

## Arthur's Articles.

### Off to Hong Kong.

After waving me off twice from Australian shores when I went on my two tours of Vietnam, Annette and our two children finally had a chance to join me as we left Melbourne on a flight to Singapore, on our first leg of our great tour of duty in Hong Kong in April 1972.



We had sold our 1968 Holden Kingswood station wagon to a friend in our church, our furniture had been collected from our married quarter in Heffernan Street, Laverton that we had called home for four years, the personal clothing and household items we had despatched to Hong Kong were already on the high seas, so all we needed for about four weeks was carried with us on the chartered aircraft bound for Butterworth in Malaysia, stopping only in Singapore to allow our Hong Kong bound passengers to disembark, ready for our onward journey to Hong Kong the next day.

### A Stop-over in Singapore

We were met at Changi airport in Singapore by my sister, Ellen, her husband and two daughters, who were on their second tour of Singapore with the Australian Army. They took us to their home. All would have been well, except that our luggage had continued to Butterworth. We waited through an exceedingly long night to find out if the airlines promise that our luggage would be back in Singapore on the return flight, in time for us to connect with our recalcitrant luggage before we concluded our travel to Hong Kong. Fortunately, it did.



We spent the night at my sister's place although we had a room at a Singapore hotel, but without any items to affect our ablutions and no spare clothing, it was preferable to stay with my sister. About the only one of us who did not agree with that solution was our five-year-old son who, in the absence of any male clothing, had to wear his female cousin's nightdress to bed! I do not think he ever forgave us for that slur on his boyhood!

### Arrival in Hong Kong

However, we made it to Hong Kong the next day with a full set of luggage that we left Tullamarine and were met at Kai Tak airport by the Administrative Officer from the RAAF unit who took us to the North Point branch of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank to open an account in Hong Kong.



He also took us to the North Point Store to open a grocery account. Our daily needs were delivered each day from that store, so we rarely went shopping for groceries.

As the Sergeant Linguist I was replacing at the school was still tidying up his two and a half years in the colony, he had not vacated his married quarter, which had been allocated to me. So, we were set up in the Alba Hotel in Causeway Bay, with the tramline running past our front door and the Hoover Sky picture theatre across the road. Part of our introduction to Hong Kong was to accompany the children to Victoria Barracks Primary School where they were placed in approximate classes in the British education system to where they were at in Australia.

Next door to the Alba Hotel was a new construction with pile drivers being struck around the clock to drive the standings for the new building into the reclaimed land on the northern side of the island. The Alba Hotel, too, was to be demolished not long after our stay, as it was very fusty due to the humidity that engulfed Hong Kong. We were to notice this more as we moved up the hill at North Point, where our married quarter was under cloud most of the time and we had to have de-humidifiers running day and night in our wardrobes to keep the mould from growing on our clothes and shoes. Full buckets of water had to be emptied several times a day, but we soon became used to that.



One night, while Annette poured her tea from her tea pot, a huge hunk of scale crust flowed into her cup. We called the House Captain to our room to show him this ugly blob in her cup. After several grovelling apologies up and down the hotel's management chain, every meal thereafter, taken in our room, was accompanied by a bevy of senior wait staff who had to inspect every item before it was placed before us.

The local Chinese dialect in Hong Kong is Cantonese. The staff conversed long and loud in front of us. If only they spoke Mandarin, I thought. But we soon learned that when they spoke about us, we were referred to as 'guai lo,' (Foreign devils.) That followed throughout our time in Hong Kong. Now, Mandarin, 'Yang guai zi,' would have been much easier to understand! Still, 'foreign devils' or not, we still thanked them in English and smiled at them and the complement was returned.



*Trams ran along the northern side of Hong Kong Island*

### **Our Married Quarters became ready.**

Within weeks, our condominium at Flat E9, Hilltop Mansions, Tin Hau Temple Road, North Point, was ready, as was our furniture and goods despatched from Australia and we left the Alba Hotel and were taken up the hill to our new home. Flat E9 had magnificent views of Kai Tak airport's runway if it were not for the high-rise flats on the other side of the road. But we could see the aeroplanes running up to take off or to slow down as they were landing after the gruelling flights



over the high-rise buildings of Kowloon as they came in at head height. We soon got to tell if thick black smoke trailed the aircraft on take-off, it was a China Airlines flight!

