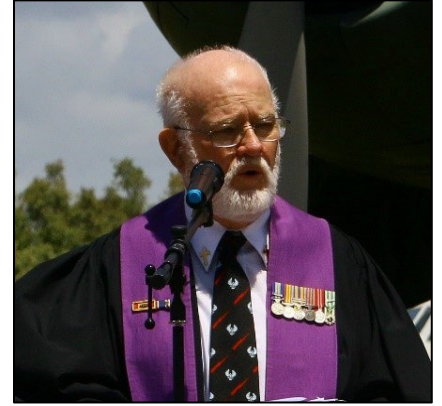


## Arthur's Articles.

### History Repeats Itself!

Warrant Officer (WOD,) 'Chalky' White's [words](#) did come true! You will remember from last issue, that my WOD at No. 2 Squadron had cajoled me into agreeing to be Orderly Sergeant from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day with a promise not to put me on the Orderly Sergeant's roster for all of January 1968? What he knew then that I did not, was that my posting came out to Support Command Melbourne, for 1st of January 1968. This meant that I travelled on 1st of January, arriving at Brisbane airport on the 2nd of January 1968. He kept his promise.



At the airport to meet me was my wife, Annette, then two-year-old daughter, Leanne and a chubby eight-month-old baby son, Ashley. We left the airport to begin life afresh and get to know our family. I know many Vietnam veterans had the same raw experience of renewing relationships with family. Many had difficulties for an unknown number of reasons, but most adjusted. We did and the family bonded, now with an extra little man in it. It was just a wonderful experience after almost twelve months separation.

We took time the following day to chase up the used car salesperson who took our immaculate Holden Special Sedan for a song, along with his Credit Note for a better price than 'the song,' to provide us with a brand-new car. We had stipulated a model that we wanted, so we headed off to his second-hand car yard in Ipswich to meet a very forlorn owner who broke the sad news, as sincerely as his countenance did not reflect, that although he was a car dealer, no new car franchises were willing to offer him a discount on a new vehicle, so he was unable to honour his Credit Note! I walked out of his used car yard, telling him, "I'll see you in Court!"



The next day, we headed into a top Ipswich solicitor, who willingly took our case and proceeded to issue letters of demand to this Used Car Dealer. No money was forthcoming, so we told the solicitor to proceed further. As a matter of coincidence, years later when I left the Air Force, this solicitor was still practising in his Ipswich chambers, coming close to his retirement, with his son stepping into his shoes. He contacted Annette, who already was working as a manager of a high-profile Tax Assessment agency and appointed her as his Tax Accountant where she took on his clients with complicated tax returns. That arrangement was beneficial to both parties until we moved from Ipswich.



To conclude this court action, a date was set in late 1968 for us to attend Court in Ipswich. Annette and I drove up from Melbourne. As we were walking up the steps of the Court, our solicitor advised us that the Used Car dealer had capitulated and would pay us the full amount of the Credit Note. Why the change of attitude, I enquired? That week, the car salesperson was extending his business into a new car franchise and any bad publicity may not have gone well for him.

So how did we manage to purchase that new car we wanted? After the refusal to cooperate, we were taken to Brisbane and visited a few new car yards. One was Annand and Thompson in Fortitude Valley. We told our sad tale about being diddled out of our credit note value, while looking at a newly released Volkswagen 1600 sedan, like the slope back and station wagon version but sporting twin carburettors over the VW 1500 sedan. Playing with figures, the Newstead staff of Annand and Thompson showed us the recommended retail price, then brazenly offered us the amount of our failed Credit Note to be taken off, so we drove away in our 'quick-off-the-mark' VW 1600 sedan, which became the Fry family's two-door mode of transportation until we outgrew it!



The Fry's finished their holiday in Ipswich, then headed south to start my next posting in St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, albeit, located at an attachment to the rambling Victoria Barracks in St. Kilda Road.



The Housing Officer at Support Command said that I would be waiting some twelve months before I was entitled to a Married Quarter, so I was able to obtain Temporary Rental Allowance. We chose a neat house. but condemned for demolition to build flats on the site, in College Street, Gardenvale. This suited me for we were just down from Glenhuntly Road where the tram ran to take me to work and return me home every day so that Annette had the VW 1600 all day for her favourite pastime, shopping!



