it was into the mess hall past the catering officer to whom we could make any complaints. On one occasion Peter Booth, a course mate in line with me, got his cottage pie and we could see maggots in it. So we went straight to the catering officer, Warrant Officer 'Wimpy' Porter. He looked at it, acknowledged that it had maggots in it, and said 'Throw it out and get yourself another plateful'. No such action as confiscating the whole cooked mess.

It was Peter whom Joe Reynolds later caught doing the washing up. The washing up dish was a steel vat over a meter square and almost as deep. We called it the *Queen Mary*. Normally we would lean over the sides to wash the hundreds of plates accumulating from a meal. This time Peter put his gumboots on and got in the vat with the dishes. The Commanding Officer caught him on an unexpected inspection and read him the riot act. He pointed out that it was unhygienic; that men could not eat off dishes washed this way; and that 'If you can't eat, you can't shit, and if you can't shit you die'. Joe Reynolds was nothing if not colourful. Some of the students were colourful in their own way too. We had one who drank Aqua Velva after-shave lotion for its alcoholic content.

Mars bars and milk were my staple supplement to meals. Morning tea break from class was always a visit to the canteen for a quarter-pint bottle of milk and a Mars bar. We had a bar where we could buy beer and sit around for a couple of hours after class and on weekends, but I can't recall patronising it a lot. I did most of my drinking in town, and more particularly in Melbourne where I acquired a taste for whisky with beer chasers. Serious drinking was done downstairs in the Australia Hotel in Collins Street, a hangout for homosexuals. They were attracted to servicemen and could be counted on for a few free shouts before they got the message that that was all we wanted from them. Young and Jacksons, on the corner of Swanston and Flinders Streets, was famous for its big nude painting of *Chloe* in the bar, a demure Parisienne with her hair in a bun and looking towards the swilling crowd in Flinders Street that collected outside after the compulsory closing at six o'clock. *Chloe* was painted by Jules Lefebvre and finished in 1875. I believe she has been in the bar since before the turn of the century. She is a more revered Melbourne icon than even Captain Cook's cottage in nearby Fitzroy Gardens.

The city of Ballarat was a pretty place with a lot of historical atmosphere; trams in those days; and spacious gardens. It was Victoria's largest inland city, and had established its name in Australian history for the Eureka Stockade in 1854 when gold miners rebelled over the licensing system. There were good clothing stores and I started to dress well with my regular pay, although there were times when my pay did not last the fortnight and I would sometimes pawn my watch - to be redeemed when I was financial again. I bought a gaberdine overcoat that I still have in 1993, and good shoes with thick crepe rubber soles. These were often called *brothel creepers* because they were almost silent compared with leather soles. The city was famous for its Begonia festival and a paradise for photographers. The gardens, with hothouses, statuary and

floral displays were always attractive. Wal and I were both budding photographers, progressing from black and white to colour. Colour photography was in its infancy then with only slow colour slide film generally available, and we never graduated to doing any colour processing but did most of our own black and white. There were many hotels in and around Ballarat and our favourite was The George. Different courses had different preferences, but ours spent more time and money at The George than elsewhere, and we sometimes went there for meals to get away from the mess routine. Six o'clock closing was the rule then and you had to be known to get a drink out of hours. Actually the system worked well despite the rule. Local police condoned after-hours drinking and left the pubs alone. It was the licensing squad from Melbourne that caused all the trouble, but they couldn't do much. Arriving unannounced they could catch a few hotels at once, but frantic phone calls cleared every other hotel in moments.

I saw how this happens late one Sunday night when I came back to Ballarat on the train from a weekend in Melbourne. I went alone into the hotel and headed for the noise of drinking in the lounge, but the doors were locked and nobody could or would hear me banging on them. So I wandered around looking for another entrance, and found a hole in the wall where restoration was being done. It was covered with a heavy tarpaulin that I pulled back to see the crowd in the lounge. I was dressed in blue uniform and still had my service peaked cap on, so I expected to be let in without any bother as a regular Air Force drinker. I then went back to the proper door and waited for it to open. When it did the lounge was empty, with not a sign of any of the drinking in progress only moments before. They thought I was police, and had cleared the place in seconds! I wasn't popular.

Not all my free weekends were spent out of Ballarat. I joined a local athletics club, the *Wendouree Harriers*, and concentrated on the 220 and 440-yard races. Hundred-yard sprints were too short for me, but I did reasonably well over the longer distances.

On Friday afternoons we would finish class early to permit leave takers to catch the afternoon train to Melbourne. We always had a dress parade before we were dismissed, which virtually meant that we had to wear uniforms off the base as there was not enough time to change afterwards and still catch the bus into Ballarat to make the train connection. Some students would occasionally try to beat the system by wearing only underclothes and trousers under a greatcoat, but it wasn't long before authority woke up to this and made us

open our greatcoats on the parade ground. Anybody caught was confined to base. The RAAF put on a semi-trailer type of bus for us after a while, and it shuttled between the base and Flinders Street railway station in Melbourne. Seats were like park benches and the trailer had a canvas roof and sides. It was cheap and convenient while it lasted but slow and uncomfortable. Ballarat to Melbourne was only about 115 km but it seemed to take forever. The road was narrow and winding until it reached the Melbourne traffic, and on the way home we had the uphill climb. Always on the return journey on Sunday night we would stop at Bacchus Marsh to have a couple of drinks at a chosen pub. That always meant a toilet call for many before we reached Ballarat only 80 kilometres away, but there were no more stops. Pissing out the back of a moving semi-trailer is an acquired art, I can assure you. I could never remember them even then let alone now, but bawdy ballads filled most of the time for the Melbourne to Ballarat journey.

There were always dances around Ballarat to which many of the students went and enjoyed themselves. I had never been a dancer, having been to only one uncomfortable, formal ball in my school years, and couldn't face the thought of going to a dance and not knowing which foot to move where next. So I took professional dancing lessons - personal not class - at a dance studio. When I finally realised that dancing is impossible to learn unless you already know it I gave up trying. Anyway by this time I was getting too close to my dancing teacher, which I didn't want either. My dancing problems were later solved when Wal introduced me to square dancing. We were first attracted to this when Jim Vickers-Willis called square dances at the base cinema, and became quite dedicated dancers at Legget's Ballroom in Prahran, Melbourne. I took to this with enthusiasm. It was logical, challenging, social, active, and there was always a caller telling me what to do next. Wal took to it even more than I did and became a competent caller in his own right. Square dancing came and went and I really enjoyed its era. My musical tastes expanded to include singers like Billy Ekstine, Eartha Kitt, Nat King Cole, and the man with muscles in his voice - Frankie Lane.

While Wal Harris was an electronic genius he was many other things as well. He could play piano, organ and guitar by ear, and at a party one night where he was introduced to the mouth organ he sat in the corner of the room for about half an hour teaching himself to play it competently. He was also a skilled horseman, motor cyclist, car driver and mechanic. In short a great bloke to know. He was only two months younger than I was, an only child, and we fitted together like twins. But physical twins, no. He was broader and more

solidly built than I was, and would have been taller if he ever stood up straight. He could dress up if he wanted to, and did for square dancing or when we went to stage shows or reviews, but generally he looked scruffy. There were more important things in life to Wal than presentation. With a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth, he was called 'Debris Des' by some of the students.

It wasn't long before I was going to Melbourne for weekends at The Pines Hereford stud farm on Heatherton Road, Dandenong, that his father managed for a rich Greek, Arthur Abrahams, who also owned the George Hotel in St Kilda, the Colortex fabric factory, a plastic-bag factory, part of a shipping line, and bred race horses for a hobby. The house we lived in was a weatherboard cottage at the end of a long, winding, gravel drive that wound past farmhands' quarters and terminated in a straight section between the horse yards and the horse boxes. There was another, more grand house fronting Heatherton Road that was reserved for the owners and their guests, though it was rarely used, and a third that was eventually occupied by a fulltime vegetable farmer. The farmhands' quarters were rundown and no longer used as such. Wal and I used them later on as a workshop to house our motorbikes when we dismantled them for repairs or modification. The telephone at the house was a quaint, wooden box anchored to the wall and having a built-in mouthpiece and truncated ice cream cone-shaped earpiece. To ring, it was necessary to wind a handle in this box. That turned a magneto, generated a voltage, and rang at the Dandenong exchange where the switchgirl would answer. It was probably almost a museum piece even then.

At times The Pines supplied the hotel with milk, chickens and vegetables, all grown under Walter's loving supervision. Walter senior was ex-Air Force from the war, and an excellent farm manager and horse trainer. He had been a guard at Darwin when the first air raid was launched against it, and was in Morotai when the war ended. Dandenong was my second home while I was at Ballarat and later at Sale. It was there I learned to ride in a manner of speaking though I used to chafe inside my thighs, and I was permitted to help in moving the cattle around the 550-acre property which included its own basic training racetrack. Most of the time I was in control of the horses, but I upset Walter one day when one bolted with me. There was no way I could stop or even control it, and it was all I could do to stay mounted. Wal with his superior horsemanship rescued me from that predicament and I was always given a quieter horse after that. I also learnt to mix horse feed, pick up and stack hay bales, and generally help around a farm in both the glorious days that Victoria

can provide and those cold, miserable days when the clouds sit on or under the ground. Mrs Harris fed us well and looked after us like a very patient mother. In winter she would heat house bricks in the wood-fired oven and warm our beds for when we got home late. I particularly remember the Sunday nights before we left to return to base. We would have early tea of good home cooked stock. Fresh bread was not available on Sunday night to a farm out of town, but Mrs Harris would damp a loaf with either milk or water and put it in the oven for a while. It was like newly baked bread. Sweets were generally home cooked pie with thick fresh cream. We were never allowed to go hungry. Walter trained a young racehorse, Carioca, in 1953 and had it in top form. It almost broke his heart when the horse entered its first race and the owner walked up to the jockey and said, 'I do not want this horse to win'.

There were other friends whose names I can no longer remember who warrant mention from Ballarat days. One took me home to a relative's place at Heidelberg a couple of times. Quietly spoken, older, and a stable influence. I started to travel around from Ballarat, and it was probably with this bloke that I went to Adelaide a few times, getting dreadfully drunk on Cooper's Ale and Southwark. It was only an overnight train ride and we could do it on a weekend cheaply by sleeping sitting up in the train. Geelong was another place I went to frequently, and developed a comfortable relationship with Ron and Rita Powell, the owners of the hotel I always stayed at, so that I had special concessions when I went there. That lasted until Rita caught her husband in bed with the nubile secretary and the business relationship folded along with the marriage. Geelong had peculiar traffic lights. They were an array of neon tubes that shone the appropriate red, amber or green, and counted down the time by switching off one tube at a time until all the tubes switched to the next colour. It also had big clock face indicators that could still be found in parts of Melbourne. These were about a meter round, with one hand that swept over red, amber and green segments. These were eventually replaced by the modern system of three lights we know now. A local beer in Geelong, Volum brand, was by far the worst beer I have ever drunk.

Maintenance Squadron, East Sale

On 2 October 1953 both Wal and I were posted to the RAAF base at East Sale, Victoria, on completion of our course. This was home for the School of Air Navigation and the flying training school where flying instructors were taught. There were four basic aircraft types: Wirraways - flimsy, basic, two-seater trainers. Mustangs - single-engine fighters most recently used in the

Korean War. Dakotas or DC3s - twin-engine, reliable transports and navigation trainers. Lincolns - four-engine heavy bombers used for navigation training. Consequently there was a variety of radio and radar equipment constantly under repair and maintenance. Every aircraft scheduled for use that day had to have its radios checked first thing in the morning. Wal and I developed an efficient system for rapid movement down the flight line, cross checking with each other and thus doing two aircraft at once. As long as all four VHF channels on every aircraft worked it went well, but it had times when it fell apart through unserviceability and we had to recover from disorganisation. A more tedious task was replacing the HF aerials on the Lincolns. These stretched from the mid-upper section of the aircraft to each of the vertical fins, and were frequently shot off by the mid-upper gunner. The wire was multi-strand stainless steel, and required a particular technique where the strands were separated then individually wound back over the whole wire, alternate strands being wound in opposing directions for strength.

Instead of learning the practical applications of my training I began to appreciate how little I really knew about radio equipment, and I found workshop maintenance both difficult and frustrating. I did well enough at it to pass my theory and practice trade tests for promotion to LAC (Leading Aircraftman) on 1 December 1953 but was never comfortable. In all my spare time I was riding as passenger in Wirraways with pilots doing their advanced training, and enjoying spins, rolls, loops and various other aerobatics. I was introduced to blackouts with high positive G at the pullout from a steep dive when the blood is forced from the brain, and to brownouts with high negative G in manoeuvres where the blood swamps the brain while the aircraft tries to slip away from under you, leaving you restrained only by the seat harness. It gave me a love of flying for flying's sake. Even the crash of one of our Wirraways near the base, where the pilot ejected from the aircraft but his parachute didn't open in time, didn't discourage me. I was sent out to guard the crash site, and saw both the wreckage and the indentation in the ground where the pilot had hit beside it. I found one of his shoes still there.

At the end of 1953 Wal came home with me for Christmas holidays and we jointly conceived the idea of climbing the Story Bridge over the Brisbane River. Dressed in overalls we climbed through the outside metal panels, up the steps inside the steep slope, and onto the walkway that stretches the full length of the bridge on both sides along the top of its arches. We had unimpeded freedom of the bridge with magnificent views of the city, river traffic, and the bridge structure itself. And we took a lot of photos. When we came down we

tried to sell our photos to the evening paper the *Telegraph*, but I don't think they believed we had really been there and didn't want anything to do with us. I was courting Cecilia 'Celie' Simpson whom I had met at a dance in the Blind Institute and, wanting some measure of recognition, Wal decided that since we were in overalls we could go down to where she was working in the Department of Mines, to check the telephones. So we wandered down, said hello, checked Celie's and a couple of others for good measure then wandered out again. We could have had free run of the place.



Cecilia Simpson, the future Mrs Bibo at Lorne, 1955.

There was a lot more freedom at Sale as qualified technicians than we had known at Ballarat, and we enjoyed life. Mess life was much better, with good food and good company. Wal and I used to get a lot of simple pleasure out of watching the magpies doing their aerobatics while we had a quiet beer after work. As volunteer and usher at the base cinema I got to see all the movies free, and got to associate with the tune *Granada* that was one of the seemingly few records the projectionist had to play in intervals. Interesting things were happening and I was a volunteer steward for the Queen's visit to RAAF Base Point Cook that year. This was the first visit to Australia by a reigning monarch. I didn't get to meet the Queen then or even very close to her, but I was later to be her navigator in Australia and New Guinea.

We still had guard duty after work and took the same approach as at Ballarat. We hid in aircraft or in the hangars until it was appropriate to be seen. Sale had its characters too. Our Commanding Officer was a Wing Commander Abicair who was so scruffy he made Wal look neat. Instead of a belt he used a tie to keep his trousers up. He was very down to earth and one of his sayings went down in Air Force history. L Group was our clothing and equipment store and he didn't consider it efficient or productive, to the extent that he once told the staff 'The only thing that comes out of L Group is you cunts at five o'clock, and well dressed too'. His daughter, Shirley Abicair, was a singer and entertainer of the time.

Our accommodation was in small groups in houses scattered around the base. They didn't have much by way of internal walls but we had some privacy. It had been built that way to confuse the enemy during the war and not to look like a military establishment, though the proximity of the airstrip and hangars would have been a major give-away. Anyway, for heating we had a cast iron stove in each house and a generous supply of cut wood. We would have the stoves and lower part of the chimneys glowing red-hot during the winter. One of my roommates used to get so drunk he would use the chimney as a punching bag but never seemed to hurt himself. Showers and toilets were in separate blocks shared by a number of houses. Wal and I both acquired motorbikes while at Sale and frequently rode the few yards to the toilet rather than walk. Wal had a couple of different bikes, a little BSA Bantam and probably a 500 cc BSA twin. I had a 350 cc Ariel Red Hunter, single cylinder. These took us to Dandenong most free weekends, and we had them well equipped with expensive black leather saddlebags. About 180 km, it seemed a longer journey then than I would consider it now. Getting my licence to ride was almost a comedy. They were issued by the local police station in Sale, and

I presented myself there one day with my bike. The policeman inspected the bike, and told me to ride around the block while he went inside and wrote out my licence. Wal coached me in riding and we toured the local countryside by day and night for practice. One night, coming back from a ride to Bairnsdale, we stopped at a roadside fire where a tree was being burnt. It was a freezing night and in getting myself warm I burnt the bottom of the leg off my uniform trousers.

Not many of my group spent much time in Sale town. Apart from a few pubs it didn't seem to have much to offer. But we would go in occasionally just for a change of atmosphere and something different from mess food. Wal and I spent the majority of our free weekends in Dandenong from where we would venture out to our square dancing, or such shows as *Kiss Me Kate* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. Or go to the grand State Theatre, which still had a theatre organ that emerged from a pit to play before the film and during interval. Some of the bigger theatres still had a music hall elegance about them, with uniformed doormen in heavy coats with braid. We still went to Luna Park in St Kilda, which we had patronised during our Ballarat days. With its Big Dipper, sideshows and stalls, it still held fascinations. One of our favourite attractions was a centrifuge. People stood against the inner wall of a big drum and it was set to spin. When the centrifugal force was enough to prevent falling, the floor was lowered and we stayed stuck to the wall with no visible support. Besides the Herefords, The Pines was now also given over to vegetables and chickens to supply the owner's hotel in St Kilda. The chickens were mechanically plucked with a machine installed in the rooms Wal and I had used as workshops. Work expanded to include ploughing, harrowing and sowing. We were rarely asked to work but volunteer labour was never rejected. Photography was becoming a major hobby and we set the laundry up as a darkroom for our developing and printing. I took black and white photos of the farm, and at shows using the available stage lighting. In one of these photographic episodes at a stage revue we had our cameras confiscated by theatre authorities who gave them back to us after the show, minus film. Standard colour film was Kodak colour slides, very slow. The first colour photo I took was of a rose in the garden at the Pines.

While brilliant, Wal was reluctant to suffer too much discipline and went AWOL (absent without leave) a couple of times from Sale. He eventually paid the penalties for both times. The first time he ended up in cells in Sale. We had a couple of steady WAAF (lady airmen) friends, one of whom visited him after the evening meal. I visited him after that, which was pretty generous of the

guard commander. He didn't regard prisoners in a bad light, and expected Wal to behave and not cause any trouble while largely looking after himself. As I left the cells Wal came out with me to go to the toilet where we parted ways. When he got back to his cell it was locked and the guard said to him, 'You can't go in there. He's already had two visitors tonight'. Wal had to explain who he was. His second AWOL was more serious and he served time in Holdsworthy, the army prison in New South Wales. Discipline was rigidly enforced here and included such activities as: cutting the lawn with nail scissors; painting walls with a toothbrush; and, digging holes to get dirt to fill holes that you had dug to get dirt to fill holes ... Wal had spent his second AWOL in Queensland where he stayed with friends, Alan and Mavis Reed, whom we had met at Maroochydore on our first holiday together from Ballarat, besides spending some time at Galway Street where he would play his guitar in the front bedroom at three o'clock in the morning. He also worked in Rockhampton before eventually surrendering to the Service Police at Amberley. The Service Police at Sale had questioned me about Wal's possible whereabouts, but I had no idea where he might be, did I. After his surrender he was allowed to make his own way back to Sale on his motorbike without escort, to go to gaol.

Initial Flying Training School, Archerfield

Disaffection with practical radio and a love of flying prompted me to apply for training as a navigator. This caused a bit of consternation in the bureaucracy because at the time applications were only made for 'aircrew training', which meant pilots. Those failing to make the grade as pilots were shunted off to become navigators or radio operators, but navigators had to have good academic grades. I had no intention of ever being a pilot and applied specifically for navigator training. In front of my final selection panel I could only justify my request by explaining that I wanted to be the one who determined the aircraft direction rather than the one who physically pointed it in that direction. Two other navigators had done this before me; Tommy Wright whom I don't think I ever met, and John Johnston in 1952, who figures prominently throughout this story, beginning with the RAAF School of Languages. When I was accepted after twelve months as a radio technician I ended up on No. 20 Aircrew Course at the Initial Flying Training School at Archerfield, not far from Greenslopes, commencing aircrew training on 10 September 1954. Here I underwent all the training in the theory of flight but refused to fly in their Tiger Moths that were the trainers of the time. Had I not already determined not to fly as a pilot I might have been dissuaded by the fact

that Tiger Moths had no radio or intercom. The instructor in the rear cockpit and trainee in the front cockpit only had a speaking tube through which it was necessary to shout at each other. Not only words but also garlic-laden or merely bad breath also came down the same tube. Rex Hubbard was my navigation instructor and Geoff Jarrett - an officer and a gentleman - was my radio instructor. We even learnt to send and receive morse code. During practical flying lessons I was free to pursue my own theoretical interests. I was afraid that if I went flying and did well I might not get to be a navigator, so I had to force the issue by not flying at all. Archerfield at this time was quite active and had a large staff, with National Service Trainees also being taught to fly. It hosted some excellent functions in which I served as drink waiter and enjoyed myself. Mine was the last course to be trained at Archerfield and it closed down after we left, becoming a purely civilian establishment.

Even though I was close to home I lived in at Archerfield, in decent accommodation with two of us to a room. I had my bike that I had ridden up from Sale and used to slip home frequently, sleeping there occasionally. One Saturday morning when I had stayed the previous night at Greenslopes I rode back to Archerfield to get something. In an S bend under a railway line at Ekibin the bike slipped on the wet, greasy road and I slid along under it for a while. Those were days before helmets and protective clothing, and while I wore a leather flying helmet, boots and goggles on the open road, I was wearing only swim trunks this time. My back was a bit lacerated, but I think a few spectators got a bigger fright than I did. I didn't tell Mum or she would have worried, so I had to wear a shirt around for the rest of the weekend. Two of my course mates were badly smashed up in a motor cycle accident and spent so much time in hospital they were taken off the course. The bike was very handy for visiting Celie at her small flat in Villa Maria, in St Pauls Terrace, during the week, or going to her parents' home at Tweed Heads when I had weekends off. The railway still ran to Tweed Heads in those days, with the junction not far from the Simpson's house in Pearl Street.



Terry Bibo & Cecilia Simpson on his Ariel Red Hunter, probably at Tweed Heads, circa 1954.

School of Air Navigation, East Sale

After Archerfield it was back to Sale. But in a different capacity than before. This time it was classrooms again and aircraft at the School of Air Navigation on No. 12 Navigator Course commencing on 1 February 1955. Other course members were Len Hilton, Frank Murphy, Neil MacPhurson (failed), Pat

Mackay (failed), Clem Whiteley, Sas Joshua, and Ian Sutherland. Ian was already a Flight Lieutenant, Clem and Sas cadet officers at the RAAF Academy, and the other five of us were airmen. One of our classrooms was a planetarium where we learned to use our sextants to determine position, before practicing with hundreds of sightings on real stars that we had to calculate and shoot. When I had finished the course I knew the names and locations of most of the major stars in the southern hemisphere. It's a pity that kind of knowledge doesn't stick unless it is constantly being used and consolidated. The sextants were mechanical, with spring-driven motors that averaged sightings over two minutes to compensate for aircraft movement. To get a good fix three stars had to be chosen about 120 degrees apart. Lines from these would intersect to make a small triangle; the smaller the triangle the more accurate the fix. Navigation computers were essentially specialised circular slide rules (e.g. the CPU-26A/P Computer Air Navigation) with a scribed plastic plate passing through them, on which we could calculate tracks and ground speeds and do various conversions for altitude and temperature. Learning was fascinating, and the pinups inside my wardrobe door were a line-up of weather maps cut out of the morning newspaper, that I kept updated to follow the changing patterns.



No. 12 Navigator Course, 1955. (L-R) front row: A.Cdt Whitley, FltLt. Sutherland, FltLt. Couldrey, A.Cdt Joshua; rear row: Tr.Nav. Hilton, Tr.Nav. Mackay, Tr.Nav. McPherson, Tr.Nav. Murphy, Tr.Nav. Bibo.

Without modern aids, navigation then required extensive use of celestial bodies, some radio stations, a global radio network called LORAN, fixes from ground features, and the measurement of drift over land or sea by whatever means. Our first trainers were the Dakotas, and in these we did our basic navigation and photography. Photography was interesting and demanding. We used the same ungainly aerial cameras for low-level handheld photography of such places as the butter factory at Maffra, or clipped to the aircraft fuselage for vertical photos for map making. For handheld photos we would sit in the open doorway of the Dakota with a safety strap to prevent our falling out. High altitude photography for maps required precise calculations for height, speed and number of frames per minute. Our photos had to overlap by one-third and produce a straight line when combined to make a map. Flying around Victoria was generally cold and we were given large thermoses of hot

food to take as rations. Hot, greasy lamb chops mixed with turbulence and the smells of hydraulic and electrical equipment were a severe test for airsickness. I first flew as navigator in a Dakota on a familiarisation flight on 3 March 1955, and left them on 12 July with 91 h 10 min of daylight flying and 67 h 45 min of night flying. The Dakota, or Douglas DC3, was to be one of the outstanding aircraft of the 20th century. With two radial engines driving three-bladed propellers it first flew in December 1935, when I was only two years old. It was designed to carry 21 passengers about 800 kilometres, which was a long way in those days, and within three years was the dominant aircraft in the American airline world. During World War II it was used extensively and by 1946, when production ceased, there had been about 13,000 aircraft produced for civil and military use. Dakotas were still flying regularly and safely in 1993.

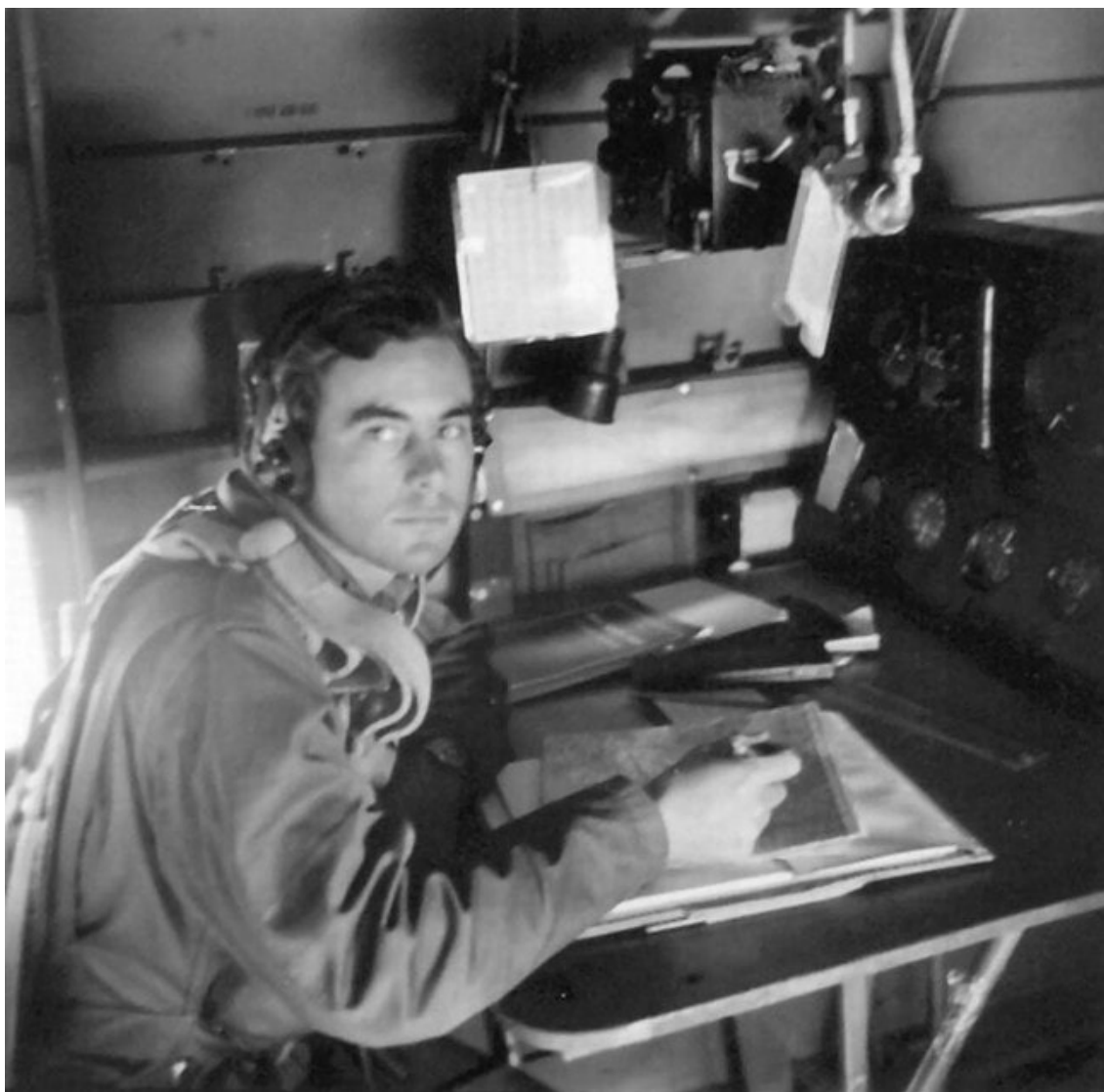
From Dakotas we graduated to Lincoln Mk30 bombers on which we completed our training and then did bombing with the Air Armament School. Most of this was using little 11½ lb practice bombs, with only one sortie using 250 lb medium explosive. When I left here at the end of October I had logged 159 daylight hours and 100 night. Between the Basic and Applied phases of the navigation course, and again before the bombing phase we were given short breaks to relax, and during one of these breaks, in June, Celie came to Sale for a holiday. We were able to enjoy visits to Melbourne, Lorne and Ballarat and meet such friends as the Harrises.

I used to get airsick and at some point in my training I went to medical section to see a doctor about it. He was sympathetic but pointed out that if I continued to suffer badly then obviously I could not be a navigator. He also gave me motion sickness pills to take before flying which, I think, were less effective than the threat of losing my flying. I did conquer airsickness while on course except for some times that I was able to cope with, but I always carried pills with me afterwards for the benefit of others. My worst bout of airsickness was on my final flight test on 19 August. Our final practical exam was for half the navigators to fly from Sale to RAAF Pearce near Perth, across the Great Australian Bight, and the other half to bring the aircraft back. With the sparse navigation aids of those days this was a fair test of competence. It was not a direct flight and took me eleven hours and forty minutes. My instructor, Flight Lieutenant Len Couldrey, flew in the nose turret as observer and second navigator if required, while the other student navigator travelled as passenger.

Navigators never get lost, but somewhere in the Great Australian Bight I was temporarily uncertain of my position and very green around the gills. To

recover from this I needed the observer to pass me a ground position when we made landfall in Western Australia. I remember my brief conversation with him being interrupted a couple of times while I threw-up into a sick bag while trying to write down the latitude and longitude coordinates of the fix he was passing me. Not only did I pass the test but I had the dubious honour of navigating the aircraft home again. The student on the return flight (Pat Mackay) was failed by his instructor in his very early hours and suspended immediately from course. We returned to Pearce and I was nominated to replace him on the return flight next day. At least I was allowed to bring the aircraft home direct, which was a couple of hours shorter than the trip over. I next saw Pat in the early 1970s when I submitted a flight plan to him as a civilian air traffic controller at Tullamarine airport, Melbourne.

We had four days off in Pearce as a bonus for completing the course, and spent a lot of time in Perth. Frank Murphy and I toured the town, with its street of English style buildings in London Court, and its beautifully etched and large-scale naked mermaid on the mirror in Davey Jones's Locker bar. Kings Park was an attractive diversion with magnificent views over the city and the broad reaches of the Swan River, besides its colourful display of *bird-of-paradise* flowers. Frank figures prominently in one of my photos, standing high off the ground in the narrow alcove of a clock tower, under the clock face showing twenty-five to two.



The author at the navigator's station of a Dakota trainer at Sale, 1955.

I graduated as 'Best Practical Navigator' with an inscribed silver cup, and brevet with silver plaque. We were promoted to Sergeant on graduation on 25 October 1955. The course I did was Basic Navigation, and I never ever did an Advanced Navigation Course, which went a lot further into navigation theory and could only be done after an operational tour and serious practical application of basic theory. In 1974 I found out that, one day after completing the basic course, I was recorded as completing the Advanced Course. This is also recorded on my Certificate of Service and Discharge. It is difficult to imagine how this could have been done in error in the Orderly Room and

recorded on my documents. So someone must have done it deliberately. But I was never told.

I had sold my bike by this time, and had the luxury of travelling as a passenger with my brother John to Amberley. John had a two-door white Ford Anglia, and was working in Melbourne with Ansett Airways.

Lincoln Conversion Flight, Amberley

I was now ready for the real world of flying. Len Hilton and I had applied for posting overseas and got No. 1 Squadron, Lincolns based in Singapore and bombing terrorists in the Malayan peninsula. Training for Lincoln Conversion Flight was done at Amberley where we were also teamed up into crews, and we were posted there on 7 November 1955. Morale and efficiency depended a lot on the crew's team spirit and we tried a few combinations before settling on our final choice. Len stayed as bomb aimer, and was to be among the best, if not THE BEST, in the squadron. I was navigator. And Warrant Officer Bill Middlemiss was our captain. Bill had served in Korea during the 1950-53 war, flying Mustangs and Meteors for 77 Squadron, and was one of the Air Force's best pilots to my way of thinking. He had a natural ability - what we called 'flying by the seat of his pants'. I was to fly with Bill over the next six years. Ray Catoni and Dick Affleck occupied the dual position of radio operator/mid-upper gunner, Neil 'Puki' Leonard was rear gunner, and Jim Perry was our first real co-pilot. We had a shakedown of co-pilots and had to put one of them, a Pom whose name I forget, under the shower, clothes and all, before rejecting him.



Avro Lincolns in the mist at Sale, 1954.

During November and early December 1955, and early January 1956 we practiced bombing, formation flying, air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery. I wasn't really interested in either gunnery or bombing but did the gunnery for the experience. Our gunnery range was at Evans Head, down the coast from Amberley. To get there we would fly to Southport then, keeping just off the coast, fly to the gunnery range. This was the beginning of my introduction to low flying. On occasions we would hug the coast and fly below hilltop height to give the Coolangatta-Tweed Heads residents a thrill as this four-engined bomber virtually skimmed the waves. There were times when we had to increase height to avoid surfboard riders who would otherwise have been severely buffeted by our turbulence. There were a couple of complaints from

Tweed Heads residents about our blowing washing off the lines when we flew over Celie's parents house at 4 Pearl Street, Tweed Heads, but most people enjoyed the sight. We always had permission for low flying, but the authorities never intended that we should fly as low as we did. Flying this low in a big aircraft required skill, and I always trusted Bill Middlemiss implicitly. We were to fly like this over the next six years without incident. For our air-to-ground gunnery we would drop a dye marker in the sea and shoot the stain it left; for air-to-air we had a Mustang towing a fabric drogue. But we bomb-aimers/nose gunners did not practice air-to-air, that was for the mid-upper and rear gunners. Lincoln Conversion Flight closed down when we left, and the Brisbane *Telegraph* printed a photo of the crew, minus Bill, framed in the rear doorway of the Lincoln.

I had a couple of weeks off in December to get married at Coolangatta on 10 December. We were married in the church at Coolangatta by my brother, Len, and honeymooned in Toowoomba. Pat Bibb was best man and Shirley Simpson bridesmaid. 1955 was a good year. Len had been ordained on 30 June, had married Tony and Val on 29 October, and now Celie and me. From the time I had met Celie I had spent many happy days at Pearl Street with Jack and Ivy Simpson. Jack ran a banana farm up in the hills of Currumbin and used to work it in his shorts, hat and bare feet, and a cigarette. Number 4 Pearl Street was a low, weatherboard house with a large front verandah like that at Greenslopes, enclosed to make a spare bedroom. And it had an upright piano that Robyn was learning to play. Pearl Street gave access to all that is now the Gold Coast, with its splendid beaches, bird sanctuary and Tweed River. Celie's younger sisters and brother were; Colleen 1935, Shirley 1937, John 1944, and Robyn 1948. All good company. In January 1956 we had a party at the big swimming hole in Currumbin Creek with Celie's family and friends before departing for overseas.



Lincoln Conversion Flight on closure at Amberley, December 1955.



The crew at the Lincoln Conversion Flight, Amberley, January 1956. (L-R): Neil Leonard, Ray Catoni (kneeling), Terry Bibbo (kneeling), Dick Affleck, Len Hilton, Bill Middlemiss, Jim Perry.

No. 1 (Bomber) Squadron

Singapore, The Malayan Emergency

I flew to Singapore by commercial aircraft, a DC4 the *Philippine Trader*, on 16 January 1956 and arrived at Changi airport at 9.00 p.m. to the heat, humidity and smells of tropical Singapore only 80 miles north of the equator and about 600 km² in area. Even speaking to other crews in Australia who had served in Singapore had not prepared me for what I found. I had expected something like the classic version of Japan - clear streams, cherry blossoms and so on. But what I found was filthy black canals, and acres of Chinese and Indian slums with their network of narrow alleys bearing the international *Out of Bounds* sign. Anything further removed from my expectations I could not imagine. But early impressions were soon overcome, and I grew to love the place before I left it. Initial accommodation was in the Sergeants' Mess at RAF Tengah, with wives and families not arriving for a couple of weeks. Mess accommodation was brick buildings with concrete floors, wide windows to allow free air flow, and big ceiling fans. Taking a lesson from the locals most of us quickly adopted the tubular sarong skirt as the standard form of dress around the living quarters. Local staff did our washing and ironing and cleaned our rooms, and we ate our meals in the mess dining room. A Chinese woman, Sew-Sew, did our mending and kept our clothes in order, and Parkha, an Indian houseboy cared for our shoes. With the humidity, care of shoes and clothing was always a problem. Left too long many items of clothing would grow mould that was hard to remove. To combat this wardrobes had light bulbs installed in them, and these were left on all day to provide warmth to keep everything dry. Bill Middlemiss had been promoted to the commissioned rank of Flying Officer by this time and lived separately in the Officers' Mess.

Singapore, the 'Lion City', was still a colony of Britain and was not to achieve independence until 1959, when the then Chief Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, became Prime Minister. It had a recorded history dating back to the 13th century when it was part of the Sumatran trading empire. British interest commenced with Stamford Raffles leasing the land from the Sultan of Johore in 1819 for the British East India Company, and extended to full sovereignty in 1824. Japanese troops swept down the Malay Peninsula and occupied Singapore on 15 February 1942, remaining there until it was liberated on 5 September 1945.

Malaya's history of association with Britain is more complex than Singapore's. But, after World War II, Britain united various Malay states to form a federation (1948). Free elections were held in 1955 and the Alliance Party, under Tunjku Abdul Rahman, was overwhelmingly victorious. The Federation of Malaya became an independent nation and member of the British Commonwealth in 1957. A Communist insurrection began in 1948, with guerrillas mainly enlisted from the Chinese population, and the Malayan Emergency was declared on 18 June. Australia offered aid in the form of No. 1 Squadron flying GAF Lincolns, which became operational in 1950.

Using the jungle as hiding places for over a decade these guerrillas carried out terrorist raids on plantations, settlements, and highway traffic. They were to be our targets for the next two and a half years.



No. 1 (Bomber) Squadron at Tengah, Singapore, July 1956.

Flying

By 18 January 1956 I was practicing bombing and gunnery on China Rock, a small island off the east coast of Singapore, and on 24 January I went on my first true bombing mission using live bombs against real targets. Between then

and 5 July 1958 I was to fly on 104 bombing missions and be in the strike that claimed 18 terrorists from the 7th Independent Platoon as early as 21 February 1956. It was our bombing that caught Teng Fook Loong at breakfast in the Kluang area of Southern Johore and eliminated one of the leading terrorists under Chin Peng. Chin Peng was leader of the Malayan Communist Party, and operated out of the jungle on both sides of the Malaya-Thailand border.

No. 1 Bomber Squadron had been in Malaya for five and a half years, having begun flying operations there on 26 July 1950, and their score at this stage was one confirmed kill - and that an elephant. There had not been many successes in the air war against the Communist Terrorists in Malaya, and there were to be a couple of major errors on the squadron's part that rightly cost a couple of officers their career. Besides bombing missions we would do low level strafing of areas of jungle known to house terrorist camps and cultivations. The army found the locations of most of these, but sometimes our own aerial photographic reconnaissance revealed targets. Our only other fatal bombing strike was on 21 June 1956 when we killed five more terrorists in Negri Sembilan, bringing the total to 23. Thousands surrendered to ground forces as a direct result of our bombing, and said that life in the jungle was an ordeal and they were forced to move constantly.

Life in Singapore was endlessly fascinating and it may be well to keep the flying separate from the social side. No. 1 Squadron had seven aircraft each capable of carrying fourteen 1000lb bombs, and we came under RAF control. Within limits we flew with the same crew that we had formed in Amberley. Although there was an attempt to make navigators and bomb aimers alternate at their tasks (after all we were cross-trained) this did not work at all with the Middlemiss crew or, ultimately, the whole squadron, and was soon abandoned. We knew where our expertise lay and what gave us the best results. I was not interested in being a bomb aimer, but loved the navigation and worked hard at it. Len was the best bomb aimer I know. It wasn't long before the Middlemiss crew was singled out as radicals and treated accordingly. We seem to have lost Jim Perry soon after arrival in Singapore and gained Paul Morrow as co-pilot. Paul fitted in to our team much better.

Squadron Leader Leo Britt was my first Flight Commander - senior officer between aircrew and Commanding Officer - and we didn't like him much. He was awarded a DFC on return to Australia, but those of us who served under him have very serious reservations about his credentials for the award. In his

‘do or die’ approach to the pursuit of his DFC he completely disregarded safety heights, and more than once expected us to fly in cloud near mountain peaks below the safe height. His idea of pansy formation flying in Lincolns was wing tips overlapping and six feet nose to tail in a box formation. Bill refused to risk his crew and abuse his aircraft this way and we flew to one side, out of formation. This didn’t please the Commanding Officer, but we refused to cooperate. Squadron policy in flying to targets was to fly line astern in close formation. Not only was this hard on the pilots (as well as unnecessary), it progressively increased the load on the aircraft engines with more aircraft in front producing turbulence. The number of engine changes necessitated in Britt’s tour was far more than should have been required by the amount of flying we did.

We had a goat in our mess as a pet and called him Lee Ho. Leo Britt actually commented one day on what a lovely name this was for a goat in Singapore, ‘*Chinese of course*’. After the goat we got a monkey that lived during the day on a long chain in one of the bedrooms. He became a bit destructive and we had to let him go. English servicemen in the tropics were not very clean. They washed neither their clothes nor themselves often enough, and the display of grey underclothes in the changing room at the station swimming pool was testament to this. One of our sergeants had the monkey swimming in the pool, an excellent 25 metre one, when he was confronted by an English officer. The Sergeant told the officer that the monkey was very much cleaner than he was, and kept him swimming. The officer must have accepted this because there was no further action.

Bill and I spent most of our lunchtimes in this pool, swimming for fitness. My standard lunch for most of the two and a half years was a *vitamin sandwich*; vegemite, cheese and lettuce. I can recommend it. When I arrived there I could hardly swim at all, but when I left I could swim breaststroke all day. Bill had probably a unique ability to be able to float upright without moving. He would hang motionless in the water with his head back and nose above the surface and just float. The canteen at the pool was run by the NAAFI (Navy Army and Airforce Institute), and sold F & N (Fraser & Neave) soft drinks. Australians took a particular liking to two flavours, orange and root beet. In their wisdom the NAAFI thought they would capitalise on this popularity by putting the prices up on those two flavours only. We gave them the message by boycotting them all. The prices soon came down.

There were many areas of difference in our behaviour that singled us out from the other crews. We were issued with heavy revolvers that we were required to carry when flying over terrorist territory, which was most of the time. Instead of revolvers Bill and I would fill our holsters with newspaper to pad them out without the weight of a gun. I really don't think a revolver would have significantly increased our chance of survival had we crash-landed in the jungle. While I enjoyed drill as a recruit and under training I did not take to it as a Sergeant navigator, and I made a few glaring errors in practice for a ceremony of Trooping the Queen's Colours. I was unceremoniously removed from the parade, which was what I wanted anyway. But because we had such a good crew, and consistently proved it, we got away with a certain amount of non-cooperation and were often selected as the crew to do the work when a single aircraft was needed. In fact it was our crew who took a reporter, Ken Hyams, on a bombing and strafing sortie in October 1956, which he recorded for broadcast over the radio back in Australia. We also seemed to do more than our fair proportion of air tests after the aircraft had been overhauled. Bill must have been a magnet for air tests, and we did many more together over the years. We often found problems and had to land at different airports or with fire trucks out for our landing. I landed in the crash position more than once. In truth most of the problems were in the instruments giving faulty indications rather than in any major malfunction, but you ignore safety and warning instruments at your peril in flying. My only real life-threatening flying situation was not to occur until November 1959, and we didn't need instruments to tell us. We were ultimately made to pay the price for our individuality though, when the squadron returned to Australia.

Others in the squadron shared our disillusionment and made their feelings obvious in subtle ways. One fellow burped loudly on parade but could not be singled out by his senior NCOs or officers, and his mates wouldn't put him in. So the whole squadron was put on a curfew for a while as punishment. In the middle of this I was standing in the hangar in front of a notice board with a lot of other men, reading a poem that had appeared there as comment on the situation. I read only two lines before the hairy arm of the Commanding Officer tore the poem from the board and stormed off in disgust. The poem started:

*This squadron I'll hasten, this squadron I'll smarten.
There'll be no burpin', no pissin', no fartin'.*

I wish I could have read the rest of it.

Ken Hyams was not the only passenger we had. In March 1956 some Army Gurkhas joined us for a familiarity flight.



Taking some Army Gurkhas on their first flight at RAF Tengah, March 1956. (L-R): Bill Middlemiss, Jim Perry, Terry Bibb (kneeling), Dick Affleck.

We flew at all odd hours of the day and night and would frequently be kept sitting around in the mess or near the aircraft waiting for word to take off. There was literally no knowing when you might be called out to go on a strike. We had an operations officer; I think his name was Oscar, who knew which bedroom in every aircrew house was the main bedroom. In emergencies he would drive round in a car rapping on bedroom windows to get attention, with a crew bus only half an hour behind him to pick up aircrew. But usually the first notification of a strike came when the details were chalked-up on a Task Board in the crew room. Immediately the ground staff went to work towing the required number of bombs to each aircraft. If they were to be left overnight a Malay guard was placed over them. On the morning of the strike

armament personnel loaded the bombs into the bomb bays using portable hydraulic winches. Over the years a few bombs did fall when being loaded but none ever exploded. The mechanism really was safe from this height, but we would later see it fail when bombs were dropped safe from the aircraft. Each strike was preceded by a formal briefing with identification of the target, nomination of procedures, allocation of crews to aircraft, outfitting, flight planning, and pre-flight inspection. Flying clothing was a lightweight flying suit, canvas jungle-boots, survival kit and knife, revolver, and woven cloth helmet incorporating headphones and clip-on microphone/oxygen mask and, of course, a parachute.

Our bombing was done from several thousand feet over mountains and dense tropical jungle, and took three basic forms. The easiest was when an Army spotter plane dropped a smoke flare on the target and we bombed the flare. Next easiest was Datum Point Bombing, when the target's patch of jungle was near a prominent feature like the bend in a river, and Army surveyors gave us the bearing and distance from that for dropping bombs. That was by far the most common method. The third, and infrequent, was when we were under radar control and told when to drop. That was never very satisfactory. Most bombing was in V formations of three to seven aircraft, laying down an overlapping carpet of devastation. Occasionally things went wrong. Like when the squadron bombed the wrong flare. The Army spotter aircraft actually put down two flares so that we could line up the two and bomb the second. That gave us the direction for bombing. Before my time in Singapore someone had bombed the first flare, frightening the daylights out of a nearby police post. Another bombing routine that was almost as hard on the crew as the terrorists' was annoyance bombing. We would fly most of the night over a selected patch of jungle known to contain terrorists and drop one bomb at a time at random points about every fifteen or thirty minutes. It must have been hell on the ground, but we didn't get much sleep either. Not every strike followed immediately on the briefing and occasionally we could retire to the Sergeants' Mess to wait for the call out. We spent a lot of time lying around on heavily cushioned chairs in our galvanised-iron crew room reading newspapers and magazines and waiting for something to happen and drinking coffee.



Avro Lincolns of No. 1 (Bomber) Squadron during an operation, October 1957.

The exhausts of the four Merlin 12-cylinder engines of the Lincoln vented straight to atmosphere, so they were noisy. And they were not synchronised. Each engine's revolutions had to be set by minutely adjusting the throttles, which was the mark of a good pilot. Unsynchronised engines produced annoying beat frequencies. The noise of the engines was such that, even with our padded earphones, many aircrew developed a hearing loss at a band of frequencies around the engine noise. This was cumulative and would not become apparent until years later. The navigator station was directly in line with the engines. Behind the pilot was a rack of radar gear with the navigator's desk to the rear of that, and then the signaller's station with the radios. The navigator slid along a bench seat between the radar and his worktable, leaving a narrow passageway along the starboard side of the aircraft. This led under the co-pilot's feet down to the nose turret with its twin machine guns and bombsight. The radios were big Marconi brand, with colourful knobs for chasing frequencies. We used to call them bird's nests because of the mess of wiring inside them.

I had practical experience of two major foul-ups in a short time. When bombing in V formation it became the responsibility for the lead aircraft to do the final navigation, and transmit the call for bomb doors open and the actual drop. The other aircraft simply held formation and dropped their bombs on the countdown. Every aircraft, however, was responsible for ensuring that the right target was being bombed, by checking the lead aircraft's navigation. Most navigators chose to sit back and rely entirely on the lead aircraft. On one strike when we were number 3 in a formation of probably 5 I noted that we were going to overshoot the target and drop our bombs way beyond it. The final stage of a bombing run is of very short duration, around a minute and a half, with the bomb doors being opened only 20 seconds before bombs are dropped. The call for bomb doors would be the first precise indication of where the aircraft were in executing the bombing run. There is not a lot of time for indecision. I told Bill we were overshooting. He said 'How sure are you?'. I said I was as sure as could be. With that we then looked at accountability. Was I right? Would the other aircraft listen to me if I told them? If I was wrong and called a false alarm we would be in worse strife than we already were. If I was right there were two aircraft in front of us, one of them the Commanding Officer, to take the blame before we were counted. So we said nothing; and I was right. We bombed 1½ miles beyond the target.

The RAF were not impressed and took the squadron off operational duties for a fortnight for intensive training. On our first strike after this, in October 1957, we had a formation of seven aircraft. Again the Commanding Officer was leading. Again I told Bill we were overshooting. He said 'How sure are you?'. I said I was as sure as before, and we started transmitting to the other aircraft, telling them not to drop. The first aircraft could not hear us as it was not possible to hear and transmit simultaneously, and he was transmitting the instructions for bombing. All the other aircraft would hear both his and our transmissions, and would have to make a quick decision whom to believe. We and one other aircraft dropped no bombs. One aircraft started to drop, then changed his mind and closed his bomb doors, which is the only way to stop the process once it is started though it could mean a loose bomb in the bomb bay. The remaining aircraft dropped their bombs two miles past the target; worse than the previous error. The navigator and bomb aimer in the lead aircraft were sent back to Australia and taken off flying. No one at any time had anything to say to me about the incident. It was as though I had never been there. This and other incidents gave me little respect for some of the senior officers in the squadron.

Since most bombing was done in company there was no opportunity then for low flying except when strafing, and that was serious stuff not fun. But when we were coming home from solo bombing missions we would sometimes indulge ourselves by flying down part of the main west coast highway below palm tree height. I could look up at the coconuts growing on the trees on either side of the highway. The occasional car we flew over must have had terrified occupants. The only time low flying caused us any bother was when we dropped a bomb below safe height and part of it came up through the skin of the aircraft under the radio operator's seat. Ray Catoni kept it as a souvenir, but I believe Bill had some explaining to do.

We were not always able to carry out our bombing mission, generally because of weather but sometimes because the terrorist camp had been evacuated by the time we got there. In these cases we would go well out to sea and jettison our bombs safely, meaning they were set not to explode. Almost never did I see 14 bombs go safely. One or more exploded despite safety precautions. This was an interesting factor in the squadron's only crash. Takeoff at Tengah was to the north, and directly in our takeoff path was a Malayan mountain, Gunong Pulai - 200 metres high, that a heavily laden aircraft could not climb over. So it was normal practice to slip around to the left or right depending on where we were headed after that. Early one morning, still dark, seven of us took off for northern Malaya making our way up independently. We didn't fly formation at night on route to the target. At the rendezvous point there were only six aircraft, the seventh having crashed into the mountain on takeoff, unknown to us. Miraculously the crew survived. The aircraft hit treetops, badly injuring the bomb aimer, Pat Doyle, in the front turret and blinding the pilot, Squadron Leader 'Bushy' Goldner. The copilot, Tom Thorpe, took control and banked the aircraft left for the sea. At treetop height he jettisoned his 14 bombs that fell in school grounds, rice fields, village property and jungle. The aircraft gently crash landed in mud flats just off the coast and the crew were able to walk out on the wing and get into a local fishing boat. None of the bombs exploded. I believe that only 13 were recovered; the fourteenth probably going to make explosives for the terrorists.

In October 1956 No. 1 Squadron took part in an air show in Hong Kong. The Middlemiss crew was one of two to go, and I got to spread my wings to the Philippines and Hong Kong. The Americans sent a jet fighter out of the Philippines to meet us, but it wasn't for VIP treatment. Tension was still high after World War II, and military bases had a security zone around them - the Air Defence Interception Zone (ADIZ). Besides reporting the aircraft

position at defined points on route we also had to report on entering the ADIZ. The signaller, Ray Catoni, couldn't contact the Philippine authorities and so we breached their interception zone and were intercepted. They easily saw we were no threat, probably checked our flight plan with air traffic control, and escorted us in.

It was in the bar of the American air base at Clark in the Philippines that I first saw television, which by then was old hat to the Americans but novel to Australians. Manila was an eye-opener with some sleazy frightening areas, strip joints, and nightclubs where patrons were required to check their pistols in before entering. I remember the star there of the first strip show I ever went to - White Fury and her twin 44s. White Fury's speciality was to counter-rotate silk tassels stuck to the nipples of her 44-inch boobs. Manila was also the home of Jeepneys, colourful converted World War II Jeeps with lengthwise wooden seats that made them into mini-buses. We used these for local transport. Leaving Clark air base we were lined up on the runway behind a pair of Super-sabres. I had my head and shoulders out through the upper hatch watching them take off. I had never seen jet afterburners until then, but when the aircraft in front of me cut his in for takeoff and I heard the sonic crack and saw the extra length of flame from his tailpipe I knew all about them instantly.

There were two navigators with Bill; we must have deserved a holiday. Each of us thought the other one was flying on the day of the air show and we met in the crowd of spectators. Bill managed without us but the stunt was a flop anyway. The idea was to have two Lincolns flying on opposite sides of a circle, one side of which passed over Kai Tak airport. The first aircraft was to fly over on four engines, the second on three, the first on two, then the second on one. To the crowd it was supposed to be the one aircraft doing repeated flypasts. Synchronisation was lost and the Brits put on another event to fill in the gap, so no-one took any notice of the Lincolns. The static display there was historical and included a World War II five-bladed Spitfire (Supermarine Spitfire F.24, VN485, now on display at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford).

I was to get to Hong Kong, the land of 'Fragrant Streams' again in February 1958. The colony of Hong Kong comprised the main island and several neighbouring islands, and a section of the China mainland known as Kowloon and the New Territories - just over 1,000 km². Kowloon means 'Nine Dragons', the name by which the Chinese once referred to the nine hills on the Kowloon peninsula. Hong Kong had been acquired by the British in 1842 at the end of the Opium War, and Kowloon in 1860. On both occasions I

found it vastly different from Singapore; more hectic and crowded but great shopping. With a population of 3¼ million there were 15,000 sleeping in the streets of the world's third most densely populated country at night, and thousands living in squatter towns like Diamond Hill with cardboard-walled cubicles and straw mat lean-tos, or else in houseboats tied up in rows in the busy waterway. With over 5000 people per square kilometre life overflowed the land onto the sea. We lived both times at the RAF mess at Kai Tak, just a short bus ride from Kowloon on the mainland. From here I was able to visit some of the bars and nightlife as well as tour the city and harbour and dine at Jimmy's Kitchen, which rated itself 'The Most Popular Restaurant in Hong Kong', and the Tai Pak Fong, one of the floating restaurants anchored off the shore of Aberdeen on the south of the island. The restaurants were serviced by water taxis that were the homes of their operators, and had thatched alcoves built on the decks to provide protection from the weather. All seafood on these restaurants is shown live, and the customer chooses from live fish and lobsters in making a menu choice. Most of the bars were clip joints where every patron is paired off with a girl on entry. The girls make conversation and drink non-alcoholic drinks for which the patron is charged bar prices. To enjoy their other, more intimate, services the patron must pay the bar owner for lost drinking time, whereupon the girl is allowed to take the patron to her room.

I also managed to go to Victoria Peak, which is the highest point on Hong Kong and has a funicular railway climbing the 550 metre hill at a sometimes precarious angle for an unimpeded view of the Kowloon peninsula, and the city of Victoria fronting onto one of the finest natural harbours in the world. With wide, clean streets and double-decker busses Kowloon was well served for transport, but still had its rickshaws firmly established. In contrast, Victoria, the capital of Hong Kong, had narrow streets crowded with people. And leading off these streets were even narrower and more-crowded alleyways. There were several modern ferries operating between Kowloon Peninsula and Hong Kong island. A ten-minute ride over revealed a wide variety of shipping, from American warships to the President Taft disgorging its cargo into sampans to local Chinese junks whose style had not changed in centuries. Aboard the ferry the traditional cheongsam dress revealed shapely legs with its side-split reaching high up the thigh in fashionable dresses. A small boy on a houseboat begged for ten cents. That was less than twopence at the time, but to him possibly a fortune. In one of the alleyways a man was giving comic books to children in exchange for bottle tops, but from us he wanted a dollar each.

Bill and I also took the four-hour ferry ride on the *SS Tak Shing* to tiny Macau, only 16 square kilometres in area, to see life in the Portuguese colony and get a glimpse of the feared Communist China. Sixty-four kilometres southwest of Hong Kong it sits on the delta formed by the Pearl and West Rivers. Our taxi driver would not take us very close to the border and we really only saw the flag on the Barrier Gate. On one side of the gate flew the flag of Portugal, a symbol of four centuries of Christian civilisation. On the other side flew the red flag of Communism, hinting at a life distasteful to free men. The most densely populated country in the world, with over 27,000 people per square kilometre (compared with Australia's two), Macau was established in 1557 and was the oldest foreign colony in the Far East. With its cobblestone streets, tree-lined boulevards and colonial-style buildings, it still had a Western-style charm that conflicted with its harsher reality of Asian men in rags pulling handcarts through the streets. (It is scheduled to return to China as a Special Administrative Region in 1999). Of historical interest there and standing above the crowded tenements as Macau's leading landmark, are the ruins of the Church of Saint Paul. Built around 1600, with Japanese Christians completing the facade around 1637, it was considered a wonder of the time. It was burnt down in 1835 and only the imposing facade remains, occupying a place of its own at the head of a long, broad series of steps. Also there is the house used by Sun Yat-sen in his flight from the Manchu police, one of the most imposing in the city. Sun Yat-sen was the man responsible for overthrowing the Manchu dynasty and establishing the Republic of China in 1911. From the ancient Portuguese Ilha Verde (Green Island) Old Fort, now converted to a modern army camp, I could look over the town and past nearby Portuguese islands to outlying Communist held islands. Macau's attraction for the people of Hong Kong lay in its casino, but we had not gone there to gamble.

Navigation became pretty routine in Malaya and I was accused of doing mine in the margin of a *Time* magazine because I generally took a Coke and a magazine with me to pass the time. Navigation equipment was still basic, but I was well versed in manipulating the H2S radar. This had been developed by the British towards the end of World War II, and I had been introduced to it in my early days at Amberley, had studied it at Ballarat, and trained on it at Sale. I enjoyed making it work properly and spent a lot of time under a black cloth cover like an old-time photographer's hood, with head pressed against a rubber visor that fitted over the screen at one end and was moulded to fit the eyes and nose at the other end. I was able to exploit this to get a photograph of the green radar screen showing the southern portion of Malaya and the

northern portion of Singapore. I also developed the art of cat-napping where I could get instant short sleeps while nothing was happening, and was to do this for the rest of my career. While truly asleep, my mind was alert to either 'Nav' or 'Terry' and I would be instantly awake for what followed. By December 1956 I had become a check navigator, which meant I was qualified to train other navigators in the practical aspects of the profession, and to assess their performance. I took any opportunity that was offered for diversification, and flew with the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) in a Sunderland flying boat on anti-submarine exercises in the China Sea. Compared with comparatively compact Lincolns, Sunderlands were like a flying warehouse. They also seemed to fly about as fast as a warehouse, and taking off and landing on the water was like having a corrugated iron warehouse collapsing around your ears. I preferred my Lincolns.

Lincolns were not pressurised and we could open the side windows, which was handy for getting rid of rubbish. But it was also my nemesis. Having eaten an apple I opened the copilot's window to throw the core out. Unfortunately Bill had a vinyl bag, with a 35mm Leica camera in it hanging on the window catch. It got sucked out the window but was still hooked on the catch. Both he and I made a dive for it and got each other's hand instead of the bag as it broke free and fell into the China Sea. When we landed we went straight to the insurance company who told us to go and buy a new camera, no questions asked. Bill had more trouble explaining the loss of aircraft technical manuals that were also in the bag. We up the front of the aircraft were not too adversely affected by non-pressurisation, but the rear gunner wore the brunt of it. In the rear turret, which was designed to rotate left and right, it was windy, cold and noisy. Rear gunners didn't normally travel in their turrets unless they wanted to enjoy the view, and only got inside them in the operational area.

Bushy Goldner had replaced Leo Britt as Flight Commander and was a good man, well respected. After his accident with the mountain he was replaced by Squadron Leader Rolf Aronsen whom we soon nicknamed 'Mother' for the way he mothered the squadron. He was sometimes given the full title of 'Mother Goose'. Some of Rolf's utterances at briefing sessions have been recorded for posterity. Among them:

'...and if you can't come home in formation then come home individually.'

'...if you can't drop your bombs on the target, and you can't jettison them manually on the way home, bring them back.'

'I will no longer accept this business of going to the toilet as an excuse for being late for briefings. If you're due for a briefing and you find you want to go to the toilet, then go 15 minutes earlier. I do.'

And again on briefings. 'There is no reason at all why you should be late for briefing unless you're flying, or - ah - or unless you have a reason.'

On formation flying. 'We're going to do some formation flying today and tonight. All our formation flying in the past couple of weeks has been done individually.'

We had been ordered to stand by in the mess, ready to take off on a strike at a moment's notice. None of us was greatly impressed as this was supposed to be our day off, and we didn't regard these strikes at all seriously any longer. By 10 o'clock we were fairly cheased off when Mother rang to say 'There is no word of the strike just yet. So you can disperse, but don't leave the mess'.

Runways are named for the direction they point. Runway 02 points NNE, runway 20 points SSW, but it is the same piece of concrete in both directions. Mother's briefing to Mike Lancaster, a new pilot doing his first solo Lincoln flight from Tengah to Changi said 'Now Mike, when you get to Changi, if you find you can't land on 02 because it isn't long enough, use 20'.

Mother was also the only captain to select wheels-up instead of flaps-up while still taxiing out for takeoff. The weight of the fully loaded aircraft prevented them from retracting, and he ordered the crew to gently tiptoe out while he sent for the ground crew to lock the wheels and sort out his problem.

In one of our seemingly endless waits, standing around our aircraft on the tarmac waiting for the signal to go, Aronsen started a soliloquy on the nickname of our rear gunner, Puki Leonard. Pookey Rabbit was a children's book character of the time, and Mother soliloquised, 'Pookey Leonard. Why do they call him Pookey? I call my little girl Pookey. Pookey the friendly rabbit'. It was just as well he couldn't see our faces in the dark. *Puki* is Malay for *cunt*.

One of our pilots took some leave in Penang, northern Malaya, and wanting to get back to Butterworth Air Base hailed a trishaw.

Pilot: 'Church Street ferry, please'.

'No, no,' from the trishaw rider, 'I take you White House Hotel'.

Pilot: 'White House Hotel? What for?'

'I get you good Chinese girl. Eight dollars'.

'No thanks. Church Street ferry'.

But the trishaw rider was not to be put off so easily. 'I get you Indian girl. Seven dollars'.

'No thanks', said our pilot.

'Can get you Malay girl. Seven dollars'.

'Look! Just take me to the Church Street ferry'.

'What's up? You no like knock-knock?'

'Yes, but only with white girls'.

'OK', he countered, 'White House Hotel, room 36'.

The story is also told of the RAF type who spent some time in the Aircrew Mess, our Sergeants' Mess. He ended up in Woodbridge Mental Hospital for a week after a solid bout of drinking. On the day he was released from hospital he was put aboard the train for Kuala Lumpur. There he staggered off the train, blind drunk again, screaming 'I'm cured! I'm cured!'

In mid-July 1957 we came back to Darwin for one night. One of the tailors in Tengah village with whom I had done considerable business asked me to deliver a letter to a contact at RAAF Base Darwin, which I did. When we went to clear customs next morning their office was shut, but we could see a big blackboard inside. On it in very large letters was SERGEANT BIBO.

Obviously we were not meant to leave Australia until I had accounted for myself, but I had an idea that it was not relevant to this trip as I had been promoted to Flight Sergeant on 25 April. It transpired that my Tengah tailor was doing big business with his Darwin contact and using my name to get the stuff through customs. Fortunately I knew nothing of this and was not implicated. I had a few words to say to my ex-tailor on return to Tengah, and wrote to both the RAF and Australian customs with the full story. Merchants who abused the trust of servicemen were liable to have their shops closed if they were on RAF land as at Changi, or suffer the withdrawal of other favours if they were outside the base as at Tengah.

I was to get back to Australia again in September 1957 on what was technically a training flight but in reality was for rest and recreation. This time we flew via Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean to Perth, where we stayed for four days and had ourselves a party. Cocos Island was a loose term applied to the group of

27 islands in the Cocos-Keeling group, and had achieved a special place in Australian history during the First World War. When a German landing party had put ashore here from the light cruiser 'SMS Emden' to destroy the communications station, it was reported to HMAS Sydney. She intercepted the 'Emden' and damaged it, forcing it to be beached on North Keeling Island and freeing the eastern Indian Ocean from raiders for the rest of the war. Cocos was to become a frequent port of call over the years and a fair test of my navigation; but I didn't know that then.

It was standard practice for crews overnighting in towns around Australia to call the local nurses' quarters for company. The practice was crudely known as 'rent a root' by coarser elements in the crew, which was largely unfair to the nurses. Most of the parties, and certainly this one, were simply enjoyable social gatherings with no commitments. On this flight I was crewed up with another crew and pilot, Frank Slater. They were a switched-on bunch. We took a load of red wine back with us from Perth through Darwin, and landed after dusk at Tengah. Darwin to Tengah was a twelve-hour flight. Taxying down the runway I got a bit concerned about getting this wine through customs and suggested we unload it quickly in the dark and pick it up later. Poor naive me. It had already been disposed of and to this day I don't know how it was done.

About midway through my tour, in April 1957, I did an eight-day jungle survival course with the RAF. The first four days were spent at RAF Changi where we lived in atap huts, had lectures in the mornings, and did practical work in the afternoons. Nights were free to eat and drink, but the atap huts were pretty basic and we had to accept the rodents, and the atap beetles that were continuously trying to reduce the thatched roof to sawdust. Practical work included finding and identifying edible food. There are a lot of yams that are edible if properly cooked but poisonous otherwise, and not easily identifiable as such. I would have been reluctant to eat raw any yams I found there. Actually there are an enormous number of plants, grasses, seeds and roots that are both edible and nutritious in jungle and bushland, as the Australian or Malayan aborigines could tell us. On the third afternoon, returning from slogging through local swamp and jungle, I heard one of the British officers ask his mate how the showers were. His mate didn't know because he hadn't used them yet either.



Participants of No. 27 Jungle Survival Course at Changi, April 1957.

For our last four days we were taken to tiger country on the Malayan east coast at Mersing, and dropped off with a 24-hour ration pack each, a revolver, a condom, and a couple of parachute panels for a hammock. Part of the course had us in a group trekking overland, then we split up into teams of four to make camp, forage for food and water, spend one night sleeping alone in the jungle then return by truck to Singapore. On my night alone I heard elephants nearby, but one of my mates claimed he found tiger pads under his hammock in the morning. I didn't manage to find edible food in the jungle, despite my training; not that I tried very hard. The 24-hour ration pack, supplemented with a few smuggled beef cubes to go with the rice, was enough to survive on. Fortunately there was plenty of water because I was drinking over a litre an hour while we slogged through the jungle. Back in Singapore we were dropped several miles from Changi, and had to make our way to camp at late afternoon into dusk through a cordon of Malay police who were looking for us. If captured we were to be thrown into solitary confinement cells and treated like prisoners overnight. It's awfully hard to sneak through a Malay village with its dogs, pigs and chooks, and I was captured. Another rule said that, if captured, you could escape if you got a specified distance from your captor. There were

two Malay police and two of us captive. So I just lagged, and when my slack guard got ahead of me I ran to the coast and waded neck deep out to sea. There was no way he wanted to come and get me so I stayed that way until it was dark and I could safely get ashore. Then I crawled along monsoon drains until I reached Changi and freedom. That night I got quite drunk on a steak and one bottle of beer and slept well.

Changi was the main RAF transport base and had a variety of aircraft. The four-engined Hastings was universally known as 'the best three-engined transport in the world' for its penchant for engine failures. Of another ungainly British transport aircraft it was said 'you can carry fuel or a payload, but not both'. I am fairly sure that it was the Hastings two RAF aircrew were talking about when one of them said 'The only thing that stops this aircraft from falling apart in the air is the deathwatch beetles holding hands'. The British did make some good aircraft though.

I flew my final strike on Tuesday afternoon 24 June 1958 and finished my tour on 5 July. The Squadron ceased operations in Singapore with the Malayan Emergency being declared at an end - although it would not be formally declared so until 31 July 1960 - and came back to Amberley to be disbanded. In its eight years of operations the Squadron had flown over 3,000 sorties and dropped 16,000 tons of bombs. We were awarded the General Service Medal (Malaya) for active service in a war zone, and I became a returned serviceman.

No. 1 Squadron, under Wing Commander Robertson, flew a grand tour of Australia for its homecoming, commencing at Darwin and flying anticlockwise through all capital cities for flypasts and civic ceremonies.

Bill Middlemiss's crew was sent home alone with an overnight stop in Darwin. We paid the price of our individuality but we retained our honour. Bill and I had flown as a team for 2½ years and went on to fly together on Neptunes over another 3½ years, clocking up a memorable partnership on the way.

Mess and Social Life

Up till 1956 there was no provision for married personnel in No. 1 Squadron. From then on, with a batch of new families, there were many opportunities to enjoy all that Singapore had to offer. Celie arrived on 1 February and our first married quarters were in a new estate at Serangoon Gardens, right across the other side of the island from Tengah. Most families were housed here in the first instance. We were given 1½ days to settle in and never allowed to forget

it. Weeks afterwards, when we wanted leave we would be told 'but you had 1½ days off in February, Sergeant'. The RAF ran a shuttle bus between the estate and Tengah and the Australian Government paid a per capita rate. When we were required out of normal hours there was always a vehicle to pick us up and take us home, so transport was never a problem. Not until I changed address.

I don't think we lived long in Serangoon Gardens after Celie arrived. There was provision for renting a house of your own choice, and we moved into a well-established small house in Adelphi Park owned by an Indian doctor, Felicity Jacob. She lived in a granny flat along one side of it. It was very comfortable, and she was an excellent landlady. We were to remain friends with Felicity right through our tour, and she nursed both Judith and Susan through their baptisms. Felicity's house was just down the road from Bill Middlemiss and his wife Verla. Bill eventually acquired a Morris Minor that met most of our transport requirements to and from work. There was an excellent bus service all over the island, but for social mobility nothing could beat the Singapore taxi. Cheap, readily available, and full of information. We developed a firm relationship with one taxi driver, Low Cheng Boo, who became my guide and mentor, introducing me to areas and functions in Singapore that I would otherwise never have found. Photography was becoming a big thing and I wanted to record as much as I could of my new environment. I did dabble in movie photography briefly but abandoned it in favour of colour slides. Through Low Cheng Boo I got to weddings, funerals and religious ceremonies, as well as to outlying villages where I would not have been welcome alone. We grew out of Felicity's house when Judith was due and moved up the hill to a complete house, number 3 Marigold Drive Adelphi Park, bordering a wilderness catchment area. Every house had a high fence, and its doors and windows barred, with concertina doors that could be locked. The more affluent houses and mansions had substantial stone fences and wrought iron gates. Slum areas had no security because they had nothing to lose. Petty theft was rife, and enterprising thieves would use bamboo poles to reach in through the bars to steal small items. Racial riots were not common but the Indians and the Chinese had a good one while we were at Felicity's house. The island was placed under curfew for a day, with helicopters patrolling overhead broadcasting warning messages through megaphones. There were monkeys in the jungle off our back fence, and a cashew nut tree that we never got any nuts off because of the monkeys. Many of the houses and gardens had displays of a variety of orchids that offered themselves as excellent photographic subjects. Every building in Singapore had its

complement of gecko lizards; clean, little, wide, friendly lizards with big eyes. They crawled over walls, windows and ceilings after insects, doing nobody any harm.

Life in Singapore had a lot of attractions. We had a cook/amah to do the housework including waxing and polishing cement floors with a characteristic red wax. Several houses in close location shared a gardener. All basic but adequate furnishings were supplied. And shopping was duty free. A lot of hawkers on bicycles serviced the residential areas and it was astounding to see how much they could crowd onto a bicycle and still manipulate it. One fellow we called the Fuller Brush Man had so many varieties of so many brushes that he could not be seen on his bike except from side-on. Grocery and food stores had their small vans that did home deliveries and took orders, or we could buy bulk fruit and vegetables from markets in a big warehouse. There wasn't much Australian food available and we ate either local food or mostly British bought from the Singapore Cold Storage. Fruit was plentiful and various, with mangoes from Thailand, locally grown bananas, imported grapes and apples, and local tropical fruits in season. These were rambutan, mangosteen and starfruit. Rambutans had a pleasant white flesh inside a soft prickly red skin, about the size of a plum. In season these were hawked all over the country, on bus routes and at bus stops, by regular hawkers and little boys earning pocket money. Mangosteens also had a white, segmented, juicy pulp inside a tough purplish rind, and were quite delicious. Starfruit were about the size of a large pear, and viewed end-on were star shaped. A golden-red colour with matching flesh, they were bitter if not ideally ripe. We couldn't eat durian - regarded as a delicacy and aphrodisiac by the locals. It is a large oval or round fruit with a hard, green, spiky skin. Inside there are five segments, each with an oval compartment containing a gluey pulp over some seeds. Its smell is atrocious, and eating durian was once described by a visitor as 'like eating fruit salad in a toilet'. Fresh milk was almost unobtainable at first and then came on the market in plasticised paper pyramids called Tetrapaks. I think the only dairy herd was in the highlands near Kuala Lumpur in Malaya. At Christmas time we had whole turkey. Bill Cape was one of the more competent co-pilots who flew with us, and one of our circle of friends. He came to Christmas dinner with an apology for not eating much and not staying long. Somehow he had committed himself to two Christmas dinners at widely separated households and wanted to honour them both. Bill spread Vegemite on his bread as thick as most of us spread jam.



Ah Chin, Judith and Cecilia, Christmas 1957.

Medical facilities for families were provided by the British Military Hospital, and that's where both Judith and Susan were born. Actually Susan nearly wasn't born. I came back midmorning from one of those night strikes to be told that Celie was in hospital and liable to lose the baby. She didn't, but Susan was subsequently born prematurely on 2 May 1958, probably delivered by a Sister Brooker. In the British Military Hospital the mothers were allowed a bottle of stout with their dinner, and the babies were wheeled in to the wards from the nursery in multi-cribs for visiting hours. Celie came out of hospital with Judith after seven days, but I'm sure Susan was a little longer because of the complications of premature birth. Judith was born with a mop of jet black hair and probably a darker than usual body. At one feeding time the nurse walked past Celie's bed taking a baby out to the native mothers, who were housed on the verandahs. When the lady in the next bed suggested to Celie that the baby was hers she denied it. The baby was too dark, and had to be a local child. Shortly afterwards a very apologetic nurse returned with Judith, having failed to give her to a native mother! Both of the girls were registered

with the Australian High Commission so that they were recognised as Australians and not little Singaporeans. We were allowed to do our own hiring and firing of amahs and they were paid by cheque by the RAAF. If they were very good it was normal to give them a bonus, but most of them were pretty average. Ah Chin was our amah about the time that Judith was born on 12 June 1957, and was very good. Judith walked at eleven months, about which time she took a liking to the big tropical snails that used to frequent our yard. We caught her trying to eat one.

It was from Adelphi Park that I fell into my biggest conflict with the RAAF in Singapore. My taxi driver used to pick me up regularly and take me to the main road that was the RAF bus route to Tengah. The 'bus' was a canvas-covered lorry with wooden slatted seats, crowded by the time it reached Adelphi Park. Generally there was standing room only. About this time I found out that the RAF was being paid to provide a proper bus service for us. So one morning I told the driver that I would wait at the side of the road, and when he got to Tengah he could tell the Transport Officer to send a bus for me. I waited, and no bus came. Eventually I got a ride in a RAAF staff car going from Changi to Tengah. Late for work I was called before the Squadron Leader Administrative Officer, Rex Shadforth, with whom I apparently had a loud and vocal argument. I don't recall the details, but one of the pilots passing the office at the time later commented on the exchange he heard. Shadforth told me he would solve my problems by shifting me from Adelphi Park to a closer location, and that he would charge me over my argument with him. Long before this I had stood at the bar of the Sergeants' Mess beside the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Robertson, who had been with us in Lincoln conversion flight and was the guest of our mess at a function, and announced to whoever would listen that 'This is the bloke whose guts I hate, and who hates my guts'. So it was not surprising that Authority was out to teach me a lesson. I had a look at the proposed accommodation and declared them as slums, refusing to accept them. As an aside here, another navigator lived in this area. His name was Ron Hale but he was always known as 'Sweaters'. It was some time before I found out that he was called 'Sweaters' not because he wore cardigans in the tropics or any such reason, but because he was regarded as being 'as wet as piss'. I didn't want to share a slum with Ron. Another reason I didn't want to shift was my belief that the Housing Officer, a mate of the Administrative Officer, was getting a kickback from houses he controlled but not from mine. I sweated over this problem for a while as the administration prepared its case, then one day at the pool a Flight

Lieutenant Engineering Officer introduced himself to me and said he was prepared to be my legal representative. Obviously word had got around and I did have friends. The case was subsequently dropped; I was never charged, and I wasn't made to shift. But I was paid out in the return to Australia.

Social life was appealing, with excellent restaurants and a variety of local food that didn't cost a lot. I saved almost nothing over the three and a half years in Singapore but consider myself richer for the experience. Some of the squadron members hardly moved from the mess and saw nothing of the rich variety of life there. Our own mess and other military messes held functions occasionally, which were more formal and different from just dining out at a civilian establishment. People used to let their hair down and behave with fewer inhibitions. At one of our Tengah functions we announced the engagement of a single navigator, Bruce 'Splinter' Andrews, to the daughter of a local serviceman. That was the first either of them had heard about it, so it is not surprising that it didn't develop. The British had a club, the Britannia Club, for the use of servicemen and their friends. It had a pool and a canteen that we sometimes used, but the atmosphere was not conducive to frequent visits. We found the conduct and cleanliness of the average British serviceman in Singapore not what we expected. The botanic gardens in Cluny Road were an excellent area for an outing. Extensive, they had colonies of monkeys living free in the trees and occasionally walking the lawns or pathways. These were noisy but harmless as long as they were not teased or antagonised, and would take peanuts out of our hands. I touched the long tail of one walking ahead of me along a path, and I thought he was going to have me for breakfast the way he looked and snarled at me. At one of the stalls on a bicycle in the gardens was where I first encountered durian ice cream. Not even the locals would eat that, much as they loved the fruit. Macritchie reservoir provided a clean cool environment for families, and we used to take Judith there to play on the shady slopes, and to Changi beach. Singapore didn't have a clean sandy coastline, and Changi was one of the few places with a small beach worth visiting.



Dining out at Singapore. (L-R): Cecilia & Terry Bibo, Pat & Keith O'Connell (gunner), Verla & Bill Middlemiss.

Bugis Street was on everybody's must-visit list and was known the world over for its attractions. In a crowded, Chinese part of town it came to life late at night with food stalls and bars offering a vast and tempting range of food and drink at reasonable prices, served at small tables in the street under the stars. The best place was sitting at the table directly under the *Out of Bounds* sign on the lamp post. Bugis Street was the haunt of prostitutes of both sexes, with the males more gaudy than the females. It wasn't necessary to participate in the activities; the fun was all in being there to witness the spectacle, and maybe talk to some of the actors.

Mess jackets, tuxedos and other clothing were tailor made. We bought very little ready-made. Most of my early tailoring was done by Casa Nova in Tengah village - until the customs affair in Darwin. It was in Casa Nova's shop that I heard how the English language can be fractured into new meaning. Some of the children there were street kids, living off their wits and sleeping where they could. One little regular we called 'Ten Cents' because of his constant appeal for that small silver coin. A lot of the aircrew from the Squadron had been

invited to a 'Cocktail Evening' between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m. on Tuesday 22 October 1957, and during the course of this Ten Cents and his little friends picked up quite a few handouts in coins, and fireworks that we bought for them. I had bought Ten Cents a packet of crackers, but they hadn't lasted long. When he asked me for more I told him 'No, Ten Cents! I've already bought you too many'. His reply was a classic. 'No, Tuan. You only bought me one many. Now you buy me one more many'. So naturally I did. One More Many. The festival we celebrated was the festival of Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, and our celebrations lasted long past 8.00 p.m. and well into the night. We were given an array of small Indian foods that were very spicy and tasty; potato cakes, preserved figs, cashew nut fudge, various nuts, and other sweetmeats too difficult to describe but very palate pleasing. I was still drinking Scotch in those days but I was set back when it was served in a five-ounce glass tumbler. Full. It lasted most of the night and I remember getting Coke put in it when it was half empty. Merchants were very friendly to us and I think it was not just commercial motivation that prompted our invitation to the festival celebration. In almost any shop, if you stopped to discuss a possible purchase the shopkeeper sent out for a soft drink or a bottle of cold beer for you.

Deepavali celebrated a Hindu myth in which a popular ruler returned from a long term of banishment, and took over command of a kingdom that had been badly run by his brother. This brother was the son of his father's second wife. He had been given the throne in favour of the first son as a mark of gratitude to the second wife. She had some time previously saved her husband from poisoning. On their return they were greeted with myriads of lights. Today Hindus and Sikhs light up their houses with many candles to celebrate the occasion.

The best shopping in Singapore was in the small, highly competitive shops in the city proper or in some of the outlying villages located near military bases such as Changi or Nee Soon. Bargaining was the order of the day and it was only sensible to check out every source in an area before committing to buy any major article. Smaller items of clothing or household application could be bought any night of the week at markets known as amahs' markets, where sellers literally laid their ware out on the streets under acetylene lamps. Singapore's population was predominantly Chinese, around 73% or 1¼ million, and the amahs' markets were crowded with Chinese women in their pyjama suits, hair pulled back tight and tied in a bun, with babies strapped to their backs and woven wicker baskets for their shopping. Between these

extremes there were isolated local stores that sold tinned foods, thongs, umbrellas, pots and pans and so forth. Thieves Alley was a great place to visit. It was said that if you parked your car at one end you could buy it back in pieces before you reached the other end. With the amount of old junk sold in Thieves Alley it may have been a promising place for antique hunters. Chains, chests, massive old Chinese steam irons, vases and crockery were laid out along the alley walls. Individual itinerant salesmen sold birds in bamboo cages, or woven garlands of flowers, while there were those who reputedly walked all the way from Nepal to sell medicinal plants, herbs and roots, as well as trinkets and necklaces. Indian musicians would be there with peculiar instruments, and a daughter dancing for the crowd. Men and boys patrolled the streets retrieving cigarette butts. They extracted the tobacco and rolled new cigarettes from it, which they sold individually or in loose quantity.

A complete Singapore village was devoted to making gravestones. The work was all done painstakingly by hand from the rough marble block to the finished article. But Singapore was not all shops and villages. It had a substantial rural sector that grew vegetables in rigidly ordered garden beds. We always had to be careful using local vegetables because of the use of human excrement as manure. These market gardens were as lovingly tended as works of art by the families that managed them. Aquaculture was already being practiced and the Chinese had a small community on one bank of an inland pond, largely man-made. They bred fish and prawns and netted them more easily than if they had to go to sea. Standpipes in and near villages and population centres provided water and a congregation point for communal bathing and household laundry using tins, buckets and tubs. Oxen still provided the power to grind grain into flour and would walk all day in a circle, yoked to a mill under a small atap roof to keep off the sun and the rain. The freshly ground flour was used in the village to make noodles that were hung out on long wooden racks along the roadside to dry. Vast Chinese cemeteries with elaborate vaults and headstones occupied precious real estate. There were extensive rubber plantations where the trees were tapped every morning and the sap taken to factories for processing. Tapping involved expertly making a sloping cut in the bark so that the white sap flowed into a tin cup hung on each tree. One such factory was at the entrance to our estate of Adelphi Park and I am glad we lived far enough from it to escape the powerful smells it produced. Rubber was fundamental to the economy of Singapore, which was one of the largest rubber markets in the world and the most important single port of shipment.

The city had a vast Chinatown with narrow streets and decrepit three-storey buildings. These were bursting at the seams with people and were marked for redevelopment. But that was not to come for a long time. In areas like this the washing was hung to dry on bamboo poles stuck out from the building at right angles, and could look like a colourful parade of flags almost blocking out the sky. People, stalls and trishaw - bicycle taxis - crowded the streets. A high percentage of the Chinese peasant class was illiterate. When they wanted to send a letter or a greeting they dictated their wants to a professional letter writer, who may also read their answering letter to them, for a small fee. Among the buildings was an occasional death house where the elderly were brought to spend their last days, and associated with these were the workshops where all the three-dimensional decorations and models were made for the elaborate funerals. Paper figures were made to represent the deceased and a model of his house, and a quantity of paper money made to see him through in the new life. Here and there a new building was being erected. The enclosing scaffolding was entirely bamboo, laced together with twine. Women labourers of the Sam Swee group in their uniform of red headdress and black samfoo scurried up the planks and scaffold carrying their baskets of concrete, and you had to wonder why the whole structure didn't collapse. The Sam Swee women derive their name, meaning 'three rivers', from the district in China where their industry originated. They are not to be underestimated; their work would put most men to shame.

The roads were generally good, and well maintained. Labour was cheap, and lawns, footpaths and open areas were kept cropped by men and women artistically swinging their small scythes that cut the grass off at just the right height. Singapore has tropical downpours that quickly induce local flooding, stalling cars and trucks and choking roadways. To cope with this the roads are paralleled by monsoon drains, up to a few metres wide and a metre or so deep. While these generally do the job there are rains they cannot cope with, and I was caught in a few of these. Fortunately the runoff is quick after rain ceases. The same monsoon drains periodically claim cars as victims, and a few of the Australians ended up in monsoon drains after a few too many drinks or just careless driving. With a constant high heat and humidity Singapore's atmosphere can be oppressive, particularly in rain. So rather than wear raincoats people use umbrellas. Stalls all over the place sold oilpaper umbrellas with bamboo ribs for about a dollar. When closed they looked green from the paint on the ribs, but opened they were brownish or creamy. These umbrellas doubled as sun shades for the local people most of the time.



A monsoon drain catches a driver unawares in Singapore, August 1957.

Singapore's waterfront was a crowded, busy place, and Collyer Quay was the mercantile centre of Singapore with its banks, insurance and shipping offices. Bearded, turbaned Sikhs stood guard in the bank doorways with shotguns. Car parks were policed by boys who had appointed themselves car attendants. Paying them almost guaranteed security; not paying them risked minor damage to the vehicle. Ships anchored off shore in the roads and were then unloaded

into sampans that took the freight to the Singapore River for further delivery. Like an ants' nest, there was a constant traffic of bodies between the boats and the shore with burdens of rattan, packs of raw rubber, or bags of some other commodity. When the port was idle the river would be crowded with stationary sampans anchored six deep or more against its bank, with only a narrow passageway down the middle. Water taxis did a roaring trade between ship and shore, many of them only powered by a man with a pair of oars. There was a sharp contrast between the parklike surroundings of the Victoria Memorial Hall and City Offices, and the slums not half a kilometre away. In front of the Victoria Memorial Hall stands a statue in memory of Sir Stamford Raffles who purchased Singapore for England in 1819 from the then reigning sultan of the area. Raffles Hotel was acknowledged throughout the world for its excellence.

Elizabeth Walk on Connaught Drive, a promenade along the waterfront, was always crowded at weekends with people seeking escape from their homes and offices, and featured a variety of small food stalls. The world-renowned Change Alley was near Collyer Quay. Just a short, narrow alley with a multitude of small stalls crowded into it, it sold all the most popular tourist items in clothing, jewellery and electronics. Canvas awnings for the stalls overlapped in the centre of the alley. Moneychangers plied their wares vocally, and accosted tourists with their rapid fire 'Change money. Money change. Change money.' It was sometimes more convenient and profitable to use the moneychangers than the banks. But many a tourist was caught by the ploy of 'have to go and get the right currency' after handing over their cash. We always kept sight of the moneychanger until we had the exchange currency in hand.

It really is a small world. Celie had relatives in the area. Joe Cagnacci was a very personable bloke about my own age who had a flat near the heart of town and was in our social circle. An elder brother of his was based in either Labuan or Sarawak, and visited Singapore. I was to get to Labuan once while in 1 Squadron, and was impressed with its open cleanliness, cosmopolitan population of only 9,000, and less development than Singapore. Off the coast of Brunei, it has an excellent natural harbour used as long ago as 1846 by the British. They undertook to suppress piracy in the area in exchange for its use. It has an impressive, well-maintained war cemetery for World War II soldiers who died in the area. Singapore also has an enormous war cemetery with 4,000 graves where many Australian soldiers are buried, the Kranji War Cemetery. A tall, impressive memorial in the shape of an aircraft wing supported by columns at the head of a wide concrete stairway carries the names of 24,000

others who have no graves. The Labuan War Cemetery with headstones set low in landscaped lawns has more of an aura of peace about it than the Singapore cemetery with its vertical marble headstones.



