

Roderick (Rod) Mackenzie – A216395– Electrical Fitter

A brief history

After Wagga I was posted to Richmond, Williamstown, Butterworth, back to Richmond then Sale, the United Kingdom, Melbourne, Villawood, then back to Melbourne. There I was discharged in May 1981 after twenty-seven years and transferred to the Active Reserve (Dad's Army); more on that later.

I then purchased the lease hold of the Buckingham Hotel in Footscray. I found this a difficult task at first but survived it for three and a half years. The clientele at the hotel were a mixed lot from very good decent people to a convicted murderer and everything in between, and I often wondered why they got on with each other. I soon realised ninety-five percent of them were born, bred, went to school, worked and would no doubt die, in Footscray.

My "favourite" customer was the convicted murderer Jack O'Shea just released from jail after serving fifteen years. Nice fellow - a butcher by trade and former painter and docker - he cut the throat of his girlfriend's husband in a telephone box. After his release Jack took up again with his old girlfriend and the conversations between Jack and his girlfriend's daughter (whose father Jack had killed) after a few beers were colourful to say the least!

One could write a book on the pub but I won't go on, except to say after a disturbance in the bar one night and after I woke up with a black eye, I decided to sell.

Incidentally, two weeks after I had left the pub, Jack O'Shea had an argument with a fellow drinker and cut his heart out with a boning knife! Jack later died in jail.

Having sold the pub I toured the east coast with a small van and had a few weeks work with the RAAF Reserve at Richmond, Amberley and Townsville on the way.

On my return to Melbourne I started teaching avionics subjects at Kangan TAFE (Broadmeadows) and putting in a fair amount of time with the RAAF Reserve, which was enjoyable and rewarding. While with the reserve I was part of a small team that restored a RAAF Museum Vampire aircraft to flying condition.

This aircraft did flying displays at almost every airshow in the country and at many major events and, being part of the maintenance team, I had to go along. I had a most enjoyable time doing this; you could say it was a great hobby with all expenses found and being paid as well.

But it came to an end in 1993 when the RAAF said, "No more extensions, you are too old. Goodbye."

I continued to work for Kangan TAFE until 2000 when work ran out there. I intended to retire but RMIT contacted me. I am still teaching three days a week at RMIT, but will be retired or on final leave by the reunion in May 2004 at Coffs Harbour.

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