



My Story

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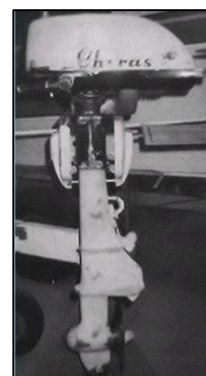
I grew up on a dairy farm at Maleny, Queensland. (Maleny is on the Sunshine Coast, up on the range about 30 klms inland from Caloundra). That meant early mornings, and nearly always late for the bus to school. The bus being a converted ex-army blitz which did double duty delivering empty cream cans and produce on the outward trip, and collecting the school-kids on the way back to school at Maleny. The seats were installed on the return trip and consisted of hardwood planks which were slotted into grooves in the sides of the truck.

I was able to coast through primary school and from memory nothing proved difficult at that level. The only homework I did, was on the way to school, helping some of the kids with compositions and arithmetic. Things changed radically though when I moved from grade eight to high school. I received my first taste of the real world when I found I had a personality clash with one of the teachers. It so happened that he taught Maths one and two, as well as chemistry and physics. I guess I contributed in some respects to my own problems, as I was caught reading novels during his lessons on more than one occasion. He encouraged his own circle of DL's who would start him off on cars or whatever, and off he would go.

I did not realize how stupid I was, being independent and not playing along. I managed to pass nine subjects at Junior level, with only one C pass. No prizes for guessing it was Maths A. I had determined that there was a better life to be found outside of cows and Maleny. I acquired all the paper-work to join the Air Force, just before completing High School.

I required my maths teacher to provide references for the RAAF application and left it in his hands to complete. Second major awakening in life - don't rely or trust others with anything of importance to oneself, especially when we had not exactly been friends during my time in High School, (he missed me by inches with a high-speed black-board duster, on more than one occasion when he caught me reading.) The end result was after months of waiting for a reply, I found I had not even applied. I was too stupid to re-apply, and go through all the paper-work again. After all I was a shy country boy and did not relish a confrontation with my former teacher. I joined the legion of the great, un-skilled and looking for work, I travelled to Brisbane to board with an Aunt at Salisbury and started door-knocking businesses in Hamilton to find employment.

I was after a trade, and was offered a fitter and turner apprenticeship position with Cheras Industries. They manufactured outboard motors which were similar to the bare-bones "Seagulls" of today. I started at the bottom where masses of



machine dust and assorted rubbish thrived. When I had lasted about three weeks at this menial job, I had to re-consider my options. I could not live away from home, travel across the city from Salisbury to Hamilton and expect to have enough for a train trip back home at Maleny each weekend. The wages were in the order of three pounds (\$6.00) a week. I could not survive on that. I quit my hopes of getting trade qualified and started work in the old Munitions area at Salisbury, mainly feeding a conveyor chain with new number-plates on their way to be painted and cooked. The pay was about double the apprentice wages and I could walk to work. The joys of being a Process worker - again not to my liking.



My parents urged me to apply to the Bank of New South Wales, (Westpac in a former era), so being a good country boy who always did as he was told, I did!! My first posting was to Proserpine where I found everyone else had all the money, you handled it in bulk and never kept very much at all for yourself. I earned enough to purchase an old BSA motor-cycle, and this started me on another path to self-destruction. I joined the Army Reserve (Citizens Military Forces) while living in Proserpine and learned a lot of things to avoid. When a couple of years later, I had a choice of which service to apply for, after carrying comms gear as well as heavy barrels etc. no contest really!! I stayed three years in the Bank's employ with further postings to Cloncurry, Tully and Atherton.

While still employed at Tully, I did a rush trip back to Atherton, just for a weekend visit. I failed to negotiate the "S" bend over the rail line just outside Mareeba on the return trip and spent the next month in the local hospital, eighteen days in a coma. I was left more than a little bit mixed-up in the thinking department from this encounter and consequently could see no future for myself working in the bank, (back in Proserpine again.) I quit this "secure" job and decided I would go cane-cutting to make real money.



My first attempt at cutting green cane for planting, left me with blisters and some advice from the cocky. His words were to the effect that I would never make a go at it. I suppose it is a bit of a "seachange" to use a modern term, going from banking to manual labour. I ended up with a "cut" of my own for my first season, at Giru. Hand cutting, hand-loading onto a flat-top truck, driving a couple of miles (those days), starting an engine-powered derrick, hand moving a five ton (empty) weight QR FJS wagon under the derrick and loading it, with about six tons of sugarcane. Good fun. I think not. Cane-cutting for two seasons with trips to Victoria to follow the fruit picking in the off season. I had many other short term jobs in between. It was another learning curve when I was fencing on a property at Rolleston. Those cockys think they are God. Again not for me.