I enjoyed the tram ride to and from my office for as we rattled along Glenhuntly Road, I would watch the many shops, some operational, but most deserted, and wondered which shop was Charmain Cliff's book shop where she and George Johnston had a kiss and cuddle out the back of the shop, as he described in his novel, 'My Brother, Jack'. George and Charmaine married in 1951, leaving Australia in 1954, firstly for London and then the Greek Island of Kalymnos, where they both continued their writing.



When in Werribee learning Vietnamese, we had ventured out to the Dandenong Hills and bought a beautiful black and tan male dachshund, Prince von Daxendorf, a contraction of Annette's family name, Neuendorf. When I went to Vietnam, we left 'Prince' with some friends at a bayside suburb, who was to send him up to Ipswich by air freight after Ash was born. This did not happen, and in late 1967, our friends cagily told us that 'Prince' had been stolen from their front yard.



I noticed that many Linguists had taken their commissions, so I decided that I must increase my education from Junior level when I left High School to meet the current RAAF minimum requirements for commissioning. I signed up for night classes in English and Mathematics at Prahran Technical School, a short drive from our Gardenvale home. The English class began with twenty aspirant hopefuls while only five sat the final examinations in December. The mathematics class started with ten and only two sat for the final exams. I did well in both and received my certificates to confirm this step towards commissioning.

I still remember my English teacher, Mr Niven, for his interesting stories and good humour. He told us how his daughter was friendly with Neville Shute-Norway's daughter. He told us how Neville Shute would write until midday, using only his pencils. He would sharpen all his blunt pencils, then walk away and relax for the rest of the day.

Neville Shute was a stickler for proper etiquette and gave little attention to any caller who did not phone for an appointment before arriving at his front door. One Christmas, Mr Niven's wife, when a late teenager, was invited to the Shute-Norway home. The two girls 'hit the turps' together on Christmas Eve. At the Christmas dinner table, the following day, the future Mrs Niven vomited all over the set table. According to our teacher, Neville Shute-Norway gave an approving gesture and said that in most genteel conventions people would be on their best behaviour, then congratulated the embarrassed young lady guest that she had defied all existing conventions, by making light of her untimely reactions to the night before! Whether Mr Niven was stretching the truth or just giving his students an extra reason to come to class, I will never now, but he kept his



numbers up throughout the year with such brilliant snippets of ‘gossip’ about writers of the books we were studying.

As we had always lived around Laverton and Werribee for our Victorian postings, living at Gardenvale was a new experience for exploring, which we did on most weekends. We found the newly opened Ferguson Winery, the snow-clad areas of Donna Buang and Lake Mountain, as well as Philip Island, where we watched the fairy penguins do their nightly parade. We also replaced our dog, Prince, stolen while I was in Vietnam. We bought a tan female dachshund, ‘Lady,’ who was as beautiful as ‘Prince’ but more mischievous. Life was good living in the real Melbourne!



Then, in September, the Housing Officer at Support Command, called me up and told me that I had risen to the top of the Sergeant’s Married Quarters list and to expect a MQ within weeks. Then he announced that we would be moving into the flats at Carlton, Richmond, or North Melbourne. Oh! Annette and I knew that ‘Lady’ could not go with us into the flats, so we advertised to give her away, and she was swept up by a grateful new owner. Sorry, ‘Lady,’ we will miss you!

Next, in an unexpected twist of fate, a posting came through for me, back to the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook. The day I arrived back at Point Cook, the Laverton area Housing Officer announced that I was at the top of the Sergeant’s Married Quarters list, and offered us a MQ in Heffernan Street, Laverton, which I accepted. If only these events could have come a few weeks earlier, we could have kept our beautiful ‘Lady’ dog.



At Language School, I was given the task of sorting out the unit’s inventory as well as putting me in the Vietnamese Language department. I monitored a few sessions on the main twelve-month course who were coming to the end of their year, but I mostly was given classes, face to face, and in the language laboratory, with the Colloquial course, courses of six weeks duration for those going to Vietnam, intended to be forward scouts. I had established myself as one who could tell the class how to form their mouth to make the sounds and tones necessary to speak this language, a skill I have been called upon recently to teach those wishing to speak Vietnamese.