Visiting the Labuan War Cemetery, Malaysia, June 1957. (L-R): Terry Bibbo, Paul Morrow, C. Laughton, Neil Leonard.

The Singapore Photographic Society was a professional body of mainly Chinese photographers with whom I could not hope to compete but from whom I could certainly learn. So I joined the Society. I found that this also gave access to social functions and areas of the island I would otherwise not have found. One of my photos, a pair of gazelles I had photographed in the Perth zoo in September 1957, was exhibited in an international exhibition in Singapore. I won a silver cup for a photo of a *gloriosa superba* I submitted to a floral show. Other photos I took in Singapore won awards back in Australia, and I went on to have other colour slides accepted in international exhibitions around the world but without taking any prizes. Through the photographic society I got to see, but not photograph, the largest flower in the world. It is

the *Rafflesia* and reaches over one meter in diameter. If my memory serves me correctly it also only flowers at night and dies the next morning. I upgraded my camera at least a couple of times in Singapore, always with a Voigtlander. Prices were much cheaper than in Australia, of course, and new models always had that something extra to offer. Electronic flashes were just coming on the market and initially I had one with a battery pack that hung like a heavy handbag from the shoulder. Later they became small enough to contain their own power pack of four D cells and could clip directly on to the camera. Not for many years would they be small enough to be built into cameras. Where we now expect a camera lens to cover all focal lengths from telephoto through wide angle and close-up, zoom lenses were in their infancy. I needed a carry bag to accommodate the individual lenses for each of these applications and thrilled at the opportunities they opened up.

We also joined a film society that screened films privately in the British Council Gallery on weekends but I don't recall renewing our membership of that after the first year. I don't think it had a lot to offer over the regular features showing in the main city cinemas or the local crowded, noisy, primitive cinemas that I went to once or twice for the experience, and was a very staid and conservative audience.

Singapore was well served with international artists of renown and we went to concerts by Benny Goodman, Luigi Infantino (Italian tenor), and Richard Tucker (American tenor). Other cultural highlights included the Tai Thean Kew circus, an impressive display of acrobats, solidly build dancing girls, and animals from China; and the Katherine Dunham show, the first all-black music hall company from America, all of whom I photographed in performance. Good cinemas were open seven days a week. There was a wealth of quality paintings, drawings, carvings and other artwork available for viewing; and local carvings in teak or ebony or ivory were sold by shops, village stalls or hawkers on bicycles all over the island. I brought home teak carvings of a Sumatran male head, a female head and bust, and a seated naked female. And a small pair of black Malayan bears.



Benny Goodman in concert at Singapore, 1957.

Haw Par Villa, better known as The Tiger Balm Gardens, offered outdoor paintings and concrete depictions of Asian folklore; heroes and villains, princes and clowns, animals with human attributes. Much of it was quite

gruesome, like a squatting man in a frame being sawn in half vertically by two men with a crosscut saw; another having his tongue cut out; a woman being disembowelled while standing strapped to a frame. Other scenes show rats as stretcher-bearers in a war between the animals, and a stag in a suit using a telephone while attended by a turtle manservant. The Gardens were always a popular place of family entertainment.

Chinese drama had its inception in the eighth century when Emperor Ming Huang formed the first college, and stage plays first appeared in the thirteenth century. Chinese operas, or wayangs, would run for two or three nights in indoor theatres in amusement parks, or outdoor theatres in any space big enough to hold them. Staged by touring actors they were largely symbolic, with the movements and gestures of the actors representing actions that only the initiated can understand. Basic colours were important, with white being the villain of the piece. There was no charge for attendance but the audience was expected to spend money on sweetmeats and other items sold there. These were noisy, colourful spectacles with elaborate costumery enjoyed by the crowds and would run well into the night. They did not mind my intrusion, and I was able to photograph these from the audience and from backstage for some satisfying results. Snake charmers could always be found in the grounds of St Andrew's cathedral with their cobras and mongoose. With rare exceptions I found Singapore people friendly and cooperative, and willing to share their artistry with anyone who was genuinely interested.

Objections to my photography were more from a position of shyness and reserve than antipathy, and here is where my taxi driver (Low Cheng Boo) proved so valuable. Our standing arrangement was that, on days when I wanted to go sightseeing, he would drive exclusively for me for as long as I wanted him and would leave his meter running. But because there was not much mileage involved, at the end of the day I would pay him what I thought to be a fair price. He always accompanied me to outlying villages, temples, drug rehabilitation centres, funerals and wherever his presence could break down barriers for me. I was able to visit fishing villages and photograph people at home and at work. Children loved to be photographed and would often clamour around and put on their own show to get attention. Some of the coastal villages were picturesque affairs built on stilts over the sea and with a sandy environment. These villages, or kampongs, were almost wholly populated by Malay fishermen who lived very simply. The houses were built over the water to allow for disposal of refuse, and to make launching and beaching of the boats more convenient. Other, urban villages, were built over

mud flats that stank when the tide was out, and where the houses were interconnected only by raised wooden footpaths, some of them decently constructed of regular planks, and others nothing more than narrow planks laid precariously on posts and not having direct connection with each other. The houses themselves were coarse wooden constructions with either atap or corrugated iron roofs. Temple guardians opened their doors and I frequented Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh temples and Muslim mosques. Some of the carvings and pictures in the Indian temples, based on Hindu mythology, are erotic and, at times, bordering on the grotesque. In contrast the bare setting of a Muslim mosque is almost severe in its simplicity.

The majority of Chinese in Singapore were Buddhist. Singapore's largest temple was the Twin Groves Buddhist temple, founded in the early part of the century by a Chinese philanthropist. It had four great statues representing the Four Great Kings of Heaven flanking the main entrance, three main buildings connected by a covered walkway across a courtyard, and impressive altars. Another temple housed a 300 tonne statue of Buddha in cement. Buddha may be represented in a variety of forms, since it is the ideal and not the man that the image recalls. In another Buddhist temple was a shrine housing a piece of the sacred Bodhi tree, under which Siddhartha Gautama sat almost 3,000 years ago and meditated for 49 days. As a result of this meditation he achieved the enlightenment he was seeking and became known as the Buddha or *The Enlightened One*, and hence formed Buddhism. In the Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple in Race Course Road was a replica of Buddha's footprint, modelled on one of four footprints supposedly left behind by Buddha. Made of ebony, and inlaid with 108 religious symbols in mother-of-pearl, it manifests itself as an exquisite object of unusual beauty. It was rated one of the finest pieces of artistic creation ever accomplished by human hand. There was a steady movement of worshippers through the temples. Some came merely to pray, while others bought joss sticks that they burned in large embossed brass urns. Yet others tossed a bundle of sticks into the air, reading their fate in the pattern made on the floor by the fallen sticks.

The Sri Mariammam Kovil was a Hindu temple in South Bridge Road whose archway and roof were profusely decorated with carved animals and human figures. It also had a colourful and flamboyantly decorated tower that rose several storeys above an impressive doorway of sculptured wood. During festival time the courtyard would be crowded with devotees watching the firewalking Hindus. I attended one of these firewalking ceremonies and can vouch for their authenticity. The bed of coals was red-hot and probably five or

more metres long. The heat could be felt from some distance, but I watched a man walk the length of the bed with a child on his shoulders. He showed no sign of physical or mental discomfort.

A solemn and colourful Muslim procession to honour the 1416th birthday of their religious leader, the Prophet Mohammed, was over a mile long and included hundreds of inscriptions honouring the Prophet.

In August 1957 we decided to take holidays travelling in Malaya on the local bus service, the Sing Lian Express. This would take us through a lot of terrorist territory but was really quite safe. Villages in the most critical areas were completely enclosed with barbed wire fences and had curfews. British policy had been to take all villagers from a wide geographic area and house them in what they called *Strategic Hamlets*. They had relocated 500,000 people, and this was undoubtedly the major factor in curbing terrorist activity and interest. Outside these hamlets life went on as usual outside curfew hours, but there were security patrols and frequent security checks of vehicles along the road. Once we had crossed the causeway connecting Singapore with the mainland and been through Malay customs, our suitcase in the luggage compartment of the bus was not opened. But the Malay security police took delight in opening our hand luggage and inspecting every little thing. As an Australian couple with a two-month old baby we attracted a lot of attention travelling on local busses, and I don't think we saw any other white people on the bus at all. Our route took us up the west coast, not up the main highway, so we travelled the equivalent of country roads with a vehicle ferry to get over the river at Batu Pahat. And got a flat tyre, but that gave us a break from sitting in the bus. The Malayan countryside was different from Singapore, being so much bigger and with extensive rice fields, and not having the predominant Chinese population. The village houses were different too, mostly wooden on small stumps with atap roofs and with verandas. Built for the hot, wet climate. The rice fields were flooded ready for planting, with the new seedlings in small plots adjoining the fields prior to transplanting. Some of the villages were attractively laid out, with well-kept pathways to the houses and potted plants in the gardens. The ubiquitous water buffaloes were there to plough and prepare the rice beds.

Our first stop was a Rest House in Malacca, about 250 km from Singapore. Rest Houses throughout Malaya were run primarily for government servants but rented out unused rooms. I remember arriving there just after lunchtime, and they served up a delicious local fish in butter as soon as we'd settled in.

The Rest House was a big, rambling, two-storey building with wide, airy rooms. Malacca is a coastal town on a river mouth, with a lot of Dutch influence in its architecture. The city was first founded in the 14th century by Raja Iskander Shah when Singapore was abandoned due to Javanese attacks. By 1404 it was nominally part of the Chinese empire and trade with China established. The first European visitor was De Sequeira in 1509. Whole blocks of municipal buildings were built from local red laterite with all the colour built-in, and dating back to 1641. Stadthuys was believed to be the oldest existing Dutch building in the Far East. Christ Church, an old church of the same material but a hundred years younger, was built to replace St Paul's Church as the Dutch State Church. Malacca had its Chinatown too that might have been transplanted from Singapore, but that didn't detract from the local culture. For general transport there were taxis and trishas, which we used, and for the farmers there were beautifully built ox-drawn wagons with curved, thatched roofs built right out over the backs of the oxen. The Church of St Paul is a well-preserved relic built originally as a chapel in 1521. We were shown St Francis Xavier's tomb, where his body rested between 22 March and 11 December 1553 following his death on the island of Changchuen in the mouth of the Canton River in 1552. His body is now preserved in his native Goa. He was a Jesuit missionary and had been in Malacca in 1545 to 1547. Some magnificent carved tombstones of Dutch and Portuguese notables dating back to the sixteen-hundreds are historical landmarks lining the walls of the chapel.

From Malacca we moved about 50 km further up the coast to a sleepy, picturesque town of Port Dickson with its large Indian community, many of them Hindus, and then inland to Seremban. As we got off the bus in the Seremban market place a Malay man who had been travelling on the same bus came up and warned us not to get caught by shysters. All the people we met and talked with were courteous and interested. Probably they rarely saw people like us travelling at such a basic level. In the Sikh temple the community was at prayer, with men on one side of the aisle and women on the other. It is part of the Sikh religion never to cut the hair or to shave. From Seremban, characterised by its wide, clean streets, I took a one-day trip to Kuala Lumpur, the Malayan capital, while Celie caught up on some rest. Kuala Lumpur looked like most other large towns except for its mosques, since Islam is the state religion. A classic example of Moorish architecture is the Muslim Mosque situated on the river junction from which Kuala Lumpur takes its name. The literal meaning is 'muddy estuary'. Mosques are always oriented so that

worshippers face Mecca when they pray. Severe penalties are imposed on Muslim citizens caught breaking the fast in the holy month of Ramadan, when they are not allowed to eat or indulge in sex between sunrise and sunset. Malaya is rich in tin mining country, particularly around Kuala Lumpur, and I drove past mines on the way there. After this we went straight back to Singapore, all the wiser for having travelled.

Festivals and Ceremonies of Singapore

Kathina

In the *Sunday Standard* of 3 November 1957 there was an article describing a Buddhist ceremony scheduled to take place at 2.00 p.m. Some monks were to be presented with their saffron robes - the annual ceremony of Kathina. The ceremony was carried out not in the Thai temple, the only one in Singapore, but in an associated building known as the Chapter House. Celie and I arrived as the ceremony was about to begin. A wooden figure of a fish hollowed out to make a drum hung outside the temple. Celie was given a seat outside and I was shown in and given a seat amongst other photographers - Chinese, Indian and European. The monks, men and women, were seated on a dais in front of an elaborately decorated altar, and were already clad in their saffron robes. There were to be more than 100 ordinations, the first to be held in this temple for over 50 years. Facing the monks and on a lower platform were the lay Buddhists, about thirty. Venerable Pakasitsutagun, speaking in English, told of the ceremony: the robes are given to the monks after their Vassa or three month retreat to various other temples during the rainy season. Great importance is attached to the ceremony which dates back about 700 years.

The gift of robes, though indispensable in the Kathina ceremony, is not the only important offering to the monks. There are gifts of foodstuffs, umbrellas, razors, medicine, mats, and other articles of a personal nature. To Buddhists the saffron robe is an object of respect as it conveys the idea of purity. It is regarded as a symbolic 'flag of the Arahant' - (a person who has attained the last stage of sainthood). Monks depend entirely on charity, and in places like Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka can be seen in the streets in their house-to-house rounds collecting alms. In Singapore they were rarely seen because the lay people took the alms to the temple. And, in addition, financial assistance came from the Government of Thailand where Buddhism is the State Religion. The main function of the monk, besides officiating at ceremonies and giving young people religious education, is to serve as an example of the

Buddhist way of life and to point the way to Nirvana or heaven. The three essentials for the Buddhist monk are poverty, celibacy and inoffensiveness. He follows strictly the Buddhist rule against harming any living thing, even straining insects from his drinking water lest he inflict suffering. After the address by the Chief Priest, the gifts were presented to the monks by a laywoman. The four most important monks received theirs in beautifully carved golden baskets covered with mats of coloured crepe paper and interwoven flowers. The other monks were given their robes on a tray. Hymns were chanted by both monks and congregation, and the ceremony closed with the lay people crowding around the monks in animated conversation.

Opium Treatment Centre

When, on 8 February 1958, I found myself at a temple where opium addicts were treated I was invited to stay for the ritual slaying of a cockerel and the pouring of its blood down the aisle and at the altar, and then to join the feasting afterwards. I was one of six Westerners to attend the last of four ceremonies conducted every year at the Opium Addicts Treatment Centre in Changi Road. The Centre was a Chinese temple some six years old, whose inhabitants followed a religion instituted in China in the early 19th century. Here the priests and priestesses undertook to cure both mental and physical ills without the use of medicine of any kind. Their speciality was the cure of opium smoking, though they claimed to have cured all types of illness from ordinary cigarette smoking to an insanity case that was rejected as hopeless by the mental hospital. Addicts came to the hospital dirty, smelly and hungry with no personal possessions. They were given a wooden pillow and a blanket, and dried out for the first three days with almost no food. During this time they would be given only tea that had been blessed by the priests, and prayer. On about the fourth day they would be normal but weak, and after another three days of prayer, care and feeding they would be ready to leave the temple. This course of treatment cost \$18, but anyone wanting to stay for further treatment could do so for \$1 a day. On one side of the temple was a dormitory for men, and on the other side a dormitory for women. About 25 addicts passed through the temple each month. The Government recognised the Centre and subsidised it with five bags of rice a month, worth about \$3,000 a year.

This ceremony had begun in the morning with the slaughter of a pig and 40 cockerels as a sacrifice to the fourth of the temple's four patron saints. The second part took place in the afternoon with the sacrifice of several more cockerels at the door of the temple, and the chanting of prayers from the altar.

The high priest gave his benediction and handed around holy tea in handle less cups. The altar was laden with food, and highly polished brass urns in which sandalwood was kept smouldering. Unlike most other Chinese religions there was no statuary, but the Chinese symbol for space or heaven held the place of honour above the altar.

When the ceremony was over we were treated to a ten-course dinner. Most of the dishes contained chicken and pork, which was to be expected considering the day's sacrifices. We had shark's fin soup with chicken, chicken and noodles, abalone soup with a rare form of Chinese lettuce, sweet and sour fish, Chinese radish and meat, giblets and vegetables, and a few pork dishes. That was where I first ate abalone in large slices, and enjoyed it along with the other exotic foodstuffs. Two of the temple staff deserve mention. Mrs Yang was a High Priestess of the temple. She spoke with a heavy American accent, having been educated in America. Her beliefs in the Old World and its ways had not been affected by her experiences in the New World. Mr Chia was the temple's secretary. A devout Methodist, he had no trouble reconciling his Christian beliefs with his heathen belief that the sacrifice of one cockerel will cleanse a man of his past and future sins.

Fighting-fish

One of the most captivating smells of the back streets of early-morning Singapore was that of roasting coffee beans - better even than the smell of freshly brewed coffee. I was caught by the rain in Chinatown one morning and took shelter near a coffee shop. The two groups in the front of the shop did not arouse my interest particularly. After all, coffee shops are the meeting places of many groups of people from partygoers to gangsters. But when someone drew my attention to the focal point of each group I was interested. The two groups were clustered around two wide-mouthed bottles such as are used for holding sweets. And in the bottles were pairs of Siamese fighting fish, engaged in a battle to the death. Ordinarily these fish are uninteresting things about 100 mm long. But when engaged in battle they become living colours of iridescent blues and greens with rippling fins. The fight can last only a few seconds, with one of the fish turning tail and refusing to fight. Or it can go on for more than an hour, with the fish slowly circling, coming to grips, and somersaulting one over the other to the bottom of the tank; until one breaks free, seeking refuge near the surface or on the opposite side of the tank from his opponent. High stakes are wagered on the outcome of such fights, and no doubt the coffee shop had a lookout to warn of the approach of police. When

I left, both pairs of fish seemed tired but determined not to give in. Probably the fight would go on for another half hour or more.

Chinese Funeral

Many of the rituals pertaining to a Chinese funeral have been prescribed in the ancient classics prior to the time of Confucius, and dating back to almost 1800 BC. As though he had arranged it for me, one Saturday morning my driver arrived unannounced and said there was a big Chinese funeral on but I must hurry. Hurry I did, and picked up Bill Middlemiss along the way. We saw the whole ceremony, beginning at the house, through the lengthy funeral procession to the burial. The family were millionaires whose father had died some twelve months earlier. His funeral had cost \$30,000 and it was estimated this funeral of the mother would cost the same. I had the whole procedure explained as it happened; from what it cost and how the money was sometimes borrowed over many years, putting some families in dire financial straits; the hiring of the professional mourners in their traditional sackcloth to weep along the procession; the fireworks display at the graveside to drive away evil spirits; and the leaving of foodstuffs at the grave to nourish the deceased on his journey. The feast at the house included several whole pigs, numerous roast ducks and chickens, and countless cakes and oddments. Orange and grape juices were being consumed by the case full. The coffin was a gigantic varnished thing costing \$2000, set up behind an altar inside the house. Covering the coffin was an elaborately decorated silk spread costing \$1400, and provided by the funeral association to which the family belonged. One room leading off the coffin room was stacked with prayer paper and other paper decorations. These would be used or burned at the funeral or other allied ceremonies. Another room was crowded with people dressing in sackcloth. All the mourners were relatives of the deceased; professional mourners are only used by those who have not many relatives. A constant stream of people moved through the house, lighting joss sticks, praying at the altar, then going out for a cold drink. There was no evidence of real sorrow anywhere. An old lady gave us white handkerchiefs to be displayed somewhere on our person during the funeral.

Three Buddhist priests conducted the funeral service. It took about two dozen men to load the coffin on to the hearse, a truck over which a dome of coloured paper and flowers had been built. Other trucks and cars were festooned with wreaths or bolts of expensive cloth. The hearse was towed out in procession by about 100 men of the funeral association carrying their

distinctive blue and white umbrellas. Shuffling along behind the hearse came the mourners in a compact group, the degree of relationship to the deceased being expressed in the colour of the mourning clothes worn. There was much theatrical weeping and wailing, and hiding faces in the sackcloth. All this was done to the music of a brass band and a band of traditional Chinese instruments. The change of music from Western to Chinese was abrupt and seemingly illogical, with *Home Sweet Home* and *Swanee River* interspersed between Chinese tunes. At the cemetery the grave had been dug next to the deceased husband's, the bottom lined with coke and the sides bricked up to form a vault. From the hearse to the burial place the coffin was carried by 32 pallbearers. Amidst a deafening cacophony from all musical instruments the Buddhist priests performed their ceremonies and the coffin was lowered into the grave. A strip of red silk cloth with Chinese characters on it was draped along the coffin and a bottle of wine poured over it. Gifts were laid before the grave and joss sticks lit while the vault was sealed with seven interlocking slabs of cement. This done, the crowd rapidly dispersed and made their way back to the house for the feasting that could last for days.

Cheng Beng

It is a Chinese belief that no man's home or property, nor even his body, is his exclusive possession, but belongs to his ancestors as well. The fortunes of the living and dead are, moreover, inextricably intertwined. When an individual dies he may become a good spirit, helpful to his heirs. But it is also possible that he may join the army of demons. What fate befalls him is determined not only by his own past actions, but by the solicitude with which his descendants honour his memory. This gives rise to the annual festival of Cheng Beng. On the 6th of April Chinese in their thousands flock to cemeteries to honour their dead with gifts according to their means. The plots of land comprising the graves are cleared of weeds, and the gravestones repainted. Firecrackers are exploded to frighten away evil spirits. Paper decorations and paper 'stage' money are burned to help the deceased in his new life. Joss sticks are lighted and prayers offered, while red candles and foodstuffs are laid out in front of the gravestones. There are bowls of rice, boiled eggs, whole chickens, green vegetables, bottles of sauce and stout. In less recent times these were left to be consumed by the deceased, and even today some families still follow this old custom. However, the Chinese largely are a practical people. Most of the gifts have been replaced by paper and cardboard substitutes. And the food is taken home at the end of the day, to be consumed by the family. It is assumed that the spirit of the food has been possessed by the spirit of the deceased, and it is

alright for the living relatives to consume what remains. Confucius has said 'To serve the dead as if they were living is the highest achievement of filial piety'. Most Chinese, whether followers of Confucius or not, believe that the more elaborate the funeral and subsequent ceremonies, the better the chance of the deceased's having a happy life in the next world. This can be at the expense of the living because, after all, this life is only a preparation for the next.

Thaipusam

The ceremonies for the Indian festival of Thaipusam began before the February sunrise. In the temple grounds devotees were burning holy camphor and other smoky incenses. Some were working on the ground building kevadis. These were wooden structures consisting of a pole about a metre long, forming the base of a semicircle that was decorated with palm fronds and flowers. They would be carried in procession by men, a few women, and one young boy. As the sun rose other men started preparing participants for their sacrifice. This entailed building a metal framework like the skeleton of a heavy umbrella and anchoring it to a metal waistband. The umbrella-like struts were flat and had holes along their length. Through these holes long metal spikes were inserted, and their sharp ends dug into the skin of the torso across the chest and back, and under the arms. There were dozens of these spikes in the completed structure and their points made a herringbone pattern in the participant's skin. There was no bleeding, but some of the participants had white powder dusted onto their skin. A few then had spikes with large metal stars on them forced through the extended tongue, preventing it being drawn back into the mouth. Others had further spikes forced horizontally through both cheeks over the tongue.

Preparation took until midmorning when all the participants, either carrying heavy kevadis or burdened with torturous metal-spiked frames, left the temple grounds in a solemn procession chanting hymns.



A devotee carries his spiked metal frame during the Indian festival of Thaipusam, February 1958.

Nine Emperor Gods

The Festival of Nine Emperor Gods was an October festival for the Chinese. It was held at night in a hall in the Great World Amusement Park. Individual articles of penance were: a wooden chair with nails in the seat, back and arms like the bed of nails favoured by Indian holy men; a massive half-moon shaped axe that one participant was swinging back and forth over his head, striking himself in the middle back and drawing blood; and a long machete with a straight and a serrated edge that had already drawn considerable blood from the participant's back. Other devotees were seated on wooden chairs in a rude circle, and I was allowed inside the circle to take my photographs. They were swaying and chanting themselves into a state of self-hypnosis. Some incense was burning but there was no sign of any drugs or painkillers. As the ceremony progressed helpers pushed multiple daggers through the surface flesh of the upper arms and throats of the participants. These were more than superficial, and lifted more than two centimetres of flesh in some cases. Most of the participants then had long brass spears forced through one cheek and out through the open mouth. They bit on prayer paper wrapped around the

shaft to hold it in place. The daggers and spears drew no blood, and appeared not to inflict any pain. When they were all fully prepared this way they stood, and marched out of the hall in procession. Some had baskets of flowers hanging on the ends of the two-metre spears through their cheeks.

Ceremonies like these are held periodically to atone for past misdeeds and to build up grace for future life.



A devotee participates in the procession of the Nine Emperor Gods Festival, October 1956.

Moon Festival

The Moon Festival occurs on the 15th day of the eighth moon - the Harvest Moon - of the Chinese calendar, which was 19 September on the Gregorian calendar. Since the moon is feminine men are not permitted to worship her, and this is essentially a women's festival. Preparations started days beforehand, with the decoration of shops with lanterns of all shapes and sizes. By festival time most of these will have been bought by women for presentation to their grandchildren. The children put a small, lighted red candle in each lantern and carry it on the end of a bamboo stick. The temples are hives of activity on festival night and attract crowds of sightseers as well as worshippers.

Innumerable superstitions surround the Moon Festival but the figures of the Hare and the Toad are significant symbols that have prevailed over the obscurity of time. Women light two candles and set fire to bundles of incense sticks, then go forward to make obeisance before the altar. They also take this opportunity to search their futures. A somewhat hit and miss affair, it involves lighting three incense sticks and whispering questions. The answers are the words spoken by the first casual passer-by.

When my posting ended and I had to return to Australia I felt that I was just starting to find out what made Singapore tick. It was a fascinating two and a half years. What I didn't know then was that I would see a whole lot more of the island until my final visit in 1975 when I would be happy to leave the new-look Singapore behind.

No. 11 (Maritime Reconnaissance) Squadron

Richmond, New South Wales

In the weeks over the end of July and the beginning of August 1958 Celie, Judith, Susan and I lived at Pearl Street, Tweed Heads, with Jack and Ivy, and at 4 Galway Street with Mum and Dad. Jack and Tony taught me to drive, and Dad lent me £180 to buy a £300 second-hand, black Hillman Minx. It was a small, four-door, side-valve sedan that Tony helped me choose. It still had an external switch at the rear of the car for the tail lights, which had been the law until then. This required getting out of the car to turn on the taillights, so there was no excuse for having faulty lights. Dad still had his better quality blue Hillman which was the last car he was to own. Tony was a qualified mechanic and may even have had his own garage now. He did have his own house in Carina, which Dad had helped him build, and we visited there as well as enjoying Pat's cuisine at Burleigh Heads. Pat had left the T & G insurance firm he had worked for and, with a partner named Cyril, had bought a small restaurant that he called *The Ferns*.

Len was in the Cairns diocese, having chosen there for his diocese after Banyo, and was to be foundation parish priest at Malanda where he remained from January 1959 until December 1964. John was still in Melbourne. Mary was at Toronto outside Newcastle, with George instructing at the recruit-training centre at Rathmines. Leo, Bernard and chubby-cheeked Ursula were still at Galway Street. Bernard had a nice new bicycle and Leo had an Austin A40 with folding roof. Aunty Liz, at 86 years old, was still living at 22 Lockerbie Street, Kangaroo Point. Mum and Dad would both go to visit Len at Malanda in 1959 and Dad would stay into June and July to help build Len's presbytery. In a letter to Mum from here he had numerous spelling mistakes but genuine affection, and he was expecting Leo's arrival. Intrepid Leo in 1959 drove his A40 over 3500 km to Cairns-Malanda and back with no tools whatsoever, over what must have been almost pioneer dirt roads part of the way. He had told Tony there was no use taking tools because he 'wouldn't know what to do with them anyway'. He didn't need them. Leo was to go overseas on a working holiday in 1962, and would marry and settle in Canada.

By the end of August I was living in the Sergeants' Mess at RAAF Base Richmond and looking for accommodation. It was not easy to find local accommodation and we ended up renting half a miserable house in

Springwood in the Blue Mountains. We made friends and joined a tennis club, and I drove the Hillman to Richmond down the back road to avoid traffic. Springwood was only a small shopping community, but it had a lot of scenic appeal with mountain trails and waterfalls within easy distance, and easy access to the more established tourist resort of Katoomba. Then a new suburb was opened up at St Marys near Penrith, and I used my War Service entitlement to build a house there in an allotment with a tall red gum tree. That was a small, blue, three-bedroom, fibro house with a big back yard at 19 Parkin Road, and we were certainly in there by June 1959. Our Real Estate agent was Phillip M. Plows who had a business called Mala Homes on the corner of the Great Western Highway and Mamre Road, and we got quite friendly with Phil in our negotiations with the War Service and builders. With our Singapore background we had a nameplate made for the house - Istana for 'palace'. We didn't have enough money to furnish the place and started off with upturned tea chests for tables, and cheap cane saucer-chairs. Heating was single-bar radiators, and we never had the phone on. Two-stroke Victa lawn mowers were all the rage, but my experiences with two-strokes had left me their permanent enemy. I bought an electric mower that was to last many years until it fell apart with metal fatigue.



19 Parkin Road, St Marys, NSW, 1959.

There was no sewerage, so we still had the outdoor toilet with tins and sawdust that I was used to as a child. Drainage was a problem. All waste water from bathroom and kitchen was channelled into a grease trap that was a cement pit about a metre square by a metre and a half deep. This had a hand pump for evacuating the stale, smelly, greasy water over the back yard as irrigation. Each house was supposed to dispose of its own water in its own premises. At night we would pump this gunk into the gutter outside to run off in the stormwater drains. Since we were all doing it nobody complained, but the council didn't approve. The hand pumps were a real time and energy consumer too. So we bought a siphon that was operated off the back yard tap. Fresh water from the tap sucked stale water from the pit, and the mixture was at least a little better for irrigation. Mostly we fed this into the gutter too.

We had some good friends there because we all had similar houses and similar incomes. Jack and Yvonne Hargreaves lived below us with their little daughter Debbie, and we spent a lot of time with them. Above us lived an older couple

from Coonabarabran and I used to think, 'Is anybody ever born in places with names like that?' Actually Coonabarabran has a lot to offer and is not the backwater I thought it to be. When I discovered the Warrumbungle National Park I appreciated Coonabarabran. Two doors up were a younger couple, Betty and Vince Hazelgrove, and Celie was to be godmother to their son, Craig Steven. Vince died not long afterwards in a car accident in Tasmania. Penrith was the major regional centre for the district and St Marys was only beginning to develop. It must have been towards the end of our time there that we went as a family to a Chinese cafe in St Marys, because both Judith and Susan were active little girls. Seated at the table they looked at the Willow pattern on the plates and found a flower. 'Flower, flower, flower', they both said. Then they found the bridge, but progressing from the F in flower they said 'Fridge, fridge, fridge'. Then came the house. That, of course, became 'Fouse, fouse, fouse'. We had not anticipated that they would find a duck! And their little voices echoed throughout the cafe.

I was commissioned as a Pilot Officer (or *bograt* as the rank was known) on 1 May 1959, shortly before I was due for promotion to Warrant Officer. By this stage I was the only Flight Sergeant navigator in the RAAF; all the other members off my course and the course after that had been commissioned, but I still had my Singapore behaviour hanging over my head. Being a Pilot Officer didn't mean a lot more pay, but it did mean bigger mess fees, buying a formal mess uniform, and more social obligations. After 12 months incident-free probation I was promoted automatically to Flying Officer on 1 May 1960. David was born on 5 April 1960 and Robert on 16 April 1961, both at the Nepean District Hospital, and some time after Robert's birth I had seven weeks leave to take and not enough money to take it anywhere. The meatworks at Riverstone took casual labour from queues that formed outside its gates every morning, and I joined the queue a couple of times. I couldn't crack the meatworks Mafia and eventually got a job closer to home at the Balgay jam factory under a false name. My initial employment was washing the fruit boxes with a steam hose in an annex off the side wall of the factory, and that was what I mostly did. After I had been accepted by the regulars I was allowed inside the factory to help in making and canning the jam, and even got to work overtime. Balgay was good jam and they used real fruit. There was no way I could get to drive the forklift, which is what I wanted to do.

When Bill Middlemiss and I got back together we started making our own rules again. There were many times when we had to fly on Sundays, doing test flights, and we took some of the civilian neighbours along for joy rides. We

never entered their names in any documentation, so there is no record of it, but it would have caused a headache if we had ever crashed or been diverted to another airfield with unauthorised civilians on board. Other aircrew lived out our way and, when possible, we operated a car pool. It wasn't a great success but did help when we were all flying in the same aircraft or at least on the same exercise.

I first flew in No. 11 Squadron on 26 August 1958 with Flight Lieutenant (Gandy) Bevan. Like me, Bill had to be converted to the new aircraft and it was not until May 1959 that I teamed up with him to resume our pilot/nav relationship. This squadron did not have the same crew routine as No. 1 Squadron and crews were just drawn from a big pool of manpower in each aircrew category. But arrangements could be made to fly with other aircrew of your choice. There was nothing routine about maritime navigation and it was to become a very demanding challenge again. The first two months at Richmond were dedicated to learning a whole new discipline of navigation and the aids and instruments that went with it, and beginning to learn some of the strategies and techniques of anti-submarine warfare. All flights collected weather forecasts before doing the flight planning, which might take an hour before takeoff depending on its complexity. While the official forecasts we were given by the meteorological section were what we were legally required to go by they were not always accurate. For local forecasting we could not pass one of the weathermen, Fred, a scarred Spitfire pilot from World War II. He was uncanny in knowing what the seasonal and daily variations in weather would be at any time, and we listened to him for the reality, while planning the theoretical for submission to air traffic control.

The Neptunes, (Lockheed P2V-5) were propeller driven twin-engine piston aircraft fitted with complex radar and electronic equipment, designed for long duration, low flying searching, and were equipped to drop torpedos or bombs and launch rockets. Navigation equipment was more advanced than on Lincolns and included an electric-powered periscopic sextant. This was attached to a coupling in the roof, and extended outside like a submarine periscope. We had not graduated to inertial or satellite navigation which were years and decades away. Even with modern aids much of our navigation relied on dead reckoning out over the ocean miles from land. Dead reckoning involves working out where the aircraft should be if all observations and calculations were correct, and generally required measuring drift frequently to calculate winds, then applying those winds to aircraft heading. Heading is the direction the aircraft is pointing; track is the direction taken by the aircraft as

the wind blows it off its course. A constantly plotted track and groundspeed should give the aircraft position at any time. The Neptunes were not air-conditioned, and had a stifling atmosphere caused by all their electronic and hydraulic equipment. This, combined with operating in uncertain weather at low altitudes, was a powerful stimulant for motion sickness. Until I got used to this I reverted to pills, and subsequently always carried them around for the benefit of others. They were readily obtainable from medical section with no stigma. On normal operations Neptunes carried three navigators, two or three pilots and several electronic officers. Carrying three navigators was not a case of double redundancy. We all had a job to do. One was responsible for route navigation to the scene of the action. He kept track of the geographical location of the aircraft. A second navigator in the nose was tactical navigator. He only knew where he was in relation to a tactical point, but around that point he was extremely accurate and would direct the manoeuvres to locate submarines or whatever else we were searching for. The third navigator operated specialist electronic equipment. On long exercises we would rotate through these positions. And thereby hangs a tale, but you'll have to wait for it.



RAAF Lockheed Neptune P2V-5, serial A89-301, 1960.

At this time a Neptune held the world long distance flight record. This was a P2V-1 that had flown 18,078 km from Perth, Western Australia, to Columbus, Ohio, in 55 hours 17 minutes on 29 Sep-01 Oct 1946. While I never got to equal that, I flew as long as 16 hours on one flight and from 12 to 15 hours on several others. There was a pod on each wingtip. The port one carried fuel, 300 gallons I think, and a radar scanner. The starboard one carried fuel and a 70-million candlepower searchlight. This searchlight was powered by creating an arc across carbon electrodes - like electric welding. It seems a real safety hazard to mix this sort of powered light and a fuel tank in the same wing pod. But I know of no recorded instances of malfunction, so the engineers really got it right. Seventy million candlepower is so bright you can read a newspaper by it three kilometres away. We used it for final one-and-a-half-mile homing in on a periscope that had been located by radar, or to light up suspect vessels. Over the years the squadron was to get many complaints from cruise ships and local councils about our lighting up vessels and beaches during our exercises, and we had to curb our enthusiasm to use it except on legitimate

targets. People didn't like being caught in the limelight doing things they'd rather not be seen doing. We had two radars; one looking around 360 degrees out to 300 miles for coastlines and solid objects, and another with a shorter wavelength looking ahead in a narrow arc for small objects like periscopes. In good hands this was a precise tool, and we could pick up seaborne rubbish. Once we homed in on a 20-litre drum that might have been a periscope, another time we homed in on a large-bodied seabird, which was most unusual. This precision radar was also used to keep us out of thunderstorms. Most of the time.

The forces within thunderclouds are enormous and can throw aircraft around like chaff in the wind. Inside a good thunderstorm is black interspersed with lightning, noisy with hail and rain, and uncomfortable with buffeting, vibration and uncontrollable changes of altitude. The only tactic available in these circumstances is to throttle back to a speed that reduces the stress on the aircraft and wait to exit or be spat out by the cloud that can easily reach 20,000 feet (over 6,000 metres). We did not intentionally fly in cumulo-nimbus clouds, but there was one memorable occasion when our radar operator allowed us to be trapped. I have never considered these situations more than discomforting; aircraft are built to withstand them and good pilots take appropriate action. But on this occasion one of our crew had his rosary beads out praying for deliverance. And I must confess I would not like to repeat the experience. I flew in other thunderstorms in other aircraft after this, but never one to equal that in the Neptune.

I spent the month from 8 September to 10 October 1958 on No. 6 Basic Maritime Reconnaissance Course and was thereafter qualified to fly as navigator. But, with squadron conversion training and continuation training, I was not classified as fully competent in all aspects of Anti-Submarine Warfare and maritime navigation until June 1960. From this time on I was involved in training other navigators, and I enjoyed the practical aspects of this. It was gratifying years later to hear that a navigator for whom I had great respect said 'He taught me all I know about navigation'. Which wasn't true, of course. He just needed guidance and experience. It is interesting to note here that, of only seven times I went flying in October 1958, five flights were Search and Rescue air tests, but these would have been only for instruments or equipment - not the full air test after a major servicing. Once qualified I spent the next three months on exercises. Whether for exercise or for real, we flew at several thousand feet in transit to our target area to conserve fuel and gain speed. In the area we flew at 1500 feet and flew for maximum duration or economy.



No. 6 Basic Maritime Reconnaissance Course of No. 11 Squadron at Richmond, NSW, October 1958.

We had three definitions of submarine: possible, probable, and positive. An indication from one source gave us a possible submarine; this might be from a sonobuoy launched from the aircraft and picking up cavitation. Like smoke flares to mark positions, sonobuoys were launched out of a chute in the rear of the aircraft at a speed equal to the aircraft's forward speed, so they fell straight down. A microphone hanging from the sonobuoy picked up marine noises. Cavitation is the noise caused by turbulence around a ship's screws as they rotate, and every submarine type has its own peculiar signature. In fact every seagoing vessel has its own signature. Our equipment could not identify types; we could only hear the noise. A confirmation of the presence of a submarine by a second source, such as our Magnetic Anomaly Detector, gave us a probable submarine. The MAD equipment was housed in a long fibreglass housing in the tail of the aircraft, and detected variations in the earth's magnetic field caused by the submarine's massive steel hull, that it stored on a

magnetic wire recorder. A positive submarine was one that had been seen and identified as such by a reliable observer. Two submarines that I know I worked with were the *HMS Andrew* (P423) and the *HMS Telemachus* (P321). There were obviously others whose names, and in one case nationality, I will never know. Bill and I did find a submarine off the east coast of Australia whose ownership was denied by all friendly forces.

Visual observation was important, and there were two seats in the rear of the fuselage with domed windows projecting beyond the aircraft skin. An observer could look down beside the aircraft. These windows were removable and we often flew on the searches with them stowed, enjoying the fresh air and unimpeded vision. While they were open it was common practice to throw little rubbish out, but there was also another disgusting habit. The aircraft was not equipped with a chemical toilet, and ground staff didn't like emptying the pan when the aircraft returned to base. There was an unwritten law that whoever used the toilet first had to empty it on return. Consequently every effort was made not to be first, and this included borrowing a map from the navigator, shitting on it, bundling it up and throwing it out the window. Our aircraft were all numbered in the three hundred series from A89-301 to A89-312. The practice was highlighted one day when the bundle opened in the slipstream and spread brown stuff over the aircraft number on the rear fuselage. It was still obvious when the aircraft landed and it was subsequently known not as Three Oh Nine but as Three Oh Shit.

The first real break from routine exercises came in February 1959 when the Australian Government gave some of our redundant Sabre jets to the Malayan government. Navigation aids and aircraft endurance were inadequate for these to be flown without external assistance, and a few Neptunes were positioned for this purpose on Biak Island in then Dutch New Guinea, now Indonesian Irian Jaya after its annexation in 1962 by President Soekarno. As the Sabres were flown out of Darwin in four waves on separate days, we flew to a point at 6 degrees south latitude to meet them and fix their position. We then gave them a heading for wherever their first refuelling point was. At this stage I've forgotten where that was, but since they got there safely I obviously used the right figures at the right time. The delivery flights took place between 11 and 16 February but we were based in Biak from 9 to 17 February. Our 'working flights' were only six hours duration, which gave us a lot of time off.



RAAF Lockheed Neptune P2V-5, serial A89-307, 1960.

Accommodation was in newly constructed bungalows right on the beachfront. The island was coral with some sand, and had the traditional coconut palms and tropical vegetation down to the waterline; a tropical paradise. Magnificently coloured corals, beche-de-mer and fishes were right at our front door. The island was quite primitive from a tourist point of view, and all the more enjoyable for being so. But it had its moments. Toilets had no paper, but had a tap beside each toilet bowl. By custom we were supposed to wash not wipe; how we were supposed to dry was not explained. So we used paper from the aircraft and soon had extra toilet paper sent up from Australia. Hercules transports were transiting regularly to Malaya with support equipment for the Sabres. Another problem was food. We initially ate in a hotel run by KLM, the Dutch airline that was flying four-engined Super Constellations through there. It was pretty basic. At breakfast the native waiter would religiously take orders for a variety of fare; then bring everybody the same bacon and eggs. For dinner I remember rollmops - raw pickled fish - and mashed potato and sausage. We learnt quickly, and had cases of Tom Piper sent up from Australia along with cases and cases of beer to supplement what we had brought with us. From then on we ate regularly on the beach in front of our units. Somebody, usually the copilot or an engineer, would be sent out to the aircraft

to bleed fuel from its tanks. Initially we just poured this into the crushed coral beach and lit it, cooking our Tom Piper on the flame. This wasn't very economical, and once we had empty tins we filled these with sandy coral and used them as fireboxes. We would fill them with the fuel and cook on top of them. Fire lasted a lot longer that way.

The water was crystal clear and a delightful temperature. Coral and marine life were unspoiled and attractive. Flippers, snorkels and face masks were available free from the hotel - which never seemed to have any guests - and we spent an idyllic week, making friends with some of the natives in a nearby village, and inspecting wrecked landing craft left over from World War II. There were two types of village: the conventional coastal houses built on solid ground and surrounded by coconut palms and other trees and shrubs; and a village built out in the estuary of the river, houses forming a rough U pattern and connected only by a narrow walkway. This was obviously accessible only by boat and had no protection from the elements. The children were delightful company, and always walked with us along the beaches pointing out shells or other interesting items. There was at least one boy about nine years old who stood out in a crowd of the very dark natives. He was blond, and very Caucasian, and obviously of mixed race but definitely a local village child.



The children were delightful company on Biak Island, February 1959.

Around this time I appeared live on evening television when one of the stations (I don't know if it was commercial or ABC) filmed our preparation and departure for a night exercise, and I was interviewed at the aircraft. We didn't have VCRs in those days, so I never got to see the film. I took a lot of canning the next day when all sorts of people rang pretending to be talent scouts. A major exercise put me back in Darwin in March 1959, a town I had first seen in November 1955 on an overnight stop. It was still a frontier town, with bullet holes on the cement walls of the Bank of New South Wales from World War II, authentic Chinese temples in the back streets, and a frontier atmosphere where a disgruntled customer could, and did, drive his Land Rover through the front wall of a shop. We would take cold beer about 40 kilometres out of town to Berry Springs, and lie in the cool running water under tropical vegetation drinking it. On our way out to exercise areas we would find time to fly along the rugged coastline and down river courses. Water buffaloes were thick on the ground in places, and we startled scores of crocodiles into the water from sunning themselves on the banks. We saw spectacular waterfalls inaccessible by other than aircraft.

In April I was back in Singapore and the Philippines on an extended exercise with United States forces for most of the month. From now on I would spend considerable time overseas on duty with its consequent effect on home and family life. Back in Singapore it was easy to resume relations with the shopkeepers at Changi who never forget a face, and to catch up with Joe Cagnacci for some social life. Because our P2V-5 counterparts in the American forces were naval personnel, not air force, we stayed at Sangley Point Naval Air Station instead of Clark Field in the Philippines. We flew in over the historic island of Corregidor, now a national shrine, at the entrance to Manila Bay. Only 5 km² in area, it was the last Allied stronghold in the Philippines in the early stages of World War II. In May 1942 about 10,000 US and Filipino troops finally surrendered there to the Japanese who had landed in the Philippines only six months earlier, on 10 December 1941. Sangley Point projects into Manila Bay like a gigantic earthen aircraft carrier, one side an airstrip like a flight deck, the other buildings.

As in my previous visits to the Philippines we used Jeepneys for local transport, bargaining with the drivers for a conducted tour of places of interest, and largely leaving them to decide what to show us. We were admitted to the reception room in the President's Palace, with its pair of splendid crystal chandeliers reflected like a mirror in the tabletop beneath them. From there we drove to the tomb of Ramon Magsaysay - wartime guerilla leader and later president; a Chinese cemetery richer than any I had seen before; an outdoor art gallery of international standard; massive stone wall ruins from World War II; and a monument of column and statuary honouring the Spanish who were the first Europeans to visit (Ferdinand Magellan - 1521), and later colonise the islands. We saw more of the rural countryside than in previous visits in the slums of Cavite over the bay from Sangley point, where boys still rode oxen down the unpaved streets and girls at wooden stalls wove floral decorations for sale to servicemen or tourists; and Quezon City - which had replaced Manila as the Philippine capital in 1948. On this exercise, *Sea Demon*, I left Australia with one captain and returned with a different captain in a different aircraft, having switched crews mid-exercise for some reason.

When I returned from *Sea Demon* on 1 May I was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and was able to join Bill Middlemiss on common territory in the Officers' Mess. On 13 May I first flew as Bill's navigator, in time to team up with him for a trip to the United States in June. It was a major tragedy that put me on this trip to the USA, though I would have flown there later anyway. These Neptunes did not have fire extinguishers in their engines. While doing

local flying in the Richmond area one of our aircraft had an engine catch on fire. Before it had a chance to return to base the wing burned off and it crashed in market gardens within sight of the control tower. The crew were all killed and the crew I was with was moved up to take its place.

All our aircraft were scheduled to fly to the Lockheed factory at Ontario, outside Los Angeles, where they were to be fitted with J34 jet pods under the wings, outboard of the piston engines, giving us both jet and piston engines. Jet engines would be used for assistance on takeoff when required (heavy aircraft, short strip, hot day), and for rapid closure once a submarine had been detected and we were going in to destroy it. Because they used so much fuel they could not be used all the time, and they were not designed to fly the aircraft without the assistance of the piston engines that provided electrical and hydraulic power. With Bill we did actually fly on jets alone with the piston engines windmilling (turning under power to provide electric and hydraulic services but no thrust), but just the once. We were at a safe altitude when we tried this but we knew we could do it anyway. As a result of the fatal accident the aircraft were to be fitted with fire extinguishers at the same time. The plan was to fly three aircraft to America and bring the crews home by civil flight. From then on crews would fly other aircraft over in July, August and September and fly the modified aircraft back, keeping an assembly line going until all eleven aircraft had been modified. This didn't work out, and some of us found ourselves in America for three months or more at one time. To justify the expense of keeping us there waiting for aircraft we undertook various anti-submarine oriented courses at military establishments. But all this was still to come for me. I came back by civil aircraft after delivering A89-312 to Ontario.

On this first trip we left Richmond, NSW at 6.00 a.m. on 25 June, refuelled and spent the night in Fiji at Nadi (pronounced Nandi), landing on the coastal strip over the expanse of sugar cane fields. The next day we flew on to Canton in the Phoenix Islands in mid-Pacific, crossing the International Date line and landing the day before we took off. The real nose of the Neptune was perspex, affording better than 180-degree vision for an observer searching for submarines. The observer's seat was just behind the perspex and had additional side windows, but there was a metal grating over the perspex as a footrest. On long trips we could sit there getting a suntan, but we were supposed to be strapped into proper crew positions in the body of the aircraft for takeoff and landing. Even the tactical nav station facing the starboard side of the nose compartment was not an approved position. Bill let me stay in the

nose for landing at Canton for an unparalleled view. The island is a coral atoll a couple of metres above sea level at high tide, and so narrow it looks like a spider web on the map. There were two communities, one clustered around the airstrip on Northside and the second a couple of kilometres away on Southside. We stayed in the half where the airstrip is. These coral atolls are fascinating places to visit, but being American with a major airstrip this one had facilities denied the lesser-developed indigenous islands. We stayed overnight to enjoy the outdoor cinema with its canvas deck chairs under the stars, the food and the company, and to get organised for the nine-hour flight to the Naval Air Station at Barbers Point, Hawaii, next day. We didn't get very far that day, returning unserviceable to Canton after only two and a half hours. The following day was successful.

We had two nights in Honolulu, living in an American Services Club right on Waikiki beach for far less than the tourists were paying to live beside us in hotels. There I found out that the sand for the famous Waikiki beach is all imported, and watched it being raked before breakfast each day to make it attractive for the tourists. Diamond Head with its deep saucer shaped extinct volcanic cone was just to the east of us. Australia did not have shopping malls or even extended shopping hours in those days, and to see the variety, quantity and price of merchandise available there was an eye-opener for us. We bought stainless steel cutlery sets (cheap Japanese) and those candles inside vases that were to become popular in cafes here. We also joined the tourists in browsing the street stalls, shopping centres and eateries where we could get fillet steak for \$3.95 or lobster for \$2.95. And that was expensive; we found places where we could eat well for less than that. A most distinctive feature about American eateries is the glass of cold water that is the first thing brought to the table, and the side salad with my favourite French or Thousand Island dressing. Breakfast was all American style with coffee and a 'short stack' of four hotcakes with maple syrup, and eggs 'over easy'; grilled properly on one side then turned briefly to just cook the other side. Americans couldn't accept the fact that Australians wanted the hotcakes and eggs on separate plates. They mixed the hotcakes, maple syrup and eggs together on one plate.



Diamond Head, Hawaii, as seen from a passing RAAF Neptune, November 1959.

From Hawaii to Los Angeles is over 4,000 km, and there is nothing in between. For us this was thirteen hours flying, and we left at 10.00 p.m. to make a reasonable daylight arrival. Every long distance flight has to have a critical point (CP) and a point of no return (PNR) calculated for it. The CP is that point from which it will take just as long to come back to base as to proceed to destination. The PNR is that point beyond which the aircraft can

no longer safely return to base. We also had to allow for an alternate airfield near our destination in case our destination airfield was closed because of weather or accident. A safe percentage of fuel more than was needed must also be carried to allow for unforecast and detrimental changes in the weather. Part of the navigator's job is to keep these calculations up to date as the flight progresses and circumstances change. To assist aircraft navigation there was a ship located about halfway. It had a radio beacon that broadcast continuously and gave the latitude and longitude of the ship and its identification. So we could get at least one definite fix and use imagination to fill in the gaps. Operating out of Australia our in-flight rations were generally steak, salads and tinned ham. The electronic officers cooked the steak and prepared the meals at an electric stove in the rear of the aircraft. When flying with Bill we rarely ate the ham, preferring to draw lots for it and take it home. The Americans usually gave us boxed lunches of sandwiches, fruit, chocolate bars and biscuits. One lunch was always different from the rest. To combat the possibility of food poisoning both pilots were not allowed to eat the same type of meal, or if they chose to do so the second pilot must wait two hours after the first pilot had eaten.

Staying with the Navy, we landed in Alameda Naval Air Station near San Francisco giving us a bird's eye view of the Golden Gate Bridge and downtown San Francisco, then took our aircraft to Ontario the next day. The following week was a holiday. We strolled the streets of San Francisco: Market Street with its bright lights by night and unexpected lifesize model of Christ in wet sand by day, and where the shopping hours were so extended it was possible to get a haircut 24 hours a day; Powell Street with its cable cars being hauled up the steep hill to the 'Top of the Mark' - The Mark Hopkins Hotel at the top of the street, with its internationally acclaimed cocktail lounge and panoramic view of the city and its famous bridge connecting San Francisco with Marin County; the Golden Gate Bridge itself, the longest and highest single span suspension bridge in the world - 1,280 metres between the two towers and 227 metres above high tide; Grant Avenue in Chinatown with the largest settlement of Chinese in the United States, and all of its shops seeming to have come direct from the Orient. We took in Disneyland at Anaheim outside Los Angeles, with its Main Street horse-drawn streetcars; Frontier Land and the Mississippi stern wheel steamboat cruising through Mark Twain's America, its Red Indians and stage coaches; the vision of Tomorrowland with the monorail and Monsanto exhibition; and the vision of Yesterday with Fantasyland and a flying Dumbo. We lived in motels, ate mostly from

supermarkets and take-aways, and enjoyed American hospitality. Bill made friends very easily and it wasn't long before we were being invited into homes. One family wanted us to go and live in America, assuring us of a job to get started. But we came back on Qantas Super Constellation *Southern Aurora* in which passengers were issued with a certificate noting that they had crossed the equator. Mine is dated 9 July 1959 at 1436 GMT.

Two months after my first trip, on 25 August, I was again USA bound, this time in A89-309, and I wasn't to return until 14 November. Having left our aircraft with Lockheed at their Ontario factory we stayed again in the Uplander Motor Hotel where we had stayed briefly on our previous trip. This was luxury accommodation to us, used to sleeping in the quarters provided on RAAF bases or in transit quarters overseas, and had a double bed and black and white television. The manager here, Mr Clark, was extremely helpful to all the crews and we enjoyed his help and hospitality. His secretary, Dalene (Day) Johnson, was also very good to us, and I was to develop a platonic friendship with Day that lasted some months until we eventually stopped writing to each other. Her father had wanted a son he was going to call Dale, which is how she ended up with Dalene. Americans on their own territory are generous to a fault, and in all our relations with American servicemen on exercises we had found their friendship warm and genuine. I was to experience this to a greater extent through Day Johnson. When I had left Upland and gone to San Francisco, Day and her friends wanted me to come back for Halloween, the day that they celebrate with 'trick and treat' and pumpkin lanterns on All Saints Day, 01 November. I took a couple of days away from the crew and bussed it back to Upland, staying with Day's friends. Day was not very mobile, having a broken right leg in plaster from toe to crotch. She was also in the throes of divorce and had been warned by her lawyer not to have any eligible men in her house until the proceedings were finalised. I had planned to leave late on the night of the festivities to get back to San Francisco for classes we were attending at Alameda. As the night wore on my hosts flatly refused to let me leave until after my bus had gone, telling me everything would be all right. I had to believe them. When they finally let me go they had chartered a private light aircraft to take me the 560-odd kilometres to San Francisco airport. And because it was colder than I had catered for they gave me a suede sports coat to wear, insisting that I was not to try to give it back. I wore it for years.

We enjoyed ourselves in the Uplander, swimming and playing shuffleboard, and eating from supermarkets to keep cost down. Sitting around the pool there was where I was introduced to FM radio, which played full LPs non-stop

and had low-key non-intrusive advertisements. That prompted us to buy LPs to take home; they were cheaper and more readily available in the supermarkets than at home and mine ranged from Pearl Bailey to Victory at Sea, by Richard Rogers. I thought I had the full score of Victory at Sea, but I recently found out that it covers 13 hours and is the longest symphonic work on record. We were on allowances for meals but we wanted to collect that and spend it on travel rather than food. So we claimed for three meals a day and ate two. Day had a big '54 Chrysler that she let me drive. I had taken out an international driver's licence before leaving Australia.

From Upland we proceeded to the smog and freeways of Los Angeles for a while. I was carrying all the money for our incidental expenses, thousands of dollars that I had in a money belt for safekeeping. Responsibility for carrying what we called the *imprest* was always delegated to a junior officer, and there was no-one more junior than me - having only been commissioned in May. When I got to LA I realised it was still in the safe at Upland. A frantic phone call and it was on its way by fast car courtesy of the manager of the Uplander. He didn't make me go back for it. Up till then I had never seen freeways and cloverleaf overpasses except occasionally on television, and I was impressed with the way they criss-crossed the city and kept the traffic flowing. Though I drove safely then and afterwards I never felt really comfortable in left hand drive cars, and was particularly liable to error in making left hand turns where I wanted to hug the curb and end up in the wrong lane. We were in Los Angeles for the spectacular fireworks display on Independence Day, the fourth of July.

I went to the intersection of Hollywood and Vine Streets, the 'centre of Hollywood'; palatial Beverley Hills, home to many famous film stars; and Dino's Lodge, owned by Dean Martin and its address at 77 Sunset Strip which was the title of a long-running TV show at the time. Of more cultural interest was a concert under the stars at the Hollywood Bowl with Anna Maria Alberghetti. The Bowl is the largest natural amphitheatre in the world with a seating capacity of over 20,000, and nestles in the Hollywood Hills. With Keith Sylvander, the other navigator in the crew, I went to see *Gigi*, M-G-Ms 1958 Academy Award Winner, and what I found to be a far better film, *Porgy and Bess*. We went by coach to Las Vegas, up through the Mojave Desert with its peculiar Joshua trees, stayed in the Stardust Hotel and fed the gambling machines. What I lost Keith won. *Le Lido de Paris* entertainment was lavish and meals were superb, and yet it didn't cost us a lot from our economy budget. Half of our pay was retained in Australia to make sure that wives and families were cared for and could not be disadvantaged by our long separation. We

opened American bank accounts to facilitate payment of our salary and allowances, and used chequebooks. Some of the crews pooled their resources to buy second-hand cars, which were ridiculously cheap by Australian standards. These were handed on from crew to crew while the modifications lasted.

We tried to justify our stay in the USA this time by doing courses, and one of these took me to San Diego where I completed a three-weeks Anti-Submarine Warfare Course on 25 September. On the east side of San Diego Bay it was an immaculate, white city curving back from the Pacific to the Laguna Mountains. It has an excellent harbour, and is the home of several US Navy installations besides being one of the major aircraft producers in the US. Site of the first permanent white settlement in California, it was an attractive city in many respects and was to be a doorway to Tijuana in Mexico. An interesting incident happened in San Diego before my arrival, but was still being talked about. American currency notes in common use were \$1, \$5 etcetera. A \$2 note was legal tender but not used. Military establishments have a habit of incurring local civilian displeasure, and San Diego spoke poorly of its naval base, blaming sailors for everything that went wrong in the community. So one payday the naval Commander had his entire base paid in \$2 notes. When the town found out how dependent it was on the Navy for its existence the attitude changed dramatically. (The RAAF Base Ballarat had taken a different approach to a similar problem, again a little before my time. Airmen were frequently being assaulted by ruffians in Ballarat. So one night the Base Warrant Officer loaded a truck up with willing hands and did the town over. The message got through without any police involvement, and there was no further trouble).

Architecture in San Diego reflects its Spanish and Mexican days as well as its modern American. The El Cortez Hotel had a glass elevator running about 15 storeys up the centre of its facade; not for the faint of heart. Balboa Park has a museum, art galleries, gardens and a zoo in its 560 hectares. I enjoyed a night of entertainment at the Fiesta del Pacifico in Westgate Park, with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra under Arthur Fiedler and guest artists Peggy Lee and the Kingston trio amongst others.

Tijuana was a tourist town with the usual collection of bazaars and stalls selling the junk that tourists love to buy. It was also a slum town with makeshift shacks accommodating families; and bars with Tequila to be drunk with a lick of salt and a slice of lemon. Its main claim to fame was its bullfights at the El

Toreo De Tijuana and its horse racing at the Agua Caliente, and it was the bullfights we had come to see on a Sunday afternoon. Located just south of the American border, it did not need an entry visa and we went by bus. There were six performances in the afternoon spanning a range of expertise, each around fifteen or twenty minutes. A grand parade of toreadors introduced the spectacle, and then the first bull was let in. One matador welcomed the initial charge of the bull from its pen on his knees, to the thrill of the crowd. The bulls were magnificent beasts with menacing horns and weigh in at over 500kg. The bull must be four years old before he can be called a 'fighting bull' and take part in a true bullfight; younger bulls are only fought by apprentice matadors. They are all specially bred on ranches dedicated to the sport, and selective crossbreeding through many generations has produced bulls of outstanding aggressiveness, vigour, fighting style and bravery. The first third of each bullfight displays a ballet of cape work in which the matador, assisted by his banderilleros, performs for the crowd while assessing the bull. Along with the crowd at this time we drank wine out of skin bladders, holding the bladder at almost arm's length and squirting the wine into our mouths. I didn't miss, but I wasn't prepared to try a second time. Not all the matadors managed this phase without being driven to the safety fence by an angry bull. Some suffered spills, and one had the seat torn out of his trousers but was otherwise unharmed. The safety fences are short panels strategically located around the ring, behind which the man can fit but not the bull.



Tijuana was a tourist town with...a slum town, September 1959.

The first third of the performance ends after the picador weakens the bull by stabbing it in the shoulder muscles at the highest point in the bull's neck. He does this from atop a horse that is blinkered and has a heavy quilt almost reaching the ground on its right side and up under its belly on the left side. When the bull charges this protected side of the horse the picador plunges a heavy lance into its shoulder and neck muscles. He does this a few times with the bull being attracted away from the horse each time with a cape movement called the *Quite*. The lance has a collar preventing it from penetrating too far. A bull can easily lift a horse's front legs off the ground, and sometimes toss the horse to the ground. A trumpet fanfare signals the end of the first phase for more cape work and the placing of banderillas. There are classic movements to these phases such as the *chicuelina*, which the crowd appreciates and expects to see. In the *chicuelina* the bull's attention is attracted and its direction of charge determined by arm movements with the cape. As the bull charges, the matador makes a pirouette in the opposite direction to that taken by the bull. The banderilla is a wooden, decorated barb about 70cm long. They are placed in pairs in the spine at the base of the neck by the banderillero or by the matador himself. This is possibly the most spectacular and most dangerous

phase of the bullfight, since the banderillero does not have the benefit of a cape to distract the bull's attention from himself. He can place the banderillas by attracting the bull, and as it charges step aside and place them. Or he can run to a stationery bull and place them in passing. The third, and most common, is *al cuarteo*. The bull's attention is attracted from a distance and, when it begins its charge, the banderillero runs diagonally in a curve. He times his speed to arrive at the point where the bull's and his own path cross before the bull, so that he can face it at that point slightly to one side, place the banderillas and make his safe exit. Three pairs of banderillas are placed in each bull. Their punishment is slight and their main function is to further aggravate the bull and increase its aggressiveness.

The third phase of the ceremony, again signalled by a trumpet fanfare, is a final ballet of capework with a smaller cape, the *muleta*, and sword culminating in killing the bull with the sword. Apart from their artistic aspect the passes with the *muleta* serve a definite purpose. The low pass forces the bull to follow the *muleta* in a small circle, thus tiring it and diminishing its power. The high pass prevents the bull from charging with its head held too low, and sends it further away after each pass, thus preventing it from returning too quickly for the next charge. In theory killing is swift and decisive, with the sword severing the spinal cord. On one performance of the afternoon I saw the sword placed in the neck and protrude through the chest. The bull shook its head and ran off as though it had never happened. This matador then had to retrieve the sword and kill the bull properly with a second attempt. A worse example, for which the crowd wanted to feed the matador to the bull, was the matador who made thirteen (I counted them) attempts to kill the bull before he was successful. Each bullfight is judged, and the ears and tail awarded for an outstanding performance. When the bull collapses a team of horses is brought in to drag the carcass out of the ring, and the sand is smoothed for the next performance. Barbarous perhaps, skilful and spectacular, certainly.

From San Diego it was back to barracks at Alameda. The nearest city to Alameda is Oakland, 'San Francisco's Poor Neighbour', on the east side of San Francisco Bay and connected to San Francisco on its peninsula by the two-level Oakland Bay Bridge. Millions of dollars were being spent on a redevelopment program to overcome its image. Twenty-three per cent of the population were Negroes and they were predominantly employed in the Kaiser shipbuilding yards. Oakland had no particular attraction and we bussed it over the bridge - all 14 kilometres of it - a few times before we could arrange our next excursion. It was while waiting at one such bus stop in San Francisco in

September 1959 that I saw newspaper headlines that Mario Lanza had died of a heart attack, at only 38 years old. I thought he had a vibrant tenor voice and the world is richer for the library of records he left of operatic arias and enjoyable ballads. If he really did stand in front of a mirror saying 'Mario, you sonofabitch, you *can* sing', then he deserved his self-praise. Sacramento is the state capital of California and within 150 km of Oakland. Keith and I bussed it up there to see the night lights and the beautiful Capitol building in its squirrel populated park, and then carried on to Reno over the Sierra Nevada Range. Made prosperous by quick-divorce laws and legalised gambling Reno is known as 'the biggest little city in the world'. There was nothing small about the clubs in Reno and Harolds claims to be the world's largest. Its one-armed bandits that consumed dollar coins supported that claim. The American dollar is a solid coin 37 mm in diameter. Listening to a row of machines avidly swallowing these is like listening to a metal foundry without earmuffs. But Reno did have a respectable suburban area of homes as well.

Our final and short excursion was courtesy of the US Navy. We grabbed a flight on a Dakota going to a naval base on Whidbey Island in Seattle up in Washington State on the Canadian border. That was up and back in the one day with a view of snow clad mountains and a box lunch provided, but it was good to fly as passenger in a military airplane instead of having to crew it. Our original schedule of departing for Australia on 26 October had been amended to 7 November, and time had finally run out for us. My logbook shows a certain amount of confusion around this time. On 28 October Bill Middlemiss and I picked up A89-306 from Ontario and took it to Alameda. We test flew it after an engine change on 3 November and took it back to Ontario the next day. I then went back to Alameda with Gandy Bevan in A89-307 on 5 November and yet departed from there in A89-306 four days later with Bill Middlemiss, with a crewcut haircut that I was to retain until about 1973.

Alameda to Barbers Point was about as far as we could safely fly, and it took a few attempts to get started on our return to Australia. For three days I went to the meteorological section to plan the flight, only to find that the prevailing westerly winds meant we wouldn't reach Hawaii. So we would send a message through diplomatic channels that we were delayed and go back to the barracks to fill in our day. Finally the winds dropped enough that we could no longer use them as an excuse not to go home. The return trip from America on 9 November was the only life-threatening incident I recognise within my career. It was an emergency where, not only did we not need instruments to tell us, electric instruments could easily have turned the emergency into a tragedy. I

was not duty navigator on this trip, Keith Sylvander was, and so I became only a participant and observer. About 1000 nautical miles (1800 km) out of Alameda, the Naval Air Station near San Francisco, heading for Hawaii we developed a fuel leak. This was not an ordinary leak that wasted itself in the slipstream. Instead it flowed from the wing tanks into the body of the aircraft.

Unlike most aircraft with either a high or low wing, the Neptune was built around its wing. The wing spar went right through the aircraft just behind the navigator's seat, and to get from front to back of the aircraft we had to climb over the wing. My crash position was sitting on the floor facing aft with my back against the wing spar. The wing sections outside the body of the aircraft were filled with fuel tanks, but the fuel had access to the fuselage through the wing spar. There were two steps in the rear of the fuselage between the electronics bay behind the wing and the tail section, and the fuel was spilling over these steps like a little waterfall - not just a dribble. The risk of fire from an electrical spark was so great that we had to turn off all non-essential equipment, maintaining only radio communications and navigation aids. We declared an emergency, reduced altitude to a level from which we could more easily ditch the aircraft, and turned back, to be eventually met by a Coast Guard aircraft sent out to meet us. There wasn't much it could have done if we had gone up in flames, but if we chose to ditch it would have provided support and rescue. In the event we landed safely two hours after dark and left again at midnight next day after repairs.

I didn't normally have any difficulty relating to other crewmembers but there was one captain I refused to fly with for almost a year. We had gone to Hawaii in September 1960 for three weeks of exercises with the US Navy, living in barracks at Barbers Point. Accommodation at American bases had already lost its male/female segregation and two female officers occupied the room with which mine shared a common bathroom; we never got to meet. But we did spend a lot of time sitting around our own rooms or those of American aircrew talking politics, economy, or world events. Besides travel, this gathering of common souls in communication and exchange was the greatest attraction of my aircrew career. Most of our crewmembers were well read and intelligent, and we constantly surprised our American counterparts with our general knowledge of their politics and lifestyle. I regularly read *Time* and *Life* magazines from cover to cover. It was *Life* that had provided the background to the Asian religions I had been introduced to in multi-cultural Singapore.

Something went wrong with the planning and the exercises were never held. We enjoyed three weeks holiday. But we went flying occasionally to keep up appearances. On one short exercise I was in tactical control of the aircraft and had just completed a perfect location of a submarine. I was feeling pretty happy and called for the next manoeuvre. The young new captain I was flying with, Howard Morris, and whom I regarded as immature and reckless, countermanded my instructions and we traded words. On return to base I fronted my Flight Commander, Squadron Leader Kevin Rodd, who informed me that, while I might have been in tactical control, in the air 'the captain was God'. This is true, and it must be so. The captain has ultimate responsibility for the safety and control of his aircraft, overriding even the wishes of VIP passengers or senior officers, but I had expected a more reasonable response from my captain in a tactical situation. When we returned to Australia I requested never to be tasked to fly with him again, and I didn't until August 1961 when I elected to be his navigator and photographer in our attempt to win the Fincastle Trophy. Maritime squadrons around the world competed annually for a trophy for accuracy in low-level bombing. Each squadron did its own exercise under controlled conditions and the results were submitted for international assessment. We won in 1961, but I honestly think the trophy was shuffled around the squadrons on a buddy-buddy basis so that no one was either superior or disappointed for long. Howard could not have been too bad because he went on to become a senior Qantas 747 captain.

We had time to investigate Honolulu in September and October of 1960 and moved around. Americans are very generous people on their home soil, as I saw in California. American servicemen in Hawaii were always willing to lend us their cars, and would volunteer them even without our asking. We had a late-model Mercedes that was temporarily without a driver. The owner had recently been booked three times on the one trip from the naval base into town. The first time he was warned, the second time he had to buy a ticket in a policemen's ball or something, and the third time they took him off the road. He gave the car to us to use. So we toured the big island of Oahu and saw rows of stalls where the traditional leis are made in many colours and sold. We visited the Dole pineapple-canning factory for a conducted tour, and drove around and through the expansive cane fields. We viewed spectacular volcanic scenery and some of the biggest waves I have ever seen on beaches. Surfboard championships were held there. We used our influence to get into the control tower at Honolulu airport to see operations from the controllers' point of view. Courtesy of the US Navy we were given a launch tour of the memorial to

commemorate the sinking of many ships in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 8 December 1941. They also took us over an atomic submarine with its relatively spacious bunks, ice cream and Coke machines - so different from the Australian cramped and spartan diesel subs. And what must have been the oldest aircraft carrier in existence; it had a wooden flight deck. I had to visit the Buddhist temple for comparison with those I knew, and found it more modern and lavish. That's one of the advantages of a more modern and richer society. We drank light American beers at isolated, quiet bars in little villages, and 7 *High* (bourbon and 7Up) in the busy tourist hotels with trad. jazz, Hawaiian music and hula girls in grass skirts. And then we came home.

Home was through Pago Pago, on the island of Tutuila in American Samoa, and we landed at sunrise. For accommodation we were given what looked like a private house with minimum furniture and left to make our own arrangements. After showering and changing we all drifted down to the local village that had a rough bar and dance floor, and coarse wooden tables and benches. We soon had lots of local dusky Polynesian admirers, some of them very attractive, dancing and drinking the day away. One hardened veteran who attached herself to my group turned out to be a senior policewoman. She knew everything and everyone, which was a good thing for some. Two of the most attractive bodies on the dance floor were the subject of considerable competition among some of our crew members. Competition ceased abruptly when my veteran identified them as transvestites. Single co-pilots didn't waste many opportunities and one of ours left the bar for a short time, returning in a vehicle that passed for a taxi. Paying the taxi driver for the combined fare plus entertainment he suddenly worried about his health and asked if the girl was clean. The taxi driver, counting the dollar bills, didn't even look up. One Two Three 'Of course she's clean', Four Five Six 'She's my sister'. Seven Eight Nine... By nightfall I had become paired off with an attractive young Samoan who took me home to a shack in a nearby village to meet her parents. Then when we got back to my accommodation she was disappointed that I wouldn't go to bed with her. As I explained, I was Catholic and married, both of which I took seriously. Besides, it had been a long day and I was scheduled for departure at 5.30 a.m. next day for more than 12 hours of flying plus a refuelling stop in Fiji. And I took that seriously too.

In all my years of flying I have not found cause to criticise the Australian customs. They would go out of their way to make re-entry easy for us, and bend the rules as far as they could. From this and other trips the crews brought back the latest in electronic equipment, whether it was radios, tape

recorders or televisions. The television sets needed modification from the American system to the incompatible Australian system as well as a transformer for the different voltage. Apparently the difference in Hertz, 60 down to 50, didn't matter. Our squadron radio section had all the expertise needed to convert imported sets. I saw customs officers literally step over TV sets on the tarmac at Richmond and refuse to see them. If our declarations were marginally over the allowance they would say 'You didn't pay £14 for that, did you, surely you mean £4?', and alter the figure.

My best flying was, of course, with Bill Middlemiss, and we indulged our passion for low flying. Another aircraft observing us one day said that our propellers were causing their own wakes in the water with turbulence. But it was with Bill that another navigator made Air Force history and left me holding the can. We had been operating well into the Indian Ocean out of Cocos Island, already over 2,700 km north-west of Perth, having left Cocos at 3.40 a.m. on 28 February 1961 on what was to be a thirteen hour exercise. Our routine was: one navigator asleep and on call; one on visual observation in the nose and ready to man the tactical desk when the target was found; and the third keeping track of aircraft location. We split the flight into three and rotated through the three shifts. Once we were active on a target the aircraft was a hive of activity and we were all under enormous pressure. The tactical navigator used a grid that could be laid down anywhere, but the route navigator used charts with latitude and longitude. On route he had to calculate and plot the aircraft position every twenty minutes, and we regularly passed positions back to land based authorities unless we were operating under radio silence. Even in a tactical situation the route navigator had to know where the aircraft was at all times. I had had my rest and finished my time on the tactical table when I came back to take over route navigation of the aircraft and take it back to Cocos. So I was many, many hours out of touch with precisely where in the world we were. I was handed a blank map of the Indian Ocean with the words 'I don't know where we are but I'm going to bed'. That took a bit of sorting out. Alan Carruthers was the navigator and his reputation in the squadron was destroyed. I heard this story told years later by Air Force officers who were not even in the squadron at the time.

Cocos was a staging point for Qantas on their route to India, and had reasonable accommodation, a good mess and a bar. It was a coral atoll with the airstrip on the largest island, West Island, and productive coconut plantations on Home Island to the northeast, and Horsburg, Direction and South Islands. The whole atoll was, until 1955, owned by the Clunies-Ross

family who ran it efficiently with Malay labour, producing coconut oil and copra. Money on the West Island was Australian currency and on the administrative centre, Home Island, it was plastic tokens. But no one got to the Clunies-Ross Island, Home Island, without invitation. Swimming around Cocos was normally treacherous, but it had a small safe area near the jetty some distance from the housing. To get there we had to borrow a truck. The road to the swimming area was always littered with the stinking carcasses of coconut crabs that overran the island. These had one big claw they waved threateningly, and that was all they needed. Reputedly they could bite the neck off a beer bottle if antagonised. Cocos was fascinating for its coconut-palm lined beaches, its driftwood, and its hermit crabs that have a soft body they protect in empty sea shells, changing shells as they grow.

The exercise we were on, *Jet 61*, was a major international exercise and we went to Trincomalee and Katunayake in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) for the debriefing. But we left our Neptunes in Butterworth and went as passengers in a Hercules from 36 Sqn. The Butterworth mess was a hive of activity with crews of various nationalities gathered there. Australia had taken over Butterworth Air Base from the British, and to show that we were no longer beholden to the colonial power we had a beautifully woven banner over the bar reading *All Pommies are Bastards*. But we drank in peace with them. Sri Lanka, an island at the southern tip of India, presented the same picture of Asian life as Singapore and Malaya; ornate Hindu temples, young Buddhist monks, people washing themselves and their clothing in the rivers, and the same oxen powered mills. We lived in an Indian Air Force mess where the food was barely edible. I think it was curried goat. From here I brought home a black ebony carving of an elephant with ivory tusks and toe-nails.

Penang offered a different view from the Singapore scene. Unlike Singapore, Penang has substantial hills, and consequently different vegetation and scenery. The hillsides were terraced for rice fields, and a funicular railway similar to that in Hong Kong climbed the slope giving a view across to mainland Malaya. There was more rural area, but in the capital, George Town, the shops and markets were similar. The Ayer Hitam Buddhist temple was possibly grander than anything in Singapore, and well cared for.

Coming home from Malaya after this exercise, over central Australian countryside that resembled gigantic thumbprints with its pattern of vegetation, our starboard engine started blowing thick black smoke. Even with fire extinguishers now fitted we didn't want to tempt fate so we landed at Bourke:

way-out country for a maritime reconnaissance aircraft, but a great public relations exercise. I don't think there was anyone in town who hadn't been over the aircraft when we left two days later.

I had continued my hobby of photography in the squadron and had been the squadron photographic officer. This gave legitimacy to flying that would otherwise have been hard to justify. In the interests of photography we flew scenic flights over Lord Howe Island, Sydney Harbour, the Yallourn open cut coal mine, Warwick Farm, Randwick, and my house in St Marys. From a Hungarian photographer in the 11 Squadron photographic section I found out that Bibo is as common in Hungary as Smith is in Australia. On 15 May 1961 I was able to formalise my photographic training by being sent to East Sale to do No. 10 G.D. Photographic Officers' Course, which I enjoyed for three months. This was a full theory and practice course including studio cameras and techniques as well as field photography. By this time I had accumulated a list of credits for photography: 1958 - Silver Medal Certificate from the Singapore Gardening Society; acceptance in the 9th Singapore International Salon. 1960 - 4 acceptances in New Zealand 'March of Colour'; 2 acceptances in Second Canberra National Colour Salon; 2 Certificates of Merit from Parramatta Evening College Photographic Exhibition. 1961 - 3 acceptances in Toowoomba Chronicle National Exhibition of Photography; 1 acceptance in the 3rd Queensland International Salon. 1961 - 1 acceptance in the 3rd Canberra National Colour Salon; 1 Winner in the Leichhardt Inter-College Photographic Exhibition, and 1 Certificate of Merit from Parramatta Evening College. There was an element of irony in my relationship with my photographic instructor at the Parramatta Evening College. In the Leichhardt Exhibition it was my photo of him as a painter that won, while his entry didn't get a place.



No. 10 G.D. Photographic Officer's Course, East Sale, 15 May 1961. (L-R) front row: Eric Bartlett, Joe Turner, Norm Ashworth, Eric Kluukeri, Ken Mitchell; rear row: Terry Bibbo, Ed Langham, Alan Hart.

I teamed up again with Wal Harris while I was on the photo course and even got him back on the base to use the RAAF facilities in producing his own enlarged photos. Up till now I had only seen snow in a thin layer at Ballarat, not in a full drift on a snowfield. So in August we took Wal's Holden station wagon up to Lake Mountain. We camped in deep snow off the side of a track, drained the radiator to stop it freezing, and slept in the back of the wagon in sleeping bags. Next day we wallowed in the snow, threw snowballs and took photos.

November 1961 was a bad month for Bill Middlemiss. The Hawkesbury River flowing past Richmond and Windsor was subject to periodic flooding, and Bill had built his house on a backwater to the river. It was flooded, and a lot of damage done to carpets and paintwork. Fortunately Bill had enough warning to be able to get most perishables shifted out of the house. The RAAF helped

with volunteer labour and transport. Bill eventually sold this house and bought in St Ives, which is where I next saw him when I came back to Richmond to fly on Hercules in 1968.

Not long after this I was accepted for language training. I had been disappointed in not learning Malay while in Singapore for two and a half years, and had applied for the Indonesian course at the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook. I was posted to the Langscl in December 1961 and said goodbye to Bill Middlemiss as my long-time captain and a good friend.

Between 10 November 1955 and 7 December 1961 I had flown with Bill a total of 1,636 hours over 433 days, or almost 22 per cent of my time in the air. As a comparison the next pilot I flew most often with was Wing Commander Keith Molloy for just less than 6 per cent of my flight time.



After my final flight with Bill Middlemiss (right), flying A89-306, 7 December 1961.

RAAF School of Languages

Point Cook, Victoria

Three and a half years of maritime flying was as much as anyone should have had to endure in Neptunes, and I looked forward to 12 months language training at the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook, Victoria. That 12 months was to extend to six years before I got back to flying. Preselection for language training was rigorous and involved IQ testing and aptitude tests for both Roman alphabet based languages and tonal/character based languages like Thai, Mandarin and Vietnamese. Failure rate on these tests was high, and a further 30% of students would fail to complete some courses.

Driving down alone to Point Cook to start there on 15 January 1962 I became 'temporarily uncertain of my position' in the Port Melbourne area. The man who gave me directions was intrigued by my nametag. We wore chromed metal nametags over the left breast pocket of our uniforms, with just our surname on in capital letters. He read BIBO as 8180 and reckoned I was the only man with a number for a name.

By this time I had traded the Hillman for a grey Austin A90 - a little bigger, more modern and stylish, but still an old, second-hand car. We rented the house at St Marys to a RAAF officer and once again Wal Harris came to my aid. He had a vacant house at 15 Tullius Avenue, Clayton, on the Princes Highway southeast of Melbourne and a long way from Point Cook, but available. We moved in there for the twelve months of my course. It was a substantial suburban house with a carport, enough bedrooms, a big open fireplace in the lounge - and a septic toilet. This was some revolutionary contraption with a clamshell shutter built into the seat. When you sat down, pressure opened this shutter to the pit below. When you stood up the shutter closed, theoretically cutting off the smell of the pit. It didn't work, and years later over the open toilet pits in China I was reminded of this toilet in Clayton. Because of the intensity of study at Point Cook students were required to live on the base, and I was permitted to go home on most Wednesdays and weekends. Paul was born at the nearby Dandenong Hospital on 29 December 1962. Celie's sister, Colleen, married Ray 'Hockey' Burnell in the same year and we held a small, family reception at Tullius Avenue. David had asthma, and eczema all over. At night he scratched, making it worse, and had to wear gloves to bed. We were prescribed such treatments as aureomycin that came in tiny

tubes, costing a fortune and lasting no time. One doctor in Clayton, whom we promptly ceased to patronise, said we had to tie him to a crucifix in his cot to stop him from scratching! So much for his modern medical learning. The next doctor we went to prescribed coal tar and zinc ointment for the eczema. That cost about 50 cents a bucket, and while it discoloured both David and his clothes it worked for years.

My accommodation at Point Cook was upstairs in a two-storey wooden block of ancient vintage that we shared with civilians, with the showers and toilets downstairs in a brick annexe to the block. The RAAF Base at Point Cook was where the RAAF was formed in 1914 as the Australian Flying Corps, and has historical significance. It is worth noting here some of the history. On 20 September 1912 the Minister for Defence approved the formation of the Australian Flying Corps and Central Flying School (CFS, renamed No. 1 Flying Training School on 31 March 1921). Point Cook was ratified as the site for CFS on 7 March 1913 and the first equipment unloaded there on 28 February 1914. The first flight by a military aircraft in Australia took place on 1 March 1914 with a Bristol Boxkite number CFS-3. The Australian Flying Corps was renamed the Australian Air Corps on 1 January 1920. On 31 March 1921 the Australian Air Force was formed as a separate service and, on 13 August of the same year, had the prefix Royal added to become the Royal Australian Air Force. Until 1926 Point Cook was the only RAAF base. In 1992 when I returned to do an Indonesian refresher course it was the longest serving military base in the world. In 1962 it housed Base Squadron, No. 1 Basic Flying Training School, the Officers' Training School, the Institute of Aviation Medicine, the School of Languages (Langscl), and the RAAF Academy. The Langscl buildings were sited right on the edge of Port Phillip Bay, and we knew it. They too were old wooden buildings, single storey, which had been left over from the war years. For most of the year we put up with the smell of rotting seaweed that piled up on the unappealing beach, and in the summertime we were plagued by blowflies and bogong moths. There was a jetty out into the bay with a net-enclosed swimming area and a wooden platform with changing rooms, which was some compensation. And we had a gymnasium and excellent sporting facilities from golf to squash.

In 1962 the course I did was classed as Indonesian/Malay and the senior lecturer was a Malay, Omar Jauhari. Despite spelling and some semantic differences the two languages were essentially the same, but Indonesian had developed under Dutch influence while Malay was influenced by the British. After I had left the school, in 1972, the two languages merged, adopting a

common spelling and becoming the lingua franca of that area. Common spelling does not make for common understanding though, and I was told by one of my top graduates with an Indonesian wife and ten years residence in the country that he understood about 70% of spoken Malay, while Malays seemed to understand about 90% of his Indonesian.

My other teachers were Cath O'Dempsey, ex-RAAF officer; Djani Soedjanmo, native Javanese; and a serving female naval officer whose name I cannot remember. Don Hesterman was a serving RAAF Sergeant whose responsibility embraced technical support and some teaching. We used tape recorders with 5- and 7-inch reel-to-reel tapes. Much of the material for the course had been taken direct from American teaching at Monterey in California and, in some areas, modified for local use. Textbooks were supplemented by transcripts of broadcasts from Radio Indonesia and Radio Australia, and material acquired from the Indonesian embassy in Canberra. The material was adequate and had obviously served its purpose over the years. I did not take easily to learning Arabic script though, which was not an important subject within the course, was not used by graduates, was not well taught, and seemed to be an easy way for Omar to get a couple of hours non-involvement with his class. He provided some guidance, but basically we had to teach ourselves the script from text books and Malayan newspapers. It has a regular alphabet, a shortage of vowels, and is written from right to left. It is this shortage of vowels that leads to varied English versions such as Mohammed/Muhammed, Hizbullah/Hizbollah/Hizballah. Students came from the three armed services, from government departments such as External Affairs, Defence, and Trade, from the Police, and occasionally intelligence agencies though they were never identified as such.

Soekarno was President of Indonesia, a charismatic figure and a superb orator. His speeches were classics in language, emotion and history. He had established the Indonesian Nationalist Party in 1927 to fight for independence from the Dutch. After cooperating with the Japanese during their occupation of Indonesia in World War II he proclaimed independence on 17 August 1945. Four years of bitter resistance by the Dutch ended with his being declared the first president of a United States of Indonesia, still linked to the Netherlands. In 1950 the unitarian Republic of Indonesia was declared, and Indonesia joined the United Nations. Dutch opposition to Indonesia's territorial claims led to a revolt throughout the archipelago, starting in 1956. Soekarno declared his 'guided democracy' in 1957, which made him a benevolent dictator with broad powers based on the 1945 constitution. Normal parliamentary

government was abandoned. Relations with the Netherlands were finally severed in May 1960, and in early 1962 Indonesian guerrillas landed in Dutch New Guinea and fought Dutch military units. The Indonesian army had assumed a major role in the political and economic life of the country in what would become known as the army's *dwifungsi*, or dual function. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) under the leadership of D N Aidit was moving towards a membership of over three million - the largest communist party in the world outside the Soviet Union and China, and the best organised and most dynamic political entity in the country. The PKI had Soekarno's patronage and was headed for control of the country. It was an exciting time to be studying Indonesian.

Classes were long and intense, with every encouragement to use the language under study at all times in preference to English. The constant pressure brought group changes, and sometimes we behaved in ways uncharacteristic of the individuals. For diversion in class we would make paper pellets that we shot at blowflies with elastic bands, trying to explode them. We held some riotous parties in our living quarters in which we consumed vast quantities of beer and spirits and behaved like *larrikins*. After one of these binges I found my bed had been filled with those crystal deodorant blocks that are put in urinals. Those things are lethal at that level of concentration. One army officer of more gentle disposition had shelves of gourmet food in his room. His diversion was to hold small parties and to serve such delicacies as grapes still in their bunches; and into individual grapes he had patiently injected a range of spirits using a hypodermic needle. To relieve pressure we occasionally had an approved party at the gun club, an isolated building at the gunnery range, which had a bar. Staff and students would all congregate to let off steam and prepare for another bout of study.

Wing Commander Toby Garrick was Commanding Officer and Squadron Leader Kevin Egan his Director of Studies and Administrative Officer. Both were Russian Linguists, but Toby was a genuine White Russian. Toby was firm but fair, and we were later to achieve big changes in the curriculum and teaching methods at the *Langscl*. Kev Egan was a powerhouse of energy, but liable to sudden changes of personality and flares of temper. Years later he had a brain tumour removed which, along with his dedication to the demon drink, had undoubtedly contributed to his volatility. He was also responsible for major changes over the years, sometimes in cooperation with Toby and sometimes in opposition. Warrant Officer Peter Dennes was Kevin Egan's assistant, and Chinese linguist into the bargain. Other students at the school in

1962 were Alan Bishop, a Flight Lieutenant pilot with whom I would later fly on Hercules transports, and Stephen FitzGerald who would become Australia's first Ambassador to China where I later met him again. Both of them were studying Mandarin. The three of us formed a drinking trio and would frequently make our Friday night drives home into pub-crawls that generally included the Windsor in Spring Street, Melbourne. We also spent considerable time in the bar of the Officers' Mess where I acquired a taste for Tia Maria and blue-vein cheese. One corner of the bar was almost reserved for one of the teachers from the Langscl, a devout Muslim. He would buy his Scotch, did a finger in it, and flick a drop of liquor to the carpet. Finally someone plucked up enough courage to ask him why he did that. He replied, 'The Koran says, "Thou shalt not drink a drop of alcohol", and that's the drop I'm not going to drink'. Mess life was very kind while we were on course. It was like an exclusive club. Menus were interesting and varied; we were waited on at table; hors-d'oeuvres regularly included luxurious crumbed scallops; and we had excellent bar service. But while we played hard and drank hard we also studied hard, and did a lot of homework.



