



My Story

Lynette Mitchell.

Lyn Kyte joined the RAAF in 1965 and flew to RAAF Base Edinburgh to do her Rookies after which she was posted to Base Squadron East Sale as a Clerk General in the Orderly Room. She says “I will never forget the people I worked with. Cpl Tony Keene was a bit like an older brother as I battled with the newness of living away from home. Never was there a better Sergeant as was Flt Sgt Dorian. His gentle quiet manner earned him so much respect. Flt Lt Dougal McKenzie and Warrant Officer Murray were out there in character and with a CO like Wg Cdr Sullivan (Slam Sullivan) I couldn't have asked for a better working life.



I shared a room with Anne Whiting (married Val Quinell AFFITT) and Ann Dodds (married Rob Steel MTD) and we have remained friends ever since, nearly 46 years. When Anne Whiting married Val and had to leave, Pam Hiddens joined our room and we found her again last year at the Brisbane Reunion (2011). East Sale had a magic all of its own and those who were posted to Sale and felt as though they had been exiled to some gulag left the place with a sense of having been given a gift of understanding nature because East Sale was then a truly beautiful base. Each year since the late 1970's, the WRAAF meet in different states (the next in Perth Oct 2013) and our little band of East Sale WRAAFs has grown to near 30 as we find each other after far too long. Total attendance of the [Brisbane reunion](#) (2011) was over 400.

Winter in Sale was quite a shock for a young Brisbane girl used only to hot days, hot days with high humidity and hot days with thunderstorms and the only ice we saw was thundering hail stones from the summer storms. My first acquaintance with Victoria's seasonal days was the morning after my arrival and being greeted by the bins covered in what I thought was snow. I was quickly enlightened that it was indeed frost and was to learn that early mornings in and around Sale are bathed in fog and frost and if you are not driving through it as I have, it is indeed a charm of the place if there is a warm fire to sit in front of and enough blankets on the bed at night. Pot-bellied stoves were common in the 1960's and in the Orderly Room we all took a turn at prying our civilian clerk, Mr Boucher, away from his prime position to escape the cold. Our living quarters, little weatherboard buildings, which were

built in the late 1940's and which we called huts, unfortunately, did not have that luxury. A one bar heater was the go which warmed our toes and cooked delightful toast from the bread we were given by friendly 'Airmen's Mess' people (with vegemite of course)".

"I remember the fog coming in though. We would all go out in groups to the 90 mile beach, to Baseball, River Trips, Car Rallies (hopeless I was) or just on long car trips to the snow or fishing in the Mitchell River, Licola, or the Den of Nagen.

Really the happiest of times. Sometimes we would meet at the cafe in Sale called Dirty Jim's. Chicko rolls had just been invented and they were the best - on a par with potato cakes (scallops if you are a Queenslander)."

Lyn says she can also remember the fabulous imbalance between blokes and blokettes on the base. (Fabulous for the blokettes perhaps – tb) "There were many more men than women on Sale, the ratio would have been about 1:40 maybe 1:50. So being the WRAAF, being the 'one' in the ratio, a good time was a great time, and to be serious we did have many great times together. We all experimented with the new found freedom of post war independence for women but there was constraint from the very English upbringing that most of us would have had. Many girls joined to flee unhappy home lives (as I had) and the WRAAF gave us the knowledge of self and a freedom to fly, to find inner strength and identity."

In 1967 she had met Ian Mitchell a Framie at Jet Section, Maintenance Squadron, and married in March 1967 and was married and as the law at the time forbid married women to serve in the ADF she was forced to take a discharge. "To have to leave the RAAF because we had found our partners in life was a sad time and I was 'ineligible for WRAAF duties' on the 19th February 1967. Thankfully, this changed in the late 1970's, but it was too late for me.

Sundays was chore day to prepare for the coming week. First you had to bag a spot on the time queue to get to the washing machine. The old Lightburn 'cement mixers', which were



designed by Harold Lightburn and manufactured for the Australian Defence Force were in production from the mid 50's up until the mid 80's and actually didn't do a bad job of cleaning and spinning. They rocked and rolled all over the laundry floor and certainly kept the barracks' electricians busy.

We also had a drying room which was the best in the entire world. It could dry clothing faster than any modern dryer you can name and probably dried half the base population's washing.