Our flat was large with four bedrooms and out the back was an amah (maid's) sleeping quarters and toilet, together with the laundry. Clothes lines were simple bamboo poles, used by the amah, but 'guai lo' wives who chose to use them, did so at their own risk of the bamboo pole falling and their washing needing to be retrieved from a widely scattered area. We soon learned the Cantonese name of our building, which we told to taxi drivers and 'pak pai' drivers. 'Pak pai' meant black number plate and is like our 'Uber' share rides today. 'Pak pai's were cheaper and usually hung about near the premises, but whether you were insured while in them or not, was never really known. 'Fung ging dai ha, Tin ha Miao dau, Bac kok.' We had to learn that for no other public transport came past our door. Although once we went down the hill, there were trams, buses and minibuses galore.



Sometimes we did walk down the hill from Fung ging dai ha. But I cannot ever remember walking up the steep hill, except one day in June 1972, flood water from the burst Braemar Hill Dam knocked us off the road and swamped the VW engine. I stayed with the VW beetle to try to re-start the engine, so Annette and the two children walked the rest of the way up the steep hill. They were exhausted as I drove in having managed to get the VW started. The fierce frown on Annette's face told me not to tell her how clever I was in getting the engine started!

### **My Schooling.**

You may remember that two of us on the 1969 Chinese course at Point Cook were ear-marked to fill the two vacancies in learning institutions in Hong Kong. One was at the Hong Kong University and after two years studying at HKU, the graduate would be posted at RAAF School of Languages as a Lecturer-in-Chinese Mandarin, becoming in time, Lecturer-in-Charge Chinese Department (LIC-C).

The other was at the (British) Ministry of Defence Chinese language School, at Lye Yue Mun, just past Chai Wan on the eastern end of Hong Kong Island. The MOD CLS course was broken into two parts, Translator Standard and Linguist Standard in Chinese (National) language. I achieved Translator Standard in September 1972 and Linguist Standard in September 1973.

My time was split between my studies at MOD CLS and a job which really was a 'Clayton's job' on a MOD station, CSOS at Little Sai Wan. Two British Army Chinese students, a Captain and a Warrant Officer 2 and I shared a job that 'supervised' Chinese translators as they translated newspapers, books, magazines, or pamphlets written in Chinese. We were there to oversee them and help if they needed to explain any Chinese into English vernacular rather than word for word translation. These guys had been doing this type of work since the World War Two period,





so there really was not too much need to call on us for our advice and I am sure that when they did, it was simply to make us feel needed!

Our workdays fitted in with our school days. Whoever was Number One on Day One sat in the chair to oversee the entire system. Number Two on 'guai lo' supervisor for Day One could take a day-in-lieu for missed Public Holidays, or just sit and take the chair if Number One stepped out. Number Three took their Rostered Day Off. This was not a flawed system but considering the prime reason for being there was to study Chinese, most time off saw us heads down into the books at home. Or else I was on my motorcycle getting fresh air in my face as I rode around Hong Kong Island. Pity there was not a subject in that topic. I would have graduated a lot earlier!

### **Annette took a job at the Australian Commission.**

The Australian Commission was in Connaught Centre, in Hong Kong's CBD on Hong Kong Island. My wife, Annette, worked at the Australian Commission as did several of the unit's wives. She worked as a locally engaged clerk, so the pay was not terrific, but she was invited to all the parties when Dr. Steven Fitzgerald's entourage, the first Australian diplomats into Beijing, came to Hong Kong on R&R for their regular break from the restrictive movements outside the Australian Embassy in Beijing. They had to travel by train from Beijing to Hong Kong, so were tired on arrival.



*My zippy 100 c.c. Suzuki motorcycle*

Further the ladies had to wear long pants as bare white legs caused much consternation when they stepped off the train at country stops. Annette had worked at the Ipswich General Hospital where the Third Secretary in Beijing's father was the Registrar, so, it was assumed she knew him! At those events, I was known as Mr. Annette Fry rather than by my military title!