Students of the School of languages at Point Cook in the mid 1960s.

I enjoyed learning, and easily topped No. 8 Indonesian Course in December 1962. Instead of being posted back to flying I was asked if I would stay at the school as an instructor. Temporarily sated with flying I looked forward to a couple of years of teaching, with stable working hours and a new and interesting challenge and said yes.

Social Life

With a permanent posting to the Langscl I was entitled to RAAF married quarters and we moved into 1 Heffernan Street, Laverton. Except for the half-house we had lived in at Springwood this would prove to be the worst house I ever lived in. The back yard was a thick mat of kikuyu grass and a big, sticky pepper tree near the back gate. The front yard we rarely used because it was so public. On a right-angle bend in the road it had two road frontages. The mortar holding the bricks together in the fence was so poor that children going past picked bricks off as they went to school. The house itself was built

of precast concrete slabs bolted into place, with aluminium-frame sash windows. Frequently the steel wire connecting the window to its counterbalance jumped off its roller and jammed, so that the window behind our heavy, green plastic curtains could be neither opened nor closed until the Housing Commission fixed it. Cooking and hot water were provided by a slow combustion stove that initially burned briquettes that were delivered in bags by truck. These were dirty, smelly things and more costly than the equally dirty, smelly coke. So we changed to using coke that I collected myself from the gas company in bags in a trailer. We stacked these right beside the back steps for easy access, and that area became like a black pit. When the firebrick in the firebox fell apart - about every year and a bit - the stove had to be let go out. Then when the firebrick had been replaced it had to be left to cure. So for a couple of days each time we had no hot water or cooking. Summertimes were hot and insect infested because most windows had no screens. Wintertimes were cold and damp with the whole house sweating inside. I don't think this did David's asthma any good. We were always taking him to the Children's Hospital for treatment, and he was hospitalised more than once. The floors were polished wood, with lino only in the kitchen.

Life did settle into a more regular routine. All the children started school in turn at the Adastra State School in Armstrong Street, Laverton, with David repeating his first year in 1966 since he started before he had turned five, and Robert starting in 1967. The school was within easy walking distance, and if it was raining they went in bare feet to save their shoes. Judith and Susan transferred to St Mary's convent school in Altona in 1967, going by school bus, and they all went to Sunday School across the railway line. The train line to Geelong ran between the main highway and us and we had to cross it to go almost anywhere. With the drugs he was taking for asthma David was reluctant to wake up to go to school, and Celie often had to dress him standing up before he was awake. He had an accident at school where he fell onto a metal grate, splitting the back of his head. School authorities found me at work and I took him to the Altona District Hospital where he was stitched up. On another occasion I had to take him to The Clinic, in Blyth Street, Altona, at night when he obviously was not well. The doctor proclaimed him nearly dead, and said he probably would not have lasted the night out. Celie had to take him to the Royal Children's Hospital every month or so for therapy. That was a major exercise by train and tram. Younger children would be allowed to accompany him in turn, and for a treat they got to eat from the hospital canteen. Then he had to do daily therapy at home to clear his lungs.

This meant lying him head down over a pile of pillows or cushions and massaging and thumping his back to free up any mucous in his lungs. Robert had an argument with a metal swing that wanted to split his eye open and Hockey Burnell came to his rescue. I don't know where I was at the time.

Radio Rentals rented out television sets and we were soon a customer. These were still black and white; it was years before colour television became affordable and widespread in Australia. Judith and Susan would be put to bed at the same time as the boys, but when they were asleep, or at least settled down, would be allowed to creep out again to watch the television with Celie. Paul had two experiences with the TV set he would probably rather forget. He must have been about 4 when he bit into the 240v power lead and short-circuited it. How he wasn't electrocuted I don't know. Later he attacked the TV set once more by pushing it over on its face. It was only a console on four legs. When the boys put the set upright again all the glass from the picture tube, which had imploded, trickled out vents in the bottom of the console. 'Look Mummy, it's raining glass', he said. When I reported the incident to Radio Rentals and asked for another set the girl could not see the funny side at all. Melbourne had much to offer in its parks and gardens and we spent parts of many weekends in floral surroundings or park playgrounds, with the children on those hard-plastic ride-on toys that were replacing metal tricycles. The Myer Music Bowl, an impressive covered stage providing outdoor entertainment in Kings Domain, was a place we sometimes went to.

Wal was now living on a sizeable property at Upwey in the hills north of Dandenong and, besides being regular visitors, we had the use of the house when they went on a holiday. This was in the autumn with the magnificent colours of foliage that are almost beyond description or comparison. With no academic qualifications beyond the RAAF course, which was not recognised, Wal headed the semiconductor division of Anodeon in Melbourne. With a team of graduate electronic engineers responsible to him he was designing transistors, and circuits for their use. When his firm tried to get him to acquire paper qualifications he had a nervous breakdown with the hours of work and travel involved. He went back to being an unqualified genius. We kept in contact with the Harrises at *The Pines* where the kids played on the haystacks and were taught how to feed the horses with a flat palm so as not to get bitten on the fingers. John Bibbo was still in Melbourne and we kept in touch as we had during my postings to Ballarat and Sale when I spent occasional weekends with him. We were to see him build his house at Aireys Inlet, which we were going down to visit when we learned of the assassination of President John

Kennedy on 22 November 1963, an event that shocked the world and provided material for decades of speculation. John Bibb was to be awarded an MBE in the 1967 New Year's honours list for services to civil aviation.

The big Flemington markets in North Melbourne saw us every second Saturday with our four-wheel shopping trolley. We would fill this with enough fruit and vegetables to last the fortnight and then balance a box of apples on top until we got to the car. Nearby Altona had a reasonable shopping centre and a slightly better beach than Point Cook, and summer found us down there often on Friday nights, with fish and chips out of a newspaper for tea; except for Judith who never took to fish and chips and got three potato scallops instead. Days were long that far south, and with daylight saving the sun didn't set until quarter to nine, followed by a long twilight. Once I discovered the Footscray auctions we did regular business there in furnishings, and I spent many hours with the crowds on Saturday afternoons. I traded the grey Austin at Kevin Dennis Motors for a sleek white and brown FC Holden sedan, HBP-256. I had the head replaced under warranty within a week, but I must have had it replaced or machined another four times before I got rid of that car. Obviously it had some serious, basic problem. We put seatbelts in it long before they became a legal requirement. With a roofrack on the Holden, and later a wooden trailer I bought from Don Hesterman, we ventured out on numerous camping trips, covering a lot of Victoria over the years. I modified the trailer by making it twice as deep and building it out over the mudguards, and treated the timber with linseed oil and red ochre to preserve it and give it colour. That took a long time to soak in and it was a menace while it was still wet.

Don rented a farmhouse in Doherty Road Mt Cottrell, sheep country west of Laverton, and we became frequent visitors, with the children playing 'golf' in the paddocks. It was a working sheep property that the absentee owner visited when necessary. Don and his wife, Pip, who worked in Werribee, kept an eye on it otherwise. Barbecues and outings were a big feature with staff and students over the years, particularly the Indonesian students. Because Don was doing a university course in his spare time he couldn't often attend these. To make up for this he held a very special chicken barbecue every year, with half-chicken carcasses basted with a sauce he created. On those days we would take a tent and stay all night; they were monumental parties. Kevin and Dorothy Egan fought all the time they weren't in bed. After I returned to flying Kevin caught me in Melbourne one day, and enlisted my support at court in his divorce hearing next day. Even without his threat to subpoena me I think I

would have volunteered. Part of my cross-examination was centred on one of Don's parties where Dorothy had driven through a fence. I tried to be scrupulously fair to both parties in my evidence, but my unexpected appearance broke Dorothy's calm, and it wasn't until 1991 that I was able to win back her friendship. Wine casks had not been invented but bulk wine was sold in half- or one-gallon plastic or glass containers. It was pretty rough stuff and was not enhanced by the plastic that was soon phased out. Don bought his wine in four-gallon plastic drums, put a tap in the bottom and poured a bottle of vegetable oil in the top. That was supposed to prevent the wine from oxidising as it moved down the drum and allowed in more air. As I remember it the quality was such that oxidation wouldn't have made much difference anyway.

Social life was mostly woven around the staff and students of the school and we had our fair share of parties at home. Two of our most regular student guests while they were on course were Alan Cooke and Pam Smith. Pam was a lively outgoing Army woman. She played the spoons at parties. I can't explain 'playing the spoons'; she just used a pair of spoons to make musical clacking noises, and did it very well. Alan baby-sat for us on a number of occasions and was the first man I ever knew to eat his fish and chips with tomato sauce. I saw more of Alan over the years and was later to benefit from his friendship and knowledge in a task I was given in Jakarta in 1972. Alan had served in the Australian embassy from August 1965 till July 1967 with Group Captain Jim Graney, knew the language and customs well, and later resigned from the RAAF to work there in private enterprise.

Our camping started off pretty basic with a 12 x 6 feet tent, but we expanded into a bigger tent that I subsequently had extended with a lot of help from Safety Equipment Section. It was eventually 12 x 18 feet, with one-third screened with mosquito net, and sliding internal walls the full width of the tent. We built up an inventory of camping equipment including two collapsible double bunks for the children; Celie and I probably used fold-up metal stretchers that dated from 1958 and had been used in Springwood as beds for two small girls. Our fridge was a large esky that we kept supplied with ice, and we had both a single-burner and double-burner gas stove and a gas lamp. Sleeping was in individual sleeping bags. Seating was two camp chairs with backrest, and small fold-up stools around a fold-up table. Over the Christmas break in 1965 we toured into Victoria's north-west. Up through Horsham in the Wimmera wheat belt to Mildura, then down through Echuca, and Deniliquin in NSW. In Stawell we called at the magnificent cathedral for Mass

on a Sunday morning and wondered at the lack of statuary so common to Catholic churches everywhere. Surprise, surprise. When the celebrant came down the aisle saying the introductory prayers in English we knew we were in a Church of England and beat a hasty retreat. Horsham gave easy access to lakes with broad sandy beaches and shallow, safe bathing for the children. Mildura with its wide, tree-lined streets and centre avenues had grape vines, and fascinating old farm machinery on display including the original Chaffey pump that supplied Mildura with water from the Billabong station for 70 years. Echuca, on the junction of the Murray and Campaspe Rivers, was Victoria's second largest port in the days of the riverboats, and preserves its huge quay with several decks to allow for changes in river height. In Echuca I saw how easy it is for children to drown. I was on the bank watching the children in the river and Susan got out of her depth. She was going down for the third time when I reached her but nobody around her, and within easy reach, was paying her the slightest attention. Deniliquin, on the Edward River, had one of the nicest river beaches I have ever seen, with clean golden sand and temperate, clear water.

Erecting and dismantling the tent and associated equipment was a two-hour job, and we had a working routine. We would get out of bed about 4.30 a.m. and pack the kids into the car in their sleeping gear. Then we'd pack the tent and the beds, having packed all the other gear the night before. When everyone was awake and hungry we would stop for breakfast. Cereal was ready for milk in Tupperware bowls, and we would make toast and coffee on the gas stove. After breakfast we would drive till lunchtime and make camp, generally sending the kids off to play because they helped best by not being under foot. With this routine we avoided a lot of traffic and made the most of the cooler part of the day. In one small town, probably Wangaratta, we had the tent only half-erected when Paul collected the metal seat of a swing diagonally across one eye. That meant a frantic dash to the Ely Street Clinic, which fortunately had a doctor on duty who stitched him up and did it very well. Not all our camping trips were long. With Johnno (Vietnamese instructor) and Wendy Johnston we spent some interesting short camps at Castlemaine, Nagambie and Jamieson.

Castlemaine, a city between Ballarat and Bendigo, grew out of the goldrush era of the late 19th century, while Jamieson was a quiet backwater in which to get lost and enjoy solitude at the head of Lake Eildon. Nagambie Weir, just north of Seymour, was one of our favourite spots. The pool at the base of the weir was full of large turtles, making diving a hazard not worth risking. But the river

flowing from there was an ideal picnic spot, and the boys once caught a big blue yabby like a small lobster when we were camping up there with the Johnstons. Actually I don't think we caught it at all; I think it surrendered voluntarily. It just appeared in a clear pool from which there was no escape. At Nagambie we saw the problems of breaking down away from civilisation. Going into town on a Saturday afternoon we saw a car newly pulled off the side of the road. Coming home a little later we saw it had lost its wheels. On Sunday morning, going to Mass, we saw it on its side, and when we came home an hour or so later it had been stripped of all major components. We never sighted the gremlins responsible for the dismantling.

1964 was the year Judith learned there was no Santa Claus. For Christmas that year we were camped in the double garage of Peter Moore on the army base at Puckapunyal. Peter had just completed the Indonesian course. On Christmas morning I suddenly found that I had left all the presents at home in Laverton. So Christmas was delayed while I drove the hundred-and-thirty odd kilometres back home to collect them. Typical Melbourne weather, it was fine north of the range and miserable the rest of the way.

In 1966 we took in a pedigree dalmatian pup named Yalta for boarding until she was old enough to be trained as a seeing-eye dog. Most dogs were Labradors, and this was to be an experiment in suitability for the dalmatian. The Lady Nell dog training school paid all the veterinary charges that arose, which was just as well. She was spayed and looked after like most dogs. But she was hit by a car one night when I was exercising her, and spent a few days in hospital. I never took her on a leash but rode a bike with her running alongside. This time she decided to cross the road without being told, and collided with a car. She recovered without any complications. Though a lovely dog she was a scatterbrain, and when she was eventually called in at about 18 months old she was beyond training. We were told we could have her back to keep but we declined the offer. I had been in the habit of taking her to the school when I did odd work on my own on weekends. One Monday morning I was confronted with the accusation that she had shat in the language laboratory and asked to explain. I was fairly sure she hadn't, but the evidence was there. In trying to clear my and Yalta's names I was told by one of my RAAF students that it had been a student prank that misfired. Only in 1992 did I find out that one of my Army students tried to set me up, and it was no prank but a deliberate attempt to discredit me. Kev Egan was aware of this from his independent enquiries, and when the Army student later proved to be a borderline case he was dismissed rather than given a second chance.

On 14 February 1966 Australia adopted decimal currency. The government had been conducting a massive campaign to educate people for the changeover, and many of us who had become accustomed to the decimal currency of overseas countries welcomed the change. Initial coins were 1c 2c 5c 10c 20c and 50c, and paper currency was \$1 \$2 \$5 \$10 \$20 and \$50. The simplification of measurements was to flow through weights and measures, but not as easily or as abruptly as the change of currency. Towards the end of 1966 I sold the Holden and bought a well-worn Land Rover panel van JTA-427. With the help of RAAF workshops, and the Land Rover Club of Victoria that I joined, I modified the front seats of small cars from the wreckers and put four sideways-facing seats in the back of the van, and we were better equipped for travelling and camping. From then through 1967 we enjoyed organised four-wheel drive trips with the Land Rover Club and I started to learn off-road driving. There was some training on steep private property, but mostly it was learn-by-doing on club outings. Undoubtedly one of the best trips was to the Grampians in late 1967. With spectacular views overlooking Halls Gap, magnificent waterfalls and rushing mountain streams, and road clearing with an axe (no chain saws), we enjoyed ourselves and learned too.

In 1967 we spent a long weekend at Hepburn Springs, north-east of Ballarat. Famous for its mineral water that can be freely pumped from taps located around the reserve, it had a large natural swimming pool that was supposed to be good for arthritis sufferers. We found the mineral water had to be mixed with cordial to make it palatable. Yalta was still with us and had the run of the place. It was easy to take dogs camping those days. Dorothy Egan, Kevin's wife, camped with us. The pair of us spent most of Sunday night awake holding the centre-pole, trying to stop our tent from blowing away in a gale. I thought I was going to see a repeat of the only camping trip I remembered with Dad, but without the rain. Other friends, Ray and Margaret Crossley, with their two girls were in our party but had their own tent. Ray was a signaller in the RAAF and I had flown with him in 11 Squadron, but he was doing a desk job in Melbourne and lived in Burwood where we kept in touch. When we got home from that weekend Paul went to hospital to have his tonsils out.

Another camping trip took us to Bright in the Ovens Valley in northern Victoria. With its glorious autumn colours Bright is a popular tourist attraction and well worth the visit. Not all our camping expeditions were ideal, and there were many weekends that were ruined by the wind and the sand or the mud and the drizzle that can be so characteristic of southern Victoria. Besides the obvious enjoyment I got out of camping I thought it important for my own

and the family's general education. Australia has so much to offer that it is important to be aware of the size and the variety of Australia's attractions. Even if they can't be recalled from those early days, they have been observed and absorbed and serve to influence later observations and actions. Perhaps our final trip before leaving Victoria was to Mt Gambier in South Australia to see the famous Blue Lake. One of four lakes in this once-volcanic area of Australia, this turns to a sparkling blue in November every year and reverts to a normal colour again in the autumn. The colour of the other lakes remains constant.

One of the most-remembered features of Melbourne is the *Skipping Girl* who still figures as the company logo on Cornwall's vinegar bottles. This was a multi-coloured neon sign high on the Cornwall's vinegar factory, which was activated to show a girl skipping. We made it a landmark on our way home from the city at night along Victoria Street, Richmond. It must have been expensive to erect and maintain because the company eventually dismantled it, and suffered a vocal public outcry from its admirers. A cheaper thrill for us was on a service road, and I think it paralleled the Prince's Highway out to Dandenong, which had a big, smooth bump in it. At the right speed the car would become almost airborne for a moment, giving the kids a taste of negative-G with that feeling in the stomach. We always tried to take that road if we were heading out that way. 'Here comes the bump. Here comes the bump!', they would call. The Holden handled the bump quite well but the heavier Land Rover was not nearly so much fun. Then one day the bump was no longer there; the council had smoothed it out, taking away a cost-free source of fun.

The Gunung Guntur was an Indonesian commercial vessel that we adopted. It made irregular visits to Australia in 1966-67 and I organised the Indonesian classes to hold barbecues and outings for the crew. For economy at barbecues we bought chops rather than steak. We had to lie with a straight face when a few of the crew told us they were Hindus and could not eat beef - since the cow is sacred to them. The chops might have gone on the barbecue as beef, but they all came off as lamb. After that we only ever bought lamb chops when the ship was in. In return we were invited on board for reciprocal hospitality. This did not always include the students and we had smaller, more intimate parties with just a few crew and selected Langscl staff. The captain invited just the family to dinner on board one Saturday night, and we were treated to a feast. Not appreciating either the occasion or the food, all the children wanted to eat was a jam sandwich. The relationship developed to the

extent where I gave them an Albert Namatjira copy, framed. In return they gave us two pictures made from straw on black fabric, which I was determined would not become Langscl property since all the effort was being put in by the staff and students at their own cost. In a draw that was not rigged the students and I drew lots for the pictures and I won, and I had them framed. They are of three women planting rice, and a farmer with two oxen ploughing the rice field. On the ship's final visit before I left Point Cook the Engineer, Soegiarto, gave me a carving of the Indonesian mythological Garuda bird, and Captain Legawa gave me a beautifully bound special edition of *Tanah Air Kita* (Our Homeland)-a pictorial introduction to Indonesia.



Crew of the Gunung Guntur, staff of the Language School and their families enjoy an outing, 1967.

Teaching Indonesian

In 1963 I became the first RAAF officer to instruct in Indonesian and became a link in the RAAF's control over the course content. The Mandarin course had a RAAF officer as Senior Lecturer, Flight Lieutenant John Wilson, and the Vietnamese would acquire one in John 'Johnno' Johnston. Kev Egan was

Senior Lecturer in Russian as required, and Flight Lieutenant Eugene Koneshenko was part-time lecturer in French. Johnno was a navigator like myself, and we were to team up pretty well over the years. We played a lot of chess, drank a lot of beer, went camping together, and attended official functions, besides doing an Interrogation Course with the Army at Middle Head. Johnno had been a navigator on Lincolns at Amberley when I did my conversion training before going to Singapore in 1955. With other things on my mind, like the overseas posting and impending marriage, I had not made his acquaintance then.

Having had no training in instructional technique, my first task was to develop a style and to learn my subject. I also wanted to change a lot of the course content to make it more relevant to Australia and to modern times. In that I had the support of my RAAF superiors and, gradually, the staff whom I was able to enlist. One of my first intentions was to have the Arabic script removed from the curriculum, and a greater emphasis placed on Indonesian over Malay. But this was to take three years. The interest in Arabic was reduced in 1964 and the subject was removed in 1965. It is easy to quote out of context, but the phrase *kemaluannya ternyata* can have various meanings. I believe the common Indonesian understanding would be “His balls were on display”. I am told that the Malays would more likely see it as “His embarrassment was obvious”. Yes, well, if the Indonesian interpretation were correct then the Malay one would probably apply as a consequence. I read widely and attended symposiums and other conferences on language training in Adelaide and Melbourne, establishing links with universities that did not recognise or approve of our pragmatic approach to language training. Our approach was to make a fluent interpreter/translator in as short a time as possible. Theirs was to teach the culture of the country in the language, without concern for fluency. I developed a healthy respect for the work of Dr Wilga Rivers who was at Monash, I think, and I read her books and applied their principles.

Indonesia continued to play a prominent role in world affairs, particularly our own. With a population of around 95,000,000 in 1963 (about 10 times that of Australia) it was the fifth most populous country in the world. It also had, and still has, the most Muslims of any country in the world; but has no state religion. The official state philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia is enshrined in their Panca Sila, or Five Principles, as embodied in the preamble to the constitution. They are: 1 Belief in the Almighty God; 2 Humanity; 3 Nationalism; 4 Sovereignty of the People; 5 Social Justice. Stretching over 4800

km along the equator it comprises 13,667 islands. Over the next five years of my stay at the Langsel Soekarno gained claim to West New Guinea, which he called Irian Jaya. This had remained under Dutch control when he became president in 1949. He had annexed it in 1962, but the United Nations had taken over administration on 1 October and gave it to Indonesia on 1 May 1963. He opposed the formation of the Federation of Malaya in 1963 between Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, commenced his policy of *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) and infiltrated guerrilla bands into Malaysia. Here he came into combat with British troops, and with Australian troops of the 3rd and 4th battalions Royal Australian Regiment in 1965 and 1966 at Malacca and in Johore state. As a new power bloc Malaysia stood to pose a threat to Indonesia's influence in the region. RAAF aircraft were forbidden to overfly Indonesian territory, and flights to RAAF Base Butterworth had to proceed via Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean, then around the north of Sumatra. In 1965 Indonesia withdrew from the United Nations over Malaysia's admission to the Security Council.

A coup mounted by Lieutenant Colonel Untung of the Cakrabirawa Presidential palace guard on the night of 30 September 1965, to usurp Soekarno's power, was put down within 24 hours by the army under Major General Soeharto. But the early hours of Friday 1 October saw six generals, including Army Chief of Staff, Ahmed Yani, kidnapped and murdered. Generals Panjaitan, Harjono and Yani was killed instantly, the remainder, Suprpto, Parman and Sutojo were executed within the next few hours. A seventh general and concurrently Minister for Defence, Nasution, escaped when his aide, Lieutenant Tendean, impersonated him. This was an unprecedented action. Never in any great war had an army lost six of its top generals in one night. It was averred, and almost certain despite denial by the American Central Intelligence Agency, that more than one of these was killed by torture under the 'death of a thousand cuts'. The army released photographs of the mutilated bodies, which were recovered from a well in the small village of *Lubang Buaya* - the Crocodile Hole - near Halim Air Force Base. In this torture the victim is immobilised and slowly cut to pieces by women with razor blades and small knives, starting with his most personal and sensitive parts that were stuffed in his mouth. The women belonged to a Communist group called Gerwani, an acronym for *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* - the Indonesian Women's Movement. Barbarism sometimes lurks beneath a thin veneer of civilisation. Army reaction was severe, and resulted in the death of probably 500,000 people in an anticommunist bloodbath. In March 1966

Soeharto assumed power, brought Indonesia back to the United Nations and restored relations with Malaysia. Over the next twelve months he stripped Soekarno of all his titles and became president himself in March 1967. Soekarno's era ended with his arrest in 1969 and his death in 1970, riddled with venereal disease. A historic time to be teaching Indonesian.

Djani Soedjanmo was both an excellent teacher and a fine man and his support was invaluable. He left in 1964 and we never heard of him again. I fear he may have been mixed up in the 1965 uprising. In the next few years I was to recruit Albert Tan (1964), with a fine, but timid, academic brain; Ati Achdiat (1965), daughter of a prominent Javanese novelist, Achdiat Kata Mihardja, and recommended to us by Alan Cooke; Nathan Kadjokoro (1965), a pleasant natured rebel to the core and not fazed by academia; and Cornelius Antonius Wilhelmus van Herwijnen (1964), or Caw for short. Caw was a Dutchman with a history of exploits in Indonesia that made fascinating listening. He was also very well educated, and fluent in about eight languages with a knowledge of some others. With immeasurable Dutch obstinacy and tenacity he kept reins on developments in the curriculum. His death from cancer a few years later robbed the school of a valuable contributor. With these staff for guidance I rewrote the Indonesian course and established a different teaching pattern. Certainly with Ati, and probably with the others, we bent the Public Service rules and filled the position with the person of our choice before we advertised the vacancy. Ati was a lovely person and married Stuart Graham in August 1966. Stuart had a tenuous contact with Indonesia in that his uncle, I think, Noel Graham, had recently completed a Staff College course in Indonesia at the Indonesian Army Staff College - which was quite a feather in his cap and a positive sign of cooperation between the two countries' Services. Ati was quite talented and coached the students into presenting a play, *The Tintookies*, in Indonesian one year.



Visit of the R. I. Air Attache, November 1966. (L-R): Terry Bibo, Air Attache Haskari Hasanuddin, Ati Achdiat, C. A. W. van Herwijnen, Albert Tan.

The Langscl also installed new tape recorders in the language laboratory in 1963. These had been commissioned by Toby Garrick to meet revolutionary demands. The tape recorders for 12 booths were rack mounted near the tape library and were controlled remotely by a complex teacher's console and the individual student's control panels. They played and recorded backwards and forwards, giving correctly spoken text on the forwards play and recording the students attempts to reproduce it on the backwards play. The student could therefore make instant replays and comparisons of his and the original texts, and practice until it was perfect. Each booth could be connected to a different language tape and each student could progress at his or her own pace. The Langscl pioneered in this, and it was successful in all my time there. I wrote a review of the system, with diagrams, for publication in a university magazine, and it was also reviewed by the Education Department of Victoria in 1964. It was the vanguard of much more sophisticated and miniaturised language

laboratory equipment. I also spent a lot of time writing and talking to Indonesian military attaches and ambassadors, arranging their visits and escorting them to the School of Languages in an official capacity. From this I was invited to their national day celebrations in Canberra on 17 August. And the school developed such links with the Indonesian embassy that we were being provided with frequent, up to date transcripts of internal radio broadcasts during the bloodbath in 1966. This made fascinating reading and important course material.

On 1 May 1963 I was seconded to the RAF for 18 days for a special operation with their 51 Squadron. This necessitated flying in a Comet jet at up to 45,000 feet (13,650m). The highest I had ever flown so far was 22,000 feet with Bill Middlemiss in 1957, which is quite comfortable breathing oxygen in a non-pressurised aircraft. In a pressurised aircraft such as the Comet, where the cabin pressure would probably be around 8,000 feet at an altitude of 45,000 feet no special equipment is normally necessary. But sudden decompression at 45,000 feet means unconsciousness in seconds and death in minutes. So I needed indoctrination, including suffering hypoxia. I was given this at the Aviation Medical Centre at Point Cook. This involved lectures on the theoretical aspects of the subject, and decompression in a special chamber. The chamber can hold six to eight people and has portholes and radio for communication. It was sealed and the air extracted to equal an altitude of 25,000 feet while I was breathing through an oxygen mask. I then had to remove my mask and answer questions and do simple mathematics while my actions were observed by a doctor. It doesn't take long for handwriting to deteriorate to a scribble, mathematics to become impossible to calculate, and answers to questions to become stupid. And all the while you think you are accurate and logical, while your fingernails are turning dark blue from lack of oxygen and you are entering another world. Before a critical point the doctor replaces your oxygen mask and reality returns.

A couple of days after this I flew to Singapore by commercial jet and joined the Comet crew at Tengah, my old stamping ground except that this time I was in the Officers' Mess. I was given a training flight on 5 May to familiarise myself with the equipment I was to use, and flew operational on the 6th. Over the next week I flew three more operations at altitudes of up to 42,000 feet, and achieved some success. Despite my previous attitude to Pommies dating from my No. 1 Squadron days I got on very well with the Comet crew. The RAAF had not given me any allowances to meet the additional costs of living overseas for more than a week and the Comet crew really looked after me,

paying my expenses from their funds. I flew home from Singapore in a Comet, but this time a commercial one flown by British Airways.

For this operation the RAF had requested RAAF assistance and I had been volunteered by the powers-that-be in Department of Air. In November 1964 they flew another series of operations and requested that I be seconded to them again. On this second detachment I lived at RAF Changi, travelling up there in a RAAF Hercules transport instead of in style in a commercial aircraft. Indian tailors still remembered me from 1959 and those earlier years when I did a lot of my shopping in Changi Village. Between 11 and 26 November I flew six operations.

For the two and a half years I had lived in Singapore until 1958 I had never eaten durian, having never got past the smell. With the RAF aircrew who were new to Singapore and wanted to try durian I finally got around to eating it. Once was enough, and I will never regret not becoming addicted to it. That evening I spent on my balcony taping the toc-toc bird calls to send home to Mum and Dad on a tape accompanying a small recorder I had bought for them. Tape recorders were in their infancy compared with today. Cassettes had not been invented and three-inch reel-to-reel tapes were all the rage for sending spoken letters. The toc-toc bird would make his toc-toc noises a lengthy but irregular number of times, and it was said that the Chinese would bet substantial amounts of money on their guess as to how many tocs it would call. From Changi I picked up transport to Butterworth in North Malaya, and went back to school in the Hercules.

In September-October 1963 Johnno and I went to Sydney to do a four-week Interrogation Course. We lived in the army mess with batmen attending to our needs, and attended lectures and demonstrations in the Intelligence Centre at Middle Head, Sydney. These terminated in half the class being kidnapped during a lesson and thrown into dungeons. And I mean dungeons. These were caves and corridors carved in the sandstone of Middle Head. Fortunately Johnno and I were among the other half, on the interrogating side. Short of physical violence there were no punches pulled, as the idea was to acclimatise the student to the atmosphere he might face if captured in a war zone, and to train us all in interrogation techniques. Isolated instances in the past, when the course was conducted at Amberley, in Queensland, had produced traumas - and worse - in some students, with consequent media publicity. An inoffensive and slightly built navigator, Wally Johnson, had killed his guard when he was released from solitary confinement. He was found not guilty. But we had

medical and psychiatrist supervision. And no problems. Johnno went to Vietnam late in 1964 for more than a year and was able to put his training to good use. On my free weekends at Middle Head I repainted some of the rooms and exterior of the house in Parkin road.

As we mixed socially outside the school environment so we mixed during school hours. There was a Commercial Hotel in Werribee, the nearest town of any consequence, that we patronised at lunch times when we could manage it. They served a magnificent scotch fillet. Johnno, Don Hesterman and I were among frequent visitors. It was probably here that Johnno introduced me to chess, which we challenged each other over for many years afterwards. Peter Dennes didn't drink with us often during the week, being on a different work schedule than us. But Celie and I had a lot of social contact with Peter and his wife Leslie and were to follow this up in later years at Canberra. Peter was of enormous assistance to me in getting things done through the Orderly Room that was responsible for administration.

I had good rapport with almost all of my students, there being a couple of notable exceptions. With my appointment to staff I also became the senior officer for RAAF staff in the language laboratory and on the course, and was responsible for compiling their annual reports and counselling them. There were a few torrid and extended love affairs among the students but I was not privy to knowledge of them all at the time. Nor did I recognise the homosexual airman, Ray Crosisca, in 1963. I don't think their extra-curricular activities affected their academic performance anyway, though Ray was subsequently discharged from the service. I would never have guessed that John Holloway, from Department of Trade, would be among the first to take his wife on a diplomatic posting to Burma (Myanmar) at public expense. His 'wife' was another male. We had only one attempted suicide in my classes in the five years I was teaching, when a young WAAF overdosed on sleeping pills. She recovered, and was allowed back on course against my opposition. The Vietnamese had an effective suicide when a student piped his exhaust into his car parked outside the WAAF quarters one night. And one of the Chinese instructors, Mr Wu, suicided. I don't know how these figures compare with other high-intensity training courses.

Among the more memorable students are Peter Evans and Michelle Warner from the 1963 course. Peter, an airman, was brilliant and a candidate for Mensa. But he was also unorthodox in that he was prepared to stand up and be noticed over issues he felt strongly about. He pitched a tent outside the

main gate of RAAF Laverton to protest an accommodation argument he was having with the RAAF. I saw a lot more of Peter after he left the RAAF and lived in Rockhampton where he became a prominent businessman. He organised a 20-year reunion for his class and staff of 1963, and many of us got back to see the school again in 1983 and renew friendships. Michelle, a naval WRAN was lovely, nineteen and naive. She had to be protected from herself. Jim Hadfield, a RAAF co-student, told me one day how he had introduced Michelle to oral contraceptives the night before. The contraceptive she took was a tablet of chewing gum. Fortunately for Michelle the introduction had only been by way of conversation and not for his designs on her body. Twenty-nine years later, in Brisbane, Michelle told me the same story. She had a knack of making instant coffee look like cappuccino by grinding up the coffee/sugar mix before adding hot water, and would sometimes make mine when the staff and students were having morning or afternoon tea together. After 1963 I didn't see Michelle again until 1992 when she reappeared through contact with Peter Evans. I remember a surprise night when this course descended on 1 Heffernan Street to drag me out for the night. What the occasion was I have no idea, because it was warm enough to swim and so not my birthday, which is in June. I was bundled off to the banks of the river at Werribee where we drank until dawn, when I went swimming off the pier at Point Cook before starting classes for the day. It was a heavy day, but some of the students felt it more than I did, and offended Cath O'Dempsey when they couldn't make it through the day's classes.

Promotion to Flying Officer had been automatic after twelve months of incident-free probation and I was on a short-service commission, which was for either three or six years. Further promotion required study to pass a number of exams in such dull and uninteresting subjects as Air Force law, service writing, and administration. In 1963 I put in a lot of time studying past papers and Air Force manuals, locked away in my office after hours at the Langscl. My first attempt was successful and on 3 April 1963 I moved up to the rank of Flight Lieutenant that I was to retain for the rest of my career. For a number of reasons, not the least of which was my subsequent love of flying again, I refused to study for any more promotion exams. Promotion beyond Flight Lieutenant would have significantly increased the possibility of my flying a desk again, and I was determined to avoid that.

With two language laboratories operating most of the day and into the night and serving at least five languages, we used a lot of tapes. Every student who could afford one also had his or her tape recorder. Don Hesterman and I

arranged for the official purchase of tapes for school use, and for heavily discounted prices for student tapes. The market was so good we were given special prices, and occasionally an LP record by the salesman. The record was promptly taped and made available to the staff and students. Officially it belonged to the School and was kept in the library. Staff were not supposed to accept gifts from contractors. A couple of my more motivated graduate students put me in touch with Garuda Book Services as a source of Indonesian artwork and books. Over a few years the students and the School spent a lot of money on dictionaries, grammars, newspapers and magazines, novels and various other publications, besides batik cloth and artefacts. I have a black and white batik wall hanging reproduced from an original in the Sultan's Palace in Yogyakarta. This measures about one metre by 2.4 metres and tells the story of the Ramayana from Indonesian mythology. With 18 characters it is a beautiful classic that tells the story in 37 panels and has an accompanying text explaining the meaning of each of them.

This market was so profitable that its smooth-talking salesman thought he should reward my patronage. He arranged for an evening at Melbourne's Southern Cross Hotel with all expenses paid. I was to find out that the evening also included two attractive prostitutes, which made me a little uncomfortable. I wasn't accustomed to that kind of company. When we finally parted in pairs at the hotel doorway I took my partner home to wherever she lived and told her she had earned her fee without having to provide the service. So we sat in my car for the next couple of hours in serious conversation about the problems in the world, and her profession in particular. She was quite a nice person to talk to, but filled my ashtray with cigarettes. With our marriage already under strain I had no hope of explaining them to Celie when she found them next morning on the way to Mass.

I was not long established as a lecturer when Radio Australia asked me to monitor their broadcasts. I jumped at the opportunity. Getting approval from the RAAF was easy, and monitoring had a number of advantages for me. I was paid to check three hours a week of selected material taped from broadcasts, which was good pocket money of around \$700 a year when my total income was only \$6464 in 1967. Radio Australia provided the recorder. I was being exposed to more native speakers than just the school staff and our school contacts. And I was able to use any of the material I wanted for classwork. My main function was checking for correct translation, and I generally found errors. But I was also there to ensure there were no diplomatic blunders. The arrangement was beneficial for as long as I remained at the school. From

monitoring I extended to assessing all their applications for employment in the Indonesian Section, and my recommendations were always accepted.

During the bloodbath following Soekarno's overthrow in 1965 I criticised what I saw as an inflammatory statement in a broadcast by an Indonesian female announcer. It was the exhortation *Madju Terus; Pantang Mundur!* (*Ever Onward; No Retreat*), so the force of its interpretation depended on which side you were on. The way I saw it was plainly anti-Establishment. She appealed and got university support, and the case went to the Managing Director of Radio Australia, Talbot Duckmanton, who rang me at work. I had to concede that the statement *could* have been innocuous where I saw it as inflammatory in context, and the woman won her case. After a while I was offered the position of head of the Indonesian Section of Radio Australia but could not accept the prospect of perpetual employment at a desk job in Melbourne. I offered to work there for a couple of years if the RAAF would second me to the position, but that was not acceptable and eventually one of my students, Peter Moore from the 1964 course, moved into it and he did a good job. He subsequently employed two more graduates of the Langscl, Alan Morris from about 1961 vintage, and Joe Coman from his own course. Alan was a very good reporter, married an Indonesian, and lives in Victoria. Joe managed, but his wife profited more by becoming Peter's third wife later on.

Besides my contact with Radio Australia, Indonesian diplomatic circles and the Gunung Guntur, I was also an active member of the Australia-Indonesia Association. Many of the graduates of the school went straight to employment in intelligence duties if not to the diplomatic, which gave me entree to the highly classified Defence Signals Division (responsible for signals intelligence and communication security). It was natural that I should come to the attention of our internal security service ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organization). I had not given the matter much thought, and it certainly didn't bother me. But the extent was driven home to me one day when an ASIO officer, with whom I had limited contact, quoted verbatim words I had spoken to my Radio Australia contact some time previously in the Officers' Mess car park. I believe this interest was to be to my considerable benefit in 1979 when I applied to work with them.

Life was not a bed of roses and I faced various conflicts including official criticism of my style and attitude by both an Army Colonel and an Air Force Group Captain. The school closed ranks and I weathered those, but coupled with lesser obstacles of an obstinate and obdurate bureaucracy they affected

my enchantment with teaching and started to take their toll. Allied with these, I was criticised because my classes were not producing the traditional bell-shaped figures beloved of academics, indicating a few excellent students, a majority of mediocre students, and a few poor students. Many of my students were excellent, a few mediocre, and almost none poor. Poor students held back progress and were failed once they proved themselves beyond redemption. Coming through a rigid preselection process, and benefiting from the quality and dedication of our teaching staff, surviving students tended towards excellence. I was teaching to a standard, not to a formula. So I simply ignored the criticism from the RAAF Education Branch and concentrated on results. My attitude became increasingly maverick and I would ask myself 'What can they do to me? Post me? ... Please'.

Man of La Mancha made its debut on 22 November 1965 and I knew how Don Quixote felt. I seemed to have been tilting at windmills for years. But, unlike Don Quixote, I had had a measure of success. And I didn't have a Dulcinea. If I had she would have been the personification of pragmatism and progress. I could see no value in being mired in the *status quo* and worshipping tradition. There must be achievement.

At the end of 1965, after three years of teaching and four years off flying, I applied to return to a flying squadron. Toby Garrick refused to recommend the posting and we struck a bargain. Up till now Omar Jauhari was still nominally Lecture in Charge of the Indonesian Department even though I was effectively running it. Being a public servant he could not be dismissed or demoted except for incompetence or immorality, and he exhibited neither of those. He was just a bit slow to change. So I told Toby I would stay for another year if I could have total control of the Department. A Malay Department was created and Omar moved sideways; and I became head of the Indonesian Department. I still have embossed business cards on wood veneer to remember that period. These were organised for production overseas, probably in Thailand, by Jim Gairdner, Thai instructor at the school and our neighbour over Heffernan Street.

Kev Egan achieved notoriety in late 1965 when his irascibility got him into a fist fight in a Melbourne pub, and he featured prominently with his black eye on their front pages of the morning newspapers. He had a final falling-out with Toby who arranged his posting as Administrative Officer to Wagga Wagga. Kev was replaced by yet another navigator, Squadron Leader Terry Jordan, recently returned from Taiwan. He was a Chinese linguist and had

distinguished himself by completing his degree course in the university there with Chinese as the teaching language - no mean feat. With Johnno we navigators might have reigned supreme but Terry was an insufferable little man. For two years we worked for a common cause, but I cannot say I worked with him. Fortunately I was entrenched and not afraid of a posting, while he was still finding out how to fit in. When he left the RAAF he went on to a higher plane in a Melbourne university. When Toby Garrick retired he took a senior post in the University of NSW in Sydney.

Johnno and I still kept in touch with Kev Egan at Wagga and drove up there in the Holden for a weekend to go to the Wagga races. We decided to 'road test' some of the wine flagons we were buying from Werribee. Having driven up on the Friday night and pitched my tent in the caravan park on the bank of the Murrumbidgee we rang Kevin and invited him out. He had used his position of influence to provide us with beds on the base, but we never got to use them. By three o'clock in the morning we were well into road testing the claret, and ended up in no condition to go to the races. Johnno's verdict of the claret was that it was 'a very brave wine to be out on the road so young'.

During one of the school breaks in 1966 I drove up to St Marys to repaint the house. Parkin Road, which had originally been a cul-de-sac, was now a through-road and attracted a lot of traffic. The area was rapidly turning into a slum; houses and yards neglected, and a real eyesore. My direct lease of the house to the RAAF officer had not been very successful, except in so far as we were able to negative gear it to reduce tax. A W Hogg, in Footscray, was our taxation consultant for years. As soon as the officer moved in he wanted a garage and all sorts of other work done. So we let him move out and gave control of the place to Phil Plows, the estate agent who had handled our original purchase. Rent came in at \$15 a week and Phil took his cut of 7%, and we didn't know who the tenants were. In three days I painted some interior rooms, and the entire exterior twice, with some walls given a third coat. While I was painting, a middle-aged couple asked me if I would sell the place. I sent them down to Phil, and we eventually sold a home I would never have been prepared to move back to. I had thought this couple bought the house, but later research showed that it was not sold until 30 June 1969.

At the end of 1966 I did not apply for a posting. I applied for 'Repatriation from the School of Languages' with the request that my application be forwarded to Department of Air 'regardless of the Commanding Officer's recommendation'. It didn't create any ill-feeling. Toby knew me pretty well by

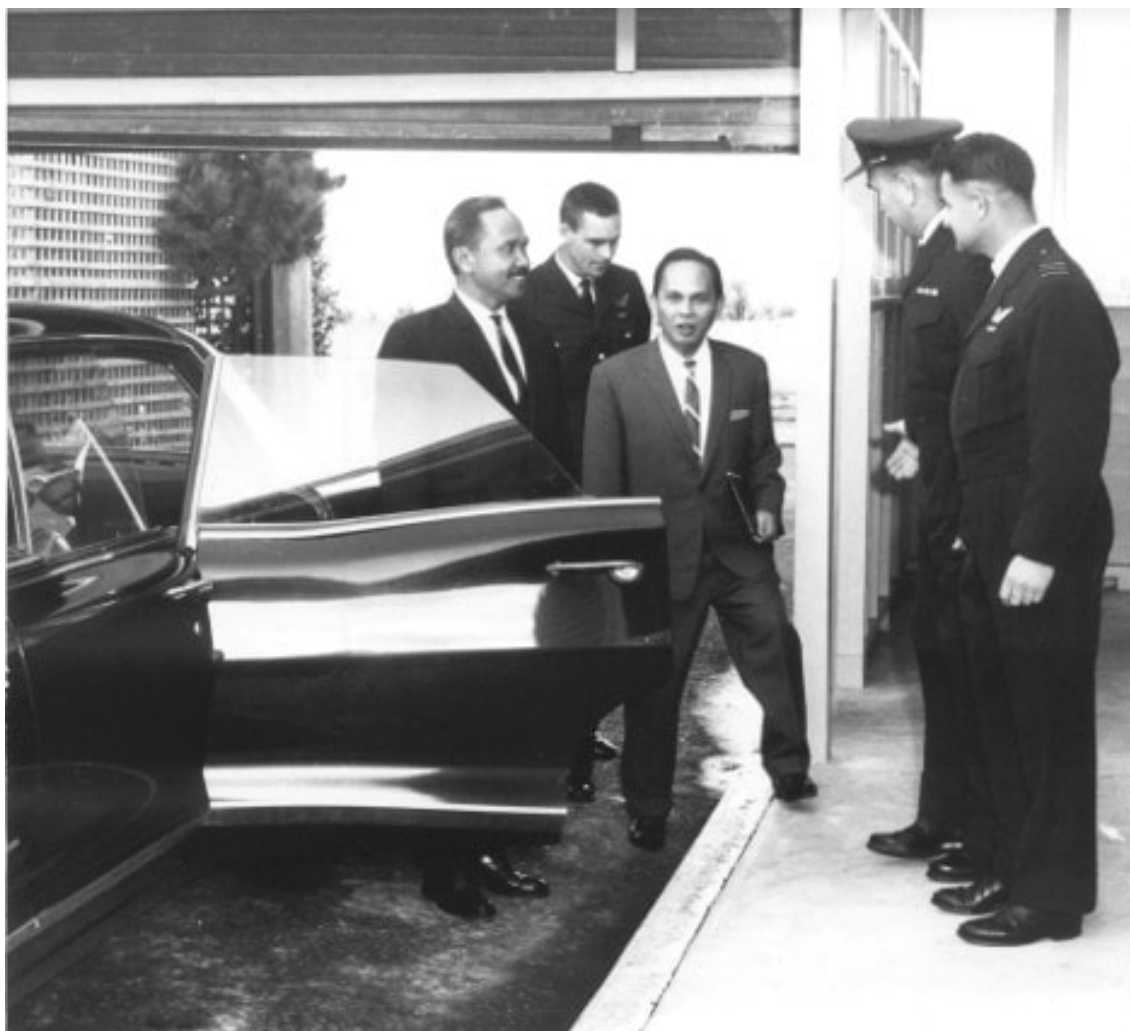
this time, and he knew I was both dedicated and competent despite my attitude. I had previously baited Toby when he banned all foodstuffs in the lecture rooms and offices, claiming the crumbs were attracting mice that ate the insulation on equipment cables. In response I parked my Land Rover in front of the School and used to publicly take my morning-tea out and eat it in the cab. We found some compromise on that problem before it got out of hand. I was told I would be released at the end of 1967.

I had obviously mastered the Indonesian language and was an A grade linguist, but I do not believe I ever achieved the fluency I was credited with in the tasks I was given both at the Langscl and later on in my detachments from 37 Squadron. Some of my students achieved a fluency I could only envy. Alan Cooke married an Indonesian actress, Meinar, raised a family, and controlled the McCulloch empire in South-east Asia and the Pacific before becoming a successful businessman in his own right, and owning a mansion in Tucson, Arizona. Kerry Collison married an Indonesian princess, took Indonesian citizenship, and developed bars and restaurants in Jakarta before creating housing estates in Java. Moving on just one step ahead of Fate he went to Singapore, and is currently repeating the process in Vietnam - which is wide open for exploitation by a ruthless entrepreneur in 1992. Before he even finished the course Steve Zagon was speaking better Indonesian than I was. He also became a businessman in Indonesia and worked with Kerry for a while, but I was told he was reluctant to use the language in sensitive negotiations where fluency was demanded. Others became military attaches or their assistants, or diplomatic representatives including ambassadors. Some are millionaires as a direct result of their competence in Indonesian. While I envy their success in a way, I could not accept the graft, corruption, exploitation and immorality that I know to be the essential building blocks of that success. I am happy to have been instrumental in assisting them along the path to material riches. Not everybody acquitted themselves well, though. Robbie Burns, assistant to the military attache in Jakarta in 1965, arrived at an official function in a flamboyant uniform of his own creation and outshone his Colonel. He was replaced.

At one of the Air Force Week displays at Point Cook I saw an aircraft flying backwards. The low-level wind was so strong that the pilot of a Winjeel trainer could reduce his throttle till the windspeed exceeded his airspeed. And I saw a man fly. An American demonstration had a man strap small jets to his back, take off vertically to higher than our aircraft hangars, turn around a few times and land safely. I have never seen a practical application of the demonstration

since. Johnno returned to flying after the 1966 year and went to Hercules transports at Richmond. We kept in touch and, with his recommendation I, too, went to 37 Squadron on C130E Hercules in January 1968. But, in 1967, after nearly six years off flying I almost needed retraining. Aviation rules and regulations had changed and equipment had become more modern. So in October-December of that year I flew a number of times in a Dakota from the Flight Test Squadron of Aircraft Research & Development Unit at Laverton. This was with Group Captain Jim Graney, with whom Alan Cooke had worked in Jakarta. That was uneventful except for once getting zapped by lightning that blew a hole in the rudder and sent us hurrying home. Compasses and instruments can be inaccurate after a good lightning strike, and good navigators avoid situations where they may be rendered 'temporarily uncertain of their position'.

Ati arranged a send-off and gave me a coffee mug, and we packed up house for Richmond, NSW. For morning tea on the final day of packing and departure we bought three-layer rainbow cake. It was just as well we sliced it all first before eating any because it had a used banda-aid in it. The health department prosecuted the producers. Not having a house to go to at this stage we spent Christmas with Colleen and Hockey, with Gary, Brett and Robyn, at a house they were renting at Kurnell in Sydney. We then chased Johnno and Wendy up at Umina, camping in our tent in the caravan park and enjoying the beaches until I had to start work on 8 January 1968.



Escorting the Indonesian Ambassador to the School of Languages and met by the Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr Toby Carrick and the Director of Studies, Sqn Ldr Terry Jordan, May 1967.

No. 37 (Transport) Squadron

Richmond, New South Wales

No. 37 Squadron was equipped with Hercules C130E transports with four Allison T56 turboprop engines. Twenty-nine metres long, 40 metres in span, and standing over 11 metres high, these were a magnificent aircraft for performance, versatility and crew comfort, and one of the most remarkable transport aircraft since World War II. They could carry a maximum payload of 42,500 lb (19,300 kg). My time on Hercules was undoubtedly the best of my flying career, with five years of useful, functional flying largely centred on South-east Asia but reaching the east coast of America. The squadron was highly professional, and although we had pilots like Bill Middlemiss they acted with greater restraint. I was to fly up Katherine Gorge with one of these pilots, but that was before it became such a commercial tourist attraction. Norm Whyburn was the Navigation Officer when I arrived, and was followed by Doug Tobin and Bruce 'Splinter' Andrews. Splinter had come a long way since our time at Tengah and, as a Squadron Leader, outranked me. I still would not do promotion exams for increased rank because that would greatly increase the probability of my being removed from flying and ending up on a desk somewhere, probably Russell Offices in Canberra that we called *The Concrete Castle*. Commanding Officers were Wing Commander Ron McKimm (appointed 21/2/66), Squadron Leader McKenzie (T/CO 1/10/69), Wg Cdr John Radford (15/12/69), and Wg Cdr Roger Bateson (13/3/72). Roger Bateson was to organise a formal military funeral for Splinter Andrews when he was killed in a head-on collision on the back road to Canberra towards the end of my tour. He had been posted to Department of Air and worked weekdays in Canberra, coming back to his unit on the base at Richmond for weekends. Going back to Canberra one Monday morning he hit a farmer's truck, and I lost a good friend. With another navigator, Ben Bentley, I went to the Camden morgue to identify the body to save his wife, Pat, the ordeal. It was not a pleasant task and I needed assistance from the medical section to get to sleep that night.

Navigation equipment was modern and serviceable and included forward-looking radar, and Doppler equipment that computed the aircraft's ground position from a measurement of drift and groundspeed. This worked well over land but not so reliably over smooth seas. With their increased complexity

aircraft now had written checklists for all the actions required for takeoff, landing, and emergencies. Previously the crew had to remember the procedures, and there was opportunity for error or omission. Aircraft starting had improved over the years since Wal Harris and I had to tow battery carts out to the aircraft lines at Sale, and plug them into the aircraft to provide power for starting engines or checking equipment. On Neptunes we had used power units - diesel generators that were towed out to the aircraft by tractor. Hercules had their own power supply built-in, in the form of a Ground Turbine Compressor, commonly called an Auxiliary Power Unit, or APU, on other aircraft. This was a powerful, small motor near the left wheels that supplied power for instruments, air-conditioning and engine start. This was just one of the features that made the aircraft so versatile.

The hardest adjustment to make in coming back to flying was in the use of air routes. In both bombers and maritime aircraft I had been used to flying in straight lines between any two points, and working out where I wanted to go on a convenient map of my choice. I had flown directions based on the True north and south poles not the Magnetic ones, and I had made allowances for magnetic variation and compass deviation. Almost all of my flying had been in uncontrolled airspace, and we virtually told authorities where we were going to be and went there. Now I was to fly on magnetic headings on routes laid down like highways, nationally and internationally, and conform to more stringent rules and regulations. Air routes were corridors of defined width with nominated reporting points requiring an accuracy of plus or minus two minutes, except in Malaysia where it was one minute. If I said I would be over a reporting point at 1157 then I had to be there between 1155 and 1159 or else revise my estimate. This was necessary for the safety and coordination of all aircraft using the route. There were additional loads on the navigators, too. Flight planning was more complex in the consideration of fuel quantities and rates of fuel flow, and initial and final cruising altitudes based on aircraft weight and the temperatures at takeoff and on route. Previously I had left all this to the captain. Now the navigator was part of the team. We would draw charts of anticipated fuel consumption before takeoff and plot actual fuel use against this along the route.

Crews were drawn from a pool of pilots, navigators, flight engineers and loadmasters. Normal crew was two pilots in the usual front seats; flight-engineer seated between and behind them and slightly higher; navigator behind the co-pilot and facing the starboard (right) side of the aircraft; and loadmaster in the big cargo bay. The crew compartment was on a sort of first

floor up a set of three steps inside the forward entrance door on the port side. It had independent air-conditioning and two bunks. The bunks were against the wall aft of the navigator who, along with the rest of the crew, used the head of the lower one to stack personal gear on. The upper bunk was fully available and came in for a lot of use on training flights or long flights with extra crew. Johnno Johnston was firmly entrenched in the squadron and helped in my training.

The Squadron's major commitment was to the support of our troops in Vietnam. A very brief chronology of events relating to their involvement is as follows: In May 1954 the French, as the colonial power, were defeated by Ho Chi Minh's forces in the historic battle of Dien Bien Phu and Vietnam was divided along the 17th parallel (17 degrees North). Ho Chi Minh formed a strongly nationalistic communist party in the north, with its capital at Hanoi. From 1960 the North Vietnamese supported communist guerrillas in the south, with assistance from Communist China, leading to full-scale war by 1965. President John Kennedy, in November 1961, authorised substantial military aid to South Vietnam, and by the end of 1962 there were over 11,000 military personnel there. In the peak years of the war there were 500,000 American troops in country at any one time out of something like two million participants overall.

In May 1962 the Australian Government, under Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies, announced the deployment of a training team of 30 Army personnel to assist the South Vietnamese. This team grew to more than 200 specialists who worked for and with the American Central Intelligence Agency. In April 1965 he announced the decision to commit troops to the conflict. The National Service scheme, introduced in November 1964 for selected 20-year-old males made it possible for this commitment to be upgraded to an infantry battalion group and the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, started to arrive in Vietnam in May 1965. National Servicemen were required to do two years fulltime and three years part-time service.

In 1966 and 1967 Australian forces were increased to task force size of three battalions and tanks, and the 1st Australian Task Force was established in Phuoc Tuy Province southeast of Saigon. Nui Dat was the base. At one stage we had 7,000 troops there. The RAAF provided 6 Caribou transport aircraft from 38 Squadron in August 1964; Iroquois helicopter support from 9 Squadron in June 1966; and a squadron of Canberra bombers, 2 Squadron, in

April 1967. In February 1968, timed to coincide with the peak of Vietnam's religious holiday period, Viet Cong insurgents unleashed the 'Tet' offensive and captured Baria, the capital of Phuoc Tuy province. They were defeated and driven back through Bien Hoa and Long Binh, but the offensive sparked opposition to the war throughout the United States and this flowed over to Australia. Vietnam was the most reported war in history. There was almost no military censorship, which gave wide rein to irresponsibility, and the media were obsessively drawn to the most photogenic stories at any cost - including that of principle. The American involvement in Tet was widely reported by irresponsible journalists at the time as being a defeat for them. It was, in fact, a complete victory for the American and allied forces, but by the time this became apparent to the media they were entrenched in their negative reporting and refused to change the tone, doing irreparable harm to the public relations aspect of the American military effort.

With moratorium marches in the streets of the capital cities in protest against the war as a background, Prime Minister William McMahon, announced in August 1971 that the Task Force would be withdrawn before Christmas. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam ordered the remaining Australian troops to be withdrawn in December 1972. At the end of our involvement we had lost 497 troops, 2 nurses, 4 correspondents and one female entertainer, out of 50,001 troops who had served in Vietnam. Official figures give the breakdown as: 42,700 army; 2858 navy; and 4443 air force. We brought most of the dead home in aluminium coffins for a decent burial in Australia.

United States reduced its ground troops to 50,000 in 1972, and with its allies withdrew from South Vietnam in 1973. The North launched a new offensive culminating in the total collapse of the South in April 1975. North and South Vietnam were reunited in 1976.

I had one familiarisation flight of one hour fifteen minutes on 9 January 1968 and left two days later for Vietnam, under training. Squadron Leader Alan Bishop was my captain; we had been together at the School of Languages in 1962, and I was to fly a lot with Alan in 37 Squadron. There were two basic routines we flew; the VT series for general cargo into and out of Vung Tau, which was our destination in Vietnam; and the MV series that was our medical evacuation flight. On the VT series we flew Richmond to Darwin, about 6½ hours. After an overnight stop it was on to Vung Tau, 7½ hours, unload and reload, then on to Butterworth in Malaysia, 2 hours. We generally had a day of rest in Butterworth and left early the following morning for Darwin, 8 hours.

After another overnight stop it was back to Richmond. Most of our flying would not have taken us above 30,000 feet, but the aircraft could fly as high as 40,000 feet. The highest I ever got in one was 33,000. Cruising speed was 280 knots (520 km/hr), which was the average speed we would maintain over cruising and climbing to our final altitude.

The MV routine was a little different. After our northbound overnight stop in Darwin we flew to Butterworth, 8 hours. Next day we flew to Vung Tau to pick up the wounded, and brought them back to the hospital in Butterworth. Operational restrictions prevented us from taking medevac patients direct from Vung Tau to Australia. We had a little over 24 hours free before leaving at 7.00 p.m. local time on a non-stop flight to Richmond, 13 hours or more.

On the medevac flights we carried two crews and a medical team. When the service was established it flew from Butterworth to Richmond over Darwin in case it needed to refuel. John Johnston pointed out to the Commanding Officer that the service had a built-in liability. By flying over Darwin it increased the distance flown as compared with flying over Derby, and thus increased the probability of having to refuel. So the route was changed to enter Australia at Derby, which also had the potential to give us more favourable winds over the second half of the flight where the upper level winds were predominantly westerly. One crew flew as far as Derby, about half way, while the other tried to sleep. The front bunk was generally reserved for a co-pilot or engineer, and the navigator slept in a nylon bunk down the back with the patients. Nursing staff worked their own roster depending on the condition of the patients, and were always welcome up on the flight deck. They would frequently bring us a cooked breakfast around about sunrise. We were well catered for with in-flight rations, and the loadmasters generally looked after the crew with coffee and prepacked meals. My favourite meal out of Butterworth was a locally produced curry.

The C130E's nominal range was 6,000 kilometres with a payload of 9,295 kg (20,500 lb). It is over 7,000 kilometres from Butterworth to Richmond and the longest flight we would undertake. At that time it was probably the longest single stage flown by a Hercules anywhere in the world. A fully loaded Hercules weighed 155,000 lbs - over 70,000 kg - and almost half of that was fuel. It was relatively slow to climb in the warm air of the tropics, and we had to avoid clouds and minor turbulence that we would normally fly through. And, because of the possible effects of reduced cabin pressure on the patients we were limited to 25,000 feet where the cabin pressure was sea level. Medevac

flights out of Butterworth were undoubtedly the most significant flights the Squadron undertook. Over 3,000 patients were evacuated from Vietnam in C130E aircraft at around 50 patients per flight.

Military activity in Vietnam was intense around this time and I flew two VT series flights in January. The second was with an American exchange officer, Captain Glen Bentz. Glen was possibly one of the best Hercules pilots in the world and was to demonstrate some superb flying over the next few months. He was also a ham radio operator, and would pass the time on long flights using the aircraft as a mobile station to communicate with other hams around the world. February was a busy month for me, with two more VT series and a lot of short internal flying. It was essential to get navigators productive in as short a time as possible to meet the operational demands placed on the squadron. A navigator categorisation scheme had been started when I was on Neptunes and I had left them as category B1. Navigators had to undertake proficiency tests and be assessed on their performance on an operational flight every twelve months to determine proficiency. Category A was the best and was recognised with a certificate, B was average to good, and C was competent. I was rated category C at the end of February and trusted to go on my own.

Vung Tau, on Cap Saint Jacques, south east of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), was a substantial base with hangars, messes, accommodation and canteen facilities. Conditions were a bit primitive, as befits a war zone, and we never spent very long there. Only twice did I stay overnight in Vung Tau, and they were both occasions when I missed excitement by one day. The base was mortared the day before one and the day after the other. The mortars were badly aimed and did no real damage. Much of the taxiway and parking area was PSP, perforated steel planking, locked together to give support over doubtful ground. In fact, for some time we were landing on 3,000 feet of PSP instead of 6,000 feet of concrete runway while the strip was being upgraded. That was when Glen Bentz made one of the smoothest landings I have ever experienced in a heavily laden aircraft. I was still waiting for the normal thump of landing at Vung Tau when I realised we were taxiing. Usually the aircraft was dropped in and the props put into reverse thrust for braking in an unmistakably positive action that strained the seat harness. Air traffic into Vung Tau was constant and various. There were small FAC (forward air control) spotter aircraft, helicopters in all shapes and sizes, and small and large transports. Most of these were a drab green and our silver Hercules stood out like a country

outhouse. But painting the aircraft would have increased its basic weight considerably and reduced our useful payload.



The approach to Vung Tau, Vietnam, from the cockpit of a Hercules C130E, 1969.

Ten degrees north of the equator and on the South China Sea, Vung Tau had only wet and dry seasons with a tropical monsoon climate. The southwest monsoon brought more than 200 mm of rain per month from May through October. With an average temperature around 26 degrees and reaching the early 30s it was a humid, clammy climate. It was no gardeners' paradise, with little greenery of any consequence except the surrounding jungle. Our standard routine there was to grab transport and go to the American PX (post exchange or canteen) to buy spirits. Visitors were not normally permitted to shop at the PX, but since we were there so regularly we were accepted as in-country troops and issued with a PX-card. There was a special form of money in use throughout military bases in Vietnam, called scrip. Like Monopoly money. Its use was to limit the black market in currency, and we had to change our Australian dollars into scrip at the local pay section. We could buy large bottles of gin, bourbon, bacardi - 40 fluid ounces - for around 90 cents. Tia Maria, Kahlua and heavy liqueurs were a little more expensive but still a gift.

We also bought our aftershave and deodorants there, and I had a preference for Mennen. There was widespread black marketing of American stores and equipment throughout Vietnam and fortunes were made by some servicemen in control of the accounting. Troops bartered goods, and Australians acquired air conditioners and commercial refrigerators in exchange for slouch hats or Australian beer. When one American unit found itself embarrassed by possession of a power boat about 8 to 10 metres long the Australians bought it for a couple of cases of beer. It was used for leisure at Vung Tau and then taken onto Australian inventory and shipped to the RAAF base at Learmonth, where I went fishing on it some years later. Accounting was so lax that the Australians were able to assemble a whole helicopter out of scrounged spare parts.

We often had long delays in Vung Tau while the aircraft was being loaded and unloaded and would occasionally eat in the mess with the troops. Menus were adequate and there was always enough to eat. Flavoured milk and cordials were available from big metal containers but the milk was reconstituted, not fresh. Listening to talk in the mess and making our own observations did not give us much respect for the South Vietnamese soldier, who did not seem terribly interested in fighting for his country. But stories about the American troops were not always inspiring either. There was plenty of anecdotal evidence of troops going into combat under the influence of drugs, with drug use rife throughout the services. On a lesser scale were the stories of troops in combat wearing aftershave, smoking, and playing transistor radios. Then there was the story of the American troops who flatly refused to attempt to recover tanks lost in enemy territory. No amount of discipline could overcome their rebellion to what they saw as a suicide mission to recover scrap metal. I believe the issue got as far as supreme military authority in the USA, but the troops won out in the end and the tanks were abandoned.

The roads around the base were frequently crossed with speed bumps to try to curb hoon and macho driving. Troops didn't take kindly to these obstructions and the precast concrete forms would mysteriously be removed overnight. So the authorities laid tank tracks across the road to replace them. On their first night they were picked up by helicopter and dropped out to sea. Authority had the final say though when they created permanent, cement bumps.

Unlike the air strikes in Malaya I have not kept a count of the number of VT or MV services I flew, but they would average out at close to two a month over the five years. Considering that this was often the only flying I did in that

month it might not seem that I was fully employed. In fact, our time in the squadron headquarters building was fairly well accounted for. There was constant study and preparation of maps and charts, instruments and equipment, rules and regulations, and amending of books and other publications. Some of us had a training role, which necessitated preparation and correction of material. Nevertheless we did have free time, and we had a projector for which we could draw movies from the base and government libraries. These ranged from educational to entertaining, and I first discovered Glen Campbell in a film called Galveston and enjoyed his music from then on. But there were entertaining things happening locally too. Aircrew were issued with Jaeger Le Coultre watches, but I had long since surrendered mine in favour of a more functional civilian watch of my own. One of the navigators went to the base store to either exchange an unserviceable Jaeger watch or draw out a new one. The Sergeant behind the counter refused to give him one, saying 'There is only one left in stock, and if I give you that I won't have any to issue if there is a need for one'. The navigator was not overwhelmed by the Sergeant's logic, but had to go through the Equipment Officer to get his watch. Johnno and I managed to slip into the Windsor RSL Club in frequently for counter lunches over a game of chess. I generally lost. Other navigators, like Ben Bentley, spent their loose hours at the Windsor Golf Club. Ben retired there from the RAAF with an esoteric knowledge of grasses that could live under water for long periods without deteriorating. That was important for this golf club that was flooded so frequently.

For long overseas trips we would arrange with customs to take our own duty free beer. That cost from eight to twelve cents a can, so it was well worth our while to be self-sufficient. I would collect this from Cawsey's, the bonded wholesalers in Sydney, in the Land Rover, usually with Johnno to help me find the way. That would go into bond at Richmond, and be loaded on the aircraft just before departure. On one of these visits to Cawsey's we were introduced to Courage 1770 Colonial Ale, a limited edition beer that must have been one of the best beers ever brewed commercially. Johnno and I were to buy the last remaining cases of this beer at Cawsey's on a later visit, and so ended an era.

Landmarks became so familiar and timing so regular on the VT and MV series that they almost became a 'milk run'. Every flight was different in many subtle ways, and that's what made them always interesting and challenging, but it was comfortable to come back to a regular routine after other irregular flying. Indonesia is a land of many active volcanoes and we could fly over the smoking cones of these regularly. On check flights it was only necessary to

look out the window at familiar islands to know with reasonable accuracy how the navigator under test or training was performing.

Some of our internal flying in Vietnam took us to Phan Rang where the Canberra bombers were based, and aircraft were housed in revetments to make them difficult targets for mortar or missile attack. The revetments were thick earthen mounds on three sides of the aircraft. Phan Rang was on the coast about 300 km north east of Vung Tau, and we saw a lot of the bombing, strafing and shelling that made up the ferocity of the war. Giant B52 bombers from Guam laid down carpets of bombs that made my efforts in Malaya look puny. Warships off the coast bombarded targets with shells the size of the B52 bombs. F4 Phantom fighters were constantly engaged in strafing and rocketing enemy positions. The F4s flew in pairs and I heard one pilot reporting that his wingman had just been shot out of the air beside him with a guided missile. I did not hear, but was told of, an incident in which the pilot was trapped in his aircraft as it crashed. With his radio transmitting he was screaming his way to the ground. Finally another pilot cut in with 'Ah, shut up and die like a man'. There was a lot of camaraderie between pilots, but that can turn to callousness on occasions. Twice I flew the few miles from Vung Tau to Luscombe, the airfield for Nui Dat where the main Australian army contingent was based. These were hurried trips under certain threat, with a big silver aircraft on the tarmac presenting a tempting target for the communist Viet Cong guerrillas in the surrounding jungle.

Bill Middlemiss, my captain of many years, had left flying while I was at Point Cook and had done a specialised air traffic control course. He had been in the Phan Rang area working with the Americans and directing their aircraft in the combat zones. We didn't get to meet in Vietnam, though. Bill was awarded a medal by the Americans for his performance.

The international language of flying is English. But, on one long flight over Indonesian territory I was prevailed upon to use my second language. We had asked Jakarta control several times for permission to climb to a higher altitude and were being continually ignored. So I asked them politely in Indonesian, which got instant response, not only from Jakarta but from another squadron aircraft with the Commanding Officer on board halfway round the world somewhere. I didn't really hear this following dialogue, but I believe it happened. An aircraft in Malaysian airspace accidentally transmitted part of a conversation between the pilots in which the word *fuck* appeared. Malaysian air traffic control immediately came on the air with: *'Aircraft that used that word*

identify yourself. Of course that was greeted with silence. For a while. Then from all the corners of the globe came responses like: *'What fucking word?'* *'I didn't say fuck.'* and *'It wasn't fucking me.'* Malaysia got the message.

Most of the air traffic controllers we spoke to around the world were men. It was common to finish communications with them with a sir as a mark of acknowledgment of their difficult work. We would say *'Thank you, sir.'* Or *'Roger, sir.'* Singapore had a female air traffic controller who did not take kindly to being called *sir* and would positively snarl back at us that she was not a *sir*, she was a *madam*. The harder she tried, the more she got called *sir*.

The RAAF had a base in Thailand where Sabres from 79 Squadron were based after Garfield Barwick, Minister for External Affairs, had offered them in 1962 under the SEATO (South-East Asian Treaty Organisation) agreement to which we were signatory, and George Stirzaker, brother-in-law and my drill instructor at Amberley, had served at Ubon in 1963. I also got to Ubon up near the Thai-Cambodia-Laos border in the northeast of the country in August 1968 when, for a solid week I flew backwards and forwards every day from Butterworth with Geoff Lumsden as captain. That was when the base closed down and we were bringing all the stores and equipment back for accounting. There was some junk amongst that, and also a lot of equipment like portable generators that 'disappeared' and was never accounted for. SEATO was instituted on 8 September 1954 with the express aim of containing Communist China, with signatory nations being Britain, France, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan, New Zealand and Australia. With China's entry into the United Nations it became irrelevant and was disbanded in the mid-1970s. Australia took a new, and more humanitarian interest in Ubon in the first years of the 1990s when, under the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), it sponsored a land reform project to lift the standard of living in this, one of the poorest areas in Thailand.

With the RAAF base at Butterworth in north Malaya, opposite Penang Island, there was little call for us to go to Singapore. Local freight was probably handled by a Dakota. It was April 1969 before I got back 'home' to Singapore with an overnight stop at Changi.

America beckoned again before the end of the year and, with Alan Bishop, I took a Hercules over to Westover Air Force Base, just outside Boston, in October. This was a working trip but it did give us two nights and a day, the 25th, to see the city and taste its delights, and we rented a car that I drove. It would not have been complete without the clam chowder that we put high on

our priority list. We ate this at The Union Oyster House, 143 Stuart Street, which had been doing continuous business since 1826 and where Louis Philippe lived in exile before becoming King of France. Boston was the state capital of Massachusetts and had been an early centre of American Puritanism. A city of broad avenues running into narrow, crooked streets of colonial Boston it houses landmarks and monuments of the past, including the 17th century house where Paul Revere lived. Strongly anti-colonialist, Paul Revere is best remembered for his ride through the Massachusetts countryside on 18 April 1775, immortalised in poetry by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. This was to warn the people that the British soldiers were being sent out in the expedition that, as it happened, started the American Revolution. The fully restored *U.S.S. Constitution*, known as *Old Ironsides* lies anchored in the US naval shipyard and was open to visitors. Perhaps the most famous vessel in the history of the US navy, this 44-gun frigate was launched in 1797 and put to sea in 1798. She has a catalogue of encounters with French and British forces. Originally condemned as unseaworthy in 1830, she was used as a training ship for some years. In 1925 she was rebuilt under public subscription. We returned to Westover in freezing cold to centrally heated barracks and I was introduced to a modern miracle. The duty steward produced steaming hot-dogs in packets in almost no time. I had no previous experience of microwave ovens.

Hawaii on the way home warrants mention for the use of the English language. We always needed weather reports covering the time and regions of our flights for me to do my flight planning, and we always ordered these from the meteorology section as soon as we landed. Our first call in Hawaii when we were picked up at the aircraft in the base taxi was to the met section to order these details to be ready for our morning departure. The Negro driver asked us where we wanted to go. We said, 'To met section to order the weather'. He thought this was hilarious and called his base station up on his radio. Between fits of laughter he reported that he had 'these dudes from Australia who want to **order** the weather. Man you can't **order** the weather, you got to take what you get'.

The VT599 service I flew on in May 1969 differed from the usual. From Vung Tau we flew to Utapao, an American base on the Gulf of Thailand that launched airborne tankers to refuel the B52 bombers. Temperature has a profound effect on aircraft performance, and they're at their best in crisp, cold air. For a given weight an aircraft will need more runway for takeoff, and will climb more slowly to a lower altitude with increasing temperature. In an extreme case the aircraft will be prevented from taking off at all. Every takeoff

in the Hercules was preceded by reference to a set of tables and charts to extract relevant takeoff speeds, runway lengths, and altitudes. We always found answers to our formulas, but I thought I was going to witness a miscalculation at Utapao. The strip at Utapao was pointed out to sea, which was just as well. I watched a tanker take off. When it reached the end of the strip on the coast I reckoned it was still on the ground and was bound to crash. But, like taking off from an aircraft carrier, it lifted itself into the air in a cloud of black exhaust smoke from four jet engines. While I watched, it disappeared over the horizon still in a cloud of smoke and barely gaining altitude. I would not like to be crew on operations like that.

We were intrigued at breakfast next morning when the public address system broke its discordant music broadcast to announce a series of numbers for the day. These were repeated a few times throughout the morning, and since they were obviously meaningful to the servicemen on the base we asked their significance. All the prostitutes in town had a unique number, and every morning the US medical team checked all, or a percentage, of the girls. Then they broadcast the numbers of those infected with VD so that servicemen who had been with them recently would know to report for treatment.

Local flying took us all over Australia, especially Pearce in WA and Rockhampton, and up to Lae and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, and included a lot of army support and transport of bulky items like armoured personnel carriers. With a deteriorating marriage, I remember getting very drunk in Lae with another navigator, Ron Ewing, who was no stranger to alcohol, and having Ron put me to bed. A bit like me, Ron was never to make Squadron Leader either. After John Johnston and Ben Bentley retired, Ron was the most senior Flight Lieutenant navigator in the RAAF and I was next. Ron married a Vietnamese woman, Therese, who was very well received in squadron circles, and added four children to the couple he inherited with Therese.

The Hercules proved its versatility when we were involved in army tasks that required us to land at Vanimo, on the north coast of Papua New Guinea and just east of the Indonesian border. That was just a grass strip in the jungle. About as remote an army camp as there is, its soldiers were glad to have intelligent company overnight including another American captain, Bill Edmund. We flew as fire spotters during outbreaks of bush fires in the Blue Mountains area, and directed fire fighters to the heart of the blazes. In a visit to Edinburgh in South Australia I found a bottle of 1933 Seppelt's Para port

on sale in the mess bar. It was no special price so I bought it and put it away to drink when we were both 50 years old. Normally we would not have had reason to go to a place like Broken Hill - the Silver City - but, because the Air Officer Commanding had to attend a funeral there on 12 November 1969, we went there for the day. Using his authority we arranged for a conducted tour over a mine, with lunch provided in air-conditioned comfort while he attended the funeral. The only sizeable population centre in the far west of NSW; Broken Hill is founded on the richest silver-lead-zinc deposit yet discovered. There was a real contrast between the old mining structures of the 1880s still preserved there, and the modern equipment of the present. In mid-1969 I had opportunity for aerial photography of the Sydney Harbour and Gladesville bridges, but these were taken from higher altitudes than those I took from the Neptunes. Obviously flying regulations were becoming stricter. Gladesville Bridge had been the subject of a disastrous collapse in its early stages of construction with substantial loss of life.

Periodically we were called upon to fly mercy missions, and I did one to Espiritu Santo Island in the New Hebrides north of Noumea early in December 1968. A seaman had been beaten up in a bar and suffered severe head injuries. The Government had agreed to provide a surgical team and aircraft to get him to hospital in Sydney. We arrived at this primitive airstrip three hours after dark with Stan Hyland as captain, and must have made three or four attempts to land before we finally got the aircraft on the ground. By then I was almost a case for the medical team. It was almost 2.00 a.m. when we departed for Sydney and 7.00 a.m. when we landed. All in the line of duty, though we did have two navigators. Dave Barrett was the other one. I think the patient died of his injuries despite our help. Other medevac emergencies occurred on 31 March 1970 when we made a late night dash to Darwin to take a patient to Essendon in Victoria, and again on 23 December 1970 out to Honiara in the Solomons to bring a naval patient to Sydney. The Squadron was responsive to these emergencies and the aircraft versatile enough to cope with them at short notice.

By the end of June 1969 I had logged over eleven hundred hours on Hercules and was upgraded to category B and, with Johnno, became a training and route check navigator. We were responsible for ensuring the maintenance of standards, and for assessing each navigator annually on a flight - generally to Vung Tau. We, in turn, were checked by the Squadron Navigation Officer. Most of the navigators were very good, and had no trouble with the problems we set for them without notice, though others could be disappointing. Kev

Page got lost over Indonesia on a flight that neither Johnno nor I was in charge of. That sort of thing can cause international embarrassment, besides reflecting on the professionalism of the squadron. On 27 May 1970 I was upgraded to category A with a formal certificate from the Air Officer Commanding Operational Command. Lockheed were proud of their aircraft and issued certificates and lapel badges to aircrew who completed 1,000 and 2,000 hours of flight time on the C130Es. My certificate for the One Thousand Hour Club is dated 10 May 1969, and for the Two Thousand Hour Club 26 July 1970. That represents reasonably intense flying on any aircraft.

Having done an Intelligence Officers' course in 1965 I was given the secondary duty of squadron Intelligence Officer. As such I promptly discarded all the dreary old material from the wartime that used silhouettes of Soviet fighters and bombers and suchlike. I could not see the relevance of it and, instead, compiled material dealing with the economy and politics, history and geography, of countries we flew to and with which we were involved. I chose to apply a different meaning to 'Intelligence'.

My Indonesian was put to the test on its home ground in July 1969 when we went through Bali and Surabaya, with two nights off in Bali. I was sent along as interpreter for a medical team and was quite useless. Everyone we consulted spoke excellent English, as I had expected. But I got to tour part of the island with the crew on a few motorbikes. I was glad I had a licence. The markets of Den Pasar were not attractive and gave no promise of what the countryside had to offer. The sawahs, or wet rice fields, were a tribute to the ingenuity and cooperation of the villagers. Built on the slopes of the mountains they follow the lie of the land like irregular giant terraces. Villagers still separated the rice by pounding the dry stalks on the ground with poles, using a rhythmic pattern and regularly changing the pole from hand to hand. Old mothers clad in only a sarong and with pendulous, empty breasts were not concerned with our intrusion into their daily chores. The separate grains were then obtained by frequently pouring the pounded rice from woven baskets held at arm's length over the head. The grains fell to the ground and the husks hopefully blew away. The final preparation consisted of putting small quantities of the rice grain into a heavy stone bowl, where it was once more pounded with a pole before being emptied into a basket.

We called in at little workshops in villages along the way to Ubud, and were amazed to see the primitive working conditions and the tools used in creating the beautiful carvings and statues in ebony and teak. The artisans sat on bare

earth or wooden floors, with no artificial lighting, and worked with hand chisels and small adzes. Initial outlines for the finished artwork were scribed in chalk on the teak pieces. I could not resist buying a matched pair of ebony heads; thin carvings that have to be viewed in profile. The gamelan is a traditional Indonesian musical instrument something like a massive, crude brass xylophone. It exists in orchestral proportions and in single units, and its music is unique and haunting. We listened to one such instrument being played in an outdoor market before moving on to the gateway of a small temple. With the exception of hotels and recent additions, the buildings in rural Bali were old and historical, exuding character. The gateway was tile and carved stonework, and while I was photographing it a dokar passed by. The dokar, derived from the English 'Dog-car' is a small two-wheeled cart pulled by a tiny pony, and found more in the countryside than in the towns.

That night we went to the spectacular performance of a 'ketjak' or ape dance. It was performed in the courtyard of a temple and derived a powerful atmosphere from it. The ketjak dance is a dramatic piece of folklore involving one hundred kneeling figures who give guttural chanting support to the main characters, with arms stretched above their heads and 2,000 fingers undulating to the rhythm of the dance. It gets to the very base of the soul. After the dance, and before going back to the hotel, we called in on a cockfight in a little village square. These were brief and tempestuous, with the fighting cocks fitted with sharp steel spurs to supplement their natural spurs. They attracted a good crowd that wagered a lot of money on the outcome. Bali must be seen to be appreciated, and had more to offer than Kuta beach, nude bathing, free love and drugs.

There was an interesting flight in April 1970 when I flew with Dino DelFabbro on Royal Tour Support to Canberra, Brisbane, Mt Isa, Longreach, Townsville and Mackay. I didn't know then that I would later be flying royalty themselves around Australia and New Guinea, not just the support.

Squadron Leader Bob 'Shaky' Greenwood had been at the squadron since my arrival and was a qualified advanced navigator. He had actually done a course I was credited on paper as having done. He was called *Shaky* because his hands continually trembled. But when they had a grip on the control column they were steady and powerful. He was my captain on a 15-day monumental tour through Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaya in October 1970. We took the Joint Services Staff College on their end of course educational

tour. We had an augmented crew and I had another navigator, Dave Clarkson, with me.

Port Moresby was, and probably always will be, a grotty place, but Rabaul is a gem. Built around a beautiful harbour it could be one of the tourist attractions of the world. Lae, too, had a lot of appeal, which I think it has lost since independence. In Jakarta we were welcomed by the local military and offered a night out on the town. I had a fair idea of what this might involve and begged to be excused. I like to have some control over my entertainment. Bangkok with a population of three million was crowded, with cars laid out on the roads like paving stones. They drove about seven abreast and how anybody arrived anywhere amazed me. I think we stayed in the Dusit Thani Hotel and went to a movie the first night there, and arranged for a tour on our day off. Dave and I shared the tour.

For seven American dollars each we got a ride up the river in a motorised canoe. This was big enough for the two of us and the esky of beer we took with us. We had brought enough duty free beer with us in the Herc to last the entire trip. The outboard motor had a very long shaft on the motor to put it well under the boat. This was necessary to avoid the riverweed that floated in abundance on the surface. Even so, the boatman had to lift the propeller clear of the water every so often to clear it of weed. The river was wide and muddy with quite a swift flow, and the weed was big and chunky. We had a pleasant cruise up past villages, fields and temples to a small museum. I'm not sure whether we were given lunch here or brought it ourselves from the hotel, but we certainly didn't go hungry.

The remainder of the \$7 deal put us on a big barge, towed by a motorised barge about the same size. On the trip back to Bangkok we were entitled to drink as much as we wanted of any liquor on the barge - and it was well equipped. A number of other tourists had gathered along with our crew at the museum and most of them were teetotal old ladies. The crew decided to drink their share as well. I know that I went over to the towing barge twice to talk to the crew who were cooking their dinner on the afterdeck of the boat. It is impossible to walk a towrope so I can only assume that there was some solid tow that I walked on. I hate to think about it now. It was a long cruise back, arriving after dark. By this time I was not feeling well and had to take a taxi back to the hotel while everyone else went out on the town. I still remembered to drink a large tumbler of water before going to bed. Some of our social

drinking was pretty heavy, and water before bed followed by Coca-Cola the next morning was my favourite antidote.

It was not a long flight next morning to Chiang Mai in the north but I was still not well. Even a couple of hours flying was more than I wanted. Since I was duty navigator and Dave was entitled to his rest I had to make the effort. I wasn't long out of bed when we checked in to the hotel. One of the most popular tourist towns in Thailand, and one of the busiest drug centres, Chiang Mai had a lot to offer, but not to me. I got to walk around the markets before we left next day.

That was a busier day and back to a normal working routine. We flew to Udon Thani and Ubon Ratchathani and back to Bangkok for another two nights off. On one of these first two flights for the day I saw a bird at the highest altitude I have ever seen one. There was an eagle at 15,000 feet. Bird strikes are common around airports and in low-level flying, but I think we would have had some explaining to do if we had hit this eagle. Man finds it difficult to breathe at 15,000 feet; I don't know what the eagle's secret was. This time in Bangkok we visited one of those select restaurants where the seating is a cushion on the floor, with legs stretched under the table laden with food. Awkward? Not when waitresses hand feed you, including peeling the pumpkin seeds among the nibbles that go with drinks. That fairly expensive night was hidden in the overall cost of our meals and accommodation.

From Bangkok it was back to Utapao and Butterworth and on to Kuala Lumpur for four days. And that was another story. On the day of arrival I met John Holloway swimming in the hotel pool. John had been one of my Department of Trade students at Point Cook, and the bloke he was swimming with may well have been his 'wife' at that time. We did tour Kuala Lumpur and go to movies to see *Kelly's Heroes*, but we were becoming embarrassed by the amount of beer we still had to dispose of. Being duty free it could not be taken back into the country. To drink it we would have to average five cans per person per day. We held a conference and decided we'd had enough and I should try to dispose of it on the local market. That was not as easy as it might sound. The law discouraged retailers from handling it and no legitimate outlet I approached would take it from me. In the end I got a taxi driver to dispose of it at give-away prices. We were nearly rolling in the aisles with laughter at *Kelly's Heroes* there, but I could hardly raise a laugh when I saw it some years later in Australia.

On one of our days off we travelled to the Batu Caves, about 11 km northeast of KL. There are two caves and we only visited the one known as the Bright Cave, so called because sunlight penetrates holes at the top of the cave. About twenty metres high and twenty-five metres wide it was quite cavernous with interesting limestone rock formations and colours, but not as extensive as some I have seen in Australia. The other cave, known as the Dark Cave, is reputedly the home of countless big bats and two-metre long white snakes that feed off the bats. Hindus celebrate their festival of Thaipusam at a temple there with the same piercing of body and tongue as I had witnessed many years earlier in Singapore. An interesting feature of the caves is the 272 steps that have to be climbed to get up to view them. They take the perspiration out of you.

We got home to Richmond on 25 October. On the 31st I was off again on a regular medevac. While I was in 37 Sqn I spent an average of one day in three on overseas trips. Combined with my absence from home on the less frequent internal flights it made for a lack of harmony and stability in married life.

Johnno left the squadron to go to East Sale, to instruct at the School of Air Navigation, at the end of 1970. I was to catch up with him again in November 1971 when a flight for pilot instrument rating gave us reason to stay overnight on the base.

On 24 January 1971 terrorists exploded an ammunition dump outside Phnom Penh airport in Cambodia. It eliminated an entire village and devastated the airport. The Government laid on a special operation to go to Phnom Penh next day and I flew to Vung Tau on our normal schedule. The visit to Phnom Penh was given no publicity and we operated in virtual secrecy. When we left Vung Tau we flew first to Phnom Penh on a very brief visit and then to Butterworth as normal. On that afternoon of 26 January the airfield was littered with debris and fragments of munitions. All the hangars and administration buildings were ruins. A Caravelle jet aircraft - twin-engine passenger - was still burning inside its hangar that had collapsed on it. With a background of bombing jungle I had not seen devastation like this, and I was not to see it again until cyclone Tracy wiped out Darwin on Christmas Day 1974. I brought home shrapnel as a memento but it has long been lost in our moving house.

My next variation from the routine of Vietnam was in July 1971. With India suffering its perennial food shortage we flew a cargo of foodstuff to Calcutta as an Australian Government commitment. Fortunately this was over and back

in the one day from Butterworth. Witnessing the chaos and confusion at Calcutta airport, and experiencing the difficulty of even submitting a flight plan to get out of the place, I had no urge to stay any longer than absolutely necessary. I flew this operation with Ian Baldwin. Ian had the reputation of being one of our less-couthful pilots, with stories and language that would not be acceptable around the family dinner table. One of his more gross acts was to hang oysters out of his nose to shock people at parties. I never liked oysters anyway.

Later that year I was to come as close to a midair collision as I ever wish to. A Mirage fighter crashed in the Sydney-Wollongong area on the night of 6 October. All available squadron aircraft were tasked next day to search for wreckage and possible survivor. We were each given a specific area of ocean to search from a specific starting point. Weather was cloudy and visibility was not good. When I came to start my search I reckoned I was south of my starting point and we did a manoeuvre to bring us back over the start point and heading in the first direction for my search. As we broke cloud I saw another Hercules pass us going the other way. Either one of us was wrong or we both were, but a bigger margin of error would have made for disaster. Other navigators tell similar stories, so we are still subject to human error and there is still an element of chance in military flying.

I flew my last medevac out of Vung Tau on 20 September 1971, but there were still wounded to be brought home. My final medevac of a long series was from Butterworth, landing at Richmond on 2 November after a fourteen-hour flight. My last two flights into Vung Tau were to bring home the remaining Australian troops. We unloaded one crowd, happy to be home, at Sydney on 5 February 1972. Twenty days later we landed more troops at Amberley from my final flight into Vung Tau. The troops were happy to see the last of their battle fatigues and discarded a lot of clothing in the aircraft as they disembarked. Most of this went straight to the incinerators, but not before the crew had picked it over. I scored a pair of boots and a couple of pairs of trousers and shirts that were good for later bushwalking and trout fishing. In a little under four and a half years I had logged over 3,000 hours flying on Hercules and considered them one of the greatest transport aircraft of the era. The Squadron continued to fly to Singapore and Butterworth regularly, with side trips to Palembang, Sempang and Labuan, and I flew on these as well as on a lot more internal flights.



