

D O W N T O  
E A R T H

Air Marshal David Evans, AC, DSO, AFC

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## FOREWORD

I have had the honour of knowing David Evans for a very long time since the days when he, vastly my senior, led the Royal Australian Air Force as its Chief and I was a lieutenant colonel at Army's headquarters. You could see David in full rig as an air marshal or in tennis gear and you would know he was a senior military officer—he had that 'presence'. It might have been natural or, I suspect, the mantle of his very long service, which made him one of the most experienced and eminent aviators of his generation. He was not a 'desk warrior' who had his 'flying ticket punched' to provide subsequent credibility in the promotion game, but a highly experienced pilot and commander who sat easily in the chair of the RAAF's professional head. I jumped at the chance to read *Down to Earth*, knowing his service encompassed some of the most hectic and hazardous experiences and a period of deep reorganisation and challenge for our armed forces in World War II and the decades following.

I was not disappointed. His story is told with wisdom and occasional whimsy of a time when our forces went from absolute pre-eminence in the defence of the nation's interests into a twilight zone of no war, no peace. His pivotal service in the air bridge relief of the Berlin Blockade typifies the mostly unsung work of our armed services after World War II. His rapid rise (which to him and to his indefatigable and ever-charming wife Gail would have seemed anything but) came about because his superiors saw what shines through the pages of this book—his wisdom and balance, coupled with priceless operational experience. He was destined to command but discovered what every very senior commander has to endure—the turbulence of leadership of dynamic organisations tossed about by the fates.

This is an important story, most attractively told by an eminent Australian warrior. I am honoured to write this foreword and hope you will enjoy the account as much as I have done. I commend the Air Power Development Centre for its work in bringing Air Marshal Evans' memoir to us all.

General Peter Cosgrove, AC, MC  
Chief of the Defence Force 2002–05

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As distinct from the professional author, the amateur needs encouragement to be 'kept at it'. This was provided to me in abundance by Dr Chris Clark and Wing Commander Ken Llewelyn who skilfully steered me in a different direction to what I had intended. Now that the task is over, I concede that they may have been right. Chris has also done a fine job in editing my work, ably assisted by Wing Commander Keith Brent who got down to the nitty-gritty of correctly spelt names and accuracy in my recall of times and events.

Dr Sanu Kainikara, the author of many books on defence and air power, helped by his wideranging views expressed in discussion. I am also indebted to Peter Smith who aided my recall of the project when writing on the Australian-designed trainer aircraft, the Wamira. Group Captain Richard Keir, the Director of the Air Power Development Centre, and all his staff were always helpful and courteous.

Finally, I apologise to my patient wife, Gail, for spending so much of my time on 'that damned book'. I do appreciate her forbearance, and thank her for coming up with the title. More than that, I am deeply grateful for the 36 years of Air Force life we shared, and for the whole 63 years during which her support has been constant.

David Evans

# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADG	Airfield Defence Guard
AAC	Australian Aircraft Consortium
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ADF	Australian Defence Force
BABS	Blind Approach Beam System
CAF	Citizen Air Force
CAFOPS	Chief of Air Force Operations
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force
CDFE	Chief of the Defence Force Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements
GCA	Ground-Controlled Approach
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
PAF	Permanent Air Force
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCDS	Royal College of Defence Studies
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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## A FUTURE SHAPED BY WAR

Notwithstanding the memorable words of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on his return from crisis talks with the German Dictator, ‘peace in our time,’ tension continued to build up throughout the British Empire. The general reaction was to pray for peace whilst glumly accepting that war was inevitable.

These were my observations as a 13-year-old schoolboy. With all the wisdom of such a teenager I assessed the odds in regard to winning a shooting war. This was based entirely on longstanding dogma that ‘Britannia rules the waves’. Of course we would win! I had even entered into an exercise book the name of any Royal Navy or Royal Australian Navy ship that came into the news. I think I was inspired by the names—names that signified capability and fighting spirit—HMS *Indomitable*, HMS *Revenge*, HMS *Majestic*. To me, the names were far more expressive than the name of a town or city.

However, as most predicted, Australia found itself at war. I well recall the day that Great Britain declared war on Germany—which meant of course that Australia was also at war. Several hours before the announcement by the Australian Prime Minister at 9.30 pm on Sunday 3 September 1939, a special edition of the evening paper was on the streets. I was with my mother as young newsboys called incessantly, ‘War declared! Paper, paper! War declared!’ My mother passed twopence to the boy and, as he passed the four-page paper to her he nodded at me and said, ‘He’ll have to go’. To say my mother was shocked would be a gross understatement; aghast would be a better word. She glared at the boy and said, ‘Don’t be

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ridiculous, he's only fourteen.' For my part, I accepted what the boy said as a reasonable possibility—or even probability. World War I went on for five years and many wars throughout history had lasted longer than that. I think the major response within me was one of impatience with my age and hope that it would last long enough for me to take part, which, on reflection, was hardly a commendable attitude. I had no idea whatsoever of what part I would play. The other thought that came immediately to mind was whether my dad would go, as he was only 35 years of age at the time.

We went home and immediately turned on the radio to catch the news. In fact, this was the start of a new routine in the Evans' household and I expect in most other Australian homes. I doubt that we ever listened to the radio news before this defining day in the history of our nation. From that day I doubt that we missed a single radio broadcast when at home. I followed the progress of the war avidly, day by day. I was disappointed rather than distressed that the Maginot Line, the great defensive line erected by the French to parry such an attack, was bypassed by the blitzkrieg and strategic thrust of the German Army. Our armies always seemed to be under devastating air attack with the Stuka dive-bombers of the Luftwaffe playing a major role. The defeat of Belgium and Holland and then the surrender of the French Army came as a great shock, but in the minds of young 14-year-old fellows defeat was never a consideration. Indeed, the successful evacuation of the greater part of the British Army from Dunkirk was presented as a great victory rather than a resounding defeat. I was able to accept that explanation without the slightest doubt.

Then the Battle of Britain grasped the attention of the whole of the free world and, in particular, appealed to the fantasies of thousands of young Australians—I was one of them. Every day on arrival at school my mates and I would gather and the conversation was, 'Did you hear yesterday's score? We shot down 23 for only six lost. Sailor Malan got two—takes him to 23 confirmed.' We knew all

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the aces: Paddy Finucane who commanded the Australian Spitfire Squadron, a wing commander at 22, Sailor Malan a South African, 'Tin Legs' Bader and our own Bluey Truscott. I still followed the activities of the Royal Navy and was horrified by the losses of merchant ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean. I was filled with admiration for the merchant seamen involved in that dangerous task. However, it was the war in the air that really fascinated me. And if this conflict continued until I was 18, in my mind, I was very clear just what I wanted to do—fly!