I was working in deep trenches for the Brisbane City Council Sewage Department, when my application to join the RAAF was successful – all I had to do was to wait a while until they called me up. I was back at my adopted home in Bowen when the time came. The date of enlistment

in Brisbane, was 31 July 1965. I reported to the RTO as ordered and then began a series of uncomfortable train trips from Brisbane down to Edinburgh. The difference in temperature from t-shirt dress in Bowen, to Edinburgh SA was a bit of a shock. My first evening meal in the mess at Edinburgh was another, as lo and behold, who should I see but my best mate from Bowen, Peter “Jack” Nicholls. He was a couple of courses ahead of me, and we both were unaware of each others intention to join up.

Recruit Training was uneventful as I was a very fit individual in those days. I bought a pair of hand-clippers and offered emergency haircuts of a Sunday evening for two bob a time. I must have saved a lot of blokes from falling foul of our course DI, Sgt Chris McNolty. My dad always claimed there was only a week between a good and a bad haircut anyway. “Jack” was again a couple of courses ahead of me when we arrived in Laverton to start on Number 62 RMC.

Somehow during 42RTC I also managed to squeeze in the odd beer with Johnny Mathwin.



The Maths proved to be a problem for me. I swear I had never seen such stuff before in my life. There definitely was some new concepts and I gained a Supp-Fail. That scared me, as the only option left would be off-course and GH. I studied very hard for my Supp, and creamed it so to speak. Time flew by, and off to my first choice of posting to Amberley to No.3AD working on Canberras and Sabres. Nine months later and it was back to Laverton to meet the motley crew making up Number 41 RTC.



I am gifted with 20-20 hindsight, and I wish now that I had not spent so much of the course time weekends interstate with John “Tommo” Thomson (now deceased), at his home in Corowa. That part was great, although the hard bit was being on time for Monday morning parades, after arriving back on base mere hours earlier.



The heated class-rooms were not good for staying awake and concentrating on the subject matter in hand. I can remember more than one person studying with their eyelids closed. My memories of Laverton's cold and drizzling rain has not dimmed.

My next posting after successful completion of RTC, was again following the sun to Townsville and the Neptunes. What a monster to keep serviceable. Working on the things allowed me to build up more leave-in lieu than I could use, with trips to Richmond, exercises in Darwin and a swan to Hawaii. Five years in, and I was off to Amberley again, this time to 2 SQN who were busy with Canberras in Vietnam. My contribution to the cause was mostly stuck on a desk bay servicing the Green Satin Radars sent back. By now it was getting close to the end of my six year enlistment period and I had found a lovely lady from a dairy farm at Allora (near Warwick, Qld). We decided to get married and even though I had just been given a posting to 77 Sqn, I decided to pull the pin.



I had a discussion with our section Sergeant about my intentions to get out, (sorry but I have forgotten names these days). He said “you’ll be back - guaranteed. They all do” he said!! I had to prove how immature I was by leaving the Service on 30th July, 1971. Six years and out to the reserve with the rank of Corporal.

I remember getting enough from the DFRB to replace my mother's hot-water system which had broken down. I was living at home in Hendra, (suburb of Brisbane) and doing a very fast trip to and from Amberley each day using my trusty steed, a green Triumph Trident. It would make a person wonder how I have lived to old age. Luck of the Irish, I guess.

It was a long time later before I remembered that I had agreed to meet Trevor Benneworth in the main street of Launceston, when we both were out in July 71. It did not happen. I think I was too taken up with the thoughts of the up-coming marriage to remember my promise to Trevor. My first civilian job was as a black and white television technician in Brisbane. (I should have enlisted as a ground radio tech when I joined the Air Force, as they had plenty of time available for the required civilian OJT). The money was way less than the RAAF, so I headed for a mine job in Weipa as a radio technician.

Comalco owned everything there, and provided a service for all domestic repairs. This was my apprenticeship to becoming a real technician having to fix everything from radio networks to a

tape replay TV station using Ampex tape machines. Four years later, I joined the staff as foreman in charge of communications section. This encompassed the above, as well as the Industrial Instrumentation, telephone and computer IT systems.