RAAF Hercules C130E at Vung Tau, Vietnam, 1971.

July 1972 was an interesting month. The Government decided to give the Indonesian Armed Forces a language laboratory, but they wanted to be sure it would be a viable concern and not a waste of our money. I was chosen as Australia's sole representative to assess the situation in-country, briefed at Department of Defence in Canberra, and sent to Indonesia with a short list of Military/Government people to consult. I lived in the 14-storey Hotel Indonesia, close to the Australian embassy, and worked through the assistant to the military attache. I'm pretty sure this was Kyle Leach. He was one of my graduate students and was of enormous assistance. Alan Cooke was also in Jakarta at the time as a civilian, and with his support as well I achieved near miracles. In the few days I was given I inspected the proposed premises for the laboratory, visited a functioning language laboratory, toured a military base and talked to the appropriate authorities. In what spare time I had I also consulted, and got quotes from, two firms in Jakarta that produced the equipment for the laboratory. I was able to produce a well-based argument on the proposal and back it up with estimated cost.

The Hotel Indonesia was a homely place to stay and I was adopted by a houseboy who saw that I wasn't cheated. He would go out to buy beer for me from his own friends in the back streets rather than have me pay the hotel prices, and generally looked after me. I left him a generous tip. With Alan and his Indonesian wife, Meinar, I ate at a local restaurant with loads of atmosphere at a reasonable price and savoured delicacies like green turtle satay. I think that would have been a rarity in most parts of the world then. Unfortunately the turtle has since been hunted to the point where it is threatened with extinction in order to provide markets and restaurants throughout Indonesia, and particularly Bali, with its delicate meat. The restaurant was owned by Mrs Suharto, wife of the president. It was only one small part of the property she owned in town where she was referred to as *Mrs Ten Per Cent* for her practice of taking a percentage of everything that passed through her hands. It was not just coincidental that her name was Tien Suharto, and *Tien* is Javanese for *ten*. Mrs Suharto was undeniably a driving force behind the corruption and flagrant patronage enjoyed and flaunted by members of the Suharto family. Indonesian society, and its trade and commerce, were built on a bedrock of graft and corruption, and the overthrow of Sukarno had not changed that in any way. Exposure of the practice and its sensationalisation in Western newspapers, under the guise of 'investigative journalism' will never alter what is endemic to Indonesian culture.

Alan Cooke also took me on a tour of the city, and pointed out the thugs and pimps. It was a rough city to live in, and required a guard on your house at night, although this could be something as simple as an underemployed youth sleeping on your doorstep. Alan was a personal friend of a high-ranking military officer who lived nearby and who guaranteed his security. Indonesia was run wholly by the military in fact, if not in law. Army commanders were appointed to lucrative areas where they could exploit administration and natural resources in partnership with Chinese businessmen, in accord with their dedication to the president. Simply good officers without the necessary dedication were confined to a different ladder of promotion that kept them largely within army circles, without the benefit of perks. Alan had a diesel generator in a back room to provide power, the city power being so irregular and unreliable.

In transit between Jakarta and Australia I had enough time off in Singapore to call on Ron Gerahty who had been an army student with me at the School of Languages. Ron took me up into southern Malaya to see old sights and also to the Jurong Bird Park in Singapore that warrants special mention. Sprawling

over 50 acres on the western slope of Jurong Hill it took nearly two years to build and was the biggest of its kind in the world. Much of it is a massive aviary where both people and birds move freely, kept in by a giant net strung on steel cables. This aviary contained about 3,000 birds of about 100 different species, with other aviaries and cages making up the numbers to 7,000 birds of 350 species. Artificial icebergs for penguins, an internal tramway service for visitors, a restaurant, a steel suspension bridge and the world's highest man-made waterfall - 8,000 gallons a minute falling 100 feet down huge boulders - made the visit quite an experience. Singapore was growing with the years.

On my return to Canberra I was called to present my arguments to the Defence committee considering the grant. I told them that if they were to proceed they should choose the more expensive of the two firms in Jakarta because his equipment was more suited to tropical conditions than his competitor's. It had also been tried and proven and was in use in other premises in Jakarta. But I also said that, from my observations and discussions, I did not believe that the Indonesians were ready for the grant. Amongst other problems the building they had chosen was totally unsuitable, being a cavernous, concrete building on a busy intersection. Sound proofing and air-conditioning would have been too big a financial burden, and would have detracted from the value of the grant. They thanked me and made a spontaneous decision to defer the grant for a few years, to be reconsidered then.

This trip to Indonesia was a welcome break from a chore that took me back to teaching, but not as I wanted to be. A group of Indonesian pilots was brought down to Williamstown to be taught to fly on Sabres, and I was one of a few teachers assigned to teach them English at the same time. There were at least two others, possibly three, but they were from the Education Branch, not from flying. I was there to provide the aircrew background and also to sit in the control tower when they went solo, in case there were any panic situations. There weren't, and I found the confinement to the base at Williamstown very restricting. I had to live in the mess during the weeks I was there between 13 June and 11 August and only got back to Richmond for the bare weekends. I had to be back in Williamstown on Sunday night for an early start on Monday morning. Teaching English as a second language was not my forte and I was glad to see the end of that assignment. The ordeal was lightened by having Alan and Jacqui Hedges on the base. Alan and Jacqui had been like family to me on the many flights through Darwin, and I enjoyed spending evenings with them again in Williamstown.

In those years I had other diversions too. The first was a minor one occupying only a weekend, probably 14-15 September 1972. I went to Williamstown for parachute training and spent Saturday in lectures and on the training equipment. On Sunday morning I went to 3,000 feet in a Caribou and walked out the back. It was a water jump, into the bay, and almost as soon as we had freed our harness and inflated our life vests we were picked up by rubber dinghy. The full harness has straps over the shoulders and up between the legs, locking in a clasp on the chest. Approaching the water it was necessary to unlock the clasp and sit in the U shape of the harness, holding on to the straps above the head as on a swing. As soon as the feet hit the water it was necessary to slide out of the harness and manoeuvre under the water to avoid getting caught up in the shroud lines, and then pull the knob inflating the life jacket or *Mae West*. It's a fascinating sensation and I can see how sky divers become so enthusiastic. My jump was uneventful, but a female jumper had one strap of her harness looped over the top of her open parachute, reducing its volume and giving her a fast descent. Also, she would have had little directional control over the chute. Little problems like that are the reasons for the jump into water rather than onto land. Three days later I was back at Williamstown for another nine days as interpreter for two Indonesian officers who were being trained in air traffic control equipment. I had forgotten until now just how long I spent there on Indonesian related tasks.

Another diversion was more extensive and, perhaps, even more enjoyable. I was seconded to the Navy for a few weeks, 21 October to 20 November 1972, to accompany an Indonesian Admiral and his team of advisers up and down the east coast of Australia looking at patrol boats, their construction, training, repair, and use. As with the medical task in Jakarta I had almost no need for my second language. In fact the only time I used it seriously was in the final windup late on a Friday afternoon in Canberra. I told the admiral that he was wasting time with his waffle and should end the meeting. That shocked the meeting but I got a few knowing looks from other members of his group. We visited naval bases, shipyards, engineering firms and consultants from Melbourne to Cairns. We lived in the best hotels and worked only gentlemen's hours. We ate in the best restaurants and never considered the cost. A young naval officer had control of the money and asked me to help him spend it, since I obviously had little else to do. So we were the ones who chose where to eat every day and ordered the wines for lunch. When the tour brought us back to Sydney I had both accommodation in a city hotel and a commonwealth car driver at my disposal. Since I lived at Richmond and he lived at Rooty Hill or

somewhere close, we elected to both go home for the night and he picked me up in time to check out of the hotel next morning.

No cost was spared on entertaining the party and we had to take them to a strip show in Kings Cross. That turned one of them on and he had to have a girl that my naval friend arranged and paid for. In Cairns the Navy laid on two patrol boats to do a demonstration of their capabilities and take us to a tropical island for a barbecue. This was Fitzroy Island, and was undeveloped at the time. I was able to arrange for Len to come with us on that exercise as a temporary Catholic chaplain to the group of essentially Muslim Indonesians. Each boat was put through its paces in view of the other so that we could all both see and experience the manoeuvres, and it was quite an experience. Tropical Queensland is renowned for its lethal box jellyfish but some of the sailors, just graduated from training in Melbourne, were obviously not aware of their danger. Approaching the coast of Fitzroy Island a few of the sailors dived off the boat to swim ashore. When they landed we asked them how they felt. They were OK but commented on the strange square-looking jellyfish they had swum past in blissful ignorance. It was certainly a pleasant diversion from the routine of flying for a few weeks.

I was posted to Pearce as a navigation instructor for the trainee pilots but was glad I was able to reject the posting, which was picked up by Terry Dennis. By this time I had quite a history of vocal chord trouble, which I explain later, and was forbidden to lecture or even to talk too much. The left hand of the RAAF in charge of postings was apparently not connected to the right hand that knew about medical matters. When the problem was resolved I was posted to the VIP squadron, No. 34 Squadron, in Canberra. I arrived back from Butterworth in the afternoon of 6 January 1973 to pack up for yet another move.

Along with thousands of others I was awarded the Vietnam medal, and became a returned serviceman for the second time.

Darwin, Northern Territory

Darwin in 1968 was still very much a frontier town, but improving. The mess had a good bar with a big verandah to provide cool, social drinking in good clothes, and a small room where we could congregate in flying suits or sports clothes. It didn't matter in the small room if you were sweaty and a bit smelly. The verandah was roofed with camouflage netting that provided a unique atmosphere as well as shade. The mess had a comprehensive collection of LP

records that introduced me to such artists as Tom Jones and Englebert Humperdink, as well as a billiards room and dartboard. Billiards, snooker and darts seem to have been mess pastimes for as long as messes have existed, but I could never find the interest or the skill to master them or even become adept at them. Accommodation varied over the years. Initially it was in long huts, individual rooms, with showers and toilets out the back. Later on we were to get almost exclusive use of a small air-conditioned annexe to the main mess building. There was always a lot of jealousy about this annexe and we had to fight 36 Squadron for it. They flew most of the internal operations on army support, while we were mostly employed on the overseas trips. In the end we won. On rare occasions we stayed in a motel in town. Darwin time was half an hour behind Eastern Standard Time, so going north we had a longer day - 24½ hours. Malaya then was 7½ hours ahead of Greenwich (now 8), so we had a 26-hour day flying on to Butterworth. These time differences worked against us from the point of view of fatigue and, while they weren't long differences, we had to consider them. Of course they worked in our favour coming home.

In the long huts we would sit around the verandahs or the rooms after the day's flight and enjoy a cool beer. Cans in those days had ring-pull openings and it was common custom to drop the ring-pull into the can to avoid litter. The theory was that the ring-pull with its attached teardrop shaped flap would not easily come out the hole we drank through. It rarely did. But once in Darwin one of the crew nearly swallowed one, and we realised the danger of the practice. Once aware of the problem we heard of instances in America of people suffering severe internal injuries from swallowing ring-pulls. The sharp edges of the ring-pull were causing concern in other areas too and it was phased out, to be replaced by openers that remained with the can without causing litter or danger. Shavers too were going through a development phase. The double sided, wafer thin Gillette blades were being replaced by more-manageable competitors. I normally used an electric shaver but, because of power and connector variations and complications, I took a blade razor with me on flights. This was a Schick, from America, with a permanently closed grip that held a blade about 36 x 8 mm. It was safe and efficient, and ten replacement blades came in a special injector container that forced the old blade out as it inserted a new one. The old blade was then stowed in the same container for eventual disposal.

An attitude of recklessness prevailed in some of the RAAF personnel as well as in the hardier outback community. With Darwin under a cyclone warning,

and the ominous weather supporting the warning, I saw mess members' sole concern being to stock up with enough cold stubbies to last out the cyclone. Fortunately it passed by, not like Tracy in 1974. I was woken one night with what I thought was the floor moving, but put it down to a hiccup in the refrigerator we had to share our air-conditioned quarters with. Next morning I heard we had had a minor earthquake.

I was flying with Dick Cooper as captain on one of those occasions when we were lucky enough to stay in a motel off the base. It may have been as early as November 1968 or as late as June 1969. They were both trips into Vung Tau. Dick and I were sharing a room and I was sound asleep while he was out partying somewhere. He brought two other couples back to the room with him to party on. As I am told the story, they either couldn't or wouldn't wake me to open the door and manoeuvred one of the wives through the breakfast servery hatch to unlock it from the inside. The party of five continued to celebrate, sitting on Dick's bed. There was no way I could sleep through that, and I had better jokes than they were telling anyway, so I decided I'd have to join them. That was my introduction to Alan and Jacki Hedges, and Don Rudkins and wife. Other close friends on the base were Fred Bellchambers and his wife Joy, and Ray and Marge Ellis. Ray was a service policeman who worked under Fred as Provost Marshall, and we all got on well together. But I think I spent more time with the Hedges than with all other families combined.

Every night, and day too if we were there for some reason, was a social occasion. Family dinners were like being home, and barbecues were regular schedules. Alan and Jackie had a daughter, Lisa, born in 1966, whom I nearly put through the ceiling fan one night, tossing her up in fun. One of the advantages Darwin had in those days was the ready availability of barramundi fillets, tiger prawns, Moreton Bay bugs, and buffalo steak. Alan had connections who could produce these in quantity seemingly at will. I remember prawns being cooked in a 200-litre drum and piled high on trays, to be washed down with cold local tinnies. Darwin had two breweries, and the biggest stubby in the world. A *Darwin Stubby* was a 80 ounce bottle. Company was always pleasant and Jacki was an attractive blond with a lilting Welsh accent. Alan was no slouch either; over 180 cm of well-toned muscle honed in water polo. We spent a lot of time in the base pool on days off, and later on in Alan's aboveground pool that I supplied when I went into business with Johnno. The aboveground pool was a great place to laze in with a cool beer on hot nights. In 1970 Johnno and I had registered a business known as Blue-

Right Enterprises. The name was taken from an aeronautical aid and had no other significance. We had wanted to call it Janus Enterprises (for our two-faced approach in setting it up; it was a tax dodge) but that name was in use already. Over three years I retailed all sorts of goods to RAAF personnel from Richmond to Butterworth at 10% gross profit. In short, the government subsidised their purchases while the RAAF provided my transport and the Taxation Department reduced my taxes.

Blue-Right Enterprises was set up around the time when seatbelts were becoming compulsory in Australia. They had long been fashionable, and I had fitted them to the Holden I had at Point Cook, but prices were astronomical while suppliers made the most of a captive market. Initially I sold seat belts and other safety equipment from Safe and Sound in Sydney. They sold the best baby seats and baskets. Business expanded to include custom-made fabric seat covers from a factory in Londonderry, near Richmond, and eventually anything that people asked for and I could get wholesale. I still had an accountant in Footscray, Hunt & Trytell, doing the paperwork, and made a loss of \$109 in the first two years of operation - which it was designed to do. The loss was offset by reducing my taxable Air Force income, with my gross income in 1971 having reached \$8714. In the third and final year I made \$70 profit, contributing to a gross income of \$10041; the accountant and I had fouled up somewhere. I gave the enterprise away when I was posted to Canberra as being logistically too difficult to maintain. From my accumulated gains I bought a fibreglass boat and cheap outboard motor. The motor was made from a two-stroke lawnmower motor and was about the only two stroke I ever knew to work reasonably reliably.

I didn't seek out social occasions in the Darwin mess but I did take Jacqui to a formal ball there once that was quite a memorable occasion. I got about twenty minutes sleep before flying on to Singapore and Butterworth, which made for a long day. Alan was walking his feet to blisters on a fundraising walk to Katherine. All this hospitality had to be repaid somehow. All the crews were being cared for by some family or other, it seemed. So we set up a pipeline to take fresh vegetables to Darwin with every flight. These were both fresher and cheaper than what was available in Darwin. A local fruiterer in Richmond would pack a carton or fruit box for each family in Darwin and we'd pick them up at the last possible minute to load on the aircraft. Alan was an air traffic controller, so it was easy to let him know by radio when we were due to land. I had forgotten, but he also reminded me, that we would sometimes extend our landing pattern to fly over a favourite picnic spot to warn him of our

approach. Apparently this used to frighten the chooks in a commercial poultry farm and the owner didn't like it.

I enjoyed five years of Darwin hospitality, with some boat fishing in local rivers - and getting eaten alive by sandflies. With Ray and Marge Ellis in 1971 we went on a four wheel drive trip for a couple of days to the Daly River when Ray bought a short wheelbase Toyota Land Cruiser. That was a real family affair with about five kids and six adults altogether. For some service I can no longer remember I was given an aboriginal bark painting by a nursing sister at Darwin. This is of a bird and two other snakelike objects and was done by Malangi of the Manurrnu tribe, the man who painted the design on the \$1 note.

Butterworth, Malaysia

The air base at Butterworth was on the west coast of the Malay peninsula opposite the island of Penang. The RAAF had a squadron of Mirage fighters based there and it was the hub of our Southeast Asian activities. Mess life was very well organised and we had air-conditioned rooms permanently allocated to the Squadron and used by whichever crews happened to be there. These were set off some distance from the mess proper, had a big overhanging roof for protection from the heat and rain, and were surrounded by lawns and coconut palms. Frequently we had overlapping flights and there was always a strong 37 Squadron contingent in Butterworth. Besides the bar, the dining room, and the bedrooms, we used other facilities of the mess like its reading room with *Punch* magazines and the *Straits Times* newspaper, and the station swimming pool as well. On the VT services we would arrive around 7.00 p.m., having left Darwin 12 hours earlier and come through Vung Tau. That was 9.00 p.m. Darwin time, and by the time we had tidied up the aircraft and got ourselves cleaned up there was little incentive to go to town. I had friends there in Wal and Barbara Smith, who had lived opposite us at Laverton. Wal was a doctor, specialising in aviation medicine. Barbara had a part-time job broadcasting over Radio Butterworth, a transmitter maintained with volunteer labour to provide home news and comfort to service personnel. Other friends were Keith 'Aussie' Pratt and his wife Jennie, who had been at Richmond and, later on, at Williamstown. Aussie was an engineer and had earlier been a loadmaster on Caribous in Vietnam. He knew the local area. There were married quarters on the base but no-one I knew lived in them. All my friends lived in places like Rubena Park, down the road from the base. These were nice homes, some on high cement stumps and some at ground level, just like

suburban homes in most towns in Australia. Butterworth, too, became a home away from home.

This was the era of miniskirts, which did wonders for women's figures in the tropics which discouraged overdressing anyway. There were the inevitable liaisons between crew members and local wives and nursing sisters, but there was no public declaration. There were also inevitable suspicions of liaisons, and I am sure my free association with wives of friends earned me an undeserved reputation in some people's eyes. I could also be the fall guy when people set their mind to it. Stu Bryce, pilot, was courting Kay Gallagher, nursing sister, and was in a group wanting to get away for a night's entertainment. Unfortunately one of the group was another nursing sister, Joan Yelland, who was not popular, ugly as sin, and drank beer straight from the 750 ml bottle. She wasn't wanted along in the group. Somehow it was arranged that I would look after Joan at the mess while the group made its escape. I liked both Stu and Kay and got to know them real well afterwards, so I don't hold it against them. And I soon got rid of Joan Yelland after they had left, anyway.



Living quarters at Butterworth, November 1969.

The bar and its associated beer garden got a lot of passing trade, and I enjoyed bacardi or gin with soda and freshly squeezed limes. There were two local beers, Anchor and Tiger, both of which had their adherents. I drank both but preferred Anchor. While we didn't know it at the time I think we ran a considerable health risk drinking draught beer at the bar. The pipe from the keg entered a brick/cement dividing wall from the storeroom and exited at a tap in the bar. When the tap was taken off for modifications it was found that the pipe in the wall had long since corroded away, and there was a massive cavity in the wall itself being carved out by the beer swirling through. A great breeding ground for unimagined wogs, but it didn't seem to have affected the taste of the beer. Locally produced ice for drinks was clean, but medical checks on ice from surrounding villages proved them highly suspect with all sorts of bacteria. I was never to suffer food poisoning in Asia, so I was either lucky or else developed immunity through gradual ingestion of all the local germs. We could buy bottles of fresh limejuice from the bar if we gave them enough

notice, and took them home when we could. The swimming pool was a short walk down the beach from our quarters, and it was customary to take a floppy esky - a quilted cold-bag with ice from the mess - full of cans of local brew down there when we weren't shopping on the island, and laze away the hours in the sun. One of the advantages of flying was being able to enjoy seasons out of time with those in Australia. In the worst of winter we always had a regular welcome return to summer.

With a clear day free on every VT service we got to see a lot of Penang and do a lot of duty-free shopping, and that's what took up most of our free time in Malaya. A taxi to the ferry terminal was cheap and the ferry services ran continuously, with only a short waiting time for most of the day. It was a combined car/passenger ferry and we would sometimes have use of a car, or take the taxi over if we were short of time. As regular crew we weren't permitted to bring as much back to Australia as casual passengers, but we had some concessions. I rarely went home without two watches. As a navigator I was entitled to have a watch on Greenwich time for navigation and another on local time of the country I was in. So I always left Australia with one watch and returned with two. When the second was a ladies' watch I couldn't declare that as my 'other' watch, and I would generally carry that through in a pocket. In fact I was carrying a ladies' watch when we were lined up on arrival one night and made to empty one pocket each, chosen at random by the customs officer. Fortunately my guilty pocket was not the chosen one. The customs were good to us provided we didn't abuse the privilege. Only when a couple of greedy loadmasters brought a load of watches in hidden in a hot water urn did they turn nasty. So did the RAAF. I became such a valued customer of the Shanghai Watch Company that they gave me a beautiful, and probably valuable, painting on a leaf, which I now have framed.

With Alan Cooke back in Australia, and semiprecious stones readily available in Penang, we tried to set up a market. One of my trader friends gave me literally hands full of stones with no counting or accounting whatsoever, to bring to Australia for appraisal. Alan had them appraised and the answer was 'Great stones, but if my apprentice cut them like that I would sack him'. We could not get uncut stones, so our market never developed. I still have a star sapphire and two other stones from that episode. Alan also arranged for me to get two beautiful wax figures of Indonesian characters, in glass display cases. One was destroyed by customs, I think deliberately in checking for drugs or whatever, but the other survived to enter my collection of Indonesian artefacts.



The Butterworth to Penang Ferry, November 1969.

We shopped for tailor-made clothes from shirts to suits, and Wai Kee's name has gone down in Squadron history as the best tailor in Penang. Reel-to-reel tapes were in vogue and we had music stores in Penang who would copy any LP record in stock on to tape for us at a small nominal cost. They would sell us the tape or we could supply our own. The squadron must have had tapes of every piece of music worth owning. The closest I came to popular music was Edmundo Ross, and when one of the pilots asked me to get him a copy of an album by a group called *Blood Sweat and Tears* I doubted that he was being serious. Group names went on to become more outlandish and abstruse than that. The Australian group, *The Seekers*, was to perform their final concert together in 1968. Renowned for their clean, straight music they had achieved world status with their *Georgy Girl* being the first Australian offering to reach number one on the American pop charts. And for attracting the largest concert audience to date in the southern hemisphere, with a crowd of 200,000 at the Myer Music Bowl in Melbourne. Ivory had not been banned and I

bought an ivory chess set, with the black men actually a dark brown colour of burnt ivory.

One of our most enjoyable pursuits in Penang was to visit Poshni's curry house for a Pakistani curry and a showing of carpets and rugs that were sold from the same shop. It was the best curry I ever ate. And the special paratha bread was so special that, when the cook left to go back to Pakistan, the owner took it off the menu for months until he was satisfied the new cook could provide the same quality. Alan Bishop and I were sharing a trishaw from Poshni's to the ferry terminal and talking to the rider, a fit, clean young man. I could talk with him in Indonesian, Alan talked with him in Mandarin, and we both talked with him in English. In all three languages he was fluent and educated. When we asked him why he was driving a trishaw he told us that he had a university degree but couldn't get a job. We travelled around town by trishaw in preference to taxi because it was both cheaper and often more convenient. Our relationships with the trishaw riders would be almost unthinkable to some, but exemplifies the essential honesty of mankind. With a bundle of parcels accumulated from shopping, we would not hesitate to leave most of them in the trishaw while we disappeared into a bar or another shop. We never lost anything.

Nights in Penang were more often than not spent in a local restaurant or at a food stall on Gurney Drive or somewhere. Occasionally afternoons or evenings were spent at the classic old E & O Hotel where some of the nursing sisters were quartered. The food stalls were outdoor carts that provided a variety of superb local foods. One of my favourites was crispy crab balls - crab removed from the shell, rolled into balls, deep fried briefly and served in the original shell. I never ordered these without thinking *'Poor old Crispy'*. On other nights we would come back to Butterworth village to eat at the foodstalls. Here we could sit down to a feast of satay, completely occupying one stall full-time. Only when we were finished was there any accounting, and that was done by counting the number of satay sticks used.

Some nights were more exciting. Johnno and I were together on a day off and went for a drink or two in the small downstairs bar of the Merlin hotel. It was relatively new, with live entertainment in a dining room that revolved when they could get the motor to go. Two scruffy airmen brought two beautiful girls into the bar, one dressed in a see-through ensemble and the other in a neat Nehru outfit. They had a couple of drinks, and then the airmen left. In such a tiny bar we soon had the girls, Monique and Simone, drinking with us, and

conversation was flowing as smoothly as the drink. We were impressed. Johnno went outside to the toilet and, on his return, checked with the reception desk to see what the entertainment was for the evening. The man looked at him knowingly and said 'You should know. You're drinking with them'. The entertainment was two female impersonators from Sydney! When he came back I knew by his demeanour that something had changed. When he told me quietly what the situation was the tone and texture of the conversation changed from then on too, and we had a very interesting talk with our two transvestites who had both had sex change operations overseas and were working the world's stages on a tour back to Sydney. We didn't go to the entertainment. It would have been an anti-climax.

Weekends off in Penang were a gourmet's delight. The 7th floor of the Ambassador Hotel had a great bar that served free peanuts with drinks, and good, cold beer. And from 12.00 noon till 3.00 p.m. it served a Rijsttafel, the translation of which is 'Rice Table'. For only a few dollars Malay waiters in colourful native dress served a smorgasbord of spicy dishes, and returned with more until no more could be eaten. There was rice; five curries - chicken, prawn, fish, beef, and egg; four main vegetables - cabbage, bean sprouts, ladies fingers, and cucumber; and 12 side dishes - mixed vegetables in vinegar and spices, cucumber and spices, pineapple and spices, grated coconut, banana, ground nut, salted egg, salted fish, dried shrimps, small dried fish, prawn crackers, and spiced shrimp paste. To finish off there was Gula Malaka - chilled sago served with coconut milk and molasses. I never missed an opportunity for a Rijsttafel. Groups of us would also dine in the Chopsticks Restaurant in the hotel on weeknights. While waiting for the main meals to be prepared they would serve sliced green chillies in soy sauce, which we would eat as appetisers. They were hot, of course, but we were used to them. We would introduce crew members new to the Squadron and South-East Asia to these chillies by telling them they were beans, and chew hungrily on a couple at the same time. We didn't fool everybody, but we enjoyed the reactions of those we did catch.



A Rijsttafel menu from the Ambassador Hotel, Penang, Malasia.

47 Luttrell Street, Richmond

We had to wait for married quarters at Richmond because I rejected the offer of a flat on the base and we were on the list for a new four-bedroom house still under construction. In the meantime Sister Berchmans, Principal at the convent of the Sisters of St Clare - the Poor Clares - gave us the use of an old school hall in the grounds of the Catholic school/church in Richmond. With all the camping gear we had it was comfortable as a temporary measure, and more weatherproof than a tent. We must have lived there for weeks, possibly as long as two months. It must also have been used as an assembly hall, because it had a stage that came in for use while we were still living there. I suppose we didn't get to bed until the play was over. And on rainy days we had to move the beds aside to allow for sports to be held indoors. The children started school at St Monica's, where we lived, and were always the first home

until we got a proper house. Paul's Infants Report of Studies for December 1971 has him promoted from Grade 2 to Grade 3 with Attendance and General Comments both recorded as Good, signed by Sr M Berchmans.

In debt to the nuns I taught marching to the young girls in preparation for their school sports day, and Judith tells me I was an idol to the group who flocked to join the classes. It is interesting to look back at comparative costs. School shirts for David and Robert cost \$1.99 each from Woodhill & Co. Pty Ltd in Richmond. School winter uniform pullovers cost \$3.99, and two 30-inch uniforms for Judith and Susan cost \$11.00. My total income for the taxation year ending 30 June 1968 was \$6366.

David's asthma continued to plague him but he also had tonsil problems, to the extent that he spent two days in the St George Hospital in Kogarah from 21 to 23 May 1968 having them removed. For comparison with today, hospital fees were \$11.70 per day, theatre fee \$4.20 and the discharge fee 30 cents. These were the early days of medical insurance to cope with the increasing costs of hospitalisation and sickness. I think there were two main companies, The Hospital Contributions Fund of Australia (HCF), and the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia (MBF) to which I subscribed. From David's total bill of \$27.90 I got a refund of \$20.20. The yearly subscription to MBF was \$55.20, so it obviously paid to belong. (When David's son, Brendan, had his tonsils out in Canberra 24 years later, the fees were \$300 a day for the hospital and \$300 for theatre fees.)

Will Ryan was the housing officer, and lived around the corner from us. Aussie Pratt lived next door on the upper side of Luttrell Street. Social life was good, with friendly neighbours and other Squadron families. Bill Middlemiss was back in Sydney and had a house at St Ives. This was set below the road level and bordered public property that Bill landscaped and assumed control of. We were to go there a lot for visits and barbecues. Bill had his beautifully restored black Riley sports car, and a collection of Bing Crosby records that were another mania of his. There was a magnificent stand of pecan nut trees on Agricultural College property in the Yarramundi Paddocks above our house, and there were always plenty to be picked up on the footpath without having to trespass. But trespassing for bigger booty was more fun



The family home on Luttrell Street, Richmond, NSW in the late 1960s.

We were well established in our house by April 1968 when Colleen, Hockey and family came to David's eighth birthday party, and would visit them at Arncliffe and other houses as they moved over the years and we didn't. We improvised a bookshelf out of varnished pine shelves on Besser brick blocks. And in those days we had an enormous bowl made from an acid bottle with its top cut out for exotic fish that I had to keep replacing as they died. They were certainly better than television. The fish bowl lasted until our next posting and was never replaced. On summer evenings I could go down to the banks of the Nepean River, off Castlereagh Road, and fish with not much success. Others could catch nice bass there. Richmond had an old cinema that had special family rates we could take advantage of, but I'm not sure how official they were. It was there that I first saw the classic science fiction movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a collaborative effort from the author, Arthur C Clarke and the producer/director, Stanley Kubrick. Until *Star Wars* ten years later that was arguably the best space movie made. I enjoyed it the first time, enjoyed the book even more, and subsequently enjoyed the film even more after having read the book.

Much as I disliked driving in large, busy cities we drove to Sydney occasionally to see the sights, particularly the Royal Botanic Gardens on Farm Cove with its bronze statues of the horses. And in 1969 we enjoyed a ferry cruise around Sydney Harbour organised by the Windsor RSL Club that I belonged to. All the children took up school sports and I think these were held in the grounds of the Hawkesbury Agricultural College, off Londonderry Road not far away. Photos show them trying hard. Place getters had the ribbons pinned on their chests for pride; red for winning, blue for second and yellow for third. Robert remembers souveniring the sack after a sack race, and taking it home. When Hobartville Primary School was built closer to home in 1969 the children went there. Community spirit came to the fore and we had a working bee to build a playground near the school. The equipment was a lot safer than in other places, with soft seats on the swings that could not cause the accidents like Paul's at Shepparton where he had nearly lost an eye. Paul still couldn't stay out of trouble, though. He stood on the upturned lid of a boot polish tin and nearly severed his big toe. That needed a dash to Kurrajong Hospital for treatment and stitches. Why did we go to Kurrajong instead of the bigger hospital at Windsor?

Judith went on to secondary school by train in 1970 to the Holy Family High School in Marayong, and Susan followed a year later after repeating a class. In 1972 David went to Saint Dominic's at Penrith for schooling under the brothers. This was about 19 kilometres away along Londonderry Road and he had to catch a school bus. This was easy because Londonderry Road was parallel to Luttrell Street and only one block away, so it just meant walking around the corner and waiting under a big tree for the bus to come. David kept homing pigeons and would take one to school with him on the bus so that it could find its own way home. He could have done with one the day he was delayed at school until after the bus had gone. There was no public transport, and we didn't have a phone. So he had no way of calling for help and set off to walk all the way home. That's over a three-hour walk, and Celie was anxious before that. With the next-door neighbour, Dot Etheridge, she set off along Londonderry Road in Dot's Valiant and found David about three quarters of the way home. Poor kid. And the weather was cold and wet.

The steam train from Sydney ran through Windsor and terminated at Richmond. The line paralleled the Windsor Road on the opposite side from the runway at the RAAF base. On my previous posting here on Neptunes it was permitted to get off the train at the Clarendon station for the Hawkesbury Racecourse, cross the road and take a shortcut through an opening in the

perimeter fence and across the strip. Air traffic controllers watched for pedestrians and shone a green light to give them permission to cross. All this had changed by 1968, with increased air traffic and heightened base security that was to see a high chain wire perimeter fence erected around the base. Anyone using the train to Richmond had a long walk or a taxi ride to get to the base through the main gate.

For Judith's eleventh birthday we were back at the Burnell's in front of the same mural of a Swiss landscape where we had celebrated the previous Christmas. Ivy Simpson was down from Tweed Heads to spend some time with her daughters. And David was nearly electrocuted. A builder on the adjoining allotment was using Hockey's power from an outlet in the laundry. He asked David to go and turn it off for him. The plug was faulty and leaking electricity, so that when David touched it he got a shock that contracted his muscles and he couldn't let go. Only after some time did Colleen come to find him and turn off the power that could have cost him his life. There was some interesting four wheel driving country in easy reach of Richmond, and in September Aussie Pratt led us up to a trig station on Mount Banks that tested the suspension of the Land Rover. That same month we drove through the Warragamba Lion Park where the lions roam free and drivers keep their windows closed. And by December the benefits of overseas shopping were evident in a typewriter for Celie for Christmas. Dad and Mum were celebrating Christmas with us, Dad now 86 years old and still with all his hair and his senses.

The RAAF hosted a Christmas party every year for the children in which Santa Claus arrived by helicopter or fire engine and handed out toys. There were all sorts of sideshows and food stalls to keep the kids entertained. Richmond air base had a good swimming pool, which had been largely built by volunteer labour during my days there on Neptunes. David and Robert played there with their battery driven motorboats on Christmas day, and Paul had his sailing boat. David was to get stung on the lip at the pool by a bee that found its way into his soft drink can. With the sting so close to the throat and a consequent risk of suffocation through swelling, the base medical section gave him an injection to counter the sting. In 1968 David joined the Cubs in Richmond for a couple of years, with Robert and Paul following in turn when they turned eight. All the Cubs and Scout leaders' titles - like Arkala - were taken from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, and David progressed into the Scouts before our next posting. Once a year the Scouts had a campaign in which they did little jobs to get finance for their clubs, and this was called 'Bob (a shilling) a Job

Week'. David earned one of his bobs helping to load a Hercules on the base. The loadmaster probably also had boys in the Scouts.

A far more historic experience than loading a Hercules was presented when the space capsule from the Apollo 11 mission passed through Richmond. The space age had begun with Russia's Sputnik 1 being launched into orbit on 4 October 1957, catching the Americans by surprise. A month later Sputnik 2 carried a dog, Laika, and seemed to establish Russian supremacy by proving that life could survive in space orbit. America's first answer to the Russian challenge came on 31 January 1958 with the launch of Explorer 1 that made the first major discovery in space - the Van Allen radiation belts around the earth. Russia forged ahead with the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, on 12 April 1961. By 1965 the American two-man Gemini flights overtook the Russian lead and laid the foundations for the three-man Apollo program to put a man on the moon. This finally happened on 20 July 1969, when Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldren touched down in their four-legged Lunar Module from Apollo 11 and next day took man's first steps on the planet in the Sea of Tranquillity. The third astronaut, Michael Collins, remained aboard Apollo. David, Robert and Paul had the opportunity to crawl over the capsule that brought the astronauts back to earth while we had it in transit in one of the hangars at Richmond. David remembers actually sitting inside the capsule.

We continued our practice of exploring the local region and visiting local towns, although Richmond and Windsor were able to satisfy most of our needs. Windsor met more than our needs one night when we went to a Chinese cafe there after I arrived back from a Vietnam trip. We found an oily glob of sand in Paul's Coke bottle and I confiscated it for the health department, much against the wishes of the little waiter. No action was taken against the bottlers, on the grounds that we had opened the bottle and could have put the muck in there ourselves. Penrith, Parramatta and Blacktown had bigger shopping centres that we went to sometimes. I would occasionally leave my car at Parramatta and catch the electric train in to Sydney rather than endure the city traffic. One of the local attractions included the *Rotolactor* at Camden, one of the first automatic assembly lines for cows being milked. Others were the oldest church in Australia at Ebenezer, and the oldest rectory at Windsor. Saint Matthew's Anglican Church is a historic old church built by Francis Greenway, and has splendid stained glass windows. Windsor is one of the oldest towns in Australia, having been laid out in 1810 along with adjoining Richmond by Governor Macquarie.

We found picnic spots at Wiseman's Ferry and Wilberforce, and stayed at Wiseman's Ferry both in our own camping outfits and in a rented van. A historic convict road, the Great North Road, built around the 1840s, ran from the northern side of the Hawkesbury and I used this instead of the main highway on a lot of occasions. With the Land Rover there wasn't much difference between driving on dirt or bitumen roads. There was an old ghost town of Joadja about 25 km out of Mittagong that we visited. A busy centre serving a shale oil industry in the 1850s, it was then a shell from history. I was having fuel trouble with the Land Rover here and remember getting my face and eyes full of petrol while fumbling with the fuel line under the car. Susan came to the rescue with a canteen of water I always carried in the car for emergencies, but the emergencies were supposed to be for drinking, not for this.

Camping was still in our blood and it seems that when I was not flying we were away camping. I transferred from the Victorian branch of the Land Rover Club to the Sydney branch and immediately started going on trips to the bush. While koalas are as unique to Australia as the kangaroo they are not nearly as numerous nor as obvious. On one of our trips along a bush track we had to stop to let a koala cross, which Robert remembered years later as one of the highlights of bush driving. Easter 1968 had us in a convoy of four Land Rovers in the Snowy Mountains and over the border into Victoria. This was more extensive than the trips I had done within Victoria and was the start of friendships with Leon Braxton and Barry Runnstrom and their wives, established members of the club. Over the years I was to learn a lot about driving and vehicle maintenance from Leon and Barry. The Land Rover was still registered in Victoria then (JTA-427), and had two jerrycan holders mounted on the back drop-down door, and the small Holden roofrack to provide some extra storage space. Besides wilderness areas with only fire trails and tracks through them we crossed fields of yellow daisies as crisp as plastic and inspected old, abandoned farmhouses with log fences. We inspected the remains of a Dakota (A65-50) that had crashed on Cowambat Flat in 1954 and was slowly eroding away or being souvenired. We came home along the power lines on the Brindabella track between Tumut and Canberra, an area I would later traverse again and again in the Canberra branch of the Land Rover Club. Canberra then was a deprived country town with none of the outstanding roads and facilities it was to acquire later with maturity. Lake Burley Griffin was only four years old. Was this also the trip in which we nearly lost a member on a flooded causeway? In walking across a cement causeway on the

Rules Point Road to check for its security Howard Ross suddenly disappeared, sucked into one of the drainpipes under the roadway. We thought him gone, when he suddenly popped up about thirty metres downstream. He had gone through perhaps the only pipe that was not obstructed by branches and other debris. It was a brief shock to the members present, especially his wife and children who had seen him disappear in the flooded river. He suffered only minor physical injury and was able to continue driving.

Another trip took us to the Abercrombie area with Hockey Burnell as a guest, and Barry Runnstrom who would be a lifelong partner in four wheel driving. There were four vehicles on that trip and we suffered thirteen boggings between us in two days. One Land Rover burned its clutch out with all the debogging we had to do. We had tried to cross a farmer's field that looked good but was a quagmire under a deceptive crust. Once committed we had no choice but to progressively use one vehicle at a time as an anchor while we dragged bogged vehicles past it. Fortunately not all trips were like that. But on another in the same area, when Len was down for holidays, I slid off the wet and slippery clay road and had to be winched back. Fortunately there was no damage although there had been a definite risk of the car falling on its side. By then I had registered the car in NSW as EVC-925, and had built a full-length roofrack that got most of the gear out of the cabin for safety and comfort. A couple of other navigators, Gordon French and John Walters, had helped me build this roofrack from arc-mesh and angle iron, and it formed a platform that bolted to the gutters on the Land Rover roof. Alan Windsor was another keen member of the Land Rover Club and I think he worked in the transport section at RAAF Richmond. He was to drop off a steel cable about forty feet long one weekend when I was away flying. It would have been a great recovery cable if I had ever had to use it, and I never asked him where he got it from.

In January 1969 we made the first of several visits to the Abercrombie caves north of Goulburn. This was truly a peaceful spot with interesting and varied scenery that was to call us back many times in the years to come, both as independent tourists and as members of Land Rover club outings. The caves alone were worth the visit, and the creeks and rivers offered cool relaxation and, for Robert on one occasion, a fresh trout from a prohibited creek. On another occasion we saw a family of platypus for several minutes in the creek that flows through the camp. That was the only time I have ever seen platypus in the wild. From the campsite there was a walk down the riverbed to a small rock pool above a waterfall that we particularly liked. Within the camp itself

there was a rickety suspension bridge offering alternative access to the cave area from the camping area, and this was a thrill for the children.

Richmond flooded again at the end of 1969 and the towns of Richmond and Windsor were isolated once again, with the main highways east and west under metres of muddy water. The base was above the flood level and flying was not affected, but the water certainly made a mess of houses and shops. Luttrell Street was also above the flood level and we had good drainage.

The Big Banana at Coffs Harbour figures in photographs taken in mid-1970, so we appear not to have wasted many opportunities to get on the road when school holidays coincided with my time off flying. This was a trip to Brisbane and the Gold Coast with side trips to Mt Tambourine and Lone Pine. I had been to the animal sanctuary at Lone Pine several times as a child but can only recall once going to the Lamington Plateau area of Mount Tambourine.

The Warrumbungle National Park is one of the most appealing, easily accessible areas of eastern Australia. We first went there in 1970 and it has attracted me many times since then. That holiday was a long one, going through Orange and the radio telescope at Parkes on the way to Coonabarabran, and visiting Henry Lawson's birthplace at Grenfell. Little now remains of the Lawson home except a brick fireplace and chimney preserved as a tourist attraction, but when he was born in 1867 it didn't exist anyway. He was born in a tent in the goldfields. This area around Forbes and Grenfell is rich in Australian gold mining history, still reflected in some of the buildings and memorials. Bushranger Ben Hall's grave has been preserved in the Forbes cemetery since he was buried there after being shot nearby on 5 May 1865, aged only 27 years. Sheep grazing 'the long paddock' forced us to stop and wait for them to clear the road outside Orange.

With spectacular mountain scenery; graded walks; brilliant flora in season; native birds and animals; conducted tours, slides and films under a park ranger; and excellent facilities; the Warrumbungles are best visited around August. At this time the wattles are so brilliant they are nearly glaring, and their smell so thick it can almost be tasted. While much of the spectacular scenery can be seen in short, easy walks, the best of it can only be enjoyed with climbing and effort. The Grand High Tops walk takes 6 to 8 hours and climbs nearly 1,000 metres. But it really is worth it for those who can endure it. The nights are freezing but the days are crisp and clear for viewing the mountain scenery and the parade of golden wattle. We liked it so much we were back in 1971 with a six-berth caravan I bought to replace the tent. That made for much more-

civilised living. I had seen this 15-foot van for sale outside a service station in Richmond, and buying it set me on the caravan path for about another ten years. Blue-Right Enterprises provided a substantial annexe for this caravan that increased our living area. By this time we had also traded in our old Land Rover on an almost equally old, but more comfortable, Land Rover station wagon, DQY-162, that was to last beyond retirement from the RAAF. I bought this from Cousin's Truck Sales in Parramatta Road and, judging by the mud and dust in its chassis, it had been a Snowy Mountains vehicle.

With Robert and David I set off for Cairns for the school holidays after Christmas 1970. Robert wept a little soon after we left the security of home but soon recovered after we stopped for refreshments at Hornsby, on the northern outskirts of Sydney. Sleeping under a tarpaulin we camped beside the car in many places on the way up and back - on the beach, beside a river, in a Queensland rest area - and spent a few days with Peter Evans at his property 'Archervale' in North Rockhampton. Peter was going through a turbulent period with his wife, Gem, which showed in her acceptance of us. But Peter was really good company, and took us down to Gladstone where a lot of his work was done. Peter had gone into the insulation business and had developed a market in the area. At Cardwell, a sleepy little village then on the coast about half way between Townsville and Cairns, we stopped around lunchtime to fish off the jetty. We caught a lot of little fish the locals told us were stripeys and grunters, goodness knows what the real names were. There was a mouthful or two of meat on each fish and we made meals out of them. In Cairns we put up our tent in Stratford caravan park in North Cairns, out near the airport and not too far from where Len was based in the Good Counsel presbytery. Cane toads were in plague proportions. Land Rover Club training with the jaffle iron solved many of the meals there, and the best I remember was thick jaffles made with freshly cooked mince. With its vast fields of sugarcane this country was different from what we were used to down south, and the climate was tropical.

With Len as our guide we had a comprehensive tour of that area of North Queensland and got to Lake Placid, Port Douglas in its primitive state, Mareeba with its tobacco farms, and Malanda where Len had been parish priest. The boys got to inspect tobacco as it was growing, and we swam in the pool under the little waterfall at Malanda. We slept where the night found us and put up the tarpaulin to sleep under. Only a few hours driving provided a rich variety of scenery ranging from tropical rain forest through rich farmland to a taste of the arid outback. We saw the Cathedral Fig Tree outside

Yungaburra, a classic example of the strangler fig that grows from a seed germinating high in the host tree and sending down aerial roots that eventually strangle the original tree. The Cascades in Mossman Gorge provided swimming holes in waterworn boulders in a tropical rainforest setting. And we got over on the ferry to Green Island with its underwater observatory and, at the time, beautiful coral reefs and sandy beaches. Captain Cook had sighted and named this island in June 1770, shortly before the Endeavour met disaster on the coral reef off Cooktown. We left to come home only a few days before the wet season started, bringing floods and ruining holidays. We had been very lucky.

Andrew was born at the Kurrajong Heights hospital on 4 January 1971, and fast became a traveller. In one set of holidays, after the August Warrumbungle visit in which he was wrapped against the cold, we toured the Katoomba, Mudgee and Gulgong areas. Katoomba was no stranger to Celie and me because we had visited it when we lived in Springwood, but it would have been new for the children. From a quarry in Mudgee we brought back soft red stone with the shapes of different fossilised leaves in it. Gulgong was famous for being the town on the ten dollar note. It also houses one of the finest collections of Australiana, particularly Henry Lawson material, in the country.

For the Christmas holidays we took the caravan to a park at Woolgoolga, where Jack and Ivy came down to meet us for a while. This was before the government reclaimed land occupied by caravan parks on the foreshores, and we had a site on a grassy sward with a track down a cliff to the beach. And that's where Andrew had his first birthday. We had a desalination kit from one of my RAAF survival packs for entertainment, and also for practice as a survival item in the Land Rover off road kit. The beach at Woolgoolga had a lot of fascinating rocky pools that filled with sea creatures as the tide receded, and we probed for pretty octopuses with a nail on the end of a pole. But we never caught any. Evenings and receding tides brought out the armies of round, blue soldier crabs marching across the sand, and disappearing into the sand when they were threatened. The sandy beach was clean and the children liked to bury each other in it. For Andrew we put a wading pool on the beach under our beach umbrella so that he could enjoy the salt water without having to be closely guarded all the time. Woolgoolga has one of Australia's close Sikh communities and its own mosque.

The caravan was to serve as a bedroom for Judith and Susan later on when we kept it parked in the driveway, next to the front door. For communication we

had a set of battery powered toy telephones between the caravan and the house, which saved rushing in or out with every little message. One day I had a visit from a council member, concerned that I might not have been caring for my children or perhaps not providing proper toilet facilities. Somebody must have reported me to the council, but there was no problem anyway and the girls still lived there after the visit. Susan, and then Judith, took up guitar lessons with P L Leese in Richmond in the middle of 1972, when there was a lot of interest in folk music. The Vietnam war had provided a fertile ground for the development of protest songs, but Simon and Garfunkel were riding high in popularity with music that was much more acceptable. It would be difficult to choose their best out of a list including 'The Sound of Silence', 'Mrs Robinson', 'The Boxer', 'Scarborough Fair' and 'Bridge over Troubled Water'.

Johnno and I had quite a steady home brew business going for a couple of years. We didn't buy kits but made up the recipes from separate ingredients and used a special brewer's yeast. The project lasted long enough for us to have acquired proper equipment with sealed lids and water traps that prevented air getting back into the fermenting brew. But in the beginning we brewed in anything that was available, like household buckets. In fact the best brew by far was one of Johnno's creations in a plastic bucket, which we could never replicate. Most of the brews were drinkable if not exactly inspiring, and certainly the price was right. The Squadron held an occasional wine bottling too, in which we gathered as a group to wash and sterilise second-hand bottles and fill them from a bulk container. It was a good squadron from the point of an active and friendly social life, and we held our share of functions and barbecues.

Some time around the middle of 1971 I went to the RAAF medical section with a sore throat. All my medical history to date was satisfactory and I had no reason to dislike or distrust RAAF doctors. The doctor I saw this time was a civilian and didn't even bother to look at my throat. He prescribed disprin and 'come back in a week if that doesn't work'. Within a week my throat was no longer sore but I found it very difficult to talk. It required an awful lot of effort to make sound. This time a RAAF doctor did look at my throat, and found a polyp growing on my left vocal chord preventing their closing. I went to work but Doug Tobin sent me home because I was useless around the squadron without a voice. After a hastily arranged consultation with a specialist I was sent in to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for a local operation for its removal. And that was the beginning of an eighteen-months' saga.

On the morning of 11 August the anaesthetist plugged his needle into my arm and said 'Count to ten'. I easily reached it, and he withdrew the needle to put it in a vein where it should have been in the first place. This time I reached three. I woke up from the operation stiff and sore from the wrongly injected anaesthetic and was encouraged by the nursing staff to talk. The same day I was sent back to Richmond to spend two nights under observation in the sick quarters. Then it was back to work as usual. No polyp. But by November I had developed a contact ulcer where the polyp had been, caused by irritation. I should have been put on complete vocal rest, according to the speech therapist. I was sent to in order to learn how to speak in a higher pitch with less vocal strain. As the therapist, Miss Thorne, said, 'Unfortunately, the only effective treatment for vocal chord contact ulcers is COMPLETE vocal rest, which is impossible for this patient at the moment, as his job requires speech and he is married with six children, which obviously would demand vocal use'. An understatement, if any. In July 1972 I had another operation to recover from the error of the first one. This was followed by ten days of vocal rest. I was not allowed to use my voice at all during this period, and was put on speech therapy again when the period ended. A new speech therapist, Margaret Parkhill, found that 'Breath capacity and control is inadequate for his rate of speech which is fast. Mr Bibbo was advised further in methods and exercises to reduce this strain - exercises for breath control: adequate phrasing; reducing rate of speech'. The ten-day silence was interesting because there was no point in going to work. But I could not easily circulate in the community where people expected me to engage in conversation. I used to carry a notebook and pencil but never felt comfortable. I had to use it to get a haircut though, and barbers are notorious for their babble generally. A common reaction from friends was that they would shout at me, as though that would compensate for my lack of vocal response. With healing proceeding very slowly I had a third operation in October 1972 and a fourth in January 1973. My final period of ten days vocal silence coincided with my posting to Canberra, making final clearances and removal from Richmond a little difficult. I cheated a bit on the ten days limit. We moved to Canberra to start work on 22 January 1973. Len was down on holidays to help us move, and was saying Mass in the house when the RAAF authorities from Housing Section came to do their final inspection of the house I was moving out of.

From Richmond to Canberra we drove in loose convoy. With the three bigger boys I was towing the caravan with the Land Rover station wagon. Celie with the girls and young Andrew travelled with Len. I think he had a Toyota Land

Cruiser station wagon at this time. We were not in visual contact for much of the time, and by the time we were at Lake George on the outskirts of the Australian Capital Territory we hadn't seen Len for ages. I think we had actually turned back to look for him and had decided that, if he was anywhere, he had to be in front of us. But we also thought that impossible because we hadn't seen him pass. We were so concerned that we flagged down a police car, a Cooper S Mini Minor, travelling the other way to ask if they had seen him or any evidence of an accident. At this time I was still on my ten days silence, and David and Robert were astounded that I had broken the rules to talk to the police. *Oh no, Dad talked. He's not supposed to.* There had been no accidents and no sight of Len, so we just pressed on. When we eventually resolved the problem it turned out that we had separated in Mittagong. The southbound highway meets a clock tower that makes a prominent Y intersection. The highway continues to the right, but the major secondary road goes through Bowral and Moss Vale and this is the one Len had taken, and he had passed us. We joined forces at RAAF Base Fairbairn after Len's diversion and I checked in for the final phase of my Air Force career.

No. 34 (VIP) Squadron

Fairbairn, Australian Capital Territory

From Richmond to Canberra was only a few hours drive. Celie, the girls and Andrew were accommodated in a motel in Queanbeyan overnight and the boys, Len and I spent the night in the caravan park. Then we moved into married quarters at 3 Hayter Place, Page. At this time Page was on the northern outskirts of Canberra with sheep country and open land around it, with a small community shopping centre. Our house was four-bedroom without a garage or carport. Initial neighbours were an older English civilian couple in number 1 and an army officer in number 5. When he moved out civilians moved in and stayed for the duration of our posting. I hardly got to meet the English couple but spent a lot of time with John Howard, professional butcher, even after retiring from the RAAF and moving from Page. Not far away were Sid and Susan Smith whom we met through Andrew's childcare program and who became firm friends. At that time Canberra boasted one commercial and one ABC television station, ABC FM radio, two ABC AM stations and two commercial AM stations. There was one university, the Australian National University (ANU), and no Technical And Further Education (TAFE) colleges.

I was in Canberra, but at least I was still flying and not a captive of the Defence complex at Russell Offices. These buildings sat astride Sir Thomas Blamey Square as Australia's Pentagon, off the southeast corner of the parliamentary triangle formed by Parkes Way and the Kings and Commonwealth Avenues. They were signposted by the Australian-American Memorial, a tall monolith that appears to be made of grey sandstone but is actually aluminium. It bears the inscription: 'In grateful remembrance of the vital help given by the United States of America during the war in the Pacific 1941-45. Unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II February 16 1954'. Atop the monolith proudly sits an eagle with its wings raised vertically. It was affectionately known as *Bugs Bunny*. Less affectionately to those of us who were aware of, and subject to, decisions emanating from Russell Offices it was known as *Phallus in Blunderland*.

If I thought flying on Hercules had been hectic I was to revise my opinions while I was in 34 Squadron. Catering for VIPs (Very Important Persons) and politicians required a commitment unparalleled in any of my other flying.

While it was a challenging position and opened up opportunities for travel and communication not yet encountered, it was also to be highly disruptive to family life and to include the destruction of my marriage.

Flying – Introducing No. 34 (VIP) Squadron

No. 34 Squadron flew three different types of aircraft: 2 medium-range twinjet BAC 1-11s, 2 medium range twin-prop HS748s, and 3 short-range twinjet Mysteres. Pilots were restricted to one type but navigators flew on both the BAC 1-11s and HS748s. I had never flown as navigator on a jet, my flying with the RAF 51 Squadron had been in a different capacity, and I really found it quite different from anything I was accustomed to. From cruising at 280 knots I now had to cope with 470 knots, which meant thinking and working a lot faster. But the hardest part was in the takeoff that frequently required several changes of heading in a short time. Everything happened so quickly that I was initially stunned. Once I had adapted to the new routine I wondered where the problem lay, but certainly there were moments when I wondered if I would ever graduate to jets. Suffice to say that I did, and I went on to become the training officer, route-check navigator and, for a while, the Squadron Navigation Officer. A requirement for jet flying was that I do another run through the decompression chamber in August. Being familiar with the procedures I was able to enjoy the experience and watch the reactions of others in there with me.

My first flight in the Squadron was on 8 February in a BAC 1-11 with Squadron Leader Geoff Willans as Nav Leader and Flight Lieutenant Max McGregor as pilot. It was only up to Sydney and back, which was just as well with the cramped space on the flight deck. The navigator sat behind the pilot, facing the left side of the aircraft, and the three crew took up most of the room behind our lockable door to the passenger area. The following day was up to Coolangatta and return with the PM, Gough Whitlam, who had taken over on 2 December 1972 when Labor replaced the Liberals who had been in power since 1949. A week later, on 15 February, I flew my first HS748 flight with Flight Lieutenant Don Ende as pilot and the Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck, as our passenger down to Albury and Melbourne. I soon gave up the practice of logging passengers and only noted names on particular occasions like royalty or interesting overseas visitors. Max and Don were two of the finest pilots I ever flew with and we would cover some ground together over the next three and a half years.



No. 34 (VIP) Squadron at Fairbairn, Canberra, 1973.

Our function in the VIP Squadron was to fly the Governor-General, Prime Minister, parliamentarians and select committees, and visiting dignitaries around Australia and anywhere else in the world as required. Visiting dignitaries generally had a schedule to follow and could be planned for. But some parliamentarians treated the aircraft like an extension to the car fleet and expected them to be available at a moment's notice for as long as they wanted them. This meant flying at short notice at all odd hours of the day or night for unknown periods of time. We did have defined crew duty periods that permitted us to fly for twelve hours with two hours for flight planning and one hour for post-flight cleanup, a fifteen-hour day. I think we were entitled to eight or ten hours off between flights. Since much of our twelve-hour flying time involved us in sitting around waiting at airports we did not make a big issue of extended flying hours. However, I was to come into conflict with some of our clients when I thought they were abusing the system too much. Our aircraft had to be positioned and ready at the airport ninety minutes before planned takeoff time. So, if we had to pick Billy Snedden up from Melbourne at 5.30 p.m. we had to be there at 4.00 p.m. To pick Gough Whitlam up from Sydney at 7.00 a.m. meant we had to be there by 5.30 a.m. That meant getting out of bed before four o'clock, and four o'clock sticks in

my mind as a common time to be either getting out of bed or departing from Canberra during those years. Positioning ninety minutes early and having politicians roll on board several hours late, drunk as newts, did not endear many of our clients to us.

Early morning flight time was not wasted. Major Canberra restaurants did catering for the Squadron - The Lobby had the concession for a while - and we ate royally. So we would take a substantial breakfast and eat it while we waited. Steward service on the VIP Squadron was excellent, and some of them would warrant special mention. Tony Carville, Jim Buissey, Robyn Carey, Vicki Sherrif, Ken Hammett and Ron Andrews are just a few who give the lie to the belief that Qantas does not derive its acronym from its initial function as the Queensland And Northern Territory Aerial Service but, in fact, stands for Queers And Nymphomaniacs Training As Stewards. Whatever the VIPs ate, the crew ate accordingly. And whatever they drank, we drank at their expense at the end of most flights. Malcolm Fraser's Grange Hermitage was no exception, but not one of my preferred wines.

My rejection of this acknowledged fine wine may have had a Freudian connection with my rejection of Fraser the man. Coming to power as he did after the constitutional crisis caused by that historic dismissal of Whitlam on 11 November 1975 by Governor-General Sir John Kerr, he did not use the Squadron much before I left in May 1976, so I only saw him briefly in his Prime Ministerial capacity. But I had seen a lot of him in opposition. John 'Spike' Tyrrell, another navigator, once described him aptly as a 'social cripple'. By that he meant that Fraser could not relate to persons outside his immediate defined social boundaries, not that he was generally socially unacceptable. His method of expressing dissatisfaction with the catering on the aircraft was to reject the steward's offering and open a packet of sandwiches that his wife, Tamie, had prepared for the occasion. Having criticised the Whitlam government over use of VIP transports he hardly used the Squadron at all for months after his election until the public had forgotten his criticism. Then he expanded the Squadron to include Boeing 707s, much more prestigious and to his liking.

The BAC 1-11 was a challenging aircraft in the role in which we used it. Built by British Aircraft Corporation it was configured as a 28-seat VIP transport, powered by two 10600 lb thrust Rolls-Royce Spey 511-14 turbofan engines. These were probably the noisiest engines in Australia, and the crisp crackle of a BAC 1-11 taking off on a freezing Canberra morning was something most

residents resented. The noise level was so high we would not have been permitted to fly the aircraft in the continental United States. In round figures it weighed 74,500lb (33864 kg) loaded and 45,000lb empty. It was 93' 6" (28.5m) long, 88' 6" (26.97m) wingspan, and 24' 6" high (7.47m). Maximum cruising speed was 470 kts (870 km/h), although we generally cruised at a percentage of the speed of sound at Mach .73. It had a nominal range of 1850 nautical miles (3430 km), which was an embarrassment since Australia is over 4000 km wide at its extremes. So coaxing range and economy out of it was a constant challenge. Our two aircraft were numbers 124 and 125 from the manufacturers and had arrived in Australia in early 1968. When they were traded in on Falcon 900s in early 1990 they had logged over 25,000 hours between them.

The HS748 was a light transport with two Rolls-Royce Dart 550-2 turboprop engines, built by Hawker Siddeley of Britain. It had a maximum takeoff weight of 44,495lb (20,225kg) and a cruising speed of 230 kts (425km/h). In its VIP configuration with spacious compartments we generally carried about 18 passengers. It was affectionately known as a Draggie or Dragmaster for the slow and ponderous way it dragged itself through the air. But that made for easy navigation and also for access to remote airstrips denied more sophisticated aircraft.

Flying – The BAC 1-11

Wing Commander D A B 'Dabs' Carter was Commanding Officer when I arrived and he flew the BAC 1-11. He was not a man who mixed with his crews away from Canberra and I did not have a lot to do with him until we clashed over a redress of grievance I submitted on 9 November 1973 towards the end of his era. On Hercules we flew in green flying suits that were laundered at public expense. On VIP aircraft we had to fly in full uniform and we were issued an extra uniform to replace the flying suits. But frequent dry cleaning of uniforms was costly, and by researching Air Force Orders I proved that they should be cleaned at public expense - just like flying suits. I submitted my claim to Dabs Carter and it subsequently went up to the Officer Commanding RAAF Base Fairbairn. He sent it back to Carter and told him to tell me to withdraw it, which he did in express terms. My reaction was to add yet another paragraph to the claim and resubmit it to him next day. We didn't talk to each other very much after that. It took thirteen months to resolve the issue during which time it was discussed several times by Air Board, and by which time I had made a ministerial case out of it by writing to the Minister for Defence. With mounting frustration and anger at the patent ineptitude of

the bureaucracy I had also spoken to the now defunct *National Times* who had given me honourable mention in one of their columns. They titled it 'Green is Clean' and quoted me in saying that, if the RAAF could not come up with a satisfactory solution, we would have to resort to wearing 'the grotty green flying suits' used on the regular transports. This was twisting the knife because they didn't publish this until 20 January 1975, by which time I had won.

This certainly publicised the problem, and my bank manager in Jamison commented on it next time I saw him. Also Alan Hedges, now in Butterworth, sent me a clipping from the internal RAAF newspaper, *RAAF News*, which had picked up the article from the *National Times*. I had also arranged with the RSL for legal aid to force a decision, and with the *Canberra Times* to publicise the matter. On 29 November 1974 I again wrote to Lance Barnard, Minister for Defence, and told him I was going public within fourteen days unless I got an acceptable resolution of my claim. I was to talk to the *Canberra Times* on the following Monday and the RSL in that same week when I took the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Charles Read, to Jervis Bay on a Thursday afternoon, 5 December. As he got off the aircraft he said to me 'You won that case, you know'. I said I didn't. He assured me I had won and would hear officially very soon. On that basis I cancelled my interviews. The Air Board advised me officially by letter dated 9 December 1974.



RAAF British Aircraft Corporation BAC 1-11, serial A12-125.

The only other BAC 1-11 pilot I flew with until March 1974 was Flight Lieutenant Dave Smith. It was with Dave that I did my qualifying flight in April 1973 to be allowed to navigate without someone looking over my shoulder. And it was a monumental flight. Different from Neptunes and Hercules, the BAC 1-11 would only stay airborne for about 4½ hours maximum before it ran out of fuel. With head winds we sometimes had to refuel in Adelaide to get to Perth. This trip was from Sydney to Alice Springs, then to Learmonth in WA with a low flight around Ayers Rock and the Olgas on the way, and across to Cocos Island. After three nights in Cocos I was put to the test with my route check under Geoff Willans on the way home. Cocos to Learmonth was a straightforward three-hour flight. Having refuelled there from the local Catholic priest who held the concession at the airport, I was tasked with getting to Sydney in the most expeditious manner. I was lucky. Flying at 40,000 feet with an outside air temperature around minus 60° Celsius, to a point north of Adelaide to pick up the air route to Sydney, I had tail winds of around 100 knots most of the way. If there was any problem about fuel I could make a quick decision to refuel in Adelaide, but that would make a long day for us. We coaxed that aircraft to almost 300 nautical miles over its planned range and flew 2111 n miles (3910 km) non-stop to Sydney in just 4½ hours. That is an average speed of 869 km/h, but we would have been cruising

at 1000 sometime between Learmonth and Adelaide. There was a lot of satisfaction in winning challenges like that.

We did a lot of short haul flying between the eastern and southern capitals and had our regular hotels from which we got special aircrew rates that they gave to airlines. In Sydney we stayed a lot in the Chateau Commodore near Kings Cross. A little curry house tucked away in the back streets there had more attraction than the fleshpots. But I remember the bouncer marking the back of my hand with a fluorescent dye on the way out of one of these one night, so that I could be recognised when I returned from buying more beer for a show we attended. In Adelaide the hotel we most frequented was the Town House and it too was close to a strip joint, and pizza parlour with its exhortation to 'Remember, pizza is traditionally eaten with the fingers'. The receptionist at the Town House was Dawn who, along with her daughter, plied a different trade at night and always looked forward to the visit of a particular trading ship that called at Adelaide. I got to Coolangatta a few times and we hosted the Simpsons with VIP snacks on a tour of the aircraft. When I landed at Brisbane Tony generally managed to get to the aircraft. He was working for Ansett there.

Wing Commander Keith 'Masher' Molloy joined the Squadron to take over from Dabs Carter as Commanding Officer, and my first trip with Keith was to Rarotonga, the capital of the Cook Islands, carrying the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Don Willesee, and party. That had its moments. The BAC 1-11 was not over-equipped with navigation aids and we used Doppler equipment for track and ground speed, and radio direction finding and radar for positions. We had a sextant for star sights but I hated using it; calculating and shooting the star sights was very time consuming. The Doppler was prone to unlocking and could not be relied on. With tiny windows and no way of looking straight down, the aircraft was not designed for visual navigation and we were flying into the night anyway, mostly over featureless ocean. The radar was primarily a weather-warning device but we used it for both positioning and tracking. On both the Hercules and the BAC 1-11 some navigators had found they could read drift off a slight distortion of the radar picture, and I used this a lot over the sea. Because of the distances involved we had to refuel in Brisbane and Fiji. Rarotonga is almost as far the other side of Fiji as Brisbane is this side. We lost our radar before we left Brisbane on 19 March 1974. Legally, according to Air Force regulations, we were unserviceable and should not have proceeded. But Keith would not let a trip like this be aborted by an unserviceable radar, and it would not have created a good image of the

Squadron in the eyes of our passengers, so we flew to Fiji hoping to get it fixed there. Qantas tried to help us but didn't have the parts and we wasted time while it got dark. It was only 3½ hours to Rarotonga, but it seemed that much of that time was spent watching and avoiding the spectacular fireworks of tropical thunderstorms along the route as we picked our way to our destination.

The welcome was worth the trouble, with grass-skirted maidens hanging leis on our necks at a colourful singing, dancing reception. There was only one, unpretentious hotel on the island and we were given a two-storey block of flats backing onto jungle for our accommodation. Tourism was strictly controlled, and tourists with long, unkempt hair or otherwise not meeting the required standards were turned around at the airport and refused entry. For three days and four nights we enjoyed a Pacific holiday. We rented a small open utility for touring and stocked our flats with VIP stores and locally purchased food, along with the duty free beer we always took with us. Meals were available at the hotel and included chilled, fresh coconut juice for breakfast, with the coconut only being opened when you ordered it, and served with a straw.

Only 67 sq km in area, Rarotonga is a beautiful volcanic island with a rugged, forested interior reaching up about 650 metres, and two perimeter roads about 30 km long. One was bitumen; the other paved like old Roman or English roads, and thought to have been built under the leadership of the chieftain Toi in the eleventh century. A tour of this road, called the Ara Metau, in a horse-drawn cart on a fine day is a tourist treasure. The village square was straight out of Somerset Maugham, and the feast we were treated to one night with dancing and singing probably much the same as in his time. Actually I found the food at the feast pretty dreadful in both looks and taste and I came away hungry. We swam in the crystal clear water and I got a coral scratch that took many weeks to heal. On our third night we organised a party in the flats and invited some local guests. The lady who owned our flats came with her sister; both big, roly-poly, joyful women. But one had a most beautiful daughter who had come to enjoy herself. Mother never let her out of her sight. Word of the party got around the island and a New Zealand crew invited themselves. Since they came bearing gifts of liquor they were welcomed, unlike a couple from probably PNG who came empty handed and we refused them entry. Vicki Sherrif was our stewardess, and to protect her from possible molestation by drunken, amorous fellow crewmembers Keith Molloy locked her door from the outside and kept the key when the party was over. Unfortunately Vicki was

the least affected of us all and woke early - unable even to leave her room until Keith surfaced.

I had bought a new 35-mm Asahi Pentax camera to take to Rarotonga and I took a lot of spectacular photos. Unfortunately I didn't have the film connected to the takeup spool, so all my photos are only in my mind. But I did bring back a carved wooden face with protruding tongue and pearl shell eyes as a souvenir. I have never been an enthusiastic philatelist but I do have a thick collection of Indonesian First Day Covers given to me by Alan Cooke, and I was tempted into buying a Rarotonga First Day Cover with seven boat stamps depicting Maori Explorations of the South Pacific. Also I brought back some of the currency, which is world-renowned in numismatic circles for its 'doodle dollar'. They take their sex seriously and the big silver dollar carries the god of fertility with a penis out of all proportion to his size.

The next BAC 1-11 trip of any consequence was in the lead-up to the 1974 elections. Both Whitlam and Snedden used the aircraft extensively and we had some hard flying. By choice I navigated for Gough Whitlam whom I admired as a man - and not because he was ex-RAAF. Politics aside he was a statesman, and intelligent, which is more than I can say of some other Australian leaders. Our whistle-stop campaign tour of Australia commenced with a 2-hour flight from Melbourne to Brisbane on 9 May. Fortunately we got a good night's sleep because the next day was long. Out of Brisbane we flew to Alice Springs, and waited at the airport for the politicking to finish. Then it was on to Perth for more of the same. After the ceremonies of Perth we had to refuel in Adelaide on returning to Sydney, which we reached about 8.00 p.m. That was over ten hours flying that day and we had long exceeded our crew duty, so we spent the night in Sydney and went back to Canberra next morning. I never had any criticism of Whitlam or his wife, Margaret, in their conduct in the aircraft and treatment of the crew, and the stewards found them equally likeable and considerate. Stories abounded in the Squadron about politicians, and their mannerisms were commonly under discussion. One of the kinder jokes of the Whitlam era was: *Why does Gough always take Margaret overseas?* There were two acceptable answers: *Because he can't stand to kiss her goodbye*, or *To kick-start the jet aircraft*.

The pre-election trips were our first real introduction to the Australian press. There were always journalists along. We soon grew to view the generic journalists as the lowest form of life on earth, and consolidated this impression with increasing exposure to them. They were almost invariably

uncouth, unkempt and inconsiderate. Their reporting of 'facts' was often a perversion of the truth, and after one article spread across the middle pages of the *Canberra Times* I was determined to confront the perpetrator. Unfortunately he had left the press group by this time, and I could only express my disgust to the remaining journalists. No doubt there are journalists with integrity, but I would put them in roughly the same proportion as honest politicians.

The first of the notable VIPs was the President of Burma whom I took from Canberra to Mangalore, Melbourne and Sydney over the last two days of May 1974. Burma had actually been part of the British Commonwealth until independence in 1948. The political and economic strife that traditionally followed cessation of colonial rule beset Burma and, in 1962, General Ne Win overthrew the constitutional leader, U Nu, and established a military dictatorship with himself as Prime Minister. He had become President only on 2 March 1974 when Burma became a one-party state and a socialist republic. Some VIPs actually handed out gifts to crewmembers in the early 70s, and I was given a beautiful set of gold and jade cufflinks by U Ne Win on this trip. Other gifts at various times included a magnificent Puma steel hunting knife with staghorn handle, from a German Parliamentary Delegation. They were grateful for our service because an aircraft strike had left them stranded, and we were called out late one day to get them to Brisbane. Years later I left the knife on a beach at Pambula after cleaning fish. The Minister of the Coal Industry of the USSR, Boris F. Bratchenko, gave me a boxed set of three big ballpoint pens in different colours. It may be hard to believe that electronic calculators actually started out as very basic tools. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Diet of Japan gave me one of the first marketed. We carried their party around eastern Australia early in September 1974, and they had their photograph taken with the crew in front of the aircraft. The calculator measured 30x70x145 cm, had four functions - plus, minus, divide, multiply - and ran off four AA cells. From that simple start calculators made rapid growth. We were fascinated by them in the Squadron and followed their growth, eventually using them for navigation in place of the circular slide rules. Before the end of my tour Spike Tyrrell was using a Hewlett Packard calculator that could be programmed with a magnetic strip - an early basic computer. We have no proof, unfortunately, but we believe from stories of the time that we were cheated out of gold coins after flying the Shah and Empress of Iran. The stories said that the Shah had left coins for us but

the protocol officer in charge of his visit had not seen fit to send them on. He had other uses for them.



Members of the Japanese House Of Representatives and flight crew, Orange, NSW, September 1974.

In July of 1974 I got to ride in that boat the Australians had bought from the Americans for a couple of cartons of beer in Vietnam. Nobody had to account for it in Vietnam because it didn't officially belong to anybody. But to bring it back to Australia required paperwork. So it was acquired as a recreational item by the Canteens Organisation, I think, and taken to the RAAF base at Learmonth, Western Australia, near where the enormous antenna is located at North West Cape for communication with submarines. We only had the one night there, but that was enough for us to put on joy flights for local RAAF personnel in exchange for a fishing trip out into Exmouth gulf. I caught some good fish and brought them home in the aircraft refrigerator.

The Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlevi, was probably at the peak of his power in September 1974 when he visited Australia and, with Keith Molloy, we took him and his Empress to Cairns for an overnight stay and then back to Sydney. He showed an interest in the crew activities and sat in the co-pilot's seat for a while on the way to Cairns. He was familiar with flying, and I think he was a pilot in his own right. He exuded power and authority and automatically commanded respect, while at the same time making lesser mortals in his presence feel relaxed. Coming to the throne on the abdication of his father in 1941 the Shah had set about modernising and Westernising his country, alienating many of its religious leaders. A combination of the strains of modernisation, his authoritarian rule and his family's vast wealth provoked a mass uprising in 1979 and he fled the country. A radical Islamic leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, set up an Islamic republic in November of that year and was to drastically change the face of Iran in the world scene. The Trade Winds Hotel was booked out but the owner, Paul Kamsla, whom we had frequent dealings with on visits there, put us up in a flat they ran as an annexe to the hotel, and we feasted on king prawns.

By July 1974 Geoff Willans had been posted and I had been appointed Navigation Officer, a position I was to hold until December. This was nominally a Squadron Leader position, but I had seniority and experience that qualified me to occupy it as long as the RAAF liked to leave me there. I knew that it was only temporary because I would still not do my promotion exams, but I was quite happy with the situation. Up to October 1974 our overseas trips had carried a spare captain but only one navigator. In my capacity as Navigation Officer I argued that the workload, and the risk of illness from food poisoning or whatever, was equally applicable to a navigator as to a pilot. If the pilot strength was increased for overseas trips then this should apply equally to the navigator. The general rule applying to which navigator went on what trip was that we took our turn, regardless of destination or aircraft type. This ensured that each of us got a reasonably equal chance of an enviable trip, and also the risk of a poor one. Dave Clarkson was the navigator in line when we were tasked to go to China and, for this and subsequent trips we were approved to take two navigators. Since I was Navigation Officer and had argued strongly for the second navigators position I took this first opportunity and went with Dave. We got along well together, having flown together on Hercules, and I had appointed Dave as my other route check navigator in 34 Squadron. The purpose of the trip was to take Dr Jim Cairns, as Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister for Overseas Trade, to visit the 1974 Shanghai Industrial Exhibition and to open the Australian Exhibition in Beijing.

Jim Cairn's 1974 China Visit

One of Whitlam's first initiatives in December 1972 was to recognise Communist China and to establish diplomatic relations. He appointed Stephen FitzGerald as our first ambassador on 9 January 1973, at which time Steve was on the staff of the ANU as deputy head of the Contemporary China Centre. When he left the School of Languages Steve had furthered his studies at ANU, and had been an outspoken staff officer at Foreign Affairs until 1966 before moving to the ANU. I had not seen Steve since our School of Languages days in 1962.

China was not open to tourists except by way of invitation, and was very much a closed country to most of the free world's aviation. Air France was the only carrier listed in extensive documentation we eventually acquired in China. In the Squadron we had no details whatsoever on air routes and regulations or facilities. Qantas supplied us with all the maps and charts we needed and briefed us on conditions, but there were enormous obstacles to be overcome before we set foot on Chinese soil. Every member of the crew had to be approved by the Chinese government and no last minute changes were allowed. The finally approved crew was: Wg Cdr Molloy and Flt Lt McGregor, captains; Flt Lt Copley, co-pilot; Flt Lt Bibbo and Flt Lt Clarkson, navigators; Sqn Ldr Homer, engineering officer; Sgt Shearer, Sgt Beattie and Cpl Taylor, engineers; Cpl Robertson and LAC McPhail, stewards. The two countries argued to the end over our uniforms. Australia said we were military and should fly in our normal uniforms. China said they would not let us into the country as servicemen. Finally we compromised by accepting the ruling on civilian clothing, but sometimes flying in uniform with our rank removed. Apparently the peaceful configuration of our aircraft compensated for the fact that it was, in fact, a military airplane.

We were always fully loaded on this trip and had strict limitations on how much weight each person could take, VIP or not. To get to Darwin on 5 October we had to refuel in Alice Springs. To get to Singapore we had to refuel in Bali. After an overnight stop there we went on to Hong Kong where we picked up a Chinese navigator and radio operator. They were not going to let us exercise any initiative in their country. It was only a couple of hour's flight to Shanghai, looking over the Chinese navigator's shoulder.

China is one of the world's most ancient civilisations, with recorded history dating back about 4,000 years. It was a Socialist country, and the most populous in the world with about 800 million people. With a land area of some 9.6 million square kilometres it was the third largest country in the world after the USSR and Canada. The People's Republic of China had been proclaimed on 1 October 1949. Mao Zedong, 81 years old, was the Chairman of the Chinese Communist party and the only living founder of the party that he helped establish in 1921. Regarded as the leader of the Chinese Revolution, Mao had led the Red Army on the historic 12,500-kilometre Long March from Jiangxi province north to Yan'an in Shaanxi province in 1934-35, after withstanding several military campaigns launched by Chiang Kai-shek who led the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) that was intent on overthrowing the Communist Beijing government. Following the 1949 Revolution and until he relinquished the position in 1958 Mao had been Chairman of the People's Republic of China.

We landed in Shanghai on 8 October in drizzling rain and were taken to a large old hotel, the Hengshan Hotel in what was once the French Concession, to change, be briefed, be allocated interpreters, and then escorted on a tour of the city. From when we entered China until we left every minute was accounted for, and we were given a schedule of events and times to adhere to. There was nothing intimidating about this. The Chinese always appeared genuinely interested and concerned with our welfare, and placed very few restrictions on our activities and questions within the boundaries of their programs.



Dr Jim Cairns, Minister for Overseas Trade and Deputy Prime Minister, and entourage, Shanghai, 8 October 1974. The author is 2nd from left in the rear row.

In the time available there was no way we could more than scratch the surface of a city covering more than 6,000 sq km, and with a population in excess of ten million, and we didn't try. We visited a couple of tall buildings to get a view of the city's style and the Western influence on many of its old buildings, and especially the 'Bund' which is the waterfront along the Whangpoo River - lined with impressive Western style buildings, but all a depressing drab shade. Even allowing for the weather there seemed to be a sad lack of physical colour in this city with a colourful history of mostly unpleasant relations with the West. Then we were treated to a river cruise towards the mouth of the river along a crowded riverway with busy docks on both sides. Shanghai is a bustling industrial centre and busy seaport whose name means 'above the sea'. We were asked not to take photos when we passed a naval establishment, but it was done nicely. From the river mouth we were given a train ride back to the city and our hotel. Of all the brands of communism the world has experienced the

Chinese is the most enduring, dating from its founding here in Shanghai on 1 July 1921.

After breakfast next morning we boarded a train for the two-hour journey to Wusih, and I saw how intensively cultivated the land was in China. Crops were grown right up to the railway lines with no safety margin, and farmers worked quite close as the train steamed past. In a motorcade of local vehicles looking like big old Fords we drove from the railway station into town, to be greeted by an estimated crowd of 200,000 people lining both sides of the street about six deep for eight kilometres, and a reception fit for Royalty. It was an impressive sight. We were the first Australians, and some of the very few foreigners, to visit the city since World War II. Wusih is a very old town that was established under the Han dynasty (206BC - 220AD), and is located on the north bank of Lake Taihu, one of China's famous tourist spots. The lake is one of the biggest in China and covers an area of over 3,600 sq km. Wusih was a thriving area of light industry and people's agricultural communes, and had a Workers' Sanatorium set on an island in the lake. Our guides and interpreters were well informed, spoke good English, and had a sense of humour. We were firstly taken on a ferry ride to appreciate the beauty of the area from a water aspect, and then set ashore in the park. Turtle Head Park's natural scenery and traditional Chinese buildings and artwork along the shore of the lake were inspiring, and we roamed freely until lunch time when we were taken to the Tai Hu Hotel - set in extensive grounds - for lunch. Here we were each given a room in which to rest and refresh. Most of us rested with a cool Chinese beer. Lunch was a traditional Chinese meal of many different dishes including seafood from the lake. A Chinese national partnered each of us and I watched my partner do the impossible. A specialty from Lake Taihu was its small shrimp. They would fit on a fingernail. I saw my partner pick these up with chopsticks, eat the meat from them, and put the shells down with his chopsticks without faltering.

One of Wusih's most famous industries was the production of small hand-painted clay figurines made of the clay from a hill called Hui Shan in Wusih. In the Ching dynasty the industry specialised in characters from operas and plays, but was now embracing a wider variety of subjects for the export market. We were given a conducted tour through this factory after lunch to see the skilled artisans at work.

Wednesday brought the official function of a visit to the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition, a venue for the permanent exhibition of products manufactured in

Shanghai. On arrival here we were given a heavily plasticised single-sheet brochure with colourful photos of some of the exhibits, a map of the exhibition hall, and a wealth of instructions - all in Chinese. But fortunately accompanying it was a smaller sheet of translations for us. The hall itself was sufficiently impressive, with a large statue of Mao Zedong in front of the door and overlooking a pond with fountains. Exhibitions ranged from a 300,000 kW turbogenerator through a video tape recorder to an acupuncture stand. While all the equipment was well made and substantial it was visibly decades behind the West in terms of styling and miniaturisation. But the feature piece of the exhibition was undoubtedly a jade carving, 'Red Flag Planted on the Summit of Mt. Jolmo Lungma'. Weighing about 2,000 kg, it was intricately carved out of a single piece of jade, with figures climbing the mountain and standing triumphant on the summit, and of inestimable value. We toured the exhibition with the official party escorted by Stephen FitzGerald, ambassador, and then resumed our itinerary to Beijing (Peking).

Shanghai to Beijing was under two hours on 10 October, and just over 1,000 km. Again we had our supplementary crew, but that meant I could spend more time looking out windows, and I could not imagine flying the same distance anywhere in Australia and seeing the ground below me continuously exploited for production or habitation.

In its historical context this flight was still a major step ahead in international diplomacy and Australia-China relations, though Gough Whitlam had been here in 1973, and a RAAF Hercules had delivered a Murray Grey bull as a gift from our Government in the same year. Certainly for me it was the dominant event in my flying career so far.

We landed at Beijing about 4.30 p.m., and it is worth noting here that whereas Australia has three time zones and a two-hour time difference between east and west to allow for the passage of the sun, China observes the same time throughout - 8 hours ahead of Greenwich. Here officials of CAAC, the Civil Aviation Administration of China, who were our coordinators, met us. We locked our aircraft and proceeded in convoy to the city. No traffic was allowed to impede our progress, and policemen on point's duty at intersections made sure of it. Along the way I was immediately impressed with the order and cleanliness. There was no rubbish on the streets, and people on the ubiquitous bicycles were raking up leaves as soon as they fell, to be used for compost. Thursday night, 10 October 1974, was momentous. After checking in to the

Min Tzu Hotel we barely had time to shower and change before leaving for the Great Hall of the People to attend a banquet hosted by the Chinese.

China is a land of superlatives, and the Great Hall of the People typifies them. On the west flank of Tiananmen Square it covers an area of 52,191-sq m, and was built in 10 months. It contains numerous reception rooms, banquet halls and conference rooms. The largest banquet hall can accommodate 5,000 people and the major conference room 10,000. When I entered the foyer I had the impression of being in an enclosed football stadium. The vases flanking the main entrance were so big I could have stood up in one and not been seen. This was to be the first of three banquets I would enjoy here in the next nine months. Seated twelve to a table we were each accompanied by a Chinese national as in Wusih. Protocol dictated that our hosts serve us the first helping of each course, and politeness demanded that we accept it even if it was not appealing. With a firm grounding in Southeast Asian regions most of us had no trouble with chopsticks, but we could have had a fork and spoon on request. Table service was superb and all tables were served simultaneously. There must have been an army of chefs, waiters and kitchen hands. Interspersed between the courses were the toasts, and these tended to be numerous and get out of hand, each accompanied by the salutation 'Gan bai'. We drank the toasts in Moutai - distilled from wheat and sorghum and with 53% alcohol by volume; some of our hosts drank Chinese wine. Each toast was in a small liqueur glass, probably about one fluid ounce. We were expected to drink the toasts in one gulp, and the Moutai would burn its way down to the pit of the stomach and then come back like a bad burp. It really smelt bad at first, but after a couple it didn't matter any more. When we noticed our hosts only sipping their wine or Moutai at toasts we drew attention to it. 'Ah', we were told, 'we are the hosts. That's OK. You are the guests. You must gulp your toasts'. So we accorded to protocol and proceeded to write ourselves off. After all, we didn't have to drive home.

The banquet lasted around two hours and ended abruptly, which was to be the pattern for almost all banquets. On arrival in Beijing we had been allocated a car (left hand drive) and driver for every two or three people and mine was 19 (that number again), which I shared with Dave Clarkson and Squadron Leader George Homer. Whenever we were scheduled to go anywhere we simply climbed into car 19, but absolute punctuality was insisted on and any lateness caused considerable concern. Our rooms in the hotel were never locked and I left valuables lying around in room 444 with impunity. The essential honesty of the Chinese people meant it was not necessary to lock things away or even

lock doors. I had bought a Sanyo radio cassette player in Hong Kong along with tapes of Neil Diamond and Olivia Newton-John, and I left these, my camera, other personal valuables and loose money lying around all the time.

Beijing in 1974 was a vast sprawling city centred on the Place of Heavenly Peace, Tiananmen, and the Forbidden City, former palatial home of generations of Chinese Emperors, and had been chosen to be the capital when the Republic of China was founded in 1949. Beijing proper had a population of two million, with the Beijing Municipality supporting seven million. Before the 1911 Republican Revolution no building was permitted to rise above the Emperor's Palace but there were now tall buildings in the city and on the skyline. The Boulevard of Eternal Peace, Chang An Jie, runs through the city from east to west and was more crowded with bicycles than cars. The Imperial Palace faces Tiananmen Square from the north and Chien Men, one of the original gates in the former walls of the city stands directly south of the square. Tiananmen Square had traditionally been the assembly point for hundreds of thousands of protesters, especially in the mass rallies of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Chairman Mao Zedong had launched this revolution in 1966 to eliminate social differences and bourgeois attitudes that had sprung up since 1949. His youthful, aggressive supporters marched through the country reciting from the 'little red book'; Quotations from Chairman Mao, a copy of which I brought home. The Cultural Revolution was not a success and Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, assisted by her 'gang of four' made a bid for power as Mao approached his death. She failed, and was expelled from the Communist Party along with her accomplices. A degree of order was introduced with the adoption of a new constitution in 1978 that restored some citizens' rights and downgraded the cult of Mao. Mao Zedong died in 1976 and his body lies in state in a mausoleum erected on Tiananmen Square.

Friday morning was devoted to the Opening of the Australian Exhibition at the Beijing Exhibition Centre at 10.00 a.m. and we received a formal invitation from Dr Jim Cairns to attend. Following that there was another formal invitation to a reception at 11.30 to mark the opening. Not to be outdone, there was yet another invitation from our Chinese hosts to attend a reception at 7.00 p.m. at the Peking Hotel to celebrate the holding of the exhibition. Between the Exhibition and the evening's reception we were scheduled to visit the China-Vietnam Friendship Commune at 3.00 p.m. Some of the official jargon will serve to give a pen picture of a commune: 'Communes are an administrative grouping of basically self-sufficient rural settlements designed to facilitate agricultural production and the administration of the rural areas...

Communes are divided into three levels of administration; the commune itself, the production brigades and the production teams... Members of the Revolutionary Committee of the Commune will greet the party on its arrival, explain the workings of the commune and then lead the party on a conducted tour. 'The Revolutionary Committee is the government organ responsible for overall administration'. Communes had grown out of the economic planning introduced after the Communists took over in 1949. In 1955 the first cooperative farms were formed, and by 1957 all individual land ownership had been abolished. These cooperatives were superseded in 1958 by people's communes, with up to 25,000 members, and having responsibility for social welfare as well as agricultural production.

