



My Story

Rod Faux.

I joined the RAAF as a fresh faced appy on 31RAC in January 1977. I remember the shock of being told to get a haircut (I'd had a neat "trim" – this was the 70's – to shoulder length only a week or two earlier!) before we left the Melbourne recruiting centre for the bus ride to Laverton.



About 70 of us, freshly scalped and half dazed, eventually tumbled off the various buses to be yelled at, pushed, prodded and goaded in to some semblance of order outside the blocks, where we were given our first introduction to our new home. The good news was that if we wanted to leave we could, no questions, just put our hand up and we were on our way home. From memory, I think one bloke did just that – back on the same bus he'd arrived on while the rest of us were still wondering what we'd got ourselves in to.

6 weeks of learning left from right, how to iron a shirt, how to make a bed – what was the point of bed-rolls anyway? – how to shave (this was something I had done twice before, so I was ahead there!!), and how to line up. Line up for inspection before going on parade, line up to march to parade, line up for parade, line up for marching to the mess, line up in the mess, line up to march back from the mess, line up for the sake of lining up.

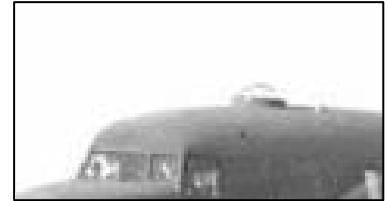
Finally in to the exciting phase of actually learning about electronics. I think by now we were down to about 60, and we separated into 2 classes, 31A and 31B. Although we didn't know it at the time, we were to stay pretty much settled in those classes throughout our time at Radschool and after just over 18 months of instructors' grief about 30 of us graduated in December 1978. Those of us in 31A graduating as Airies, and those in 31B as Groundies.



Unleashed upon an unsuspecting world, my first posting was to East Sale, where I spent a very pleasant 6 months forgetting everything I had learned at Radschool while working on the Macchi flight line. East Sale for me was all new drinking games, songs, and girls. This was the life. Trips away, back seat rides with the

Roulettes, those fancy white overalls, and good times with mates impressing the local girls with our “man-of-the-world” attitude, and our capacity for alcohol. Maybe not that impressive looking back on it, but certainly fun at the time.

I then had 6 months in the Dak hanger. Real aeroplanes! Real radio work! Well, black box changes. It was the closest I'd come so far. And it got me off what had become a bloody freezing flight line. Although I do remember some early morning pre-flights for the Daks where there would be an inch of ice all over the things and the wings were a very slippery slope. I would take a run-up, push with both hands as I jumped, and slide gracelessly back and fall flat on my bum. I think I still have the bruises, but it was apparently vastly amusing to others!! I recall at one point we were doing some work for the civilian airstrips, which involved the Dak flying in at 100 Knots at 100 Feet, with me standing on the pilots' armrests, my head in the astrodome and “marking” the beacons as we flew over them, while some-one else “timed” the signals from them. The buzz of flying along at that speed and height with my head stuck up above the fuselage is something I will always remember.



A man and woman were having dinner in a fine restaurant. They were gazing lovingly at each other and holding hands. Their waitress, taking another order at a table a few steps away, suddenly noticed the man slowly sliding down his chair and under the table, but the woman acted unconcerned.

The waitress watched as the man slid all the way down his chair and out of sight under the table. Still, the woman appeared calm and unruffled, apparently unaware her dining companion had disappeared.

The waitress went over to the table and said to the woman, "Pardon me, ma'am, but I think your husband just slid under the table.

The woman calmly looked up at her and said, "No, he didn't. He just walked in."

Then it was in to the workshop for a stint on the Doppler bench. The major fault with this particular piece of equipment was it was fitted to aircraft. In this case the antenna, which was supposed to move with the aircraft's drift angle, was in an unsealed section of the tail plane, and would often become a solid block of ice. The pilot would report the unit faulty, no drift angle, and both box and antenna would be duly replaced by the hanger techs. I would warm them up and dry them out in the workshop, get them going again and send them back. No-one ever seemed to get bored of this cycle and it kept me occupied for the rest of my time at Sale.



In mid 1980 I was given the good news – a posting to 2OCU at Willytown. Arriving at

a new Squadron was always going to be a nervous affair, but when I stand a commanding

165cm (5ft 5in in the real money – a bit short you might say) and then the first two people I meet are Tony “Lurch” Kendall and Grant “Biggus” Drew, I figured someone had made a mistake. However, Lurch and I got on well together when we were sent to “purgatory” at the Macchi end, and Biggus remains a friend today. One of the most memorable things at this time was being sent to New Zealand on exercise in early 1981, and spending a very pleasant Sunday afternoon in the Airmen’s Boozer, drinking far too much and pointing out to our hosts all the problems with their cricket team, only to watch that infamous moment when Trevor Chappell bowled underarm. Somehow we got out alive, although I seem to recall a lot of apologies, excuses and “our shout” peace offerings were required.