### **Our church connections.**

I had time outside of my studies and work commitment to manage a church-run servicemen's retreat in the Soldiers and Sailors building in Wan Chai where visiting US ships and local UK soldiers could come into the Living Room and Sailors and relax. I replaced a retired US Naval Chaplain who took furlough for six months. I followed his roster of families coming in each night as 'Host Families' to greet the soldiers and sailors, who talked, played games with them and provided suggestions on what to buy their loved ones while in Hong Kong.

On the Saturday night, I would ask if anyone wanted to go to a church of their choice next day. I would then call the nominated church's contact who would arrange transport for those wishing to follow their own faith. For those who wished to attend our sponsoring church, I would arrange to take them or if too many, arrange a taxi, or a fleet of taxis to take the visitors to a church of their choosing.



On their last night in port, I would have a 'waffle night' where each visitor could try their hand at making waffles to be served with ice cream. By the last night, many of the sailors had spent most of their money, so an invite to the Living Room was well accepted and not only was it free, but soda pop and nibbles were laid on by my sponsoring church's generosity. I had to report my expenses each week in running the Living Room, but while my Headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, considered a weekly account of several hundred Hong Kong dollars for 'soda pop,' nibbles and cooking ingredients a well-attended group. They neglected to see that perhaps that large amount represented only a few who attended but drank and ate a whole heap of 'freebies.

When the pastor of that church had to take emergency leave, none of the other mission's employees were available for pastoral duties as each had a legitimate job, they were paid to come across from the United States to do, I was elected to head the church. We were not members of that denomination, but we were a lower grade of member, Associate Members. They were at a loss what to call me in my leading role. So, they called me, 'Moderator,' a military Chinese language student from Australia with oodles of spare time on his hands! And that is why I do not put on my C.V. that I was a Moderator of a Southern Baptist Church in Hong Kong! MOD CLS would have had a fit!

### **We witness a major catastrophe.**

June 1972 saw the slide of many buildings down further up the slopes, down on to Kotwal Road in the mid-Levels. Our AdminO who met us at the airport, lived next door to the last building that collapsed. He invited us over on the Sunday afternoon to see the terrible destruction. I took several slide photographs from his flat. When the slides came back, every slide that showed the destruction had been obliterated with ink, during their development.



*An ink splattered photo in the Kotwal Road disaster*

### **RAAF Welfare.**

The RAAF Unit, simply known in those days as RAAF Base, Butterworth, Detachment A, although small, had an active Welfare Committee. That committee bought an old Chinese junk, with a much-worn London bus motor and moored it at Aberdeen Harbour. The MT Fitter, 'Smithy,' and a few mates, kept it running. It was called the 'Kung Lu' ('Kung' being taken from the Chinese word for Air Force and 'Lu' from the word for Army.) Groups that knew a unit member could hire the 'Kung Lu' when it was running and often, we sailed around the sunken wreck of the old 'Queen Elizabeth' then called 'The Sea wise University.' Just after it was refurbished, it burnt and sunk to the water line. It sat there for months and was eventually cut up and sold for scrap. We went on several excursions around the old Queen Elizabeth and took many photographs, although, surprisingly, none were obliterated as the Kotewall Road photos were.

Now here was a very odd tilt to life in Hong Kong. If a fire began and the Fire Brigade arrived, the owner had to negotiate with the head firefighter to see if it was worth extinguishing the blaze. As I just mentioned, the 'Sea wise University' burnt and sunk. The original floating Restaurant at Aberdeen had just been finished when it caught fire. The negotiations took a little while, while the fire continued and severely damaged the almost complete Aberdeen Floating Restaurant!



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*The burnt-out hulk of the former 'Queen Elizabeth'*

The floating restaurant sat on the water with the tower tilted to the side for most of our entire tour before it was repaired and was opened during our second tour. It is where I spent my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party.



The similar vintage two storey home opposite us in Repulse Bay lay derelict on our second tour of Hong Kong. One night, it caught fire and as no owner was contactable, so, after the fire Brigade arrived and with no negotiations on a price to put the blaze out, it was reduced to a shell.