In 1941 the Air Training Corps was formed. It was a training organisation formed specifically to prepare boys between 14 and 18 years of age for entry into the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). I joined immediately and was a foundation member. Here I was able to study the things that interested me—interested me because I needed the subjects at Leaving Certificate standard (5th year secondary school) to make it as a pilot. I worked assiduously to do well and found that the Air Training Corps instructors, many of whom were World War I aviators, were willing to provide additional instruction for those who were obviously dedicated. I embraced maths, physics, English, aerodynamics and meteorology almost as a religion. The result was that when I was on course at Initial Training School I could almost have passed the ground school exams *on arrival*. That is probably an exaggeration, but I can say that without the training given in the Air Training Corps, at least 50 per cent of the students enlisted as aircrew would have failed. There were two very obvious reasons for this. Firstly, in the early 1940s the majority of Australian students left school at the end of third year, or even before. Fourteen was, at that time, the legal school leaving age, and perhaps another factor was that the country was still recovering from years of depression. Secondly, Australia, then a nation of 6 million people, had taken on an unbelievable task in contracting to the British Government to enlist and train 1000 aircrew every four weeks. This was to comprise 380 pilots, 226 navigators and 392

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wireless operator/air gunners. Australia could not have met that undertaking without the support of the Air Training Corps. Even today, 67 years after its formation, a surprisingly high percentage of senior RAAF officers are ex-members of the Air Training Corps.

I was disappointed to note a year or two ago that the name had been changed from the original Air Training Corps to Air Force Cadets. Being a traditionalist, I thought the ATC had served Australia and the RAAF so well as to retain the name as part of our Air Force heritage.

An additional bonus I got from Air Training Corps membership was that we paraded and went to studies at 6.30 pm every Wednesday night. This was held in a hall used by the Militia and happened to be next to a church hall where dances were held every Wednesday night. My mother often expressed surprise that the Air Training Corps finished its training so late as to have her 15-year-old son getting home at midnight—and with school the next day!

The date 5 June 1943 proved to be a turning point in my life—for two years I had waited impatiently for this day! My mum was tearful but retained the faith that her prayers would see the war over before I had completed my training. My dad was less demonstrative and I am not sure what he felt. He gave me a wristwatch. In those days parents of limited means gave their sons a gold watch on their 21st birthday. Mine was not gold, but my father was very proud of that watch and I was indeed touched by the gift. Obviously, he was feeling quite emotional when he came into my bedroom to give me the watch. He seemed to be stuck for words. He murmured something about keeping safe and we shook hands—men did not hug in those days. Dad was a policeman, a reserved occupation. Under wartime manpower control he could not leave that job. I wondered if he felt some embarrassment at staying home and his son volunteering to go off to war. I know he was proud of what I was doing but he left it to my mum to say the actual words.

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It is interesting to note the difference in entering the Services today and in the 1940s. Of course it was wartime and the number entering the Services was huge. Firstly, we went into Sydney for attestation and then onto a bus to Bradfield Park, No 2 Initial Training School. On disembarking the bus, a drill sergeant introduced himself and marched us to a hut that was to be our home for the next several months. The intake was several hundred and there were many drill sergeants and many huts to be occupied. Here we were briefed on the set-up and procedures. Number one, learn from now on there is not a right way or a wrong way of doing things, there is just one way—the Air Force way. This is where you place your bed, this is how you fold your blanket each morning. You cannot have limp blankets, so get some stiff cardboard to put in the folded sides so that they are dead straight—vertical. The kitbag, which carried my whole world for the next three years, was to have four loops of the white rope at the top and absolutely round. The drill instructor made it quite clear that he wanted to see them all perfectly round, set on the same floor board in a perfect line every morning. He continued advising the use of anti-tinea powder located in all the shower sheds—‘dry your feet and use the powder and be aware that tinea and sunburn are regarded as self-inflicted wounds and punishable.’ More advice continued—where and how to store clothes and shoes, then down to the straw shed to be given your mattress, a hessian bag about six feet long and told to fill it with straw. Then back to the hut with mattress, unfold your wire bed and make it—blanket folding supervised by the sergeant. Then to the store to be issued with clothing—everything from undies to No 1 blue uniform, hairbrush, clothes brush, shoes, sewing kit, etc.

We were a young bunch, mostly just turned 18 with a few older blokes transferred from the Army up to the age of 27. Amongst our gear were two steel panniers that served as plates for our meals. We took these, lined up for each meal and held the pannier out to be served as we filed by. Not first class but a quick and efficient

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way to serve large numbers. Afterwards the meal panniers were washed and returned to the assigned spot in our lockers. We were also detailed in turn to serve meals to the other students. I recall one morning the chap in front of me, ex-Army, turned to me when he got his porridge and said, 'Yeah, it's got bromide in it.' 'What is bromide?' I asked. He replied, 'It's a chemical that stops you—you know.' I did not know and again asked, 'What?' He continued, 'You know, that stops you wanting it.' Still puzzled I asked, 'Wanting what?' Finally he replied, 'You know—with girls.' 'Oh,' I said. God knows where that theory came from but I believed it. I did notice, however, that he did not deter anyone from lapping up their porridge.

We were given leave from 4 pm—sorry, 1600 hours—Friday until 2200 hours Sunday night. However, the slightest infringement of the rules would see weekend leave cancelled and replaced by guard duty. Furthermore, before marching out on leave, we were all paraded and inspected to ensure we were fit to be seen as representatives of the Royal Australian Air Force.

Life progressed in this regimented pattern, but really it was not too bad. Always there was the dread in the back of your mind that you could be 'scrubbed' (failed) if you fell behind. My main concern was whether I would be categorised as a pilot or navigator or wireless operator/air gunner. This would take place at the end of the three months academic phase.

Again it is interesting to reflect on the method of pilot selection. On the day set for the selection process, one dressed in best blues, spruced up, shoes gleaming. When called, you entered the door at the end of a 40-foot (12-metre) timber hut, you spied a trestle table set up halfway down at which four or five officers were seated. A white line was drawn across the floor about three metres in front of the table. One marched very smartly, halted on the white line and saluted the President of the selection committee. Invited to take a seat, you took your hat off, sat down and answered questions for the

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next 15 or 20 minutes then rose, saluted and marched out. Two days later the whole course, about 400, was paraded and the results read out—for example, Smith, R., navigator; Jones, T., wireless operator; and Brown, K., pilot. All sorts of theories circulated about the white line. If you halted exactly on the line you would be selected as a pilot, short of the line you indicated caution and would likely be a navigator, or overstep the line and show aggression you were air gunner material. I actually saw members of my course practising this halting on the line!

Post-World War II this was simply not good enough. There was insufficient depth, little science and no psychologist involved. Pilot selection now is a lengthy affair with Stanine tests, aptitude tests, and a series of interviews with a psychologist, experienced pilots and other officers. I have no quarrel with this lengthy and expensive process, but simply note that in the war years 1939–45 the percentage of those selected as pilots who failed to graduate was 50 per cent. Now, under the peacetime selection scheme with all the tests, the percentage of failures is still 50 per cent. Oh well, I know some people, psychologists in particular and even some flying instructors, will point out the odd periods when the failure rates have been less than 50 per cent but overall it is not markedly different to the war years. That, incidentally, is no reflection on the RAAF—it is much the same in all air forces.