We were met at the commune by the Revolutionary Committee with workers lining both sides of the road, clapping us. This was the local form of greeting and we were expected to clap in return as we walked down through the ranks, and it felt strange. Over bowls of fragrant tea we were briefed on the agricultural commune, and all our questions were openly and adequately answered. Then there was the guided tour; past the newsboard that functions as a daily newspaper, look at the crops - normally 1 wheat and 2 rice each year, see the very basic tiny tractors used for all sorts of jobs on the commune, and spend a long time watching the ducks being force fed. The ducks are rounded up from the pond and handed one by one to a lady commune worker who sits at a feed bin with its electric motor and plastic hose. She rams the hose down the duck's throat and presses her right foot on a pedal switch. A measured amount of food is forced into the duck's gullet. Next please ... No waste. Then on to see Sabre Bogong, the Murray Grey bull presented to the Chinese Government by Gough Whitlam in 1973. They tell us Sabre Bogong is a little odd. He can't do anything with the lady cows. They can still use his sperm for artificial insemination, he is not sterile, but he is impotent. I presume Dr Jim Cairns would have given Gough a colourful account of the story when he got home.



The China-Vietnam Friendship Commune Noticeboard, October 1974.

Saturday was dedicated to the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs, and we had only crewmembers in the party. The official party and its press contingent had another engagement. Some 2,500 km long, the Great Wall winds across northern China running mostly along the southern edge of the Mongolian plain. It is an amalgamation of many walls built to protect China from northern barbarians. The wall's present form dates substantially from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD) but sections of it date back to 200 BC. It averages 7.6 m in height and is 4.5 to 9.0 m thick at the base, sloping to 3.6 m at the top, and is estimated to have taken 300,000 men ten years to build. Guard stations and watch towers are placed at regular intervals. Only a section of the wall near Beijing has been restored and opened to visitors. Walking on the wall and seeing it snaking away across the mountains it was impossible not to be moved by the contemplation of the enormous amount of history written into its stones. There were many Chinese visitors but it was far from crowded. Fortunately the weather was magnificent for viewing and photography. Our timing had been fortunate with the summer dust and heat gone, and just a touch of cold in the evening air.

Spoilt rotten on this trip we had been provided with a chef to prepare a full meal for our lunch and we retired to a nearby building made available for just that purpose. We ate in luxury with our guide and interpreter and got to talk about personal affairs. The working week in China was six days, with only Sunday off. Our guide was a highly educated and qualified engineer who saw his wife for two weeks in the year. She worked as a doctor in a distant province and the only time they saw each other was on each one's annual week's leave. The chef wanted to know how long it took to train a pilot. We told him one could be trained in 12 months, and then get his experience working in a squadron. He said he was better qualified than any pilot. It took him years to become a chef and he never stopped learning. He certainly served magnificent food, and plenty of it.

The thirteen tombs of the Ming Emperors (1368-1643 AD) are nestled in a peaceful valley protected by a semicircular range of hills. Entering the valley we drove along the Sacred Way lined with pairs of stone statues of animals and government ministers, all substantially bigger than lifesize. Their significance is not clear, but some are animals of good omen while the ministers and other animals were meant to serve the dead in the next world. Of the thirteen tombs two had been restored and one of these, Ting Ling, excavated. We descended into the tomb of the Ming Emperor Wan Li and two wives that, although completed in 1588, lay vacant until his death in 1620. This required a long walk down a paved ramp to the tomb entrance. The massive vaults with their arched roofs were built to a standard befitting a palace, and contained the elaborate coffins, furniture, and containers for oil and foodstuffs for the journey into the next life. Above the ground at Ting Ling were two small museums displaying some of the treasures the tomb once contained, and depicting the misery and suffering of the peasants who built the tomb.

To complete the day we were taken shopping. Beijing and Shanghai both had Friendship Stores to cater for foreigners. These were large supermarket cum department stores open to foreigners only, and very spartan in their layout, though with a wide range of items appealing to foreigners. I think we all bought something, and I bought a 22cm high marble carving of a Ming warrior in full regalia. Prices in the Friendship Stores were apparently higher than in the general department stores, but still very reasonable. Currency was the 'REN MIN BI' or 'People's currency', and was circulated in Yuan, Jiao and Fen. Fen were light aluminium coins, the equivalent of 1, 2 and 5 cent pieces. The smallest bank note was 1 Jiao, equal to 10 Fen, and 10 Jiao equalled 1 Yuan. With time to spare we talked our guides into taking us to a general store.

At first they were reluctant. We had noticed also that they constantly kept watch over us wherever we were or whatever we did. Our initial impression was that they were suspicious of our possible actions and intentions. It took some time to realise that they were enormously concerned with our welfare, and watched us so closely lest we come to harm under their supervision. They almost visibly trembled when we crossed roads, until we were safely over. We were to have a more graphic demonstration of this concern for personal responsibility when we wanted to fly out of Beijing. In the department store we became the centre of attention, with people crowding around to look at these white strangers, and some wanting to touch us to see if we were real. They were fascinated by blond and fair hair.

Sunday had initially been scheduled for a visit to an Arts and Crafts Factory, but for some reason this was changed - to our advantage. We ended up on a tour through the Imperial Palace (in The Forbidden City). This walled city was what formed the northern aspect of Tiananmen Square and the Palace had been constructed in the 15th century AD by the Ming Emperor, Yung Lo. The Palace had been restored and added to in the 18th century by Emperor Chien Lung, and was the central part of the old Imperial City which housed high officials, princes and all the craftsmen who worked on the upkeep of the Palace. For 500 years, a succession of 24 emperors lived in the Forbidden City. Within the city walls were temples, granaries and storehouses, vegetable gardens and orchards. The grounds covered an area of 720,000 sq metres, and there were more than 9,000 rooms. Ten-metre high walls surrounded the City and a moat protected the walls. The Imperial Palace had been turned into a museum containing a priceless collection of Chinese bronzes, porcelain, paintings, jade and other treasures, some of the exhibits dating back to prehistoric times.

There are no words with which I can adequately describe the culture and richness in the Imperial Palace, and I must revert to a cliché. It was mind-boggling. On this, and a subsequent trip through the Palace in the following June, I found it impossible to absorb the artistry and the history presented here. Some of the objects I saw and photographed were: gold stupas about a metre high studded with precious stones; the throne behind which the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi controlled the affairs of China before encouraging the Boxer Rebellion; Emperor's clothes intricately and heavily woven with gold and thread made from peacock feathers; the oldest known painting in China (painted in 800 BC), of what looks like a princess and a mythological bird; a three-dimensional gold landscape (about 1 x 1.3 m) with birds, buildings and

trees; and gold musical jar-shaped instruments whose metal value alone exceeded \$1,000,000 at the time. In a courtyard I walked through the arch formed by the Friendship Tree, two trunks and a common top formed by a grafting over a century ago.

Before leaving Beijing we had the opportunity to visit the zoo with its giant pandas. Covering 50 hectares the zoo housed over 2,000 animals from all over the world, but was most famous for the pandas. These gentle and playful black and white animals live in bamboo forests above 2,000 metres altitude. Adults can grow to 1.5 metres long and weigh 140 kg. Threatened with extinction from indiscriminate hunting and other forces, the panda has attracted worldwide attention and support.

Monday, 14 October 1974, brought an end to a historic tour and we left Beijing, still with our extra Chinese crew, and flew back direct to Hong Kong. On this and a subsequent trip I was able to collect an extensive collection of matchboxes for my daughter Susan's collection, and to provide mementos for later years.

From Hong Kong we flew to Kuala Lumpur instead of to Singapore, and checked into a palatial hotel where I ate frogs' legs and venison. Our passengers wanted to see Bali on the way home so we overnighted there on the 16th, staying in the Bali Beach Hotel. Built in the 1960s from Japanese war reparations and formally opened by Sultan Hamenku Buwono on 1 November 1966, this was the only building on the island with 10 storeys. Bali had introduced regulations prohibiting any building taller than 15 metres - the height of a coconut tree - in accordance with its Hindu religion and customs, but authorities at the time bowed to the wishes of President Sukarno whose vision it was to see a hotel on Sanur Beach. (Interestingly this hotel was destroyed on 20 January 1993 in a spectacular fire that started in the Qantas office on the ground floor. It was still being restored in June 1993.) Next day we had to work for our living again as we checked through customs in Alice Springs - where our shoes had to be washed and disinfected because we had been to a commune - and took our passengers to Melbourne before returning to Canberra.

HRH Prince Charles' 1974 Visit

October was a good month, and I took Prince Charles down to Hobart on the 23rd, returning to pick him up for a morning flight to Mangalore on the 26th. Royalty did not give trivial gifts to aircrew who served them, but Charles had

his photograph taken with the crew beside the aircraft and gave each of us an autographed copy. Neatly dressed in a suit, he is flanked by Keith Molloy and Vicki Sherrif. Next outside are myself and Jim Buissey, and on the ends are Bruce Copley, co-pilot, and our flight engineer whose name I have forgotten. Our flight engineers were not aircrew. They were ground engineers borrowed for duty on special trips. Prince Charles was a qualified pilot and talked to us on equal terms about our work. We liked him.



HRH Prince Charles with the aircrew of A12-124, October 1974. (L-R): Flt.Lt Bruce Copley, Flt.Lt Terry Bibbo, Wg.Cdr. Keith Malloy, steward Vicki Sherrif, steward Jim Buissey and a unknown flight engineer

As far as the BAC 1-11 was concerned there was only routine flying until June 1975, but with a third captain in the system, Flight Lieutenant Dave Smith. The role of the Squadron demanded that pilots be well qualified in their job, but all the BAC 1-11 captains were also great personalities. In fact the whole crews were generally well suited to each other regardless of rank. Stewards were junior or senior NCOs, and we usually took a ground engineer along on long flights to provide technical support. In the restaurants or hotels we always

ate together, and we drank together in each other's rooms. We always stayed in good hotels and ate at interesting restaurants. We were no strangers to such places as a piano bar in Adelaide, a steak house in Lae, or the poker machines in the Cooma RSL Club. Or telling jokes from the stage in a hotel restaurant in Port Moresby. The co-pilot carried money to fund our expenses. Some of the best parties in the Squadron were organised and held at Tony Carville's house in Queanbeyan.

By June 1975 Nev Duus who had been promoted to Squadron Leader had replaced me as Navigation Officer. Strictly speaking I should not have been required to work under an officer who only recently had been working under me, and I should have been posted. I made it plain, however, that I did not want a posting and was quite content to work under Nev. We both understood the situation and there was no friction. I kept the position of route check navigator, and had to fail one navigator on a trip back from New Zealand where we would have ended up in strife if the problem I set had been real and not hypothetical. He passed a subsequent test. When a second trip to China came up in this month I was in line. There was some objection because I had been before and others wanted to go. This trip included Japan and North and South Korea, so I was able to argue that China was only a part of the trip and I should retain it. Spike Tyrrell and I went on what was even more historic than my previous trip, with Keith Molloy and Max McGregor as captains and Steve Wessels as co-pilot. Robyn Carey and Tony Carville were our stewards. The purpose of the flight was to take Senator Don Willesee, Minister for External Affairs, on a state visit.

Don Willesee's 1975 State Visit

After World War II Korea was arbitrarily divided into two occupation zones, the Russians north and the Americans south of a line of latitude 38 degrees N. With worsening relations between the USSR and the US, the division was formalised in 1948 with the establishment of two separate regimes, North Korea and South Korea. Relations between the rival governments became strained, and on 25 June 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The United Nations authorised its member nations to give support to South Korea, and Australia was one of fifteen countries that, along with the United States, sent military forces. There was heavy fighting and the war raged until 27 July 1953.

Australia had established diplomatic relations with North Korea at ambassadorial level on 31 July 1974, but we only had a charge d'affaires in the

country. Diplomatic negotiations for the flight were even more convoluted than before because of the relations between the countries we were visiting. North Korea was at cold war with the South, and didn't recognise Japan. In planning the trip we had to allow for return to China from North Korea in order to fly on to Japan and subsequently South Korea. We could not plan any routes to North Korea until we were in China and had local knowledge.

Using a little more flexibility this time we did not go to Singapore. Instead I chose to refuel at Zamboanga in the Philippines and then go direct to Hong Kong. Zamboanga was an international airport, had all the fuelling and administrative facilities we needed, and was out of the congested air corridors of the Manila area. On 4 June we flew to Hong Kong through Alice Springs, Darwin, and Zamboanga. On 6 June we picked up our two Chinese crew for the trip to Beijing. Probably because we had many of the same crewmembers, certainly the same navigator and captains, we were allowed to do our own navigation this time. In fact the whole Chinese-Australian relationship was a lot more relaxed.

We landed in Beijing at 3.30 p.m. on Friday 6 June after a direct flight from Hong Kong, and went through the same procedure as before in convoy to our hotel, this time the Peking Hotel. Once again the first night was dedicated to a banquet in the Great Hall of the People, hosted by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chiao Kuan-hua. We knew all about Moutai this time but protocol had not changed. After the strict two hours for the banquet we returned to the hotel for a well-earned rest. During the remainder of our time in Beijing we had little official contact with Senator Willesee's party, and followed a schedule prepared separately for the crew by our Chinese hosts.

Saturday brought my second visit to the Imperial Palace Museum and, as I said earlier, another culture shock. Entrance to the Museum was through the Wu Men (Meridian Gate), which gave access through a vast courtyard and another gate to the main front part of the Museum and the Three Big Halls. These were the Halls of Supreme Harmony, Middle Harmony and Preserving Harmony, from where the Ming and Ching emperors issued decrees and held ceremonies. Each of these Halls was set in its own raised grounds with a series of enclosing walls, and steps with balustrades. Five stone footbridges crossed an internal moat to the Hall of Supreme Harmony whose gate was protected by a massive bronze lion. The interior of this Hall boasted marble staircases leading to a throne, and gold and red lacquered pillars. The stepping-stone at the back of the Hall of Preserving Harmony has its middle section carved with

clouds and dragons. This is the largest stone carving in the palaces, a work of the Ming period. It was carved in 1761 and is 16.57 metres long, 3.07 metres wide, and 1.70 metres thick and weighs about 250 tonnes. The Imperial Garden in the rear part of the Palace was where the emperors lived, studied and spent their leisure hours. It has an area of over 7,000 square metres, and is planted with pines and cypresses several hundred years old interposed with rocks of various kinds.

In the afternoon we went to the Temple of Heaven, dating back to the 15th century and set in spacious parklands. Every year at the winter solstice the Emperor would travel from the Imperial Palace to the Temple of Heaven and 'speak to the heavens' about all the important events of the last year. At the beginning of every year he would come again to offer sacrifice for a propitious year. The Temple of Heaven consists of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Imperial Vault of Heaven and the Circular Sacrificial Altar. The Imperial Vault of Heaven is a three-tiered building about 30 metres in diameter surrounded by the famous Echo Wall. Standing close to this wall I spoke, and heard my words come back after travelling the circumference of the wall.

Stephen FitzGerald, still the Australian Ambassador in China, held a reception at his Residence on Saturday night, and I met some of the embassy staff involved with our visit. Among them were Ray (First Secretary) and Royna Gardiner, only three and a half months in the country themselves. Ray and Royna invited the crew to a party in their flat up on the twelfth floor of one of the blocks in the diplomatic compound that housed the international diplomatic community. The compound had a secure wall and a guard on the gate. Even the lifts were not open to use freely by the residents and had a Chinese operator. Coming home one night Ray had found the lift vacant and had started taking himself up. He got to the sixth floor before the lift was stopped and brought down to where he was given a lecture before being escorted up to his flat. We would meet again years later when both Royna and I worked for Waltons. Also here I met Steve's secretary, Jean Anderson, who set her eyes on my body and would pursue me relentlessly for the rest of the trip. Unsuccessfully. At a later party in her flat, where we all sat around on the floor because there were so many of us, she cut me out of my group like a dog working sheep and had me backed into a corner where the rest of the crew abandoned me to go home. I escaped from her snare and took refuge in numbers while they were still waiting for the lift to go down. Jean had a pleasant personality and was a competent secretary. She was only about 150 cm tall and very big for her height. Following the reception we socialised for

some time in an underground bar in the Australian embassy quarters, along with diplomatic staff from other embassies in Beijing. The bar was so popular it didn't take long to become a crowded mass of humanity that took all the enjoyment out of being there.

Sunday was programmed for another trip to the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs. There was only the one entrance to the Great Wall and I chose to walk on the Wall in the opposite direction to what I had chosen last time for a change of scenery. The previous night's socialising caught up with me and I had to use the local toilet. I had been accustomed to primitive and smelly toilets from years of activity in Southeast Asia, but this was like no other. Planks over a well-patronised open trench beat anything I had ever used before. Our sightseeing this day was a repeat of the previous occasion, with only a change in the vegetation marking the different seasons. By evening I had rebounded sufficiently from Saturday night to enjoy yet another banquet in the Great Hall of the People on Sunday night, this time hosted by the Australian Foreign Minister. I was getting a taste for Moutai.

On Monday morning we visited another commune where we clapped ourselves in and clapped ourselves out, and then went to the Summer Palace for one of the cultural highlights of the visit. The Summer Palace is on the western outskirts of Beijing and was an imperial garden from the time of the Kin Kingdom in 1115 AD. Three-quarters of the 290 hectares of the Summer Palace is taken up by a large artificial lake and there are numerous pavilions and palaces. A series of long covered promenades connect various pavilions and are decorated with paintings of old Chinese legends. The Summer Palace is now a public park. I was told that the ground here freezes to a depth of one metre during the winter, and that large blocks of ice were cut from the lake for storage in caves in the nearby mountains from where they would be brought back in the summer. Finance for restoration of the Palace and construction of a magnificent, if curious, two-tiered marble boat, was supplied by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi in 1888 from money originally collected from the people for the development of a modern navy.

The Summer Palace can be divided into two parts, Longevity Hill with its Covered Promenade, Porcelain Pagoda, Bronze Pavilion, Great Stage and other equally spectacular attractions; and Kunming Lake with its Marble Boat, Seventeen Arch Bridge, Jade Belt Bridge and extensive water gardens. The bridges are all artistically shaped. There are over 3,000 halls, pavilions, towers and promenades, which, collectively, must represent a microcosm of China's

culture. In two long narrow boats with awnings we were rowed around Kunming Lake to appreciate what can only be described as its unparalleled beauty. On land we walked until exhausted to inspect what we could in the time available to us, and we came away fascinated, impressed, and awed by what we had been either lucky enough or privileged enough to experience.

Tuesday was taken up with a visit to a factory producing delicate artwork. I watched a girl painting a detailed picture on the inside surface of a small, broad bottle about 40 mm tall and 30 mm wide, but with only about a 10 mm open top. From here we were introduced to Chinese housing and education. The housing estate was similar to the Tsaoyang Workers' New Residential Area we had visited in Shanghai in 1974 but not mentioned. It was clean and orderly, considering the number of basically peasant class families it contained. The people lived with two or more families to one house or unit, depending on the generation gap. Essentially each family owned a bedroom and shared other facilities, paying rent of between three and eight per cent of their average wages. Health, housing, power, sanitary facilities and education were provided free or heavily subsidised by the state and, while they were far from rich, the people were at least healthy and supplied with adequate food and clothing. Communes and villages supported what they called 'bare foot doctors' - roving medical orderlies with a basic practical training in treating everyday ailments. From their very early years children were housed in dormitories with housemothers to look after them, enabling both their parents to work in the fields or factories. In the mornings they could be seen trooping across the fields or along the village roads, each carrying a small wooden stool, heading off to their education. Healthy, happy, colourful and well-dressed, tiny children performed folk dances for us in their classrooms and sang traditional songs probably extolling the virtues of the communist state. Older boys and girls, probably about six years old, put on a larger show for us in the school grounds. Dressed in red and white uniforms they exercised in rows with wooden rifles and brought their dance to a climax by forming the five-pointed Red Star, with a trio of children separately hoisting the Red Flag and flanking it with ported rifles. Education was free, but it was certainly directed.

Not until Wednesday 11 June did we leave Beijing for Shenyang. The official party had left the previous day by CAAC aircraft to visit Chang Chun, and we would meet them again in Shenyang. Relations had improved to the extent that we did not even carry Chinese crew on this trip. They trusted us to go alone. But first of all we had to get out of Beijing. Our aircraft had been sitting under guard for five days at the airport, and when we approached it on Wednesday

morning the guard made it clear we were not welcome. Since it was our aircraft and we wanted to fly it we made it equally plain that we intended boarding it, firstly to get documents for flight planning and then to depart. When the guard drew a line on the ground between the aircraft and us, stepped behind the line and cocked his rifle, we surrendered. It was his aircraft until he was officially relieved of the responsibility. We found Chinese authority to issue him the necessary orders.

In northeast China on the Hun River, Shenyang was China's fourth largest city with a population of 2,400,000, and was the leading industrial centre in Manchuria. Our lives were still under Chinese control and we were issued with our itinerary for after lunch. It was planned to visit two factories, one heavy industry and the other a feather factory. Keith Molloy was not feeling the best and went to bed to rest in preparation for yet another banquet planned for Wednesday night. He appointed me his representative and I took the prime place in the leading car of the convoy, with local dignitaries as my companions. Our engineering officer, Flight Lieutenant Mike Hodgkinson, was technically critical of the equipment we saw in the first factory but it was certainly functional. With a sad history of Russian and Japanese occupation and development Shenyang was not familiar with Australians, and it fell on me to make intelligent small talk and suitably appreciative comments. This was made easier when we went to the feather factory. As you are probably wondering now so did we wonder then. What was a 'feather factory' all about? Here they took the feathers from dead birds from all over China and made two- and three-dimensional pictures from them. These ranged in size from tiny to a large mural, taking up space on one wall of the factory and depicting a crowd of young people on the march, against a backdrop of the Great Wall and its surrounding scenery. All colours were natural and the feathers were painstakingly placed one by one to contribute its colour where it was needed.

I bought a picture measuring 11 x 19 cm, of a small bird sitting on a branch, beak open, singing. There are other branches in four sizes, foliage in greens and autumn tones, and flowers with white petals and yellow stamens. The bird is white bodied with pink shades on the head and back, black tipped wings and dark brown tail. If that sounds ghastly it is because of my description, because the picture is quite natural and pleasing. Everything in the picture is feather. The branches are quills, and even the pollen is ground yellow feather. It is a glorious piece of Chinese artwork. After our tour we sat down for the inevitable tea and talk, and the factory representative said how much they were honoured by our attendance. In reply I had no embarrassment in telling him

that we were the ones who were honoured. In all our collective travels we had covered much of the world and thought we had seen most of what there was to see. But none of us had ever seen anything like his feather factory with its meticulous and skilful workers producing such art. And on that note we returned to our accommodation to prepare for what was to be the banquet of all banquets.

Our accommodation was the Guest House No. 42. Before Liberation this had been the American legation, and was situated halfway between the Xinquiao Hotel and Qian Men Gate. The official party was housed in the East Building, while the crew was housed in the Main Building, which also contained the dining room. We were advised not to drink the tap water in Shenyang or even to swim in it, and we drank from carafes provided in the rooms. Or else we drank the excellent Chinese beer that went down well and didn't leave a hangover. On both of the China trips we drank their beer freely at no cost to ourselves. Spike Tyrrell and I shared a room, as did most others, but Keith Molloy as captain and Robyn Carey as the only female crewmember had single rooms.

Our hosts for Wednesday night's banquet were the Liaoning Provincial Revolutionary Committee, and I think they found this night a good occasion to let down their hair and celebrate. There must have been at least two hundred seated for dinner and the food, as usual, was plentiful and excellent. Spike, Robyn and I were three of the crew at one table of twelve; six Australians and six Chinese. It was not long before the toasts were flowing: Your country and my country. Your aeroplane and our aeroplanes. Your family and my family. Occasions were found from thin air and there was no two-hour time limit to this banquet. Robyn soon found this too much, but protocol demanded that she participate. So Spike and I explained to our hosts that it was customary in Australia for a man to drink a lady's toast if she could not. They accepted this, but with a stipulation. Spike drank Robyn's next toast plus his own. I drank the following toast for her but so did Spike, at their insistence. From then on both of us had to drink two toasts every time. Robyn kept some sort of count and said later that I drank at least 25 toasts that night. (Moutai is 53% alcohol by volume.) During the course of the meal Senator Willesee and the Chinese Chairman had addressed us. I had taken offence at something Willesee had said that I thought reflected on the crew and had wandered across to Keith Molloy's table to discuss it with him. This was not the done thing in such circumstances. Obviously the Moutai had got to me. Stephen FitzGerald made the rounds of the dining hall, drinking at least one

toast at each table. He had obviously acclimatised to Moutai in his ambassadorial post. When he stopped at our table I again expressed my concern at whatever Willesee had said, but Steve only laughed it off. Then the banquet ended at last and we got up to leave.

While I felt quite clear-headed I also felt as though my legs had turned to lead, but we had not finished yet. Immediately after dinner it was planned that we all gather in an upstairs hall for after dinner drinks and socialising. Keith called me aside for a man-to-man talk in my room before going upstairs and, realising my condition, I offered not to go. This was not acceptable as we had been seen to leave and we must be seen to return - the best of friends. We could not lose face with the Chinese. From that point I lost several hours of my life and can only tell it as it was subsequently told to me. I honestly have no conscious memory of anything after our talk until the following morning. As the story goes, I went with Keith to the upstairs hall, behaved socially and talked sensibly for a reasonable period of time, and then excused myself to go to bed. My room was only downstairs and along a couple of corridors. Here I lay down on my bed fully dressed in suit and shoes. Spike Tyrrell saw the ambassador's secretary slip out shortly after I did and followed her to my room where she was taking my shoes off. The fact that I would have been incapable of meeting any of her demands was apparently not obvious to her. Spike locked me in to sleep off my problem. About that stage I must have almost been a candidate for a poem Judith subsequently found:

Bibo

an epigram

*When Bibo thought fit from the world to retreat,
As full of Champagne as an egg's full of meat,
He wak'd in the boat; and to charon he said,
He wou'd be row'd back, for he was not yet dead.
Trim the boat, and sit quiet, stern charon reply'd:
You may have forgot, you were drunk when you dy'd.*

Matthew Prior

It was about five o'clock when I woke the next morning with a raging thirst but otherwise feeling none the worse for wear. I did not have a hangover, and I did not have a headache. I drank my litre of water, which only slaked my thirst for a short time. Then I drank Spike's litre of water. When the effects of that wore off I went down to Robyn's room to steal hers, but like a sensible girl she had her door locked. Keith's room was opposite ours and his door was

open. So I drank his litre too. After that I stayed thirsty until breakfast time, and for the rest of the day I drank copious amounts of Coca-Cola from the aircraft rations. My indiscretion of the previous night was forgotten or forgiven, but my punishment for it was a mental blackout of several hours. I wondered how Steve FitzGerald and the members of the Revolutionary Committee were feeling.

Before lunch we had a short tour of the town and visited a palace, a temple and other buildings that were but shadows of what we had seen in Beijing. A 20-foot statue of Mao Zedong on a 20-foot pedestal surrounded by his young revolutionaries reminded us we were still in one communist country and would soon be leaving for another of unknown dimensions.

From Shenyang to Pyongyang on 12 June was only a one-hour flight, but when we took off we did not know whether we would be speaking English (the international language), Chinese, Korean, or Russian in our communications. The Chinese provided two multi-lingual interpreters to cover all possibilities. In the event we used English. We were, by now, reasonably well informed on the structure and performance of communism, but our Chinese hosts had said, 'You think you have seen communism, but you have seen nothing till you have seen North Korea'. And they laughed and shook their heads as they said it. They were not joking.

We landed in Pyongyang at about 5.00 p.m. and almost immediately began to appreciate what the Chinese had meant. We were the first Australian servicemen to set foot in North Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953, and our very presence in Pyongyang was a historic occasion. Normally, as navigator, I should have been the first person to leave the aircraft. In deference to Keith Molloy as Commanding Officer I let him be the very first of us to set foot on Korean soil, then I was next. On the drive in to the city we could see anti-aircraft guns and cannons on the hills and ridges flanking the road. What would have passed as bus shelters along the road in most other towns were machine gun emplacements. We were accommodated in the International Hotel, which, I think, had seven or eight floors above road level. Mounted on its roof was a massive standard 'Long live the great Juche idea', Kim Il Sung's grand plan for self-sufficiency. We shared rooms on the fourth floor, overlooking a lake in one direction and gardens in the other. There was no air conditioning or even a small refrigerator. To get 'cross flow air-conditioning' we had to leave the hall and balcony doors open to let a breeze

through. This also let in the incessant martial music that was broadcast through loud speakers in the park.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was led by its president, Kim Il Sung. Trained in Moscow before the Second World War he became the Republic's first premier when it was established on 1 May 1948 and became president in 1972. He instituted a program of industrialisation, strengthened the armed forces and promoted considerable material progress. But it was a closely controlled society accompanied by regimentation and loss of individual liberty. In March 1974 he had 'opened the new tax-free era in Korea, the fatherland of Juche, a great event in human history which thrilled the people with boundless emotion and joy'. Korea had been formally annexed to the Japanese Empire in 1910 and Kim Il Sung was worshipped as having crushed Japanese Imperialism. Publicly idolised throughout the country he was becoming one of the modern world's most enduring revolutionary leaders. Newspapers, magazines, posters, radio, and every person who spoke continually praised him with a variety of adulatory titles. The most popular was 'The Respected and Beloved Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung'. The expression was to become so frequent that it grated on us. Kim Il Sung had set himself up as a god. It was overpowering. His picture was everywhere; his statues were everywhere. His presence was all pervading and society revolved around his personality.

As was our custom we had a small party with our own beer immediately after settling in, this time in Keith Molloy's room. Our security people had briefed us before leaving Australia to expect that our rooms would be bugged in communist countries, and to watch our conversation. To us the bug was always Fred and he lived in the ceiling. After a few beers we told Fred that we were used to much better accommodation than this, and the very least he could do was provide refrigerators for us to keep our beer cold in. Then we went down to dinner. This was typical Australian steak and chips, ordered for us by the charge d'affaires' staff. It was accompanied by bottled water, and beer that was never the same out of any two bottles. We drank it anyway. Towards the end of the meal a waiter came up to take our orders for breakfast. After a quick discussion we started ordering bulk amounts like 'fourteen slices of toast, ten cups of coffee, two cups of tea, four bacon and eggs etc'. That wasn't the way it was done. 'How many grams of toast?' 'How many grams of butter?' 'How many grams of jam?' And so it went on. We had to specify the precise quantity of every item we ordered, and that is what we got. At first we had to estimate how many slices and how many grams to a loaf of bread even, before we

started calculating the other items. Somehow we solved the problem so as not to go hungry, and ate local food instead of Australian. Korean chopsticks were short, stainless steel and pointed, different from any I had ever used before.

Our first compulsory tour was after breakfast next morning when we were taken out to see Kim Il Sung's birthplace, now a national park. We travelled in buses and drove past fields under cultivation. Near each group of workers was an open pyramid formed by their rifles, with butts on the ground and bayonets interlocking for mutual support. The park was impressive but lacking in sincerity. Mangyongdae, the Cradle of the Revolution, was where 'the great Revolutionary leader Comrade Kim Il Sung' was born on 15 April 1912. Now it is a place of worship for the Korean people and on the compulsory itinerary of every significant visitor to Pyongyang. Let me quote from one of the multitude of articles written on Mangyongdae: 'The birth of the great leader! It was the most auspicious event seen for the first time in our national history of 5,000 years. It was when our country was trampled underfoot by their bloodstained jackboots of the Japanese imperialists and whole nation condemned to brutal suppression. But the birth of Comrade Kim Il Sung, the great sun of nation, was the dawning of new morning of history which would lead Korea to tear off shackles of the Japanese imperialists' colonial rule and win back her independence over her three thousand-ri long territory'. The heart of the park was the straw-thatched native house in which Kim Il Sung was born and spent his childhood. It and the barn still contained various farming instruments and a loom, a mortar and a deformed jar used by four generations of his ancestors. The kitchen contained iron pots, tableware and water jars used by his mother, Kang Ban Sok, and portraits of his grandparents hung on the wall of the first room. In the yard were the 'Warship Rock' and the 'Sliding Rock' on which, as a boy, he would play at crushing Japanese imperialists. A Korean War ditty had said:

*They seek him here, they seek him there,
They seek the bastard everywhere,
Will he be shot or will he be hung,
The damned elusive Kim Il Sung.*

Obviously he was neither shot nor hung, and had gone on to greatness in his country.

When we returned to our rooms before lunch every aircrew room had a refrigerator in it. **Fred** had been listening. North Korea hated Japan and refused to recognise its existence, yet these were Japanese refrigerators with

the nameplates removed. Official cars we had seen were Toyotas with the nameplates removed. Koreans were pragmatic communists. To check on Fred I went to the charge d'affaires' office on the sixth floor and asked about refrigerators. 'Look', he said, 'we have a refrigerator here. Our door is never locked. You can use that. Come up anytime'. Then I went to the press area, on the fourth floor with us but in a different section of the hotel. The reaction there was more vocal. 'Effing refrigerators! You can't get an effing cold drink here let alone an effing refrigerator!' I didn't tell either the charge d'affaires or the journos about Fred. And I certainly didn't tell the press that we were getting cold Korean beer free on room service.

The next day, Friday 13 June, was dedicated to a tour of selected cultural exhibits including the Children's Palace, and an al fresco lunch in a garden. As in China, Kim Il Sung took the children for indoctrination at a very young age. We saw classes painting, but it was obvious to us that the children were painting by numbers and there was no room for individual expression. We had a ballet class perform for us, beautiful, healthy, smiling children. But watching closely we saw that the smiles became scowls the moment they thought they were out of sight behind a pillar, to be switched on again as they came back into view. We watched classes of sub-teenage children assembling and disassembling automatic weapons as part of their 'artistic' education. As the Chinese had told us, 'You haven't seen anything till you've seen North Korea'. On Friday night we attended a formal concert by Korean children. Colourful and professional, it was a credit to the children even if their subjects were Revolutionary Operas with stereotyped militaristic or nationalistic themes. One solo performer on a xylophone I will remember as long as I live. I think it must have been the most moving music I have ever heard, and I wasn't the only one. The entire audience gave her spontaneous applause, and talked about her music afterwards. We wished we had been able to record it.

On Saturday we had to attend an industrial exhibition of North Korean products. The crew schedule put us in the exhibition centre some time before the official party arrived, and we wandered around freely inspecting the exhibits. Pyongyang appeared to have been rebuilt by amateurs after the War. On close inspection verticals and horizontals in buildings were actually wavy lines. The metal panels of their cars appeared to have been beaten out with a ball peen hammer, not pressed in a mould. Windows were hard to look through because the two surfaces of the glass were never parallel and consequently distorted everything. This showed up in the industrial exhibition, and Mike Hodgkinson said that the lathes on display resembled those he had

done his apprenticeship on 25 years earlier. Even before the Senator's party arrived we had seen enough. So when the official tour began with its guides and interpreters we did not join it. A lady guide then invited us to join, and finally told us to join. We still refused until she went for help, and we were very firmly told to join the tour or be the subject of an international incident. So we joined the tour.

We listened to how Kim Il Sung virtually created flax; how he stood on a section of ground and said that here would be a gold mine, and it was; how he looked at barren fields and said they would produce bumper crops of rice, and they did. But when we were told that North Korea invented crop dusting I'd had too much. I protested strongly and said Australia had invented crop dusting long before North Korea had heard of it. (Actually I didn't know who invented crop dusting but I thought it was Australia, and I wasn't prepared for it to be them. In fact it was America who flew the first crop spraying in Ohio on 3 August 1921, to dust a grove infested with leaf caterpillars.) From then on I was ostracised from the group and might as well not have existed. North Korea was passionately in love with itself but not prepared to recognise any limitations. We had seen and heard by now that massive convoys of trucks and trains moved throughout the night, so as not to present a daytime target. But in the early mornings we could see the number of stalled trucks from the convoys littering the streets. They were quickly removed. None of the streets had names, so that nobody could report on the location of any buildings.

After lunch on the Friday we refused to go on the scheduled tour. We were told we must. To give them leeway I said that the aircrew needed the afternoon to prepare for the morrow's flight. Our guide went away for consultation with his superiors. When he returned he approved that the **aircrew** could stay behind but everyone else must go. The aircrew were to remain in the hotel and could play billiards and table tennis. When a table tennis ball bounced off a verandah and fell two storeys below road level we were not permitted to retrieve it. That evening we found out why. We were not permitted to operate the lifts in the hotel and had always been taken to our floor by a porter. When a few of us wanted to go up to our rooms on Friday night there was no porter obvious, so we stepped into the lift and Spike Tyrrell was about to press the button for the fourth floor. Suddenly a Korean hand appeared in a karate chop to Spike's arm but stopped short of connecting. Then the Korean pressed the lift button, but in his haste he pressed the wrong one and we went down. At the basement the doors opened automatically to show a grill leading into a room full of racks of electronic equipment. Obviously connected to a lot of

Freds throughout the country. The Korean porter was confused and embarrassed to have shown us this and hastily took us to our fourth floor.

As background to why we hated journos, and particularly to what we did after table tennis on Friday 13 June 1975, I will quote an article subsequently printed in the Melbourne Truth.

RAAF AT WAR IN KOREA

By The Whip

THE RAAF has gone to war again in Korea - this time a war of words. The action took place on the Foreign Affairs Minister, Senator Don Willesee's visit to North Korea. The Senator was flown by a RAAF crew of 14 in a BAC 1-11 from the Government's VIP squadron. The 14-member RAAF crew were the first Australian servicemen to set foot in North Korea since Australian prisoners were released after the end of the Korean war in 1953.

Wherever the crew went in North Korea they were confronted with heavy propaganda from their hosts. And in most cases they gave as good as they got. The fact that they argued back almost got them into trouble with the Foreign Affairs Department, which was worried that they were getting too deeply into politics instead of just flying aeroplanes. As one RAAF man said: 'It's pretty hard to keep your cool when children spit on the ground when they see you coming in the streets.' North Korean children have been taught to hate Americans. There is little doubt they would have thought the RAAF crew were the hated Yankees.

But not everything in North Korea was unpleasant. The RAAF brought along some samples of Melbourne beer - only to find their hotel rooms did not have a refrigerator. Their North Korean hosts promptly provided 14 Japanese made fridges and didn't seem to worry about the snub for the local product.

I was the RAAF man quoted and it wasn't like that at all. After a few rounds of table tennis and after the tour had left, we decided to leave the hotel and all go in different directions, figuring that the Koreans could not anticipate this and would not have troops standing by to apprehend us. Some people went to the park where, in fact, they were followed by little men flitting from tree to tree on the fringe of their vision. They were not obstructed until they came to a bridge with a soldier on it who blocked their entry. They were probably approaching a military establishment. Others took photos around town. I was strolling along a street when I saw a troop of youths in army uniforms and boots marching towards me and singing what was apparently a marching song. When they recognised me for what I was they abruptly ceased singing. As they passed me they stared at me as do troops giving the eyes right to a dignitary in a parade. After they had passed they resumed singing. I told Spike Tyrrell. Spike Tyrrell told a journo. The journo embellished it to make a story.

We decided to celebrate our last night in Pyongyang as we had celebrated our first - with a party in Keith Molloy's room. Realising that it was at least slightly risky we also decided to regale Fred with songs and ditties from the Korean

War era, some disparaging the Korean pilots but some making a joke of the American administration too. There were LPs of them available then and many of them were very clever, particularly one called *Oscar Brand in the Air Force*. We hoped that if Fred was interested in our songs he would not have them translated before we left next morning. The party was over and we had all gone to bed when we were summoned by hotel staff. We were ordered to get dressed and to prepare for an audience with the Defence Minister. Had they translated the songs already? . . . He didn't want to incarcerate us for our singing, he wanted to give us each a gift to remember Pyongyang by. I was given two bottles of Ginseng Liquor with the grotesque roots of the plants in the bottles.

Three days after arrival we left Pyongyang. Contrary to international practice we were not permitted, let alone required, to file a flight plan, and simply departed after we had recovered our passports at the airport. Crew passports were not returned until we specifically asked for them, and a messenger had to be sent for them. While we waited we really did wonder about Fred and our singing. Once airborne we submitted a flight plan by radio to Beijing so that they had a record of our movement.

To drop our Chinese crew we had to return to Beijing. This done we had to refuel in Shanghai for the leg to Tokyo. Departing Shanghai was an embarrassment. We were running late in our itinerary, and to save time Max McGregor went to the flight briefing while I submitted a prepared flight plan. I was no longer using the circular slide rule navigation computer, though I still carried a smaller non-standard one on all my flights. Calculators had improved so rapidly that I had adopted one as my basic computer, and had created formulas for all the calculations I needed to do before takeoff. In Shanghai I had a Casio pocket-mini that had the four basic functions plus a memory into which calculations could be saved. This was a lovely little device at the time; only 10 x 6 x 2 centimetres and running off two AA cells or an AC adaptor. The Chinese in the flight planning office - where they still used straight slide rules - were fascinated by my Casio and crowded me while I did my flight planning. Max and I didn't get to talk to each other before takeoff. The Chinese had given Max a different departure procedure than the one I had filed and he hadn't told me. My departure took us over a military area that they had specifically asked him to avoid. They probably thought we were spying when we flew straight into this area after takeoff, and smartly directed us out of it. This threw all my carefully calculated plans to the four winds besides

having the potential to cause an international incident. We apologised for the confusion and hoped they understood.

Arriving at Tokyo airport on 15 June was like joining the queue in an airborne bus terminal. There were aircraft everywhere under very strict control and we were slotted into the landing pattern. With VIPs on board we always tried to maintain our schedule to the minute. It was always my aim to open the aircraft door at the precise second of the scheduled arrival time. The controlled landing would have made us several minutes early, so we asked the control tower to send us around to lose time and explained why. They were marvellous. I put my watch away and they put us on a deviation that brought us in right on time. In taxiing in we passed an enormous row of 747s like airborne taxis. They moved internally in Japan as public transport, just like trams or buses in other countries.

In planning our four days in Tokyo we had liaised with Qantas and been briefed by them on conditions including cost of living and local customs. Qantas met us at Haneda airport and took us to the Imperial Hotel that we had nominated in Australia as the hotel of our choice. Here, in the lounge, they shouted us one round of drinks and proceeded to tell us how costly it was to live in Tokyo. Listening to them, and checking the hotel price lists, we soon concluded that we were facing a hard time here - even with RAAF allowances. After breakfast next morning we changed the entire complexion of their briefing by abandoning the tourist beat that they followed and would have us follow. Accommodation was no problem since that was billed straight to the RAAF, but meals were a different story. So we moved about one block into the native quarter and away from the congested tourist thoroughfare, and found a clean cafe. It had a few horseshoe shaped counters with a chef inside each one and stools around the outside. In the window were plastic replicas of the various meals available. Even we could read replicas if we couldn't read Japanese. We ate most of our meals here from then on, and could get a nourishing meal and a bottle of beer for a few dollars. We got so welcome they would clear a horseshoe for us when they saw us coming.

Japan, where we had to arrange everything for ourselves, was much quieter than China or Korea with their planned activities. Our first full day was taken up with window-shopping and visits to the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Tower. The Imperial Palace was set in extensive gardens in an otherwise very crowded maze of a city of 9,000,000 people, but had none of the grandeur of China. Considering the devastation inflicted on the city during the Second World War

it showed marvellous resilience in its modern reconstruction. The Tokyo Tower, built in 1958, was a dominant feature of the Tokyo scene. Apparently, at 333 metres tall, it eclipses the Eiffel Tower by 33 metres, and is one of the highest supported-steel structures of its type in the world. The tower provided broadcasting and TV relay facilities, showrooms, an amusement parlour and an observation platform. The views from there were certainly spectacular. A street artist with scissors cut two quite respectable profiles of my head out of black paper, stamped them with his chop, and put them under plastic for safe keeping. For good measure he threw in a standard lamp and a female entertainer with microphone. He was very fast and accurate.

Wanting to try the famous 'bullet train' - the Shinkan-sen - reputedly the most comfortable and fastest in the world then, on Tuesday we chose the shortest trip that would let us get the feel. This was a 43-minute ride to Odawara and cost 2,680 yen return (\$A7). Because there was one stop on the way the train never got to its full speed of 200 km/h but was impressive nevertheless. Its smoothness in accelerating from stopped was such that a cigarette standing upright on the arm of the seat did not fall over. When it stopped at stations its doors were lined up with painted queue marks for passengers to step straight in. Computer controlled from a central control room, the Shinkan-sen had never had an accident.

Odawara was totally foreign territory to us and English a foreign language there. While the others went window-shopping I searched for a restaurant for lunch, and found one upstairs in a shopping complex. It was traditional Japanese where we sat on the floor with our legs under the table. We got the message through to Mama-san that whatever she brought us to eat was OK with us. That way we could be pretty sure of getting authentic menu items, not something concocted for us. When we were settled in she brought her daughter out to us. She spoke a little English and wanted this opportunity to practice. We spent a couple of happy hours there, eating good food, drinking excellent Japanese bottled beer, and drinking sake from square, wooden cups. When the time came to leave we were given a distinctive plastic ashtray each as souvenirs.

One of the pleasures in travelling in Tokyo was that it was completely free from the evils of tipping. At railway stations there was a standard charge per bag, and hotels, restaurants and nightclubs added the service charge to the bill. Mike Hodgkinson paid the taxi driver when we returned to the hotel from

Odawara and didn't wait for change. The taxi driver abandoned his car and ran into the foyer after us to return our change in small coins.

On Wednesday 18 June I teamed up with a secretary from the embassy and we went out to dinner and a stroll through the Ginza, Tokyo's shopping and entertainment centre. One other nice feature of Tokyo life was that it was one of the safest cities in the world for visitors. Mugging was unheard of, and it was quite safe to walk the dark streets in the dead of night. But the narrow streets of the Ginza were lit with neon signs and streetlights. The people in them ranged from women who might have stepped in their costumes straight from the cast of *Madam Butterfly* to executives in business suits. We were hailed from across the street by such a businessman. He didn't speak English but wanted us to join him in drinking sake at his table in the street. The warm sake kept coming in kettles from inside the shop until we had to leave, and even with the language barrier we enjoyed each other's company for that time.

On 19 June we flew to Seoul, the capital of South Korea, and ended up only 198 kilometres from Pyongyang. South Korea, known as the Republic of Korea, has a different post-war history from its northern neighbour, but colourful nevertheless. It inherited about two million refugees from the North after the Korean War but also received economic and technical assistance from the United States and Japan that materially assisted its development. Syngman Rhee became president in 1948 - the same year that Kim Il Sung came to power in the North - and was exiled in 1960 for election-rigging. The president in 1975, General Chung Hee Park, came to power after a military coup in 1961, became president two years later, and would be assassinated in 1979 by the head of his own intelligence agency after an increasingly autocratic rule. In 1975 tensions were high between North and South Korea, and had increased in the first half of the year after the discovery of a number of tunnels from the North under the demilitarised zone between the two countries, and communist victories in Cambodia and Vietnam. One of the tunnels was three feet high and four feet wide with reinforced concrete slabs, and had electric lights, a narrow-gauge railway, sleeping quarters and drainage. Another was six feet high and six feet wide, and was presumably for rapid troop movement in a mass invasion. Several other tunnels were thought to exist.

We stayed in the Chosun Hotel, which was what the International Hotel in North Korea should have been modelled on. This was set up and back a bit from a main road so that we had a courtyard and a row of shops to walk through to get into the public thoroughfare. Here I bought a pair of brass wall

hangings about 25 centimetres tall, the symbols for long life and happiness throughout the region. Only about 30 kilometres from the Yellow Sea on the western side of the Korean Peninsula and with the Taebaek Mountains to the east, Seoul in June had a pleasant temperate climate. We wandered around in shorts and shirtsleeves while people back in Canberra were rugged up against the cold. Our sightseeing in Seoul was restricted to what we could see by foot or taxi around town and what we were shown by our volunteer guide from the Australian embassy. I think he was a RAAF Sergeant but he may have been Army. We needed him to get around because the city was crowded, with a population of probably around 5,000,000. I had thought the traffic in Bangkok bad, but in Seoul it was positively lethal. In driving around town in taxis we soon got to refer to the 'magic hand' that every driver had. There appeared to be no road rules other than that vehicles drove on the right side, and cars bunched up all over the road. Yet they moved, and without accident. Being a few inches ahead of cars beside him gave a driver priority, and lane changing was effected by simply putting out the 'magic hand' and turning at the same time, regardless of traffic density or flow. The 'magic hand' appeared to have the effect of parting the traffic in the same way as the biblical parting of the waters. Since they all lived by the same rules there were no accidents that we saw, and not even any fights. There is no way any of us would have attempted to drive in Seoul.

Seoul had been headquarters of the US forces during the Korean War and still supported a strong American presence from which it undoubtedly benefited. It did have good roads and overpasses to cope with its unruly traffic, and to service its modern business centre. There was no overt sign of the siege mentality exhibited by its northern counterpart, but a constant preparedness for war existed. Regular drills embracing the entire town were held to accustom the inhabitants to the actions required in the event of invasion. I was told that the overpasses on the major roads were designed so that they could be explosively separated at their ends, and would fall across the road below to form an obstacle to traffic, particularly tanks. Looking out my bedroom window I had a view of the Observatory Tower on Namsan Hill, which was what Canberra's Black Mountain Tower would resemble on a smaller scale when it was built. Keith Molloy was the only one invited to any diplomatic functions and the rest of us looked after ourselves. Probably on the second night there, Friday, we all wandered into town for dinner. I wasn't impressed with the place that was chosen and decided to find myself a true Korean restaurant where I could taste local food. I did find a place where there was no

English understood, and had a look at what the patrons were eating. Then I said, 'I'll have some of that, and some of that'. Not only did it taste dreadful it smelt revolting, and I collected a receipt for it and left.

I spent my birthday on Saturday 21st, at a private lakeside home on a picnic organised by the Sergeant attached to the embassy. He organised cars and drove us to a holiday home belonging to friends. This took us through the rural countryside where we saw the traditional houses and temples of the country. The home was a two-story one at the foot of a mountain with a terrace opening into a lake. The terrace was protected with a stone wall, and had a wide covered pontoon with three fingers allowing for two boats to be berthed in it. With picnic rations including watermelon we had bought on the drive out we spent a very pleasant final day before starting our journey homeward.

From Seoul we flew through Hong Kong with a refuelling stop in Okinawa. That was my first encounter with a totally computer-generated flight plan. Other operations through American bases had involved computer-assisted flight plans that still needed some work for personal preferences like flight levels. This one covered everything from takeoff to arrival at destination. Fortunately we were not committed to adhering to it once we were airborne. My encounters with computer-generated weather forecasts, particularly in Australia, always left me wishing for more human involvement.

In Hong Kong Max McGregor and I let our hair down and enjoyed a handfed Kobe beef steak at the famous King's Lodge restaurant in the Palace Hotel. Then we visited a series of the backstreet bars where the bar tenders were all topless (and nearly bottomless) attractive young Asian women. Steve Wessels and Spike Tyrrell must have had responsibility for the following day's flying.

Hong Kong to Canberra was a mirror image of the journey out, with refuelling at Zamboanga, Darwin and Alice Springs, with an overnight stay in the Alice. We were back in Canberra on 24 June.

The Final BAC 1-11 Flights

For all my flying to date I had never been to our near neighbour, New Zealand. The opportunity arose in July 1975 with a trip to a Royal New Zealand Air Force base at Whenuapai and the capital, Wellington, both on the North Island. From Wellington we did some local flying to the South Island to see the snowfields and slopes. Known as Windy Wellington the city certainly earned its epithet. Squadron members spoke of New Zealand at the time as

being 'more British than Britain', as having more second-hand cars than new ones on the roads, and as a socialist society destructive of personal initiative. Certainly my very brief visit of three days on 6-8 July indicated that all of these observations might have been correct, and I didn't like their beer either. It was coming home from this trip that I failed John Woods on his route check. He was the only navigator I had to fail the whole time I was there.

July 1975 was to be important for its political implications on the Squadron. This was the month in which Whitlam dismissed Dr Jim Cairns as Deputy Prime Minister over the Khemlani loans affair. Outside of Government, some members of the Labor Party had arranged for massive loans from Saudi Arabia, channelling illegal commissions to Dr Jim Cairns' son, Philip, and to his secretary, Junie Morosi. The loans affair ultimately led to the premature removal of the Labor Party from office.

Prince Charles was in Papua New Guinea for the Independence Day celebrations on 16 September 1975. Once again Keith Molloy and I teamed up to pick him up in Port Moresby on the 19th and provide local transport. Stu Bryce had joined the Squadron, and he was co-pilot. I had left Stu on Hercules towards the end of my time there. This time we took the Prince to Bali for a two day holiday, and we stayed at the Legian Beach Hotel with Indonesian-style bungalows tastefully set in gardens - a big improvement over the Bali Beach Hotel. Entertainment at night was classical Indonesian music with the gamelan, and Javanese dancing, which I enjoyed. On 21 September we took Charles to Singapore and left him at Tengah, my old stamping ground but very much changed in almost twenty years. The Prince was once again talkative and friendly, and again had his photo taken with the crew. These were in colour and he wasn't around to autograph them when they were processed. While the rest of us are in uniform, Charles is in a floral shirt worn outside his cream slacks. Vicki Sherrif is tucked into his left side and Jim Buissey, our senior steward now, is next to Vicki again.

This was my final visit to Singapore in the RAAF, and the place had changed significantly from the city I loved. It was now a bustling metropolis of high-rise buildings, with five-star tourist hotels lining Orchard Road and mushrooming elsewhere. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, whom we had known in the late 50s as 'the barefoot mayor', had transformed the island into what would become a technological centre of excellence in the region. Streets were impeccably clean, with on-the-spot fines for littering. Society was united behind his efforts, despite some outspoken dissidents. The city had a ring road

within which private vehicles were banned during business hours, thus removing much of the congestion and pollution afflicting many of the world's capitals. Hectares of land once occupied by Chinese cemeteries now supported housing estates and major roads. Singapore was a model of advancement in the modern world, and to be admired as such, but it was no longer home to me. I came home on 22 September, refuelling at Bali and Alice Springs. (Lee Kuan Yew was to resign on 26 November 1990 at the age of 67, after 31 years as Prime Minister of the thriving city-state.)

Sir John Kerr had replaced Sir Paul Hasluck as Governor-General in June 1974, putting him in the position of power where he was to dismiss Whitlam as Prime Minister on 11 November 1975 and cause a double dissolution of Parliament. Sir John's secretary, David Smith, read the dissolution proclamation outside Parliament House, and concluded with 'God save the Queen'. Whitlam retorted: 'Well may we say God save the Queen, because nothing will save the Governor General. The proclamation which you have just heard read by the Governor-General's official secretary was countersigned by Malcolm Fraser, who will undoubtedly go down in Australian history from Remembrance Day 1975 as Kerr's cur'. Fraser, a wealthy Victorian grazier, had taken over control of the Liberal Party on 21 March 1975, replacing Snedden as leader of the Opposition. We were to acquire a new Prime Minister and a diminished role.

I had regularly logged over fifty flying hours a month with the Whitlam Government. Only twice under the Fraser Government until I ceased flying in May 1976 would I log almost forty hours, and for the other months I logged around twenty. It became depressing having to go to work, but it did have the effect of softening the parting from flying. Better to have left in a slump than in a period of hectic activity. There was a brief flurry of activity in February 1976 when Stu Bryce became a BAC 1-11 captain. We had a busy month in which we stayed in Learmonth, Melbourne, Newman, Port Hedland and Adelaide, as well as visiting Hobart, Sydney, Meekatharra and Alice Springs.

Newman, up in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, was a company mining town for the world's biggest open-pit iron ore mine. The scale of the mining operations and the size of the machinery were astonishing. Wheels on the dump trucks were almost twice the height of the average man. Alice Springs had become one of my favourite Australian towns and I grabbed every opportunity to go there. At one time I thought I could have been happy living there. I loved the climate and the scenery. In numerous visits to the Alice I had

ridden camels, inspected the location of the original telegraph station, called on the date farm, and driven out to some of the nearer tourist attractions like Standley Chasm - that sharp, narrow crevice in the MacDonnell Ranges; and Simpsons Gap with its large permanent river pool and semi-tame rock wallabies. I had been lucky enough to see the Todd River in flood, as well as in its normal dry state as a camping ground for Aborigines and venue for the outlandish annual Henley on the Todd regatta. Sometimes we stayed in a motel slightly out of town, but because we also sometimes wanted accommodation at very short notice we favoured staying at one hotel in town, the Alice Springs Hotel, where we got to be known. Maureen Baker was the receptionist/manager, and good company. We would take her 20-year old daughter, Louise, out on some of our sightseeing. Staying at this hotel we would witness the aftermath of some of the brawls the Aborigines would have outside the bar, spreading the remains of two-litre glass wine flagons over the road and footpath. During these last few months I also got to fly with more captains: Bruce Copley had qualified, and Mike Birks. Mike, who was an outstanding jet pilot, was killed in December 1991 in a Tiger Moth crash at Point Cook.

Stu Bryce had Fraser's measure very quickly. Boarding the aircraft late Fraser would want to be rushed to his destination to make up time. Stu would agree, and would taxi fast down the taxiways, wheels screaming on the turns. He would pull the aircraft into as steep a climb as permissible and level off at our chosen altitude, flying through any bumpy cloud along the way for good effect. Having impressed Fraser with our zeal he would then pull the power back and we would proceed normally. Fraser never knew any better. Billy Snedden had been worse than Fraser at arriving late and was frequently drunk on arrival. His table manners on board the aircraft were appalling, and stewards hated having to clean up after him. He frequently blamed 'the late arrival of his aircraft' for his failure to keep appointments. I considered this grossly unfair since, in the beginning, we positioned ninety minutes before pick-up time. Later this was reduced to sixty, but we were never less than one hour early for any scheduled pick-up. After reading in a Sydney Sunday paper about this 'late arrival' while I was sitting at Sydney airport waiting, I decided to do something about it. We had our two aircraft there at the time, one for Snedden and one for Whitlam. After getting Keith Molloy's approval as Commanding Officer, I rang the editor of the newspaper. I told him about our positioning requirements and invited him to send a reporter out to the airport to see for himself that it was being observed. I also informed him that most

delays were caused by late, drunken arrivals of the offending parties. We were never again reported as being late.

My final BAC 1-11 flight was a return trip to Sydney with Keith Molloy on 27 May 1976, the last three months having been routine flying within Australia. I had logged 807 flying hours on this aircraft as compared with 3410 hours on the Hercules, but it had opened new horizons for me and provided new relationships and experiences that I will always remember.

Flying – The HS748

Flying in the HS748 was totally different from flying in the BAC 1-11 and navigators almost had to have split personalities. It was slower; the air-conditioning did not work as well; it was functionally different in the airstrips we would land at; and it lacked the image of the smooth prestigious jet. Nevertheless it had its compensations. Its pilots were generally as sociable as the BAC 1-11's and we carried royalty around in them. They were reliable aircraft though I had an engine failure in one as early as 17 March 1973, a little over five weeks after first flying on one. That warranted a routine diversion to Sydney out of Armidale and did not have the heart-stopping impact of a later incident. The last words aircrew want to hear is 'MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY', indicating an aircraft is in dire peril and in danger of crashing. Coming home from Sydney late one Saturday afternoon in company with the other HS748 carrying Margaret Whitlam, we heard it broadcast its MAYDAY and report its right engine on fire, and its intention to attempt to land at Goulburn. We were well ahead of it and immediately turned back to render what assistance we could. When we found it and escorted it in to Goulburn the crew had fired the extinguishers and feathered the engine but still had the fire warning signals. It was subsequently found to be a major false alarm caused by a faulty instrument, but by then the crew had lived through the experience we all hoped to avoid.

On 18 February 1973 I was off to Papua New Guinea with Don Ende for a week, taking Gough Whitlam up there for a state visit. PNG was to get self-government on 1 December, to be followed by independence in 1975, which the Labor Party had avidly espoused. This trip was a real workout and a tremendous introduction to Papua New Guinea. We overnighted in Port Moresby, Kieta, Buka, Rabaul and Lae, besides visiting Goroka, Mt Hagen, Momote, Port Moresby and Townsville. With its rugged mountain backbone reaching to almost 5,000 metres and thick tropical cloud sitting on, above and

around the mountains, PNG required constant attention to flying but was rewarding in its views. The Squadron had its contacts with the plantations there and we took home local coffee and tea in bulk quantities. Pat had married in 1966 and was in Port Moresby in 1973, living at Bisini Parade, Boroko, but I am not sure that I got to see him on this trip. Certainly we got together on a few of my flights into PNG because I remember going shopping with him for an electric shaver and a black leather belt. He remembers going to dinner with me at the Gateway Hotel near the airport, where we stayed when we couldn't get a room in town. Pat worked for Ansett Airlines of New Guinea and was seconded to Air New Guinea when they replaced Ansett in December 1976.

Buka is an island off the northern tip of Bougainville. The airstrip is on Bougainville and it needs a boat to get to Buka. Accommodation was in a homely old guesthouse where we were treated like family by our dusky hosts and allowed free run of the property and premises. We helped ourselves to beer from the fridge and there was some sort of accounting for it afterwards. With Dave Clarkson, who had shared the river trip with me in Bangkok and would have been training me on this trip, I took a sightseeing tour of the neighbouring reefs and islands with a local native guide and boatman. At one stage we thought we would never be seen again because the outboard motor stopped, and the current was more than any of us could beat with the oars. And it wasn't taking us home. Fortunately the motor eventually started again and we headed straight back home for firm ground and a cold beer.

Squadron Leader Al Pappin and Flight Lieutenant Arthur White were my next captains and we got to such out-of-the-way and diverse places as Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Mount Isa, Dajarra, Echuca, Nowra, Townsville, Wollongong and Flinders Island in March 1973. The largest island in the Furneaux group off the northeast tip of Tasmania in the windswept Bass Strait, Flinders Island was to supply us with mutton-birds and crayfish in our seasonal visits there. In May I had the opportunity to go to Gunnedah with Doug Anthony, leader of the then Country Party, and I liked the town as soon as I saw it. Later on I bought land there and made plans to move there, but they all fell apart.

When I came to Canberra I brought with me some pictorial books showing the plight of the Aborigines, and I felt concern for them as did many other Australians then and since. With one of our major functions being the transport of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Senate Select Committees

on their investigations into issues of concern, I soon found myself visiting Aboriginal communities all over Australia. I sat in on discussions between staff of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or their minister and Aboriginal groups. I witnessed the construction and destruction of dwellings designed for, and sometimes by, Aborigines. And I saw first hand the sites and development (sic) of some projects into which the government was pouring millions of tax dollars. It did not take long for me to realise that the Aboriginal issue was one that was being exploited by a vocal minority with a tunnel-vision outlook. I soon concluded that the only fair and sensible solution to the Aboriginal question was integration into an Australia that was moving with history into the ever-developing modern world. The stone-age era is over, and only when Aborigines got off their arses and out of the gutters, pulled their weight in the community and stopped agitating for an Australian apartheid in which they were the favoured race, would there be a justified social solution to their problem. This, of course, would not happen, except in select individual cases, and more subtle ways would be found to extract money from both public and private purses.

I had no argument with the retention of a primitive lifestyle, and the land and coastline to go with it, for Aborigines who genuinely wanted to follow that course. But the vocal land rights claims were not being made on their behalf, and were primarily directed at successful business ventures or tourist sites more profitably exploited by the white or partly coloured legal advisers to pliant aboriginal groups. Aboriginal equality had been enshrined in law after the constitutional referendum held on 27 May 1967. What would be politically described nearly 26 years later as a white guilt complex towards Aborigines, ensured that this *equality* would discriminate positively in favour of Aborigines to the extent of widespread abuse of public monies and functions. The 1991 census reported 261,129 Aborigines, comprising 1.53 per cent of the Australian population. In the 1991-92 financial year the Federal Government spent more than \$1.16 billion on programs to assist Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders directly, and by then had spent over \$25 billion since the mid 1970s.

My first massive exposure to the Aboriginal question was between 24 and 30 June 1973. With Don Ende we visited Aboriginal establishments in South Australia and Western Australia, calling in at Ceduna, Kalgoorlie, Perth, Jigalong, Newman, Wiluna, Laverton, Warburton, Esperance, Norseman and Forrest. Don had been a pilot for the Flying Doctor Service in Western Australia before joining the RAAF, and knew most of this area like the back of

his hand. He put his flying skill to good use when we had to land at one of these remote airstrips. It was not uncommon to have to fly low over the airstrip to chase cattle or other livestock off it before we could land. But one dirt strip had had a lot of rain and could have bogged us. So Don did a series of touchdowns along its length, testing the surface in a number of places for strength. Only when we had proven we could safely depart did we elect to land. Don also knew many of the people we met along the way. Warburton is right up in the Gibson Desert, west of Ayers Rock, and we spoke to one of the tribal elders there whom he had tended in earlier years. I remember well his answer to what the government should do for Aborigines in the area: 'Give us water and leave us alone'. He was one of the few who wanted to return to the old ways with no white man intervention. The majority of agitators, with their white legal advisers using the government as the goose that laid golden eggs, simply wanted the benefits of civilisation at no cost to themselves.

Gordon Bryant, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, had announced on 4 February 1973, at the end of a five-day tour of Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, a Federal Government grant of nearly \$3,000,000 for improving conditions for Aborigines in that state. The grant was intended to help WA build 115 new houses for Aborigines and to provide employment for additional doctors, nurses and teachers. In addition, two areas in the state would get money for development work designed to place effective control of them in Aboriginal hands, thus becoming socially and economically independent. A similar grant was announced in Queensland on 9 February. On this trip in June, and on subsequent trips, I saw new houses - built at two to three times their value in nearby towns - being destroyed before they were even occupied. And the Government's answer to this was to build even more houses. Figures published on 8 April 1973 by the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council showed that the country's Aboriginal population was nearly 116,000, Queensland having the largest concentration with over 24,000. Presumably they were referring to true Aborigines, not the multitude with only a small percentage of Aboriginal blood who would later exploit government weaknesses. There was an awful lot of public money being wasted on a very small proportion of the Australian population.

The road from Kalgoorlie to Warburton was littered with the carcasses of second-hand cars the Aborigines had bought with their social-service cheques, and abandoned when they ran out of fuel or broke down. Laverton (pronounced as in save) is a bit east of north of Kalgoorlie, and had very old ruins of its gold mines, including a big, crumbling smokestack about 25 metres

high. We entered to get the view of looking down a gun barrel but didn't stay long in case it started to fall down. Fortunes were made and lost in the 1970s and Poseidon became a family name when nickel was discovered at Windarra mine here, and \$1 shares soared to more than \$200. In July I was doing more of the same flying with Arthur White, this time in Dubbo, Bourke, Walgett, Mungindi (which most people would mispronounce, and where I would wander the unkempt footpaths that reminded me of my childhood) and Moree, before going down to Flinders Island again. I was learning to make my own observations and not rely on the selective presentation or distortion of facts from the pens of blinkered public servants or journalists.

Before July was over I was off to Papua New Guinea again with both Don and Arthur as captains. This was a training flight for crews to become accustomed to the difficult and sometimes dangerous flying in the Highlands. Airstrips sat on mountaintops, with a pronounced slope that meant always landing up hill and taking off down hill. Or they were set deep in a valley with surrounding hills forcing a steep approach and departure, or violent low-level turns. We practiced at Wewak, Mt Hagen, Mendi, Tari, Telefomin, Goroka and Madang, and spent the night at Wewak. The Highlands are among the highest mountains in the Southern Hemisphere, towering as they do some 5,000 metres above sea level and forming a jagged backbone along the centre of PNG. The peaks are usually hidden in cloud, water cascades down their slopes, and the lower slopes are covered with dense rain forest. The beach at Wewak had its usual group of dusky little boys ready with primitive lines to show us how to fish. Also at Wewak was a massive stone monument carved in Japanese characters and commemorating the last stand by the Japanese there in 1945. The Japanese XVIII Army held out on the cliffs at Wewak Point until overwhelmed by the Australian 17th Brigade on 11 May 1945. Fighting from interconnected fortified caves and tunnels the Japanese would not surrender, so the Australians blew up the entrances and sealed them inside.

From the tropical sweat of PNG I was soon flying over the snowfields of Mount Kosciuszko and the township of Cabramurra under construction. Colleen and Hockey Burnell were in Cabramurra where Hockey was supervising the construction. As with the mutton-birds from Flinders Island, we never missed an opportunity to exploit the resources of places we were required to visit. In both August and September - and on subsequent occasions - we brought bulk oranges back from Griffith in the heart of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Like Canberra, Griffith was planned by the

Canadian, Burley Griffin. Unlike in Canberra, his plan was not fully implemented in Griffith.

December is not a recommended time to visit the Gulf of Carpentaria, but I was there with Don Ende in 1973. We had a co-pilot named Don Eddie, a Canadian, and when the two Dons flew together we had to be careful in nominating to whom we were speaking. We did a round trip through Mt Isa, Darwin, Karumba, Normanton and Mackay. The Gulf was not flooded then, but there was a time when it was flooded right in to Karumba and Normanton and had a new, temporary coastline. I flew over it in the BAC 1-11, nominating Normanton as a point on route. When we landed at Canberra there was a complaint from the local council that we had ignored them in their plight and had not landed. My only response was that if we had landed we would have been the first contribution to a local aircraft museum, because there was no way we would ever have taken off again.

I don't know whom we took to PNG in December 1973, but it was most likely preparation for the Royal visit scheduled for February 1974. I was never one to complain about trips up there, and went with Al Pappin as captain, and Dave Clarkson as co-navigator. This was more civilised than the training flight and we stayed at major cities - Port Moresby, Rabaul, and Lae; and visited Kieta, Goroka and the island of Daru. In Kieta we visited the Bougainville copper mine, driving up through the mist on the mountain and looking at the fearful drops off the side of the road. With their wheels firmly planted on the road, the rear of the trays of some trucks stuck out into space on some of the bends in the road. The mine looked like a gigantic terraced quarry scarring the jungle landscape. In Rabaul we hired taxis to drive around Blanche Bay and view the city and its nearby sleeping volcanoes from the other side. Then we inspected the tunnels in which the Japanese had hidden their barges - on railway lines for easy launching. The Japanese had captured Rabaul in January 1943, and by March they had reached Lae. The scorpions in the tunnels were a more deadly threat than the rusting remains of the barges, still in their hideouts. Local villagers climbed the coconut trees and brought us green coconuts for drinking. Just cut the top off the husk and pierce one of the eyes in the shell for a delicious natural thirst quencher. On the tiny island of Daru in the Torres Strait, only a stone's throw off the southern coast of PNG, we saw native paintings decorating the fibro walls of the High School and the row of carved totem poles along the street in front of the school, displaying the local culture.

The 1974 Royal Visit to Papua New Guinea

Queen Elizabeth II came out to Rabaul in the royal yacht Britannia which, anchored in Rabaul Harbour - one of the most beautiful and best natural harbours in the world - was a picturesque sight when we landed on 23 February 1974. Also in the royal party were Prince Philip, Princess Anne, and her husband since 1973, Captain Mark Phillips. Once again I was with Don Ende, and I think Tony Carville and Robyn Carey were stewards. Our task was to take the Royal party to Goroka the next morning, then on to Lae and Port Moresby on the 25th. Of course in such a situation 'there was no accommodation at the inn' in Rabaul. Every available room in the town had been booked out for ages, and we had the foresight to have booked ours as soon as we had been tasked for the operation. Unfortunately the group of public servants in charge of protocol had not had the same foresight. They had no rooms and had 'assumed' control of ours. With that sort of attitude I was all for putting them out in the street and leaving them to fate, but Don Ende softened and we doubled up in rooms to give them somewhere to sleep. Rabaul has some skilled native wood carvers and I brought home from there a carving of a shark and another of a dolphin, and a grotesque 50 cm elongated black carving of a face.



Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip and Princess Anne are met by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Michael Somare and Mrs Somare in Goroka, 24 February 1974, as the author salutes near A10-596.

With the Highlands weather at Goroka very much in mind I had planned a departure time from Rabaul for the Royal party to allow me a generous margin of time at Goroka to find our way down through the cloud. Weather on the way across was perfect and we virtually had the sky to ourselves. No other aircraft was allowed within miles of us and we travelled in a block of protected airspace within which we had total control. The HS748 was divided into two compartments, one for royalty - complete with its own toilet - and the other for the rest of the entourage. The Queen travelled in a protected cocoon and only the stewards got to talk to her - and then only regarding her needs. We found a hole in the clouds near Goroka and were able to meet our commitment of a timely arrival for Her Majesty. Goroka was colourful with natives in their tribal dress - or undress as the case may be. The women were bare breasted, with only a variety of wide or single-string bead necklaces, and a skirt of seemingly loose twine wound around and around the torso.

Predominant colours were orange, blue, white and yellow. From Goroka to Lae next morning was a short flight straight down the valley of the Markham River, and there were only brief ceremonies here before we took off for Port Moresby on the other side of the Island over the 12,000 foot backbone.

It was on this leg of the flight that Don Ende was summoned to the Royal compartment to meet the Queen. At the end of their conversation Don suggested that 'the crew would like to meet Her Majesty'. The answer was firm and polite: 'Her Majesty does not wish to meet the crew'. I had allowed myself so much leeway on this leg that, because nothing went wrong, even cutting back on airspeed as much as was reasonable, we arrived at Port Moresby two minutes early. So we used the whole length of the runway and had to taxi slowly back to the reception point. I found out later that the officials there, not as concerned with punctuality as I was, were a bit confused as to why we did this. One of the highlights of my brief association with royalty arises from this trip. Most of the party had travelled in mufti, and the reception was in full ceremonial uniform. Consequently, while we were taxiing in, the corridor of the aircraft was jammed with people trying to make final adjustments to uniforms. I had to get from my nav station in the front of the aircraft down to the rear to open the door for exit. It was always the navigator's responsibility to open the rear door, lower the stairs, and be down at the foot of the stairs to salute the exit of the Queen or other VIPs. This time my passage was blocked by Mark Phillips and I said, 'Excuse me, could you let me past. I have to open the door for you people.' He ignored me, so I said it again. And again he ignored me. So, running out of time and patience, I put my hands on his hips and squeezed past him. As I got past he turned to me and said, with his cultured British accent, 'I **would** have shifted for you, but you were **standing** on my **spurs**!'

Pat was at the airport for the ceremonies and subsequently sent me a photo taken by the local newspaper. I am still at the salute, with the Queen approaching the camera. Prince Philip is shaking hands with Mrs Somare, wife of the Prime Minister, and Princess Anne is just a pace behind him. Later on, when Princess Anne was on the official dais, a gust of wind lifted her dress revealing the colour and size of her briefs, and this was captured by a local photographer. I believe he tried to sell the photograph worldwide but most of the newspapers rejected it. I did see it published in one newspaper but can't remember which one it was. We left the royal party in Port Moresby to be picked up there by the Britannia. Three days later, on 28 February, we carried Princess Anne again, this time from Sydney out to Camden to see some horses

she was interested in. She and Mark Phillips had come to Sydney to attend the Equestrian Federation ball.

My involvement with Prince Phillip was resumed on 5 March in Perth. We had positioned the aircraft in Pearce, our RAAF base over there, for a departure from Perth on the 6th. On the afternoon of the 5th, however, we were invited (required?) to attend a cocktail party hosted by the Prince at Government House. Unlike his son, Charles, Phillip was aloof, but certainly a man to be admired. We took him down to Albany on the 6th and on to Kalgoorlie the next day where we left him, eventually to wend our way home.

The Final HS748 Flights

From March two new pilots figured in the HS748 picture, Squadron Leader Bill Trewartha and Flight Lieutenant Barry Ney. Bill was very quietly spoken, and replaced Al Pappin. Barry was an extrovert, and we would have some fun together later. But Arthur White was captain when I incurred the wrath of Doug Anthony, Leader of the Country Party, at RAAF Williamtown. We had not flown far, only Canberra to Cowra then on to Williamtown, but we had spent all day waiting in the aircraft. Our crew duty ran out about eight o'clock that night. It seemed that Anthony's only purpose in coming to Williamtown was to get into the bar in the Officers' Mess, and I told his secretary to watch the time for our departure. When that had come and gone I rang the mess and told him we could either leave and go to Sydney or he could spend the night in Williamtown. I believe Doug Anthony didn't even finish his last drink, but if looks could kill I would not be alive today. We had the foresight to ring Sydney and have a taxi waiting for us at the airport. We generally parked in a remote part of the airport removed from the main passenger area. Anthony's party had not had the foresight to organise either a taxi or an official car. So we switched off all the lights, locked the door, and left them on the tarmac in the dark. We were not deliberately unkind to our passengers, but we gave as good as we got when they abused our service.

On days like this, with a lot of time to kill while waiting for VIPs to do their business, we would usually have to lounge around the aircraft reading, sleeping, or playing cards. So I decided to put the time to profitable use and enrolled for a Small Business Owners course with International Correspondence Schools. I had nothing to lose. I was interested in setting up a caravan sales and rental business after retirement, and the background would be useful. Besides, the RAAF would reimburse most of the cost if I passed the course. I completed it on 3 November 1975, and collected their certificate. As

a variation on killing time we once took a two-burner gas stove to Tamworth and had a barbecue in the shelter of the passenger lounge. The co-pilot, Rod Miller, and I did the cooking and gave Vicki Sherrif a break from her duties.

With Bill I was back in the tropical north again in August 1974, getting away from the worst of Canberra's winter. On 12 August it was 12½ hours of flying through Mackay and Townsville to Darwin. I think our special circumstances kept us off the RAAF base for accommodation, which tended to make some of the bean counters angry with us, though it really was none of their concern. Out of Darwin we went to the dirt strip of Killarney Station, where a visit from an aircraft like ours was truly an event, and we wondered what such an attractive governess could find to interest her in the isolation of an outback cattle station. At the Daly River Mission the same day we saw how the Catholic Church handled the Aboriginal 'problem', and restricted both the amount of alcohol available and the times in which it could be drunk. The government could have learnt much from places like this. The Mission had a substantial white stone church complete with belltower, and was set in carefully tended grounds.



RAAF Hawker Siddeley HS748, serial A10-595, parked on the dirt strip at Killarney Station, NT, 13 August 1974.

On 14 August we flew to Gove, over some of the fascinating rock formations locked away in the relatively inaccessible areas of the Northern Territory. Gove was the airport for Nhulunbuy, the company town for the vast bauxite mine on the Gove peninsula. It had on display a very damaged relic of a wartime aircraft and was named after a heroic Pilot Officer. Nhulunbuy was a beautiful little town but one of the nation's most isolated, sensibly designed for tropical living and boasting an Olympic-size swimming pool. The nearest road was nearly 400km away and there was no railway. Seemingly a great place to get lost. But we had to return to the rigours of Canberra's winter.

October 1974 was a month of the sublime to the ridiculous. From jets in Hong Kong and Beijing at the beginning of the month it was the Draggie in Hughenden, Dajarra, Normanton and Weipa to complete the month. But this was to continue into November in one of the most comprehensive tours of Aboriginal communities I would ever undertake. A list of the places we visited with Arthur White as captain between 30 October and 11 November will suffice to show the extent of the area we covered between Normanton and

Kununurra - the long way around: (Queensland) Cunnamulla, Hughenden, Dajarra, Normanton, Weipa, Townsville, Brisbane; (NSW) Broken Hill; (WA) Forrest, Perth, Port Hedland, Lagrange Bay, Broome (twice), Beagle Bay, Lombadina, Derby (four times), Camballin, Fitzroy Crossing (twice), Balgo Hill, Halls Creek, Kununurra, Wyndham, Kalumburu, Meekatharra; (SA) Ceduna, Adelaide.

The Kimberley is an ancient land of hills and mountains composed of a variety of different earth forms and reaching nearly to 1000 metres. It is a rugged country with little development. The coastal areas of the Kimberley experience up to 1500 mm of rain in the wet season between December and April, and we were only a month ahead of its traditional onset. Three places in the Kimberley stand out from all those I visited: Fitzroy Crossing for its backwardness, and Aboriginal violence; Camballin for its refined layout and variety of housing - and for the arrangement the Aborigines had with a local white charter pilot to fly them in a plane load of alcohol every social service payday; and Kalumburu, run by a Catholic missionary, Father Sans, and administered by the Benedictine monks of New Norcia.

Broome was once the pearling capital of the world and is the setting for Ion L. Idriess's 1937 novel *Forty Fathoms Deep*. It was a hard trade and there was a Japanese Pearlers' Cemetery in the arid red soil, with a variety of upright slab headstones with their Japanese inscriptions. It was in Broome that I had to tell the private secretary to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that we would not be adhering to their schedule on the next day. Since the start of the trip we had worked long hours, and coped with the time zone changes along the way eating into our crew rest time. Finally, when I thought we had been pushed to the limit, I told him we would not be departing next morning on schedule but would observe a full period of crew rest overnight. He wouldn't accept that. So next morning, to protect the aircraft captain from criticism I simply stayed in the flight planning office until I was ready to leave, expecting to find an angry party waiting in my aircraft. Without a word of explanation they arrived even **later** than I had decreed.

Outside Derby, which is northeast of Broome and located on King George Sound with its nine-metre tides, was one of the strangest trees in Australia. This was the Prison Boab, which was hollow and was used in the gold rush era, probably from about the late 1880s, as a prison. It had an opening about two metres high by one metre wide and could hold about twelve people. It was still very much alive. Halls Creek, on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, was

a derelict ghost town from the first gold rush in Western Australia. There were still substantial ruins for us to wander through and photograph. Nearby was the Great Wall of China, a line of quartz rock standing above the surrounding soil and stretching for tens of kilometres. Wyndham was the end of the world; a depressing town with a massive meatworks that spewed blood and offal into the Cambridge Gulf, feeding sharks and crocodiles. A drunken semi-trailer driver tried to cool off there and only lasted a couple of minutes before a crocodile took him.

Kununurra is just to the southeast of Wyndham and barely inside Western Australia. It serviced the Ord River Scheme project that produced Lake Argyle, destined to irrigate tens of thousands of hectares of the surrounding blacksoil plains, and holding nine times the amount of water in Sydney Harbour. It was also the largest body of fresh water in tropical Australia, but that did not guarantee it success. Nature with its pests would combine with the tyranny of difficult working conditions and transport costs to ensure that the Ord River Scheme would remain an uneconomic proposition for decades.

Generally throughout these places it was at least discouraging, if not actually offensive, to see the blatant waste of public money on such failed projects as turtle farms and housing projects, while the government emptied its coffers into the bottomless Aboriginal bucket. The problem was one of an administration that demanded neither responsibility nor accountability from the recipients of its largesse, and could not be laid on any specific individual we met. In fact, those we met at the majority of places were courteous and helpful. The crew was always provided with an escort and guide if we had time to fill in, and a 4WD if available. Guides could not always be trusted to look after our welfare if we were stupid. One in WA let me go swimming in an inviting rock pool before telling me that they had recently killed a six-metre crocodile near there, and promptly took us down river to show us the skeleton. We used our time profitably to see as much as we could wherever we went. The children were particularly friendly and would hang all over us if we let them. The quality of building construction varied widely according to availability of materials and length of time the settlement had been established. There were substantial brick quarters at some, while others had only local timber and corrugated iron. Most of them sold paintings and artwork to supplement income.

Kalumburu Mission, in Napier Broom Bay northwest of Wyndham, was a model of efficiency with years of effective administration dating back to 1908.

It had magnificent horse and cattle yards, vegetable gardens and fruit orchards, a splendid church with nuns in attendance, a clean atmosphere on a broad river, and a happy population. It also had graded dwellings, from gunyahs to decent houses. Father Sans' policy was to let the Aborigines progress at their own pace while he provided guidance and support. At first they came in to the gunyahs they were used to. After assimilation they moved of their own accord up the scale until, finally, they were living in houses and in a style fitting to houses. The system worked, and Father Sans had only one real prohibition. Any Aborigine coming to the mission and subsequently leaving during the course of his progress was not welcomed back. This presumably kept out troublemakers and made room for Aborigines genuinely wanting to progress. The government was not content to see church-run Aboriginal communities and was intent on transferring control to the government service, regardless of cost or efficiency. Letters left on the aircraft at Kalumburu gave us a clear picture of the policy, and of Father Sans' reaction. He told the government he did not want their money in exchange for his competent control of the Mission, and they should cease interference in a functioning process. I think he lost his argument in the face of bureaucratic stupidity.

As if I hadn't had enough of the Aboriginal problem, I was back into it in full swing again in December with Bill Trewartha. There is no point in labouring the point, so I will simply list the places visited between 3 December and 21 December as supportive of my previous observations: Kalgoorlie, Wiluna, Esperance, Norseman, Leonora, Laverton, Warburton and Ceduna. Some of these places had their own peculiar attraction. I can remember sitting at an isolated airstrip with no buildings whatsoever, and no sign of civilisation except the poisonous mullock heaps left over from mining, and enjoying the raucous cacophony of hundreds of cawing crows. But December 1974 went down in Australian history not for inept government involvement in Aboriginal affairs. Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin on Christmas Day, wreaking havoc and causing deaths and injuries.

On Christmas morning I had got out of bed at 7.00 a.m. and was listening to the morning news when the tragedy was broadcast, and I knew my day had just begun. The Squadron had a BAC 1-11 up there within hours, with Dave Smith and Nev Duus on board, and they were soon involved in evacuation. On the HS748 it took me a lot longer to become involved, and a lot longer to become dis-involved. Dr Jim Cairns was Deputy Prime Minister (I think Gough was overseas), and had to be picked up from Melbourne. Then we were off through Alice Springs to Darwin, arriving at dawn on the 26th. The

devastation was appalling, with whole suburbs literally wiped out and an estimated 90 per cent of the city's buildings damaged. I knew Darwin well, and I knew what it should have looked like. The RAAF base had suffered considerable damage but was functioning with an emergency control tower. Aircraft of all shapes and sizes were upended around the airport or wrecked in hangars that had collapsed; buildings were unroofed or destroyed; trees were uprooted and power lines were hanging loose everywhere. People were stunned, and were lined up at emergency centres set up at the airport, with the one suitcase of possessions they were allowed take. Some civil aircraft had already been mobilised and evacuation was chaotically under way. I say chaotically because, having dropped Dr Jim Cairns and his party, I immediately contacted the RAAF emergency centre to tell them we could take a load of refugees out. Busy listing names on forms, the officer I spoke to (another navigator, whom I did not greatly respect) was unable to provide me with any assistance on getting a passenger load. Without sleep for 24 hours now, and seeing the necessity for action, I was in no mood for ponderous bureaucratic procedures and started to say so.

Fortunately Dave Smith, from the BAC 1-11 came over at that point and said, 'Look, that's not the way to do it. If you go over to the civilian side you'll find a gentleman there with a megaphone. Tell him how many seats you've got and he'll fill your aeroplane'. I found the man with the megaphone, and went back to my aircraft for twenty minutes sleep sitting up in one of the VIP seats. Then we loaded the aircraft with a crowd of disoriented Aborigines, all with wristbands with their names on, and took them to Alice Springs. I got to bed at 7.00 p.m. that night after 36 hours on the job, but I was streets ahead of the victims of the cyclone. Unlike them, though, I did not have a suitcase of belongings. Dr Jim Cairns's group had unloaded mine along with theirs and I was left with what I was standing up in. (It was to be several days before a civil airline office returned it to me in Canberra.) Next morning I was back in the fray but down to Melbourne and Canberra. With Barry Ney for the next three days we evacuated people to Townsville, Mt Isa and Brisbane. I had a break then for a couple of days before doing another evacuation to Alice Springs over 3 and 4 January. By this time civilian 747s were in use as well as RAAF Hercules and, I think, an American Starlifter. We all stretched our aircraft beyond the manufacturer's specifications and carried loads that would never be permitted under normal circumstances. Official figures from the time put the death toll at 49 (*Time Australia* later said 65), with about half the population of 20,000 evacuated. Rumours at the time said that criminals had taken advantage

of the cyclone to settle scores with impunity. Stories of heroism abound, as do stories of heartbreak. A young naval rating stayed on duty during the cyclone while his wife and children were killed in their home. A woman carrying a baby had her arm cut off by a sheet of flying galvanised iron and lost both the baby and her arm. But a mother who sheltered in the bath with a mattress over herself and her child had the house disintegrate around her, with the bath being safely deposited on the ground. It would take years for Darwin and its population to recover and to rebuild.

I was back in Papua New Guinea with Bill Trewartha and Barry Ney again in April 1975 adding new names to my list: places like Girua and Gurney, Kieta and Wewak, besides visiting places that were now becoming familiar like Port Moresby, Mt Hagen, Goroka, Rabaul and Lae. Sir John Kerr had been appointed Governor-General on 11 June 1974 and this was a formal visit to Milne Bay on the eastern tip of the island - site of decisive battles between the Japanese and Australians in 1942. In August of that year the Japanese army suffered the first defeat on land at the hands of Australian forces. Sir John's ceremonial reception there with fuzzy-wuzzy children in grass skirts and feathered headdresses, and the military guard of honour in resplendent uniforms, bore no relation to the bitter battles of World War II. Australia's new National Anthem, *Advance Australia Fair*, had replaced *God Save the Queen* on 8 April after a public opinion poll but the old anthem had been retained for Vice-regal functions, so I presume the PNG band would not have had to learn a new tune for the Governor General's visit.

From Port Moresby we had to fly over the island of Bougainville to get to Kieta on the east coast, and we saw a fissure open up in the side of a mountain and start spewing smoke. We were impressed, of course, and talked about it in the bar of the Davara Motel in Kieta. A volcanologist there was immediately attentive, and envious of us. We gave him the approximate position of the event for later investigation, but we hadn't thought it important enough to warrant noting in fine detail at the time. Wherever we went in PNG we moved out into the villages and countryside for local colour and sightseeing. Bougainville had a beautiful black sand beach; not dirty sand but genuinely black sand. It also had heavy rain, and I sheltered from it by cutting off a massive leaf of a jungle plant and using it as an umbrella. We drank our duty-free Courage Draught while swimming in the motel pool in Kieta. In Rabaul Barry Ney simply flagged down a passing white motorist and his wife, which led to their being our hosts for the day and driving us around to places we

would otherwise never have seen. We collected VIP rations and a bottle of Scotch from the aircraft for an evening meal at their home.

I think it was in Wewak that we bought a distinctive bottle of wine for dinner at our motel. Obviously appreciating our sense of humour, and enjoyment of a fine wine, the manager gave us a wine that had been relabelled. We were so impressed that we soaked the label off the bottle and brought it home for reprinting and general Squadron use. The label is [partly] reproduced below.

