



AS IT HAPPENED

BY

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AN AIRCREW EXPERIENCE

ARCHIVAL NOTE: Fred was good enough to entrust his autobiography to me so that I could take extracts for our historical records. Fred joined the RAAF in 1943 when the Service was 22 years old and served continuously until the RAAF turned 60, 38 years later. He held every rank from AC2 to Air Vice-Marshal. Naturally, his book reads like an RAAF Aircrew Who's Who from the 1940s to the 1980s. Because stories in this section are told in the first person, the words used are Fred's, whose pilot training to 'wings' standard took place at no. 5 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) Uranquinty NSW where the following incident took place. E.C.

WHO IS WHOM?

One of our course mates was known as Maurie Burnett. He was a little wild and it was rather hard to believe his story that his previous occupation was 'studying for the priesthood'. On the last weekend before graduation a group of us were in Wagga Wagga celebrating a little early. Because of rationing, hotels were only open for an hour or so at a time and we were walking across the main road to find another hotel that still had some beer. An old car with open spoke wheels was coming along the road and Maurie apparently had not seen it. We called a warning and Maurie, who had been imbibing a little, turned towards the oncoming car and said something to the effect of "Bother the car" and kicked at it. Unfortunately he appeared to catch his foot in the spokes and was thrown to the roadway. He damaged one arm and tended to moan a bit on the train back to the Uranquinty Siding later that evening. The next morning on Wings Parade, with Maurie present, The Officer Commanding Uranquinty announced that Group Captain Brearly was present and would present the 'wings' to the graduates, including his son. We looked sideways at one another because we did not have a 'Brearly' on course. Of course, it was Maurie Burnett (as we knew him) who had enlisted under an assumed name. It seems that he was already a graduate in Engineering and had been denied release to join the RAAF. Again the RAAF system was understanding and as Maurice Brearly, Maurie went on to finish his Operational Training and complete a successful tour as a fighter pilot with No. 77 Squadron flying Kittyhawks. Subsequently he reverted back to his Engineering career, working with De Havillands in the United Kingdom where he

became something of their propellor expert. He also went further in the academic world with higher degrees. I met him again many years later during 1977 and 1978 when he filled the post of Professor of Mathematics at the RAAF Academy at Point Cook. His demeanour and his whole way of life were so different from the days of 1944-45 that I had to ask him about it. In effect, he stated that he decided to treat his WW2 adventures as a sort of sabbatical from his lifetime's work.

NO. 77 SQUADRON, LABUAN ISLAND

At last a posting to No.77 Squadron came and it was off to war as a passenger in the back of a Dakota (DC3). No. 77 Squadron was then flying Kittyhawks out of Morotai Island in the Celebes and we arrived at Morotai on 6 June 1945, after an eight day trip. No. 77 Squadron couldn't accommodate us and we were housed at No.14 Repair and Salvage Unit, where they did have some space. This was because No. 77 Squadron was fully manned with pilots and was busy packing up and getting ready for the impending move to take part in the invasion of Borneo.

The final episode before joining No. 77 Squadron was a sea voyage on an American Landing Ship Tank (LST) from Morotai to Labuan Island off the north-west coast of Borneo. The trip occurred in June 1945 and took five days. My main memory is of the splendid American food, including icecream (!) and the difficulty of washing with the salt water which was used in the showers. We arrived at Labuan Island not long after the invasion landing and the 'Beachmaster' system was still operating. We had to walk down the ramp at the front of the LST carrying our gear and then waded through some shallow water to the beach. Once on the sand, it was onto a truck and off to No. 77 Squadron at last! On the way I saw the first dead person I had ever seen. A Japanese soldier who was just lying on the side of the road. I finally joined No. 77 Squadron at Labuan on about 21 June 1945.

The squadron camp was some two miles from the Labuan air strip and more or less in line with it. All the accommodation was in tents, including the Mess and there were minimum facilities. Our Acting Squadron Commander was Flight Lieutenant Andy Young and the squadron doctor was Mick Kater who was to be with the squadron again in Japan and again during the Korean War. It had become a practice in RAAF fighter squadrons for NCO pilots to be accommodated in the Officers Mess so we all lived at the same standard.