Then the big bubble burst! The Army and RAAF announced that all current Linguists were expected to be fluent in SRW (Speak, Read, and Write,) two foreign languages. I was posted to Point Cook to learn either Indonesian or Chinese. I weighed up the two choices and chose



Chinese. I was given the 1969 Chinese (Mandarin) course. On my course were several Army Linguists who were already Vietnamese interpreters and an RAAF Linguist, conversant in Thai. I bought a Honda 50 c.c. motor scooter to travel from Laverton to Point Cook which left the VW 1600 free for Annette's use. Sometimes the head wind from Port Philip Bay was so strong that my little 50 c.c. scooter barely made any headway. One day the RSM, a Thai teacher, Ian D, flew passed me on his 450 c.c. Honda. When I arrived at School, I told him he nearly killed me that morning. He gasped and said that he never went anywhere near me! I replied, "I know that, but when you went passed me so fast, I thought I had stopped, so I got off, and found I was still doing 60 kph!"



January 1969 brought with it my return to the classroom to learn Chinese (Mandarin). There were four RAAF on the course. The Thai Linguist, an Aircraftsman Clerk Financial Accounts, and as Corporal Education Assistant, Ray, who has been my friend for fifty-three years. In fact, since starting this epistle, we have chatted on the phone.

With my tonal and mono-syllabic language behind me, I was quick out of the stalls and sat in the top five of the class that started out as twenty but dropped to eleven after the six-week "hatchet" mark. In June of that year, I developed a chest infection which landed me in 6 RAAF Hospital in Laverton for a week, without discovering the cause of the problem. With a few more days lost before I could return to the classroom, I had lost almost two weeks of instruction and never managed to catch up. I dropped to the lower half of the class and by the end of the course, although I passed, I had finished ninth out of eleven students, not matching my High Credit graduation score on the Vietnamese course.

Our graduation celebration was unlike my Vietnamese course. On the Chinese course, our families were invited to attend plays in Chinese in which half the class participated in one of the two. All students in the graduating Chinese class, dressed in appropriate Chinese costume, and spoke their lines in fluent Chinese. The guests were given a translation of what we eleven said on stage. One student should have said, "Please take off your socks (wa za)' but said "Please take off your pants (ku za)!" The Chinese speakers throughout the show began giggling, much to the Chinese Department lecturer's annoyance, and the guests read 'socks' and could not understand what all the frivolity was about, until we told them after the show. In later years, they returned to the usual graduation ceremony of past years.



Arthur Fry is second from right, playing an old Chinese lady

In 1968, the previous award of pinning Sergeant's stripes in all RAAF language graduates ceased. No graduate had been promoted or re-mustered to Linguist. Many fought for years to attain the previous status. Some were commissioned. Others drifted back into their previous mustering, with or without being gainfully employed as Linguists. In 1969, we had our dux of the class, an Aircraftsman, and the Corporal, both left in limbo. In 1970, both were commissioned, as the answer to the military's problem of not allowing movement for successful graduates. By 1970, a policy was reached, to employ graduates as linguists at LAC rank. I was replaced in Vung Tau, Vietnam by an LAC Linguist who vacated the linguist position in Phan Rang when the Squadron left Vietnam. As an aside, I was asked if I thought the Phan Rang LAC Linguist could do my job I had done as a Sergeant Linguist. I replied, "If he cannot, it is my fault. I was one of his lecturers!"

With my Chinese course behind me, I was left at the RAAF School of Languages to continue with my inventory task, as well as my class sessions with the colloquial course, the main course of 1970 plus one extra task. A Chaplain, Rodger Boerth, was being sent to fill the Chaplain's role at Vung Tau with the added responsibility of re-starting the task of building an orphanage commenced by Father Grannell some years earlier and with the passage of time, had slipped into the 'too hard basket.' Rodger had been given six weeks to learn the Vietnamese language, under my full-time tutorage. When he 'graduated' from my class, I never thought I would see him again so soon. (That will be revealed in the next issue of RAM.)



One day, I was called into the Director of Studies office and presented with a problem that had occurred in the replacement of linguists in Vietnam. After the 1968 course, which promoted no graduates to rank and the Linguist mustering, there were no Vietnamese speaking Linguists to fill the Linguist position in Vung Tau in January 1971. It was pointed out to me that I was being considered for two positions in Hong Kong, following my Chinese training. The proposition was brought forward to me, that if I accepted the Vung Tau Linguist position, I would be in Hong Kong in either position within three months of coming home. Now that was a carrot! In fact, it was not three months, but five months between Vietnam and Hong Kong postings.

Wrapping up my posting in the RAAF School of Languages for yet another time, (one more to come!) I set out in January 1971 for my second tour of Vietnam, in the January, leaving Annette, Leanne, and Ashley to remain in our Heffernan Street, Laverton home as Leanne was in primary school and Ash had started kindergarten. Vietnam calls, but Hong Kong is also calling.