Our unit also packed the RAAF Welfare Chinese junk to go to one of the islands east of Hong Kong which housed Chi Ma Wan prison. We went about once a year, on invite and the prison's inmates thought it great that they could wait on us hand and foot while they enjoyed the day as much as we did. Everyone took home a (purchased) glass engraved, "Stolen from Chi Mas Wan Prison."



*Fire Brigade sits idly by while negotiations to extinguish the blaze continue!*

### **The days before the Cross Harbour Tunnel**

When we first arrived in Hong Kong, there was not any tunnel connecting Hong Kong Island to the mainland. If we went to Kowloon or the New Territories by car, we had to use the car ferries. To cross otherwise, we would use the Star Ferry or various other ferries that criss-crossed the water between the two points. After the Star Ferry closed for the night, the only way home was by 'Walla Walla's.' First came the cross-harbour tunnel then the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), both tunnels sat on the bottom of the harbour floor and by our second tour in 1980, the MTR had been extended to multiple points around Kowloon and the New Territories, not to mention, as far as Aberdeen on Hong Kong Island.







## Our Transport.

How did we get about? Just after our arrival, we bought a 1964 VW beetle. Nothing could kill it, even when we run out of oil! When we left Hong Kong in 1974, we sold it to an airman and when we returned in 1980, he had just put it off the road, not for anything mechanical, but for too much rust! We could not sell it locally for two reasons. It was blue and Chinese abhor blue cars for some unknown reason. And it had a 'four' in the number plate. '4' means 'death' while 'three' means life and auctions for one, two, three, or four 'threes in a plate fetched high dollars when released.

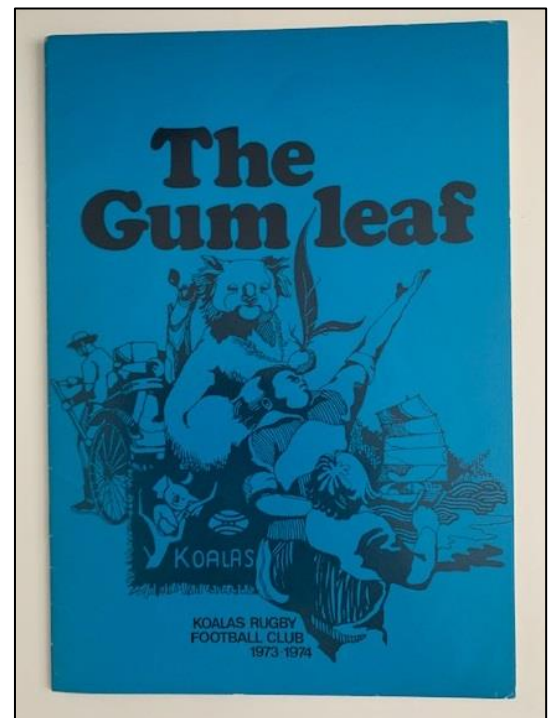


## The 'Koalas'

Our unit did not have enough men for a football team. Rugby Union was played all over Hong Kong. We formed a team and invited both military and civilian Brits into our Koala Football Club. We invited visiting ships and other local teams to play us, the result always was the same, Visitors usually close to fifty, Koalas – Nil. But we always claimed we won the drinking competition after the game. We played the Red Hackle team from the Black Watch just before they went back to the UK. They had kept enough alcohol to last them for the remaining six weeks in Hong Kong. The night we played them, we left them with no alcohol stocks.



I wrote the weekly newsheet for the Koalas, called 'The Gum Leaf.' Our Commanding Officer, SQNLDR John Rossiter, asked me if I could produce an end of season glossy 'Gum Leaf,' as he was Patron of the 'Koalas.' My classmate from Point Cook, a Koala's player and then at Hong Kong University (HKU), came with me to see the manager of a large cigarette company in Hong Kong and asked him to cover all costs to produce a glossy 'Gum Leaf' end of year magazine. I promised him that if he paid for the full production of the magazine, I offered the 'carrot' that he could have the full back page to advertise his product. We shook hands on this deal in the exclusive Hong Kong Club and the first glossy 'Gum Leaf' is now part of history.