OLE'FIELD
Dedrilla 69

*AN UNUSUAL 'Rough-as Guts' Wine that has the
Distinctive Bouquet of old and ill-cared for
animals. It is best drunk with the teeth clenched
to prevent the ingestion of seeds and skins.
Connoisseurs will savour the slight Tannin Taste
of burnt shag feathers and soiled medical
dressings. Possessors of a cultivated palate
admire the initial assault on the taste buds which
comes from the careful and loving blending of
circus cage floor hosing with perished jock
straps. The maturing in Midland Abattoir hogs-
heads gives it a very Definite Nose. In the
United States this wine is marketed as Saviour
Brand (9 out of 10 people who drink it for the
first time exclaim, 'Je-e-esus Chri-i-ist'.*

*CAUTION - Avoid contact with the eyes and
open cuts. Keep away from 'naked flames' (both old and new).*

While I continued to fly extensively throughout Australia in the HS748 for the next 12 months, there was no flying of particular merit except perhaps the flight over Lake Eyre on 30 June 1975. This is normally the biggest of Australia's saltpans, covering 9,300 sq km. It is also the biggest lake in Australia and lies 17 metres below sea level, enjoying an average rainfall of less than 20 mm a year. Records indicate that only about twice in any century is the bed covered with water, and when I saw it in 1975 it was a real lake up to 6 metres deep. Water birds flocked to it and established prolific colonies, only to be trapped when it inevitably dried up again and caused them to die in their tens

of thousands. Otherwise flying was all pretty much routine and I expected to fly anywhere from Hobart to Tindal or Nowra to Perth, and generally did.

My final flight in the RAAF was on 28 May 1976 in an HS748 to Sydney and return, the same as in the BAC 1-11 but with Barry Ney as captain. By this time I had logged 987 hours on HS748s and a grand total of 7991 hours flying on all types, the others being: the C130E for 3,408 hours, Neptune for 1,397 hours, Lincoln for 1,121 hours, BAC 1-11 for 807 hours, Dakota for 198 hours, Comet 2R for 59 hours, Sunderland for 11 hours and a Pembroke for one hour. I left the Squadron classified as 'Above Average Category B VIP Navigator' and, in retrospect, enjoyed my entire flying career.

After my retirement I was awarded two more medals, both of them for service in the RAAF. They are the Defence Force Services Medal and the National Medal. They have no particular significance since they are widely awarded to servicemen who complete a lengthy period of service with good conduct. The medals awarded to me are:

- (1) Australian Active Service Medal 1945-1975, clasp Malaya, clasp Vietnam.
- (2) General Service Medal 1918-1962, clasp Malaya.
- (3) Vietnam Medal.
- (4) Australian Service Medal 1945-1975, clasp SE Asia.
- (5) Defence Force Services Medal.
- (6) National Medal.
- (7) Australian Defence Medal.
- (8) Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972.
- (9) Pingat Jasa Malaysia.



RAAF Hawker Siddeley HS748, serial A10-596.

3 Hayter Place, Page

Hayter Place, Page, was a short cul-de-sac reached by getting on to Belconnen Way from the centre of town, Civic, and turning right into Coulter Drive. First left into Ogilby, first right into Burkitt, and second left into Hayter Place. There were other ways of reaching it that I would use later, but that was the most common one on the hundreds of journeys home from the RAAF Base at Fairbairn on the other side of town. There were no front fences - part of Walter Burley Griffin's vision in his winning plan for the design of the new Australian capital in 1912 - and a short driveway ran up the right side of the house, through a wooden gate and in to a big back yard. There was no garage or carport, which was a major deficiency in a city with an average of thirty days a year over thirty degrees, and where the maximum temperature had reached over 42 degrees in February 1968 (but averaged only 28 during the middle summer month of January). January 1973 was hot, and we would spend a lot of the evenings after work in the water of Lake Burley Griffin, cooling off in the long evenings of daylight saving when the sun set as late as 8.20 p.m. and twilight lingered till nine o'clock.

When it wasn't in use the caravan was either parked on the front lawn or kept at the RAAF Base where there was a dedicated car park. To provide shelter for the Land Rover I put up a tent in the yard that lasted some months until it literally fell apart with the wind and the weather. Then I built a sort of garage out of free pine offcuts from a government sawmill at Kingston. The bark on pine trees from the many local plantations around Canberra was shaved off and dumped on a public allotment on the East Basin of Lake Burley Griffin at Kingston. Many of the shavings were thick planks and, with the pine bark still on them, were attractive for rough garden sheds and the like. I covered the roof and one side of the garage with these, and built a workroom off the other side, with a raised wooden floor. It was pretty basic, did not have council approval, but did the job. If summer in Canberra was unkind to vehicles, winter was far worse. Average July temperatures ranged from zero to eleven degrees, but had reached minus ten on 11 July 1971. I remember a lot of days with minimum temperatures around minus four to minus six, and one day in particular when the range was from minus four to plus six and the fog lifted for only a short time late in the afternoon. But Canberra did have long periods of moderate weather and clear skies not found in other eastern capitals. With its dry climate, long term mean of 7.5 hours of sunshine every day, easy access

to beaches, snow and mountains, and lack of extremes like heavy flooding and severe hailstorms, it can develop quite an appeal for initially hesitant residents.

Over the three and a half years we lived at Page we were to keep chooks, birds and a lamb. These all seemed to reflect the turbulence of married life at the time - periods of productivity and pleasure ultimately ending in disaster. The chooks produced the most expensive eggs in Australia at the time. I had fenced off a corner of the yard between the garage wall and the corner fences, using chicken wire, posts and more of the free pine. Then I bought half a dozen laying hens from a chicken farm in Pialligo and fed them on laying pellets, not just household scraps that our chooks would have got in my childhood. Service pay was adequate for a reasonable living in those days but the overall chook experiment was supposed to provide resources, not be a drain on them. In the event they laid so few eggs over such a long time, and caused so many hassles about feeding them when I was away on trips that I brought the project to a sudden halt. One Saturday morning, the only one at home, out of chook food and due to leave on a multi-day trip in a few hours, I cut all their heads off and dumped them in a plastic garbage bag on the Belconnen tip. This must have met with general family approval because there was never any query as to where the chooks had gone.

The birds seemed to be a bit more fun, because they didn't have to be productive. They only had to look nice and make nice noises, which these finches did, and they lived in a reasonably large cage near the back steps. I built the cage out of the ubiquitous pine offcuts. The occasional death or loss was easily replaced, and they lasted a couple of years until someone left the door open and they all escaped during the night. The cage then became a cubbyhouse for the children, it was that big.

The really different pet at Page was David's lamb, in late 1973. While I said that Canberra did not have the devastating extremes of other capitals it did have its share of incidents. One storm killed a lot of sheep in the neighbourhood, leaving their lambs motherless. Through his friend, Geoff Aspinall, David acquired a newborn lamb. In a flash of brilliance he named her Chops and she was formally known as Mrs Lamb Chops. Mrs Chops lived in what later became the chook yard; at that stage it only had a fence and no chicken wire. In the corner where the two fences came together I built a pine bark roof with a partial front wall for protection from the elements. She had to be fed from a beer bottle with a teat on it, and was quite a lovable little creature until she grew to the stage where she could be returned to the farm.

Where the densely populated suburb of Florey now stands was sheep country, and for a while there was a section of it fenced off as a track for trail bikes. Small motorbikes with chunky tyres were popular for bush riding, and did not have to be registered for use on private land and dedicated tracks such as the one at Florey. Robert had a small blue bike for a while and we only had to walk it over the road - Southern Cross Drive - to get access to the track, but like most two stroke motors I have ever had anything to do with it too was a disaster. Yet another two-stroke disaster was the Lambretta motor scooter I bought from the stewardess, Vicki Sheriff. I thought this would be more economical and convenient for the frequent and irregular driving to and from work than the Land Rover. Not so. I gave it away just to be rid of it and, in February 1975, bought a tiny, 50cc, four stroke Honda that I could carry in the back of the Land Rover. That was a great little machine that lasted for years and covered a lot of ground with very little trouble. I rode it to work and shopping in all weathers, used it for recreational riding in the pine forests with Barry Runnstrom, and doubled Andrew to and from Mass on it. I finally sold it to my neighbour, Dr George Philip, after I moved to Downer, and George used it on his sheep farm near Yass.

The house was probably the largest we had lived in; four bedrooms and separate lounge and dining rooms along with all the other usual rooms. The boys had twin double bunks in one room, the girls' twin beds in another, and Celie and I had separate rooms. In fact we'd had separate rooms since 1968 but we were still functioning as a family. With my absence from home so much Celie took all the responsibility for the educational and sporting arrangements for the children, and they obviously worked in the long term. The lounge room floor was plain wood that we had covered with carpet. Beanbags - pear shaped vinyl or material filled with polystyrene beads - were fashionable. Thrown on the floor, they moulded around the body and were very easy to relax in. We still didn't own a TV, and transferred our rented one from Radio Rentals in Richmond for \$6.35 a month. Colour television was finally introduced in Australia in March 1975, but was so expensive that it was out of our consideration for many years. Its introduction had the effect of reducing the price of black and white sets though, and I bought a portable that ran off both 240v and 12v and could be used in the caravan and Land Rover. Heating - more necessary in Canberra than in any previous home - was a rough slow combustion heater on a cement slab in the lounge. We supplemented this with a kerosene heater at the end of the hallway that fed all the bedrooms, and electric blankets for the beds. Properly maintained, these kerosene heaters

were effective and efficient despite their inherent dangers. We had been dependent on kerosene heaters for years and took them camping with us in our tent. The hot water system was inside, providing me with a regulated source of warmth for the beer brewing that I continued from my Richmond days. Judith and Susan brewed ginger beer sometimes and kept the bottles under the basins in the laundry to ferment. They were very lucky one night when several bottles exploded shortly after they had come out of the room from inspecting them, sending shards of glass all over the floor. They would certainly have been injured if it had happened while they were there.

Judith, Susan and David went straight into Belconnen High School, and Robert and Paul started at the Page Primary School in Petterd Street, with Robert going on to Belconnen in 1975. Paul must have settled in easily because his Half-Yearly Report for June 1973 has him in the Middle or Highest band for all seven of his subjects. This was their first exposure to coeducational schools since primary school, as the schools in New South Wales had been segregated. Colleges were being established in Canberra and Susan was in the last class to do year 12, the Higher School Certificate, in high school (1976). After that the colleges took over the last two years of education before university. Judith left school and went to work in 1974. Schooling here was more than classrooms, and Paul was to enjoy school excursions to Hill End, Sydney and Palm Beach. David had excursions to both Sydney and Wodonga in 1975, and Andrew started preschool around the middle of the year. In line with a spiralling price index, plus the fact that Canberra was isolated from the real world of shopping, school uniform trousers for the boys cost \$11.99 each. But bus fares were only five cents. (Twenty years later the minimum fare would be \$1.60, and the bus service would be subsidised by Canberra rate payers to the tune of \$54 million a year, or \$2.50 for every \$1.60 the passenger paid. Seen from another viewpoint, \$700 from the rates paid by every household went to support a bus service that carried only 4% of total passenger traffic). Judith and Susan both started work in the local Coles supermarket in Jamison Centre, where Susan went on to become one of the senior girls in the office before leaving in 1979.

Canberra had the reputation of being a 'public service' town with higher than average incomes. Prices were set accordingly across the whole spectrum of daily needs. The problem with this was that the overall picture was distorted by the highly paid public servants, and even those other people on relatively moderate incomes had to pay the high prices. Bread was baked in Canberra by two main firms, Fielders and Buttercup, yet the Canberra price for a loaf of

bread was dearer than the same firms' bread sold over the border in Queanbeyan. From a population of around 166,000 in 1973 there were somewhat more than 28,000 public servants, about a third of the workforce. There were few supermarkets and not much competition. Entrepreneurs would bring truckloads of fresh fruit and vegetables to the outskirts of Canberra for sale direct to the public on weekends. Canberra still has its fruit trucks, but on a totally different basis from the early 1970s. It was common for people to drive to Wagga Wagga or Gundagai for clothing, Canberra's variety and price being so unattractive. Common electrical goods had to be ordered for delivery from Sydney, and prices were inflated to allow for the 'freight'. The growth of Canberra's retail trade out of that blinkered situation was slow. The RAAF had enjoyed a substantial pay rise by 1973 after years of being left behind the public sector, and my gross income that year was \$10655.

Popular music of the era was provided by professionals like The Beatles, Abba and John Farnham, while AC/DC played at school concerts in Belconnen, becoming world famous in later years as an Australian heavy metal group. I liked Shirley Bassey and Barbra Streisand, besides the popular classics I had always liked. In mid-1974 David developed a zeal for music and took up the drums with a Mr Latta in Pennefather Street at \$3.50 a lesson for six months. We bought a second hand drum kit that David practiced on zealously. Then at the end of 1974 he stopped learning, and the only reason we can reach now is the continuing deterioration in marital relations that was obviously flowing over into the children's affairs. Robert became quite involved in football with the Belconnen Browns and Belconnen Whites, amassing a number of trophies, and representing Canberra in 1974 in ACT primary school football.

This was the first house in which we had a telephone, with the phone number 545035. I was on call so much at short notice that it was essential to have a phone. I tried to claim its installation and rental as taxation deductions, because I would not have had it except for my job as a navigator, but the taxation department was not sympathetic.

When I wasn't flying there was plenty of social life. Terry Stirzaker and his wife, Sue, lived at Campbell and Terry was studying at the Canberra School of Music. Terry was Mary's eldest son and had shown musical talent uncommon in the Bibbo family. He was bass guitar in the Riverina band 'The End' with three other musicians in the mid-1960s, appearing with such artists as Normie Rowe. In 1966 they moved to Melbourne where Terry was called up for National Service, becoming a musician in the Army. He then went on to study

at the Canberra School of Music. Ian Alcock, ex-Indonesian student and then staff at the School of Languages, was a civilian in Canberra and lived just a couple of suburbs away at Latham with his wife, Joy, and a very hyperactive son, Rowan. We got to see these two families a lot, both at their respective homes and at some of Canberra's attractions like the Tidbinbilla nature reserve with its native flora and fauna, and barbecues and bushwalks. Ian was keen on rallying, and I went in to the Brindabella pine forests once as support for him but never caught the rally bug. He also had a new Volvo that proved that even such top brand names could not guarantee quality. His gearbox was a constant source of trouble until he finally got rid of the car because of it. Ian helped me drink the home brew I made on the hot water system. Where Johnno and I had used makeshift materials in Richmond, I had bought a proper brewing outfit in Canberra. I don't think it made any better beer though. Spike Tyrrell and his wife Jennie, and Dave Clarkson and his wife Bev, were good friends too, not just working mates. I was starting to make the acquaintance of Sid and Susan Smith, particularly once Andrew started preschool, and that would develop. John Howard, the butcher next door, was a good bloke with a wife and eventually two small children. John's main problem was falling asleep in front of the TV after a few beers with his dinner - and a few before and after - leaving his wife to maintain conversation until it was time for his guests to go home and him to go to bed. But he was good company around the occasional barbecue when I could produce barramundi steaks from Darwin that were the envy of neighbours.

With eight years difference in age between him and Paul, Andrew was like the start of a new family except that he had doting elder sisters instead of close siblings who might have been jealous. He must also have had the advantage of not being as aware of parental frictions as the older children. Anyway he was pretty well looked after, and we would go for walks around the neighbourhood when I was home, or play in the many excellent playgrounds in Canberra's parks on weekends, along with Paul who was still young enough for some of those exploits. He also had to be introduced to all the right stories at bedtime and so forth, and here I rediscovered Dr Seuss. I think *The Cat in the Hat* and its sequel *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* are little children's classics that any adult can enjoy reading time and again on these occasions. I don't know when I first read Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* but it remains top of my list of recommended reading to children, and I still have a copy I will enjoy reading again after having introduced it to Andrew.

George Stirzaker had done his final posting in the RAAF at Wagga Wagga and had retired there, buying a house at 10 Spooner Avenue, across the road from the one he and Mary had lived in as a RAAF married quarter. Only a few hours drive from Canberra, Wagga Wagga became a port of call for our caravan, impressing Mary with its comfortable fittings. In those days the Hume Highway ran through Gundagai and across the Prince Alfred Bridge over the Murrumbidgee River and its river flats that used to flood severely. Driving over this narrow, rickety bridge was an experience to be remembered. It was the longest timber viaduct in Australia and had been built in 1866. It remained in use until replaced by a new concrete bridge on a bypass in 1976 after over a century of extensive use. Gundagai itself had gone down in Australian folklore for its dog on a tuckerbox sculpted by Frank Rusconi and erected in 1932, five miles north of the town. Dogs were popular companions for the bullock teamsters, and one such teamster over 100 years ago lamented in verse his misfortune at getting bogged there. In what is believed to be the unedited second of four verses he says:

*'Twas gettin' dark, the team got bogged,
The axle snapped in two,
I lost me matches and me pipe,
So what was I to do?
The rain came on, 'twas bitter cold,
And hungry too was I,
And the dorg shat in the tuckerbox,
Nine miles from Gundagai.*

Mary was later to be a tower of strength in counsel and comfort in difficult times when Andrew and I would go down on our own. Wagga Wagga was also attractive for its botanic gardens at the base of Willans Hill, incorporating a Chinese section with gate and pavilion installed by Chinese artisans who were brought from Wagga Wagga's sister city of Kunming along with the genuine tiles and artefacts. George Stirzaker's name appears in the roll of honour for participation in the construction of the Camellia garden there embracing the Chinese pavilion, opened on 20 August 1988 as a bicentennial project. George has been active throughout Wagga Wagga and has received council awards for his contribution to its beautification. The botanic garden also has a small animal park and playground where Andrew would play with Kathryn Stirzaker and Andrew Ceeney, Mary's daughter and grandson respectively. As the town has grown so has that area, becoming a focal point not to be missed by visitors to the city.

But family life was continuing superficially at Page, and birthdays were still celebrated with parties of the children's close friends. Susan teamed up with Jane Paddick, and would board with Jane's family in Harrison Street, Scullin, for a while after Celie and I separated in December 1975 and I lived in the single men's quarters at Fairbairn. Judith's special friend was Lindsay Hawthorne, and having turned 18 on 12 June 1975 she married Lindsay on 15 November and moved down to Queanbeyan. The marriage was a splendid ceremony at St Christopher's cathedral in Manuka, celebrated by Father Len Bibo and attended by a host of relatives and friends, and the reception was in the Jamison Inn. John and Betty Bibo came from Melbourne; Mary Stirzaker from Wagga Wagga; Tony and Val Bibo, and Ursula and Joe Gangemi from Queensland; and John 'Johnno' and Wendy Johnston from Ettalong. Jack, Ivy and Shirley were there from the Tweed, of course, and locals included the Alcocks, Stirzakers and Don and Di Clarke. Judith made a beautiful bride and Susan an equally beautiful bridesmaid.

Jack and Ivy Simpson came down at other times too, and we did the tourist scene with a tour of the Australian War Memorial where Ivy cried on seeing the name of her brother, Cecil, in the roll of honour on the wall, naming those 120,000 soldiers killed in World War II. Corporal Cecil Robert Smith, A.I.F. 2/31 Bn., died on 09 July 1945 aged 26 and is interred at the Labuan War Cemetery. And Lake Burley Griffin in the launch - rugged up against the cold, and inside the cabin instead of out on the open deck, but still able to enjoy the splendid scenery that makes Canberra so unique a capital. Powerboats were banned on the lake with the exception of the tourist launches, police boats and approved workboats from the sailing clubs. The lake can be a hive of activity and a blaze of colour on fine weekends and evenings, besides providing for recreational fishing for trout. Unfortunately the trout have been fighting a losing battle with European Carp that have done them more harm than all of Canberra's fishermen combined. We took Jack to Lake Jindabyne for real fishing in my boat, but the weather there discouraged us from putting to sea and we brought the boat back on the roof rack, just the way it went down. On the way home Jack climbed over the granite boulders with the boys, and helped pull off stone flakes broken off by the effect of water freezing and expanding in cracks in the rock. Jack was a very gentle man and all the children loved him as a grandfather.

The boat did get a few outings in the Clyde River estuary at Batemans Bay, the nearest seaside resort to Canberra. Only about 150 kilometres from Canberra through historic old towns of Bungendore and Braidwood, and over the Clyde

mountain with its serpentine road, Batemans Bay was an easy place for us to take the caravan and stay in the park right on the mouth of the river. We also took the boat and caravan to Tweed Heads, and parked in the front yard of 4 Pearl Street during holidays. Jack had sold his banana farm and bought a taxi. For a while he drove a Leyland P76 that went down in automotive history with much the same glory as the Ford Edsell, but which Jack was quite impressed with.

Long hair for men was the fashion, and David, Robert, Paul and their friends all had hair past their collars. Andrew's was developing into a thick mop of curls. Judith and Susan assumed the job of hairdressers to keep the boys' long hair tidy, and had fun putting Andrew's hair in plastic curlers. Canberra never had very heavy falls of snow and the city only had a few falls during any winter, even though the nearby ranges might be snow capped for weeks or months. The first snow in the winter of 1973 was a thrill for the children on a school morning and gave their lives a whole new dimension. Snow trips with the Land Rover Club were one thing, but snow in the back yard and school grounds was a different matter altogether. Snow was never very far away in the winter, with the Brindabella range just a short drive for occasional romping in the snow, bobsledding in cheap plastic sleds, or building snow men - or very readily identifiable snow women in the case of one David and his friend, Kim McCabe, built with prominent superstructure. Though winter snows in the city were infrequent, we were to have snowfalls as late as October when the winter should have been well and truly over. Celie's sister, Colleen, lived in Canberra for a while and also in Cabramurra in the Snowy Mountains. Hockey, her husband, was project manager for the construction of a new town there - the highest in Australia - and we would visit them often. On one occasion we took the caravan up there and decided that the ice and snow conditions made it too risky to bring back. So it sat there in Colleen's yard for a long time until I found the suitable combination of time and weather conditions to go and get it. That may have been the time David built the igloo, using a four-litre ice cream container to mould the snow bricks. I flew over Cabramurra in the HS748 while the caravan was stranded there, and like to imagine I actually saw it parked in Colleen's yard.

On a visit to Gunnedah in New South Wales with the leader of the Country Party, Doug Anthony, I was immediately attracted to the place. It was a clean and attractive town with facilities I thought I could live with, and in 1974 I subsequently bought a block of land there with the intention of eventually establishing a caravan sales and rental yard. That was why I did the Small

Business Owners course through ICS. I took out a loan for \$3000 at 7¼% over three years with the Bank of New South Wales (later to become Westpac). For years I had a cheque account with the Bank of NSW and a savings account with the Commonwealth. Bank managers still took a personal interest in their small customers in those days, and I enjoyed good relations with the Bank of NSW until I retired from the RAAF and wanted a bridging loan for a few months to buy a house. They wouldn't give me one. Life took a different turn and I sold the land years later around the time of my divorce. Selling it was an experience, because the land I sold was not the block I thought I owned. When I bought the land through an estate agent I spoke on the phone to the woman who owned it, and we talked about the foundations for a large garage that had been laid. This was land next to an International Harvester factory. On trips to Brisbane I always drove through Gunnedah to see my land and I saw oily rubbish being dumped on it. I was tempted to stay over, catch the culprit and take action, but never did, which was just as well. When I came to sell the land it no longer had the foundations on it and I queried this with the estate agent. He told me that mine was the adjoining block, a rough tract I would never have bought, and took me to the council offices to prove it from the deeds. A mistake very early in the game had given me land that would have been costly to turn into what I had planned for it, so it was no loss that my original plans never eventuated. With legal fees, interest on the bank loan, and rates of around \$100 a year to the Gunnedah Shire Council, the land was not a profitable investment but did represent a major focus of my life for a while. Gunnedah held my interest for years, and I still stay there sometimes on my visits back to Brisbane. The Australian author, Ion L. Idriess, wrote a book called *The Red Chief*, published in 1953 that is well worth reading for background to Gunnedah. In it he mentions Senior Sergeant John Ewing who was in charge of the Gunnedah Police District during the second half of the nineteenth century in which the story is set. The Ewing family was still in Gunnedah, and it was through their Estate Agency that I bought my land.

Gunnedah was subject to severe flooding, and it decided to flood when Paul and I were there on a visit in the Land Rover looking at our land. We had stayed at the camping ground on the shores of Lake Keepit outside town, on the Tamworth side, and that was a saddening experience too. With Paul playing on a pump-up airbed I dozed and read on the shore of the lake. At one time I saw a big car tube float past in the breeze and paid no attention. Later, when a group of men walked the shoreline they pulled the body of a small boy from the water at my feet. They started to carry him away but I made them put him

down and tried to resuscitate him. I was not trained, and it was probably too late anyway because he had been in the water for an estimated half-hour. I resolved then that I would learn first aid, but it was to be years before I did a formal St John course. That night it rained and rained, wetting the small tent and us and everything in it. As soon as it was light we packed up and headed for home. The road out of Gunnedah was flooded and the council were putting up barriers. They let me through with the four wheel drive and we only got out of there just before the town was isolated with flood waters.

I gave up formal association with the Land Rover Club because I never had the time to go on their outings, but I went fishing in bush country with Barry Runnstrom. Barry was with the Customs Department and had been moved to Canberra not long before I came down. He had built a magnificent home on the top side of Hawkesbury Crescent, Farrer. Our favourite fishing was in the Snowy Mountains not far from Kiandra, but we also fished the open sea and Lake Jindabyne in Barry's 5-meter boat. Fishing in the Snowy was for trout, and in the winter. We'd get up at four o'clock and drive through Cooma with temperatures well below zero, with ice forming on the aerial and other car projections. When we parked in the bush we had almost two hours walk and climb through unspoiled country to get to the best fishing areas, having to make our own trail through the scrub at times. Often it snowed while we fished; it was generally freezing cold, so we took a small spirit stove to warm soup and drink. We became quite adept at lighting fires with wet twigs to provide some warmth at lunchtime. Barry won't let me forget one classic outing. Frequently it was a last minute decision to go, depending on the weather. I had just flown back from Perth in cloudless conditions, and since our weather comes from the west I rang Barry and told him it was ideal for fishing next morning, not a chance of rain. We got to the area all right, but from then on we suffered wind, snow, sleet and ice from all directions. The ferrules on the fishing rods would freeze up, and fingers were so cold it was almost impossible to tie knots. But these were the best conditions for trout, and Barry always caught his quota. I was not always so lucky. Fishing side by side, I could get nothing while Barry pulled in trout as though they were surrendering to him.

We had some good times and some good catches until others started netting and dynamiting the river, and the bush we crawled through became an open highway. Then we gave up going there and concentrated more on the sea and the lake, which was less demanding but generally less productive too. The Ben Boyd National Park near the Victorian border became a popular spot and we

had our particular camp site on the mouth of a creek at Mowarry Point. From here we would fish the beaches and rocks around Disaster Bay and Twofold Bay, catching some bream but mostly wrasse that was useless except for pet food. It was good exercise though and a sociable outing with a bottle of wine around the campfire.

The Land Rover, now registered as YEH-566, was still a great vehicle for moving us around as a family, though it was slow in towing the caravan. In a strong head wind or cross wind I could be down to 50 km/h in third gear on a level road. I still had the wooden trailer from Laverton days and that was always handy for dumping rubbish or getting the pine offcuts I used so much of. The Land Rover was wearing out though, and I changed one of the differentials besides having engine and gearbox work done on it. I found a good mechanic, John Genge, tucked away off the main street. John was a sheep farmer full time and mechanic part time. He let me help with the labour to cut down on cost, and also to learn a bit more about the car itself. Even so it still cost over \$450 to repair the gearbox in March 1975. And I replaced the motor in September 1976 with a second hand one that I picked up for \$150. One thing I did learn well over the years was how to cope with broken axles. Rear axles broke with monotonous regularity, the first at a traffic light in Page. Being fully floating they could be removed without the wheels falling off, and I quickly learned to remove the outside part of the broken axle, and disconnect the rear drive shaft to disable the rear differential. Then I put it into four wheel drive and drove on the front wheels only, until I could get around to removing the broken stub from the differential and put in a new axle. I always carried both a short and a long rear axle as spare parts, and had six broken axles in the life of the car.

I was not the first in the family to get glasses. Celie had worn glasses since I first met her, and certainly David and Paul were wearing them by late 1973. I had reading glasses prescribed in October 1973 by Doctor David Coop, a local specialist. These were bifocals, and the improvement in vision was astounding. I had not realised how much my close vision had deteriorated until it was restored. Dr Coop also found that I had glaucoma, with an interocular pressure of 26mm Hg for those who can interpret such figures. Checked a month later this was down to 21/23 in my right and left eyes respectively, and by April 1974 was a fairly normal 18/20. By June 1975 pressures were back to 26/26 and a year later were 22/22 but were not being treated until 1985, by which time I was committed to using eye drops for the rest of my life. The significance of all these figures is that I would use them as the basis of a claim

for medical treatment and pension on the Department of Veterans' Affairs in 1985. A further significance, according to a later specialist, Dr Wong-See, was that Dr Coop should have begun treatment long before he did. Instead of merely charting the changes in pressure he should have reduced them to normal (less than 20mm) and maintained them with prescription drops. I didn't want two pairs of glasses, clear and tinted, and the RAAF would not have paid for two anyway. On the other hand the RAAF did not approve of photo-chromatic glasses (that darkened in the sunlight and cleared in the dark) for aircrew. However, with a little cooperation between Dr Coop and a contract optician I was able to have my photo-chromatic glasses at RAAF expense until discharged.

Celie worked part time at the library, and later for the kindergarten authority, and had her own set of friends in a football club that congregated around the Finnish Club in Belconnen. We weren't spending much time together under the same roof, and for our last year or so together she would generally arrange to be away till three or four a.m. on the nights when I was home, and on Sundays during the football season. The children had individual parental contact but no combined parental encouragement or support for a long time. 1975 was the year we separated to go our different ways. But first we had to appear in public together at Government House on invitation from the Governor General and Lady Kerr to a reception on 30 July. Rare invitations like this were encouraging in making the Squadron feel that it was not totally taken for granted in the amount of work it put into political and vice-regal support. On 2 December I traded my old Arrow caravan on a new, 8-berth Franklin caravan from Chesneyland in Queanbeyan - Canberra's border town in New South Wales. The Keoghs, who would crop up again later in my life when I worked at Waltons, owned Chesneyland. Caravans had an appeal for me with their functional use of space and economy of design. The Franklin had four bunks at the rear, the lower ones being bigger than the upper ones. The centre area was the kitchen whose table could be lowered to make up into a bed, and the front wall was a sofa whose back raised to become double bunks. It had a good refrigerator and a gas stove with oven. Colleen and Hockey were now living in Holmes Court, Wodonga, and we planned to spend the Christmas holidays at the Hume Weir Caravan Park from where we could easily commute to Colleen's. Jack was staying with Colleen and we could have a family get-together. I'm not sure when microwave ovens became readily available, though I bought mine in 1981. Colleen certainly did not have one in

1975, and when she wanted to defrost a frozen chicken I saw her ingenuity of putting it in front of an electric fan to hasten the thaw.

We had only been there a few days when Celie packed up and caught the bus back to Canberra on New Year's Eve, taking Susan and Robert. David, Paul and Andrew stayed with me. On 4 January Celie rang Colleen to say that she had moved out of Hayter Place and had no intention of telling me, and Hockey gave me the news. Hockey also convinced Celie that she should ring me the next day to tell me herself, which she did. We finished our holidays at the caravan park and I arrived back at Page to find the house stripped of all but one 2-foot 6-inch metal double bunk, two wardrobes and two electric heaters.

Logistically I could not hope to continue flying the way I was and look after children at home. That and other problems like the legality of custody without a court order, and the children's welfare, from a schooling aspect meant that all the children went to live with Celie at a succession of addresses. I moved in to the Officers' Mess and parked the caravan in a car park where I could plug into 240 volts. Andrew spent almost every weekend with me in the van over the next eight months and, except for Robert, the other children spent varying times there, including bringing their friends to stay during school holidays. Only 14 years old, Robert was a powerful boy and had developed with playing football. We had a very bitter fight probably in late 1975 and were not communicating. Fortunately this problem is resolved, though it took more than a few wasted years of what should have been a period of family consolidation. I count myself very lucky now in that the family relationships are well adjusted, though with obvious scars from the impact of the separation and divorce. While I had quite a respectable room in the Officers' Mess I could not accommodate the children there, and so I would plug the caravan into an unused power point in a vacant bedroom, using a very long extension lead. We would live in the van over the weekend and use the showers and toilets in the adjacent quarters. The RAAF conveniently turned a blind eye to this irregularity and must have given me tacit protection, because the Service Police even delivered a message to me there one day. It was on the RAAF base that Susan started to learn to drive the Land Rover. And David remembers being shown the RAAF guard dogs complex from the same period, so there were still good things coming out of the adversity. The RAAF was considerate from another point too. They let Celie move back into 3 Hayter Place on which I was paying the rent, thus restoring a familiar environment to the

children until I retired prematurely in August 1976. I paid maintenance and family support while our respective solicitors argued over property settlement.

At this time I felt I had every reason to dislike Canberra and I contemplated moving. Cairns was top of the priority list of places to live, not Gunnedah or even Alice Springs. I probably wanted to get as far away as possible and yet enjoy my surroundings and have reasonable prospects for employment and schooling for the children. I was going to fight for custody in the divorce towards which Celie was proceeding, and which became easier to obtain from 5 January 1976 when the Family Law Act came into force. This provided for the irretrievable breakdown of marriage as the only grounds for divorce. With one of our aircraft going to Papua New Guinea I went along for the ride to Cairns to sound out prospects, being picked up by the same aircraft on its homeward flight. It turned out to be a humiliating experience. My training and education as navigator and Indonesian linguist counted for nothing in the outside world where such RAAF qualifications were neither understood nor accepted. Admittedly they were not relevant to the jobs I was seeking, but they should have represented an indication of capability. I was rejected in applications for positions as airport police officer and airline traffic officer because I did not have formal schooling qualifications beyond Queensland Junior. That was hard to take at the time but probably to my advantage in the long term.

With the realisation that I could not hope to maintain any semblance of family life by pursuing a flying career after divorce, plus the sobering episode of job rejection in Cairns I set my sights lower and looked for work in Canberra. Waltons department store advertised for a security officer and I applied, joining a queue of mostly ex-policemen and winning the job. Barbara Robertson was personnel manager at the time and responsible for my initial interviews. I found out soon after I started work there that her defacto husband was a Wing Commander in the RAAF Legal Branch with whom I had fought verbally over the dry cleaning issue, telling him I would win the case despite his opposition. It really is a small world. George Shoveller was the senior security officer for Waltons and he was based in Sydney. George was a true gentleman and we got on well together later on. He interviewed me twice in Canberra and subsequently arranged for my training in Sydney. The RAAF provided for a period of training of four weeks at their expense prior to discharge, and George found it very difficult to accept that he could employ me for this time at no cost to Waltons. I had to insist that he let the RAAF pay

me for as long as they would, because Waltons pay was only about sixty per cent of RAAF pay and I didn't want to lose that advantage.

Meantime, in my last months with 34 Squadron I started arranging for early retirement and looking for a house. As a Flight Lieutenant navigator I would have been retired on my 45th birthday anyway, or had to transfer to some ground job, so I was only anticipating retirement by two years. The penalty for early retirement was a reduction in my service pension. On recommendation of Stu Bryce I used John Crisp Real Estate to help me find a house, and concentrated on the north side of Canberra. We looked at a lot of places that were either well above or well below my expectations - I could only get \$24,820 cash on retirement by surrendering some of my superannuation and settling for a reduced pension from \$6205 to \$5339. By surrendering insurance policies and borrowing from Dad's estate I could get \$33,000, so my market was limited. Finally I selected 21 Blacket Street, only to be told I had missed it by one day. So I settled for my second choice of 19 Blacket Street, which cost me \$32,500 eventually, and I paid a deposit on 15 June 1976. We arranged with the vendor to allow me to move in and pay rent until I had the money from the RAAF for settlement.

I formally ceased service with the RAAF on 3 August 1976 after 25 years service, and on 27 August received my Certificate of Service and Discharge with a letter of commendation from the Chief of Air Staff, Air Commodore Ian Parker, DFC, AFC. I genuinely enjoyed my Air Force Career and, given the opportunity, would do it all again.

Working at Waltons

Having had the realisation of how useless RAAF navigators were in the outside world forced into my consciousness, I had no difficulty in applying for the position of Security Officer with Waltons. As I have said, George Shoveller was a real gentleman and we easily became friends. A number of us were recruited at the same time in May 1976 for employment in stores throughout Australia, and I told George I would work for Waltons for five to ten years. I was prepared to commit myself to his plans for at least five years and then see what the future offered. While I needed the work to establish some order and regularity in my life in Canberra, I was suffering a salary reduction from more than \$16,000 a year to less than \$10,000. Working in a fully civilian, commercial environment with regular hours was vastly different from the discipline and ordered chaos of service life, and I had to adapt to a new culture. I also had to buy new clothes to supplement the meagre outfits I relied on in the RAAF, where I lived in uniform.

Waltons was a family store with branches in capital cities and major towns. Even from the beginning I was given preferential treatment. Our introductory course in the Head Office and major store in Sydney was nominally a few days, but when everyone else went out to their respective stores I stayed on for a more intensive introduction to Waltons paperwork. I had no intention of being what was commonly referred to as a 'floor walker' in the trade. This was a security officer who literally walked the floor of the store most of the day looking for shoplifters. The term 'shoplifter' was to be discarded in my time and replaced with 'store thief', but their activities were the same - stealing whatever stock could be stolen without getting caught, in a variety of ingenious ways. I did my share of floor walking over my three and a half years in the job, but it was not my major concern. For most of the floor duties I had an assistant, Con Friend, wife of a prominent Canberra policeman and well versed in the trade. Con took me under her wing and introduced me to the Waltons' environment and the tricks and people I needed to know to make a smooth start to the job. My major concern was to be combating the theft by staff, which had the potential to far exceed what the customers were stealing.

I was also concerned with correct accounting procedures, stock control and the operation of the hire purchase and customer finance arm of Waltons. It took some time to become versed in the intricacies of these transactions but I was given every encouragement and, in fact, had free rein to investigate any

aspect of Waltons procedures. I was not responsible to nor employed by the Canberra store manager, but reported direct to George Shoveller in Sydney. I paid the usual courtesies to the Canberra management, but working at arm's length from them gave me independence and protection from undue influence. It was not long before I made my first mark when I found that money was being shuffled between two separate accounts to produce a periodic balance. Nobody was stealing the money but it was certainly an irregular practice that had to be stopped. I wrote to George and heard no more about it, but presumably action was taken because a couple of years later the accountant referred to the incident and asked if I had initiated it.

Waltons had a basement, ground floor and first floor, and was located in Monaro Mall (which became the Canberra Centre after extensive refurbishment) on the corner of Petrie Plaza and Bunda Street. My office was on the top floor, near to the staff exit door and sharing a wall with the staff common room, which gave the staff entertainment when some of the shoplifters performed in my office while waiting for the police to arrive. Some of them put on fainting fits, or wept and implored to be let go rather than face the consequences of their action. Staff were required to come and go through a special door to discourage the possibility of easy theft from their various departments out through the customer doors. Even so they managed to get small items out through the staff door. We often had suspects but, despite occasional bag searches that threatened to become an industrial relations issue, didn't catch anyone this way.

Con Friend and her successor Sandra Keating, also the wife of a policeman, a Sergeant, caught a fair share of shoplifters. We had a code that was broadcast over the store's public address system when shop assistants wanted to call for security, and the assistants themselves liked to remain aloof from the situation. I made a couple of mistakes early in my career by presenting the culprit to the assistant for identification and was promptly berated by one department manager to whom I later apologised. I soon learnt. When a shoplifter was caught I would be called, and we would take the offender to my office for verification of the theft and handover of the culprit to the police. We were required to prosecute all shoplifters and submit a report on each case to Sydney. School children during holidays were a big problem, stealing mostly cosmetics and cheap ornaments. But we had organised gangs who would come down from Sydney and steal expensive fur and leather coats, and other high fashion objects. Transistor radios were popular items, dropped into shopping bags along with clothing or Manchester. The truly dedicated would use

shopping trolleys to make a good haul. Various figures were produced by trade and legal bodies to indicate the extent of shoplifting and the estimated value of goods stolen. I really do not believe that any figures produced before the computer age, which permits detailed tracking of merchandise, were at all relevant. They were simply estimates to fill a need for statistics.

As security officers we had no special rights of arrest, just the right of citizen's arrest that was common law then. This gave any citizen the right to apprehend a wrongdoer whom they were sure had committed a crime. We had to wait until shoplifters had actually left the store before apprehending them, because until then they still had the opportunity to go to a cashier and pay for whatever goods were in their possession. I used to impress on staff that they had to be 105 per cent sure that the suspect had stolen goods before taking action. The embarrassment for Waltons and the possibility of legal action for wrongful arrest were not worth the cost of most shoplifted goods. We did have occasional problems where I was able to pacify the offended party, but a particularly embarrassing one cost Con Friend her job. With her husband assuming the role of adviser she apprehended a boy wearing jeans with the label still on them. It was common practice for thieves to put on new clothes in the fitting rooms and wear them out of the shop, but this boy had paid for his. Con had not witnessed the leadup to the boy's appearance in labelled jeans and had foolishly leapt to conclusions. She had not observed the 105 per cent rule. The incident became quite nasty and George sacked Con, which was how I came to employ Sandra Keating. In George's defence, Con was not sacked for this one indiscretion. She had been growing less productive and more of a burden for some time, and this incident gave George the reason he needed for dismissal. David Jones, in the same building, had a female security officer with whom we cooperated. In fact, when I was investigating a theft by the acting manager I used her phone to call Sydney, since our switchboard had more leaks than a colander. The DJ security officer caught a Flight Lieutenant I knew stealing a paperback novel. His lawyer avoided prosecution by successfully pleading male menopause. Con's friendship with the DJ's staff enabled her to get a job there after leaving Waltons.

Andrew was growing up by this time and was approaching six years old when I started work at Waltons. On some of the Friday nights when I worked I would pick him up during my tea break and take him to the store. I had a favourite pizza parlour, the Woodstock, in Civic where I generally bought a small pizza for my dinner. We would pick up something to eat and drink, and I'd go back to work while Andrew read comics or watched television until I finished at

nine o'clock. The staff got to know him well and looked on him as a little mascot. They remembered him for years afterwards and used to ask about him when I shopped or visited there after I had taken up a new job. Andrew had strange tastes. He liked smoked oysters, salami and vegemite, and avoided vegetables. A slice of salami could last him an hour while he watched television, lying on the floor at home, at work, or at Mary's in Wagga Wagga. Mary still talks about it. Going home on Friday nights after nine o'clock closing I would do my washing, and hang it out so that it would be dry when I got home on Saturday afternoon. One winter night I had hung some out and was rotating the clothes hoist when I was hit in the side of the head by something solid. The clothes had frozen stiff in the time it took me to complete one circumference of the hoist.

Though I saw the need to do my time as a floorwalker, and it was necessary to give my assistant a periodic break, I was never comfortable doing it. It was necessary though, because we worked a split roster. With late night shopping (9.00 p.m.) in Canberra on Friday nights, one of us would work the late night and the following Saturday morning. Then on the next weekend we would take a three-day break with the Monday off. It had its advantages, but I had not been used to this sort of regularity in my working life for many years, and it took a lot of getting used to.

Waltons prided itself on its family atmosphere and the staff were really like a loose family, with regular gatherings in the staff common room after work on paydays. Management and staff would share drinks and eats, and discuss a lot more than just the day's activities. There were a few cliques where people had common interests like bowling that was all the rage at the time, or barbecues and swimming on summer evenings at any of the designated areas along the Murrumbidgee. The firm was a happy place in which to work and most of the employees were proud to work there. Unfortunately the three and a half years that I worked there saw several changes of management and finally a change of ownership, with disastrous effects on staff morale and my retrenchment. Some further years down the track even the name Waltons ceased to exist. But, along with Con Friend, there were notable characters in Waltons with whom I worked comfortably and, from a professional point of view, profitably. Looking now at the list of the names on the massive farewell card I was given when I left it hardly seems fair not to mention them all, but that is impractical.

A few of the more memorable ones were Mike Karys, from electrical, Mike was responsible for a lot of my education in the firm; Jeannette Norton from

where? - but concerned that we get her name correct: J E A double-N E double-T E, the longest possible way of spelling it; Angelo in photographic; and Phil Keogh who became head of the furniture department before he was twenty years old. Phil remembered my buying the caravan at his brother's yard in 1975. We became good friends and I was at Phil's 21st birthday party in August 1977 and his marriage in November 1978 to Julie, besides being a relatively frequent visitor to his parents' home in Hackett. Phil went on to own a chain of his own shops in Canberra, and put up the wall paper in my lounge room one Saturday. And there was Alan Ginns, the contract carrier, a man who was generous to a fault. Alan saw people's difficulties, and paid his assistants according to their needs not to a union formula. Inevitably the unscrupulous ones took advantage of him, but he helped them anyway. As a break from the office routine I sometimes went with Alan on his delivery runs, to enjoy his company and to observe the procedures. Alan, too, lost his job with restructuring and I last saw him working in the War Memorial. Karl Forthuber rose from department manager to be assistant manager in my time, and was one of the most dedicated and conscientious of Waltons' workers. Karl was treated very unfairly after I had left the firm, and he subsequently resigned to open an ice cream parlour in the mall and buy a milk run. Cheryl Rowley was married to a detective, and Andrew and I were to go on a lot of social outings with Cheryl and Col, and their children Marty and Leigh. I never had professional dealings with Col but respected him in his profession. He went on to worthwhile promotion and I saw his name in the local paper in 1993 as Superintendent, though I lost contact after I left Waltons. Joy O'Neill and Fay Lewis lent vitality with their good humour and their pranks.

Royna Gardiner introduced herself to me one day in the shop late in 1977, and I remembered her from China. Royna was a casual employee who would work in the busy hours through the middle of the day, or when there was a staff shortage. Over the years I spent time with Royna and Ray, and their daughter Elizabeth - married in St John's Church in Reid in June 1981 - and son Robert. They continued their Foreign Affairs career with postings to Hong Kong in 1981 and later on to Bali in January 1984, extending invitations to me that I never took up. Apart from the fact that I was already a visitor to both places, I was in no position financially to think about going overseas for many years.

Details are necessarily vague now, but my application to the administrative procedures coupled with cooperative relations with many of the staff meant that I was able to catch two pay clerks, about three or more sales assistants, at least three warehouse managers, and finally the acting manager of Waltons

himself in stealing from the firm. The manager was away on recreation leave at the time. The pay clerks and sales assistants were relatively small fry, but the police estimated that the first of the warehouse managers had disposed of more than \$50,000 dollars worth of goods - five times my annual salary. He was so well established that he used a Waltons delivery van after hours to make his illegal sales and deliveries. His downfall came when an outdoor setting was returned as unsatisfactory and I was able to prove it had never been sold. The acting manager was remarried, I think, and trying to live a lifestyle beyond his income. He had developed a scheme for processing and approving refunds for unsatisfactory sales, and an honest subordinate alerted me to irregularities in this. A check of only five of ten randomly chosen addresses on the refund dockets told me all I needed to know. A thorough audit of the year's dockets produced enough evidence to put him in jail. His departure was rather sad. I had quietly worked to two detectives in developing my case, and when we had it finalised I introduced the detectives to the manager in his office and left. He was subsequently escorted to police headquarters for interrogation and processing. When his wife rang later in the day the switch girl told her, 'He doesn't work here any more', and that's how the news was broken to the family. But it pleased me that, when he was released later that night to wait for prosecution, I was the person he rang to collect his personal effects from his office and take them to him in the dark outside. He didn't hate me for doing my job. I do remember the names of the prime offenders but I see no need to record them here for posterity.

During my period of service I did further training in Sydney and was sent down to Albury to investigate a serious occurrence of staff theft aimed at one person. I didn't solve the problem but I suspect that we frightened her into not stealing any more. There were instances in Canberra too where we knew who the guilty party was but could not obtain conclusive proof. I was sure one woman in the hire purchase area had removed all copies of the relevant documents to prevent my tracing a theft of \$300, and enjoyed thumbing her nose at us. A warehouse manager virtually admitted stealing a refrigerator, and defied us to prove it. He told me it was already in New Zealand. We couldn't prosecute him but we accepted his resignation after George and I had interrogated him in Telopea Park, where he had no witnesses to anything we said. Success in exposing, prosecuting and preventing theft did not ensure employment. George Shoveller came down to Canberra late one Friday night when I was on duty. While he had rung other security officers to inform them, he wanted to tell me personally that Waltons had decided to retrench their

security staff, and that my promise of five years of employment was not reciprocated by Waltons. I was devastated. Though I owned my own home as a result of the RAAF superannuation fund payout, I was far from self supporting and still had children at home, as well as paying support for those still with Celie. Fate took a hand in my future in two ways. I started asking friends about employment opportunities and Peter Dennes, ex School of Languages and now living and working in Canberra, suggested I write to 'that four letter crowd' and see if they had anything to offer. I wrote to ASIO on 5 July and was given an interview on Wednesday 18. This was conducted in a rented office in Civic, room 504 in the CML Building, not in the ASIO headquarters on the corner of Constitution Avenue and Anzac Parade - known to every taxi driver but not publicly acknowledged. This was a start, but I knew that it generally took at least nine months and sometimes years to be cleared for employment by the Australian Security Intelligence Organization. Meantime I dismissed yet another warehouse manager - after only a few days work - for using the company van to go on a drinking binge in his lunchtime. With his position vacant I saw an opportunity for stopgap employment and applied for the job.

On 30 July 1979 I began a new career that was only to last a few months, but was to be more physically demanding than anything I had done for many years. Waltons warehouse was out at Yallourn Street, Fyshwick, in one of the industrial areas of Canberra that later grew to include Hume in the south and Mitchell in the north. I was quite familiar with its location and layout as I had spent many hours there on frequent visits as security officer, including investigating two instances of major theft. One of these was a genuine break and enter where the thieves had broken through the corrugated iron wall and driven out the main door. The second instance was almost certainly an inside job arranged by one of the workers, but we never proved it. I had never anticipated that I would be there in any other capacity than security officer. The warehouse had two massive doors; one sliding door that gave level access from the floor to the outside, and one roller door that opened onto a loading ramp so that furniture could be loaded directly into or out of trucks. Between these two doors was a small wooden floor laid on the concrete slab of the warehouse floor. That wooden floor held the manager's desk, cupboards for the stationery, and a totally inadequate electric heater. The wind and the cold of August didn't come in one door and go out the other. It came in both doors and stayed. Sometimes it seemed like working inside a deep freeze. In this environment I found muscles that I had forgotten existed as I shifted furniture

from semitrailers to its position within the warehouse, and then from there on to delivery trucks. At nights I would go home exhausted, but at the end of it all I was fitter than I had been for years. I employed Barry Sumner as my assistant and, once I was satisfied with his performance, set about training him as my replacement. Barry was a good bloke, and kept ferrets for rabbiting. He took Andrew and me out on one of his runs to show us the technique, and I could only equate it with my fishing - a lot of effort for very little return. But most of these fishing or ferreting exercises are really only social outings in the fresh air and sunshine anyway. I don't think any of us really expects to catch anything worthwhile. I sold my trailer to Barry for \$10 after it had sat unused in the yard for years and the wood had started to rot.

This job as warehouse manager lasted until 26 October 1979. I had passed the security clearance and the psychological tests for ASIO with ease and in record time, and had the offer of a job in a developing area of the organisation. Waltons gave me a big send-off including an executive desk set with calendar, telephone directory and storage space for paper clips and things. Karl Forthuber thought it would be most appropriate for my job with the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was the cover ASIO employees used for their employer. At the mandatory speech I thanked Waltons for two things: firstly for giving me a job when I needed one in the first place, and secondly for retrenching me from it in the second place - because I was now going on to more-permanent employment with a starting salary 40 per cent more than they were currently paying me.

19 Blacket Street, Downer

Divorce was a rather bitter affair, and individual and joint attendance at marriage counselling sessions achieved nothing. Worst of all was the Catholic Marriage Counsel Advisory Bureau or whatever they called themselves. They showed an absolute inability to understand the nature of the breakdown, let alone advise on its repair. It was probably staffed with untrained but well-intentioned volunteers. Celie used Snedden, Hall & Gallop as solicitors, while I used Brian Morris and Company. Brian was ex-RAAF, but I had little to do with him personally. Peter Crooks was the man I worked with, and I developed a great respect for him. Interestingly, Snedden Hall & Gallop were my solicitors in the purchase of the land at Gunnedah, and I think they still held the deeds because I was still paying it off through the bank. Celie filed for divorce in 1976 and for property settlement on 2 June 1977. At this time I was paying \$3380 maintenance, which, with her social welfare and child endowment payments, put Celie in a far superior financial situation to me. My expendable income was down to \$5772; Celie's was up to \$7104. She was asking for \$25,000 in property settlement. While I trusted my solicitors to act for me I did a lot of private research into divorce and property settlement in order to understand the process. My research indicated that she was not entitled to any portion of the property at Blacket Street and, when I put this to Peter Crooks, we sought an opinion on my conclusions from a QC. I was substantially right, and she and her solicitors settled for the more reasonable amount of \$13,500. My divorce from Celie was considered by Mr Justice Ellis on 14 June 1977, and the decree nisi became absolute on 15 July 1977.

The children were obviously affected by the divorce, but the impact may have been lessened by the fact that I had already spent so much time out of their lives on my flying duties. We were still a family and they were no less affectionate to either of their parents. I had quite reasonable legal access to Andrew who was five years old at the time, and all the other children were old enough and wise enough to be able to make their own decisions about which parent they lived with, and when they visited the other.

The house I bought was brick veneer, three bedrooms, separate garage, with a big back yard, about fifteen years old, and facing due west. River pebbles lined the northern and eastern dividing fences. Across the back were four nectarine trees, a peach tree and a cherry tree, while along the northern and western boundaries there were rose bushes. These were a blaze of colour in season, but

spent most of their life out of season, looking scrawny and unkempt as rose bushes do. Over the years I have progressively removed them so they are no longer the eyesore I found them to be. My friends like the Bryces and the Smiths were aghast when I said I was going to pull them out, so for a long time I trimmed them to keep them under control. Periodically I trimmed them below ground level and I have never been sorry to see them go. Canberra doesn't have front fences but there is a thick hedge between my yard and the northern neighbour. My original neighbour there was Bill Langhorne, an older man and an excellent neighbour. When his wife died of cancer Bill moved down to the coast. On the southern side there were only a couple of shrubs, until the lady doctor who bought the place planted more shrubs and two stands of pampas grass. Now there is a solid wall of vegetation plus the remains of two stands of pampas grass that I regularly poison with Roundup. Power lines run along back fences rather than down the street, making for a more attractive city.

Canberra is renowned for its trees, and the then National Capital Development Commission (the equivalent of a local council, but with far more power) had lined the streets of Downer with pin oaks and Lusitanian oaks whose acorns carpeted the footpaths and street edges in the autumn. Trodden by countless feet and crushed by vehicle tyres they were a crunchy feature of the season. One year had farmers collecting them by the bag full as nutritious feed for pigs. The Commission had also initially provided almost limitless free trees for householders from a central nursery. Most of the trees in my corner of Downer and down to the shopping centre are deciduous oriental plane trees and oaks, which have their advantages. In the summer they provide welcome shade and some cooling; in winter they grow bare and allow for unimpeded access of the weak, northern sunshine. The spectacle of the autumn-toned leaves in a circle under individual trees, or spread thickly across wide spaces in parks like Telopea or Glebe is one of the attractions of Canberra with its four very distinct seasons. But the problem of the piles of fallen leaves that have to be disposed of in the autumn, and again in the spring from the pin oaks that carry their dead leaves, when the winds heap them up against fences and walls is one I could well do without. And the roof gutters and downpipes are regularly blocked, despite precautions. Unlike in the legendary Camelot the leaves in Canberra do not '... blow away completely. At night, of course'. The trees are also the gathering places for hordes of galahs and sulphur-crested cockatoos throughout the year, feeding on the autumn acorns with a raucous cacophony that many residents find irritating but I accept as an odd kind of

music. Reasonably common too are the pretty white-cheeked and crimson rosellas, and sometimes in the winter the gang-gang with its pink head on a grey body.

When I bought the house it had been vacant for eighteen months or so, and previously lived in by an old couple who had passed on separately. Heating was an oil heater in what had been an open fireplace - ghastly blue tiles. Most of the colour in the house was faded blues, greens, cream and grey, including the lino tiles in the kitchen and laundry. Carpet in the lounge-dining room was three-foot wide corduroy pulling apart at the seams. But it was home, and would provide ample opportunity for me to practice handyman skills over the years to come. Oil heating cost around thirty dollars a month, and winter stretched from May into October. When the oil crisis in the 1980s forced the price of crude oil through the ceiling I changed over to electricity and dumped the oil heater and its tank at the local tip. There were so many available from people doing the same thing that they couldn't even be given away. I had almost nothing in the way of furniture and fittings, and used Waltons for essential equipment like refrigerator, lounge, kitchen unit and dining room suite for around \$2500. Staff were allowed a ten per cent discount on purchases, which was a significant incentive to buy. I picked up a washing machine second hand for \$80, and replaced the old upright stove with another second hand one having burners beside the oven, for \$120. The washing machine has long departed to its final resting-place but the stove is still there.

Downer was on the main northern exit from Canberra, Northborne Avenue, and about six kilometres from the centre of town. It had a choice of regular bus services that I very rarely used, and was ideally located in many respects. The shopping centre of Dickson was only ten minutes walk away, well established with a variety of stores and services, but far enough for its bustle and noise to be no problem. Blacket Street is L shaped, and the section I lived in was parallel to Northborne Avenue and one block removed. Traffic was not normally a problem. Extensive playing fields and a golf course were on the other, western, side of Northborne and, as I was eventually to find out, there was an Olympic pool in Dickson. The whole suburb was rich with vegetation, and only fifteen minutes from a couple of churches. We made St Brigid's our parish, and Andrew eventually made his first communion there in October 1979.

I was still driving the Land Rover and running on retreaded tyres for economy, but had enough money to buy a bronze Ford Falcon station wagon for \$1900

at the government auctions for Susan in September 1976. I couldn't even drive it home. The radiator had a big leak in it, and I only got as far as the suburb of Torrens before I had to pull into Pete Dennes's driveway and abandon it until I could get it fixed. This was never a satisfactory car as it was too big for Susan, and I sold it in May 1977 for the same price, buying a smaller Morris Marina, YHI-536, for \$1475 from a car yard called Taxi & General near Waltons' warehouse. The \$425 left over I put towards buying David a very used Hillman Gazelle at \$500. I put another \$500 into getting it roadworthy and I might just as well have given the money away. It spent most of its life broken down, and eventually I gave it away to get it out of the yard. Besides providing transport to school and work, the cars were supposed to facilitate communication between Downer and the various suburbs where Celie and the other children lived on a frequently changing basis. For a long time I had to crank start the Land Rover until I could afford to replace the battery, and people could hardly believe what they saw when I regularly cranked it up in the car park opposite Waltons. They obviously had not grown up with the cars Dad owned.

Dad died on Tuesday 6 July 1976 and it would have been Tony who rang Waltons to let me know. I was out on one of my security runs, and came back to be met by Barbara Robertson with the sad news. We take so much for granted, but I realised how much I loved my father when he was no longer alive. I flew to Brisbane for his funeral and the family mourned his passing. I was still at Waltons on 19 January 1979 when Mum died, but I was in Wagga Wagga caravan park on holidays. It seemed that the Bibos were destined to only have family reunions for periods of mourning, and we buried Mum alongside Dad in the site he had chosen for its view.

Susan came first to live in Blacket Street and David and Paul followed later, and finally Judith. Susan was still a student at Belconnen High in 1976 and must have made an impression with her big Ford, although many students had their own cars - different from my time in school. Susan started a Batchelor of Education at the Canberra College of Advanced Education in 1977. She found this wasn't what she wanted to do with her life and later transferred to the TAFE to enrol for a Child Care Certificate. She worked as a casual at Coles supermarket on weekends until she qualified at TAFE, and lived at Downer until the end of 1979 when she left to marry Chris Bunt. Chris worked underground as an electrician in the coalmines of the Burraborang Valley, around Thirlmere and Buxton.

David took a year off school, lived at Blacket Street and worked as a storeman in Queanbeyan in 1977, learned to drive the Land Rover, and remembers Limestone Avenue as being like an obstacle course. It certainly was a bad road for many years, and should have been upgraded long before it was. The little Honda motorbike got more use than the car on David's commuting between Downer and Queanbeyan, an ordeal on literally freezing mornings. But he had tried for apprenticeship training with the Army in July 1976. He wasn't accepted, but he was the subject of a ministerial inquiry that reverberated in the corridors of Russell Offices until March 1977. With two other applicants he flew to Sydney on Wednesday 27 July 1976, for aptitude tests on the Thursday morning. The aircraft was late leaving Canberra; there was no transport from the airport to Sydney; the hotel they were booked into didn't want to know them; they'd had no dinner, and they didn't get to bed until around 2.00 a.m. They had to get up at 6.30 for their tests, following which there was no transport to get them back to the airport. Hardly a satisfactory introduction to army procedures. Having won one ministerial I was prepared to contest another, and I wrote to the Army and the Minister for Defence. It was 5 October before we got a totally inadequate response from a Mr J E McLeay, Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence. It was the sort of reply that justifies people's jaundiced view of politicians, and I had to dispute it. When he ignored my letter I wrote to the National Times, the Minister of Defence, the Shadow Minister of Defence (Bill Hayden), and the Prime Minister (Malcolm Fraser), enclosing copies of all correspondence. By the time I had an apology on 18 March 1977 from Jim Killen as Minister for Defence, I had a thickening dossier on the subject. David didn't get his apprenticeship, but we won a battle against bureaucracy.

In 1978 David went back to school to finish his education, and moved back into the house in Eaves Street, Holt, that Celie was currently occupying, putting all the boys together again. Judith had moved from Queanbeyan to a new estate at Melba, a north-western suburb of Canberra. The Melba flats were a classic example of government planning gone mad, and had more flaws than redeeming features. Eventually, after much argument and recrimination, the entire estate was demolished in the late 1980s and new buildings erected at public expense. From Melba Judith went to live on the Gold Coast where Lindsay had work as a carpenter. She came home in 1978 when Lindsay joined the Navy and went to sea.

It must have been 1980 before Paul came to live at Downer because Susan was no longer there. I think he was pretty quiet about the place, and was probably

working hard at his future, though I did catch him once smoking in the bedroom. Fortunately a habit none of us has today. Paul was keen on motorbikes, like me around his age, and had two while at Downer before eventually buying a big, powerful machine that I would not even attempt to ride.

Andrew stayed on weekends, bringing his friend Philip Smith to stay overnight sometimes. Philip was only months older than Andrew, and they spent a lot of time together either at Downer or at the Smith's in Ogilby Street, Page. The War Memorial was popular with them, where they could climb over the external exhibits like tanks, guns and the midget submarine, and would have liked to be able to do the same with the enclosed exhibits. Other popular places were the many parks in which Canberra was probably a leading city in the provision of playground equipment. This was more extensive and imaginative than what we had been used to, and included slides, forts, tree houses and all sorts of climbing, crawling, swinging and springing equipment. The Smiths and Bibos were becoming a closely-knit group, with frequent barbecues liberally lubricated with red wine out of the 4-litre casks - *chateau cardboard*. There was a lot of good wine on the market in the late 70s and into the 80s, and some of the cask wine was very good quality. Some of it was rubbish too, but Sid was quite a connoisseur of cask wines and a good adviser on what to buy. He was also a cricketer of some renown and played occasionally and coached more frequently on weekends. Sid was also a fan of The Goons on ABC radio at noon every Saturday for what seemed like an interminable period. I was not one of their followers, and one of the worst epithets I could apply to someone was to call them a goon. Master of repartee, some of Sid's one-liners were classic entertainment at home or around campfires.

John Howard and Stu Bryce were frequent visitors to Blacket Street, and John and Stu became firm friends and shared the trout I was still catching with Barry Runnstrom, and giving away to my friends or serving for dinner. I cooked these in the oven, wrapped in foil with slices of lemon and capsicum and a dash of butter. John butchered in Fyshwick while I worked at Waltons, but later took up long distance transport driving and was killed in a smash in Western Australia. I lived between Blacket Street and the Bryce's married quarter in Wade Street, Watson, spending almost as much time there as I spent at home. Stu and Kay were family to me in the unsettled years of the divorce and its aftermath. Stu introduced me to *Kaleidoscope* on ABC FM radio, two hours of pleasant music at 5.00 p.m. every day. I enjoyed this until about 1990

when it was replaced by something less appealing. I used to babysit the two girls, Emma and Lisa, periodically, and take them across the city to Manuka pool for swimming. I had lived in Downer for more than a year before I found that we had an Olympic pool, child's pool and wading pool within ten minutes walking distance of where I lived! Stu was still flying the BAC 1-11, and through him I kept in loose contact with squadron members, especially the stewards like Tony Carville and Robyn Carey. Robyn came with friends for barbecues I fired up on a metal plate - the one I brought from Richmond - sitting on bricks in the back yard. Barbecues I arranged became generally known as Bibocues because the weather invariably turned nasty, and an invitation to a Bibocue was a guarantee of rain and wind. Stu had the first Weber I saw in Australia, though they had been common in American communities overseas, and made the mistake of cooking a roast using pine as the fuel. The meat was permeated with the pine sap and absolutely uneatable. Stu was also a keen sailor and had grown up sailing the Tamar near Launceston. In the summer of 1978 we launched his Flying Dutchman on lake Burley Griffin with appropriate ceremony and champagne. I was lucky to be still getting bulk wine through 34 Squadron, and twice had 15-litre casks of Penfolds para port at ridiculous prices. It was excellent quality, and Phil Keogh would come over just to drink port. He used to claim it was the best in Canberra.

Spike Tyrrell and Dave Clarkson remained close, and Spike gave Paul a thrill in 1978 by taking us up in a light aircraft. Besides being a RAAF navigator, Spike had a private pilot's licence. Paul may have flown commercially before this but anybody's first flight in a non-commercial aircraft should be exciting, and I think Paul enjoyed the flight more than I did; I liked to have a lot of airplane around me, not be confined to sitting in a small cabin. With Spike, his wife Jenny and two young daughters, Sarah and Victoria, we picnicked at Tidbinbilla and climbed the local hills like Mount Majura to the east of Dickson, with walking trails through the wilderness area above the height to which houses are permitted to be built. The tops of most of Canberra's hills are nature parks, and preserve a green skyline in an ever-developing city. Paul and Andrew both had bicycles that travelled easily on the Land Rover roof rack, and they could enjoy exploring further afield in Tidbinbilla.

I joined the RSL in Canberra as a Returned Serviceman, and was initially very keen. Monthly meetings at 8.00 p.m. on the second Tuesday were sociable affairs with presently serving and ex-servicemen, and we were keen to establish a local club in Belconnen. So we formed a committee, and in June

1977 a bunch of us contributed \$100 each to make a fund from which we could run Bingo games and make the thousands needed to build our own club. We used the Western Districts Rugby Union Club in Macquarie as our venue for regular weekly Bingo nights on Mondays. I used to call the numbers from plastic tiles before the arrival of electronic numbering. Unfortunately I was honest and naive. I didn't realise at the time that other Bingo callers would palm a certain range of numbers to increase the odds against the public. We were giving \$1000 jackpots, hopefully paid for out of door takings. When we lost two in one night after a mediocre run of preceding nights and ended up with no money in the bank I decided to call it quits and left the RSL. At the time I was public officer - responsible to the Corporate Affairs Commission for the conduct of our club, and I didn't like the way the committee was floundering. Fortunately I had the foresight to advise the Commission and to keep a copy of the letter, because twice in later years I was called to account for the subsequent activities of the club. Another reason I left the RSL was that I was no longer comfortable at meetings where so many of the members still lived in the past. Gratitude and remembrance of past sacrifices are noble expressions, but the world keeps turning relentlessly. I was beginning to see the RSL as an anachronism that was going to have to change to remain relevant.

I think it was through the RSL that I met Dennis Turner who subsequently arranged for me to be invited to join the Lions Club in late 1975. Joining the club is never by application, but by invitation, on which they pride themselves. We met monthly at Jamison over an evening meal as is the norm for these sorts of clubs, discussed and arranged for service to the community, and generally had a guest speaker. It was an all male environment that drank a lot and got a bit rowdy. I lasted until July 1977 before resigning, using the excuse that I could no longer afford the annual fee and monthly expenditure. This was partly true because maintenance payments and my own household took a healthy slice from my income, not leaving a lot for luxury. But, as with the RSL, I had become disenchanted with the behaviour of members at the meetings, particularly their lack of regard for the speaker when they would carry on with animated conversation at the other end of the table while he was talking. In retrospect I suppose it wasn't vastly different from some of the antics we aircrew got up to in our messes and motels, but I didn't fit into the spirit of it in 1977.

In late 1977 I took the caravan to a Bungalow Park at Burrill Lake, south of Ulladulla, and put it on site, giving us the extreme options of the snow of

Mount Ginini or the sandhills of the east coast in the winter. The park had some connection with the Royal Australian Navy and may even have been owned by it. As an ex-serviceman I got discount rates on the site fee and could have stayed at the cabins there at a reduced rate. Andrew and I tried going down there on some of our weekends to escape the Canberra atmosphere and get a new outlook on life. It didn't work. The weather was unkind more often than not, leaving us looking for ways to fill in our time. There was a local cinema within walking distance of the caravan that reminded me of the Hollywood of my childhood. It had a cement floor and canvas seats, and an enormous oil-fired furnace in the rear of the cinema to provide heating on the cold winter nights. That and our portable black and white TV provided some of the entertainment, but after six months we both agreed that the exercise was not worth the effort and expense of driving there and back. So I brought the van back to Canberra where it sat on the front lawn in between shorter uses.

Tony Carville put on a New Years Eve party at his house in Pound Street, Queanbeyan, to welcome in 1978, and I had a reunion with many of the 34 Squadron members. Besides regulars like Stu and Kay Bryce, and Robyn Carey, I was back with stewards like Ron Andrews and pilots like Mike Birks, and a navigator, Howard Trevethan who had joined the squadron towards the end of my tour. That was probably my last major contact with squadron members, as I settled into a civilian routine and they were progressively posted to other bases. I had not maintained any formal contact with the Officers' Mess at Fairbairn after retirement and had virtually severed all connection with the RAAF except for friends like these from 34 Squadron.

Ivy Simpson died of a heart attack in June 1977 and the children mourned their grandmother. In 1978 Andrew and I took our August holidays in Brisbane and the Gold Coast to see Tony, Judith, and Jack Simpson. Unlike the breakup of some marriages ours had not soured family against family. Jack and the Simpsons still welcomed us, and Celie was still regarded fondly by the Bibos. We didn't take the Land Rover but opted to go by train. I had not travelled long distance by train since the early 1950s in Ballarat, and didn't count local services as real travel. I thought it would be good to take the sleeper from Sydney to Brisbane and relax on the trip. So we booked the return trip and were really looking forward to it when Andrew went down with tonsillitis. He was quite sick, and the night before we were due to leave I got the doctor's OK to go. Even the short journey from Canberra to Sydney was enjoyable as a change from the highway scenery I was so used to. Our

compartment on the Sydney to Brisbane train was self-contained with its own shower and toilet besides the two bunks. But for Andrew's illness it would have been a great trip. When we got to Brisbane we stayed with Tony and Val at Carina and consulted Tony's local doctor for further treatment, and the situation rapidly improved. With Tony in Brisbane we went to visit Lone Pine nature park, one of my childhood remembrances, and it was nothing like I remembered it but still enjoyable. Tony has always been the Bibbo mainstay in Brisbane, and many of us came to rely on him for his generous support of time and attention. We stayed with Robyn Hyde, Celie's sister, and her husband Kerry at their home in 32 Sunshine Avenue, South Tweed Heads, where Andrew experienced water skiing with Kerry and made friends with Taffy, the Scotch terrier. From there we spent a couple of days with Judith and Lindsay at their rented old house on Kingscliff Street, Kingscliff, just about a block back from the beach where Judith's black and white collie, Kim, enjoyed chasing the seagulls. Then the trains went on strike. Fortunately I was able to cancel the return trip and pick up an airline passage, which was a bonus in terms of time available on holiday, and we came back to resume our lives in Canberra.

The movie spectacular *Star Wars* also came to Canberra in 1978, breaking box office records and establishing a new era in the visual arts with the creative effects of film maker, George Lucas. Like many of his contemporaries Andrew saw it numerous times, and he set out to create a collection of the characters and spaceships appearing in that movie and its sequels. In 1978 I was able to enrich his life with a large poster-size piece of Star Wars wallpaper from a Waltons offcut to adorn his bedroom wall. George Lucas founded Industrial Light and Magic, which went on to become the most prestigious special effects company in the world by 1993.

Still captivated by the Warrumbungles I made two visits around this time. The first must have been in 1977, because Andrew was still quite young and I could still carry him easily on my shoulders. Probably the most popular walk in the park is around the Breadknife and up to the Grand High Tops. I had conveniently forgotten how far this was and how strenuous, having done it on every previous trip. So with six-year-old Andrew in tow, and only a light snack and some drink, I was surprised to find that it was over 12 kilometres round trip, with a rugged climb up Spirey Ramp and beside the Breadknife, climbing to an altitude of over 900 metres. The effort was more than repaid by the spectacular panorama of almost the entire park laid out below, with the massive spires and bluffs that are the characteristic of this once volcanic area.

The average circuit time for this walk is 6 hours. Andrew walked most of the way in good spirits, and I only had to carry him over the worst stretches. The second trip was in 1980 with Andrew and the Smith family, and visited by Paul and Chris while we were there.

The Smiths - Sid, Susan, Raymond, Philip, Katie and Derek - originally had a Volkswagon camper van with annex, and we had been camping in the past at places like Wombeyan caves only a few hours out of Canberra. That trip had gone down in our history for its horizontal camp fires. The wind was both cold and determined, and the flames couldn't stand upright, sending us to an early bed instead of cosily sitting around a camp fire. Sid Smith had also done a lot of field work in the Deua valley, inland from Moruya, as a geologist, and knew the area very well. It contained a feature known as 'The Big Hole', a big, vertical shaft in the side of a hill near the community of Gundillion that was one of Sid's contributions to our education. This has since become a national park but was then on private property and rarely visited, and Sid arranged for us to go down one weekend. We took our caravan and the Smiths had the use of a bigger van parked on the property and being used by the Bureau of Mineral Resources, but vacant this weekend of May 1978.

I had promoted the Warrumbungles, and whetted the Smith's appetite with photographs, until finally we arranged to go there in the August school holidays of 1980. The Smiths had replaced their camper van with a pop-up caravan by this time, giving them more space and comfort. Susan travelled with me and Andrew to lessen crowding in the cars, and Sid had their four children. Travelling in convoy along the main roads, and even out from Coonabarabran, was no problem. We were always in sight of each other. But on the gravel road of the park we became separated, and when I checked in with the ranger at Camp Canyon we had to wait ages for Sid to arrive, wondering where he was. I had ignored all my 4WD training in convoy procedure, and had not waited until Sid was in view before turning right into the campground. Not seeing the sign, Sid had kept going and had exited the park on the Tooraweenah side before turning back to find the camp ground. He wasn't happy, but we washed the difficulties away with a glass of red later on. We stayed long enough to do not only the Grand High Tops but also many other walks, and minor offshoots from some of these. Beloungery Split Rock Circuit was one of the easier ones, but with a 100-metre climb using ladders, chains and steps hewn into the rock to the summit of Split Rock at 771 metres giving spectacular 360° views. Some of the optional sidetracks, like the eroded dyke leading to Bress Peak, were a challenge that Susan Smith set us.

But the highlight of the visit for the children must have been the fauna. It was as though everything was laid on as a nature class for them. The Camp Canyon Nature Walk was only a 1-kilometre circular walk designed to introduce visitors to the variety of landforms, geology, plant and animal life of the park, and with Sid being a geologist it promised to be specially informative. A big, old grey kangaroo was lying just off the track and content to have the children come right up to him, while one of the eucalypts was temporary home to a big koala that was close enough to be touched without scurrying away. Emus were grazing beside the track, and at lunch time we had a kookaburra and a magpie as extended visitors, putting on a show for us over scraps of meat. One of our walks took us along a creek where we could hear the croaking of frogs, but I couldn't see any. Remembering the abundant frogs of my childhood, and the fact that the spread of housing and commercial development had all but eliminated them from daily life, I wanted to see frogs in the Warrumbungles. So I set the Smith children to find them, with ice creams as the reward. They were not easy to find, despite their noise, and Susan was the first to uncover one under a rock on the edge of the creek. After that there were more, and everybody got an ice cream in Coonabarabran on the way home. We visited the Anglo-Australia Telescope at Siding Spring Observatory in the Warrumbungles and 27 kilometres west of Coonabarabran. Internationally renowned, it is contributing significantly to mapping the universe. This was undoubtedly the most extensive of my many trips to the Warrumbungles, and the first to include the 16 kilometre walk to the top of Mount Wambelong, the highest peak in the park at 1,205 metres, but probably an easier climb than the Grand High Tops. Anyway, in those days I was fit enough to enjoy it, but not equal to the youthful vigour of Chris and Paul who could take some of the worse slopes at the run.

The Smiths always remember this trip for 'the green thing' I had. All the cash registers at Waltons had torches nearby, in case of blackout, and since they were so rarely used or checked the batteries went flat. Part of my job as security officer was to look after these. In the RAAF survival equipment there had been a chemical light. This was roughly short, candle-shaped and made of flexible sealed plastic. Inside it was a fluid and a glass tube containing another fluid. Bending the plastic to break the glass tube allowed the two fluids to mix, and they produced a green fluorescent light that could last a couple of hours. The scout shop over the mall from Waltons sold these and I talked management into replacing the torches at cash registers with them. I also carried them in the Land Rover as emergency lighting. They created a

sensation with the Smith children with ages ranging from four to ten, especially when tied to a piece of string for swinging in a circle in the dark. An important part of these trips was the friendships and knowledge developed around the camp fires and on the walks; as important as seeing Australia's geographic features if not more so. I think it was sitting around the campfire with Paul on this trip that I first realised I was not communicating as well as I should with my children. I had probably been too single minded in my approach to the work I loved, and took too much else for granted.

Coming back from holidays on Monday, 3 September 1979 with the Land Rover towing the caravan, Andrew and I had an enforced stay at Parkes. Just as we drove into the town in the middle of the afternoon the Rover broke a lay shaft and my gearbox ceased to function. The NRMA dragged me off the street into a lockable yard and we stayed that night in a motel, considering the options. Next day we knew that we were going to be there for some time as the part had to come from Sydney. The NRMA shifted the caravan and put it on site in the Parkes Caravan Park and we spent a leisurely four days playing in the park where Andrew liked to run against the stopwatch, watching television and eating the local sausages that we rated number one. We would walk down to Deans garage on the other side of town every day, both for the exercise and to see what progress was being made. When I was finally promised the car for the Friday afternoon I asked for an estimate of the cost, since I had to get the money from the bank before they closed. I asked would it be as much as \$500, and the mechanic said not in his opinion. He reckoned on three hundred and something. I should have kept my mouth shut. I drew \$500 to get me home anyway, and when I picked the car up after closing time on Friday I got only a few dollars change from Deans.

Hear-A-Book Service

The Hear-A-Book episode in my life was one that started while I was working at Waltons but stretched into 1993. It took a considerable amount of my time, resources and dedication but was for what I considered a worthy cause.

I had always enjoyed reading, and had won commendations for elocution class in primary school where a visiting teacher asked if I was English. I had never considered myself anything other than Australian - though what that means in the multi-cultural potpourri of the 90s is open to wide speculation. Also, in the RAAF School of Languages I had spent many hours in the studio recording lessons on to tape for use in the class or the language laboratory. Equipment had improved since then but the practice and requirements of recording had not changed significantly, and I was familiar with them. Apart from magazines like *Readers' Digest*, *Time* and *Life*, plus what I picked up from chemist shops that gave away free, informative magazines peculiar to themselves, my early tastes were for Pearl Buck and John Steinbeck. This widened in later years to a major respect for James Michener, Nicholas Monserrat and Paul Scott. I particularly appreciated Paul Scott's mastery of the English language in his four books that became *The Raj Quartet*. This was later turned into a TV series that I found very unsatisfactory, contrary to its sequel *Staying On* that won the Booker Prize in 1977 and was made into a film to be remembered. Later again I became an avid fan of John Le Carré, Frederick Forsyth and Isaac Asimov, plus the Australians like Ion Idriess. When the opportunity came to read books on to tape for the print handicapped I looked on it as an opportunity to expand my reading horizons and give enjoyment to a deprived segment of the community.

Briefly, Hear-A-Book (HAB) was established in 1972 in Tasmania by Barbara Sattler MBE with the financial assistance of Tasmanian Apex Clubs, to provide recorded books to handicapped people. Barbara was awarded an MBE for her work. All narrators were volunteers who had to pass an audition test and then give their time and talents to record books on to tape in their own homes. After being checked for quality by other volunteers the tapes were reproduced in Head Office in Hobart, and then sold to public libraries throughout Australia for loan to people who were print handicapped. There were various groups around Australia working under the auspices of Head Office but, when I joined, the ACT had its own fully functioning branch responsible for its own administration and fund raising. It was to remain the only branch in Australia.

HAB Canberra first got off the ground with a public meeting to enlist narrators in September 1978 though it was officially launched in August, matured rapidly, and assumed a work load that kept us on our toes. Shirley Bazley was the driving force. Up to 1977 talking books were available for the legally blind only. They had a limited circulation because of copyright clearance, and because they could only be played back on special machines available only through the Blind Society. In 1977 Shirley became the convener of a committee to investigate the provision of taped books not only for the blind, but also for the *print handicapped*. This definition embraced all those who could not comprehend or manipulate a standard book, and so included people with physical disabilities like severe arthritis, burn victims, or those with concentration problems or dyslexia. The committee consisted of volunteers from the Red Cross, the Education Department, the Blind Society and the Blindness Resource Centre, as well as the Public Library Service. Their inquiries led them to the Hear-A-Book Service Tasmania Incorporated, and to our becoming the ACT branch of HAB. As Shirley pointed out, there was no point in reinventing the wheel. In January 1991 Shirley was awarded the Order of Australia for 'services to people with disabilities'.

HAB used standard commercial recorders and tapes that could be used easily by anybody in the community. Fund raising provided equipment and tapes for volunteer narrators, but many of us used our own recorders and some even bought tape decks for donation to the HAB. Titles were chosen and copyright clearance obtained by head office, then the book was issued from library stock. Narrators chose from a list of available titles and, hopefully, there was something to please all tastes. Initially copies of the recorded book were sold to libraries for a nominal sum of three dollars per tape, but this has had to be adjusted up over the years. The average book took seven tapes but some of the marathons could run into twenty or more, at one and a half hours per tape. With research and preparation, actual production time could be up to six times the length of the finished book. It was a demanding, onerous and time-consuming commitment. Narrators came from all walks of life and represented a cross section of Canberra society. At our peak we had over forty narrators active at one time, but not all equally active. While books were supposed to be returned completed within three months this was not always possible, and occasional narrators would take literally years until we started clamping down on having books and equipment tied up unprofitably for so long.

Norma Sawicki, a founding member of the ACT branch of HAB, was the Officer-in-Charge of the Civic branch of the ACT Library Service, and took over from Shirley in 1986 in running the Canberra branch of the HAB. Most of our committee meetings were held in her library in the North Building on Civic Square. She also followed in Shirley's footsteps by being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queens Birthday Honours List in June 1991. Norma wore two hats, and could argue the cause of recorded books from either the HAB side or the library side with equal persuasion. Besides books, the HAB catalogue included magazines and periodicals, weekly selections from newspapers, and one-off productions for children doing exams. By 1981 there were over 2,200 recorded titles on HAB cassettes and this would reach 5,000 by the end of 1988. Libraries could not afford to buy a copy of every book recorded and only held selected titles. There were also other suppliers of audio books competing for library dollars. The ACT library was a special case because it received a free copy of every book recorded by ACT narrators, and by mid-1990 it held 4,000 audio books of which about 3,000 came from Hear-A-Book.

I started off by reading Stuart Cloete's *The Curve and the Tusk*, seeking assistance from the South African Embassy with pronunciation, and eventually read thirteen novels including Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* while it was drawing mass attention as a TV serial, Monserrat's *The Kappellan of Malta*, and a quadrilogy of magnificent novels by Martin Boyd. When Monsarrat died in 1979 before completing his work of grand design, *The Master Mariner*, the world lost one of its greatest storytellers, but his memory lives in the treasures he left behind. My pleasure came from narrating the books to the best of my ability and I never looked for kudos from readers (print handicapped people *read* taped books as the rest of us read written ones, they don't *listen to* the tapes). But I was inspired by a note sent to the library from a boy in South Australia, reading: 'The *Outsiders* that you sent me was the most excellent book I have ever read and am wondering whether I can get a sighted copy that mum & the rest of my family can read it.' *Joseph Rowlinson, Morphet Vale*. I had enjoyed narrating it for him too. Initially targeted at Australia and New Zealand where the cassettes were made available through any public library service, HAB had inquiries from the UK, the USA, South Africa and South-east Asian countries for expansion. Readers covered more than a normal life span, and in Canberra in 1991 we had two readers aged 102 and at least 20 in their 90s.

About eighteen months after I joined HAB as a narrator I was invited to become a committee member and then asked to take on the role of Readers' Liaison Officer (RLO), providing training, guidance, criticism and technical support for the ACT narrators. I accepted on the proviso that I be permitted to make criticism where I felt it would be constructive, even if it made waves in the narrating community. By this time I had narrated four books, and three of them had been assessed as 'very good' by head office in Tasmania. Having once spent five years handing out assessments in a language training establishment I was pleased to get this sort of assessment. I had a rude awakening with my first batch of narrators' tapes when I found that 'very good' was the standard assessment for more than 90% of the books to date, some of them pretty dreadful. Subsequently, in November 1980, I was invited to Hobart at their expense to address the head office committee on the subject of quality control of the narrators' output.

I started off by pointing out that, even as volunteers, we had responsibilities to both our audience and our providers, the authors. We could not afford to be careless or sloppy in our presentation, and had to inject quality and liveliness into our work - with proper adherence to punctuation and pronunciation, and with differentiation between characters and between narrative and dialogue. To do otherwise offended the reader and insulted the author. I then presented them with glaring examples of basic faults taken from a number of books in circulation, the majority of them recorded in Tasmania, to sheet home the message to best effect. While I accepted that giving 'very good' assessments was an ego-boost to narrators that encouraged involvement, it contributed little to quality control and made it difficult for local RLOs to apply constructive criticism at variance with head office appraisal. Enthusiasm and voluntary surrender of one's talents were a prerequisite to narrating, not a qualification. We did not have to accept everything coming off the assembly line simply because our staff were volunteers.

From then until November 1992 I assumed control of the quality of material leaving Canberra and had the full support of the Canberra committee members. Between us we lifted our quality control well above Tasmania's and initiated a number of measures that would later be reluctantly adopted by head office. Based on the 3 Rs of basic education, Reading - wRiting - aRithmetic, I proposed the five Rs of essential narrating, Read - Research - Record - Review - Repair. Acknowledged long before they were formally adopted by head office and publicly welcomed by narrating groups, the 5 Rs were eventually enshrined in the official Recording Handbook issued to narrators. Basically they required

the narrator to Read the entire book for familiarity before starting recording; Research unfamiliar words and names for correct pronunciation; Record the now familiar material; Review the recording for mistakes; and Repair the mistakes. In 1990 HAB proved its maturity by being joint winner of the Audio Book of the Year Award, sharing it with the long established Royal Blind Society of NSW. The HAB entry was *Gone to Earth*, written by Mary Webb and narrated by Anne Fraser of Launceston; while the Blind Society entry was *The Great World*, written by Martin Cruz-Smith and narrated by John Rowell. We had won second place in the inaugural Book of the Year Award in 1989 with a recording of Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroika* by Canberra narrator Maurice Day.

In April 1983 my narrating came to an abrupt end when I found that I was having difficulty in reading aloud. A specialist consultation found that my vocal chords could not handle the strain, as a result of the polyp trouble I had with them in 1971-73, and I was once again put on restricted voice usage. With that I ceased narrating, withdrew from active involvement as RLO and confined myself to a less active role in the committee. Having been involved with computers as a hobby for some years I developed and maintained a database of activities for the Canberra Branch. With this we were able to keep better track of the flow and duration of books being narrated, and produce periodic reports for presentation to Tasmania. I continued to test all prospective narrators for suitability, and checked the first tape of every book being recorded to uncover errors that might be carried through an entire recording. This was a practice we had pioneered in Canberra and which proved its worth many times over. Maurice Day, one of our best narrators, took over the role of RLO, and Maurice, Norma and I formed a trio that conducted workshops to acquaint narrators with the technical demands of the equipment and the finer points of narrating technique. We also appeared singly, or in pairs, at public meetings held to encourage recruitment and publicise the service. My address to the local Rotary Club had produced Maurice Day, and Kevin Chapman had interviewed Shirley Bazley and myself on ABC radio's 2CN on Friday, 17 July 1981. Much as I dislike commercial television, I did appear in a presentation of HAB in the Canberra Public Library for our local channel 7, now known as Capital TV on channel 10.

In April 1992 Norma Sawicki went on extended long service leave to visit her husband's family in the Ukraine - only discovered still alive in 1991 after being separated during World War II. With her departure the ACT committee recognised the load we had carried for 13 years and decided to disband the

branch and let it become a group run from Hobart. When she returned in November I resigned from the Hear-A-Book Service and surrendered my remaining functions of checking auditions and first tapes to Hobart.

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

I started work with the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) on 29 October 1979 and worked continuously with them through the end of the story, my 60th birthday - a period of fourteen years. But it will necessarily be a short episode in my book because I do not intend to divulge secrets, or explain in detail what my work was. Drawing on publicly available material will be a sufficient enlightenment for most people. Having only applied on 5 July I had been pleased to receive a letter dated 24 October 1979 confirming my employment. Before this date, though, I had been in regular phone contact with the recruiting officer in ASIO and had anticipated early employment. Though not an element of the Australian Public Service we adhered closely to APS procedures and I had to obtain a medical clearance first. After an examination by a Government Medical Officer I asked the obvious question 'Was I fit?' The reply was abrupt and precise: 'Well, you haven't got blood pressure and you can hold a biro can't you?' I was passed as fit for employment. Different from the public service, our employment was subject to a contract between each officer and the Director-General. My first contract must have been taken for granted; I certainly do not have a copy of it. Conditions were changed and a revised contract issued in 1985 along with 51 pages of terms and conditions. A revised version of this revised contract was issued in November 1989.

