

Geoff Morrow—A311716—Armament Fitter

The aimless wanderings of Geoff Morrow and company

The three years at Wagga had to be the longest three years of my life. I can remember returning for second year with an unbelievable depression that there was still two years to go before we were really in the Air Force. Although, as I later realised, the skills learnt at Wagga were invaluable in many aspects throughout my life. Our training eventually came to an end and the future looked bright - even though we had sat around doing virtually nothing for the period of the Olympics in Melbourne - and graduated on the final day of the Games. Holidays, before the start of our first posting, resulted in one of the most memorable times of my life as I met my future wife Margaret.

The next twenty years of my time in the RAAF can be broken into ten years as an airman and ten years commissioned in the armament branch. I was fortunate that in 1959 I was posted to Butterworth, giving me war service and the start of married life. The photo shows the first day of operations by No 77 Sabre Squadron in Malaya. Married life with help in the house and garden, was pretty good for both Margaret and myself and gave us our first taste of living overseas. We also had our first child here, or rather at Taiping Military Hospital, and named her Angela. We have never lost that urge to travel which has also rubbed off on our children. Currently we have one daughter, Marlene, and her family living in Germany and Angela, with her family living in Cairo. Our other daughter, Helena, lives with her family in Melbourne.

The rest of the first ten years, post-Wagga, was filled in at Williamstown and was largely taken up practicing Wagga skills in rebuilding a shack into a comfortable home in Anna Bay, NSW and producing two more wonderful daughters who, together with Angela, have produced eight grandchildren for us.

In my second ten years, post-Wagga, I was once again in a war zone. This time it was Vietnam and that took 366 days, my longest year, to get back to civilisation and sanity. I was there for Merv Lewis's final flight with No 2 Squadron and also the end of my tour, so I went up with him for one final look at the country and also got drenched after the flight as part of the tradition.

We also had the opportunity to make a second trip to Butterworth where we could relive past experiences with our children. We really went into sports in a big way on this tour. We played badminton at least two nights a week, bowling once per week and sailed every weekend. The kids loved it when we sailed for a picnic to Golden Sands or to one of the islands around Penang. A few postings later, with the children growing up rapidly, I was ready for a change of life style.

I was based in Melbourne at Support Command when I decided to retire and on 1 April 1977 put in my application for early retirement. As the time for discharge approached and no word from Canberra, I inquired about my application and was informed that they thought it was an April Fools day joke and ignored it. We decided to build a new home in Murchison, Victoria, and try our hand at alternative living.

The house went up OK as a result of Wagga skills modified to meet the challenge of an adobe pole home without power. Many tools were made specifically for the job, such as mud brick moulds. As for self-sufficiency we soon realised that the land would not support a vegetable garden to provide even the basics of subsistence. We were, however, successful in setting up a pottery and craft outlet and later a restaurant. This gave us a taste of manufacturing, wholesale, retail and hospitality. In the pottery, I did the throwing and Margaret the hand building. We had a good team going and sold our products in the retail side of our business and wholesale to other craft outlets. We started the restaurant as we felt the location was an ideal getaway for people of Shepparton or surrounding towns for the evening. Our daughter Helena started in business with the restaurant but found it not to her

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liking and left after a short time. Younger daughter Marlene had always been interested in cooking and returned home after finishing at Dookie. One of her prime subjects had been cold storage management, which came in handy. We had live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights and they proved to be our most successful periods.

However, about three years later, Marlene met a German backpacker at Port Fairy Music Festival and that was goodbye Marlene, to live in Germany. Her move gave us the opportunity to close the restaurant as we were having difficulty keeping up with the pressure of the job and we didn't want to break in a new cook. For a year I took on the job of a driving instructor at DECA followed by two years as a design draftsman with the local shire. By this stage with all the children married, we realised that we really wanted to continue our overseas travel. In 1989 we took off for Germany to visit our daughter and have been on the move regularly ever since.