My next move was to No 5 Elementary Flying Training School at Narromine, New South Wales. Narromine had plenty of air space, flat ground and perfect flying weather. The excitement of my fellow trainee pilots was immediately dampened when told that our course, No 42, would be delayed one month. Thoughts of sitting around for weeks soon disappeared—I did guard duty, worked in the kitchens washing up huge pots and pans, and peeled tonnes of potatoes, and unloaded 44-gallon drums at the railway goods yards. Also, it did not improve our morale to see young, eager students reduced to tears as they packed their bags and left having been

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scrubbed off course. Even worse, the food was appalling; the meat often flyblown—not surprising as we were in cattle country and lined up for meals in a long single line filing in through an open door. You would have thought that servicemen being adequately fed were vitally important to the war effort, but on hand was a Service policeman checking our monthly meal card to ensure we did not get an extra meal.

The most bizarre aspect of Narromine was the attitude of the staff. Here were hundreds of young men, volunteers offering themselves as cannon fodder for their country and proud to do so, but enduring what seemed to be the demeaning attitude of the base staff: ‘whatever makes these young men think they are fit to be pilots in the Royal Australian Air Force—the hide of them.’ Odd, but that was the impression we students perceived. Fortunately, my instructor, Pilot Officer Paine, was a delightful man. He was about 30 years of age, patient, and did not scream at students as did many instructors. The worst thing he ever said to me, and I remember it well, was during a dual period. He had asked me to do a couple of steep turns, a loop and then a slow roll to the right. As we swished out the bottom of that last manoeuvre I heard his exasperated voice in my earphones, ‘Christ, Evans, you must frighten yourself when you are up here alone.’ ‘No Sir’, I answered meekly but, actually, he was not entirely wrong.

Some of the instructors were bad-tempered and unnecessarily harsh in their verbal address to students. Perhaps it was their own frustration at being drafted to the training role rather than an operational unit. I recall one particular instructor, a young sergeant pilot, who saw me wearing black fur-lined flying boots whilst doing tarmac duty at the satellite field. He looked at me and, for no reason that I could fathom, shouted, ‘You are an overconfident bastard Evans.’ It certainly ruined my day. To be thought overconfident was indeed a cardinal sin. For that matter so it was to display underconfidence. However, that was simply Bill Scott. I recalled

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that incident to Bill when he was a RAAF test pilot some years after the war. He had mellowed a bit, but only a bit.

The end of 1943 was also the end of Elementary Flying Training School. Looking at my logbook, I notice that I had New Year's Day off. I had two periods on 31 December 1943 and flew again on 2 January 1944. Then it was off to No 8 Service Flying Training School at Bundaberg, Queensland. We were all very pleased—the survivors that is—to leave Narromine. There was, throughout the whole period, the fear of failing and the stress of enduring the rather harsh atmosphere endemic at Narromine. That is not to say that life was all despondency. We did enjoy the comradeship that was ever present amongst the students. We did go into the town, a 20-minute walk, on a Friday night and on Saturday. There was the open-air movie theatre, a dance on Saturday nights and the Greek milk bar for a steak and eggs. Not exactly life in the fast lane but I left Narromine with relief, satisfaction and 70 hours in my logbook.

As I recall we had a week of leave before heading for Bundaberg by troop train. About 20 per cent of No 42 Course went to single-engined flying training schools and around 30 per cent went to Canada for their advanced training. I guess we all envied those going to Canada simply because of the travel experience—a new country to us.

The atmosphere at Bundaberg was far more relaxed. Statistics revealed that the number who failed the advanced flying phase was far lower than occurred at elementary school. This proved to be correct for the ex-Narromine portion of No 42 Course. I think we lost only two of the 14 posted there. Also, Bundaberg was an attractive tropical town with outstandingly good weather and tanned, attractive girls. I remember recalling my pilot training days with a group of friends a few years ago. Referring to the Bundaberg girls being attractive I said, 'Well you notice those things when you're eighteen.' My wife was present and quipped, 'You still notice them at eighty.'

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Life was certainly more relaxed, but not by any means carefree; there was still a course to pass and both academic and flying standards to be met. We found another milk bar for steak and eggs on Friday nights and another dance hall. The golf club at Bargara held monthly dances at the clubhouse. It had a beautiful waterfront setting and became our social event of the month. However, it was spoilt by the fact that leave finished at midnight on Saturday. Sunday was for church parade and housekeeping, washing and ironing, or tennis if that was your thing. The church parade was compulsory to the extent that everyone went on parade and formed up in formation. Then was the call of 'fall out Roman Catholics and Jews'. If there was a Roman Catholic service, Catholics would attend otherwise we 'left-footers' had an hour free.

I had an interesting and, I am pleased to say, an unusual experience soon after we got to the flying phase of the course. With a total of 31 hours on the Avro Anson and on my first cross-country, the starboard engine started making disturbing noises—loud noises. Looking out I saw much black smoke and, of course, I was getting no power on that engine. I went through my emergency drills and then looked for somewhere to land. It was a wooded area with not much in the way of paddocks. The other factor was that the Anson did not retain height on one engine. I spied a paddock that looked as if it would have enough length and headed towards it. As I got near I noticed a second clearing that offered a bit more length and decided that was for me. Now the first question, should I land wheels up or wheels down? The general belief was that paddocks could look flat and smooth when seen from height and then when low down and committed, they could be seen to have ridges, large holes and other obstacles. If in doubt land wheels up to minimise the damage. However, I reckoned it looked okay and wound down the undercarriage—190 turns if I remember correctly. So down the wheels went and with the Anson now losing height at slightly greater rate, I was committed. Well the other rule was

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to come in a bit higher than normal—it is better to hit the far side fence at taxiing speed than the approach side fence at flying speed. This I followed by diving to wash off the surplus height, speed built up and the float distance was greater. Touchdown point was past the halfway mark. Clearly, I was not going to stop before the fence and so I selected undercarriage up. Of course it would not retract but unlocking should and did cause it to collapse. The right wheel went first and slewed the aircraft around 180 degrees and then the left wheel collapsed.

I got out and was surveying the damage when a fellow rode up on his horse and in a slow Queensland drawl said, ‘Saw you in a bit of trouble up there and so I came up.’ I said, ‘Where are we?’ and his reply was Mundubbera. I said, ‘Oh there is an emergency landing ground here isn’t there?’ He said, ‘Yes, this is it.’ I looked around the field and there on the other side was the usual Signal Square. Oh hell, I thought.