Publisher's Note: The author is known to have said "This chapter was never intended for publication", despite the disclaimer in the first paragraph. For this reason the chapter has been excluded.

Canberra and Beyond, 1979 — 1987

A New Perspective

With the start of an interesting, permanent and well-paid job alongside people I felt comfortable with life took on a new perspective. I suppose it also marked a formal end to the itinerant lifestyle of my RAAF career, with Waltons as a buffer zone, and signalled the start of a more conventional existence with fewer highlights. I got an automatic pay rise on 29 October every year, the anniversary of my joining date, and this would eventually make life a lot more comfortable.

I was able to start thinking seriously about doing things to 19 Blacket Street to make it more presentable. One of the first options was to repaint the bedrooms and hallway with more appealing colours, and over the years I have done them at least twice. The thought of doing ceilings discouraged me, and I got a professional painter to do all the ceilings in the house except the kitchen. He was quick and made it look easy. The next door neighbour until mid-1984, Bill Langhorne, and I did our exteriors about the same time. Window frames were the biggest problem and the most time consuming. With the front wall of the lounge and the side wall of the dining room being mostly glass there was a lot of woodwork to be painted inside and out. Otherwise it was just fascia boards and eaves that I could easily reach with a single ladder. But Bill came to my aid here by supplying a sturdy plank and two 200-litre drums to stand it on, making work easier. Waltons was the source of heavy curtains to hide the venetian blinds and help counter the problem of so much glass. In summer they provided a barrier against the merciless western sun, and in winter they provided insulation against the sub-zero temperatures of the nights. Eventually I got canvas blinds across the two front bedrooms that made an appreciable difference in the summer as well as giving greater privacy from the street.

I am pretty sure it was after I left Waltons that Phil Keogh put up the wall paper in the lounge/dining room. Then the next thing to go was the grey corduroy carpet and the lino tiles in the kitchen, laundry and toilet in about 1982. Waltons gave me the best price on this and did a good job. But there is a story behind that. The fireplace had a raised, tiled cement slab hearth, and I could see no way of coping with this in laying the carpet. So I had accepted that the carpet would have a bump in it in front of the now useless fireplace. I had not allowed for the intervention of superior forces and came home from

work one Saturday afternoon to find an awful mess and a level floor. David, helped by Chris Bunt whom Susan was to later marry, had taken the top off the hearth and had given me a flat floor in front of the fireplace. I was a bit shocked when I first saw the mess but appreciated their efforts when the carpet was down. Judith's Lindsay had helped me fill in the fireplace with decorative panelling when I threw out the oil heater, and later on I had it permanently covered with brick veneer that I also used as a feature wall in the kitchen. Ron Winter did the brickwork. Ron was a friend of Sid Smith and a jack-of-all-trades. He also put up my carport behind the house. My Land Rover was a tight fit in the single garage off the southeast corner of the house, but I had a cement slab parking area across the back of the house where I could park easily. Unfortunately this caused starting problems in the winter when the whole car was covered in ice. I got Ron to cover the cement slab with a fibreglass roof stretching from the house to the garage and reaching past the back door to give dry access from the car to the house. It was easier to park the Land Rover under the carport and give the garage to any of the other cars that were to use Blacket Street over the years.

The carpet was cream wool with a long pile and shed its wool for months. I had been warned that this would happen but had not expected it to last so long. Every movement of feet or furniture left a clump of wool. Susan Smith welcomed the phenomenon and took all the clumps of clean, fine wool to add to her collection for spinning. She had a spinning wheel and turned out some artistic products. Her artistry extended to spinning, weaving, plaiting and woodcarving in her spare time from a full time job in childcare and education.

Other furniture and fittings came as I could afford them and I passed the old ones on. Judith has the original colour TV; David has the Akai VCR that caused me so much trouble - I had five different sets before I found one that worked properly. It was only to satisfy friends in Waltons where I bought it that I lasted so long before shopping for a different brand. Andrew has the modular moulded rubber Numero lounge suite. And I still have the pine wardrobe in the main bedroom that was Judith's room. Judith bought it, and we had to take it apart to get it through the bedroom door. It was too big to turn the corner from the hallway. Once re-erected it was in there to stay. In March 1984 I had the whole bathroom torn apart and renovated by George Binos of *Binos Bathrooms*. George did the plumbing and subcontracted the tiling, painting and electrical. The electrician came at night on his way home from his regular job; the painter came first thing Saturday morning. The job was finished on 1 April. I had to wonder if it was a delayed April Fool's Day

joke eight years later. Andrew and I were sitting quietly one night watching *Exorcist III* when, at one of those critical moments in the film, the tiles on one wall of the bathroom came off with a crash. Not even Hollywood could have arranged that. The *Sylvania* brand photoflood bulb I put in must be establishing some kind of record. It is still there in June 1993. I don't think any other bulb in the house has lasted that long. I knew basically what colour and kind of tiles I wanted in the bathroom, but Judith's advice and attendance at the showrooms helped me get the best of any alternatives. She was also successful in putting living green things in the bathroom, and Susan Smith wove a rope basket to hold the pot. Since the Waltons days I had tried to liven the house with green plants in the lounge room but, like the roses, they never lasted.

Natural gas came to Canberra and many houses changed over from electricity for heating and cooking. After I threw out the oil heater my heating had consisted of a Dimplex oil-column heater in the bedroom end of the house, and a Vulcan Quasar electric heater in the lounge room. The best description of these is that they were crude but effective. I had frequently been told that reverse cycle air-conditioning was the most efficient form of heating for Canberra but hesitated to believe it. Anyway installation costs were pretty high. Finally, in April 1991, I had one of these installed with a little encouragement and assistance of a friend in the business who was also a member of my computer club. And the computer proved the claims for efficiency. It has the added advantage, of course, of cooling during the week or two when we need it in summer. The last major alterations to the house were to the carport. David and I slaved for long hours to put a square trellis under the fibreglass roof to cut down on glare and improve the appearance. I had not anticipated the amount of work involved in painting the trellis alone, let alone erecting it. We had to call on Chris Bunt to lend us his compressor and spray gun, and used over 12 litres of paint for 10 panels of trellis. We finished it two days before Christmas 1990. Then in October and November 1991 Judith, and Peter Polglase, helped me to pave the carport. And that is a story on its own.

The original cement slab had been cracked in places and sunken in others. But it had put up with the continual parking of a variety of vehicles including 4WDs without complaint. The promise was that removing the cement and replacing it with pavers on a solid base would preserve, if not improve the situation as well as the appearance. With Peter providing most of the guidance, including locating suppliers of goods and hire-services and doing the driving and collecting, and also doing most of the back breaking labour that age had

finally put beyond my reasonable capability, we set about to do the job in our spare time. The first problem arose when the bobcat I hired to remove the cement nearly got bogged in the carport. The earth under the cement behaved like a massive jelly with the bobcat going back and forth over it. The driver suggested I would have to have the whole area excavated and filled with road base before paving it, but if the soil dried out within a week there was probably nothing to worry about. Within two days the soil had dried hard and I laid the 100mm of crusher dust as a paver base. Then when we were using the flatbed compactor to stabilise it we nearly bogged the compactor. The earth turned to jelly again. I got the bobcat driver back to have a look at it and his answer was that he could provide road base for about \$1000-\$1500.

There had to be a less expensive answer, and I shifted all the crusher dust and dug a hole about a metre deep in the middle of the carport to try to find the source of the problem. I couldn't find any broken pipes and it seemed that it might just be a geographic feature of the land, with moist earth below a dry surface layer of clay. The house was certainly showing no signs of sinking in its thirty-odd years of existence. Advice from the equipment hire firm was to rotary hoe the soil, mix cement powder with it, and compact this before laying the crusher dust. So I dug the soil to a depth of the prongs on a garden fork, rotary hoed it to a finer consistency, and we laboriously mixed in six bags of cement powder before rotary hoeing it again and compacting it. On top of that we put the crusher dust again, but this time mixed with cement powder too. And finally we put the pavers down. Besides being a Trojan at physical work, Peter had more clues about how to do the job than many so-called professionals. His workmanship is a pleasure to behold, and I would never have achieved what I have got if I had gone to a professional firm for the job. I still do not put heavy cars, like my Toyota 4WD on the pavers, but I was told by John Ceeney, Dorothy Stirzaker's husband and an expert in the trade, that the cement and rotary hoeing procedure is standard practice in road building in the sort of soil I encountered.

My caravan sat in the front yard - it was too big to manoeuvre through to the back - and eventually left a long-term mark in the lawn where the grass refused to grow. It was good for extra accommodation and came into use for Chris's 21st birthday in February 1980. Poor Chris. I had a good quality Scotch that I had acquired from somewhere and didn't drink since my tastes had changed to bourbon years ago. Chris and his friend demolished this along with copious quantities of other liquor in a manner befitting a 21-year old's party of the time, and paid a technicolour price for doing so later in the morning.

Fortunately he was outside. I sold the caravan in January 1984 to a friend at work and took it down to Bermagui where he had it set up as a permanent weekendender.

Canberra friends were widespread for years until they started shifting. Pam Smith, by now an army Lieutenant Colonel in Russell Offices, had a home in Darlot Place, Kambah. She was a prime mover in closing off the street and having one of those neighbourhood street parties for 1979 New Years Eve. (Pam moved down to Tomakin at the coast when she retired). Peter Dennes was a civilian doing the same job he had as a Flight Lieutenant in Russell Offices but being paid more now. Andrew and I, and sometimes Philip Smith, used to spend weekend afternoons at Peter's and climb Mt Taylor at the back of his house in Torrens. Peter's wife, Lesley, died of cancer while I was out of touch with them between postings. Early in 1984 Peter himself was given six months to live, with lung cancer. He immediately set about putting his estate in order for his two daughters, Lynn and Lee, and maintained a very brave and pragmatic front until he died on 24 September 1984. I was at Robyn Hyde's up in South Tweed Heads on my way home from an extensive tour of North Queensland when I got the message passed up by Judith, and I left next morning to drive back for his cremation. He had a military funeral service but I am sure the padre who officiated never knew him. With the obsession about non-sexist language running rampant through bureaucracies this padre kept referring to Peter as 'this person', and I shuddered every time I heard it. Peter wasn't like that.

From the RAAF side the Bryces were my closest and most frequent friends. I spent a lot of time with them until Stu was posted to Hobart as the RAAF representative on the island. Dave & Bev Clarkson and John & Jenny Tyrrell were frequent hosts, with both families being posted from and returning to Canberra. Dave was living in Brisbane in 1979, so he must have left the Squadron soon after I did. He was back in Canberra in February 1988 and needed Top Secret clearance for a position he was moving into. Clearances to this level require a detailed investigation into one's background, and Dave had asked me if I would act as referee since I had known him so well over many years. I was only too pleased to. I had been cleared for Top Secret in my School of Languages days and was obviously cleared to this level in my present job, but I had taken that for granted and never considered the background to it. When the phone rang from the Department of Defence I said I could be available on their nominated day and I could talk to them at home over a cup of coffee. It may take a little longer, perhaps an hour and a half, they said. Four

hours after the interview started we finally got to drink our coffee. And I had some concept of what was involved in a Top Secret clearance. Dave got his clearance and his job.

Spike and Jenny Tyrrell left for Washington on 12 July 1985 and we had a farewell party with them at the Canberra International the night before they left. Jenny had introduced me to osso bucco that I had never heard of before and I, in turn, claim to have introduced the Tyrrells to English muffins. The longest running of the local friends were undoubtedly Barry Runnstrom and Sid Smith. Barry has lived at the same address in Farrer since coming to Canberra a little before I did. Sid and Susan Smith moved from Page to Kambah in July 1985, taking their four children. Being such a tiny city Canberra does not suffer from the tyranny of distance that afflicts other capitals and major cities. Nowhere is very far from anywhere in Canberra, but I do not still have the same close contact as when Sid and Susan lived on the north side. Our friendship is not diminished by distance though.

While I had dependants living with me I cooked proper meals, and with the help of the Margaret Fulton Cookbook along with others that came as bonuses from Waltons, or with utensils such as frypans, I think I produced appetising meals. We even had dinner parties that I put a lot of effort into, with a 52 piece Sone cutlery set I had bought in Singapore, that strangely lacked a sweets fork, and a Corelle dinner set in Corningware. I soon grew out of the habit of cooking meals for one when I no longer had dependants to cater for, especially after I got back into serious shift work. In my non-cooking mode I enjoyed pizzas and was a regular customer of the pizza parlour in Dickson which, I claim, produces some of the best pizzas in Australia. I tried to convince Bernard of that but I'm not sure he believed me. Whatever other effects the increasingly multicultural population of Australia is having, it opened up a whole new world of cooking and food in general over the past two decades. With its diplomatic communities Canberra has always had the potential for influence here, but the larger community has been responsible for the growth in cafes, restaurants and an expanded range of exotic foodstuffs on supermarket shelves and in speciality shops.

My gross income in 1979 was \$17139, and a doctor's consultation cost \$9. Specialist consultations with Dr Coop after a referral from a GP were \$14. By 1981, after joining ASIO, life was becoming easier with my gross income now nearly \$25,000. As a PAYE (Pay As You Earn) taxpayer with no dependents, study or business on the side, I did my own tax returns now instead of going

through a tax consultant. In 1986 the Tax Office brought out a new green form with 49 questions on it, and life was supposed to be easier for people submitting their own returns. This green form became a growth industry, and by 1990 was a book of more than 100 pages trying to explain the ever-increasing complexity of Australia's taxation system.

Judith was away from Canberra for her 21st and came back at the end of 1978. In October 1980 she visited a Singapore she would not have remembered and which no longer resembled the place where she was born. But with a background of photographs and talk over 23 years she was well prepared for the experience and knew where to go and what to look for. She extended her trip to Pangkor Island off the Malaysian west coast state of Perak, now recovered from the Communist insurgency problems surrounding the year of her birth. In March 1983 she was off again for a Contiki tour of more than three months that took her through the United Kingdom and Europe, covering the opposite cultures to those I was aware of in Asia and South-east Asia and which she had recently savoured. She took my Samsonite case that I had bought in the American PX in Vung Tau on one of my last flights into there. I had already started to cover its lid with decals from all the hotels I stayed in during my time in 34 Squadron, and Judith added substantially to the collection, so that it was virtually covered when she got home. It was always easy to find on an airline carousel or coming out of the luggage compartment of a coach. She sent back postcards from such diverse places as Westminster Abbey, the Vienna Woods, the Munich Olympic Complex, the Champagne caves of Codorniu and the Lochs of Scotland, and brought me back a set of six silver port glasses to enhance the drinking of good wine. Judith moved into her own new home with Peter Polglase in July 1986 in Gilmore, on the then southern outskirts of Canberra.

Susan celebrated her 21st at Blacket Street with a cake made and iced by Colleen. She married Chris Bunt in the garden setting of Burra Lodge in New South Wales, south of the Googong Dam, on 19 April 1980 in a lovely ceremony with Jane Paddick and Judith as her bridesmaids. She lived in company houses in the Burragorang Valley until moving into her own home in Eurelia Street, Buxton. Clayton James was born in Camden hospital on 22 April 1983 and the twins, Rhiannon Courtney and Russell Scott followed on 7 March 1986. The twins had a difficult birth, especially Russell, and lived in humidicribs for weeks before they were allowed into the outside world and Susan could take them home. After a couple of temporary addresses on return

to Canberra Susan got her own home in Gordon in September 1991. Gordon is even further away than Gilmore and Canberra is still spreading that way.

David started his apprenticeship at the Lakeside Hotel in April 1980 after working part time at Bellows Restaurant in Kippax and being taken on there as an apprentice. The proprietor reneged on his responsibilities and started making life hard for David. I took up the argument with the Apprenticeship Board. Rather than get involved in legal complications they saw it easier to arrange for a transfer of apprenticeship, which may have been better for David in the long term as his training in the Lakeside was more formal and extensive. The Lakeside was then one of the top hotels in Canberra and earned the family patronage, along with partners for those who had them, for Christmas dinner in 1982. His 21st was in the Daramalan Club where the elders stayed after dinner while the younger generation moved on to noisier entertainment. In 1981 he won a Gold Award in the Salon Culinaire organised by the Catering Institute of Australia. He graduated in 1983, moved to work in the Canberra International Hotel in Northborne Avenue, and in September won a Bronze Award in that year's Salon Culinaire for his creation. David married Cheryl King in the historic St John's Church of England in Reid on 11 February 1984 and had his reception in the Canberra International. He wore a full beard, moustache and sideburns. Brendan Dylan was born on 8 August 1986.

Andrew and I took Len to dinner at the Canberra International while David was chef there. It was just after the \$100 note had been introduced in April 1983. The bill came to \$87, so I put two \$50 notes in the folder and we left. I had barely arrived home - the hotel is only minutes away from Blacket Street - when David rang to ask, 'Did you really mean to leave that much money?' I didn't think a \$13 tip was 'that much' and said I certainly did. Not until much later did I realise that I had left two \$100 notes, not \$50 notes. By that time the staff had split up the generous tip and complimented David on having such a rich and generous father. At least David got a share of the spoils by insisting that it was meant for kitchen staff as well as the waiters. Since then I refused to carry \$100 notes anywhere.

Robert, still living with Celie, went to the Australian National University to do his Batchelor of Economics in 1980-82. He followed in Judith and Susan's footsteps in working part time in Coles, Jamison, for his income. His 21st birthday party was a spit roast in Celie's yard at 15 Shand Place, Latham, where David was chief chef and carver. Divorce had not stopped both Celie and I from attending birthday celebrations and other gatherings with our children, and the bitterness was starting to wear off. Christmases too helped to break

down barriers, with family gatherings at respective houses like Celie's, Judith's, Susan's, and mine, or that one time at the Lakeside Hotel. Like David, Robert was wearing a full face of hair with quite a bushy black beard and sideburns. The three elder boys all rotated through various combinations of beards, moustaches and sideburns over the years. In 1989 Robert took off for an educational hiking tour of overseas countries and sent back postcards from places as far apart as the Isle of Skye in Scotland and New York's Chinatown on the east coast of the USA. Back home he bought a 4WD and became an expert, holding committee positions as high as president in the Land Rover Club. He married Wendy Van Aalst and had his reception in the Ollims Ainslie Hotel in Ainslie Avenue, Braddon, on 27 April 1991. Sheridan Ruth was born on 27 February 1993.

Paul broke with the Coles, Jamison, tradition and worked on a milk run for his pocket money around 1979-80. He astounded me by saying that he didn't write up his deliveries until after the run, when he could remember precisely how much each customer had taken - and there might have been a hundred of them. I would have needed a notebook and entries along the way. Paul graduated in nursing on Friday, 1 March 1985 and went on to become a paramedic in the ambulance service, moving out of Blacket Street finally in May 1988. His 21st had been a family affair in an Italian restaurant of his choice in Belconnen. He achieved a measure of fame in late 1992 when he, along with Grant Hogan and Brett Lenz, won a section of the Institute of Ambulance Officers' annual competition in Sydney, making them the best driving crew in Australia. After years of shared and rented accommodation he bought his own house in Kambah in February 1993. Following tradition it was number 19, in Aitken Street. Where others of us have spread our wings laterally to other cities and other countries, Paul has taken up another dimension in scuba diving.

Andrew lived with Celie throughout most of his schooling and was assessed as 'A very pleasant and friendly boy' in his progress report from Latham Primary School for November 1981. His 1982 report was good in all respects except handwriting, my own problem. The comment 'All work is hurried. Unless loops are constructed carefully all writing will be very hard to read.' may well have applied to my handwriting now. Shoes figured prominently in Andrew's early school years. No-one wanted to wear the plain black leather shoes of my time. There were all sorts of sneakers, joggers, walkers and gym shoes that society in general was turning to as more comfortable or more natural than formal shoes. Some were ridiculously expensive, and still are, but we found a

Chinese brand that we both wore. *Torch* brand were good quality casual shoes for many years, though I have not seen them around for a long time now. Andrew came to live at Blacket Street in July 1989 when he was at college. He tried a job as travelling salesman in his brown Gemini, was employed by Roger David Menswear for a while, and worked long hours at Coles at Jamison before starting a university course for Batchelor of Arts, Theatre, Acting for Stage and Screen. In February 1992 he started his course at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. For the first year he lived on campus in recently built residence blocks and moved into a flat in town in 1993. We had the Daramalan Club booked for his 21st birthday in 1992 when it suddenly folded and left us without a venue. Fortunately we were able to get a room in another club nearby, the Downer Club, and he had a family party at home in the afternoon followed by a party with his peers at the club that night. Andrew had already shown his interest in the stage and, in 1987, had appeared as Lord Capulet in the Lake Ginninderra College presentation of *Romeo & Juliet*. In September 1987 David asked if I knew anyone who wanted to buy a Holden Gemini (YMP-860) for \$3500, as Cheryl's sister was selling hers. For a one-owner car in good condition that was an attractive price and I bought it as Andrew's first car. It just fitted in with when he could legally start learning to drive. The car's subsequent history was eventful.

We had a series of car accidents over the years involving damage to vehicles but no personal injuries. In 1984 I ran my Nissan off the road in north Queensland; In about 1986 David had been hit in the side of his Holden Commodore by a vehicle that came through an intersection; Paul had required rescue from Geelong in August 1988; and a friend of Andrew's wrote his Gemini off in May 1989. My accident is described later and I had it fixed at Hall Bros in Fyshwick. David's was conventional. Paul's was involved. He had stopped at traffic lights about 6.30 p.m. on 4 August 1988 in Geelong, behind another car waiting to do a right turn when he was hit from behind, forcing him into the front car. His Holden Camira was roughly banana shape after the accident. He rang David for help and we drove down the next day, Friday, in David's Commodore and met him eight hours later at his motel. After a night's sleep we loaded the Commodore with all Paul's belongings, including his wine purchases that had survived the smash, organised some paperwork, and got back to Canberra at 6.30 p.m. Andrew had let his mate drive the car home from a bar where they had stopped for a couple of drinks on Saturday afternoon, 20 May, after work. Andrew had had a drink but his mate had not,

and Andrew didn't drink and drive. The whole front end of the Gemini was mangled when it was run off the road on a right hand curve.

Paul knew a panel beater whom we called *Stan the man* because his surname was unpronounceable. Actually it was Stan Tyszkiewicz and he ran a panelbeating and spraypainting service called Solar Spectrum in Fyshwick. Stan was a good bloke. David had his Commodore repaired there after its accident in about 1986. Stan arranged for Paul's car to be transported from Geelong for repairs and did a good job. When I went there in June 1989 with Andrew's problem I introduced myself and said, 'I'm Terry Bibbo and you fixed David's and Paul's cars. Now I've got another one for you to look at'. Stan took one pace back, put his hands on his hips and said, 'Some people have family doctors. **You** have a family panelbeater'. Stan advised me on the Gemini. We took the insurance money from the GIO, only \$2,500, and asked for the wreck, which they willingly gave to me for nothing. Then Stan got the front end of a used car in Sydney and put it on Andrew's. The NRMA passed the work and we reinsured the car with them for more like its market value of \$5,000. Stan became even more of a family panelbeater when I took the Toyota to him for repairs after being hit from behind by an ACT Government vehicle while coming home from work on Anzac Day 1990.

Most of my close associations with my brothers and sisters over the Blacket Street years were by my travelling to their houses rather than by their coming to mine. This was appropriate in many respects as I was accustomed to being on the move whereas most of the others were relatively stationary. Also, I was generally more flexible in when I could take leave than they were, and they had families to consider in determining the cost and location of holidays. With only a small three-bedroom house I had visitors sleeping on floors anyway when I no longer had a caravan to provide extra room. Len had long been in the habit of staying with Tony and Val in Brisbane on his annual pilgrimages south and extended his travel to include Canberra in March 1980, bringing Tony and Bernard with him in his yellow Toyota troop carrier. At this time Len was parish priest in Cooktown and covered a large part of Cape York Peninsula. Tony was to host a large family gathering on 12-13 July 1980 when we celebrated the silver anniversaries of Len's priesthood and Tony and Val's marriage, plus their daughter Karen's twenty-first birthday. It was a crowded barbecue in Tony's small back yard with three cakes, one for each occasion, and a range of friends and relations from 10-year old Giuseppe Gangemi to 80-year old Uncle Vic Wilson. Leo was still in Canada at this time but he brought his wife Sue back to Australia for a brief visit in December 1980. This

was the first time I had seen Leo since his departure in 1962. He was starting to look like Dad, probably more so than any other of us. Mary has an even smaller house than I do and must have felt it bursting at the seams when Tony and Val, Leo and Sue, and Bernard and I all descended on her to knit together the years of Leo's absence from the family scene.

The Land Rover was starting to show its age by now, and when I saw a short wheelbase Toyota Land Cruiser advertised for a very reasonable price I bought it. It had a powerful, 4.2-litre, six-cylinder petrol engine that left the 2.2-litre Land Rover engine for dead. It was also a much newer vehicle, with effective heating that was a major selling point for me. I had fitted the old Land Rover with a Smiths heater that took some of the cooling water from the engine and ran it through a radiator installed in the front passenger side of the car. With a fan and flaps, and an extension hose taking warm air to the driver's side, this was our investment in heating in the past. To go anywhere in the Land Rover in winter was to go rugged up. Demisting in the Land Rover had varied from commercial tissues impregnated with a soapy substance that cleared mist off windows and prevented fogging for some time afterwards, to little electric radiators. These were just like small electric bar radiators used in the home. They were connected directly to the battery and had a switch in the rear reflector. Suction caps kept them stuck to the front windscreen, but I mounted mine firmly with aluminium brackets. To have a car with both effective heating and demisting was a major move up market. It also towed the caravan a lot faster and easier than the Land Rover. When I bought the Land Cruiser I was told there was some sort of vague petrol flow problem, which was presumably why it was so cheap although I have no record of what I paid for it. For no apparent reason the petrol could cease to flow through to the engine at any time, and to fix this it was necessary to pull off the petrol hose from the pump, let the air in, and put the hose back. This happened a lot of times in sometimes embarrassing circumstances, and I haunted the distributors trying to find a solution. Finally, in desperation, I took the petrol tank off the car and emptied it into a bucket a few times. Only clean petrol came out and I was about to reassemble the tank when I thought I should try just once more. This time I got two pieces of old Sellotape out of the tank. They had been floating around inside and periodically blocking the outlet. There was no further problem.

Some of my best off-road experience was not in my own car. In September 1981 Andrew and I drove to Cairns to meet Len who escorted us to Cooktown. The state of the roads, the distances between communities and the

roadside scenery could be disconcerting for the city dweller without the urge to investigate further, and North Queensland is different from southern states in these respects. Brahman cattle, developed for their resistance to ticks, freely graze the roadsides and seem to pose an eternal threat. But they rarely caused us any delay and seemed to be fully aware of the traffic. The harsh nature of the countryside was accentuated by the hectares of yellow-flowered Rubber Vine, a form of bitou bush that was introduced from South Africa to stabilise sand dunes and now spreading out of control. A sign on the outskirts of Cooktown senses the mood of the traveller and relieves the uncertainty of one's whereabouts by announcing that there are only '*10 Bloody Miles to go!*' to Cooktown. Located at the mouth of the Endeavour River on the east coast of the peninsula, Cooktown was where Captain Cook beached his ship in 1770, and subsequently became a major gold rush port for the booming Palmer River gold fields.



Fr Len Bibo in outback North Queensland, making a radio-phone call while Terry Bibo, Barry Runnstrom and Chris Bunt (obscured) wait, 1987.

This was my introduction to north Queensland in the raw, and different from visiting parts of it as a navigator. It was also the beginning of a continuing

relationship with a number of north Queenslanders who were both Len's friends and his flock. Len had been in Cooktown since 1972 and was parish priest of St Mary's, a dilapidated church that was over 100 years old, with a matching presbytery that had been condemned by the local council as unfit for human habitation. The wooden church, on low stumps and propped up against the wind and prevailing weather, had a certain historic appeal until it was dismantled in November 1981. But the presbytery was unbelievable, and in an advanced state of collapse. It had no laundry facilities, primitive kitchen facilities, and barely adequate shower and toilet with the shower emptying direct to the ground below. The woodwork was rotten and dangerous and the whole building was a mess of accumulated dirt, dust and cobwebs that nothing short of demolition would correct. How the Church permitted him to live in these conditions is another story. Andrew and I took turns sharing a bed while the other slept on the floor. For the first two nights we put up with the smell as being part of the house, but on the third day we found a dead rat in the debris under the bed. The church was on a corner block behind the Cooktown Museum, run by Ian McKinna. Cooktown was still very much a frontier town and was not to expand into more comfortable tourist accommodation and facilities for another decade.

Len had learned his four wheel driving the hard and practical way and knew the rules and techniques for this part of the country with its bulldust and mud, depending on the season. He also had extensive knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area and literature for reference. The 1981 tour of north Queensland in Len's yellow troop carrier, with all three of us in the front and luggage in the back, was an education for both Andrew and me. Local knowledge and local characters showed us the Cooktown orchid and others, both in the native bush and cultivated by Jack Roberts in his isolated property. We visited mangrove country on the Endeavour River that Andrew and I would later cruise up on a small tourist launch and see at close hand. We bathed in safe and shallow water in the Laura River downstream from the telltale marks of a crocodile sliding off the bank, and viewed the brilliant water lilies in the lagoons of Lakefield National Park. Unauthorised visitors were not welcome at some stations and the sign at the entrance to Kalpower read:

NOTICE

GRAVEYARD OF UNAUTHORISED
VISITORS 200 YARDS FURTHER ON.
AFTER LEAVING FLORAL TRIBUTES FOR
THOSE SHOT LAST WEEK, RETURN
TO OTHER SIDE OF RIVER QUIETLY
AND QUICKLY.

The sign had been defaced by vandals, as are so many roadside signs. Len knew the owner well enough for us to ignore the sign and call on him. The Lakefield National Park had much to offer, from its magnetic and conventional termite mounds looking like a parade of giant gravestones in harsh, dry country, to the pleasant riverside camping at the Hann crossing on the Kennedy River. We called on Louie Komsic's shed on Marina Plains, set among the unusual corypha palms, but did not tempt fate by attempting to drive over the black mudflats to his fishing camp on the shore of Princess Charlotte Bay. With only one vehicle it was not worth the risk. 1981 was my introduction to Snow and Valda Evans and their daughter Kellie at Bamboo Station. I have been back several times and number them among my friends in the north. A major section yet to come in this story will largely explain my involvement with north Queensland when I include the story of my 1987 trip through this country. But 1981 was an introduction to the rugged and demanding lifestyle of families on cattle stations where the common comforts of civilisation are non-existent. Electricity was available for only a few hours a day from a diesel generator; food was bought in bulk to last three months or more when the wet season isolated properties except by air; there were no supermarkets or corner stores where items could be picked up to meet a sudden need; no Pizza Hut or golden arches of McDonalds; communication with neighbours was over the radio provided by the Royal Flying Doctor network. It obviously takes a dedication unknown to most of us to live, and want to live, under the conditions imposed on country people in outback Australia. Even the cattle on Bamboo reflected the countryside, and when we watched them being mustered they seemed mean, rugged and hardy beasts. Bamboo held the source of natural hot springs that Len, Andrew and I would visit overnight in a later trip in 1984. These were so hot they boiled frogs that ventured into them, and we would have hot baths in a small depression below a little waterfall.



Valda & Kellie Evans, Bamboo Station, Queensland, July 1990.

Coen provided hospitality and almost a return to civilisation with its hotel and general store, and a picnic on the Coen River with Merv and Irene Williams who owned the store. The water provided enjoyment for adults and children alike, with clean coarse sand and rocky outcrops.

Strathgordon was to be the most remote of the stations we visited, and it was about three-quarters of the way across the peninsula at the Princess Charlotte Bay level. The 'road' was mostly guesswork, I thought, as Len wended his way westerly on a web of tracks laid down over different wet seasons but all eventually terminating at the same point. Ruby Price and her family lived a self-sufficient life where ingenuity was a necessity for survival. When equipment broke down it was repaired or rebuilt on the spot and expected to continue to perform. We had an unusual ride here in an ARGO all terrain vehicle. Like a blunt-nosed barge with eight small, balloon tyres it could hold four adults and travel almost anywhere and we were taken across the dam, over mud flats and along open bush tracks to prove it. Len said Mass for the family at their small kitchen table, dressed almost lavishly for this setting in his new, white vestments given him by the whole Bibbo family at his silver anniversary.

The tiny outpost of Laura with not much more than a hotel, general store and school put us back on the road home to Cooktown. This was the country of the Quinkan spirits of Aboriginal legend, and Aborigines have left many of their paintings nearby at Split Rock. This first taste of north Queensland with Len was to set a pattern for my frequent return to cover the same and newer ground for years to come.

In late 1982 I decided to upgrade to a better car. Everything I had owned to date was second hand and generally well worn when I bought it. A car yard in Queanbeyan had a demonstration model MQ Nissan Patrol short wheelbase diesel 4WD on sale, and I was impressed. It was near enough to new and was fitted with a towbar and air-conditioning. I had never thought I wanted air-conditioning, but once introduced to it I would never again be without it. The Nissan was a blue and white, two-door station wagon, YNT-107, with wide orange horizontal flashes along the side. It was a stylish car and very functional. Jon Stirzaker had owned one since their introduction into Australia in 1980 and I knew them to be reliable. The MQ Patrol was a radically more modern car than its predecessor and was to prove very popular. It was irregular in that it had a 24-volt electrical system carried over from Nissan's trucks and was fitted with two 12-volt batteries. This had advantages for winter starting but introduced all sorts of complications in other areas like refrigerators and CB radios. With this car I rejoined the Land Rover Club and started going on excursions again. At least going to club meetings in Canberra was a lot easier than in Melbourne or Sydney. Here it was only about six kilometres down the road in Torrens Street initially, whereas in Melbourne I

had to drive from the western side of Port Phillip Bay out to Oakleigh on the Princes highway - almost out to where we had lived in Clayton when we first went to Melbourne. Meetings were held in the workshop of a service station where we sat around a kerosene heater and drank cans of beer while we discussed club activities. This had its drawbacks but it paid off in being able to use the workshop under the owner's guidance for free. In Sydney it had meant the long drive from Richmond to William Street near Kings Cross where the Land Rover distributor provided us with a meeting room, though once I had met up with Barry Runnstrom we used to sometimes share the driving from his house in North Rocks Road, Carlingford, in Sydney's north-western suburbs.

I was still spending a lot of time with Sid and Susan Smith and we used the August-September school holidays of 1982 to tour the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. They had a Ford Falcon station wagon now, and towed a pop-up caravan. I had the big Franklin van. Judith and Andrew and I made up our party and all four of the Smith children, Raymond, Philip, Katie and Derek were with their parents. The country was harsh and dry, but spectacular for all of that, and we picked up a little history along the way besides introducing Andrew to his times-tables as we cruised the highways. A steam train was running excursions into Pichi Richi gorge on a single track from Quorn railway station, with costumed guides delivering a verbal commentary along the way. This had been the start of the Great Northern Railway out of Port Augusta in 1879 but had proven uneconomic and had been abandoned in the 1950s. The country leading up to and around Wilpena Pound abounded in gorges and I think we must have driven through every one of them: Bucharinga, Warren, Middle, Brachina, Alligator gorge - looking a bit like Standley Chasm in the Northern Territory - and Sacred Canyon. Alligator Gorge in the Mt Remarkable National Park was early in our tour, on a truly spectacular gravel road out of Wilmington that climbs steeply through a thick forest dominated by eucalypts. To get into the gorge itself requires climbing down steps cut into the wall of the Alligator Creek ravine. Walking along the creek bed provides an unspoiled view of the sheer walls that close in to barely an arm's width apart. The creek must run a torrent through here in the rainy season.

Rather than stay in the crowded and public caravan park in the Flinders reserve we took independent advice and stayed at Rawnsley Station nearby. This had a small camp ground and a shop that sold essential foodstuffs for a few hours a day. When we saw the crowded public caravan park we knew we

had done the right thing. Part of the entertainment at Rawnsley was a sheep mustering and shearing demonstration that was well worth attending, as the station was a functioning sheep station and did not have to lay on a synthetic demonstration for tourists. Naturally we had campfires and outdoor cooking, and the inevitable happened. After suffering from drought for five years the country was brought to bloom by the rain that came to our Bibocue.

The scenery within and including the Pound is spectacular and physically demanding. The climbs up Wangara Hill and Mount Ohlssen Bagge gave some appreciation of the structure of the Pound, but not until we climbed the 1170-metre St Marys Peak on the northern wall did we fully appreciate the formation of Wilpena Pound. From here we had a view encompassing the entire basin and I took a series of six photographs which, when joined, cover the entire Pound. The final photographic scene is interesting because Philip Smith appears twice, having moved around as I panned from left to right, and figuring in two photos. It had been a strenuous climb including a narrow trail zigzagging up a cliff face from within the Pound, but we took the shorter and easier route home down the outer flank. Roughly oval in shape, the Pound is 16 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide. It provided the land for a stock run in 1851 but a three-year drought soon brought that to an end. From 1899 until 1914 it was used to grow wheat with moderate success until nature again intervened, this time with floods, and terminated that enterprise. The increased interest in tourism after World War II provided a stimulus to its development and it is now firmly established as a notable Australian feature. Wilpena Pound is synonymous with the Flinders Ranges and is undoubtedly the most spectacular feature. It is a basin, having as its rim an almost complete ring of craggy sandstone ridges, separated from one another by steep gullies. The outer cliffs are steep but the slopes inside the basin are gentler, reflecting its formation as earth movements squeezed sedimentary rocks into broad folds. Erosion levelled all but the harder layers forming the ridges, leaving fertile soil on the inner floor. The effort involved in touring the Pound and the surrounding ranges is more than repaid by the scenery.

Random Breath Testing came to Canberra on 17 December 1982 and clubs and hotels had to look to their viability. Some laid on busses or made other arrangements for their clients. Not everybody welcomed RBT but it has had a positive effect on road safety since then. Initially it was claimed that 'you stand one chance in three of being breath tested'. Someone else must have been tested a lot on my behalf because I can remember only twice in the last eleven

years that I was pulled over for RBT, and both times I had not had a drink for days.

Joe and Ursula Gangemi with the three children stayed with me in January 1983, the highlight of the visit being Cockington Green where an English village has been created in 1/12th scale with a great degree of skill. Among the attractions are typical British buildings set in immaculately landscaped gardens; Stonehenge; a cricket match and a train. This was one of Canberra's high profile tourist attractions and rated an international standing. It had won an Australian Tourism Award. But over the years I would spend a lot more time at the Gangemi's house in Murgon than they ever spent in mine. In fact I had been up there as recently as May 1982 when the girls were passionately interested in their horses and were participating in country shows. Ursula's yard in Murgon was really a small paddock with plenty of room to manoeuvre a couple of horses around the vegetable garden and still leave room for the big dog, Hagar, a massive loquat tree and two stands of prickly pear - which Joe ate. Cockington Green was to draw Jack Simpson's attention in April of the same year when he visited us alone now after Ivy's death almost five years earlier. Down to see his latest grandson, Clayton, Jack was undoubtedly a favourite elder relative for the Bibos of all ages and would have been welcome any time. Jack was later to go into a nursing home at Kingscliff, near where Judith had lived for a while, and died on 17 November 1989. Len came down again from Cooktown in May 1984, and after his presbytery had been demolished he came down from Cairns in February 1985 on his annual excursion from North Queensland. From here we were able to get down to Wagga Wagga on both occasions to see Mary whom he did not see often. After his second visit he left to go back home on 22 February after we had dinner with Celie who left next day for Beijing on an organised tour.

In May 1983 I had finally fulfilled my Gunnedah promise to myself to do a First Aid course through the St John Ambulance Association. Murray Elliott, ex-RAAF and a member of the local Rotary Club, approached me one day with the option of applying for a course through his club. They were promoting the idea and were prepared to pay for a limited number of students. Since I was back into four wheel driving I appreciated how valuable the training could be in isolated country and I applied for one of the positions. I was able to arrange to swap shifts to enable me to attend all the lessons at the Dickson College, just down the road from Blacket Street. One of the advantages of our work conditions was that we could swap shifts at a moment's notice to meet requirements, and we always helped each other out

this way. For my 50th birthday in June 1983 I booked a section of the dining room at the Daramalan Club. This was one of the clubs that had sprung up with the introduction of poker machines to Canberra, and was associated with the Daramalan Catholic College in Dickson. I had been a member since shortly after its inauguration and used the restaurant, bar and meeting room facilities, though I never had any strong urge to use the pokies. Occasionally the computer club had met in their function room, and once or twice the Land Rover Club when we couldn't get into our regular premises. With the 50-year old Para port to be opened there were only family and very close friends at the dinner, the Bryces, the Smiths and Barry Runnstrom included. It was a good dinner as well as an important social event for the family, and I gave the chef a glass of the port too. It was every bit as good as a fifty-year old port should be.

Peter Evans put in a lot of groundwork leading up to 1983 and arranged with the RAAF School of Languages for a reunion of staff and students from his graduation year of 1963. He could not locate all of his fellow students and not everyone he did contact could come, but we had a memorable reunion on 5 August. Toby Garrick, ex-Commanding Officer, came but Kev Egan didn't. Omar Jauhari came out of retirement. Myra Gargosky (nee Page) came over from South Australia but Michelle Warner would not come down from Ballarat. The only Indonesian teacher still there from my time was Albert Tan. Bob Rockett, Harry Josephs and Ray Crosisca were the other students, and it was only in this new enlightened age that I found out that Ray had been discharged from the RAAF for being homosexual. Teaching techniques and material had changed in the sixteen years since I left there, but I was impressed with the quality of some of the students whom I would have been proud to have in my classes.

Johnno and Wendy Johnston moved from Umina and built a house on the side of a cliff overlooking Barrenjoey lighthouse at the entrance to Broken Bay where the Hawkesbury River meets the Pacific Ocean. Andrew and I were up to see them in September 1983, through all that dreadful traffic from Liverpool to Hornsby before getting back into easier driving conditions. Barrenjoey had been a landmark for me for many years while I was flying on Neptunes. All of our departures for exercises out to sea from Richmond flew over Barrenjoey and we always came back there for the final short leg home. I still get up to see Johnno and Wendy, and still endure the traffic. It was at John's 60th birthday party on Saturday 8 June 1991 that I met Dorothy Egan after so many years, and we were able to be friends again after my being a witness for Kevin at their divorce. Doug Tobin and John are great friends

from our Hercules days and I frequently see Doug whenever I visit Johnno and Wendy. All of John's children have grown up and moved on to establish families of their own but they were all back to celebrate his 60th, John, Alison and Genevieve. And the favourite dog, Bindi.

North Queensland called more forcefully in 1984. I was happy with the Patrol and wanted to see Cape York - the real tip of mainland Australia not the peninsula so frequently incorrectly termed Cape York. From 1984 Len was based in Cairns as the Remote Area Mission priest, and he volunteered to escort me as his territory extended as far north as the Jardine River anyway and he rarely got up that far. I wrote an account of it for the Land Rover Club that will serve as a basis for comparison and contrast with my similar trip three years later.

The North Queensland Tour, August-September 1984

I set out from Canberra on July 31 for the top of Cape York in the Nissan MQ Patrol hardtop as it's called, and as the story will reveal I was to be very grateful for the 'hardtop' before the trip was over. Highways are highways, and there is no point on elaborating on the road from Canberra to Cairns. Suffice to say that there is a lot of work going on in various places in the bicentennial project, and there is a lot of road out of Goondiwindi that isn't getting needed attention. Some of the language of the truckies in describing it was almost enough to scorch it.

Cairns is about the last outpost of real civilisation in our north so I'll start from there. Andrew flew up for the school holidays and I picked him up on a Saturday morning and drove back to Cooktown where I'd been staying with Len. So from then on we had a convoy of two vehicles and a total of three people. For a while Andrew swapped between cars to give us both the benefit of his wisdom, but he soon found he preferred my air-conditioned comfort to the cross-flow dust in his uncle's Toyota. Distance wise there's no difference in going to Cooktown via Mareeba or Mt Molloy and I went through Mt Molloy, though that may be irrelevant now that the Daintree road is finally open. I think I'd be inclined to check that road out next time I go up.

It's about 325 kilometres from Cairns to Cooktown, and the first 170 of that is good bitumen. The rest can vary from a horror stretch to just bad gravel depending on when it was last graded, and what the previous wet season did

to it. It really wasn't too bad this time, and I covered it four times in a couple of weeks. Even the gravel stretch has two good bitumen lengths, each about 5 km. Louie Komsic runs [not any longer] the Palmer River Roadhouse 113 kilometres south of Cooktown, and it's well worth stopping there for a feed or a drink or both. He has a small museum of local artefacts and gold that he has collected over the years, and is quite an authority on the area. Lakeland, closer to Cooktown, boasts a larger community, and some years ago served a Vietnamese group who tried unsuccessfully to get peanuts to grow in the area. Stopping at Louie's each time I had no occasion to check out the facilities at Lakeland, but I believe they are at least adequate.

Family ties kept me in Cooktown for a month, but honestly I think half a day would be more than enough to see everything. It's a much prettier place on photo than in fact. Worth visiting is the James Cook Memorial Museum. Ian McKinna runs it for the National Trust, and he's a nice bloke. Owns a Land Rover. Fishing there can be good if you can put up with the wind. The locals say it drives them mad, and the Sergeant of police says they're half mad to live there anyway. It's about 200 kilometres to Laura from Cooktown along the Battle Camp road, which is quite a scenic drive for a 4WD. The road is public access, but a portion of it is claimed by a fellow called the 'Mad Frenchman' who has been known to bail up tourists with fairly intimidating threats. He's just one of the oddball characters up there. The place is full of interesting individuals. The Mad Frenchman drives a Toyota Land Cruiser that's more iron oxide than iron, and considering the way he drives it and the condition of the roads it says a lot for Toyotas in the tropics. Two of the less obvious hazards of this part of the world are the taipans and the stinging trees. Taipans are the most venomous of all land snakes and grow to about two metres long. They are rarely seen as they tend to avoid people, which is probably just as well considering they get quite angry and will strike repeatedly when cornered. We saw a long one on the Battle Camp road unnecessarily being killed by another party. The stinging tree is potentially more dangerous because it does not advertise its venom. The large, crinkly, heart-shaped leaves cause excruciating pain, swelling of the lymph nodes in the armpit or groin, and sensitised skin that remains painful to touch for months afterwards. These trees have to be recognised to be avoided and they grew just off the edge of the road as well as in deep rainforest.

Laura doesn't boast much except a store, a pub, fuel at 55c/l, and a very small community. And lots of dust. The road out of Laura to Weipa is called The Peninsula Development Road. In patches it's almost good and in others

excellent, which can lull you into a false sense of security because some of the worst 'road' I've ever been on is the stretch south of Coen. It can do dreadful things to cartons of long-life milk. Four of mine pounded themselves to a pulp in the refrigerator just going over the corrugations before we got to Coen. Unless you intend to go to Weipa it is essential to refuel at Coen or have enough fuel to get to Bamaga at the top, because there is no more fuel available along the way. This is reflected in the price of diesel fuel at Coen. At 59c it was the most I had to pay on the entire trip of over 10 000 kilometres. Coen has two stores, a pub, a mechanic and even a cafe of sorts. Speaking from experience I can't recommend it. Probably the most talked about feature of Coen is the pub name. Officially the 'Exchange' Hotel it has had a prominent S affixed to the name that is equally prominently displayed against the skyline. Camping is available at Coen at the main store run by Irene Williams if you need a hot shower, but if you can do without that the river bank a few kilometres out of town is a very pleasant spot. An even more popular spot is the bank of the Archer River some 65 kilometres further on. It's wise to get to camping stops early because they get crowded, and after dark it can be difficult finding a reasonable place to park. In this respect it may pay to consider some statistics:

The authorities were expecting 5000 vehicles up to the top this season. The season lasts nominally from June through October. That's 1000 vehicles a month each way, all looking for a place to park. I'll leave any further breakdown to you to calculate. But I must say that the occupants of 5,000 4WD vehicles create a lot of rubbish and excrement. Not many of the tourists, or 'terrorists' as they are known up there, have the discipline we encourage and practice in the club. Consequently the camp sites are pretty quickly littered with garbage and the sand strewn with little pink flags. Don't walk around barefoot in the dark! It takes a good rainy season to clean up after the grotts.

We went to Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and I think that if you go to the top you'd be doing yourself a disservice not to go and see the place. It's a beautiful little town with full facilities but not too much competition. Don't expect to buy fuel there on a Sunday. There is only one outlet and it keeps just about public service business hours. Free conducted tours are run every day by Comalco (no longer true), and it's quite an eye-opener to see the magnitude of the mining if you've never been exposed to that sort of thing before. Weipa is the source of the world's largest and richest deposits of bauxite ore. And even the greenies couldn't tell where the reclamation has taken place since the company got away from planting trees in straight lines. The road to Weipa is

signposted so don't be tempted to take the original track south of the main road as we were unless you want some of the best off-road work you'll ever get up there. Towards Weipa town, where the company assumes responsibility for roads, it is a multi-lane highway with speed limited only by the imagination. It really gives you a good impression of the place. Once in Weipa there is not much point in coming out the same way. So we went out on the northern road through York Downs to Batavia Downs.

The Wenlock is the first river to be forded, just south of Moreton Telegraph Station. It was no problem, but every year would be different with all rivers depending on the previous wet. This is the next logical camp, and it's just as well to make the most of it because that's where the road maintenance ceases. Some nice yabbies were coming out of the Wenlock. I had one bigger than a banana prawn. And just as tasty. The grader does not operate north of the Wenlock, and for the next 250-odd kilometres I reckon we averaged around 20 km/h. When I got to 40 I thought I was breaking the sound barrier. It is great country, and scenic in its own right, but it offers most of the obstacles you might like to see on a driver-training course. Curly creek crossings with mud, rock, or deep sand climb-outs; long stretches of deep soft sand; and corrugations like I've never seen before. Generally it was necessary to do between 60 and 80 km/h to ride over the corrugations, but of course that was not always possible because of other obstacles. And so it developed into a slow grind all the way. The moral of the story is don't plan on making good time between the Wenlock and the Jardine, which represents the northern boundary of the obstacle course. Other obstacles worthy of mention are the Gunshot and Cockatoo creeks. Gunshot especially is liable to be a problem southbound after rain with a steep, rutted, muddy climb out, and is notable for its sign. A large black arrow points to the bush announcing 'MOTEL GUNSHOT. DINGO'S BREAKFAST. 5.30 AM, A PISS AND A GOOD LOOK AROUND'.

Depending on progress, the Dulhunty offers excellent camping and swimming before negotiating the heathlands with their magnificent specimens of pitcher plants that eat insects. Further north again and within easy distance of the top - well almost - is Elliot Creek. It's off to the east and not signposted, but it's on the maps, and I can only recommend it as one of the most beautiful little creeks I've seen. I plan to spend more time there next time I go north. The last major obstacle to getting to the top is the Jardine River. From there it's only about 40 kilometres to Bamaga. The Jardine is perennial, has a very high water flow that I can't remember, and is excellent to drink. In fact I brought a lot of it home with me it was that good. Some of the more intrepid drivers

cross the Jardine the hard way. Me, I paid my \$20 each way and went over on the pontoon. The pontoon only operates from June through October, so if you go out of that time bracket there would be no temptation to spend the extra \$40 to save getting wet. But of course if you went out of the accepted season you'd be risking the entire trip on the vagaries of the wet anyway.

Bamaga is an Aboriginal and Islander settlement that forms our true northern outpost. It is served by boat or barge, and has a good airstrip that served the RAAF during the war and is known as Jacky Jacky airstrip or Higginsfield. Now Air Queensland and the coastal surveillance flights use it. You can refuel and replenish provisions at Bamaga, but only during normal business hours if I remember rightly. We had enough fuel to do the return trip, and that was with just two jerrycans and a tankful out of Weipa. So fuel isn't really a problem unless you have a thirsty car or one of those ridiculous little Toyota petrol tanks that I had on my SWB Land Cruiser. We were fortunate in having accommodation available in Bamaga, and made a day trip to Cape York, Somerset and Punsand Bay. Historically Cape York and Somerset are the highlights. But Punsand Bay on the western side of the peninsula is a magnificent stretch of clean golden sand that seems to stretch out to infinity. Somerset is also a beautiful place to camp, offering excellent swimming and good fishing in a very attractive setting. For anyone staying in the area it would seem to me to be the ideal place to camp after provisioning at Bamaga. The road to Somerset is well pounded, but not so the road to Punsand Bay. I had my doubts at times that we were not lost, and the local topographical map didn't help much. There are a few confusing tracks, but perseverance paid off. Anyway it isn't such a big place to get lost in.

Coming back we decided not to retrace our steps exactly and so we turned off at Musgrave to come the rest of the way through the Lakefield National Park. It requires the Ranger's authority to camp in the park, and this should be obtained by phone from Musgrave if not already arranged. There is a vast variety of country in the park from extensive lagoons of lotus to the graveyard effect of thousands of magnetic termite mounds from horizon to horizon. There are also real live crocodiles in the rivers and lagoons, and ample signs warning of the dangers of swimming in the area. We saw three crocs in the one hole when we stopped for a bit of fishing over lunchtime. Wild pigs are also common enough to be a traffic hazard. Bird life in the form of brolgas and thousands of cockatoos added to the scenery and the noise, and we were treated to the sight of bustards and jabiru. A great place to camp on the way home is the Hann Crossing on the North Kennedy River. It is well served with

bins by the rangers, and has a choice of about 4 or 5 campsites spread over a few kilometres. It's a popular spot with the outback tour groups but big enough not to get crowded.

That just about gets us back to Cooktown. And it was just half an hour out of town on the dreaded Battle Camp Road that I was to appreciate how well the Patrol is built. We had a slight difference of opinion with the direction a road should take and ended up off the road in a big hole. The front end of the car was cradled in the roots of a big tree and the roofrack was resting on the bole of the same tree while the rear right wheel was a few feet above the road. Spectacular but not too damaging. The roofrack mounted on the hardtop the way it is on the Patrol took all the strain and prevented what would have otherwise been far more severe damage. Fortunately we were able to winch out and continue without much more than wounded pride and an hour and a half delay.



Wounded pride and an hour and a half delay, Battle Camp Road, September 1984.

So for anyone intending to go to the top I would say plan to be totally self sufficient for at least the Weipa - Cape York - Coen section; check with the

locals on road conditions and local diversions; be a bit inquisitive and look off the regular beaten track; and above all enjoy yourself.

After The North Queensland Tour

Bernard was able to satisfy one of my long-term desires on the way home in September 1984 when he, Tonia and I went to Kenilworth for a few days in his caravan. From some distant memory in youth I am fascinated by fireflies and I think everyone should appreciate the sight of fireflies periodically. North of Brisbane and in the hills inland from Nambour, Kenilworth is an attractive camping area with rain forest, creeks, open fields, hills and fireflies. Little beetles that produce a phosphorescent light that they switch off and on, fireflies were abundant at Kenilworth and provided fascinating entertainment at night. Bernard had stayed here before and knew just where to take me. Nearby was a recreational farm with stables where Tonia went to ride a couple of times. Like Ursula's girls she was mad on horses. Bernard introduced me to Rose's lime marmalade - which I had never heard of - at Kenilworth, and a subtle new taste thrill. It was possibly on this trip, but may have been a later one since the book was only published in 1984, that Tony introduced me to one of the greatest contemporary novels of the decade - *The Fourth Protocol* - by English novelist Frederick Forsyth. I found that one of the most compelling novels I have ever read.

My first commercial flight had been to Hobart in a DC3 with Jim Downey and I had been back to Tasmania on several occasions in 34 Squadron, but these latter flights were always working trips with no time for local sightseeing. For a few days in the first week of October 1985 I was able to enjoy the company of Stu and Kay Bryce and daughters Emma and Lisa at their vineyard in Lalla outside Launceston. Stu had used his years at 34 Squadron profitably in doing a course in wine making at the now Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. Some of his best training flights were to Tasmania to assess the climate and potential of the area around Launceston where he had grown up, and he followed this up with a posting to Hobart after leaving the Squadron and doing time in Russell Office. By the time he was posted to Tasmania he had bought a vineyard called La Provence at Lalla, and he took to running this full time when he retired in June 1986. In 1985 he was commuting to work for the weekdays and returning to the vineyard on weekends. Kay was managing the property from a substantial house built on it and I think she was working part time at her profession of nursing sister to put the girls through good schools. La Provence grapes were all being sold at this time but Stu expected to be

producing his own wines by September 1986. I tried some of the local red that Stu and other friends were enjoying but was not enthusiastic about it. Some years later Stu brought me a bottle of his own red and it was very good. He was more interested in making the white wines, whether it was from personal preference or because his land suited its production I am not sure.

The area around Lalla and Launceston is very scenic and we drove to a number of picnic spots to enjoy it. I can understand the immediate attraction Tasmania has for visitors but I think I would find its southern climate and narrow shores too restrictive for long term occupation. With the support I had got from them following my divorce I thought their marriage was on an unshakeable foundation, and it came as a surprise when Stu called in to Canberra in mid-92 and told me they were separated. We had regularly exchanged Christmas cards and the Bryces had visited me on a few occasions in the intervening years when they came to the mainland on business or family matters, and I had not seen any evidence of friction. It seemed that we always went to the Daramalan Club on those visits. That was a great little club until it closed its doors in December 1991

After twelve years of observing what turned out to be glaucoma my eye specialist, Dr Coop, finally prescribed Timoptol drops in February 1985, and in March advised me to apply for treatment from the Department of Veterans' Affairs as a returned serviceman. I did this on 21 August 1985, opening up an interesting exchange that was to last for years. It was almost a full year later that I got an answer from the Repatriation Commission, 5 August 1986, that was a masterpiece of public service evasion. While acknowledging that 'the causes are unknown', Mr Allan Smith was able to conclude that the disability was not caused by my service career. I appealed this decision in December and the case was referred to the Veterans Review Board, being considered on 22 May 1987 and found in favour of the Repatriation Commission's decision. But I was offered the right of appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, which I took up. I also wrote to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Gietzelt, pointing out to him and the Tribunal that Mr Allan Smith had admitted as a 'material question of fact' that I had ocular hypertension and that the causes were unknown. I argued that, unless medical experts could determine the cause from access to 24 years of my life's detailed medical history in RAAF records, then the Commonwealth must accept the reasonable probability that the cause lay within my period of eligible service. Senator Gietzelt refused to become involved, and my hearing before the Tribunal was set down for 28 September 1987. It was a very polite and correct hearing in

which the chairman admitted that the rules had changed in the two years since I first applied. The government had retrospectively decreed that it was **my responsibility to prove** that the disability was caused by my service career, not theirs to prove otherwise.

In sympathy they offered to provide me with an assessment of my condition by Professor Fred Hollows, recognised as Australia's top eye specialist. Professor Hollows was head of ophthalmology at Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney. He was later to become Australian of the Year and winner of the Human Rights Award, notably for his work in Eritrea and among the Australian Aborigines, and died of cancer on 10 February 1993. Susan was living in Buxton at the time, which made for a shorter drive into the chaos of Sydney traffic for the appointment on Thursday morning, 8 October 1987. So I stayed overnight on the 7th and Chris drove me up in my car. It would have taken me twice as long to find my own way. After a battery of tests Professor Hollows said, 'If you were my patient I wouldn't be treating you', and prepared a paper to that effect for the Tribunal. Just as well Chris was with me, because I couldn't see properly for several hours afterwards and drove most of the way home with my eyes closed. With the cards stacked against me I withdrew from further competition with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

I continued consultations about every six months with Dr Coop who expressed reservations about Fred Hollows' findings, but whenever I went to my local doctor, George Philip, to get a referral he would say 'Why do you keep going to see him?', and I would answer 'Because he tells me to'. I trusted him as a specialist. In May 1988 Dr Coop volunteered me for a research project on glaucoma organised by Dr Ted Maddess from the John Curtin School of Medical Research. He was doing his research on an old 8-bit Tandy Model 3 computer that had long been surpassed by 16-bit technology, but was within his budget and still a good machine. However, with George's constant queries and Fred Hollows' statement ringing in my ears I elected to give up treatment when Dr Coop retired in January 1990, but I kept a bottle of Timoptol just in case. In March I began to see halos around lights but using Timoptol for a few days removed them. Then in May I started seeing full, glorious rainbows around lights that rang alarm bells. The remaining Timoptol removed them while I found a new ophthalmologist, Dr Jenson Wong-See, two days before my next birthday. He had little time for Coop, Maddess or Hollows, and once spent forty-five minutes briefing me on the ills of the government medical program. He confirmed that I did indeed have glaucoma,

probably had unacceptable pressures of around thirty with the rainbows, and set about finding a combination of drugs to provide relief, because Timoptol alone was not enough. We found a combination of stronger Timoptol plus Epifrin twice a day was needed to keep the pressures down to around 16, and that has been effective ever since.

Spectacles are interesting things when you have to wear them, and I had a variety of different types. I started off with the photo-chromatic bifocals in 1973 but found these were inadequate when I went to Waltons. Reading was OK, distance was OK, but there was no overlap, so shelves and racks in the middle distance were out of focus. I got trifocals, which solved this problem but still had marked limits and straight lines where the curvature of the lenses changed. Peter Dennes showed me his multi-focal lenses that had no zones but changed continuously from far to near distance. In March 1988, when I was due for new glasses again, I asked Dr Coop for these revolutionary multi-focal ones. He was not enthusiastic because he said very few people adapted to them. I got them though and it was like being given sight again after being blind. They were marvellous and I criticised him for not having prescribed them years ago. All specialists have their preferences, as I found out with Dr Wong-See who liked neither multi-focals nor photo-chromatic glasses. He refused to prescribe photo-chromatic, and showed me how they never cleared after about six months, reducing light by about 10 per cent. Reluctant to give me multi-focals he finally agreed but changed the strength, which took a lot of getting used to. My final, and still satisfactory wardrobe through Dr Wong-See, is multi-focal clear glass and polaroid bi-focals. I'd much rather not have to wear them at all though.

The Simpson Desert Crossing, August-September 1986

Undoubtedly the most interesting 4WD trip of my career was the Simpson Desert crossing in August-September 1986. Robert and I joined up with six other vehicles from the Land Rover Club to do a west to east crossing from Dalhousie Springs to Birdsville, then across Sturt's Stony Desert to Innamincka. We shared driving in the blue Nissan, now fitted with a bullbar, roofrack, large fuel tank and spare tyre carrier. The red flashes along the side were no longer there after the accident I had in north Queensland. Rather than have the left flash replaced I arranged with the repairer to remove the right one and say nothing to the insurance company. The trip was planned and led

by Des and Warren Butler and very efficiently organised from the start, though the execution was not totally as planned because of the introduction of uncertainties along the way. From Oodnadatta to Birdsville is over 800 kilometres, across some of the most isolated country in Australia. The party had to be totally self sufficient for that sector as there was no food or fuel available, no servicing facilities in the event of a breakdown, and over 1100 sandhills up to 30 metres and more in height to cross. Water was available at Dalhousie Springs but this was still 600 kilometres from Birdsville. We chose to cross heading east because the dunes are steeper on their eastern faces and more difficult to climb.

It was a 5000-kilometre trip that took us to historic places like Poeppel Corner, Coongie Lakes, the Burke and Wills *Dig Tree* on Cooper Creek, and Cameron Corner and Tibooburra. This covered the junctions of Queensland/Northern Territory/South Australia and Queensland/New South Wales/South Australia, so we visited every mainland state in Australia except Western Australia and Victoria. Robert and I slept under the stars throughout the trip, though Robert had a tent fly and I had a waterproof poncho from Vietnam for protection from the odd shower of rain. We had dingoes visit our camps and we found centipedes before they found us, but it was a refreshing and worth while experience to sleep without the confines of walls and ceilings. The stars are different from a bed on the ground in the wilderness. We carried 200 litres of fuel, 75 litres of water and two spare wheels. The party was more than adequately equipped, with emergency radio and first aid equipment, and included a pharmacist and two nursing sisters.

I covered this expedition in detail in a booklet titled *Simpson '86* that I made up with an earlier computer using less capable software. It is a story in itself and too big to include here, but for those who cannot have access to it I will cover the highlights. Kinchega Woolshed near Menindee preserves much of the history of the area over its operational life from the 1880s to 1967 and is a valuable museum of artefacts and photographs. It is in rugged country with hardy flora and shifting white sand dunes and not likely to become a popular tourist centre. The world was proven to be small when, leaving Lake Eyre South for Oodnadatta, we found a Levers Tour coach bogged in the muddy track. It had been there for over 24 hours and was filled with children from Canberra High School. With a number of vehicles linked with towropes we pulled it out and earned their applause before we moved on to remote attractions. These were Blanche Cup and Bubbler Springs, outlets in the tops of hills for the artesian basin and veritable oases in the parched and salty

landscape. The hills were self-perpetuating in that salts from the water formed a crust that imperceptibly increased the height of the mound over the years. The old railway camp near Coward Springs and the ruins of the abandoned repeater station at Strangways bore testimony to the hardships of living during the pioneering days of this part of South Australia.



Canberra High School students are rescued from an unplanned overnight stop, near Lake Eyre South, August 1986.

The Dalhousie ruins were once a thriving cattle station but were now becoming debris on a date palm oasis. There were examples of very fine timber working in some of the old stockyard fences, and the stone buildings must have supplied permanence to the lifestyle of the time. Obviously it was not to last. The 62 nearby springs had been discovered in 1870 and were a natural outlet for the Great Artesian Basin, supporting local wildlife and some delicate and unique forms of aquatic life. One had been declared a swimming hole by the National Parks and Wildlife and was the temperature of a hot bath. Purni bore, a little further along the track, was a bubbling pool with a temperature of about 75 degrees Celsius. This was a very pleasant place to gather ourselves for the launch of our desert crossing on the French Track.

Meeting the sand dunes we only made 150 kilometres before camping about 3.00 p.m., in a valley between the dunes that is technically called an interdunal corridor. Already we had been forced to use a towrope to get one vehicle over.

The changing colours of the dunes themselves with the changing angle of the sun during the day, plus the variety and colour of the wildflowers were reward sufficient for any hardships. An unusual wet season some weeks before had primed the desert to come alive with a abundance rarely seen, providing lush pasture for an estimated 8,000 camels that populate the desert but none of which we saw. At the other extreme were the vast salt pans, white crusted salt layered over mud and presenting a stark reality of nature at odds with the ephemeral flowers. We had to negotiate these, carefully sticking to the defined tracks of previous vehicles. When we reached Poeppel Corner it was crowded, but I suspect that many of the cars had come from the east or crossed on an easier track south of us. We left on a route taking us away from the majority, and headed for Annandale station that had once been a major supplier of beef that was herded down the infamous Birdsville Track on the way to the Melbourne markets. Annandale was now abandoned to parched carcasses of cattle and deteriorating fences, machinery and farmhouses, and tracks leading to it were overgrown and indistinct. At Eyre Creek we realised we had missed the track and had to do a lot of searching to pick it up. It appeared almost accidentally a couple of sandhills east of the rabbit fence and we were able to camp on a large and beautiful lagoon, the Cudrivera waterhole, that night.

On the way to Birdsville we missed another landmark and had to turn back to find it after getting instructions over the CB radio from other vehicles in the area. All cars were fitted with CBs and they were not only valuable, they were essential to safety. The landmark we could not afford to miss was Big Red, the most infamous of the dunes and 30 metres high. Its eastern face had a regular and an easier approach and a few of us tried the regular approach for its challenge. Only two vehicles conquered Big Red, a Jackaroo and a Toyota Land Cruiser station wagon. Two other Land Cruisers and the Nissan failed. The Birdsville pub with many cold beers was a welcome sight after seven days on the track since Oodnadatta. We camped on our own on a little creek out of town.

There were more adventures after Birdsville when we turned off the Birdsville track using a hand drawn map from a previous expedition. We wanted to see Coongie Lake on our way to Innamincka and there were no maps with tracks on them. It was quite an interesting excursion past the enormous Koonchera

sandhill and navigating by signs such as: *wreck of Vauxhall, eagle's nest in tree on west of track, old caravan and engine*, and merely *drums*. That night we made camp among the trees full of corellas, with pelicans drifting on the placid waters of the lake. Getting out of there next day had its elements of uncertainty as we tentatively made our way to Innamincka, at times very definitely 'temporarily uncertain of our position'. Eventually we met a team from the Santos oil company who were drilling in the area and they gave us directions, and we drifted into town looking at all the historic sites associated with the ill fated Burke and Wills expedition and their death in 1861. These included Wills' grave and King's marker, King being the only survivor after being discovered and cared for by Aborigines. To complete the story Robert and I drove 50 kilometres out in the other direction the following day to see Burke's grave, and the historic *Dig Tree* in a very attractive setting on Cooper Creek that belies the tragedy that occurred there.

Out of Innamincka to Cameron Corner took us on an excellent dirt road crossing the Strzelecki Desert like a roller coaster as it traversed the smaller, gentler sandhills. Being more accessible Cameron Corner did not have the same atmosphere as Poeppel Corner, and it was obvious to us that we were back in civilisation. At both Poeppel Corner and Cameron Corner a brass plaque on a cement base marks the boundaries of the states and is a popular photographic item. Cameron Corner to Tibooburra was only a short drive to the first real bed for days, when we stayed at the new Tibooburra Motel. Once famous for its gold, Tibooburra now services outback properties and tourists, and boasts some famous Australian paintings by Russell Drysdale, Clifton Pugh, Erik Minchen and Frank Hodgkinson on the walls of the Family Hotel. After that it was an uneventful drive back home, but the photographs, stories and memories are recorded for reminiscences because I doubt that I will ever get to repeat that trip.

The other major 4WD trip of my career was to Cape York again in 1987 and it was to have been a family event. Unlike *Simpson '86* where just about everything went right and we had no problems, *Nor-Q '87* was a series of disasters that warrant telling as a separate tale.

Nostalgia Descends

Bernard's son, Mark, and a friend Scott Wilson descended on Canberra for the Summernats of 1988. This is supposedly a gathering of motoring enthusiasts to show off their machines every year for four days between Christmas and

New Year, and is held in the National Exhibition Centre just up the highway from Dickson. Mark had a 5-litre V8 Torana that was almost capable of becoming airborne. Traders welcome Summernats because of the amount of money they spend on liquor, takeaway food and fuel. But local residents find the noise most of the night, the congestion of traffic and humanity on a short stretch of highway, and the behaviour of the less-desirable elements of the crowds a point of contention. Until recently the roadsides and median strip were used as public camping areas by thousands of visitors, and the government turned a blind eye because of the tourist income. An annual highlight was to spread oil over a section of suburban road for burning up tyres in stationary runups and foolish driving. Mark's year was relatively incident free but the last two years, 1991 and 1992, saw riots developing despite crowd control by the police and the confinement of campers to the exhibition grounds, and may well have spelt the end of the function in Canberra. Where I live I could hear the noise until four o'clock in the morning. People closer to the event must not have got any sleep, and some used to leave town for the duration. Bernard, Carmel, Tonia and Michael arrived after it was all over and Mark had left, making room. Carmel was Bernard's second wife and this was probably the first time she would have met Bernard's southern brothers and sister on their home territory, though I had met her often in Brisbane before and since their marriage in 1985. From Canberra they made a flying visit through Wagga Wagga to Melbourne. Carmel had a finer appreciation of the individual elements of flora than I did and thought I was being distinctly unkind to my roses that were in a state of decline.

As security officer in Waltons I had learnt to use the electoral roll to locate people who owed the firm money. In 1988 I decided to use the same source to try to find both Bill Middlemiss and Wal Harris with whom I had long lost contact. I didn't know what State Bill might be in, and though I expected Wal was still in Victoria I had no idea where. Wal had moved around quite a bit and had a variety of jobs besides getting divorced since I had left Victoria at the end of 1967. I wrote to different Bill Middlemiss addresses but none was the right one. It was not until September 1991 that I learned that Bill had died of a heart attack some three years earlier, and had been an instructor for a flying school in Melbourne at the time. Wal was easier to find, and I have been down to Melbourne a few times since I found him. The first time was in May 1988, shortly after my success in finding him. That was a quick two-day trip to re-establish relations, and I found a very different man from the one I had

known. Divorced from Dorle in 1983 he had married his present wife, Liz, in 1984. A mad rally driver, he had suffered a heart attack miles from help and had nearly died in the ambulance on the way to hospital, an experience he vividly remembers.

In August 1988 I made a nostalgia tour through places I remembered well from my School of Languages days and combined it with visits to family and Wal, to coincide with his birthday on 21 August. Starting off at Mary's in Wagga Wagga I moved on to Bright, source of pleasant memories and colour slides from family camping. Still an attractive town, with more facilities now, it should be worth more time later. Perhaps after retirement. Jamieson was cold, wet and nothing like what I remembered from our visits there with the Johnstons. While it cannot be universally true it is certainly a fact that some places achieve their attraction, or an enhancement of it, by association with people rather than solely on their geographic or other natural features. Jamieson was one of these. The Goulburn Weir outside Nagambie was another. An undeveloped and relatively primitive area in our time, it was now a formal park and picnic area with a resident ranger. For the local inhabitants who had not known it in its earlier days it must have been attractive, and I certainly had no complaints about it, but I was not tempted to stay longer than a short reconnaissance visit.

I spent the Thursday night with Pat and Carol at their house in Pascoe Vale on the north side of Melbourne, Pat with Ansett Airways at Tullamarine after his return from Papua New Guinea. As I walked in Pat was holding one of those thinly disguised brain washings Amway presents to coopt future sales persons. I was to remember this when I was later invited by Spike Tyrrell to a meeting for selected persons only, to discuss an attractive moneymaking proposition. Neither Pat nor Spike became an addicted Amway devotee, but I do use some of their products. Friday night was down at Wal's, and I slept in my sleeping bag in his spare bedroom and computer room, and had it impregnated with cigarette smoke in two nights. Still brilliant electronically, Wal was now working on both software and hardware computer support for a Melbourne firm. He had moved to a semidetached house in Hawthorne East since my previous visit but had not changed to suit the newly renovated environment. Wal and Liz had an agreement. Since they were both working - and they worked strange hours - then Wal was responsible for all the washing up and Liz was responsible for all the housework. I won't go into detail, but Wal's nickname from Ballarat, *Debris Des*, was most appropriate. Getting a cup of coffee meant taking an unwashed cup from the accumulated pile of cutlery,

crockery and utensils, and washing it for immediate use. Liz's approach to housework was identical to Wal's approach to washing up. Really nice people, but not given to the conventional approach to house work that I was used to.

Saturday night, 20 August, was different, with a dinner at Inverloch for Wal's birthday, with Liz plus Kath and Frank Kilfoyle, Wal's friends from way back but whom I had never met. Wal was born two months after I was. Inverloch was almost out to Wilson's Promontory and not a place to drive home from after dinner, so we booked into the local hotel. Great restaurant! *The Cottage*, run by Kirk Skinner. The meal was excellent, the cellar great, and the host friendly and expansive. We had a truly enjoyable night. But probably the most important part of the trip was the call on Wal's mother and father, now living in a regular suburban house in Narre Warren, and whom I had only seen briefly after many years on my quick visit in May. Carrie Harris was a very gentle old lady and Walter still very much a gentleman. They were both showing their age, with Walter now over 80 years old. We didn't stay long but I am glad I was able to make the visit because Carrie Harris died the following June.

Wal took the day off on Monday at Liz's insistence and went with me on the rest of my nostalgia tour. That was down the Great Ocean Road to Warrnambool, always a scenic trip with memorable scenery including The Twelve Apostles at Port Campbell, those pinnacles left standing off the coast where erosion over the centuries has left them isolated. Even though Victoria is not a very big place and its roads are better than other state's on average, the next day was only whistle stops through Hamilton, past the Grampians to Horsham, through Stawell, Ararat and Castlemaine, then home to Melbourne. I promise myself I will do the trip again in my own time and spend more time in some of these places. Victoria does have a lot to offer the tourist. No trip to Melbourne would have been complete without calling on John and Betty, and I spent the night there before returning to Canberra on Wednesday. Dinner was almost a family gathering for Betty's family too, who adored John like a father. Kerry was there with grandchildren Kate and Nicholas; Andrew, lucky to have survived a momentous trek through India that had almost cost him his life through a debilitating illness and lack of medical treatment; and Mandy, very much changed since my photograph of her as a child hugging a furry puppy doll had been published in a Melbourne newspaper. I get along well with Mandy and Andrew, and Mandy likes to rib me about my job, relating it to some imaginative TV equivalents.

Although I had rarely been back to the RAAF Base at Fairbairn since my retirement I could not pass up the Squadron's 21st birthday ball at Fairbairn on Saturday 3 September 1988. Dave Clarkson organised a party of old timers to sit at one table, and I joined him and Bev, and Arthur and Cindy White. I think Dave and Arthur were both desk-bound in that concrete castle I had avoided. Other navigators there were Howard Trevethan and Nev Duus, Nev now back to his first calling as a schoolteacher at Ipswich in Queensland. Stewards of renown were Col Cassidy, Ron Andrews, Jim Buise, Brian Robinson, Ken Emmert, and Tony Carville. Ron and his wife Trich had a successful business, Sign Design, in Canberra; Jim was still serving in Western Australia; Tony was out of flying and serving at 2 Stores Depot; and Col was serving in recruiting - touring Australia by ground instead of by air. Pilots were Dave Smith, still a gentleman and flying for the Civil Aviation Authority out of Brisbane; DABS Carter who didn't recognise me; and Mike Birks, current Commanding Officer of 34 Squadron. It was good to be back among friends with whom I had shared some of the memorable moments of my life. Looking at where we all were, and listening to the stories of the twelve years since my retirement, made me realise again how valuable was the contribution the RAAF had made to all our lives.

There is a strong local body of interest in the steam train era, and periodic public excursions out of Queanbeyan in a historic old train maintained by the Australian Railway Historical Society. Some of these are only short trips on local lines through the Molonglo Gorge, others go south towards Cooma and provide for lunch at Michelago, which is the 50 km return trip we took. More recently the service has expanded to include theatre trips to Melbourne for such shows as *Phantom of the Opera* that must be a real thrill for steam buffs. This local interest was not to be compared to the national interest aroused when the Flying Scotsman, engine number 4472, was brought to Australia for countrywide appearances. Susan's home at Buxton was close to the Railway Museum at Thirlmere, and in March 1989 we all gathered for a big exhibition there followed by an afternoon dash to catch a view of the Flying Scotsman on one of its historic joyrides in Australia.

After two referendums that roundly rejected self-government for the ACT we had it imposed on us on 11 May 1989. Before that the ACT had been administered by the Federal Government through a Minister for Territories. Canberra residents had long been criticised as being cosseted by the Federal Government and of not paying their way. Arguments for and against that criticism are now of only historical interest, but I believe that the majority of

Canberra residents had a far more ethical reason for opposing self-government. Including the 73 square kilometres of Jervis Bay, the ACT's area is only 2,358 sq km - the size of a small postage stamp on the map of Australia. Its population at the time was 260,000 in round figures. Accepting that historically and geographically there is no such thing as a completely honest or competent government we did not need yet another level of inefficiency and nepotism. A local council with a mayor of the calibre of Brisbane's Sallyanne Atkinson could have done the job. Instead of that we got a local government of 17 Members of the Legislative Assembly under the ACT (Self-Government) Act of 1988.

Polling day in 1989 took place on Saturday, 4 March, and the result was declared on Monday, 8 May, or nine weeks and two days after the voting. The ballot paper was over a metre long and proportionally wide. It was the second largest ballot paper ever recorded anywhere in the world. There were 117 candidates; and 139 boxes to fill in on the paper. I refused to vote, and as soon as I was handed my ballot paper I started scrunching it up as I walked towards the ballot box. It was too big to fit through the top slot so I forced it in, but it took three attempts to get it through. By this time the slot was deformed and my hand was stuck in it. As I walked away the whole ballot box came with me, raising a smile from the lady who was guarding it. She must have felt the same as I did. No party won a majority vote, with Labor getting 23% and the Liberals 14%. We had a government that was described as unwanted, costly and useless, and was to distinguish itself by its ineptitude, becoming the laughing stock of Australia before the next election in February 1992. This was held on 15 February and, like its predecessor, was conducted under the modified d'Hondt system. At the same time a referendum was held to determine the system of future elections and the Hare-Clarke system was voted in. In May 1993 we have accepted self-government as an irreversible fact of life. The 17 members of the Legislative Assembly acted rapidly to entrench their welfare in this tiny electorate (population at the 1991 census date was 279,396); an MLA's base salary is \$50,652 plus allowances of \$3015; the Chief Minister's salary is \$81,043 plus \$5294 allowances; MLAs pay 5% of their salary for a superannuation benefit of 29% of their annual salary per year of appointment, retrospective to the date of election. Labor holds power; the Liberals are in opposition; there are two independent members; and one member elected in 1989 as the Abolish Self-Government Party still sits in government drawing a comfortable salary under that title. Who needed self-government?

My fear of living a life of isolation as my family grew up and moved on was not one I should ever have entertained. There always seemed to be someone to share the house. Susan, David, Paul and Judith, alone or in combination, provided company for years, and when the house looked like being empty Jon Stirzaker, Mary's second son, came to stay. I think that must have been over 1987-88, approaching the time when he got married on 2 October 1988. It was good to have someone from the family in the house but I have never seriously considered taking in a boarder who is a stranger. Chris moved in on Sunday night, 30 April 1989. He had come up out of the mines and started work above ground with Honeywell in Canberra on 1 May 1989. The house in Buxton was eventually sold and Chris and Susan moved to a house in Chisholm on the south side of Canberra on 22 September. Their marriage wasn't doing too well either and they separated in January 1990.

Canberra and Beyond, 1987 - 1993

Back to North Queensland and Central Australia

After I got back from the North Queensland tour in 1987 I traded the Nissan for a Toyota Land Cruiser. Brian Pollack Motors had a weekend special that they had been unable to sell for months. It was my ideal 4WD - a white mid-wheelbase diesel Toyota Land Cruiser, fitted with bullbar, towbar, and luxury appointments inside like auto-reverse tape player and hydraulically mounted seats. It also had an altimeter and climb- and roll-indicators that I could have done without but came as standard fittings on this luxury model. I got a good trade-in of \$12,000 for the well-worn Nissan and paid \$26,000 for the Toyota with factory air-conditioning fitted. I didn't have that much money at the time and this is where I struck the embarrassment of working for ASIO. In negotiating a loan I couldn't tell them where I worked or even give them my true telephone number at work. If they had rung the Attorney General's Department to check on my bona fides nobody there would have known me. ASIO had proved notoriously unreliable in getting messages to us in our separate building, and we only gave our phone number to family and close friends. To allay any suspicion that I might be a financial risk I took a copy of my most recent pay slip and my last tax certificate in, which seemed to work. I have been a very happy owner of this car since September 1987. Talking about my ideal car to a panel beater in Cairns I had been told that if I bought a mid-wheelbase Toyota I would be 'buying a luxury vehicle with no resale value'. I certainly got a luxury vehicle, and I was on the right side of the resale step. A new vehicle fitted out to be identical with mine would have cost \$37,000.

In December 1988 I was back in North Queensland and staying with Len as guests of Louis and Luba Komsic in the Palmer River Roadhouse. A recent feature of the roadhouse was a mural measuring 3.5 x 1.6 metres done in acrylic on acrylic canvas by [James Baines](#) and titled *River of Gold*. Louis had commissioned this to depict the development of the Palmer River goldfields and to record a little of his involvement in north Queensland. A series of interwoven vignettes runs from the top right corner anticlockwise to the bottom right corner. Its story starts with the arrival of Europeans in Australia and progresses through the conflict between blacks and whites, and blacks and Chinese as the hordes of miners arrived to exploit the gold in the Palmer. The development of the gold fields leads to pictures of the machinery and methods

of mining. Buildings, activities including fights, costumes and prominent customs and persons of the time figure prominently. Louis is shown in his early days as a crocodile hunter, and finally there is a large and lifelike picture of Louis and Luba in the bottom corner. It is a truly great piece of contemporary art.

This visit was different from most previous visits that were only overnight, and we were able to investigate the local area a bit more thoroughly with Louis for guidance. Louis had a piece of land with an old caravan on it at Byerstown, a reasonable drive from the roadhouse and still on the Palmer River, and gave us his metal detector to go looking for gold there while he worked. This wasn't as crazy as it sounds, because the Palmer River had been a prolific gold producer in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and into the 1900s and still produced an interesting amount. But the scorching heat of December was no time to be out looking for gold anyway, and with typical Bibbo luck all we found were old nails and such. We were rank amateurs and it took a long time even to get the metal detector to work. The next day Louis tried to show us how easy it was to pan gold in the river just behind the roadhouse. He had gold flakes that he had picked up over the years, and other residents came into the roadhouse with little nuggets. Some of these were made up into jewellery or just put in plastic phials for sale to tourists. We stood knee deep in the tepid water and panned . . . and panned, but no gold. But I did see gold before I left there. Louis led us to the Dianne copper mine that had ceased production years ago, and to the commercial gold mine at Four Mile Bend that had just been closed as no longer viable. Dianne was fascinating for the brilliant blue of the sulphates that coloured the ground, the rocks and the water. Prominent signs warned against drinking or bathing in the water that was quite poisonous.



Panning for gold with Louie Komsic, Palmer River, December 1988.

Four Mile Bend had only a resident caretaker and still had the office buildings, the living quarters and the mess hall along with all the heavy equipment, toolsheds and the stamping battery. This was a massive Heath-Robinson contraption that crushed the rock and filtered out the gold dust. There was gold in all the angles of the rollers, but not in a quantity that warranted the effort to extract it. Underneath the stamping battery was a pile of crushed dust that had accumulated over the life of the machinery, the tailings. We speculated on how much gold there must be in those tailings and I urged Len to put some of his spare time into working them. He never did, of course, but a policeman from Mt Molloy did, and cleared \$1000 before lunch. I expect that the caretaker, if he had any sense, was not sitting idle while he guarded the equipment and fittings in the idle mine.

The Land Rover Club had provided social and recreational activity for years and Robert had been both a club member and a committee member, with a Nissan MQ Patrol a bit newer than mine. It was initially an active club and had produced a quality off-road handbook called *Going Bush* that aroused considerable interest in the publishing world. Gregory's Scientific Publications

picked it up and published it as the *Four Wheel Drive Handbook*, paying royalties to the club and giving a percentage of free copies for distribution to the members. Organising and leading trips was always a responsibility most people avoided, and it fell to a few regular stalwart members to motivate the club. David Mitchell, Peter Mills and Robert led some of the better trips, though Kevin Savage provided the biggest short-term challenge. He took us on a one-day trip through the Brindabella Range on the Canberra horizon and led us to the top of a slope that was frightening. I did not have an inclinometer in the Nissan that Robert and I were sharing but, on subsequent experience, would put it at more than 30 degrees. The surface was loose shale, with a big earth obstruction about halfway down the slope of several hundred metres. Driving down reminded me of the time I walked out the back of the Caribou, but then I had a parachute on. I am sure that if the brakes had locked we would have continued under gravity and our own momentum. That sort of driving is good to look back on but frightening at the time.

Not all the club's activities were restricted to our enjoyment. We liaised with the local branch of the Emergency Services and the ACT Police in search and rescue operations, and provided transport annually over several years to take handicapped children from Cranleigh School on excursions to the snow. In 1988 I finally took on the job of secretary and produced the newsletter on a desk top publishing program that provided good practice in computer use. I was secretary for two years during which time Robert was treasurer and Barry got to be president. Unfortunately both Barry and I ran foul of a hardcore element in the club when we tried to reform the constitution to take more account of the club's actual performance and activities. At the annual general meeting of 1990 I resigned from both the position of secretary and from the club, and Barry resigned as president. Robert stayed on to become president in 1992.

In February 1989 I discovered Jervis Bay. David had friends down there who ran the restaurant and catered for the hotel, and he had been down there a few times before I went down with him once. We booked a holiday flat just back from the beach at Vincentia and enjoyed swimming in what must be one of the gems of the east coast. I was so impressed that I went back again and thought it would be a great place to retire to, and wanted to buy a place that was for sale up on the hill. When I looked at the reality though I had to concede that it was too isolated from the family, and I would be very much on my own without the frequent contact with family and friends that Canberra offered. Anyway Jervis Bay had been 'discovered' by a lot of other people in

the ceremonies for the bicentenary, and the price of land and houses was reflecting this.

I had not been to Ivy Simpson's funeral in June 1977 but I wanted to attend Jack's in 1989. Judith and I drove up in the Nissan, getting lost on the way when I tried to take short cuts along dirt roads, and spending the night with Elaine Mazzer in Lismore. Elaine fitted in on Celie's side of the family and I don't think I had seen her since before going over to Singapore with No. 1 Squadron. She looked after Judith and me and set us on the right road to Robyn Hyde's next day. Robyn and Kerry had a farm on the hills inland from Kingscliff where they raised draught horses, and six-year old Matthew rode a Honda trail bike. Celie and Colleen came up independently, and John and Shirley lived locally. Jack's esteem in the community was obvious from those who attended his funeral and the subsequent refreshments at John Simpson's in Currumbin. Jack left behind an extended family. On Celie's line there were six grandchildren; Colleen had three more, Garrie Cartaar, and Brett and Robyn Burnell; Shirley had three boys, Ronald, John and James, and a daughter Julie; John had a boy and a girl, William John and Lisa Kathrine; Robyn had two boys, Matthew and Christopher.

Judith and I started a more extensive trip in July 1989 when we headed off for central Australia, picking up Peter Polglase in Charleville with Judith's Mitsubishi Star Wagon that had been extensively modified for camping, with stove, fridge, double bed and foldout kitchen. Peter had been in Brisbane on duty and Charleville was the logical place to meet along the way. In all my years of flying over central Australia I had not gotten more than a few kilometres from Alice Springs on the ground, and had never had the fortune to land at Ayers Rock as some navigators had. This trip was designed to rectify that problem and was planned to include the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach, other central Australian features and the Eyre Peninsula of South Australia. We covered almost 9,500 kilometres over the next three weeks.

Leaving Canberra for Bourke on Saturday, 01 July, we drove through fog for hours and I appreciated the side benefits of air-conditioning. With the heating on to combat the midwinter cold of Canberra we also put the aircon on to dry out the atmosphere in the car and stop the fogging-up. In Nyngan our attention was taken by a small reserve and we had to stop to view and photograph the scene. It was a tableau of a farmer with his sheep, done in iron sheeting and gone rusty. The farmer, life size in a hat and holding a stick, is squatting with his dog, eying a dozen or so sheep grazing nearby. The sheep all

have white faces, and their legs are welded to the outside of their bodies giving them a slight three-dimensional form. In profile it is very effective. I had two tents, a pup tent for quick overnight stops and a more substantial, bigger tent for longer stays, and we put this one up in the caravan park in Bourke. The proprietor remarked that he hoped my wife and I enjoyed our overnight stay. The countryside up the Mitchell Highway out of Bourke was flooded and looked like tidal mud flats as we headed for the Queensland border and Cunnamulla. We knew instantly when we crossed the border because the road immediately deteriorated. There were some stretches that were being improved under the bicentennial scheme but the last 40 kilometres into Cunnamulla was just a single, tarred track. The Star Wagon was easily found in Charleville but it took us a lot longer to find Peter. We checked every pub that was open and even the RSL club. No Peter. So we shifted the Wagon to a spot more convenient to where we waited, and just waited for Peter to appear, which he did about an hour and a half later. He had been having a few quiet drinks in a closed pub waiting for us to arrive, supposedly watching the car, and got the shock of his life when he came out and found the car gone.