Tidying and doing bedrolls ready for inspection the next day and the weekly general cleaning of the WRAAF Barracks was essential. Called 'Panics' the worst job was the ablutions, the worst worst job for me was chasing the hundred million billion leaves on Emu Panic. I hated it. We cleaned our floors and waxed with that yellow gunk and danced with the polisher, the one and only in the Barracks. But our floors shone with a gleam the Queen would be proud of. Maybe....

Then of course we would have to tidy our cupboards and have the coat hangers the right way and the undergarments all folded neatly in the drawers. Dusting our own bed area and making sure the room was tidy for inspection the next day. On the Monday we would be far too busy

cleaning the general areas in our panic duties to have time for our own personal space. We were allowed to have 2 personal items on our desk. I had two cute dark dolls on mine (still have them). Yes I have everything ever given to me and no I'm not going on TV show the Hoarders.

Bedcheck was, for the uninitiated, the rounds that the Orderly WRAAF of the night did up until 1159hrs. 12 midnight. We wore an armband of course and our weapon of choice was a flashlight and our armour was the log book. If you came in late, even a minute after midnight then you were logged and charged and usually ended up with extra duties. I did manage to get a charge one night and never forgave Sue Thornton – at the time. Sue had taught me how to iron shirts the dry cleaner way and we got on very well and I couldn't understand how she could not fudge the books for me. Time has erased those youthful feelings and fond memories remain.



Lyn and W/O Murray 1966

So bedcheck was the deadline and if there was to be a prank it was usually after the Orderly WRAAF had done her rounds and was safely in bed. One wonderful way to upset the Orderly WRAAF though, was to put honey on the door knobs. That was not a nice thing to do. But it was fun....”

“Who amongst us service people have never had their bed shortsheeted or participated in the act? Why is it so, that put a group of like-minded people together and they come up with games to occupy their empty minds?

Such was the way in the WRAAF and probably in many other sectors of the community where there is a leader who can convince others to play his/her game. During my years as a WRAAF I believe I was given the title of ‘goody two shoes’ but I'm certainly in for a fun time when there is no danger or hurt to the intended victim. I'm not really sure if I have been a victim really and so cannot feel the frustration or anger or merriment that could overcome one if put in that position. I did though participate in the fun times at RAAF East Sale during my time in Hut 31. My roommate, Ann Dodds, suffered the indignation of actually having all her furniture taken from the room. Bed, desk and chair. Ann was seriously involved with Rob and her return from their evenings together was always timed just before bed-check. This night she arrived ‘home’ to find only an empty space. The bed I believe was up a tree somewhere. I guess it was retrieved.....Did we get into trouble? I don't remember!

One night we decided that Brenda Brown, who worked at Medical Section, had not completed her shift. So, we each contributed a tie and somehow, because 40 odd years later I cannot imagine how we did it, we managed to overpower her and tie her from head to foot with ties and dump her on the front porch of the medical section. I do not remember if she came back that night or how we managed to carry her but I know we did it. Only the past knows if we retrieved our ties.



Our biggest 'coup d'état' was the night we buried Carol Ford's car – in toilet paper. Whose idea? Carol said it was Pam Nelson. An NCO??. Never! I know that it was after dark and we all had rollers in our hair and dressed in our pjs. Where did the toilet paper come from?? – it just appeared. It was the most fun and how many rolls we went through is also a mystery now with the passing of years. But we went under and over the car a good many times. Well it was a mini.....

Who was Carol Ford??. She was my boss. Flying Officer Ford and Officer in Charge of WRAAF at East Sale in 1966. As Carol had commandeered my bicycle when she arrived with her seniority I guess I felt somehow compensated that night. As in 2011, when the event was brought up in conversation at our bi annual reunions, we all have a giggle.

The night we wrapped Flg Off Carol Ford's (OIC WRAAF at Sale) Mini in toilet paper. She was not happy Jan!!!!

Whether Carol walked to work that morning or rode my bike only she can tell but that car wasn't going anywhere.



A leisurely Sunday arvo in Hut 31, listening to music, talking about anything and everything.

Over forty years later these silly play times that we all thought were hilarious, in our minds were certainly not harmful though probably intrusive and frustrating for the victims I dare say.

“The huts at East Sale had 4 rooms and the ablution area. Three showers, 2 toilets and a bath. Three rooms had three WRAAF and the fourth room was for the NCO in charge of the hut. We all envied a room to ourselves but the bonding between roommates was in hindsight far more valuable as 46 years later we still have contact with each other and call each other friends.