My first flight with the squadron was a practice formation sortie on 20th July 1945 and I was then scheduled to begin operational flying. On what was to have been my first operation I started the engine then, as part of the cockpit drill I turned off the electric fuel pump and the engine stopped. I tried a second start with the same result. By this time the remainder of the flight had disappeared toward the runway so I simply went back to our quarters and went down to the strip again when the flight was due in. I was then berated by the flight leader and asked why I hadn't taken the spare aircraft. There was an inference that there may have been some lack of readiness to get airborne.

Unfortunately, the availability of a spare aircraft had not been mentioned at briefing. The other fellows had been flying together for some time and the briefings were pretty sketchy. I was scheduled for my next flight a day or so later to strafe a place named Sibiu. All went well until at the top of the climb, I switched over to the auxiliary (belly) tank. It wouldn't suck properly and the engine ran in fits and starts. Because of the previous problem I felt that I was unable to declare an unserviceability and abort the mission, so I switched back to the main fuel supply and continued. It was a four hour long sortie and I started to get

very low on internal fuel on the way home. The same situation occurred with the engine running erratically and not giving full power when I switched back to the belly tank. I had considerable trouble holding formation but I did get back safely. I was then able to continue as one of the squadron pilots happily. However, the end of the war was near and I only got six operational missions before hostilities ceased. One of these sorties was a napalm attack on a place called Melalap. The most interesting one was on 12th September 1945 when there was a full squadron mission to cover the Australian re-occupation of Kuching, a couple of hundred miles south of Labuan. It was a four hour fortyfive minute sortie. There was a POW camp at Kuching with a lot of Australian inmates. They had a sign on the roof by this time which said something like "Get your fingers out" and some of them were waving in the prison compound while we were overhead. I think the Officer Commanding that particular camp was an RAAF officer.

During the latter stages of the war our doctor Mick Kater got himself over to the eastern side of Borneo and into the front lines with our Army where the battles had been much bigger than those on our side of Borneo. It was said that he would be seen up in front with a machine gun under one arm and his medical kit under the other. We didn't quite know the facts, but Mick Kater ended up with a Military Cross for his efforts.

77 SQUADRON AS PART OF OCCUPATION FORCE, JAPAN

The end of the war with Japan coincided with No 77 Squadron's conversion from Kittyhawks to Mustangs. The formation of three RAAF Mustang squadrons to go to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) took some juggling to get the right mix of ranks and musterings. When the right numbers were made up it was an unusual mixture. There was a combination of younger and less experienced people like me who had come along late in the war and not seen much action, melded with some pretty wild characters who, despite their operational exposure, were not yet ready to let go of the life they had been living. A few of the pilots who had not seen service on fighter aircraft before, had some trouble making the transition. Following our conversion to Mustangs, flying was very limited in order to keep the aircraft up to maximum serviceability and ready for the flight to Japan.

After a number of delays, the No. 77 Squadron Mustangs eventually took off from Labuan for Japan on 11th March 1946. The other two squadrons, Nos. 76 and 82 had already left. We had Beaufighters as escorts, Mosquitos as lead aircraft and Catalina Flying Boats as safety and weather reconnaissance aircraft ahead of us. The first day was a 4 hour flight to Clark Field, the USAF Base near Manila where we stayed for almost a week for aircraft maintenance. We then flew a 3.45 hour sortie to Naha Airfield on Okinawa, arriving on 17th March 1946. The final leg was a 3.30 hour flight to Bofu on 21st March 1946.

JAPAN 21ST MARCH 1946 TO 13TH MARCH 1948

After arrival at Bofu flying activity was initially at a very low rate. However, that rate gradually picked up and our main role became surveillance over that part of the main island of Honshu. We were looking for smugglers and any pockets of resistance. However, our main activities were training with the still relatively new aircraft.