I went to a public phone box near the Signal Square and called Bundaberg RAAF base and got through to my Flight Commander and reported. About two hours later, he and my instructor arrived with an engineer officer. Other technical personnel were on their way by road.

My instructor took in readily what had happened, I was too high, overshot and had to retract the undercarriage. ‘Don’t worry; you did well to get to this emergency landing ground, well done.’ I thought it best not to disillusion him by saying that I did not realise it was the landing ground, I simply said, ‘Thank you Sir.’ Nevertheless, I spent the next several weeks cursing myself for the high approach.

The remainder of the course went smoothly—more or less. My only other flying sin was not untying the security rope from the tail wheel of my aircraft when flying the first sortie one day. The result was that I went flying with three metres of rope dangling. I am told

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that my instructor shook his head and said, 'It's a wonder he didn't have the bloody concrete block hanging down as well!'

The day for graduation approached and we were all making our wings. In those days there were no metal wings to pin on, just cloth wings. They were quite thin material and designed to be sewn on the uniform. For wearing on a summer shirt, we would get hold of a piece of perspex material, cut it to the shape and size of our wings, drill small holes around the circumference and stuff cotton wool beneath the wings to pad them, and then sew them to the perspex and attach a long pin to the back for pinning on to shirts. Usually, one could find a sympathetic WAAAF to do the sewing. Naturally, after 13 months of toil and some worry, we were looking forward to the big day and getting off to an operational posting.

Just five weeks before graduation, after final wings test and academics, we were told that graduation was to be delayed by four weeks. That was a serious blow to our morale. No reason given, just told that graduation would be put back one month. It was many years—well after World War II—before I became aware of the reason and the dreadful dilemma in which the Royal Australian Air Force was placed. Without any warning, in April 1944, the British Government advised that they did not require any more Australian aircrew to be sent to the Royal Air Force (RAF). As stated earlier in this chapter, Australia had contracted to provide just on 1000 aircrew to the RAF every four weeks. Clearly, when Australia was advised in April 1944 that no further contingents were required, Australia had already recruited personnel for each and every monthly graduation up to and including April 1945. No doubt the other contributing dominions, Canada and New Zealand, were similarly affected. The situation that the RAF had allowed to develop was surely an act of gross negligence. It later transpired that at the beginning of 1944 the RAF had 53 000 aircrew for something in the order of 18 000 cockpit personnel required. It left Australia

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with 16 000 aircrew for 9000 spaces. Obviously, that affected the efficient manning of the RAAF for the rest of the war.

The extra month waiting was filled in with two weeks of leave and a little more flying to keep us employed. The graduation ceremony was simple, just the usual weekly parade with each graduate called and marching out to have the base commander pin on his wings—a safety pin affixed to the back of a pair of cloth wings—to be replaced the moment we were off parade by the homemade, perspex-backed variety.

There was no hanging around Bundaberg, but down to the huts, collect your gear, the faithful kitbag—the only piece of luggage—and be taken by bus to the railway in time to get the first train out. My movement order said to Embarkation Depot Melbourne. It sounded wonderful, off to England to an operational conversion unit and then a squadron, magnificent! But, disappointment was to follow.

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## SIR ROBERT TO THE RESCUE

**M**y mood exuberant, I was full of high expectations when I reported to the Embarkation Depot at the Melbourne Cricket Ground—the date, 8 September 1944. Did they have a posting for me, when was the next embarkation expected? Not a smile or a good day, the sergeant clerk simply went to a cabinet, came back, asked to see my movement order and went away. Finally, she came back and said you have no posting, here is a form to be completed so you can be cleared in to the unit. I filled that out and was then asked if I wanted to be billeted at the Cricket Ground. After looking at the accommodation offered—iron bed and palliasse in a huge concrete-floored hall—I decided to stay in town. I went back to the orderly room and asked if this was allowed and was told, yes, but to report by 0830 hours daily. So, they certainly were not waiting anxiously for my services. I went into the centre of Melbourne with a couple of mates to find somewhere to stay.

Mind you, staying in town would normally not be an option for a sergeant pilot living on seventeen and sixpence (\$1.75) a day. However, during the war years there was the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) hostel—a bed in a dormitory cost one shilling and sixpence (15 cents) per day. There were less salubrious places, such as the TOC-H hostel. That establishment catered for servicemen coming in at any hour of the day or night to sleep. Crowded dormitories kept in semi-dark and deathly quiet so as to not disturb those asleep. Hence was the wartime expression to describe a person 'less than bright' as 'dim as a TOC-H lamp'. In

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the end, I went for the YMCA with all its amenities—room for my kitbag beside the bed, and more importantly, clean.

The daily visit to the Depot was frustrating to say the least. I would wander around talking to other aircrew hoping to get a clue—or even an interesting rumour—but not a thing. Among the aircrew there were people returned from the United Kingdom who had completed a tour of operations. They were as mystified as I was with this rather hopeless situation. I would have lunch at the Depot Sergeants Mess and set out to town again to see what was offering. There were centres to advise servicemen on hospitality and available entertainment. However, from experience I found that the receptions and dances held by the Victoria League and the Royal Commonwealth Society seemed to be hosted by a good proportion of pretty girls. Also available was the Myer-sponsored ‘Dug Out Club’ which followed a similar format to the American ‘Stage Door Canteen.’ It served good food at very reasonable prices and had a dance floor and music. The girls who served were all volunteers and when it was not their working time they became dancing partners. It was well run, a pleasant place to meet people and enjoy the atmosphere—food, music and good company.

As pleasant as this somewhat indolent life may sound it was extremely frustrating and morale destroying. There was a war going on and I and many other young men with whom I mixed wanted to be there and do our bit. It was only one month later, although it seemed like a year, when I and a couple of sergeant pilot mates got a posting to what was termed an aircrew school at Watsonia, an outer suburb of Melbourne. What was it? A school for what? The explanation—a school to toughen you up before you go north to an operational unit. Beauty! Not great but it seemed we were on our way. And so to the aircrew school at Watsonia!

Arrival was far from impressive. The school, a huge complex of paddocks, a rifle range, an Officers Mess and a Sergeants Mess—each a standard 40-foot (12-metre) hut with a bar and chairs. Eating

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was at tables with a roof but no sides and, similarly, the kitchen was an open field kitchen. Sewerage was not one of the modern conveniences available. Bedding was sleeping bags and tents. Well, it was a toughening up school after all and we should accept all this without grumbling.

But what of the training, what would we be taught? Each day at 0630 hours, a route march! Not much to learn from that I thought. Breakfast, and then on to the rifle range with the familiar .303 rifle firing at various ranges from 100 to 200 metres. I had done all this during pilot course. I could even take the .303 apart and put it together again—why go over all this? Then bayonet drill—facing a course mate to do the thrust/parry–parry/thrust routine, why? Next, with fixed bayonets charging a hessian bag filled with—I do not know what—thrusting the bayonet in, withdrawing and then charging the next hessian bag. All the time during this routine the drill instructor was shouting at us to, ‘Scream, scream as you charge, scare and demoralise the enemy!’ Really, it only got more foolish, throwing hand grenades. Words of wisdom from the instructor once again, ‘If you drop the grenade after pulling the pin, fall on it; think of your mates.’