The expression 'beyond the black stump' to signify the outback apparently relates to Blackall according to a plaque in town. This is at the base of a sizeable stump set in concrete that is described as having been placed there in 1886, and being the Black Stump used for surveying purposes to correctly align the map of Queensland. We camped in Blackall where I paid my \$5 for a tent site and went for a shower in the foul smelling bore water. After the shower I found the lady camp manager waiting for me with a \$3 refund because I had 'such a small tent'. The three of us sat around dinner under the stars and watched a satellite go over. Dead kangaroos and wombats are the common carcasses along the roads on the eastern seaboard, but the bloated carcasses of dead beef cattle littered the roads in the interior. Many of these had been set alight by local authorities to hasten their disintegration. I contributed unintentionally to the slaughter of wildlife when I hit a eagle on the drive into Barcaldine, then hit two more birds in quick succession. The eagle had just risen off the ground at the side of the road and flew directly into the path of the car. After that hat trick I seemed to be immune from further bird strikes. At least bird strikes in a car did not carry the threat of damage and possible disaster they did to an aircraft. Barcaldine contributed significantly to Australia's history by being the town where the Australian Labor Party was born after a meeting of striking shearers in 1891. The tree under which they met is now the centre of a memorial to commemorate the event.

Longreach on the Landsborough Highway was our first point of real interest, and we had to stop at the sign marking the Tropic of Capricorn on the highway into town. Wine casks in Longreach were not the popular attraction they were in capital cities, and I think the drive-in bar we went to was glad to sell us theirs - 9 months old - for \$5. To get it they had to take us out of the bar, through the warehouse, to a storage room where they obviously confined the stuff they thought would never sell. There was nothing wrong with it either, and Peter and I enjoyed a glass or two on the Monday night while Judith enjoyed the Stones Green Ginger Wine that Peter had bought with the wine. The main attraction in Longreach, and our reason for going there, was the Stockman's Hall of Fame. Artist Hugh Sawrey first saw the vision for this repository of Australian outback culture. With the support of such other prominent people as stockman, R M Williams, it materialised over more than a decade of planning and construction to become the splendid edifice it is today. Its collection of art, relics, antiques, artefacts and memorabilia constitutes a tribute to the pioneers who built and developed Australia, and provides for the education and entertainment of Australians and overseas visitors. The building itself is imposing and the bronze statue of the horseman, saddle over right shoulder and harness in his left hand, dominates the forecourt. The presentations inside the hall are a tribute to their producers.



The Stockman's Hall of Fame, Longreach, Queensland, 1989.

Longreach is also honoured as the town where the airline Qantas was founded. Hudson Fysh and P J McGuinness saw the potential for an outback airline when they were surveying the Australian route for the London to Melbourne air race of 1919. Established on 16 November 1920 as the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Limited it grew into Australia's overseas airline, and one of the world's largest international airlines, carrying over 12 million passengers annually. Longreach seems to have become the holder of this honour through an act of nature rather than by design. Winton was the site for the first official meeting of the new airline, but floods prevented the second meeting from being held there, and from then on Longreach became the main operational base.

On the flat, featureless plains around Winton we found how the relative appreciation of 'distance' is dependent on circumstances. There are historic dinosaur tracks that the locals told us were 'just out of Winton' and we really should go and see them. 'Just out of Winton' was 110 kilometres, in the wrong direction, so we never did get to see the dinosaur tracks. History records that crocodiles lived in the swamps of central Australia up to one million years ago, and that giant herbivorous marsupials lived there until about 7,500 years ago. The effects of the previous rains were evident right out as far as Winton but

the temporary lush green vegetation faded before we got to Kynuna where the country was brown and dry and rivers were only dry, sandy beds. Stations out here depended on windmills to pump water from bores tapping into the great artesian basin, another reminder of how much we take for granted in serviced towns and cities. There is not a lot to attract the average tourist to the towns of central and western Queensland and most people would be content to leave the area well behind. To get to central Australia it is necessary to traverse it though, and we did this with as much grace as we could muster. Camooweal - don't blink or you'll miss it - is the last town on the east of the Northern Territory border, and it seemed that the wind was trying to relocate it further back into Queensland. The area was almost depressing in its sameness, and crowded with black kites that seem to abound throughout the hotter and drier regions of Australia, though we did not see any crows until the Northern Territory. Somewhere on the Barkly Highway, headed for Tennant Creek, we stopped for lunch that Peter made from fresh fruit salad and earned himself a few boy scout brownie points. Once in the Northern Territory the roads improved measurably, indicating the difference in funding applied by the various states or territories. With a 68% greater area and a significantly smaller population, the Northern Territory was obviously spending more per head of population than Queensland. Quality of the road aside, there are times when the Barkly Highway seems to be only a black line drawn on an otherwise featureless sheet, the country is so desolate.

The Stuart Highway must be the longest highway in Australia, stretching as it does from Darwin to Port Augusta, and is joined by the Barkly Highway from Mount Isa at the Three Ways Roadhouse 25 km north of Tennant Creek. Tennant Creek had developed considerably since my previous visit as a navigator and was an attractive modern town with full facilities. The caravan park was clean and green and had the best specimens of Sturt's Desert Pea we were to see. Recommended viewing in Tennant Creek included the Devils Pebbles at sunset, 17 km north of town. Capitalising on the name of the better-known Devils Marbles, these were also rounded boulders of weathered granite but much smaller and less spectacular. We were disappointed in the time we spent waiting for a spectacular display of colour. About 100 km south of town on our way out on Thursday morning we stopped at the Devils Marbles. These are rounded boulders piled high in jumbled masses on the flat plain that is now a scenic reserve surrounded by cattle pastures. Originally parts of a granite mass divided by fault lines, they have been weathered by the ages and become almost spherical. In some places the marbles are as big as

houses and are piled precariously one on top of the other. This is a popular short diversion off the main highway and was busy with tourist coaches but not crowded. Modern technology was showing itself along the edge of the highway with solar powered microwave repeater stations replacing the original overland telegraph line.

In Alice Springs we found the caravan parks fully booked and had to settle for a piece of grass directly outside the gents' toilet block, with the noise and constant traffic throughout the night. The town was busy with tourists but we joined the crowds in Coles for frozen barramundi that Peter's culinary skills made into dinner. Sight seeing, we visited the Panorama Guth that is a 360-degree painting of the world around Alice Springs. Not geographically true but artistically presented it is an optical illusion. Viewers stand on a raised platform in the centre of the circle, and have the impression of looking out over real country stretching to a distant horizon and featuring scenic points of central Australia. We were camped off the Ross Highway heading east out of town, so Friday was devoted to gorges and attractions this side of Alice Springs: Emily Gap, the nearest; Jessie Gap, only 19 km out, polluted and smelly but Judith liked it for all that, with its jagged white quartzite and red rock. Trephina gorge was populated with rock wallabies as the tourist brochures had promised, and almost luxuriant in wild flowers. We were lucky to have a lady ranger to guide us over a major part of the recommended walk. Trephina was full of surprises and we found a flock of wild duck on a pond where they were not the least concerned about our nearness. Arltunga, 120 km east and a lot further than we would have gone had we known, was the least attractive of all the attractions that day - desolate, isolated, dusty and unimpressive ruins of an early goldfield. There were mobs of wild donkeys roaming the countryside.

Saturday was more impressive with visits to the notable sites of Palm Valley, Simpson's Gap and the Telegraph Station. Rather than progressing out from town we decided to drive to the furthest destination first and work our way home. Palm Valley, in a gorge of the Finke River out past Hermannsburg Aboriginal settlement then along a 4 wheel drive track, was a place I had long wanted to see after all I had heard about it. The track south of Hermannsburg passes along the sandy bed of the Finke River before reaching the cliff-edged amphitheatre of Palm Valley. It is necessary to park here and walk upstream to the narrower gorge to appreciate the lush foliage of this oasis. The palm trees here (*Livistona mariae*) and a species of cycad known as *Macrozamia macdonnellii* are out of context and belong to a wetter climate. These, and some freshwater fish and aquatic insects living in permanent waterholes are relics of a much

wetter age. The palms, which grow to a height of 8 metres, are not found anywhere else in the region, and exist elsewhere only in patches on the northern portion of Australia's coastline. Besides the palms there are white eucalypts and other native trees whose colour contrast against the red walls makes superb photographic subjects. In fact, the whole verdant gorge with its rich colours under a brilliant blue sky with periodic bands of white stratus clouds was a natural studio.

The Alice Springs Telegraph Station was midway along the Overland Telegraph Line from Darwin to Adelaide and was opened in 1872. As the era's most intact Telegraph Station it forms an important element in the pioneering history of Australia's inland development and its contacts with the outside world, and is preserved and protected by the Conservation Commission. With its displays of old vehicles and household and technical implements it is well organised with information and facilities for tourists and we spent a profitable few hours there, returning to town through a fiery sunset.

Sunday was out to the west to Ormiston, Glen Helen and Serpentine Gorges, John Hayes Waterhole and Flynn's grave. These are all in easy reach within 150 km along Larapinta Drive, while Flynn's grave is close to town and marked by a Devils Marble. The Rev. John Flynn established the Australian Inland Mission, and had founded the Flying Doctor Service in 1927, bringing both radio and medical services to the outback. I later had photos of Simpson's Gap, and John Hayes Waterhole with Judith and Peter in the picture, enlarged to 50 x 75 cm and framed for hanging in the house. The erosion of rivers has formed all these spectacular gorges and creeks flowing through the parallel ridges of the MacDonnell Ranges and cutting away the softer rock.

Monday was a day of rest to catch up on a grease and oil change for the car while Judith and Peter went off on a balloon ride that thrilled the pair of them. They had to get up in the dark to go on this which meant we had most of the rest of the day free, and we moved on to Chambers Pillar for a sunset, overnight and sunrise. Chambers Pillar is on the edge of the Simpson Desert, 165 km south of Alice Springs through Maryvale Station, and is visited by tourist coaches as well as individuals. The coaches need to be suitable for the terrain as the last 44-km stage is definitely four-wheel drive over deeply rutted sand hills. At Maryvale we had been told that the Star Wagon would have no trouble in getting in to the pillar and we had driven off in convoy. Not too far down the track we found that the Wagon could not even get across the dry riverbed. I towed it out and we went back to Maryvale to load what we needed

into the Toyota, leaving the Wagon parked at the station. We were thankful for that riverbed because it would have been a lot further to retrace our steps from the sand hills. The Pillar is a 30-metre sandstone column standing on a 20-metre mound of rubble, and was used as a landmark by early explorers. Basically a red cap on a cream base, it is estimated to be around 350 million years old and to be part of the remains of an ancient plateau that has eroded away, leaving the pillar and other less notable features standing. It is spectacular in the sunset and at sunrise. The base of the pillar, up to about eye level, is pitted with holes like small caves that are probably indications of further erosion. The camping area is well served with bins, fireplaces and big wooden platforms that could be a dining table or a bed base. We sat around a good fire for as long as we could stand the cold, then Peter and I slept in my second tent while Judith did her best to sleep in the car. In our repacking at Maryvale we had somehow overlooked enough bedding to really make for a comfortable night.



Chambers Pillar, NT, 1989.

We came out of there on an isolated road to go to the Henbury meteorite craters just west of the Stuart highway and on to King's Canyon. The craters consist of three large and ten small ones formed by a shower of meteorites some 2000-3000 years ago. The largest is 183 m across and 12 m deep, while the smallest is about 6 m across. King's Canyon is a deep canyon with the walls rising to 270 metres in places, and ending abruptly in a semicircular precipice. Sections of the wall are spectacular sheer cliffs presenting a blaze of colour in patches, streaks and layers. Predominant colours are red, brown, orange, and

cream, with black and blue-grey in places. The fascinating rock formations, the maze of smaller canyons and the varied vegetation of trees, ferns and bushy wildflowers made it a major attraction. Tuesday was our first taste of rain and threatened to ruin our walk through the canyon, so we ignored the weather and went for the 3-hour walk around the rim of the canyon in cold, wet conditions. Judith took lunch as she generally did for our walks, and we ate it under an overhanging rock shelf. It was worth the effort even in the circumstances and warrants another visit. I will have to make another visit anyway, because in changing into wet-weather gear I left my spare film back at the car. It was too far to go back when I ran out of film in the camera after only two shots. Fortunately Peter had a fuller roll than mine and recorded a respectable series of photographs, but he too had to limit his shots to what was available in the camera. It was not necessary to come right back to the Stuart Highway to join the road to Ayers Rock, and we turned south near the Wallara Ranch Roadhouse to cut across to the Lasseter Highway.

Ayers Rock was not so spectacular at the sunset that we raced to catch after checking in to the Yulara Resort caravan park. There is a dedicated viewing area to observe the sunset that can be quite spectacular for the few minutes after the surrounding plains are in shadow, and the red rock glows as if on fire. Years ago there had been camping at the base of the rock itself but environmental concerns had closed that down. The Yulara Tourist Resort was a modern complex about 18 km north of Ayers Rock that offered first class accommodation as well as camping, and we had two unpowered sites. The Yulara Resort was well planned to blend into the environment and was not an eyesore on the countryside, and with the airport a further six kilometres north, the Rock and the Olgas were kept free of visual and noise pollution. Thursday dawned with a solid frost stiffening the walls of my tent and a fog that did not lift until 9.00 a.m., so we made that day for the Olgas. Nights were so cold throughout the trip that we generally went to bed early. We would cook in the fold-out kitchen of the Wagon and eat in the open or in the body of the Wagon. There wasn't much room there though because of the double bed, so usually Judith would end up on the bed and Peter and me in the centre of the Wagon. Most nights we would play cards or scrabble for a while or just socialise until bed time. The cold at Ayers Rock did not deter the little kangaroo mice. They were in force around the ground during the early night, always seeking the shadows and coming right under the chairs. They had very long tails, long ears, and legs like a kangaroo. While they never bothered me in my small tent with the zip done up, they got into Judith's bed, kitchen utensils

and food and had her up in the middle of the night. She wasn't very happy with them, and they left their droppings on her pillow throughout the night.

The Olgas are a group of 36 domes spread over 35 square kilometres of territory, and in many ways are more appealing than Ayers Rock. While they look similar they are geologically quite different in that Ayers Rock is a single sandstone monolith while the Olgas are conglomerate. Ayers Rock is, in fact, not a huge boulder but the tip of a massive sandstone hill buried under the earth and forming part of a vast sandstone mass underlying the surrounding plains. It measures about nine kilometres around the base and stands 348 metres above the ground. The Olgas, 40 km to the west of Ayers Rock, stretch about 7 km long by 5 km wide and present a fantastic silhouette of clustered domes. The highest of them, Mt Olga (546 m), is almost 200 metres taller than Ayers Rock and had been named by Ernest Giles after he first sighted them on 14 October 1872. Each dome of the Olgas is vertical around the base and hemispherical on top. They are separated from each other by deep ravines, but there are broad plains and valleys between some of the clusters of domes, providing for graded walks on marked tracks. The shaded gorges shelter plants that could not otherwise survive in the heat of the surrounding plains.

Friday was a better morning and we breakfasted at the base of Ayers Rock before joining the string of people making their way up the initial slope on the western face, with its chain fence to provide a purchase. As early as we were we met a man coming down as we went up, and he said that was twice he had climbed the rock that day. The climb is a 2-hour return journey, and I started doing some mental calculations on what time of the night he would have started when he finished his statement with, 'The first and the last!'. When I was on my way down too I knew what he meant. It was a strenuous climb that had me stopping frequently for a rest until I was over the lip and able to stand upright, but I was glad to see I was not the only one. The wind at the lip threatened to blow you backwards down the slope, and there was not much to hang on to in the last few steps. Simply getting over the lip was an obstacle that fazed many climbers who ended their climb right there. Scenery on top of the rock is ever changing, both in the view in different directions and in the surface of the rock itself, sometimes smooth, sometimes wavy, sometimes harsh and abrasive. Looking down over the parking area it was obvious where the old campground had been, though regeneration was rapidly restoring an original look to the environment. The top of the rock would be an easy place to get lost, and to keep tourists on the right track there are white lines painted to indicate the path and direction of travel. Some of the rockholes were filled

with an almost soupy, dark green water that had obviously stagnated for some time. There is a book at the top of the rock where climbers can sign their names, and we were the last three to get space in the current book.

Ayers Rock had been discovered by W C Gosse in 1873. In his report dated 1 February 1874 he writes:

Sir - I have the honour to enclose, for the information of the Honorable the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, diary and map of my exploration, also to report that leaving the Alice Springs, April 21st, with a party consisting of four white men, three Afghans, and a black boy, I travelled along the telegraph line to latitude 22° 28' S, about forty miles south of Central Mount Stuart.

From this point I followed the Reynolds Range about W.N.W., for forty-five miles; I was then obliged to turn S.W., passing a high bluff, piled by Major Warburton, and on the western extremity of the MacDonnell Ranges (Giles's Mount Liebig).

Here I was compelled to turn south, crossing Mr. Giles's track several times, the eastern arm of his Lake Amadeus, and on to a high hill, east of Mount Olga, which I named Ayers Rock (I have given a full account of this wonderful feature in my diary)...

His diary entry for his day of discovery reads:

Saturday, July 19. - Camp in spinifex sandhills. Barometer, 28.12 in.; wind, south-east. Continued same course, in direction of hill, over the same wretched country. The hill, as I approached, presented a most peculiar appearance, the upper portion being covered with holes or caves. When I got clear of the sandhills, and was only two miles distant, and the hill, for the first time, coming fairly in view, what was my astonishment to find it was one immense rock rising abruptly from the plain; the holes I had noticed were caused by the water in some places forming immense caves. At thirty-four miles reached foot of rock; only found enough water to replenish our bags, but none for the camels - they seem very thirsty, though only twenty-four hours since they had water. No sign of a creek on this (the north) side; the water runs into large shallow basins, about 100

yards from foot of rock. The good country extending for two miles round the rock. I have named this Ayers Rock, after Sir Henry Ayers.

Sir Henry Ayers was one-time Premier of South Australia. Gosse made his base camp at Ayers Rock, Depot No. 8, and did not finally depart from there until Friday, 8 August, when he moved to what he termed the Mount Olga Range. We left there on Friday, 14 July, after walking to some of the near scenic spots and driving around the perimeter of the rock. [Note: “Uluru / Ayers Rock” is the official name since 2002 under the Northern Territory Government’s dual naming policy.]



Climbing Uluru / Ayer's Rock, NT, 1989.

Down the highway to Marla overnight, an oasis in the wilderness on a relatively new highway. Major sections of the Stuart Highway had been realigned and resurfaced over the past five years, though the recent flooding rains had destroyed a section south of Marla, keeping tourists and supply trucks confined there until repairs had been effected. Marla had a good caravan park with motel, 24-hour bistro, and excellent facilities. But from there down to the opal town of Coober Pedy was into head winds that knocked the performance out of the diesel. I could not keep up with Judith in the Star

Wagon and my fuel consumption climbed in trying to. The area around Coober Pedy is dotted with stark white mullock heaps from the multitude of shafts that have been sunk in the search for opal. The town itself was barren, cold, windy and dusty. Its inhabitants are welcome to the town where everything of consequence is underground, but none the less attractive for being so. The Catholic Church was like a cool vault, and coolness is the driving force for putting accommodation underground. I asked the service station owner about rain and he showed me a grassy knoll, saying that it had been made possible because this year the town had received the equivalent of 16 years of average rainfall. Only 250 kilometres south of Coober Pedy we ran into continuous rain that prevented camping until we drove into Port Augusta. It had been a long day, with 800 kilometres on our odometers since leaving the comfort of Marla that morning. We stayed in a cabin in the Shoreline Caravan Park rather than try to set up an outdoor camp, and weren't long out of bed in the miserable and wet conditions that had been almost foreign to us in the Centre. The day had been so miserable we didn't even celebrate Peter's 40th birthday anniversary.

We were in Port Lincoln at the base of the Eyre Peninsula next day, Sunday 16 July. Peter had family here in an uncle on his father's side, and we stayed for three nights, taking in some of the local scenery as well as his uncle's hospitality with a sumptuous seafood dinner - fresh whiting and prawns. I don't know what Judith ate that night, because she doesn't like seafood. Port Lincoln is the home of a considerable fleet of fishing boats. The caravan park was almost empty and we had our choice of sites looking over Porter Bay and out into Spencer Gulf. There were two main events in our stay, Constantia and Whalers Way. Constantia was only an hour or so in a furniture factory, but it was no ordinary furniture factory. Here every piece of wood was individually selected for its task, and every piece of furniture was hand made to perfection. What was surprising was the artistry that emerged from slabs of wood or parts of trees that would not have warranted a second glance in their original state. Prices were commensurate with the time and skill that went into creating the furniture but customers waited world wide for their orders.

Whalers Way was a one day trip to the coast of Eyre Peninsula proper, a rugged promontory to the west of Sleaford Bay. Entry was strictly limited and it was necessary to obtain a \$10 permit and get a key into the area. Whalers Way has been developed as a flora and fauna reserve and was given the name because of the close association with whaling operations in Sleaford Bay from 1837 to 1841. Whales would be sighted from the prominent headlands in the

area, and boats would put out from Fishery Bay beach in Sleaford Bay to harpoon them. The whales were then towed to the whaling station on the northern shore of Fishery Bay where they were cut up and boiled down to produce valuable whale oil and whalebone. We saw a large fur seal colony that had based itself on the rocks at the base of the cliff at Cape Wiles, and green rock parrots as well as more common fauna in the reserve. And we kept well back from the no through road sign that indicated a sink hole in the road. In 1970, while the road was being constructed, the earth neatly sited in the middle of the road subsided. A cave 30 metres deep and 91 metres across was discovered under the sink hole. It remains dangerous and we weren't tempting fate. Unfortunately the area was windswept and miserable, discouraging a longer stay and more exploration.

We left Port Lincoln on Wednesday, 19 July, and came home through Wagga Wagga to call on Mary on the Friday night, arriving back in Canberra on Saturday with 9,365 km more on the odometer. That was the prelude to a round-Australia trip planned for April-June 1994.

I was further set to thinking about retirement and a convenient holiday home in December of 1989 when computer associate Baillie, from work, showed me an on site van with a solid annexe at another coastal attraction, Tuross Head. This was about seven metres long, fully furnished with its own shower and toilet and beds for five. Its layout was like a small house. The main sliding door opened to the lounge with lounge suite, TV and refrigerator. Behind the lounge through batwing doors was a bedroom with double bunks and a single bed. Up steps from the lounge was the kitchen and dining room in the front of the van, and behind that was a double bed with ensuite. There was ample storage space and more power points than enough. It came with a heavy outdoor picnic setting, and pot plants at the corners of the front awning. The Tuross Lake Caravan Park was privately owned and well maintained by Jan and Bob Dedman and only 190 kilometres from home, and the area was one of the most attractive and unspoiled within easy reach of Canberra. The road out to Tuross Head from the Pacific Highway was a scenic few kilometres with Tuross Lake on the south and Coila Lake on the north. Tuross was open to the sea with the Tuross River flowing through it. Coila was normally closed, and only opened its big sandbar with rough, stormy weather or when the council dug a channel to refresh it.

I bought the caravan from Bob Tyrrell for \$12,500 and hoped to use it for my own irregular breaks on shift work as well as for family holidays during school

breaks. I went down on my own besides using it as a fishing base with Barry Runnstrom a couple of times, and all the family except Andrew got to enjoy its facilities. David and Cheryl used it most from the family because they spent their holidays there with Brendan. When Shirley Simpson came down to visit Celie in October 1991 we all went down there for a night and two days of sightseeing. I did enjoy going down there for the peace and quiet it offered, and to be able to walk the beach and the sand dunes. Baillie had the caravan on one side of me and was an avid fisherman with his own boat. He kept fisherman's hours by getting up before dawn to go out and catch a few flathead or bream, and going out in the dead of night to catch prawns in Coila Lake. Les Rolles had the caravan on the other side and lived there permanently as a retiree. He was very pleasant company and looked after my van when I was away. Les would mow the grass close to and under the van where the tractor of Bob's didn't reach, and trimmed and watered the plants in the two big pots. He also had his own little vegetable patch and was always generous with excess produce. Unfortunately the rates went up in August 1990 from \$143 a quarter to \$158, and in July 1991 jumped to \$250. It was then costing me more just to own the van than it was to live in my own home, and combined usage was less than 32 days a year. So I put it up for sale in late 1992 and finally sold it in February 1993 for \$11,500. Not one of my wiser investments but I did spend some enjoyable times down there.

Len came down on 11 July 1990 and I was on the road to Melbourne yet again. This was to Wagga Wagga next day, almost my second home, for an overnight stay with Mary & George; Mary with her cats, and George with his bonsais. I like cats as long as they are someone else's and don't come into my home, leaving their fur everywhere, and Mary's cats are delightfully friendly, clean and well behaved. They have become companions for Mary and George as the family grew up and moved out, and those that died were always buried with dignity. All of Mary's children have the same love of cats that must have been instilled in them as they grew up. Mary's current family of cats is: Tobermorey 'Toby', a large ginger and white cat; Sebastian 'Bassy', a Russian Blue; Willy Wagtail 'Willy', a black and white moggie; and Chloe, a British Short-haired Blue. George must have hundreds of bonsais that are the envy of experts and is an acknowledged authority on their cultivation. He has been working with bonsais for 26 or 27 years and says it is impossible to estimate the age of bonsais without a positive knowledge of their history. His positively known oldest is a wisteria that still flowers yearly and coincides with my age, having sprouted in 1933. He always had a way with plants, and I associate him

with gladioli bulbs in the days when he was courting Mary at Galway Street. Gladioli bulbs and cricket. When he married Mary they had a share farm outside Stanthorpe for a while, near where his mother had an orchard.

After Wagga Wagga it was on to John and Betty's on Friday night. With John's influence in Ansett it was no trouble to get into the A320 Airbus simulator at Tullamarine on Saturday. This was quite an eye-opener for me. With its 'glass cockpit' in which the traditional instruments I was familiar with are replaced with multi-colour electronic presentations on computer screens, and steering is by joystick rather than a steering wheel on a control column; where the control surfaces are controlled electronically - fly by wire - rather than by braided steel cable; and where computers control the attitude and altitude of the aircraft, making it virtually impossible to crash, the aircraft was plainly in a different generation from those I had flown in. I was allowed to fly the A320, tried unsuccessfully to crash it - the computers would not let me - and landed on the runway only to run off on the grass. The view through the windscreen was a realistic presentation of the Melbourne area by night and thoroughly convincing. Cockpit sounds and feel were authentic. It must be the ultimate computer arcade game.

Overnight Sunday was with Pat and Carol. I remember how I used to put on slide shows in my home and those of friends when I came back from Singapore with hundreds of colour slides of different cultures and their artefacts and activities, and I suppose not everyone in the audience enjoyed them all. The modern equivalent is the video camera, and Pat and Carol are much travelled, compliments of the discount fares granted to employees by airlines. So Len and I were treated to a considerable session of what must have marvellous family relevance but left us a little jaded. But with family and close friends we have to take the good with the bad and be complimentary. We were to cover most of the east coast of Australia on this trip because from Melbourne we came through Canberra, and then continued on to Tony's and Bernard's where we stayed until Sunday 22. Len had not stayed long at Tony's on the way down as was customary, and we wanted to see him on the way north and also pick up Len's car for the drive back. Len had come down from Brisbane by coach and we had used my car for all the southern travel. I was combining my leave with Len's to make my regular pilgrimage to north Queensland.

Murgon is a small Queensland town tucked away north of Kingaroy and west of Gympie, and Ursula had been there for years, probably since she was

married in 1967, with husband Doctor Giuseppe 'Joe' Gangemi. It wasn't a place I got to very often, though when I drove to the north instead of coaching or flying I generally stayed at least overnight. Len and I only stayed overnight because he was running out of leave by now. It is 1700 kilometres from Brisbane to Cairns and around 1550 from Murgon. While we had intended stopping somewhere overnight we lost our resolve somewhere along the way. So we drove continuously in shifts, only an hour at a time after about midnight, until we reached Cairns at 4.45 a.m. on Tuesday and fell into bed for a good rest.

Len's home unit is in the base of a U-shaped building embracing an open courtyard and small swimming pool. The pool is just outside Len's door, which is not always convenient considering the hours and activities it attracts. The ground floor of the unit is a lounge and small kitchen-dining room. Chaotic would be the euphemistic way of describing the arrangement of furniture, books, utensils, camping gear and whatnot that contribute to Len's existence and comfort. A stairway leads up to the bathroom-toilet and two bedrooms. Both bedrooms have air-conditioners that barely work, and both display the same order of chaos found downstairs. But better the friendly chaos than some sterile order discouraging use.

Most of my trips to Cairns and out with Len were hectic because there was never enough time to do all we wanted to do, and distances were an obstacle. On this trip though I was able to get north to see Snow, Valda and Kellie Evans at Bamboo Station outside Musgrave, which is inland from Princess Charlotte Bay. I'd been going there periodically since 1981 when Kellie was only a four-year old and already developing a colourful vocabulary. She was now a charming 13-year old and home from boarding school for a midterm break. My last visit here had been in 1987 in an epic adventure I have written as a separate chapter, but the years didn't seem to make a lot of difference. I was as welcome as if I had just dropped in from a neighbouring station. The fact that Len maintained continuity with his visits in the dry season, saying Mass and spending time to keep the faith alive, was almost certainly the catalyst that condensed the intervening years. Had I not been his brother I would hardly have been accepted so readily by the people of north Queensland. Mickey Bibbo, the galah that walked everywhere rather than fly, was three years older than I had last seen him and as cheeky as ever. Mickey had reputedly bitten the Bishop on a very tender appendage as he climbed the Bishop's trouser leg during Len's introductory tour with the Bishop to his distant flock.

Distances in so sparsely populated a country as Australia exist only to be challenged, and no more so than in north Queensland. So driving about 600 kilometres, through Mareeba - almost back to Cairns - and out west through Chillagoe to Wrotham Park Station was normal for Len to make his next visit. I spent a couple of interesting days at Wrotham Park with the Arnolds, David and Tessa who managed the place, and the Hardys, Dick and Kathy, who worked there. In 1987 I had driven past the homestead on the way to the Gulf of Carpentaria but we had not stopped. Country people have not totally adopted the decimal measures for their properties, and Tessa told me that the area of Wrotham Park was 2,500 square miles (1.6 million acres) running 24,000 head of cattle. Only a young couple, David and Tessa had four delightful girls, Kimberley, Jessica, Hannah and Rachael whom Father Len spoiled with bags of sweets and small toys and trinkets on his visits. Frank, the dog, was a big, friendly, mostly black canine that could be relied on to look after the children, and welcomed as much attention as could be lavished on him. Wrotham Park homestead was a substantial two-storey house set among superb old mango trees and a variety of well-tended greenery; and a full-time gardener grew vegetables in a greenhouse made of synthetic cloth. There were adjacent buildings for ringers' quarters and houses for other permanent staff. Len and I shared an air-conditioned motel-style room in a unit of three. It had an air of established permanence and substance denied some of the more isolated homesteads. The bougainvillea was a blaze of colour in whites, yellows and pinks that seem to be nature's reward for isolation in the outback.



Wrotham Park Homestead, Queensland, July 1990.

Dick Hardy was the resident mechanic and Kathy did the bookkeeping. They also had four children, Tracey, Paula, Michael and Phillip, and lived in one of the houses adjoining the main two-storey homestead. Helicopters were used for mustering, and the property had its own dirt airstrip. This was a vastly different lifestyle from that enjoyed by Snow and Valda and was cattle management on a large scale. Whereas Snow did most of his mustering on horseback, and stations up there pooled their manpower to cover vast areas of the peninsula, taking men away from their homes for weeks on end, the helicopter was predominant here. Fitted with GPS (Global Positioning System) receivers the helicopters could roam freely over the countryside and, at the touch of a button, the pilot knew where he was in relation to his base and any outstations, and which direction to fly to anywhere he wanted to go. Operation Desert Storm to free Iraqi occupied Kuwait in January 1991 had promoted this satellite technology and civilian use was set to outstrip military use, opening up ventures undreamed of only a few years earlier. There were two helicopters in use on Wrotham Park, a Hughes and a Robinson, and the two makes were prominent over north Queensland though not with the same

popularity, as the Robinson seemed to be involved in more crashes and was regarded by some pilots as a death trap.

I was immediately at home with both families and have enjoyed their hospitality again since then. The children attended the School of Distance Education and communicated with their teachers over the radio. This must be more demanding and more disciplined than regular schooling, but I think it has the capacity to produce better students because there are not the distractions and rogue influences of large school communities in the towns and cities. Masses in the big dining room were accorded the respect of dressing up for the occasion, and the children vied for the privilege of blowing out the candles after the service.

No visit to Cairns would be complete without some contact with Louis Komsic and his wife, Luba, who had previously owned the Palmer River Roadhouse and now had a house in Gordonvale, south of Cairns. So we had to leave Wrotham Park for the half-day drive back to Cairns and dinner with the Komsics before I caught the coach back to Brisbane to pick up my car for the drive back to Canberra.

With the flexibility that my job provided for leave I was back in Brisbane on 10 October 1990, staying with Tony and Val as usual. Their eldest daughter, Karen, had a party to mark her engagement to Mark Leahy, at an outdoor function at Steve's on Saturday 13, and Ursula's daughter, Maria Gangemi was being married to Paul Gould on Saturday 20. This was obviously an occasion for a real family reunion. Stephen Bibo was Tony's eldest son and first born in the family. A successful pharmacist, he owned a beautiful home on a large allotment in Greenbank. In 1981 Steve had married Lilian McEntegart in Drogheda, Ireland, and brought her back to Australia to charm all his relatives and win her father-in-law's heart. With a couple of tents and a few Weber barbecues plus a crowd of people the engagement party was a real social occasion. Steve is an excellent cook and produced some magnificent roasts out of those Webers. He had a lot of helpers though, not to deny the ladies their contribution.

Maria and Paul were married on Saturday 20 October 1990 and had a reception fitting the large Italian complement from Joe's side and the Bibo clan from Ursula's side. Sunday was reserved for a full family reunion, and we moved down to a park on the banks of the Brisbane River, probably New Farm Park. Everyone was there except Pat who was caught up in Melbourne and Leo over in Canada. Betty and John had to forego another wedding in

Melbourne to come to Brisbane and we appreciated this contribution to family unity. There was plenty of room to move, including the ferry that plied that section of the Brisbane River that some of us took a ride on, and playgrounds ideally suited to the younger children. This was obviously a more joyous occasion than others that had called family reunions in Brisbane in past years. I was back home from that on 24 October.

August 1991 produced one of the most interesting of my sojourns in north Queensland. With a third airline, Compass, trying to establish itself in the Australian internal network, fares were competitive and had to be considered against coach fares. Possibly because I spent so much of my professional time in aircraft I actually enjoyed travelling by coach. The attraction was more than just the relatively cheap fares. I had no trouble sleeping in coach seats and enjoyed sleeping, reading, listening to cassette tapes or simply watching the scenery while someone else did the driving. The few horrendous coach smashes of the late 80s and early 90s did not deter me as they had to be seen in terms of the passenger-miles covered by coaches in Australia. The risk of being involved was statistically low. But I opted to take advantage of the cheap airfares this time, flying return from Brisbane to Cairns and driving between Canberra and Brisbane. Uralla was my overnight stop on 3 August on the way to Brisbane and I slept in an onsite van, leaving early next morning with a temperature of minus four. It was hard to make the distance between the van and the shower block before I left.

I had a day in Brisbane before flying on to Cairns and, courtesy of Kathryn Stirzaker who had contacts in the trade; I had a return pass to use Ansett's Golden Wing facilities. This meant I didn't have to queue for seat allocation, my luggage received priority handling, and I had access to the Golden Wing Lounge with its coffee and toast facilities plus faxes and business utilities I was not interested in. This time from Cairns we headed west to make Chillagoe and Wrotham Park our first stops. Tess Arnold's parents, Don and Sylvia Cockburn, lived in Chillagoe and we usually called on them. They were part of Len's extended family too. With Len's connivance Sylvia had tentatively arranged for me to look at computer equipment lying idle at the Chillagoe state school. Very active in local affairs Sylvia was also a competent painter, and she was finishing one including horses that reflected the authenticity of her background. Chillagoe had been a gold, copper, and silver-lead mining town and was 130 kilometres west of Cairns on the Burke Development Road on the dry, western edge of the Atherton Tableland. It was now the centre of extensive marble mining and an access point to a limestone cave system.

Len had accepted my interest in computers - we had a parallel development through Tandy and into MS-DOS machines - and had 'volunteered' my services to examine the mixture of MS-DOS and Apple machines that the school had inherited and which nobody knew how to use. We took a half-day break from Wrotham Park to go back to Chillagoe where I sorted out the various disks and software for the two incompatible machine types. I have no knowledge of Apple computers whatsoever but I was able to set up the MS-DOS machines, desktops and laptops, with recommended integrated software produced by the Education Department and other commercial programs in the school library. I think my visit helped to carry the school through till the Education Department was able to provide their own trained staff to get the school running properly.

In Wrotham Park Tracey had a computer that she was easily mastering, and Kathy wanted to use it for calculating the weekly payslips covering a variety of awards and working hours. Fortunately I was able to make myself useful here instead of just freeloading on my hosts, and I left a spreadsheet running under Microsoft Works that took most of the manual work out of the pay calculations and could be used to print payslips. I was rewarded for this by being taken for a ride on a friendly horse by Dick Hardy after he finished work for the day. The last time I could remember being on a horse was back in the early 50s at The Pines, and I was the odd man out. Tracey Hardy rode well, Dick helped with the mustering when he wasn't working on cars or engines, and Len had kept his own horse when he was based at Cooktown. I survived.

Rutland Plains is located on the western side of Cape York Peninsula at about the same latitude as Cooktown. In 1987 I had been hopelessly bogged in the Mitchell river on the road to Rutland Plains from Wrotham Park and recalled it as we closed the gates of Wrotham Park behind us. There is a genuine network of roads in this part of the country to support the cattle trains and provide a basic infrastructure for the scattered inhabitants, but the condition of the road surface varies considerably from time to time. We were lucky, with extensive roadworks currently under way, and long stretches of the road were the best Len had ever seen them. My stretch of the Mitchell was no longer in use as a crossing and we crossed easily and safely further downstream to pick up what was more of a track than a road. Maps can be misleading up here, showing tracks that no longer exist and omitting some prominently worn into the landscape. Common sense, native cunning and local knowledge are the secrets to success and survival, and Len has had to exercise all of those to a fine degree in his years of pastoral travel. My navigation skills were expressly

confined to the flight decks of aircraft and I am the first to admit my limitations on the ground. So, after we crossed the Mitchell we drove around in a circle till we found out where we were. Len's Toyota has two fuel tanks and he carries food and water for survival. We got to Rutland Plains without incident.

Two nights there, 13 and 14 August, and we were moving on to Kowanyama, the Aboriginal Community, where Len said Mass in the new motel that had been built since my 1987 visit. It would not rate many stars on the east coast rating scheme but it offered the tourist a comfortable measure of amenities. It was about 10.00 a.m. when we left Kowanyama for what should have been a call on a local station - I think it was Battle Creek - and then a straight forward drive back east. The countryside was deceptive, even to Len, and the promised station never appeared. After we had obviously gone more hours and far more kilometres than would have taken us there we had to admit defeat. This was not good for Len because on his previous crossing of this part of the country he had been lost for hours, and had barely made the main Peninsula Development Road - the northern highway - when his radiator collapsed and made his car useless. He'd had the car trucked back to Cairns for repairs and this was its first time back in the same country. Local features did not help us to identify our location on the map and when we came to a T intersection we made the decision to proceed in a generally northeasterly direction whenever we were confronted with choices. That way we must eventually meet the Peninsula Development Road. Periodically Len thought he recognised landmarks from his lost journey, and when we back plotted our travels he was right. For eight hours of driving we saw absolutely no signs of human life or habitation and we were glad when we eventually met a Toyota from Dixie station. The Lady at Dixie was waiting in the front yard when we pulled in, expecting us. The bush telegraph had been working and people knew that we had not been to Battle Creek, even though this visit was to have been Len's initiative and had not been formally arranged. There are hazards for the outsider in driving outback in north Queensland, but the community looks after its own and I don't believe Len would be missing for long if he had an accident or breakdown. Anyway he has his radio that works most of the time.

Merv and Irene Williams had sold their general store in Coen after being local identities for many years and were moving to Gympie to retire. Friday 16 August had been chosen for a barbecue and send-off at the Exchange Hotel and Len and I were invited. Irene's mother, Irene Taylor, still ran the Homestead Guesthouse in Coen and gave Len and me rooms for the night as

she had done in the past. She was a grand, intrepid old lady and always looked after us in Coen. A couple of years earlier she had driven a 4WD to the top of Cape York with a few of her lady friends around the same age. I had never imagined that it could get cold that far north in Queensland, but I had to put a nylon jacket on that night to stay warm. It wasn't just my Canberra acclimatisation coming out either because most of the locals had warm jackets on too.

Ever on the move, Saturday night was back at Bamboo with Valda and Snow then on Sunday out to Marina Plains at the mouth of the North Kennedy River on the shore of Princess Charlotte Bay. Louis Komsic had tried to establish a tourist lodge, but was facing severe opposition from the Queensland Government who wanted to resume his land that was inside Lakefield National Park. The present state of the building was chaotic, but it had a shower and toilet, electricity and refrigerator, a bedroom or two, cooking facilities, a caretaker, Louis, and his pet pig that kept getting underfoot. It was also well stocked with cans of beer and fillets of barramundi. Louis and his brother, Walter, had a commercial fishing licence and Louis was rarely short of barra. Every meal there was based on freshly grilled barramundi fillets, and I remembered the Hercules days and the fillets from Darwin. I slept on a slab of foam rubber on the cement floor of the breezeway connecting the two parts of the lodge, but that was only after a most unexpected encounter.

Louis was involved in the production of a film on sharks and crocodiles and had been chosen for his knowledge by the Deep Probe film team. They had a luxurious diving launch anchored off Louie's fishing camp that was separate from the lodge and quite some kilometres away across featureless grass plains. Andrew and Liz Wight from Osford Film Productions in Sydney were the producers, and they had a brash Texan director and Japanese finance. This was one of a series of three water-based nature films being produced in different world locations. In midafternoon the film team arrived in a Nissan 4WD at Louie's lodge, to interview him and hopefully get a good shot of a sunset. They had already completed shooting the crocodile segments and the boat was leaving for the Great Barrier Reef next morning to shoot the shark sequences. Both Len and I figured in the film listening to Louie expound his knowledge of crocodiles but otherwise we were not involved. With the interview over and daylight soon to end the team wanted to shoot a sunset. In two 4WDs we drove to a nearby lagoon with only minutes to spare. The sun turned a brilliant red and set behind a parade of stark trees. Louis fired his shotgun to arouse the birdlife on the lagoon and they flew directly across the setting sun. Money

could not have bought the setting, the colour and the cooperation for the filming of such a spectacular sunset. But I saw all of that on screen later that night. While it was all happening in real time I was racing darkness in changing a flat front wheel on the film vehicle. It had developed a puncture just as we stopped on the mud flats bordering the lagoon.

My efforts with the flat tyre were rewarded when Len and I were invited to have dinner on board the Divemaster that night. It was a first class meal prepared by Liz Wight's sister who was contract chef for the party, and accompanied by beer, wine and spirits, lots of interesting conversation, and showing of clips from the film under production. It was all done on tape, so there were no delays for processing. During the night Andrew Wight wondered how he was going to get his long wheelbase Nissan 4WD back to Port Douglas. With the boat leaving the next morning he was considering leaving the car at Marina Plains and arranging for a driver to fly up from Port Douglas to get it. Louie promptly volunteered me to drive it back, and that is what happened. It had been hard enough finding the way from the lodge to the coast, but the return journey after a good dinner, across featureless plains in pitch darkness was next to impossible, but we made it to the cement floor - Len in his professional swag and me on the foam rubber.

RAD-272 was a long wheelbase Nissan Patrol with car phone, CB radio, rifle, jerrycans and scuba gear. It was an interesting car to drive but I would never want to own one. Much of the road home was 4WD because of corrugations, gravel or deep bulldust, and with Len's itinerary it took four days to get to Port Douglas. I have found that road conditions and air-conditioning do not materially affect fuel consumption on my diesel Toyota, but this may not be the case with the petrol Nissan with a bigger engine. Anyway it was a very thirsty vehicle and I just kept feeding it from the \$150 fuel money Andrew had given me. When I got to Port Douglas I filled his three jerrycans and had forty dollars left. So that took Len and me to the Habitat enclosed nature park that is a tourist attraction of the Port, before we went home to Cairns in Len's car. The three nights on the road were spent at the Hann River Roadhouse, the Swiss Family Farm at Lakeland, and the Palmer River Roadhouse. The Hann River Roadhouse was on land excised from Kalinga Station and was being run by Greg and Gail Turner. This was another of Len's regular ports of call and I was always made welcome here with him. The roadhouse was smaller and less pretentious than Palmer River, but a lot further from civilisation too. It provided facilities for passers-by as well as having a small camping ground, and was clean and attractive. Len and I slept in a large caravan under its own

corrugated iron roof as protection from the elements. Isolated by distance but not by knowledge, the folk at Hann River could expound seriously on economic and political matters from a layman's point of view.

Peter and Frances Inderbitzin at Lakeland have built a distinctive home on their farm where they produce seeds, hay and nuts. The house is built from the rocks gathered in clearing the land. It has massively thick walls and an extensively overhanging roof to provide shade. The interior is open plan from the kitchen through the lounge and dining room, but with walls on the bedrooms. The bathroom is interesting with its full-length glass walls providing an unobstructed view of the world outside. Len and I slept in the attached guest area with conventional construction.

The Palmer River Roadhouse does not have the same atmosphere since Louis Komsic left it, but I could not complain about the hospitality provided by Frank and Alana Witt who were managing it. Alana was the daughter of Bill Cross who owned the store in Laura.

On Saturday 24 August we were able to give Luba a first hand account of the situation at Marina Plains, though she was in regular contact with Louis by phone. Dinner at Luba's was enhanced by the presence of her son, Stewart, and daughter, Kim. And Kellie Evans. Kim and Kellie had been friends since childhood.

Whenever possible Len and I had called on Mick and Thelma Barrett in Cairns. Years ago they had a soft drink factory right on the Esplanade in Cairns or else just back one street in Abbott Street, before the city got its growing pains. Now retired, Mick lived with his son, Brian, in a suburban house in Manunda, and Thelma had died in September 1985. Thelma was in the Hunter line that had produced my maternal grandmother who married Herbert Westerman. Mick had started me off in genealogy with a handwritten family tree of that side of the family, and it was essentially due to him that we now know as much of our own family as we do. Without his initial information I may never have started. (Mick died of cancer on 21 October 1992 at the age of 82). My son Robert has since taken responsibility for genealogy research and some of the early history can be found at www.robertbibo.id.au.

Monday 26 was back to Brisbane for a few days with Tony and Val and a visit to Bribie Island, which I had not seen since adolescence and which was now connected to the mainland by a bridge. Only a small section of the island was developed, but very tastefully, and I can understand the appeal it has for the

residents and their opposition to large-scale development. Even though Bernard had a house in Brisbane he had not picked up much of the passing Bibbo trade over the years. We tended to concentrate on Tony's, familiar to us as it had been there since Tony and Val got married in 1955, whereas Bernard had lived in and out of Brisbane at various addresses and was now living in Wavell heights, on the northern side of town and a long way from the south-east corner of our childhood. I spent a couple of days with him before driving back to Canberra on the Saturday. Both Tony and Bernard were always generous with their time, and Bernard's favourite contribution to our stopover in town was a counter lunch followed by an illicit ice cream from a McDonalds restaurant in a Brisbane mall. He wasn't supposed to eat ice creams.

As I am writing this it is becoming increasingly apparent that I had not settled into any sedentary routine after ceasing to fly. While there was no conscious appreciation of it at the time I seem to have been frequently on the move. How do people exist who only take holidays once a year? Family ties are very strong, perhaps more so since my divorce and the freedom of movement that gives a single partner, and in April-May of 1992 I was back in Brisbane. Tony and Val were living at Steve's for several weeks around this time because Lilian was recuperating from an operation. With four lively children she needed constant support while Steve worked in his pharmacy. Sinead was a nine-year old Irish angel; Liam a six-year old red-headed Irish leprechaun with more energy than any three adults; Anne at three and Daniel at one were just delightful little children needing attention. So I bunked in at Steve's on a sofa bed for a few days. Steve again proved his competence as a cook, and we enjoyed good food and fine wine along with the comfortable family atmosphere.

It was also an opportunity to catch up with other Brisbane friends and I spent three days with Lois and her husband, John. Lois was the only female member of my team and had worked with me for eighteen months until June 1989. She had been excellent company for us all and a good social member. When she left we gave her a pewter wine goblet instead of a beer mug. We were all sorry to see her go. I had not seen Alan and Jacqui Hedges since they stopped over in November 1984 on the way from Sale to Brisbane to collect Lisa from boarding school, but we had always traded Christmas cards so I had a current address. Alan had retired from the RAAF and bought a house in Burleigh Waters on the Gold Coast, working now as an engineer for Parkinson's Technical Services. Lois and I went down on the Sunday to find that Alan had not lost any of his barbecue skills he must have honed in Darwin. Even

though we did have to put up a beach umbrella to cook the fish in the rain we had a good day, and a couple of days later I was back to spend three days there renewing old friendships and catching up on the intervening years. The Gold Coast had developed almost beyond recognition since Pat had his cafe there in 1958, and even though I had visited parts of it since then I was not prepared for the extent of the development that included the Bond University and massive apartment blocks.

Taking advantage of the second family connection I stayed with Bernard and Carmel in Wavell Heights on the way home, which had the additional convenience of being close to where Michelle Warner was staying for a few months. Lost track of since the School of Languages reunion in 1983 - to which she had not come, but we had spoken to her by phone in Ballarat hospital where she was nursing - Michelle reappeared in Rockhampton in early 1992 and spoke to Peter Evans. We had been in phone contact a couple of times since then and it was coincidental that she was going to be in Brisbane at the same time that I was. Now a skilled theatre sister Michelle was also into herbal medicine, faith healing and oriental religion. She was certainly interesting company with a fund of experience since she had been such a naive student of mine twenty-nine years earlier, although we did not have a lot in common. With friends of Bernard's we made a sixsome to go to the Twin Towns Club at Tweed Heads to a dinner and concert by Susanne Clachair that proved to be an enjoyable night. We didn't have to drive because the package included coach travel from Brisbane and return. And the coach stopped right outside Bernard's gate.

That was May, and three months later I was back again. Ursula and Joe had taken a holiday to Canada with Joe's mother and had generously taken Len. Len's pay as a priest was pitiful and was so little that the Commonwealth Bank would not even give him a MasterCard. Also he had never been outside Australia in all his 63 years, unless you count Thursday Island. He appreciated the opportunity to go and see Leo, married to Sue and living in New Westminster on the west coast. Leo had been home a couple of times over the years and had brought Sue over to meet his family. Tony and Pat had both been over to see him in Canada, but there could not be the same intimate contact enjoyed by those of us all living here in relatively close proximity. Len was arriving back in Brisbane on 12 August and I arranged to be at Tony's to drive up to Cairns with him in his new Toyota Land Cruiser tray top. At long last he had a car with air-conditioning and a decent cover over the back that kept most of the dust out. We didn't try to repeat our previous drive up here

and stopped in Rockhampton for a proper night's sleep this time. And that had its repercussions.

Len is always losing things. He can lose information and items in his own home unit moments after using them, and they never reappear. He keeps track of information in any one of three computers - a Toshiba T2100, a Sharp Organiser and a HP palmtop computer. But sometimes he can't remember where to look for the information. For years now Len has said he has Alzheimers disease, which is not a joking matter, but I think it is just old age and stress taking its toll. I was recently told that it is no longer called Alzheimers anyway, it is called Craft, for Can't Remember A Flaming Thing. When we unpacked in Cairns Len couldn't find the wallet with his money he had left over from Canada, virtually his life savings. It was lost between Brisbane and Cairns. So we reported to the police, but they were not interested in lost property and we had to declare it 'lost or stolen'. About four o'clock a few mornings later, at Wrotham Park, Len woke up muttering and angry and we had to get up for our morning walk. We always went for a walk before breakfast as part of a fitness program, but not that early. Len had remembered leaving the wallet under his pillow, so the cleaning staff at the motel had obviously stolen it. When we got back to Cairns we reported this to the police and they said they would follow it up. In Brisbane on the way home I found the wallet in the glove box of my car, leaving a very embarrassed Len to tell the police that his wallet had not been stolen but that his 'brother had convinced him he still had it after leaving the motel'. He really does have problems with losing things though.

On the way back through Brisbane I picked up a camper trailer that I had ordered built after my previous visit. Steve Bibb and I bought nearly identical Aussie Swag campers in anticipation of some good camping in years to come. I'd had enough of towing big vans around and wanted something more substantial than a tent, and these campers looked like being the answer. We planned to go as a group to Longreach to see the Stockman's Hall of Fame in the September school holidays of 1993, and saved \$300 by buying our trailers now instead of waiting until closer to that time. There was a special offer on as part of an exhibition. I was back home by 30 August to start work in my new job.

This required that I requalify as an Indonesian linguist as I could not be employed on any official translation and interpretation work until I had the blessing of an appropriate authority and its formal certificate. The easiest

solution to this problem was to do an Indonesian Refresher Course at the RAAF School of Languages, and this was arranged for late September. I was accepted for number 4/92 course from 28 September to 9 October 1992, and had to put in a lot of time before then in studying the language that had developed considerably since my last official use of it twenty years earlier. Physically the School had not changed much but techniques and material were new, Albert Tan was still the only instructor from my time there, and the language laboratory had new equipment. Accommodation was in the Officers' Mess and I had a complete two-storey block to myself. Meals and facilities in the mess were as good as a first class motel and were to cost me only \$10 for the two weeks. A nominal sum for students. My previous history with the School saved the Organization from any fees for the course, though this was quite unofficial. I found that the term 'Refresher Course' was inaccurate. It was, in fact, a requalifying course in which the first week's lessons were an introduction to the equipment, materials and examination methods that would be used in the second week. This second week was almost entirely exams and administration. I would have been proud had I been Lecturer-in-Charge of that teaching team, and was impressed with their competence and dedication. With their help and a lot of hard work I requalified with respectable results after my long absence from the language.

Regular annual pay rises on 29 October, the anniversary of my joining ASIO, meant that my gross income was increasing comfortably and so was my tax. By 1990 my salary had increased from \$14052 on employment to become \$35498 - more than twice my total income in 1979. So I went back to a consultant, one recommended by Paul and since adopted by more of the family. Instead of getting a refund over the past decade or so I had been paying the tax office at the end of every year. Pat Hibberd, the consultant, got me my first refund again in 1991.

September 1991 brought a pleasant surprise when Ray Crossley, ex-aircrew and now with a Vietnamese wife, Quoi (pronounced Kwy), whom I had met briefly in my Walton's days in 1978, rang to say he would be coming to Canberra on an educational tour for his children. Ray still lived in Melbourne and he and Quoi had two children. Louise was a very intelligent but retiring girl of nine, while Damon was a five-year old tornado. Quoi was also a very intelligent and practical businesswoman, and the children were obviously going to get a good start in life. We had a hectic few days from 24 to 28 September while Quoi and Damon slept in my small third bedroom and Ray and Louise slept in their campervan under my carport. My shift work fitted in well here

because I was on early shift for the first two days, giving me the afternoons free, and off for 26-27 September with a night shift for the 28th. One of the advantages in having interstate guests is in getting to places in Canberra otherwise taken for granted, and I didn't have to take any leave to move around Canberra with Ray and family. And we also went to a local Vietnamese restaurant one night besides having Quoi cook an elaborate meal at home, leaving me with extra luxuries when they left. I had long since ceased to prepare formal meals for myself.

Computers

Computers have figured prominently in my life over the past ten years and have provided mental stimulation, useful application and social interaction far outweighing their cost. Along with flying they have been a major focus of my life. I took up computers because my job did not provide enough challenge, and I needed something to prevent me from vegetating. I have not been disappointed.

Spike Tyrrell introduced me to computers in 1978 when Andrew and I visited him at Amberley. The Hedges lived there on Kingwell Avenue and the Tyrrells lived on Lady Sherger Crescent, and though they didn't know each other we were able to make the most of our short visit by calling on both of them. We had dinner with Spike and Jenny and slept in Alan and Jacqui's small caravan. Spike had shown a facility with computers as early as his time with the programmable HP calculator in 34 Squadron, and had bought one of Tandy's first personal computers - the Model 1. At first I found the technology intimidating, but Spike insisted that I would have no difficulty adapting to it.

The history of the development of the personal computer of today is worth looking at in brief, because of its rapid and sometimes controversial growth. It began in January 1975 with an article in the electronic magazine *Popular Electronics* promoting a build-it-yourself computer. This was not for the novice, as it required considerable skill in the primitive hardware and software of the era. By 1978 fully assembled computers were available, and relatively easy to use. When IBM entered the market in 1981 the industry took off to catapult itself to today's level of power and complexity. Personal computers would not have been possible without the invention of the transistor in 1948, giving rise to integrated circuits where components could be fabricated on circuit boards. Unlike conventional radios that worked on a continuous wave of information - an analogue process - the computer works on a series of *bits* of information. Each bit is a discrete unit that can be on or off, and this is the digital process driving millions of computers around the world in 1993.

In 1971 the Intel Corp. produced a 4-bit 4004 processor on a single micro chip, providing the engine for computers of the time, and a year later they produced their first 8-bit microprocessor, the 8008. The significance of the number of bits is that this is what is processed by the computer in each of its operations - an 8-bit computer would be theoretically twice as fast as a 4-bit one, all other factors being equal. In 1973 an improved 8-bit microprocessor

appeared, the 8080, and this was to power many of the computers for years to come. Without an operating system to enable the user to relate to and program the computer it was never going to become popular. Gary Kildall developed the CP/M operating system in the first half of 1974. It provided a standard that was to reign for over a decade and, unlike other proprietary operating systems, it could run on a variety of machines. The BASIC programming language had been available since its development at Dartmouth College in 1964, and this was largely used for creating programs to run under the operating system. The Z80, an advance on the 8080, appeared in late 1975 and was the last of the 8-bit microprocessors to be used extensively. However, the consumer electronic world was not keeping pace with the production of microprocessors, and computer kits based on the 8080 were selling in January 1975 - with 256 bytes of memory!! IBM was early in the market with a briefcase-size computer in September 1975. This had 16k (16,384) bytes of memory and a tape cartridge storage system. IBM was more interested in mainframe computers and did not push this early advantage. Other companies were still selling computers with only 512 or 1024 bytes of memory.

By June 1977 Apple Computer Inc. was advertising a computer with a maximum of 48k bytes of RAM (Random Access Memory or working memory in the computer). This also offered an interface to a colour display. Apple computers were powered by microprocessors made by Motorola, a competitor to Intel and never to reach the market commanded by Intel. August 1977 saw the release of the Radio Shack (Tandy) TRS-80 Model 1 - a Z80, 4k bytes of RAM, with keyboard, cassette interface and recorder. This was what Spike had at Amberley. It was early 1980 before Radio Shack released its Model 3 to replace the Model 1, and it was a significant upgrade with disk drives replacing the cassettes, and the entire computer with its keyboard built into the one case. IBM entered the market seriously in August 1981 with its IBM Personal Computer (8088, 64k bytes of RAM, one 5¼ inch disk drive), and laid the basis for the microcomputer industry to this day. (Though Intel had produced a true 16-bit microprocessor in 1979, the 8086, IBM was still using the 8088 that had an 8-bit data path, probably on the advice of Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, who was to provide their operating system). They established a defacto standard for the industry and affirmed the Intel Corp. 80xx series of microprocessors as the dominant chip, with Microsoft MS-DOS as the operating system. The 8088 could address 1 megabyte of memory through its 20 address lines. Computer designers could not see over the horizon, and determined that there would never be a need for

more than 640k bytes of RAM, 10 times more than what was currently provided. They created computers with 1 megabyte of RAM, allowing 640k for the user and reserving the other 384k for system use. This 'conventional memory' limit of 640k has plagued the computer world to this day.

Unlike Apple, whose technology was highly protected, IBM released its technology to the open market, enabling others to legally copy and develop it. The first IBM PC clone was produced in June 1982 by Columbia Data Products and followed in November by a computer from Compaq. Compaq was also the first company to use the 8086 chip, in its Deskpro released in June 1984. Estimates vary depending on the source, and the impact sought, but by any reasonable estimate there are over 100 million PC clones in the world today.

In February 1983 IBM announced the first PC XT (eXtended Technology). Technology had advanced to a 10-megabyte hard disk, expansion slots and 128k bytes of RAM. A new level of processor, the Intel 80286, was in the IBM PC AT (Advanced Technology) announced in August 1984 with 256k bytes of RAM. The 80286 was the first chip to incorporate a 24-bit address line, allowing for 16 megabytes (16×10^6) of memory. But getting access to those 16M bytes required major additions to the operating system, which only third-party suppliers would initially provide. Development since then has been exponential, with the 32-bit 80386 being released in 1985. This could address 4 gigabytes (4 thousand million bytes) of memory. In 1989 the 80486 chip included the numeric coprocessor and the central processing unit in the one chip, plus an 8k onboard memory cache, speeding up the computing process. Clock speeds that provide the cycles on which computers run increased from 4.77Mhz in the PC XT to 50Mhz in the 80486, with speed doubling chips available for the 33Mhz processor, giving an internal speed of 66Mhz. Programs that used to run like cold treacle now flashed past with lightning speed. The basic recommended machine in mid-1993 has a 32-bit 80486 microprocessor, at least a 100-megabyte hard disk, at least 4 and preferably 8 megabytes of RAM, and a high-resolution monitor. The Electronic Revolution of the past two decades has already had, and will continue to have, a greater effect on mankind than the Industrial Revolution of the 18th-19th centuries. But the gain will not be without pain, as the labour force is redefined and electronic theft and vandalism assume strategic proportions.

These were not the only players in the field. Computer companies sprouted like mushrooms and some withered just as quickly. Some of the early names

that stayed around include Texas Instruments, Commodore, Atari and Osborne, but I have chosen IBM and Tandy because of their influence on the market and my involvement with those machines.

My first computer was a System 80 that I bought from Dick Smith Electronics on 1 March 1983. I had been in earlier to buy it but they were decent enough to tell me the price was to be reduced significantly, and I should wait. That had 16k bytes of RAM and used a cassette tape for storage. For a monitor I used the small black and white television I had, until I later upgraded to a high-resolution, proper computer monitor, monochrome green on black. The most memorable thing about the System 80 was its excellent keyboard, but it never helped me learn to touch type. I enrolled with TAFE (the college of Technical And Further Education) for an elementary computing course to get a grounding in the new discipline and finished this on 23 November 1983. One of the advantages of the shift work I was on, and the working relationship within the group, was that I could organise my roster to attend daytime classes throughout the 18-week course. On 21 November 1983, only nine months after my first purchase, I made a quantum jump to Tandy's Model 4. Like the Model 3, this was built in one piece and it had two disk drives and 64k bytes RAM. I gave the System 80 to Len in the old presbytery at Cooktown in August 1984, and he got started on the computer track. Computers were quite expensive then, and the Model 4 cost me \$3299, which was more than ten per cent of my gross earnings. I sold it in July 1985 for \$1000, which was a measure of the developing computer market and the decreasing price of more powerful machines.

Before leaving for Cooktown I had paid a deposit on a Tandy Model 4P that I was to keep until April 1990. With modifications it was one of the greatest computers of its time, in my opinion. And the modifications were not difficult for most people. With practical knowledge of my limitations in electronics I always had help from members of the Micro-80 computer club that I belonged to. The 4P initially cost \$2500, and I added double-sided disk drives and a high-resolution board to it. It had 128k bytes of RAM and sophisticated software that enabled it to be run as two separate computers of 64k each. It ran CP/M and Tandy's proprietary operating systems, TRSDOS and LS-DOS, and had the support of users and developers around the world. It was undoubtedly the backbone of my computer learning that I tried to pass on through regular articles I wrote for the club newsletter. The P in 4P was for portable, and it was in its way. About the size of a sewing machine case, its off-white plastic case contained the computer, high-resolution monitor, disk

drives, and a separate keyboard connected by an umbilical cord. The word portable took on new meaning with the production of affordable laptop machines, and I bought a Bondwell Model 2 from a club member, Garrie Garrison. This was an American computer manufactured in Hong Kong and was at the beginning of a new era in computers that is seeing a booming growth rate in 1993, with laptops, notebook and palmtop computers set to compete with desktop machines in numbers of sales. Over this time Len also bought a Model 4P and was to acquire my Bondwell when I grew out of it.

Impressed with the portability of the battery-powered laptop, and increasingly envious of club members who had graduated to 16-bit machines, I bought a 16-bit laptop Bondwell 8 in late 1986. That truly earned its cost of \$1700 and is still in the family, though its battery no longer works and it has to be used with mains power. From April 1990 Paul and Susan both got use out of it with an external colour monitor attached. I bought the next upgrade, a Toshiba T2100 laptop, in mid-1988. My ideal computer by this time was a Toshiba T5200, which I am now writing on, but it was only dream material then. The T2100 was mains powered and had a 10-megabyte hard disk. In those days that was big, and it had a gas plasma screen of proper proportions that was an improvement over the backlit, compressed LCD screens of the Bondwells. That cost \$3500, only \$200 more than the Tandy Model 4 of about four years earlier, but with a hard disk drive, 640k bytes RAM and a 720k byte 3½ inch disk. With this kind of technology I was prepared to grow out of the beloved Model 4P.

The T2100 only whetted the appetite for more power and more bells and whistles, and through Sue Stirzaker who worked for a computer firm in Sydney I bought a Toshiba T5100. Getting close to my T5200, I thought, but not much more than half price at \$6600. I bought that in September 1989 and put the T2100 in storage. The T5100 had a better plasma screen, a 40-megabyte hard disk and a megabyte of RAM. It was to be the worst and most expensive computer I owned. Nine days after the warranty expired the hard disk collapsed and Toshiba didn't want to know about it. It cost me \$1120 in repairs, some of which I got back from taxation because I used the machine at home for my work. The EGA resolution that presented 16 colours in four shades of orange frustrated me to the point of anger, and I had to get rid of it at any cost. It was not easy to sell, but I finally got rid of it in June 1991 for less than half price. Meanwhile my well-worn but worn-well 4P was on its way to Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory, bought in April 1990 from an advertisement I put in our club newsletter. The T2100 came out of storage to

go to Len in July 1990, and his NEC laptop went to Paul who passed the Bondwell on to Susan. I finally reached computer Nirvana on 4 October 1990 when I bought a second hand Toshiba T5200 for \$7500. With 4 megabytes of RAM, an 80387 coprocessor for mathematic calculations, a 16-shade plasma screen that simultaneously feeds an external colour screen, a 100-megabyte hard disk and a 1.44M floppy, a full keyboard with separate numeric keypad, and a 80386DX microprocessor, it has been eminently satisfactory. A costly hobby, but it has been worthwhile mental therapy and has practical applications. Besides, the amount I have written on computer subjects over the past ten years has helped others in overcoming difficulties, so my investment has not been wasted.

The Canberra Micro-80 Users' Group

I think the group was formed in the late 1970s, and my first awareness of it was seeing a bundle of interconnected boxes that would have done Guglielmo Marconi proud. This was at an exhibition of computer clubs shortly after I bought my System 80. The maze of wires and boxes was worse than anything I remembered from Radio School in Ballarat, but I wasn't interested in the hardware. I wanted to know how to use the technology, and the only way to begin was to join a club where I could get advice and support. The Micro-80 Users' Group was then a motley collection of hundreds of devotees, and is still in existence today with the same subscription rate of \$12 per family, which must be a record of responsible financial management. Today there are only about 40 of us still active, but the group is still vital and productive. We met in Building J of the Reid TAFE College on the third Monday of every month. Now we hold our meetings in room 2 of the Griffin Centre in Civic, every third Monday regardless of public holidays. The members come from all walks of life, and this is one thing I find most stimulating about the group. Basic backgrounds and other interests vary, but the common thread of computers keeps us together in a relationship and atmosphere that can never grow sterile. Harry Cooper was my main mentor for my formative years of computer use, and remains a source of inspiration. We ran the club for a few years between us, and are both still heavily involved in providing material and guidance at meetings. A visit to Harry's home (and they were countless) was an education. One wall of his computer room was completely lined with shelves of original and photocopied manuals. Another was lined with boxes of disks containing what seemed to be every program known to man. Harry had several computers and his own photocopier to cope with his absorbing interest. Ross

Boys has been a stalwart companion since we teamed up, and Merv Commons has been with the club since day one. But listing names of prominent computer personalities could get out of hand, so I will just say that they have all contributed to my well being over the years.

Right from the first days of PCs there has been an enormous amount of software written by enthusiasts that has been donated freely to the user community, and we thrived on it in the club. But we also traded commercial programs between friends and acquaintances, and even had legal advice that we were not doing any wrong provided that the software was not used to make money. Society takes a very different view now that the computer world has matured, to protect the income and interests of the program creators. Exploiting the situation at the time, we had channels to Taiwan where we bought well-known programs complete with manuals for a fraction of their Australian price. I buy my software now from regular suppliers, but frequently buy direct from the United States to avoid inflated Australian prices.

An 8-page newsletter supplemented the monthly meetings and provided a conduit to other clubs both in Australia and overseas. Many clubs exchanged newsletters so that we had the advantage of research or discovery in other areas. My first newsletter is dated January 1985, but by then it had been going for at least four years. By this time I had mastered the intricacies of hexadecimal notation, CP/M, TRSDOS (Tandy's operating system) and disk formatting, though this had been time consuming and, at times, difficult. I distinctly remember when revelation came one evening when I was studying a Tandy Technical Manual for the model 4P, and from then on I never looked back. After that it was time to start paying my way in the computer world and explaining programs, manuals and operating systems to those who found them as difficult as I did initially. For years manuals were written by people who understood programming but not people, and not for the user who didn't want to know the complexities of behind-the-scenes happenings. They wanted to be able to use the programs with the least effort and fuss. With my dedication to the model 4P I started a series of articles related to its operating systems, programs and their availability, and maintenance and modification. I called this series FOURplay. The newsletter of May 1985 has one of my articles, but I think there were one or two others preceding this. I suppose I averaged one article a month, though some months I had two articles in until September 1986 when I achieved some sort of a breakthrough. We had an arrangement with other clubs to reprint articles from their magazines provided we gave acknowledgment, but one particular fellow couldn't enter the spirit of

sharing that most of us subscribed to. I saw reprints of some of my articles in Sydney and Adelaide newsletters but never got any feedback. I wondered if people were reading them or were they just used as fillers for space.

After my 5-page article on Tandy's Job Control Language (JCL) in September 1986 I got a phone call from Hobart asking for permission to reprint it. Tandy's treatment in their excellent manual was detailed and, to my way of thinking, relatively clear. But it frightened most readers. In my article I explained how it all worked and included four programs I had written using JCL for common tasks on the 4P. And I explained how I arrived at the logic of every line in my programs. I willingly gave permission for reprinting because that was what my writing was all about. From then on I saw most of my previous and subsequent articles reproduced with some laudatory phrases about my knowledge of the 4P. I didn't know a lot but I could express better than the manuals what I did know. I still have hard copies of 34 articles amounting to over 100 pages of work from that era, which represent an absorbing learning curve for me as well as my contribution to the computer society I belong to. We also put all the articles on disk and sold them for a nominal sum to raise income for the group, or in the end we gave them away freely to anyone who wanted them. By this time I was writing for the MS-DOS machines, which I still do.

The first couple of articles I wrote for the new machines I called PCplay, but that didn't have the same bite as its predecessor so I quit using a series title and did every article individually. There are 33 hardcopies to date, which are probably all I have done. The first couple were straight text from a conventional word processor - I was using WordStar 3.3, which had dominated the word processor market in its early days and been the mainstay of business computing on 8-bit CP/M machines. Then desktop publishing was made easy with programs like Fontasy and Publish It!. These were the programs I used for the Land Rover Club newsletters as well as the later Micro-80 articles. They allowed for the incorporation of pictures and drawings, and for text to flow around these items, and supplied hundreds of different typefaces and pieces of clip art. In May 1990 Microsoft Windows 3.0 took the PC world by storm and provided a graphical user interface to replace the dreaded DOS prompt - C:\> - and its intimidating command line execution. With it came word processors like Ami Pro that were professional packages permitting graphics manipulation and a whole world of new features. Writing became more challenging, more creative and more satisfying. Not everyone saw the development of these programs in the same light as I did, and some of my writing was in direct

battle with articles by Barry Runnstrom who was a late starter in the group. Those opposing articles provided spice in an otherwise unruffled atmosphere. Ross Boys and I were co-contributors for many months with a column on Windows development, taken from an American bulletin board. In the early days Ross had run his own bulletin board for the benefit of club members, and was well involved in the newer, bigger and more-complex bulletin boards of today.

Programs on the Model 4P had become quite sophisticated and included high resolution drawing, and it was years before some of them were bettered on 16-bit machines. But the limitations of memory, CPU speed and disk storage spelt their doom, and programs for today's PCs are immeasurably more complex, bigger, faster and more capable. Atlases and astronomical programs displaying features in 16.8 million colours on high-resolution monitors that look like colour photographs are commonplace, and the hardware costs less than my 4P, without even allowing for inflation. There are programs to meet every demand and unimagined programs that create their own demand once discovered. Electronic Luddites who wanted to keep computers out of the schoolrooms and the workplace have had to face the reality that man has created a tool that will have unparalleled influence on our future. We just have to learn to live with it and keep it under control.

1993 - The Final Chapter

Periodically my generation of Bibos had said how lucky we had been in avoiding the sinister side of fate. There had been no major accidents or debilitating illnesses that left any of us disabled. Those of us who had survived childhood were all still alive and a united, if scattered, family. But 1993 seemed to try to put an end to that. First of all Tony had a heart attack on 28 December 1992 that put him in hospital where he had an even more severe one. When I went to Tonia Bibo's wedding on 16 January 1993 Tony was recovering in Wesley Hospital from a five-bypass operation on his heart. Pat suffered a stroke at Melbourne airport as he got off the aircraft on Sunday afternoon, returning with John from the wedding. This was Pat's second stroke but he had fully recovered from the previous one some years earlier. The second stroke was to be a bigger hurdle. It seemed that time was beginning to catch up with us and establish its supremacy. Ursula, the youngest Bibo, was to turn 50 on 31 May, turning that final page for the whole family. Not that there is anything wrong with turning 50. My ten years since then have not been regretted or wasted.



A gathering of Bibo's in Wagga Wagga. (L-R): John, Len, Terry, Ursula, Mary, Bernard, Tony, (1996, Mary's 70th).

A quick family status report at 21 June 1993 is: Mary, attends Weight Watchers in Wagga Wagga, and shares excursions with George because one of them has always to be home to care for the cats and the bonsais. John, still travelling frequently overseas and as busy as ever, Melbourne. Len, still losing things in Cairns and due for the old age pension in October. Oddly, he will be better paid as a pensioner than as a priest. Tony, hopefully fully recovered in Brisbane, and bound to be a centrepiece for Bibo get-togethers in years to come. Pat, recovering in Melbourne. Terry, looking at retirement in December, Canberra. Leo, gone overseas but not forgotten, Canada. Bernard, has already bought his block of retirement land, Brisbane. Ursula, just reached matron hood, Murgon.

In the next generation: Judith, performed very well at the Showcase Ball for the Fred Astaire Dance Studios. Susan and I were well-dressed guests. Judith

was Team Leader in the Student Assistance Centre of the Department of Employment Education and Training. Susan, doing a splendid job of raising a family on her own. Has enormous family encouragement. Susan was Field Worker for Family Day Care, Calwell, a function of the Tuggeranong Community Service. David, Sous Chef at the Park Hyatt Hotel, Canberra, commutes from Yass but deserves his own restaurant. Robert, reached fatherhood in February with a beautiful daughter. Robert was working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in Canberra, in the team compiling Australian National Accounts. Paul finally got his own home, coincidental with Robert's fatherhood. Paul was an Ambulance Paramedic, Technical Officer 2, with the ACT Ambulance Service. Andrew, under his stage name *Andrew Price*, starred in two plays as part of his course, *The Rover* by Aphra Behn, and *Barnum - The Circus Musical*, both at the Riverina Playhouse in Wagga Wagga. Those of us who have seen him reckon he is talented.

Andrew's chosen profession may open up more opportunities for serious theatre visits if he follows the right path. I can't claim regular attendance by any means, but I have always enjoyed the theatre. In Melbourne during Langscl days Celie and I went to two memorable plays put on by Melbourne University: *A Man for All Seasons*, the story of Sir Thomas More - beheaded by Henry VIII on a fabricated charge of treason; and *Ross*, part of the life story of the legendary T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). In Canberra, Judith and I have started a program of similar attendances, though so far we have only attended *Camelot*, *Man of La Mancha* and *Fiddler on the Roof* - all classics in their own way.

For the Canberra Day long weekend of 16 March Judith and I took Clayton, Russell and Rhannon up to the Warrumbungles in the camper trailer. Towing this was vastly different from towing a caravan and yet it provided comfortable accommodation only a short time after arriving anywhere. Out of the holiday season, there were few campers and plenty of space. The scenery is as spectacular as ever and I hope the children get to like the place as much as I do. Kangaroos were friendly and came right up to the kitchen table, letting the children hug and pat them. It really is a part of Australia worth visiting periodically.

With Judith I went to my first ballet ever on 29 May, and enjoyed it. Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, at the Canberra Playhouse by The Australian Ballet. I have long enjoyed ballet music but never favoured the stage and I think my familiarity with the operetta probably helped here. We are never too old to

learn. Robert had played a bit part in the Canberra performance I had attended many years ago. Marilyn Rowe starred in the title role of the ballet with Rex Harrington as her partner, Danilo, destined to save the Pontevodian kingdom from bankruptcy.

Over the years I have expressed dissatisfaction with Canberra as a place of retirement, mainly because of its extended cold season. But in my travels I have always been glad to come home, and I have looked at the pros and cons of living elsewhere. Cairns has its wet season and cyclones. Brisbane has hailstorms, floods and a humid summer that attracts a lot of complaint. Melbourne - well I've lived there and have no desire to go back except for visits. So Canberra's winter is not too bad a burden. Self-government has been disappointing, but governments elsewhere are no more competent. And Canberra is where my family is, which must be the major determining factor in accepting Canberra as home. With that acceptance I can then find good points about the place. It is a rural capital with a lot of open space and greenery, with easy and short access to mountains, coast, lakes and streams. It does not yet suffer from the crowding or pollution of major cities, and has a number of unique attractions.

Canberra's most prominent attraction is undoubtedly Parliament House on Capital Hill, or more correctly in Capital Hill as most of it is underground. Queen Elizabeth II opened this \$1 billion edifice on 9 May 1988, celebrating Australia's bicentenary and coincidentally exactly 61 years after her father had opened the old Parliament House. Visible from afar is the Parliament House flagpole, a massive stainless steel mast supported by four splayed out stainless steel supports - the largest stainless steel structure in the world - that keep the flag 81 metres above the roof line. Inside is a showplace of marble, masonry, tapestries and timber collectively constituting a national treasure. When Parliament is sitting there are 3,500 workers inside the house - more than the population of many country towns. The building covers an area of 240,000 square metres, has 4,500 rooms and 75,000 square metres of floor space.

Other nationally significant attractions include the National Gallery, National Library, High Court and National Science and Technology Centre. All of these house treasures and serve as a source of information and education for all Australians. The War Memorial at the base of Mount Ainslie faces down Anzac Parade and looks across the Central Basin of Lake Burley Griffin to Parliament House at the apex of the Parliamentary Triangle. Displays within the Memorial commemorate those who died in wars and actions in which

Australia was involved from as far back as the Sudan campaigns. National Anzac Day and Remembrance Day services are held at the Stone of Remembrance in front of the building. Anzac Parade is lined with eight memorials, the most recent of which is the National Memorial to the Australian Vietnam Forces. It honours troops who served in the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1975. Constructed between November 1991 and September 1992 it consists of a central podium surrounded by a shallow moat in which stand three concrete walls, a granite ring suspended from the walls which contains the names of Australians who died in the war, a memorial altar, a wreath wall, and seats commemorating those missing in action. It was opened on 3 October 1992 and served to assuage some of the bitterness felt by Vietnam veterans since the last of them returned home some twenty years earlier.

The most visible of Canberra's attractions is undoubtedly the Telecom Tower on top of Black Mountain. Subject to much controversy before and during construction, by rabid environmentalists and purists who did not want the skyline polluted by modern technology, it has become a major tourist attraction and a functional structure in providing essential communication facilities. Opened in May 1980 it rises 195 metres above the summit of the mountain, and provides three floors for radio communications, closed and open viewing galleries for the public, and a revolving restaurant. The 360-degree views of Canberra and the surrounding countryside out to 50 kilometres are unparalleled.

Among Canberra's many unique attractions is the 1812 overture, performed at the beginning of autumn each year. A ceremonial parade is held on the parade ground of Duntroon Military College and is accompanied by a musical presentation by combined bands from the armed services, culminating in the performance of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture with real cannons. Well patronised, entry is by donation that goes into Army welfare; it is a spectacle to be enjoyed by all Canberra residents and visitors.

Only 400 kilometres from Canberra on good roads is the Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo, the first open range zoo in Australia, that I visited very early with Andrew in the Land Rover in 1979, and have since been back to with a much bigger family complement including Robert and Wendy, Susan, Cheryl and the children in late 1992. This is a zoo with a difference, where more than 2,000 animals range freely within large compounds rather than being confined in cages. There are moats, trenches and walls to prevent escape and to protect the

visitors from the wilder animals. But nothing impedes the view of the animals from the public walkways. The zoo's 300 hectares of bushland and landscaped settings are very well laid out with roads, picnic facilities and rest rooms, and it hires bicycles to those who want to leave the car behind and still take a relaxed approach to seeing the exhibits. Within as natural an environment as is possible to maintain there are animals ranging through bison, zebra, camel, leopard, rhinoceros, monkeys and others too numerous to mention. A day spent at this zoo is a day well spent, and we intend to go back again soon.

On the economic scene it was becoming increasingly costly to live in Canberra - as it was all over Australia I suppose, but the local situation was exacerbated by our self-government. Over the four years from 1988 to 1992: water rates increased by 33.7%; land rates by 49.8%; and electricity charges by 17.3%. Acrimonious debate over the opening hours for supermarkets was a thing of the past when Coles opened 24 hours a day and Woolworths from 7.00 a.m. till midnight in 1993.

Winter was off to a good start with snow falling on Saturday 12 June. It was usual for snow to fall about twice a year on average, but only on spectacular occasions did it settle on the ground. This time it settled but soon melted.

Sixty years are over, and I hesitate to estimate how far I have travelled or how many places I have visited since I wondered what lay beyond the mountains to the west of Greenslopes. Places dominate in the story of my life, but I could not have enjoyed visiting those places on my own. People are more important than places.



21 June 1993.

Terry Bibo

Appendix – Aircraft and Pilots

The following information on pilots, aircraft serial numbers and flight times is taken from official Flying Log Books. Terry Bibb was navigator for 2,012 flights (over an elapsed 7,758 days) under 148 pilots (by rank), on 68 individual aircraft of nine different types of aircraft. Some pilots appear more than once for each rank they held.

Table 1. Aircraft serial numbers by type of aircraft

An aircraft is identified by its RAAF serial. RAF serials are prefixed by XK or WV. The RNZAF serial prefix is NZ and there is one USN serial.

BAC 1-11:

A12-124, A12-125.

Lockheed C-130E:

A97-159, A97-160, A97-167, A97-168, A97-171, A97-172, A97-177,
A97-178, A97-180, A97-181, A97-189, A97-190.

De Havilland Comet C(RCM)2:

XK659, XK695.

Douglas C-47 'Dakota':

A65-14, A65-26, A65-30, A65-67, A65-68, A65-73, A65-78, A65-89,
A65-102.

Hawker Siddeley HS748:

A10-595, A10-596.

GAF 694 Lincoln:

A73-1, A73-3, A73-4, A73-6, A73-7, A73-8, A73-10, A73-12, A73-15,
A73-17, A73-18, A73-19, A73-21, A73-23, A73-26, A73-30, A73-32,
A73-36, A73-37, A73-40, A73-41, A73-42, A73-45, A73-49, A73-50,
A73-53.

Lockheed Neptune P2V-5:

A89-301, A89-302, A89-303, A89-304, A89-305, A89-306, A89-307,
A89-308, A89-309, A89-310, A89-311, A89-312, USN 131493.

Percival Pembroke C1:
WV751.

Short Sunderland MR.5:
NZ4117.

Table 2. Pilots by type of aircraft with flight hours

A pilot is listed for each rank they held at the time of the flight. Pilots with the same surname are not separately identified. Names are listed in order of RAAF rank then non-RAAF rank. The number of hours flown is the rounded sum of decimal equivalents of hours and minutes and does not equal the actual total 7,991 hours recorded in the log books.

BAC 1-11: 807 hours over 295 flights.

Wg.Cdr. Carter, Wg.Cdr. Molloy.

Flt.Lt. Birks, Flt.Lt. Bryce, Flt.Lt. Copley, Flt.Lt. Grierson, Flt.Lt. McGregor, Flt.Lt. Smith.

Lockheed C-130E: 3,408 hours over 711 flights.

Wg.Cdr. McKimm, Wg.Cdr. Radford.

Sqn.Ldr. Bishop, Sqn.Ldr. Egle, Sqn.Ldr. Fewster, Sqn.Ldr. Greenwood, Sqn.Ldr. Hyland, Sqn.Ldr. Johnston, Sqn.Ldr. Lewino, Sqn.Ldr.

MacKenzie, Sqn.Ldr. Marland, Sqn.Ldr. Sullivan.

Flt.Lt. Baldwin, Flt.Lt. Berry, Flt.Lt. Bryce, Flt.Lt. Cooper, Flt.Lt.

Delfabbro, Flt.Lt. Driemanis, Flt.Lt. Dunn, Flt.Lt. Egle, Flt.Lt. Griffiths,

Flt.Lt. Harris, Flt.Lt. Harrison, Flt.Lt. Henderson, Flt.Lt. Hyland, Flt.Lt.

Jolly, Flt.Lt. Lanning, Flt.Lt. Lewino, Flt.Lt. Lindner, Flt.Lt. Lovett, Flt.Lt.

Lumsden, Flt.Lt. Marsh, Flt.Lt. Martin, Flt.Lt. Maxwell, Flt.Lt. McGrath,

Flt.Lt. McGregor, Flt.Lt. Roffe, Flt.Lt. Rule, Flt.Lt. Solomons, Flt.Lt.

Spinks.

Flg.Off. Baldwin, Flg.Off. Boulton, Flg.Off. Bryce, Flg.Off. Cooper,

Flg.Off. Delfabbro, Flg.Off. Griffiths, Flg.Off. Hayward, Flg.Off. Holt,

Flg.Off. Lanning, Flg.Off. Martin, Flg.Off. Mason, Flg.Off. McGrath,

Flg.Off. Murphy, Flg.Off. Radbone, Flg.Off. Spinks, Flg.Off. Unicombe,

Flg.Off. Woolcock.

Plt.Off. Holbourn, Plt.Off. Martin.

Maj. Bentz.

Capt. Bentz, Capt. Edmund, Capt. Hewett, Capt. Huneycutt, Capt. Schmidt, Capt. Waters.

De Havilland Comet C(RCM)2: 59 hours over 13 flights.

Sqn.Ldr. Dowling, Sqn.Ldr. Sweeney.

Flt.Lt. Barnard, Flt.Lt. Colman, Flt.Lt. Walker.

Douglas C-47 'Dakota': 198 hours over 36 flights.

Gp.Capt. Davis, Gp.Capt. Graney.

Wg.Cdr. Dennett.

Sqn.Ldr. Davie.

Flt.Lt. Thorne.

Flg.Off. Dreimanis, Flg.Off. Goy.

Plt.Off. Plenty.

Flt.Sgt. Gee, Flt.Sgt. Jackson.

Hawker Siddeley HS748: 987 hours over 297 flights.

Sqn.Ldr. Cowdell, Sqn.Ldr. Pappin, Sqn.Ldr. Trewartha.

Flt.Lt. Cowdell, Flt.Lt. Ende, Flt.Lt. Ney, Flt.Lt. Noblet, Flt.Lt. Rich,

Flt.Lt. White.

GAF 694 Lincoln: 1,121 hours over 367 flights.

Wg.Cdr. Ashton, Wg.Cdr. Robertson.

Sqn.Ldr. Aronsen, Sqn.Ldr. Davie.

Flt.Lt. Badgery, Flt.Lt. Dee.

Flg.Off. Day, Flg.Off. Hayes, Flg.Off. Hearnden, Flg.Off. Middlemiss,

Flg.Off. Robertson, Flg.Off. Slater, Flg.Off. Stapleton.

Plt.Off. Day, Plt.Off. Fewster, Plt.Off. Hayes, Plt.Off. Hearnden, Plt.Off. Thorpe.

W.Off. Dowrick, W.Off. Middlemiss.

Flt.Sgt. Dyke, Flt.Sgt. Hilder, Flt.Sgt. Holding, Flt.Sgt. Morrow, Flt.Sgt.

Ryan, Flt.Sgt. Tetley.

Sgt. Spring, Sgt. Thorpe.

Lockheed Neptune P2V-5: 1,397 hours over 291 flights.

Wg.Cdr. McMahon, Wg.Cdr. Wakeham.

Sqn.Ldr. Rodd, Sqn.Ldr. Shearn.

Flt.Lt. Bevan, Flt.Lt. Donnelly, Flt.Lt. Middlemiss, Flt.Lt. Trinder, Flt.Lt.

Watkin, Flt.Lt. Winchcombe.

Flg.Off. Gordon, Flg.Off. Morris, Flg.Off. Richardson, Flg.Off. Scutt,
Flg.Off. Wellington.
Plt.Off. Cape, Plt.Off. Morris, Plt.Off. Sharpley, Sqn.Ldr. Ingate.
Lt.Cdr. Dassler.

Percival Pembroke C1: 1 hour over 1 flight.
W.Off. Foster.

Short Sunderland MR.5: 11 hours over 1 flight.
Flg.Off. Duke.

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