We have reached the ultimate stage of absurdity where some people are held responsible for things that happened before they were born while other people are not responsible for what they themselves are doing today.

## Amazing people I met in my career

After I left the Air Force to enter the church, I obtained a position as manager of a rural Aged Care complex where I managed a Lutheran Nursing Home, Hostel and cottages. I also joined the preaching roster for the residents of that Home.

Four years later, a vacancy became available at the headquarters of the church's state body, the Lutheran Church of Australia, (Queensland District,) [LCAQD] in Milton for a new Director of their Welfare Department. The Chairman of the Nursing Home I managed, was also the Chairman of the LCAQD Welfare Council who knew of my strengths, (and weaknesses,) and invited me to take the position on a two-year contract, extending to a permanent position if I switched my denominational allegiances.



I agreed to a two-year contract. Their chosen successor had been employed in a Lutheran position, unrelated to any of the departments in the Welfare Department, Aged Care, Disability Centres, Children's Homes, Women Shelters, Holiday Camps, and Kindergartens.

I was to monitor him for two years while he managed the Aged Care complex I had temporarily vacated. I also took him on my visits to various responsibilities under my charge, in the later stages of my contract.

The Director of Schools and I discussed the correct position for kindergartens and we both agreed that Welfare was not the correct "department" to place kindergartens but it should be in the Schools Department. We put our joint submission to Church Council, which was approved.

At Milton, one of my first calls in my new role, was to Buderim, to the fledgling committee for Immanuel Gardens. They had built a few cottages but had plans underway for a Hostel and finally a Nursing Home. The chairperson of that inaugural committee was one of my former lecturers at Radio School some thirty years earlier. I knew him as Sergeant Cross. I cannot recall his first name as no brazen Aircraftsman (Recruit) dared call any Corporal or above by their first name. Nor can I recall his name now, so I will refer to him by his military title.

***Immanuel Gardens,  
Buderim, Queensland***

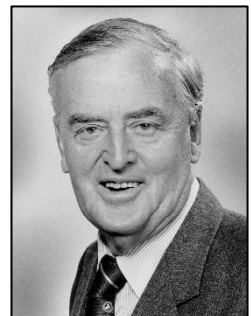
Sergeant Cross said out of the hundreds of radio trainees who passed through his, and Warrant Officer Wishart's metal machine workshop, he remembered me as the 'kid' who tried so hard but



stuffed everything up that he touched. For example, we had to solder twelve small strips of copper into a cube. The instructor assessed its strength by standing on the cube. If it did not collapse, that phase was marked as successful. My cube always had too many dry solder joints, so I never gained a tick for that phase.

Another task was to file a piece of metal perfectly flat. Sergeant Cross reminded me that every time I had the piece of metal close to perfection, I would ruin my job by filing over the edge, rendering the task unsuccessful. After several more attempts, I cannot remember gaining a tick for that phase either!

During my time in LCAQD, the Buderim committee completed the full Immanuel Gardens complex and I had the honour of sitting on the dais on an extremely hot day, sitting alongside dignitaries such as Sir Joe Bjelke-Petersen, who had just relinquished the long-standing position of Premier. Sir Joe's son-in-law, Pastor (later Bishop) Noel Noack, was the local Pastor at the Maroochydore Church and Chaplain to Immanuel Gardens, as well as the current Chairman of the LCAQD Welfare Council. Noel and I became close friends and jointly conducted other events after I left the Lutheran employ.







My dear mother told me that I would never make my living by using my hands, suggesting that I should chose a profession where I could earn a living by talking. That I did, for after graduating from my Radio Mechanics course at Laverton, I only spent three and a half years in the radio trade. The rest of my life was taken up as an interpreter and later a clergyman, where I earned my crust by talking!

In retirement I continued my voluntary work in that vein as a Chaplain to several ex-Service Organisations (ESOs).

How correct was my mother? That is a good lesson for all children, to listen to their mothers. Mothers truly do know best!

I never met Sergeant Cross again. Immanuel Gardens went on to build their complex where owners of cottages could progress, as their health declined, from the cottages to the Hostel or Nursing Home. He could have progressed that way over the past thirty years, or else he may have been promoted to his eternal reward for tolerating such ham-fisted trainees who he had remembered as being a standout klutz over the thirty years between our meetings.

It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.



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