This was becoming more absurd by the day. Whatever did this kind of training have to do with highly trained aircrew, many of whom had returned from operational tours in the United Kingdom? We were trained to go to war with an aeroplane strapped to our backsides! What was the use of the bayonet charging and the grenade throwing? Of course this farce was a result of the extraordinary confusion and difficulty caused by the decision of the Royal Air Force to cancel the 1000-a-month intake of RAAF aircrew undertaken in the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) contract.

Fortunately, by the grace of God or some other helper, I and two of my mates off No 42 Course were posted after just two weeks to the navigation training school at Evans Head, New South Wales;

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the actual name was No 1 Air Observers School. We were to be staff pilots.

This was far from the operational posting I dearly wanted. On the other hand, it was much better than sticking bayonets into hessian bags. Arriving at Evans Head on 15 October 1944, I was cleared in and given a room to share with another sergeant pilot. The Sergeants Mess was a pleasant place with good food and free use of a beautiful beach just 200 metres away.

A couple of check trips in an Anson and I was on the flying program almost every day. Ah! Life should have been almost perfect. Unfortunately, I was not seeking the good life but an operational posting. Within two weeks I had approached the senior flying officer, a squadron leader and asked if he could get me posted to Williamstown to the Beaufighter Operational Training Unit. Completion of a six- or eight-week flying conversion at Williamstown would soon see me posted to a squadron. He was a nice fellow and said he would see if he could do anything to help me. In the meantime he told me that I could do some preparatory training, get an aircraft and do some low flying. I could go as low as I liked over the beach and water but of course not overland. That was a very good response and much appreciated.

Meanwhile I became a staff pilot. My task was to fly navigator trainees on the various navigation exercises. Nothing at all exciting in this, but occasionally the students, intent on keeping a good log of their activities and pouring over their charts, got lost. The pilot, by routine map reading and familiarity with the routes flown, would point out to them the actual position and counsel them on looking out for prominent landmarks—to get their head out of the cockpit occasionally.

My most embarrassing moment at Evans Head occurred when I went to the noticeboard in the Sergeants Mess to look at the next day's flying program. This was put on the board about 5.30 pm each day. When I got there, the pilots and wireless operators were

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gathered around reading the program. I heard a warrant officer with an operational tour to his credit exclaim in a painful voice, 'Bloody hell! I'm flying with a sergeant pilot'. Clearly, the warrant officer figured he had taken enough risks during his operational tour and did not want to face further danger by flying with an inexperienced sergeant pilot. The others all laughed and I muttered something along the lines, 'Thanks for letting me know how you feel'. He was even more embarrassed than I was and apologised profusely. We did our trip and at the end, still genuinely embarrassed, he suggested we try to fly together regularly by mentioning this preference to the flight programming officer. We became good friends and he was still alive and well when I departed Evans Head a few months later.

My bid to the squadron leader was partly successful. In less than three months I was selected to do a Beaufort conversion course. It was not the Beaufighter I had asked for but it would get me to an operational squadron in due course, perhaps two months. Only then did I learn that I would have to complete a general reconnaissance course prior to reporting into No 1 Operational Training Unit at East Sale for my Beaufort conversion. That course, at the General Reconnaissance School should have taken eight weeks but in fact went on from 22 January 1945 to the beginning of August. Why so long? Again, I believe it was the great surplus of aircrew that clogged the wheels of the training establishments. Whatever the reason I believe it was the lengthy general reconnaissance course that foiled my ambition to get into operations. It still irks me to this day.

I realise that my criticism of the general reconnaissance course is based solely on the time factor and the effect it had on my operational ambitions. That, of course, was a personal issue and mattered not one whit in the scheme of things. The real point is that it was an excellent course; one on which students flew as pilot on one exercise and navigator on their next. The navigation exercises entailed all manner of search techniques—creeping line ahead,

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parallel line search etc. I could estimate the tonnage, speed and type of a ship with a five-second glance. Really I should not complain, the knowledge I gained remained with me and the RAAF for the next 40 years.

Arrival at Sale brought no surprises. The local joke was that new aircrew members should include the local undertaker in the signing-in clearance form. This was a dark reference to the very high number of fatal accidents that had occurred at No 1 Operational Training Unit. Actually, the vast majority of these had occurred as a result of a bolt in the elevator trim shearing and sending the aircraft into a vertical dive. I am pleased to say that the problem had been resolved prior to my arrival. Both East Sale and West Sale were active Air Force bases at that time. East Sale conducted the Beaufort and the Ventura conversion units. It was a busy and crowded base and needed two Sergeants Messes to feed and accommodate the number of senior non-commissioned officers undergoing training—they were known as Flannigan's and Murphy's.

I made my first Beaufort flight in early August and had only 15 hours on type when the war ended. That was a night I well remember. I was at the base theatre with my crew watching a movie. The lights came on, the Orderly Officer walked onto the stage and announced, 'The war is over, Japan has surrendered.' There was indeed much cheering and shouting. People were jumping up and down hugging each other and generally looking immensely happy. My crew and I and the other crews on course looked positively glum. In today's setting I guess we would still have looked glum, but added 'bugger!' I know that statement will provoke criticism from many sensible readers. My only defence is 'I was only 19'.

However, the unforeseen and unexpected end of this long war brought with it a new surge of confusion and the hurried creation of administrative plans: the release of Australian prisoners of war and their return to Australia, and the relief of personnel then overseas—

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in Europe, New Guinea and Borneo. These and many other matters had to be attended to as matters of urgency. Would, for instance, deployed squadrons be brought back to Australia immediately or would they remain in situ for a period and personnel changed over with people from Australia? The indecision was obvious to the bulk of people serving in the Australian Services but, of course, there was nothing they could do but wait and see.

The first indication to my course members was that the conversion training would continue until the replacement or return to Australia of deployed aircrews was decided. Then, a new twist, because of the huge number of people to be moved, available air transport would be insufficient for the task. The proposal was that the Beauforts would be modified and used as transport aircraft. Thus the conversion should continue in order to have pilots and navigators for this new task. That idea did not last for long. On 24 September all course activity was stopped. We were called to the Operational Training Unit Headquarters and told that we would all be posted to our place of enlistment and discharged from the Service. This would be done within the next two weeks.

