

**Ray (Butch) Ward—A53160—Instrument Fitter**

I was posted to the East Sale base 1958 and was soon very taken with the region. The water sports, fishing, hunting etc. were all available and I enjoyed them to the full, but I did spend the first six years of my time travelling to and from Melbourne courting the lovely “Helen” whom I had met in late 1957 whilst at 1AD. Of course, as soon as we were married and settled in Sale I was attached to the School of Radio, Laverton to do a six-month long electronic course. So for that time I was travelling from Melbourne to Sale and returned every weekend; that was the first time I was “airforced”.

While in Sale I joined the Apex Club and this led to my meeting other people in the town with whom I took up the question of employment after the Airforce. Esso Australia had just begun to organise for what is now a very big and important industry, but again I was “airforced”.

I spent nine out of a possible eleven years at Sale (with different units) and was very sorry to have been attached back to Melbourne to the Central Photographic Establishment in 1967. I and the current instrument fitter at CPE had previously done training on some very specialised electronic printers under the guidance of an English boffin who had been brought to Laverton just for this training. Unfortunately that instrument fitter had applied for officer training in 1967 and so I now became the “bunny”. I did not enjoy my eighteen months at CPE or my final six months at Point Cook.

We began building our home in Altona in mid 1968 and moved in at Easter 1969. I had been discharged in January 1969.

I was given employment in a local petrochemical plant as an instrument (process) technician and I worked for this Esso plant for five years. During this time I was involved in the construction and commissioning of a new unit in this plant and I became very involved and interested in a particular type or brand of instrumentation. This interest led to me leaving Esso and joining an American manufacturer of electronic instrumentation in 1975. This was a very industry related product and was pointed specifically at the protection, data gathering, and mechanical health of rotating machinery, i.e. turbines, compressors, pumps, generators, motors, etc. The industries involved included petroleum and petrochemical refining, power generation, gas and water transmission, sewerage pumping, etc.

I was the regional manager for the company and covered Australia, New Zealand and service needs of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. I travelled extensively over the fifteen years and I visited every corner of Australia, most of New Zealand and often into South-East Asia.

The company’s main manufacturing was in the US state of Nevada which I visited frequently. On one of my visits to the USA I had the most frightening experience of my life. I had driven one of the Texas representatives up to Reno airport for his return flight, but as I drove away from the airport it began snowing. Not until I was some five miles from the airport did I realise I was in a snowstorm. It was a farming area with no street lights, the rental car headlight were good for only five metres and I could not see anything beyond that distance. This was a very spooky experience and I still feel for anyone I read about who is lost, fogged or snowed in. I was saved eventually when a huge truck loomed up behind me; I followed him the remaining twenty-five miles to my accommodation in Carson City, Nevada. This leg of the trip was done at around ten miles per hour and I am still terrified when I think of that night. I have never been near snow since.

During my time with that company, our two sons grew up mainly under the direction from Helen, who incidentally also kept the company books, typed the quotes, paid the bills, and answer the phone just to keep busy.

I parted company with the American firm and product in 1990 and joined a local (Altona) Instrument and Electrical Contracting company with whom I stayed as a process instrument

## Mango Stories

Ray (Butch) Ward—A53160—Instrument Fitter technician until my retirement in 2002. This was mainly hourly rate basis, labour only, to refineries, manufacturers, laboratories, etc.

At this time (November 2003), Helen and I have just celebrated our fortieth wedding anniversary. Our eldest son (process instrument engineering) and his wife who live in Traralgon have given us three grandchildren. Our second son (scientist) and his wife who live in Melbourne are discussing our future grandchildren.

Helen and I still live in the little house we built in 1969 and I do not see us changing that. Neither Helen or I have ever owned a pushbike until I was sixty-five (and she a young sixty-two) years old, but we bought one each and I have become a very keen bike rider as Melbourne offers a huge network of excellent paths. I truly enjoy a three to four-hour session and seeing parts of Melbourne that I would never have seen otherwise.

We have attended two of the Wagga reunions but I am looking forward to meeting up with some of those Mangoes that I have not seen since December 1956.

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