I carried out minor repairs on the IBM mainframe computer, and system such as the repair of modems from lightning damage, as well as the terminals and printers. Thirteen years in the cape and kids in high school. The standard of education in Weipa is pegged by the majority, so off to boarding school in Townsville initially for one, but found two was too costly. This prompted a move to the east coast. I opted for Cairns, but the boss wanted Brisbane. I could not agree to this, so we met half-way and went to Townsville. I bought a small radio shop there, and accepted anything electronic that broke on land or sea, for repair. Another mistake in that there is more profit in constantly repeating similar products rather than a huge variety.



I passed the RAAF base quite often, and wondered about the number of Neppies parked in the swamp over near the fire station. They were not using them for fire training as I had witnessed was the fate of the Lincoln at Amberley. In hindsight, they would have gained more value from them if they had. I decided to join 27 Sqn and did so after an absence of fifteen years, retaining the rank of Corporal. I quite enjoyed the difference I found in the service attitude. I made friends at 35 Sqn and spent many hours working on Iroquois and Caribou aircraft.

Rappelling in Lamington National Park and scaling Mount Warning in SEQ, was the type of hard work I was not used to in the PAF. Adventure training was my cup of tea. Up and down Mount Bartle Frere, near Innisfail (in one day), and doing the climb to the top of Mount Stralus on Hinchinbrook Island, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the crash of the American bomber at the summit, was my line of work. We did a trip to the summit of Mount Warning, including the crash-site of the Lincoln bomber in the Lamington National Park. This was lost

during lousy weather, on a mercy flight from Townsville. The wreckage of the Stinson lost there many years ago, was included on this work episode.(O'Reilly, for those who know the story.).

There was one memorable weekend when the RAAF were due to hand over our Hueys to the green machine. The whole Squadron took to sea in the RAAF crash launch to camp at Rattlesnake Island. Thrashing around the island in the Huey, before winching down to the ground, was great. Live firing from a Huey gunship was something I never expected to experience either, although this was arranged by my gunnie friend W/O Mick Wallace. This made my career in 10Sqn appear dull.

I worked a lot with ground radio – W/O Bruce Hurst, W/O Noel Hartigan, to name but two. We provided comms for Combat Survival, at feature 790, Bluewater, north of Townsville. When the Bou's began to be phased out, 35 Sqn had already gone that way, and 38 Sqn had taken over in Townsville. I ended up doing Squadron History computer work with my mentor in this field W/O Boyd Kelton. – ex Instruments - PMEL.

My service career ended when I left in 2002, with the rank of FSGT and a LS and GCM. I have worked as a contractor for Telstra (ND&C) for most of ten years on and off. What a great way to see the country and drive, using someone else's fuel card. Broome, Cape Leveque, Ularu, Kakadu and all of Qld and NT. I now work as a comms rigger for a contractor to Telstra, doing a variety of jobs such as painting the upper 80m of a 130 m mast (alternating red and white sections), installing replacement masts and, electronics for station and remote properties and updating mobile systems. Dual qualifications as a rigger and technician can be useful. I still like the travel side of this life.



These days I work in Townsville as an Austel licensed cabler for another ex RAAFie. I first met him as a radio Cpl in 35 Sqn, although he turned Flight Engineer on Caribou. He is ex FSGT Alex Jenkins, who now runs his own business – Jendata.

All my life I thought air was free....until I brought a bag of chips.

WWII US Navy Submarine Destroyed a Japanese Train!!

In 1973 an Italian submarine named Enrique Tazzoli was sold for a paltry \$100,000 as scrap metal. The submarine, given to the Italian Navy in 1953 was actually an incredible veteran of World War II service with a heritage that never should have passed so unnoticed into the graveyards of the metal recyclers.



The U.S.S. Barb was a pioneer, paving the way for the first submarine to launch missiles and flying a battle flag unlike that of any other ship. In addition to the Medal of Honour ribbon at the top of the flag identifying the heroism of its captain, Commander Eugene "Lucky" Fluckey, the bottom border of the flag bore the image of a Japanese locomotive.

The U.S.S. Barb was indeed, the submarine that "SANK A TRAIN".

July 18, 1945, in Patience Bay, off the coast of Karafuto, Japan .

It was after 4 A.M. and Commander Fluckey rubbed his eyes as he peered over the map spread before him. It was the twelfth war patrol of the Barb, the fifth under Commander Fluckey. He should have turned the submarine's command over to another skipper after four patrols, but had managed to strike a deal with Admiral Lockwood to make a fifth trip with the men he cared for like a father.

Of course, no one suspected when he had struck that deal prior to his fourth and should have been his final war patrol, that Commander Fluckey's success would be so great he would be awarded the Medal of Honour.



