

Richard Barnwell—A216361—Engine Fitter

Some people are lucky to start life with a silver spoon in their mouth. I was, too; well, it was actually stainless steel wrapped in the form of forceps about my head to bring me kicking and screaming into this world. I started life traumatised. I was christened Richard. Everyone on my mother's side called me this, but on my father's side of the family I was called Dick. So, by the age of two, I had my first identity crisis.

During the first ten years of my life we lived in seven different suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. I was a seasoned traveler by the age of eleven when we returned to Fivedock, Sydney where I started High School. I was fortunate enough to gain entry to Sydney Technical High School, which meant an hour travelling each way by tram. I became an avid reader and soon lived in a world of Biggles and Captain Blood. Greek mythology soon took over and by the age of twelve I was living completely in a world of daydreams. It was also about this age that I was sent to visit an uncle who had the dubious honor of trying to give me a sex education.

This uncle explained the basic principles using the rear end of his milking cow. I rejected his theory in preference for the one of being born under a cabbage leaf. This later theory, however, was also rejected after deep and meaningful discussions with a young lady from Crown Street Girls High, who became my travelling companion in the tram to school. We debated important issues including the art of French kissing; hell, I didn't know how to Australian kiss let alone any of that foreign stuff!

What I lacked was a strong male influence for guidance. My grandfather (lieutenant commander RAN) and my father (squadron leader RAAF) were off playing war games when I needed them most. And living with my grandmother, mother and aunt was no fun compared to fishing and football. At the age of fifteen, I examined my mythical heroes and Biggles won. So, I applied to join the Air Force. This became my second major trauma; my heroes never mentioned hobnailed boots or KP in their escapades.

I remember Forest Hill well: frozen overalls on the line in winter, hay fever in the summer; but all the rest is a blur. Thanks to the dedication of the instructors, I managed between daydreams to pass, gaining a posting to Richmond as an engine fitter.

Twelve months at Richmond quickly passed with beaches to find in Sydney, and girls. It was about this time that I started to realise my life was lacking. I lacked money, female company, direction, and to top it off I was posted to Sale Maintenance Squadron. Moses did seven years in the wilderness and I guessed this was mine. Now, with Sale, being an agricultural area, the cows are milked at six in the morning and four in the afternoon. Before or after these times, life appeared to be nonexistent. To break out I started to apply for any job that would get me away from Sale, one of these happened to be for a survey draughtsman. After three years, I received a posting to Richmond. You beaut, back in the warmth of Sydney and beaches.

Now, I must add here I was screwed up; my parents had divorced by the time I was ten and although I had dated a number of wonderful young ladies, I could never tell what was love or lust, or both. Fortunately, one of these young ladies had my measure and must have realised somewhere there was some form of redemption for me.

Now, Anita was thoughtful, kind, caring and a born optimist (all the characteristics I was lacking). She decided to save my soul from the devil and we tied the knot on my twenty-third birthday (so I wouldn't forget our anniversary).

Now, I hadn't been at 2AD more than six months when one of the admin bods said, "Hey, you're supposed to be in the drawing office for training" (who said there's no guardian angels). I had applied for survey draughting years ago and this was engineering. Who cares? I was out of the oil. After six months or so of pencil smudges and inkblots, I passed the

Mango Stories

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necessary exams and changed musterings.

I decided to get some formal qualifications in mechanical engineering and for the next four years studied at Granville and Ultimo Technical Colleges, and to my surprise managed to pass.

During this period of studying we purchased land at Carlingford and after a couple of years Anita decided I needed a son. I smiled, and in no time flat we had a beautiful daughter, Joanne (I got it wrong). A year or so later Anita said I needed a son, and yes we had another gorgeous girl, Linda.

Now, with life returning to an even keel with studies completed, Anita said you need a son. And yes, we were blessed with another beautiful daughter, Melanie. I was outnumbered and out-manoeuvred, but life was great except for the lack of promotion. It had taken twelve years to reach the starry heights of corporal and there was no hope of exceeding this when the fifteen years was up and I decided to throw my hat into the civilian ring. I applied for a drafting position with the Electricity Commission of NSW, and was fortunate to obtain it.

When I started work with the commission I thought it was Utopia. A thirty-five-hour week, air conditioning, no uniform, didn't have to shave and lunch in the Botanical Gardens of Sydney was great - flowers and *birds* everywhere.

After twelve months, Anita noticed I was getting too settled. She decided we needed a change of air, so we sold our house and purchased a larger one at Warriewood on Sydney's northern beaches.

