

Dave Dodds—A14423—Mechanical Transport Fitter

39 steps or 39 years

25 January 1954 was the starting point and 9 January 1993 was the finish, two weeks under thirty-nine years of service.

After Wagga there followed a posting to Amberley with fellow Queensland Mangoes. In April 1958 I was married prior to an initial posting to Butterworth returning to Australia in late 1960. I applied for and was successful in obtaining a place on the second non-aircrew air traffic controllers course in early 1962. Gus Cavanagh and John Middlebrook were also on the course. After graduation I returned to Amberley. Various sojourns around Australia followed culminating in another posting to Butterworth for Confrontation.

Returning to Australia I received my commission and began various exercises with the Army battalions working up in the Shoalwater Bay training area prior to embarkation for Vietnam. Unfortunately or rather fortunately owing to the branch being under strength I was not permitted to travel to Vietnam with them. This liaison proved helpful at a later date during my work as an operations officer with 23 Squadron reserve.

Another highlight was a posting to Darwin pre Cyclone Tracy. Long hours of air traffic were maintained as the base was a joint user and we were dual trained to control civilian air traffic. Many social activities were held by the section, mainly barbecues and movies under the high-set houses. Pearce followed after this and another pleasant tour of duty in the west.

On return to Amberley in the seventies I took early retirement so as my children could continue their secondary education in the one place and settled into civilian life. On retirement I joined 23 City of Brisbane Reserve Squadron and served for the next seventeen years until age retirement.

Over the next few years I worked for various organisations mainly as a manager of service stations and also for Queensland Rail as a brake fitter, leaving there in 1987.

Whilst with 23 Squadron I went on many detachments and worked with 1 and 6 Squadrons (F111), 9 Squadron Iroquois, 10 and 11 Squadrons P3 and 12 Squadron Chinooks. In 1987 I travelled to Cape York for Exercise Diamond Dollar and was deployed with Divisional HQ running the base operations element comprising elements of Air Telecommunications Unit, 12 Squadron and 35 Squadron Caribous. Accommodation was reasonable but not up to Novatel standards as depicted in the accompanying photos. At the completion of the exercise a willy-willy tore through the area and blew away the Ops tent with me inside; I dived under a trailer for security. Everyone enjoyed the spectacle until they realised that Grandpa was inside and panic set in, but all was well.

1989 saw me employed with Base Support Wing, Amberley for three months as senior OpsO or “bloke in charge of jobs no one else wants” During this period I was asked to refurbish 6 Squadron operations cell and was employed full-time under 4 J 3 conditions and had a very interesting twelve months setting up and implementing the new procedures required. But all good things must come to an end. A squadron tradition was a wet down for all aircrew after their last flight and as OpsO had arranged many of these and, as shown by the accompanying photos, revenge was had.

Also in 1989 I had the honour to attend the farewell dinner for 12 Squadron on the disbandment of the squadron. It was a sad but happy occasion with many memories. In 1992 I returned to Tindal for an exercise and it was rather different from the initial trip in 1967 when ACS was still rebuilding the initial base. Twelve months later came that eventual day in January and the end of an eventful RAAF career. As stated I worked as a manager and for Queensland Rail and in 1990 became a dreaded public servant working initially in taxation then Commonwealth Employment and finally Centrelink. In 1998 I took my burnt out digger’s pension and early retirement and have never stopped since.

Mango Stories

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In Darwin I became involved in youth activities and still am today. These include junior football, Scouts and, in Darwin, gymnastics. Currently I am on the coaching panel of the local rugby league club co-coordinating the eight to ten-year age groups and their coaches. I am also heavily involved with church activities being a sacristan/coordinator for our local church, plus monthly visits to two local nursing homes. I also work two nights per week at the local greyhound complex as kennel security supervisor.

Alison and I have now been married for forty-six years and have four children and five grandchildren, all of whom keep us busy.

It does not seem like fifty years since that January day long ago so, as I write this and reminisce, I wonder where the years (and the hair) have gone.

Dave Dodds

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That's AUSTRALIA ALL OVER
continued

Push-button controls for the JET-AGE

★ THIS impressive-looking push-button console is part of Australia's most modern and expensive jet-age aircraft control tower for supersonic defence aircraft.

The tower has been built at Amberley (Q) Air Base, headquarters of the RAAF's spearhead atomic bomber force.

The recently-opened four-storey tower cost £130,000 — £50,000 to build and about £80,000 for the mass of electronic equipment it houses.

Some of the features are:

- An air-conditioning plant and an emergency generating set that is meant to come into action in the face of a nuclear attack.
- The world's latest radio equipment — much of it transistorised — and a workshop for its maintenance.
- A special "operations room" to control the approach of all aircraft in the area.
- On the top of the tower a magnificent panoramic "glasshouse" with a 360-degree view of both the sky and the ground at the air base. Seven Air Force men operate the tower. They work in sound-proofed rooms to help them concentrate on the job.



★ ABOVE: RAAF Sgt David Dodds mans a console at the new £130,000 control tower at Amberley (Q).

Australian Post clip—1962



12 Squadron disbandment dining out 1989



With Harry Ball Amberley—1962

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With two trainee friends at farewell dinner 12 Squadron

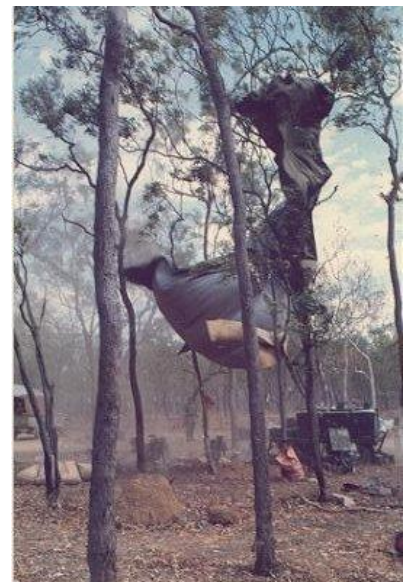
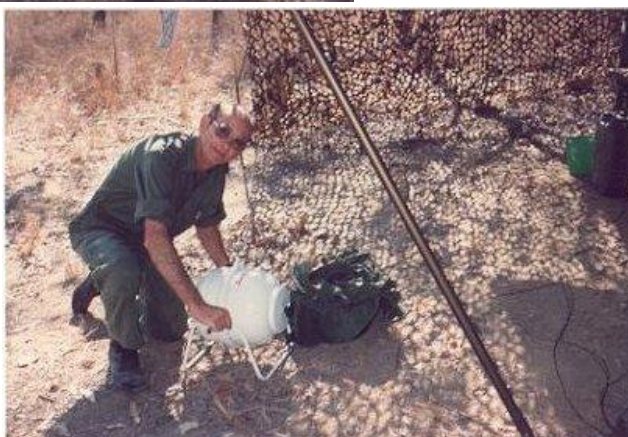


Farewell from 6 Squadron washdown and presentation 1989.



Showers

Roughing it at the Diamond Dollar exercise Cape York 1987.



HQ disappearing in a willy-willy

Washing