Our passion now, other than regularly visiting our children and grandchildren, is to travel with the themes of history and architecture. Our usual trip is to fly to Germany and spend some time in the normal domestic situation with our daughter and her family and then go to other places for anything from a week to a couple of months. Our two favourite places to visit from Germany are Italy and the UK. Italy has layer upon layer of history and architecture and the people are just great. The UK has particular advantages as they speak a similar language to us and it's great fun looking up places where our forebears came from.

However, our major interest in the UK is the National Trust. The National Trust owns more than 248,000 hectares of the most beautiful countryside and almost 1000 kilometres of outstanding coast for people to enjoy. It looks after forests, woods, fens, farmlands, downs, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, and villages - forever, for everyone and now protects and opens to the public over two hundred historic houses and gardens and forty-nine industrial monuments and mills. Each visit to the UK we spend at least a week in London.

Many trips we have had from Germany are by "last minute" deals where you take off with a day's notice to a Greek island, Spain, Turkey or wherever you like at less than half the normal fare. A great way to travel. On our 2003 trip to Europe we also visited Angela in Egypt for the first time. The Coptic Church photo was taken in the Western Desert and there has been a monastery there since the third century. Our visit to Egypt included two weeks in fabulous Cairo, of twenty million people - including four million within the city of the dead - visiting museums, mosques and markets. We spent a few days through the Sinai Desert at Sharm and another few days in Alexandria and actually stayed in a hotel on the site where Cleopatra committed suicide. From our bedroom window you looked down on the site where Cleopatra's needles stood; one now stands on the Thames in London and the other in the USA.

One of my highlights of Cairo was the opportunity to go sailing on a felucca, an ancient sailing vessel with one sail but capable of pointing about thirty degrees into the wind and forming a cup arrangement to run with the wind. The craft takes about thirty people who usually take a picnic on board with a couple bottles of wine to enjoy and watch the sun set over the pyramids.

We have travelled a long way since the training we received at Wagga in 1954-56. The skills learnt have held me in good stead for many projects that I have since undertaken. Those immediate years following Wagga gave Margaret and me a taste of overseas travel and we have never regretted our travel then and since. However, our future is unclear at this stage, as we have reached another milestone in that we are too old to maintain our home in Murchison.

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This is currently on the market and our initial move is likely to be the centre of Melbourne so that we are close to Margaret's mother, our Melbourne daughter and grandchildren and the facilities of a big city.

It is unlikely though to be the end of our aimless wandering as there are still our children and grandchildren, and still many countries and cultures that are calling.

Geoff Morrow

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PS: The above is the new address after moving.



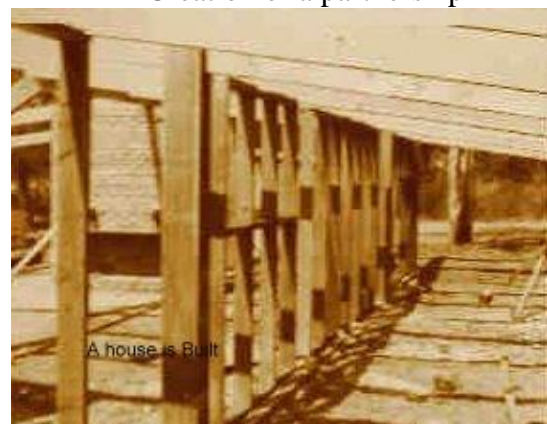
Me with "Tich" Nightingale, Butterworth 1960
77 Squadron first operational day.



Creation of a partnership



Last day in Vietnam and Merv Lewis's last flight
with 2 Squadron L to R : me, ..?, Lewis.



House is built at Murchison, Victoria

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Fantastic sailing in ancient Felucca

Fantastic sailing— an ancient Felucca



Coptic Christian Egypt

Coptic Christian church—Egypt

MANGO SCRAPBOOK IMAGES



Ready for bivouac march 1956. L to R : Back : Hodge, O'Connell, Jacka?,.....?, Belton, McCallum. Front : Perry?, Etheridge, Boyd?