Notwithstanding the great frustrations and disappointment, I really had come to love flying—military flying. I did not want to go back to civilian life nor was I particularly attracted to the idea of civil flying, even if I could get such a job. My thinking was perfectly clear, I wanted to stay in the Royal Australian Air Force! So, I went to see my Flight Commander and told him of my wish to stay in the Service. It was a quick discussion. He told me that East Sale did not make the rules. It simply obeyed orders from high command. In no uncertain terms I was told directives from higher authority had been given to me and other course members. I therefore should direct my thinking to what I wanted to do in civilian life. I left his office and five minutes later returned and asked if I might talk to the Commanding Officer (CO) and put my request to him. The reply

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was, if the CO agreed to see you, go ahead, but I would be wasting my time. The CO would give me the same answer.

The CO did see me and made it very clear that I, with all my course members, would be posted for discharge. As I had been already advised this would be done within the next two weeks. I saluted, said 'Thank you Sir', and left his office in a disconsolate frame of mind—but what could I do about it?

Time was short, a posting order could come any day and I would be off to Bradfield Park with my papers marked—'For Discharge'. I could tell my story to someone there but would probably get the same answer—they were not there to query directions from Air Force Headquarters. Then it dawned on me. Obviously the only source where the decision could be reversed was Air Force Headquarters! If I were to go to the Flight Commander or the Commanding Officer and ask for leave I should have to give my reason. I could not imagine that it would be approved given the response to my earlier requests. So I simply waited in a strategic position for RAAF transport going into Sale and I hitched a ride. The truck had authority to pass through the gate. I was not questioned and so off to the railway station. I arrived in Melbourne at dusk and obtained a bed at the YMCA, once again.

The next day was one that remains vivid in my memory. Air Force Headquarters was a huge, sprawling establishment as I should have expected of an organisation commanding 180 000 souls but, frankly, I had not given that any thought. My immediate thought on entering Victoria Barracks was that it was not really the scene for a 19-year-old flight sergeant. However, it was my only chance of getting the intention to discharge me reversed. But just where should I go? I had no idea, but I could ask. And so the first question I had decided to put to any officer (I had decided to ask officers with the probably mistaken view that they would know the headquarters layout better than others) was, 'Excuse me Sir, could you tell me where the posting section is?' What kind of posting are you looking

for was the obvious reply and so I then started asking for the pilot postings. It took some time to get an answer and even more time to find the block. Inside the block that administered aircrew postings was a series of corridors of offices with doors closed on each side. Which door did I knock on? Some, but not all, had a sign outside. I walked up and down, in and around these corridors. Finally I spied a door with the notice 'Flight Lieutenant Jones – Postings'.

Wonderful, found it at last. I knocked, went in, saluted smartly. 'Yes, Flight Sergeant, what do you want?' he said with a puzzled look. 'Well Sir, I have been doing a Beaufort operational conversion course at East Sale. Now as the war is over the course has been terminated and we were told we would be posted for discharge.' He had heard enough and said, 'Yes, I asked what you want me to do.' I then told him I wanted to stay in the RAAF and get a permanent commission. This brought a laugh with the response, 'Wouldn't we all. Look Flight Sergeant, we have more than 100 000 people to be posted and discharged from the RAAF. Our task would be quite impossible if everyone who wanted personal attention were to come in here and dispute orders issued from this Headquarters. I suggest you return to your unit and think about your future.' I said, 'Thank you Sir', another smart salute and I left.

Actually, I had wondered on my way to Melbourne whether postings or discharge would be the best course of action. Well, I had decided postings and that was no help at all. On the other hand, I had only spoken to one person, at a relatively low level. But I suppose a flight sergeant is somewhat limited in his choices. So now, find the discharge section.

This took some time, almost an hour. Again I found myself in a large office block, corridors with offices on each side. I wander along and note an office, 'Squadron Leader Law-Smith – Discharges'. I knock and enter, salute smartly and face a friendly, smiling man who says, 'Flight Sergeant, what can I do for you?' I tell him my story and his reply, 'Well, I think we would want to man the postwar Air

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Force with people who are keen to serve. Tell you what I'll do. If I can get a posting for you I will cancel your discharge. Wait here, I'll see what I can do.' He then left the office. My joy was breathtaking—mixed with the fear that he would not be able to find a posting for me. What if he went to the flight lieutenant I had seen just an hour or so ago? About 20 minutes later he returned, the smile still on his face. 'How would you like to fly Dakotas?' he asked. My quick reply, 'Sir, I would fly anything.' He said, 'Okay, go back to Sale, you will be posted to No 38 Squadron, Archerfield. You were lucky, your discharge and those for your course was in the out-tray. I have amended the signal.' I responded with a fervent, 'Thank you Sir, that is wonderful.' A very smart salute and I leave and catch a train back to East Sale. All well there, no-one had noticed my absence.

Two days later we were assembled in the crew room. The Flight Commander said postings had arrived as expected. He went on to say, when released from the briefing we should all report to the orderly room for clearance forms, get those finished and then collect our movement orders and travel documents. He then read out the postings:

30019 Flying Officer J. Smith, Parafield, South Australia—for discharge

43617 Sergeant G. Brown, Laverton, Victoria—for discharge

A further six more of these posting for discharge to various locations and then:

433900 Flight Sergeant S.D. Evans, No 38 Squadron—flying duties

There was a general gasp—shock-surprise-whatever. The Flight Commander halted, he was certainly shocked. However, he quickly resumed reading the list, wished us all good luck in our return to civilian life and dismissed us. As we were leaving he said to me as

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I passed, 'Did you know anything about this Evans?' My reply was, 'How could I Sir?'

So much for my efforts to go to war. Now it was off to a squadron and, I hoped, a happy and satisfying career as a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force. However, I cannot finish this chapter without expressing my everlasting gratitude to the man responsible for my subsequent career as an officer in the RAAF—Squadron Leader Robert Law-Smith.

Robert Law-Smith was an experienced and highly decorated operational pilot in the early days of operating against the Japanese to the north of Australia. After leaving the RAAF at war's end, he went on to become President of the National Bank of Australia, Chairman of the Australian National Airlines Commission and was knighted for his contribution to Australian business. An outstanding man in every respect.

Thirty-four years after that defining day in my life when I met him at RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne, now an Air Vice-Marshal and Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, I wrote to him in his position as Chairman of the Australian National Airlines Commission. I said I had been meaning to thank him for his understanding and kindness to a young flight sergeant so many years ago. He replied immediately and wrote, 'It seems that at least one of my past decisions was sound!' He then suggested that when in Melbourne we might meet and have lunch together. We met a few times and he came to the dining-out dinner given to me by the officers of Support Command in 1985. In my parting speech I told the story and thanked him once again.

Later, after my retirement and following the publication of my book, *A Fatal Rivalry*, I sent him a copy with the inscription 'without you this book would never have been written.' It was some time in the late 90s that I had a call from a friend of Sir Robert telling me that he had passed away. Lady Law-Smith had asked that I be informed and expressed the wish that I attend the funeral in Melbourne.

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Apparently, in his later years he had reminisced a good deal on his Air Force days and often related to friends his meeting with a young flight sergeant so long ago. He would show them my book and its inscription. It gave me great pleasure to be able to arrange for an Air Force chaplain to conduct the service for his family.