Late in 1946 we acquired air-to-ground rockets for the aircraft. A couple of pilots from No. 14 Royal New Zealand Air Force Squadron, who had experience in firing rockets from

their Corsair aircraft, came to Bofu to teach us the techniques. It was very much a pilot judgement business of learning to fly accurate dive angles and then to assess the right distance to the target for release. Subsequently, the squadron flew to Miho Air Base on the northern coast of Honshu where there was a practice armament range. The British (RAF) and Indian (RIAF) Spitfire squadrons were based at Miho and we enjoyed our time with them, although the Indians did some terrible things to us with their curries.

I was granted a commission in May 1946 and was given a period as Assistant Adjutant under Pat Cotter (Adjutant) who had been a boxer of some note, and the Senior Administrative Officer Wing Commander Andy Swan who had been in the British Indian Army, was a thoroughly military man and a gentleman. A man who rejected shoddy work, under Andy's somewhat gruff and stern appearance, there was a gentle soul. I learned much from Pat Cotter and Andy Swan.

By early 1948 it was apparent that Bofu was rather crowded with the RAAF wing while, following the RAF and RIAF departures, 14 RNZAF Squadron was over endowed with space at Iwakuni. Accordingly there was a swap of bases and the RAAF moved to Iwakuni on 2nd March 1948.

One of the stories told about the move to Iwakuni from Bofu was about the then Commanding Officer of No 14 Squadron, Squadron Leader Doug St George. He is a very fine and dedicated officer, perhaps slightly dour, who later became Chief of the Air Staff for the RNZAF. It seems that some of the Australian airmen were still at Bofu after the New Zealanders arrived there. Latish at night a group of these Australians were making their way to their quarters from their Mess and were passing through the RNZAF officers' area. A first floor window opened and a voice called out "Stop all that noise down there". After a brief silence an Australian voice rang out "Who is that"? There was an immediate reply of "St George here". Again silence for a moment, then an Australian voice called "If you are St George where is your bloody dragon"? The only noise thereafter was of hastily departing footsteps!

In September 1949, Skin Hewett suffered an engine failure in a Mustang while flying near Bofu and made a good forced landing there. (Skin was another of our noted pilots who had faced the Japanese in a Wirraway over Rabaul in the very early part of the South-West Pacific Area warfare and was wounded in one of his legs as a result.) I had got myself qualified to fly our Auster communications aircraft and was asked to fly LAC Bell, a technical specialist, to investigate the problem. When he saw that a piston had gone through the side of the engine we knew that it was in need of a major repair. Accordingly, I flew both LAC Bell and Skin back to Iwakuni. About this time, Skin's wife Shirley found out what had been happening and became alarmed. However, she expressed more alarm about me flying the Auster with Skin on board than the forced landing in the Mustang. Apparently she made some comment along the lines that "Freddy Barnes can't fly an Auster"!

NO. 21 CITIZEN AIR FORCE (CAF) SQUADRON, MELBOURNE

My posting home to Australia came through towards the end of 1949, sending me to No. 21 CAF Squadron at RAAF Laverton. In due course I became involved with the activities of the squadron and enjoyed it. The CAF members came in every second weekend and a couple of them were outstanding World War 2 fighter pilots.

I received a posting to East Sale (Victoria) to undergo a Flying Instructor's Course commencing on 4th July 1950. When I arrived at the Officers Mess on the Sunday evening, The Orderly Officer Ross Glassop approached me and told me I was posted. I was about to say that was why I had come to Sale when he told me that I was posted back to No.77 Squadron in Japan and I was to report to RAAF Base Richmond on Tuesday morning 5th July for kitting and travel to Japan.

BACK TO JAPAN AND THE KOREAN WAR

On arrival at Richmond I ran into several old friends and found that there were twelve pilots and twentyeight Mustang skilled trained airmen in the reinforcement party. Rapidly, we were all onto a chartered aircraft and on our way to Japan, arriving there on 8th July 1950.