Two of the best things electricity provided for us back then were lights and heaters. The lights were on the wall beside our beds. They had a tin shade over them; rather square. Square enough to wrap our stockings around them so they could dry quickly. The heaters. Those of yesteryear with the one bar across which could warm your feet if you put them close enough. They were also very good for making toast. Of course it was probably prohibited but did that matter to a WRAAF of the 1960's? No need to answer that question.



A get together in the WRAAF's rec room, Lyn is back row, 4th from the right

It was probably a Sunday and most of us were in for the day. Brenda Brown was in the bath with her leg up on the edge. She had broken it and it was encased in plaster. So when the smell of cooking toast became a smell of burning toast and then the smell of clothing burning, alarm bells were ringing not in the fire engine that was racing towards our hut but in all our heads. Pandemonium was abound and the extinguisher pouring out foam and then Flying Officer Smith racing in and ordering us all out of the building. As we all tumbled out and the firemen raced in, Brenda still in the bath was singing out 'Don't forget me'. Still not sure when she got out of the bath.

The fire was extinguished very quickly and the WRAAF of Hut 31 were all reprimanded severely at our irresponsibility. It made for a very exciting Sunday and those in Hut 31 have

never forgotten the bells of the fire engine scrambling, the hoses snaking through the door and Brenda still in the bath.



Lyn & Flt Sgt Dorian

I had met my partner in life in the September of 1966. We spent nights looking for 'luminous ducks' on the Sale Lake. How could I be so dumb, even if I was blonde – but it was fun!. We joined all the other couples at the drive in theatre but I slept through most of the movies – that's my story and I'm sticking to it!!!

When I joined the WRAAF in 1965 we were told on Rookies that 85% of us would marry servicemen. I believe the percentage could have been higher. They didn't tell us the percentage for the longevity of those marriages. I met Mitch (Ian James Mitchell) at a Baseball get together. We were married on 25th March

1967 which means this year it will be 45 years. Mitch, of course, was allowed to remain in the RAAF as a married man and he stayed in for his 20 years. We were moved around a bit until Mitch left the Force in 1984. We bought a Florist Shop and our children (3 beautiful girls) learned some stability in their lives.

Mitch now works in the car manufacturing industry and is on the verge of retiring as all our service mates seem to be doing. I spent most of the 1970's being a mum but always a mum who did things. I learnt about computers when the girls had no choice at school and spent a lifetime being 'involved' in their education.

I've worked in the corporate sector and also in the welfare sector and I like to think I can do anything if I can put my mind to it.



Wg Cdr Sullivan, 1966



Roommates: Lyn, Ann and Anne, 1979.



Roommates: Ann, Lyn, and Pam, 2011.



2011 Brisbane Reunion

Back Row L-R: Cath Griffiths, Daphne Hopping, Marj Jones

Middle Row L-R: Rosa Wallis, Anne Whiting, Pam Hiddens, Pam Maxwell, Pam

Front Row L-R: Ann Dodds, Joan Ramsay, Carmel Holden, Pam, Lyn Kyte





East Sale Group WRAAF Reunion 2007 (All Maiden Names)

Back Row L-R: Cath Griffith, Marj Jones, Ailsa Stack, Rosa Wallas, Anne Whiting, Phil Windsor, Deidre Field, Daphne Hopping, Lyn Kyte, Ian (Mitch) Mitchell, Lex Ingram, Bill (Lofty) Reich, Neil Holmes

Front Row L-R: Denise Owen, Pam Nelson, Ann Dodds, Rod Cake, Helen Heathwoodams, Joan Kelly.



Did the WRAAF give me that courage. Maybe life's experience, but if the WRAAF had not given me that start, I may still be at Sun Alliance Insurance Group in Eagle Street, Brisbane and being over 65, just maybe a spinster who retired with her cats!

Instead I learnt to understand that I had a place in the world. Certainly I learned how to fit into a group and be courteous (just the knowledge to knock before entering a room). I learned that we were not all the same and that sometimes people who had a really bad attitude might just have an emotional problem so deep they didn't know it. It was called tolerance. I learnt to

have a good time just being with family and friends and share each other's sadness and joy. Since 1967 Mitch and I have achieved much in our lives. Not great wealth or great acclaim. We have a home, 3 beautiful daughters, and now one gorgeous granddaughter. We have their love to keep our hearts wealthy. We are getting to be 'older' but who among us has found the fountain of youth. And we have our friends of those 45 years and amongst them many are the women I served with – The WRAAF of RAAF Base East Sale. Esprit de Corp.

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