Commander Fluckey smiled as he remembered that patrol. Lucky Fluckey they called him. On January 8th the Barb had emerged victorious from a running two-hour night battle after sinking a large enemy ammunition ship. Two weeks later in Mamkwan Harbor he found the mother-lode, more than 30 enemy ships.

In only 5 fathoms (30 feet) of water his crew had unleashed the sub's forward torpedoes, then turned and fired four from the stern. As he pushed the Barb to the full limit of its speed through the dangerous waters in a daring withdrawal to the open sea, he recorded eight direct hits on six enemy ships.

What could possibly be left for the Commander to accomplish who, just three months earlier had been in Washington ,DC to receive the Medal of Honour? He smiled to himself as he looked again at the map showing the rail line that ran along the enemy coastline.

Now his crew was buzzing excitedly about bagging a train!

The rail line itself wouldn't be a problem. A shore patrol could go ashore under cover of darkness to plant the explosives, one of the sub's 55-pound scuttling charges. But this early morning Lucky Fluckey and his officers were puzzling over how they could blow not only the rails, but also one of the frequent trains that shuttled supplies to equip the Japanese war machine. But no matter how crazy the idea might have sounded, the Barb's skipper would not risk the lives of his men.

Thus the problem, how to detonate the explosives at the moment the train passed, without endangering the life of a shore party.

PROBLEM ?

If you don't search your brain looking for them, you'll never find them. And even then, sometimes they arrive in the most unusual fashion. Cruising slowly beneath the surface to evade the enemy plane now circling overhead, the monotony was broken with an exciting new idea: Instead of having a crewman on shore to trigger explosives to blow both rail and a passing train, why not let the train BLOW ITSELF up ?

Billy Hatfield was excitedly explaining how he had cracked nuts on the railroad tracks as a kid, placing the nuts between two ties so the sagging of the rail under the weight of a train would break them open. "Just like cracking walnuts," he explained. To complete the circuit, [detonating the 55-pound charge], we hook in a micro switch and mounted it between two ties, directly under the steel rail. "We don 't set it off, the TRAIN will." Not only did Hatfield have the plan, he wanted to go along with the volunteer shore party.

After the solution was found, there was no shortage of volunteers; all that was needed was the proper weather, a little cloud cover to darken the moon for the sabotage mission ashore. Lucky Fluckey established his criteria for the volunteer party:

- No married men would be included, except for Hatfield.
- The party would include members from each department.

- The opportunity would be split evenly between regular Navy and Navy Reserve sailors.
- At least half of the men had to have been Boy Scouts, experienced in handling medical emergencies and tuned into woods lore.
- And Lucky Fluckey would lead the saboteurs himself.

When the names of the 8 selected sailors was announced it was greeted with a mixture of excitement and disappointment.

Members of the submarine's demolition squad were:

- Chief Gunners Mate Paul G. Saunders, USN.
- Electricians Mate 3rd Class Billy R. Hatfield, USNR.
- Signalman 2nd Class Francis N. Sevei, USNR.
- Ships Cook 1st Class Lawrence W. Newland , USN.
- Torpedomans Mate 3rd Class Edward W. Klingsmith, USNR.
- Motor Machinists Mate 2nd Class James E. Richard, USN.
- Motor Machinists Mate 1st Class John Markuson, USN.
- Lieutenant William M. Walker, USNR.

Among the disappointed was Commander Fluckey who surrendered his opportunity at the insistence of his officers that as commander he belonged with the Barb, coupled with the threat from one that "I swear I'll send a message to ComSubPac if the Commander attempted to join the demolition shore party."

In the meantime, there would be no harassing of Japanese shipping or shore operations by the Barb until the train mission had been accomplished. The crew would 'lay low' to prepare their equipment, practice and plan and wait for the weather.

Waiting in 30 feet of water in Patience Bay was wearing thin the patience of Commander Fluckey and his innovative crew. Everything was ready. In the four days the saboteurs had anxiously watched the skies for cloud cover, the inventive crew of the Barb had crafted and tested their micro switch.

When the need was proposed for a pick and shovel to bury the explosive charge and batteries, the Barb's engineers had cut up steel plates in the lower flats of an engine room, then bent and welded them to create the needed digging tools.

The only things beyond their control were the weather and the limited time. Only five days remained in the Barb's patrol.

Anxiously watching the skies, Commander Fluckey noticed plumes of cirrus clouds, then white stratus capping the mountain peaks ashore. A cloud cover was building to hide the three-quarters moon. So, this would be the night.