We all checked in at Iwakuni and then it was back to flying. I had a local refresher flight on 10th July. The next day I was on my first operational flight for a strike on Changhowon-Ni. That involved a three hours and fortyfive minutes sortie, about one hour of which was over the Korea Strait at the southern end of the Sea of Japan.

I became a flight leader and on 31st July I landed my section of four Mustangs at Taegu on the Korean Peninsula just below the 36 degrees North Parallel and stayed there overnight. This was to become a regular feature enabling us to do extra sorties next morning. Our targets varied and we could be armed with a wide variety of weapons varying from 6X60 pound (27.2 kg) rockets and 600X0.5 inch (25.4 mm) machine gun rounds or a combination of 2X500 pound (227 kg) bombs and 1200 machine gun rounds or a different combination of the full 1200 rounds and 6 rockets. We were also to use Napalm canisters on many occasions.

August 1950 saw more use of Taegu with a flight from Iwakuni, a strike in Korea and then a landing at Taegu for rearm, refuel and further strikes as needed. By the end of August our targets were getting closer to Taegu as the North Korean forces pushed the South Koreans further into the south-east corner of their country. In September there was a sharp increase in our operational effort and I flew eight sorties over the two days of 19th and 20th September staying overnight at Taegu. In this hectic period the USAF airmen who did the rearms and refuels were pushed beyond the limits and I wasn't the only pilot who helped by feeding machine gun rounds into the Mustang wings. On 24th September 1950 my aircraft was holed by groundfire and in the main oil tank during a strike on an airfield at Onogin. That aircraft had to be left in Korea for repairs and I flew back to Iwakuni with David Hitchins in the RAAF Dakota.

By October the tide of battle on the ground had turned in the United Nations' favour and the battle line retreated north. No. 77 Squadron moved from Iwakuni to Pohang in the south-east corner of Korea on 12th October and set up in tents. By that time it was getting very cold and we found life pretty miserable after the Mess life at Iwakuni where room girls took care of all the domestics. As the front line went further north, our sorties became longer, averaging some three and a half hours.

Part of our escape and survival gear was a water bottle with a felt cover which was fitted as a cushion on top of the parachute seat pack. An early morning flight meant sitting on top of a frozen water bottle for some time which was no joy. October also saw the squadron become involved in some pre-dawn take-offs as well as night flying which RAAF fighter squadrons had not practiced for some years. Most of us picked up aircraft damage

from groundfire on a number of occasions, but the Mustang proved to be more robust than some experts thought it would be.

With the front continuing to move north we found our sorties getting longer still with some flights landing at Wonsan in the north to refuel. The squadron moved again to Hamhung in North Korea. Typical of operations in those days, on 18th November 1950 I took off from Pohang, conducted a strike and landed at our new home at Hamhung. On arrival we became involved in many close support missions for USA and Korean forces then a strong enemy push came down from the north. On 28th November the squadron was called on to provide a maximum effort when a major enemy breakthrough occurred by forces we later learned were Chinese. There were early starts, pre-dawn starts and flights into the evening. Also, it was a surprise to see the amount of hot debris that came back over our aircraft from the rockets, let alone the amount of ground fire coming our way, which we didn't see in daylight.

It was bitterly cold by this time and most of us operated from snow covered runways for the first time. Our ground troops also had the additional task of clearing snow off the wings before we could taxi out. The Mustangs were fitted with USAF-supplied special snow tyres which had coiled steel embedded in the treads.

On 3rd December 1950 we were forced to evacuate Hamhung as the Chinese continued to advance. As usual, I left Hamhung for a strike operation and then my section of four landed at our new base of Pusan back at the southern end of Korea. There were only a few occasions when we knew we were supporting our own Army chaps on the ground. Mostly we did not know who we were supporting - we just flew to orders. I flew my last of 114 operational sorties on 14th March 1951 and then returned to Iwakuni by one of our RAAF Dakotas. On 7th April 1951 I went over to Pusan and flew one of the Mustangs back to Iwakuni, when the squadron withdrew to re-equip with Meteors. Shortly afterwards I flew back to Australia by Qantas, there being no greeting on arrival, other than by my wife.