At the end of the Koalas' season, we had a break-up at the China Fleet Club. A friendly Australian based company supplied us with Australian pies and Queensland beer. A great night was had by all. The glossy 'Gum Leaf' was launched. Nine months later, ten of the club members' wives gave birth, including a British couple who had remained childless



after twenty years of trying to become parents. My Annette was one of them. She gave birth to our youngest child, Paula.

Our Commanding Officer and Patron of the Koalas, John Rossiter, called me down to his office. "Why aren't you an officer?" John asked me. I did accept his kindly advice. I was commissioned the following year on my return to Australia on the 5th of March 1975. As I tell everyone, I was not commissioned because of my Linguistic skills, nor lack of them. I was commissioned because I wrote and produced the first glossy 'Gum Leaf'!

### **Annette and her tennis.**

Annette was, since High School, a champion tennis player. In Hong Kong, she played tennis whenever the opportunity presented itself. There was a tennis tournament that had attracted British and Australians over many years. For the 1972 and 1973 season, Annette was runner up to the British Ladies Championship. First prize was a 20 cm high trophy. Runner up was a 10 cm high trophy. She had always been successful in the Ladies Doubles, too. There is a footnote to this story. On our return to Hong Kong in 1980, She was again runner-up to this British lady.



There were two tennis courts where we lived at Scenic Villas in Pokfulam, on our second posting. The men of the unit who were considered surprisingly talented players, practiced with her every day. That support by our friendly male tennis players proved most successful for 1981 was, finally, Annette's year to become Hong Kong's Ladies Tennis Champion. Prize trophies were as in the previous years. but that year the size, (height,) of the first and runner-up trophies was reduced.

### **Mid-Tour leave**

From the commencement of the Detachment, the pundits in Canberra considered that as Hong Kong was so densely populated and of humid climate, that it was considered that a mid-tour leave out of Hong Kong would be appropriate. Initially, the usual getaway was by a first-class cruise to Japan and return, with all expenses paid. Many enjoyed this form of break from the densely populated Colony.

Then began the choice of alternatives, by using the value of the cash to travel by sea to Japan and convert the value to travel anywhere in the world. The United States West Coast or The United Kingdom and Europe began to prove a popular alternative to Japan. Annette and I and our two elder children chose to fly to London, hire a VW Dormobile camper and travel around England and Scotland as well as several countries in Europe, including France, Belgium, Holland Germany, Austria, Lichtenstein, Luxemburg and Switzerland. We had a fabulous time but hampered by the fact that we had no tent fly to mark our camp site, so once we booked into a spot, we were locked down there for the night.

Our main aim was to visit Sami Haenz in Herisau, Switzerland. Sami had boarded with Annette's mother when he was the Chief Engineer representing Brown Boueri on the Swanbank Power





Station in Ipswich. Sami took us up to the high mountain region of Switzerland of Santis and Schwagalp. He also took us to Teufen for the Swiss National Day function including a large oompah band. Our children joined in the children's march from three points of town, but just as they arrived at the big band destination, the skies opened and the whole event was washed out!

The following is a quick taste of the highlighted places from our quick tour of Europe and England and Scotland. I will never forget Annette's words as we pulled up in Germany, just as we entered Dusseldorf. She jumped out of the Kombi and with outstretched arms she exclaimed, "I am the first of my family to come back to the Fatherland!" That was interesting for a week earlier, I had expressed happiness at being a first-time visitor in my British family to the Motherland! Join us on a quick tour:



***White Cliffs of Dover, England***



***Our VW Dormobile***



***Somewhere in Holland***



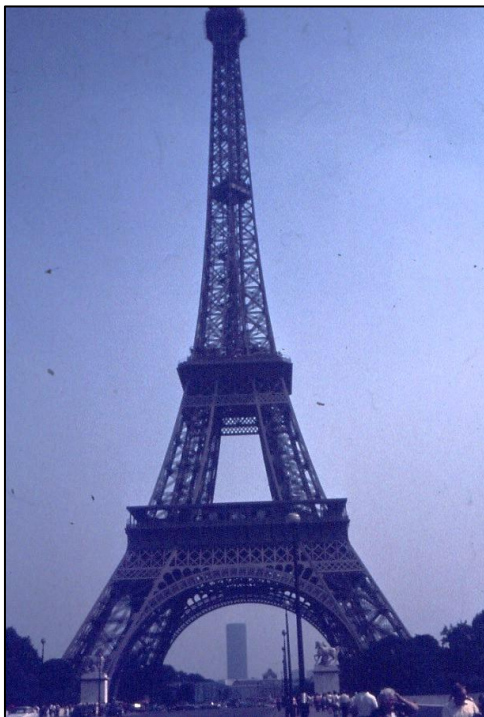
***Oostende, Belgium***



*The Dom, Cologne, Germany*



*Oberammergau, Germany*



*Paris, France*



*Buckingham Palace, London, England*



*Big Ben, London, England*



*Lifeguards, London, England*

### **Funniest memories of Hong Kong (First Tour) – No. 1**

Our Warrant Officer Linguist, Pat H lived over the road from Fung Ging Dai Ha with his wife. He had passed through MOD CLS a few years earlier. He was a jolly person, quick witted and just a wee bit roly poly, enough to be invited every year to play Santa Claus. Santa's sleigh was a camouflaged tractor which pulled several carriages behind it. In the last carriage stood Santa.

"Ho, ho, ho," he chuckled as he greeted the children on the playing field at Little Sai Wan. "Ho, ho, ho," as the tractor took off at a little more than a slow pace, Santa fell backwards, continuing his chant, he yelled without taking another break, "Ho, Ho, Holy Smoke!"

### **Funniest memories of Hong Kong (First Tour) – No. 2**

During that period, most taxis in Hong Kong were Mercedes Benz. Friends from our unit were out doing what seemed strange to the local Chinese restraint owners. We were participating in a progressive dinner, where we went into several Chinese restaurants in Causeway Bay and only had one dish, (and one drink,) paid for our bill, then left!

Several dishes (and drinks later) as we were proceeding to yet another restaurant, we crossed the road when a Mercedes Benz taxi pushed into a crowd of us on a pedestrian crossing. One of our member's wives put out her hand to stop the taxi when to her surprise, the Mercedes symbol came off in her hand. She strode around to the driver's door, opened his door and threw the symbol in his lap. She bellowed, "Here, I believe this belongs to you!" She slammed his door and the crowd continued to partake of yet another single dish for everyone in the crowd and of course, on more drink!



### **Funniest memories of Hong Kong (First Tour) – No.3**





We had made friends, which has continued to this day, with a couple from the United States, who had three young children and spent the school holidays in the company of our children. So much so that their mother claimed her children were talking Australian and ours talking American!

But we learned a few language changes from them. They had just moved to a smaller block of flats which had four floors, but while it had an elevator, (where we would say 'lift'!) their building's elevator was out of service that day. It was an extremely sweltering day, even hotter than normal for Hong Kong. We got out of our VW and climbed the stairs to the fourth floor. On arrival, Annette announced that she was 'all knocked up.'



Our friends ran over to her and hugged her, asking, when the baby would be born! s It was then we discovered that the two languages differ on many clauses. In US English, it means to be pregnant!" Not so," said Annette.

#### **Funniest memories of Hong Kong (First Tour) – No.4**

Our Unit was small, we fielded a football team by swinging ex-pats and British civilians into the team. But we could have formed a formidable men's choir. Whenever the chance posed itself, several members would break into their own often-sung song. At 3 a.m., standing at the front gates of Fung Ging Dai Ha, Ted would sing his favourite, 'Only a Rose' until the security guards opened the gates and let him in.

Mick B would break in to 'The Wild Colonial Boy' without being asked. Butch knew the "House of the Rising Sun' backwards. While Lloyd, (a teetotaller,) knew every word of 'Dolly Dimple' which earned him that same name.

#### **Funniest memories of Hong Kong (First Tour) – No.5**

One day, Annette and I were in Stanley, a favourite spot for strolling through the markets on the southern side of the island, when we decided to have a light lunch at one of our well-supported restaurants, the Stanley Restaurant, on the first floor of a dingy old building, but the food was quite acceptable.