MIDNIGHT, July 23, 1945

The Barb had crept within 950 yards of the shoreline. If it was somehow seen from the shore it would probably be mistaken for a schooner or Japanese patrol boat. No one would suspect an American submarine so close to shore or in such shallow water.

Slowly the small boats were lowered to the water and the 8 saboteurs began paddling toward the enemy beach. Twenty-five minutes later they pulled the boats ashore and walked on the surface of the Japanese homeland.

Stumbling through noisy waist-high grasses, crossing a highway and then into a 4-foot drainage ditch, the saboteurs made their way to the railroad tracks. Three men were posted as guards, Markuson assigned to examine a nearby water tower. The Barb's auxiliary man climbed the tower's ladder, then stopped in shock as he realized it was an enemy lookout tower, an OCCUPIED enemy lookout tower. Fortunately the Japanese sentry was peacefully sleeping. And Markuson was able to quietly withdraw to warn his raiding party.

The news from Markuson caused the men digging the placement for the explosive charge to continue their work more quietly and slower. Twenty minutes later, the demolition holes had been carved by their crude tools and the explosives and batteries hidden beneath fresh soil.

During planning for the mission the saboteurs had been told that, with the explosives in place, all would retreat a safe distance while Hatfield made the final connection. BUT IF the sailor who had once cracked walnuts on the railroad tracks slipped or messed up during this final, dangerous procedure his would be the only life lost.

On this night it was the only order the sub's saboteurs refused to obey, and all of them peered anxiously over Hatfield's shoulder to be sure he did it right. The men had come too far to be disappointed by a bungled switch installation.

1:32 A.M.

Watching from the deck of the submarine, Commander Fluckey allowed himself a sigh of relief as he noticed the flashlight signal from the beach announcing the departure of the shore party. Fluckey had daringly, but skilfully guided the Barb within 600 yards of the enemy beach sand. There was less than 6 feet of water beneath the sub's keel, but Fluckey wanted to be close in case trouble arose and a daring rescue of his bridge saboteurs became necessary.

1:45 A.M.

The two boats carrying his saboteurs were only halfway back to the Barb when the sub's machine gunner yelled, 'CAPTAIN !' there's another train coming up the tracks! The Commander grabbed a megaphone and yelled through the night, "Paddle like the devil !", knowing full well that they wouldn't reach the Barb before the train hit the micro switch.

1:47 A.M.

The darkness was shattered by brilliant light and the roar of the explosion! The boilers of the locomotive blew, shattered pieces of the engine blowing 200 feet into the air. Behind it the railroad freight cars accorded into each other, bursting into flame and adding to the magnificent fireworks display. Five minutes later the saboteurs were lifted to the deck by their exuberant comrades as the Barb eased away, slipping back to the safety of the deep.

Moving at only two knots, it would be a while before the Barb was into waters deep enough to allow it to submerge. It was a moment to savour, the culmination of teamwork, ingenuity and daring by the Commander and all his crew. Lucky Fluckey's voice came over the intercom. "All hands below deck not absolutely needed to manoeuvre the ship have permission to come topside." He didn't have to repeat the invitation.

Hatches sprang open as the proud sailors of the Barb gathered on her decks to proudly watch the distant fireworks display.



Members of the sabotage team pose with the Ships Flag.

The train mission is noted at the centre bottom of the flag. The Barb had sunk a Japanese TRAIN !

On August 2, 1945 the Barb arrived at Midway, her twelfth war patrol concluded.

Meanwhile United States military commanders had pondered the prospect of an armed assault on the

Japanese homeland. Military tacticians estimated such an invasion would cost more than a million American casualties.

Instead of such a costly armed offensive to end the war, on August 6th the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped a single atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima , Japan . A second such bomb, unleashed 4 days later on Nagasaki , caused Japan to agree to surrender terms on August 15th. On September 2, 1945 in Tokyo Harbor the documents ending the war in the Pacific were signed.

The story of the saboteurs of the U.S.S. Barb is one of those unique, little known stories of World War II. It becomes increasingly important when one realizes that the [8] eight sailors who blew up the train near Kashiho conducted the ONLY GROUND COMBAT OPERATION on the Japanese homeland during World War II.

Footnote:

Eugene Bennett Fluckey retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral, and wore in addition to his Medal of Honor 4 FOUR Navy Crosses, a record of heroic awards unmatched by any American in military history.

In 1992, his own history of the U.S.S. Barb was published in the award winning book, THUNDER BELOW. Over the past several years proceeds from the sale of this exciting book have been used by Admiral Fluckey to provide free reunions for the men who served him aboard the Barb, and their wives.

He graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1935 and lived to age 93.