On another occasion we were on exercise at Learmonth when a Macchi pilot decided to show his ground crew passenger (electrician/instrument fitter?) what it was like to “bounce” a Mirage. The Macchi came in low, passing beneath the Mirage as it took off, and what everyone got to see was the effect of jet wash. The Macchi completed the circuit, landed, and taxied in with the skin peeled back from the wing tanks, the wings bent, fuel and oil leaking all over the place, a very embarrassed pilot and one extremely pale passenger. I don’t recall the exact figures, but safe to say it was somewhat over its “g” limits. The aircraft was eventually trucked back to Pearce.

Mid 1981 saw a posting to Butterworth. 75 Squadron was going to be my home for the next 2 years. As it turned out I stayed with 75 when they came back to Darwin, and didn’t leave until 1988 when the Squadron was re-equipped with Hornets and moved to Tindal.



I started in Butterworth safely single and intent on staying that way as I enjoyed life, saved money, and prepared for my eventual return to Oz. (Click [HERE](#) to hear Radio Mouth Butterworth closing off for the night).

All good intentions that lasted until my first trip to Thailand. I did what many before and many after have done, fell head-over-heels in love with the place. The food, the women, the sights, the women, the booze, the women, the booze, did I mention the women; what more could a 21 year old, single, hormone-fueled, relatively well-paid, Aussie lad have asked for? I shouldn’t have asked. It wasn’t long before I met the lovely Thai lady who was to become my wife and arranged for her to move in with me at Butterworth.

In August 1983 the Squadron relocated back to Darwin taking me with them. 5 years in Darwin went far too fast. Settled in to married life, my wife had come equipped with a son and it wasn’t long before a matching daughter came along. Camping, fishing, good friends and a relaxed tropical lifestyle, but it couldn’t last.

Early 1988 and a posting back to Radschool as an instructor. Somehow I fell into instructing transmitters and felt fairly comfortable with it. But after 2 years there was something missing, and with neither a promotion nor a posting in the offing I gave myself the big promotion of “Big ‘M’, little ‘R’, dot”.

I found a job with what was then AWADI, as a transmitter tech at the Jindalee Over The Horizon Radar. I had become a groundie! 4 years at the transmitter site, some 180 Km from Alice Springs, was a bit too much for the wife and we parted ways. I ended up moving back into the bright lights of Alice Springs to take up a position at the Jindalee receiver site, where I worked as QAO for a couple of years.

While creating Husbands, God promised Women that good and ideal Husbands would be found in all corners of the earth. And then he made the earth round.

1996 was to be a year of change. I had found a new lady to share my life, and we moved to Cairns where I was to try my hand at working on aircraft again. After 3 months I found it wasn't for me, and managed to get a job working for 7 Queensland maintaining the ABC and SBS TV and Radio transmitters in FNQ – back to being a groundie. Somehow we were supposed to provide service within 4 hours of any failure. A challenging task as it involved an area from Dunk Island to Thursday Island and across to Kunnanurra and Weipa, where travel alone could be measured in days. The sites were monitored by a team in Brisbane and trying to explain some of the distances and differences between FNQ and “down south” occasionally proved a bit difficult. I can remember being called one time when they wanted to know why a particular site was off air. When I explained that while the site was only about 2 km from where I lived, we were in the middle of a cyclone and power to the whole area was off. They still wanted me to go and “see if there's anything that can be done”. My response was predictable, but un-printable!

After 3 years, 7 did not get a renewal on the contract and I was again in the job market. Imparja Television were in the process of expanding their transmitter network and I managed to talk myself into the Project Managers position. Imparja grew from their original 6 transmitter sites, covering remote NT and SA, to 28 sites that also provided coverage over remote QLD and NSW, and I created myself a job of looking after all the transmitters they now owned. I settled in to the job, enjoyed the travel, had the kids in school, got the mortgage and relaxed.



However, after 5 years the itch got me again and I started looking around. By this time the kids had left home, and there wasn't a lot holding us in Alice Springs. The opportunity came up to take over a small guesthouse in Hua Hin, Thailand, and I had never lost my love of the place, and somehow managed to convince the wife that this would be a good thing. Talk about a sea-change!

We moved to Thailand in 2004, and gave it our best to try to make a living out of the guesthouse. However, after 2 years of backwards travel in the bank account, we gave away the guesthouse idea and converted to a bar, with the rooms to be used for “other” purposes. Unfortunately my wife decided she had had enough of Thailand, and I became single again.

I now have the unique claim to fame of having married a Thai, bringing her to Australia and divorcing her, and marry-ing an Australian, taking her to Thailand and divorcing her. There’s a lesson in there somewhere.

By 2008 I needed something more than just the bar to keep me



occupied and I started coming back to Australia for 3 month contracts, doing part of my old job of maintaining Imparja’s transmitters.

And so I find myself living in Thailand for about 9 months each year, with a Thai girlfriend, and a bar to prop up and recount tall stories at. Then the other 3 months I’m back traveling around Australia checking that people can still see a picture and hear almost matching sounds when watching Imparja.

So if you see an Imparja Patrol out on the road, give us a wave, and if you’re ever in Hua Hin, make sure you drop in for a beer.

And – if you went to Vietnam, back in the 60’s to 70’s, [THIS](#) will bring back memories.....

Paddy was waiting at the bus stop with his mate when a truck went by loaded up with rolls of turf. Paddy said, 'I gonna do that when I win lottery' 'What's dat, says his mate. 'Send me lawn away to be cut'