It will be a fitting finale to my fond memories of Sir Robert to dedicate this book to Sir Robert Law-Smith—a gallant airman and a gentleman.

### 3

## SPREADING MY WINGS

Sale–Melbourne–Sydney–Brisbane, the last two legs by troop train. I had travelled the Melbourne–Sydney troop train service twice before and expected that this would be just as painful. It was! However, a small price to pay for joining a squadron at last, even if there was no longer a war to be won.

Archerfield was a crowded, second-rate airfield combining military and civil aviation. As an interim measure people were being squashed into units, including No 38 Squadron, and consequently the place was over established. For instance, 38 Squadron had about 12 squadron leaders. I noted with interest that, although the Commanding Officer was also a squadron leader, there was no question whatsoever as to who was in command. It was the first time that I became aware that the appointment was the defining factor in command authority.

Reporting first to the squadron adjutant I was told to look for accommodation. My surprise showed and he said, 'Well, until some of these itinerants shove off it seems to be on a self-help basis. Ask at the Sergeants Mess.' I did go to the Sergeants Mess and found that all accommodation was taken. I was then directed to a large timber building that had probably been a store or used for some administrative function. There I found several non-commissioned officers sitting around talking. I noted the steel folding beds and packing boxes as bedside tables. I scrounged a suitable packing box, then found some screws to put into the timber walls for hanging space and settled in. Not really a difficult task when one's faithful kitbag held all necessary possessions.

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I asked to see the Commanding Officer as is the norm for aircrew of any rank. If he does not want to see you then the senior Flight Commander is the man. However, the CO did see me, asked the usual questions; what flying experience did I have, how many hours, on what aircraft? Then he said to report to the operations room and familiarise myself with the squadron procedures. He said I would probably be on my first trip within a week as the squadron was extremely busy. Then as I stood up to leave he said 'as a second pilot you realise'. Of course I did, 500 hours was not sufficient to be sensibly categorised as a captain—it was peacetime!

I was thrilled to see my name printed out in large letters and placed on the stand-by board. This was a set of three parallel, ladder-like fixtures for captains, copilots and wireless operators. As tasks came in by signal the top three names became the allocated crew and they then went about the business of flight planning and the associated administrative details. A trip could be anything from an Archerfield–Richmond–Archerfield task to an Archerfield–Morotai–Archerfield via Townsville, Higgins Field, Port Moresby and Morotai over four days, with a mixture of passenger, freight loads or to carry an aircraft engine.

So my name was on the operations board but I knew absolutely nothing of the Dakota aircraft. 'Is there a course I have to do before I go flying?' I asked a flight lieutenant who seemed to be in charge of the operations room. 'No,' he said 'go and get a set of pilots notes and when you feel comfortable with them get one of your mates to go and sit in an aircraft with you and show you the drill—you will soon get clued up.' Odd by today's standards—in fact it was odd by the standards of those days.

One thing though is very different today, and that is pilots notes. Then, in the 1940s, pilots notes for any aircraft consisted of a book about 20 cm by 12 cm and perhaps 30 pages. It told you what you had to know about flying that aircraft. I say had to know rather than need to know because that is how it was for pilots notes—

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they only gave the essentials. More detailed instruction was given during technical lectures on the fuel system, hydraulics, engines etc. To say that today's pilots notes are different would be a vast understatement. They usually run to about 200 pages of A4-sized paper with stark warning signs in bold print telling aspiring aviators of the great danger facing them if they fail to follow procedures. I liked the old way, but then, in today's society, if a pilot is not given very serious warnings his relatives would undoubtedly sue the Commonwealth or the airline for his unnecessary demise.

As you can see, I got diverted but it was the way I have described No 38 Squadron in October 1945.

I did as told, read the pilots notes time and time again, and sat in the cockpit with several copilots and gradually found what were the duties of a copilot—or second pilot—which seemed to be the preferred title in the Air Force. Actually, it was not much of a task and had little to do with the flying of the aircraft.

Then my name got to the top of the crew/task board—10 November. It was a quick test flight in the aircraft we would fly to Morotai—a small island in the Halmahera group of Indonesian islands. It was a four-day trip and involved 36 flying hours. To me it was an adventure. My first time out of Australia and here I was, a pilot, looking down on a foreign land. I was astounded at the beautiful blue of the water covering the coral reefs that surrounded most of these islands and at the whiteness of the sand. Every island looked serene and perfect. We had landed at Higgins Field on Cape York Peninsula and stayed the night. It was indeed a primitive, isolated field about 450 miles (725 kilometres) north of Townsville. The next day was Hollandia, Biak and Morotai. Nine hours flying with two stops before reaching our destination for an RON (remain overnight).

My first trip was not a particularly brilliant performance. I thought I would show some initiative by keeping a good log of our journey, map reading, taking bearings on radio compass when

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a beacon was available—and that was not often—checking fuel usage, etc. My skipper was not a particularly talkative man. He sat in the left-hand seat wrapped in his own thoughts. In concentrating on navigation and the log I omitted to take note of the engine instruments every 1000 feet during the climb. I still do not appreciate the reason for that particular activity but was told later, at the end of the trip, that such readings tell a story. If I had, for any reason, thought my navigation work was of any use, I was disabused when, after climb out from Hollandia, the captain said, ‘How is the navigation going?’ ‘Fine,’ was my response. He said, ‘We don’t really need that, I know where we are, just tear it up and throw it out the window.’ So I did. I never did understand that particular captain. He was not a bad bloke, quite competent, but simply kept his thoughts to himself. A year later he had both engines fail on a flight between Sydney and Brisbane. With almost a full load of passengers he carried out a successful dead-stick landing in a paddock—the only one in a large wooded area. All the passengers had evacuated safely and when the captain came to the exit door his words to the assembled, very relieved, passengers were: ‘Anyone who doesn’t believe in the Lord is an idiot!’

I did a two-month detachment to Morotai in December and January. I was happy to do so and over the Christmas period all volunteers were welcome. During that detachment most of the flying was to Borneo where there remained a large Australian Army force. Labuan, Balikpapan and Makassar were our usual ports of call. Labuan had a large collection of Japanese aircraft to wander around and peer into.

The Morotai detachment of 38 Squadron was not really exciting to most, but it was to me. I suppose it was novelty, the remnants of the war were still there—many Japanese were in a prisoner-of-war camp established there. The Dutch were present in reasonable numbers and there was a Dutch Officers Mess that our officers visited regularly. We all lived in tents, quite comfortable large tents

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usually with two to a tent. We had our own cooks and messing staff for the all ranks dining room. Dining room probably gives a false impression, it was rather a meals area.