The restaurant was crowded, so the waiter found two seats vacant at a table for thirteen. The other eleven diners were concrete tradesman, all Cantonese speakers. From the moment we sat down, their discussion centred on what the 'guai los' were eating and every sentence contained reference to the 'guai los.'

When we were seated, I called for the bill and when it arrived, I used my limited knowledge of Cantonese to announce the amount and made comment to the small expense for such a hearty lunch, in Cantonese! There was silence at the table and not another word was spoken until we left the restaurant. Annette and I often refer to our lunch with eleven concrete workers, particularly when we would like a conversation to end!



## The Highlight of our Tour

As I had been in Vietnam when our son was born and had mumps when our eldest daughter was born, I could not enter the hospital to see Annette. When Paula was coming along and after I had an altercation coming down Fortress Hill Road on a wet road mingled with excess oil from old London buses, Annette said because I was never available for her in maternity rooms when the other two were born, I had better stay off my treasured Suzuki. So, I straightened the handlebars which went under the rear of a new Torana and sold my beloved motorcycle.

Halfway through her pregnancy, the Medical Officer at the Adventist Hospital said all was not well and to build her some shelving in our typhoon shelter in the kitchen to keep her mind off the baby and concentrate on my poor attempt at manual arts.

At her next monthly check, the MO announced he had found a heartbeat and all was proceeding smoothly again. So, I chose her name. Paula. Everyone was waiting anxiously for this little one's arrival. P – parents; A – aunts; U – uncles; L – Leanne; A -Ashley; Annette chose a second name for her – Louise, after her grandmother's second name. It was only years later that she found her grandmother did not have a second name.

Fung ging dai Ha, (Hilltop) was on one hill, Adventist Hospital was on the next hill. When Annette called me at 3.a.m., it took me less time to get to be with her than it took for her doctor to go up three floors in the hospital.

I went to the birthing suite, filled with long black-haired Chinese babies and there was a little bundle of 'guai lo' baby. I noticed she had purple feet. I ran in to Annette and she calmed me down by saying that is how they do it here. Not by fingerprints but by footprints of the baby!

Paula brought much joy to her waiting parents and siblings. Unit members came to our church for her dedication service, then assembled at our flat where our Senior Warrant Officer, Archie Gates, presented what would be for a christening, a silver cup to Paula.

She had been born within the period that we did not have to return home early or apply to extend.

***Now we are five***





## Closing off our first tour of Hong Kong

The four months remaining in Hong Kong, flew and soon we were back to packing up, completing our inventories, buying the last needed pieces of jewellery from J.J. Jewellers and electrical gadgets from To Brothers, which we may need back home.

Apart from the offer by our Commanding Officer to recommend me for commissioning, I had planned a fresh path for me at Australia's National University in Canberra, to obtain an educational degree to allow me to be employed in private schools teaching my two acquired languages, Vietnamese and Chinese. Can you imagine my thrill when my posting came through to Canberra. At that time, no other Linguists were in Canberra, so I was blazing a new trail in a linguist's career. In those three months, I applied for and gained a place at the Australian National University. I had been elevated to second year in Modern Chinese because of my three years study at Point Cook and at Lye Yue Mun. The icing on the cake was that one of my lecturers was Raef d'Crepiny, the alleged guru of Chinese language teaching.

In mid-November 1974, the Fry family, now numbering five, left Hong Kong, with extremely happy memories of the greatest posting they had ever enjoyed. Hong Kong? In those days, it was RAAF Base Butterworth, [Malaysia,], (Detachment A.)

## Impressive people I met in my Air Force career

Probably the most impressive person I encountered during my RAAF career, who also became one of my closest friends, was Raymond (Ray) Hiern, who began his RAAF career as an Instrument Fitter Apprentice at Wagga, rising to Sergeant Apprentice, then followed a short career as an Instrument Fitter in the permanent Air Force, before undertaking a course in Chinese Mandarin at the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook.