A CONTINUATION OF SERVICE

So it was that in April 1951, with the experience of war behind me in a physical sense, I was to continue my service as a career officer of the RAAF. The remainder of my career in the RAAF was to involve many more hours of flying in a mix of flying and administration. In this segment that aspect is treated lightly and does not really do justice to the admixture of feelings involved in the wearing of a flying brevet for a long period of time.

Just ahead of the listing of my later appointments, I would like to make some observations about being a member of the Australian Defence Force. The modified adage which applies to us is 'All good things come to those who wait...and wait...and wait...and wait'. Among those good things are the kinship of military fliers of whichever branch of service, the development of both close and transient friendships and the lifelong camaraderie endemic to military service. There are the normal highs and lows of life mixed with joys and sorrows but the pride of belonging or having belonged to the RAAF, the world's second oldest Air Force (the RAF being the first) is something which also stays with us forever. Now to the listing of appointments.

From June 1951 to October 1951 I was posted to Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU), Laverton (Vic) to undergo the Australian Test Pilot's Course followed by a posting to ARDU Detachment B, Woomera (S. Aust). My project was concerned with the

development of Pika and Jindavik. Flying was in Lincoln and the Python Lincoln, Mustang, Pika and Jindavik, Meteor 7, Meteor NF11, Super Fortress (B29 Washington), Canberra, Auster, Dakota, Bristol Freighter, Percival Prince and Beaufighter.

With my family, I left Woomera in November 1953 and returned to ARDU at Laverton. During November and December I flew Lincoln, Wirraway, Percival Prince and Meteor NF11 prior to departure to USAF on exchange duties.

My appointment was to be Operations Officer of 434th Squadron based at George Air Force Base, a part of the USAF 9th Tactical Air Command, in southern California. Before assuming my appointment, I had to attend the Base Instrument School to obtain a USAF Instrument Rating flying a T33 (dual). Following that course I converted to the F86F. A further conversion to the F100A took place in April 1955 and I became one of a couple of ferry pilots picking up new aircraft from the factory in Los Angeles. Its top speed in level flight was mach 1.4. During my stay with the USAF I had the experience of flying their T33, F86F, F100A, F100C, L20 Beaver and DC3. Late in 1955 I was posted to RAAF Williamtown (NSW) to command the about to be formed No. 3 Squadron which was to be equipped with the Australian F86 (Sabre) aircraft.

During my two years with No. 3 Squadron (1956/57) I was involved in Sabre conversions in addition to normal squadron training and I led a local aerobatic team of four aircraft. We sought and got no publicity for the group and our displays were confined to Williamtown and Richmond. All too soon it seemed, 1957 rushed away and I received a posting to undergo the 1958 Staff College Course at Point Cook (Vic). At the end of the Staff Course year I was posted to Department of Air at Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road, Melbourne (Vic) as DPO2 in the Personnel Branch. During that period I received a promotion to Wing Commander. It was a long haul for me from August 1959 until the beginning of March 1963 and then I received a posting I had not even dreamed about. It was to lead the RAAF pilot team to France to train on and then introduce the new RAAF fighter aircraft, the French Mirage.

An attachment to Central Flying School (CFS) at Sale (Vic) for refresher flying on Vampires and renewing my instrument flying rating took place in July 1962. A further attachment to Williamtown for refresher flying on Sabres took place in September 1962. October and November 1962 saw the Mirage Training Team learning French at the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook. My formal posting to be C.O. of No 75 Squadron was effective from 4th March 1963 and I was able to settle my family in a married quarter before leaving for France where I arrived on 28th May 1963.

Before our flying started we had training on the French Cyrano airborne radar as well as training on the French partial pressure suit and helmet which involved a successful pressure run to 70 000 feet. Our flying took place at Mont-de-Marsan in the south of France close to Bordeaux, Biarritz and the Basque area. After our flying training which included tactical procedures, we sought and were given a week in the United Kingdom with the Royal Air Force to compare some of the French Air Force (FAF) tactics and procedures with those of the RAF.