We installed Anita's mother downstairs, and I thought we were settled there when Anita had the great idea that I needed a son, I smiled and headed for the bedroom. She yelled, "Not that way. Come here and sign this adoption form." Some months later we were offered a young lad of twenty-three months. We soon discovered girls were different to boys, Matthew had all the signs of autism, (he was diagnosed, aged nineteen, with fragile-X syndrome) but Anita decided that if she could straighten me out, she could handle any young boy.

Twelve months slipped by and Matt didn't make any great headway. Anita thought however that another son would not go amiss, and so, with the assistance of DOCS, we acquired another son, a wonderful three-month-old boy, Steven.

Life at Warriewood was great. Being close to the water meant plenty of boating activities. We started with a ten-foot clinker dinghy, worked our way slowly through powerboats, trailer sailors and ended up with a North Shore 33 yacht. We had great expectations of sailing the eastern coast of Australia. We did all the navigation and radio courses, club raced it, then started to sail offshore... I was totally bored with endless miles at sea. However, we love Broken Bay with all its rivers and bays and now sail a Gillcraft 29 motor sailor, usually having two days midweek aboard.

Have you ever tried to fit five lively children, wife, two grannies and yourself in a HK Holden station wagon! In a nutshell, you don't fit at all well. Delete the grannies and add camping gear and it is even worse, similar to a hot water bottle on wheels. We solved this in 1976 with a long wheelbase Nissan Patrol. It rode like a billy-cart, looked like a tank, but you couldn't overload or stop it. That rugged old truck took our camping gear and us on many exciting holidays both on and off the black stuff, and introduced us to a way of life that was inexpensive and different. A camper, this in turn by a small caravan, superseded the tent and now five vans later we have a van with all the comforts. The "tank" has also been replaced a number of times and we now have a cruiser with a suspension designed for aging bones.

In the mid seventies and eighties the Commission was developing and building power stations in the Hunter Valley and Lithgow areas. I found that system design and construction to be both challenging and exciting,

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I was fortunate to be rewarded for my efforts with both promotion and the responsibility of controlling a group of officers preparing mechanical systems. This later extended to power station layouts and development. A division called Elcom Services was created to sell the Commission's expertise in engineering design to external organisations to prepare conceptual power station designs for overseas countries such as China, Egypt and Malaysia.

Good things, however, all come to an end and the state government, in their wisdom, decided we had ample generating capacity and that privatisation could earn once-off capital. I pulled the plug and retired in August 1996: a great decision.

It took five years to gradually refurbish our home at Warriewood, swinging on a safety harness three storeys up in the air is strictly for the birds so when it was completed we sold it and we now have a single story home at Terrigal (NSW Central Coast). It is easily maintained, located in a quiet area and has a tranquil outlook.

Our family has increased steadily; we have gained three sons-in-law, one daughter-in-law, four beautiful granddaughters (I'm not the only one who thinks pink), and finally one very lively grandson. Life has been very kind to us, we have a wonderful loving family, good health and, God willing, shall be able to tour and enjoy this fabulous country for some time yet.

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Power station passion ... a thing of beauty is a joy forever



L to R: Linda, Joanne, me, Bianca, Steven, Anita, Matthew, Melanie.
Induction of new member to the Barnwell clan.

PLANT LAYOUT AND ENGINEERING DESIGN

The Team



Names from left to right are: Ray McRae, Graham Sellers, Tim Richards, Bill Brunsdn, Richard Barnwell, John Brown, Geoff Fletcher

Special Areas of Expertise

Provides Plant Layout and Engineering Design for new coal fired Power Stations and major refurbishment of existing stations. Experience with seaboard and inland Power Stations both in Australia and Overseas.

Bill Brunsdn Senior Engineer/Drafting and Engineering Support - 27 years experience in Power Station design including boilers, fans, dust collection and pipework. Project management and drawing office supervision.

Richard Barnwell (Team Leader) Senior Engineering Draftsman (Layout) - 23 years experience in Power Station and Plant Layout including feasibility and environmental impact studies, project coordination and planning.

John Brown Senior Engineering Draftsman (Mechanical) - 28 years experience in the investigation, design and layout of mechanical services for Power Stations.

Geoff Fletcher Senior Engineering Draftsman (Electrical) - 21 years experience in investigation and design of Power Station protection and electrical equipment.

Ray McRae Senior Engineering Draftsman (Mechanical) - 20 years experience in design and rehabilitation of coal handling plant including major refurbishment projects.