

Dave Pointon—A14414—Mechanical Transport Fitter

After RAAF - 1969

After graduation I was posted to 3AD Amberley where I spent eighteen months. This was followed by a two year posting to Base Squadron Butterworth, Malaysia. I then returned to 3AD Amberley for a further four-year stint. My next movement was a return to Butterworth where I joined 114 MCRU for two years. From Malaysia it was back to Amberley once again, this time to Base Squadron, running transport section. I remained there for the next two and half years until my discharge in January 1969.

The real world

Once back in the real world I established myself as a heavy earth moving equipment fitter, firstly in refurbishing secondhand machines prior to resale and later moving into the sand mining industry on Stradbroke Island. In mid 1975 I was appointed as a TAFE teacher in Brisbane. During the five years I was with TAFE I obtained my diploma in technical teaching as well as gaining much teaching experience. After leaving TAFE and becoming an industrial trainer within the mining industry I met up with quite a few ex-TAFE students, many of whom made positive comments on the apprentice training we had provided.

My first assignment in industry was as senior teacher in the Mine Training College at Bougainville Copper Limited in Papua New Guinea. This two-year contract passed quite quickly and in early 1983 I found myself back in Papua New Guinea with an American construction company setting up the OKTedi Mine. This was an exciting experience. I was only with construction for six months when I was transferred to the mining company OTML. During this time I became the training coordinator for the chief engineers department.

In mid-1985 I was approached to rejoin the construction company Bechtal and participate in the training of Chinese workers at a new coal mine in the far north of China near the Gobi desert. It was there that I learnt to cope with the cold weather. Winter mornings ranged from minus twenty-seven degrees C to minus thirty-five degrees C. And we thought Wagga was cold! When we first arrived on site the Chinese invited us to a number of banquets. At these occasions the seating was such that each of our group had a Chinese national on either side of us. It was at one of these dinners that the chap next to me lent over and said to me that he knew an Australian. My thoughts were that there were eighteen million Australians, and he knew one!

“That’s good,” I said. “And who might this person be?”

To my surprise the person he named was a person I had met and had worked with.

The most interesting tasks I had to deal with in China were to liaise with the Chinese government officers of taxation and the security service. On a monthly basis our staff had to pay their personal taxes. I had to compile all the tax returns and present them to the tax collector for validation and payment. My role also involved organising visa renewals for our ex-pat employees. All in all, work in China was not easy but very interesting and I would go back tomorrow.

In mid-1987 I was back at the OKTedi Mine in Papua New Guinea as the training coordinator for the mining division. This time I was looking after the training for maintenance staff, equipment operator staff and professional staff. I also trained senior mine staff to undertake the government mine managers examinations. The mining division was moving about two hundred thousand tonnes of material each day. One hundred percent of the operators were national Papua New Guineans. Just before I left there after eight and a half years service the mining division achieved one million man hours in operation without a lost time incident.

On the rundown to retirement I was maintaining equipment for producing seed potatoes as well as developing new factory equipment.

In June 2000 I hung up my tools and began the retirement phase of my life. I have not

Mango Stories

Dave Pointon—A14414—Mechanical Transport Fitter

given up altogether as I have taken up fine woodwork as a hobby. My wife Addell and I have travelled as much as we could, mainly between jobs and more so since retirement. We have been to the United States, UK, Canada and Europe several times. While we were in China we travelled to Japan and South Korea for a brief trip.

The trip we would most recommend is to take the cruise from Vancouver to Alaska followed by a couple of weeks land tour through Alaska. Seeing the animals in the wild in South Africa was also a wonderful trip.

Just recently we rode The Ghan to Alice Springs and The Indian Pacific to Perth. In February 2004 we are booked to visit South America and the Antarctic.

We have two daughters, one working in the beauty industry and the other in a senior government position in Canberra. My best wishes to all.

David Pointon
57 Ryde Road
Hunters Hill
Sydney NSW 2110
Tel. No. 02 9817 1126

MANGO SCRAPBOOK IMAGES



Mango armament apprentices: L to R : Top- Best, Etheridge, Morrow, Gent, Brooks and Monkhouse. On wing - McCallum, Black, Gahan, Hodge and Gallagher. Under - Scutts