

**John Cox—A216371—Airframe Fitter**

After Wagga my time in the RAAF was spent at 2AD, 3AD and seven years at 486 (M) Squadron. I decided that although I enjoyed my work, I would venture outside after the initial fifteen years of service.

It took quite a long time to get it out of my system as the RAAF and particularly the ex-Apprentices had been family since leaving school.

I became a sales representative for Castrol Oil and after two years in Sydney's western suburbs we went to Dubbo for seven months before settling in Singleton. From there I travelled the Hunter Valley and out to Dunedoo - Mendooran.

While in the RAAF Fay and I were married and had a girl and two boys, then another boy after I left and our last child was another girl.

The time with Castrol was interesting and a lot of funny things happened along the way. But the downside was five nights a month away from home with additional away time for conferences. So after twelve years I called it a day and went into underground coal mining.

I hadn't been there long when I was knocked out by a flying spanner from a roof bolter about ten metres away. Everyone thought I was dead; we were about a mile underground and I didn't come to until we reached the tunnel mouth. A trip in the ambulance, some time in hospital and a few more days at home and I was right. The only thing permanent is a small numb spot on the left cheek. Underground has great camaraderie as you work in small crews and everyone watches out for everyone else as some nasty things can occur if you are not watchful.

In March 1988 I was on afternoon shift when called out of the pit about dusk to be told that my middle son, Peter, was in Woden Valley Hospital, ACT after a car accident and was critical. Carol Johnston, nee Rudkin, (a lot of you would know Carol from Laverton) worked at the hospital and said they were keeping him in casualty as they didn't think he would make it. So it was a long drive through the night and we arrived there sometime after midnight by which time Peter had made it to intensive care. Over the next eight weeks he had his right leg amputated and he gradually recovered. He has since worked with the Tax Office, CES, obtained a degree at UNE and now works in Canberra as a graduate at the Department of Education Science and Training.

In 1989 I moved to an open-cut mine and worked in the washing plant. The difference between this and the underground was the relationships. Underground, everyone watched your back - open-cut, they were more likely to stab you.

In 1990 our youngest son, Robert, completed a communications degree with Newcastle University and worked as a reporter for the local newspaper. In 1992 he did the usual backpacking trip in Europe and when he returned got a job as sub-editor on *The Land*. In July 1993 he was home and he and some mates were mucking around in the lounge room when he fell over with someone else falling over him. He became an instant paraplegic. After more than one year's recovery he returned to live alone in Windsor and went back to work at *The Land* and at the same time did a masters degree at The University of Western Sydney. Recurring pressure ulcers saw him relinquish his job and he recently got a job at the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra and now lives with Peter.

In 1997, under laws existing in NSW, I had to retire from the mine having reached the ripe old age of sixty years.

With work for over-sixties being in short supply we got a caravan and spent five months touring around Australia. We have since been to Cape York and many other parts of this great country - many thousands of miles in all directions.

## Mango Stories

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Our other three children - Tracey, David and Samantha - are married and live in Singleton along with our five grandsons, and life is still worth living. We have been to all the major reunions and are looking forward to this one.

John Cox  
22 Howe Street  
Singleton, NSW 2330.  
Tel. 02 6572 1885

### MANGO SCRAPBOOK IMAGES



RSTT badge



RSTT main entry guard house