Whilst I was away for four months, my posting was changed from C.O. of No. 75 Sabre Squadron to C.O. of No 2 Operational Training Unit (OTU) with effect 21st October 1963. OTU was to receive the first Mirage aircraft some weeks later. I held that command until June 1965 when I was posted to Department of Air Canberra where my role involved future operational requirements.

In mid-1966 I received a posting to become the Air Attache in Paris and I was attached to spend another three months at the RAAF School of Languages in Point Cook. With a growing family, Pamela and I took our two girls with us. Our two boys remained behind as boarders at Canberra Grammar School.

During the Air Attache tour of two years I was able to do some flying with the French Air Force in the Mirage, mostly at Dijon. I must make mention of a heart-warming experience of a visit to Villers Brettoneux. Australian World War 1 soldiers are still held in very high esteem in Villes Brettoneux. On Anzac Day each year there is a formal ceremony followed by the laying of wreaths at the memorial and then a formal dinner. The local school was endowed by the people of Victoria and each classroom has a sign above the blackboard saying "Never Forget Australia". Visitors are welcomed to the school on Anzac Day and the children sing songs in English. It is very moving.

Almost on the dot of two years we were again on our way to a surprise posting to Butterworth, Malaysia. My appointment was Air Staff Officer. My role was to supervise all flying and act as Second in Command to the Officer Commanding. It was a time of a number of other changes with the Sabre Squadrons being replaced by Mirage Squadrons and the British withdrawing from the Far East. Having settled the family in at Butterworth, I was sent to Australia to undergo a debriefing at Department of Air, a jet aircraft flying refresher at CFS East Sale and a Mirage refresher at 2 OCU Williamtown during October and November 1968. I commenced flying with the squadrons in rotation at Butterworth and also flew with the Dakotas we had there for transport support. In October 1971 I received my next posting which was to London to undergo the 1972 Course at the Royal College of Defence Studies (formerly 'Imperial Defence College'). That course was a precursor to promotion and at the end of the course I received a posting back to Canberra to become Director General of Personnel with the rank of Air Commodore. That posting lasted for three years after which I was posted to become Officer Commanding RAAF Williamtown.

In December 1976 I received advice of my promotion to Air Vice-Marshal with effect 10th January 1977 and a posting to become the Air Officer Commanding Support Command, Melbourne with effect from the same date. I occupied that post from January 1977 to March 1979. My final posting was to Department of Air, Canberra to become Deputy Chief of Air Staff (DCAS) effective in March 1979 and continuing until my retirement in November 1981.

Thanks largely to my RAAF staff, I arranged to be given a conversion onto Caribou aircraft and I enjoyed a number of flights in that aircraft including a 'trainer' to Papua New Guinea. I also had Caribou flights up to Darwin and down to the snowfields. In all, I flew some 140 hours in the Caribou during my last three years in the RAAF. I did a Macchi refresher at East Sale in July 1979, a familiarisation flight in an F111 in August 1979, several Mirage flights in January 1980 and a flight in a Mystere 20 from Darwin to Tindal in February 1980. My last flight was in a dual Mirage 111D from Fairbairn (Canberra) to Williamtown on 30th November 1981 for my dining-out night. The pilot allowed me to do the flying, including the landing at Williamtown.

During my thirtyeight years in the RAAF I flew thirtysix different aircraft types and models, starting with the Tiger Moth. With close to 1 000 hours flying it, the Mustang was my favourite aircraft.

ARCHIVAL COMMENT: This story of Fred Barnes is an edited version of his

autobiography, concentrating primarily on flying activities which is what ACA archives are all about. Regrettably family matters, plus personal stories about friendships and feelings towards a multitude of RAAF and other characters had to be omitted. Fred's autobiography stirred all sorts of memories in my mind as he told of many of the people with whom I had served during my Permanent Air Force Service.

It is with regret that I send Fred's book back to him with the words "A wonderful read. Thanks for the memories"! E.C.