While at Wagga, he met and married Margorie Sibrey who was his life partner, greatest supporter, sweetest critic and best friend ever since. They had two brilliant children, Kym and Barry, who shared their parents' scholastic achievement in the business world and good friendship in social circles.

Ray was posted back to the RAAF School of Languages just prior to the conclusion of my first language course in late 1965 as a Flight Sergeant Linguist. On graduation day, Ray escorted the six newly promoted Acting Sergeant language graduates into the Sergeants Mess at Point Cook and introduced the six to the new Mess life that success on a language course had given them as a reward.



*Ray and Margorie Hiern at home in Canberra (circa 2010)*





Both Ray and I were given Married Quarters in Laverton, not far from each other. We drove to School on alternate days, leaving our wives to share the remaining Holden FB sedan, to go shopping in Footscray. Annette would take our little baby daughter, while Margorie had her two youngsters as their companions on these ritual 'retail therapy' excursions.

Ray and I followed different career paths over the years, but we always stayed connected and visited when we could. We twice shared a posting at the same unit. Ray was commissioned in 1966 and began his climb to his final rank of Wing Commander where he held the post in Canberra of Deputy Director of Security – Air Force at Russell Officers. He closed his long and illustrious RAAF career and moved sideways in his position to become the Security Officer at DIO for ten years.

Our last posting together was in Hong Kong, where Ray was Commanding Officer, RAAF Unit, Hong Kong and Commander, Australian Forces, Hong Kong. Just recently, four of the five RAAF officers who were in the Colony with RAAF Unit Hong Kong at the end of our second tour in Hong Kong, gathered in Canberra, where the other three live after retirement, for a night of fine-food dining and great reminiscing, even if only to correct muted points over long told yarns about our time together.

Margorie's declining health has restricted her to a Nursing Home in Canberra, but the other three ladies enjoyed the attention and company that a night at the Gungahlin Golf Club offered the group. I said in my last column that our posting to Hong Kong in 1972 was our best posting ever, but the night out recently reminded us that our second tour of Hong Kong was even better for the camaraderie of that group lingers on after all those years.

Ray oversaw the activities of the all-ranks social club at the base, the Club Saturnalia, which saw most of the Unit gather of a Friday afternoon for social drinks and also organised other social functions that were instigated by an all-ranks committee under Ray's watchful eye.

The officers of Ray's Unit also had a 'Fun Fund Club' which saw the officers, Air Force and Army, socialize throughout Hong Kong on a regular basis. That Club also had the dual purpose of showing visitors the sights and shops of Hong Kong while the one they came to visit was at work. Many extended family friendships were made and continued for years, thanks to Ray's organizing ability at a social level.

On one occasion, Ray called for an officers' dining-in night at HMS Tamar, where the guest-of -honour was Air Chief Marshal, Sir Neville McNamara KBE, AO, AFC, AE, the Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS). Before his arrival, Ray was advised of the Air Chief Marshal's favourite drinks and that he enjoyed an early departure to rest. However, Sir Neville enjoyed the company of Ray and his Unit's officers so much that he lingered longer at the table. Ray always was an excellent host.





I recall the time when Steve Larkin and I produced a film, called 'Mulga Bill's Bicycle.' In our spare time we filmed all over the island of Hong Kong. Filming was done by Jason Gates, son of Warrant Officer Arch Gates, who added his quirky additions to the original thoughts of A.B. 'Banjo' Patterson in 1896. At the 'World Premiere' of 'Mulga Bill's Bicycle' at the China Fleet Club on Australia Day 1982, Ray announced that he knew his two Flight Lieutenants were up to something, but he did not know what!"

Steve's wife, Siepie and our eldest daughter, Leanne, portrayed the two girls who rode their bikes around the car park at Shek O that Mulga Bill wanted to impress, appeared in other non- 'Banjo' Patterson segments of the film. Leanne's children have had a good laugh at their mother's enjoyment in being a 'one time film star.'

Ray Hiern worked hard, studied hard and gained a most successful career, sometimes difficult, always enthralling, in Australia, Great Britain and Hong Kong. He and Margorie have been Annette's and my friends for almost sixty years, so I salute him as being one of the people who most impressed and mentored me in my military service.

Thank you, Ray, for being you!