Obviously, we had little to fill in our time apart from the job of flying. There was swimming of course and we always wore sandals or thongs to protect our feet from cuts when walking over the coral that was the ocean floor for 20 metres or so. Most nights there was a movie showing at some unit—usually Army. We went along almost every night rain, hail or more rain. It really did pour down on many occasions but no-one left. We sat there on the seat we had carried, with poncho wrapped around our top half and the brim of the fur felt hat pulled down so that the rain just ran off. As was the custom in those days the National Anthem was played before the start of the film. The King's photograph would appear on the screen and the National Anthem played. Immediately it finished the shout would go up from the audience 'what about Joe' and then Stalin's photo was flashed on the screen to a great shout. Very simple—but it did not take much to make us happy.

While I talk of being happy, I must mention that we each got issued with one 750 ml bottle of Australian beer a day. Not much you say but I contracted dengue fever during this detachment and had 12 days in the field hospital. When I came out I had 12 bottles of beer waiting for me to collect and we had a very enjoyable homecoming. Alcohol was rationed and therefore provided the opportunity for non-drinkers to sell their ration for an inflated price—very inflated! However, it was considered the height of meanness or greed, or simply unprincipled, to sell one's beer. Perhaps the most stinging rebuke or criticism of any person was to assert 'he sells his beer'.

Morotai had no normal city or town—nothing but smallish villages. We often drove a jeep to one of these and purchased a meal—almost invariably nasi goreng or chicken.

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February saw me back at Archerfield with a variety of flying tasks over the following four months. Mostly around the east coast of Australia with one or two Morotai trips. Then in June I was tasked to fly with the only non-commissioned captain in the squadron—to China. The task was to pick up 22 passengers in Sydney and fly them to Shanghai. This was an Australian, United Nation's Rehabilitation Agency team to assist the Chinese civil administration. The crew selection was a great surprise to me and indeed a surprise to everyone in the squadron—an all-NCO crew on an almost unsurveyed route. I say, almost unsurveyed, as the Commanding Officer and his two most experienced captains had been sent to China a few months earlier to pick up a load of pig bristles, urgently needed for the manufacture of paintbrushes in Australia. Later, I learned that the CO was both surprised and annoyed when he heard of this trip. He had been away when we were tasked by the acting squadron commander. Actually, looking back, I agree fully with the view of the Commanding Officer. Quite apart from the unfamiliar task itself, we were flying civilians, some at a reasonably high level. They were employees of the United Nations and may well have expected a senior crew with officer status. Furthermore, we were going to a nation of which we had scant knowledge. One might have reasonably thought an officer captain would be a minimum requirement to face the customs and other officials in this unfamiliar country.

However, the trip went quite well. The chap in charge of the United Nations team seemed surprised at the crew rank level—perhaps a little put out. I was a warrant officer, entitled to go to the Officers Club on American bases. However, none of us were entitled to access the Officers Mess on the Australian bases at Darwin and Morotai. At the US bases at Samar, Clark Field, Laoag and Okinawa the aircraft captain illegally wore warrant officer rank to be able to go to the Officers Club. All our passengers, eight female and 14 males were welcomed into the Officers Clubs. Actually it was quite

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amusing when we landed at the more isolated American bases at Samar, Laoag and Okinawa. On each occasion the American senior officers met our passengers and made repeated and strenuous efforts to convince the captain that we should stay the night and give them the opportunity to extend good American hospitality. The fact that our eight female passengers were quite attractive could have been a factor!

Our arrival in Shanghai was trouble free. We landed as instructed at Kiangwan civil airport, our passengers were met by United Nations and Chinese officials and we were then instructed to fly our aircraft and park it at Lunghwa about 10 minutes flying away. We waited and waited and finally we were picked up by a truck and taken to the Australian Consul's home where we were accommodated. He was an Australian of Chinese descent who had lived in China for many years. We stayed two days in Shanghai and were told to return to Australia via Hong Kong to pick up a single passenger—an Australian doctor.

Our trip to Shanghai was one of those opportunities that young men seem to squander. The two days we spent there offered a great opportunity to explore the town and learn something of its history and culture. Regrettably, we were all young fellows and concentrated more on chatting up the large number of females working for the United Nations and many business agencies. Fortunately, the Australian Consul was a wealth of knowledge and told us many intriguing stories of life in China before the war.

The return trip to Australia was uneventful, although the first leg, Shanghai to Hong Kong, presented a minor problem brought about by the fact that the navigational aids available were limited to a radio compass. The direct course from Shanghai to Hong Kong would take us over some very hilly ground. That, and the weather report of cloud over the land area and low cloud at Hong Kong, decided us to transit over the sea off the east coast. That route would add little to the 850-nautical mile (1575 kilometres)

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direct route and give additional safety at the Hong Kong end. As it happened, we were at 400 feet when we broke cloud safely over the sea. The radio compass had picked up the Hong Kong beacon and was pointing the way. The trouble was that there were three inlets that could be the harbour. Flying at 500 feet and with the surrounding hills obscured by cloud, which inlet should we take? The danger was that we could get into a situation where the route we chose was not Hong Kong Harbour but an increasingly narrow inlet giving us insufficient room to turn back. We prudently cruised up and down for 10 minutes or so and then, to our great joy, a ship appeared steaming out of one of the inlets. That had to be Hong Kong Harbour—it was.

The final act, the approach and landing, was also something of a challenge to the captain. The Hong Kong runway was a very far cry from the current 8000–10 000-foot runway stretching out over the water. It was, if I recall correctly, 5000 feet at most running from the base of a steep hill to the water. In the low cloud condition prevailing, it called almost for a full flap, power off, steep approach down the face of the hill. To land downwind in the other direction could have been rather dicey if an overshoot was required. However, all went well but it is a reminder of conditions facing pilots of yesteryear that are no longer problems with the navigation systems and infrastructure available today. We have come a very long way.

We picked up our Australian doctor and landed back at Archerfield on 5 July—18 days and 109 flying hours after leaving.

For the next few months my flying was mostly around New Guinea—Port Moresby, Lae, Finschhafen, Rabaul and Wewak. It is a challenging country for flying even today using all the flying and navigational aids of the 21st century.

Here I should pause and make comment on my flying experience and ability at that time, October 1946. I had been in 38 Squadron for one year, had flown 575 hours and throughout that period I had carried out just three take-offs and three landings.

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I had not flown at night—the schedules were based on daylight flying only—nor had I carried out an instrument approach. Add that to the fact that I received no instruction of any kind when I joined the squadron and it will be obvious that my ability was unlikely to be of a standard required to take over in the event of the captain becoming incapacitated for any reason—heart attack, food poisoning or whatever. That deplorable situation was the norm as far as second pilots were concerned. We would talk of the one or two captains who would give the second pilot a landing—occasionally. It was an appalling state of affairs that did not reflect favourably on the squadron's commander and executives. I recall when the first navigator was posted in to the squadron. He was a flight lieutenant of considerable experience. With the squadron aircrew gathered in the operations room the Commanding Officer said that navigators were being posted into the squadron and would those captains who would like to fly with a navigator put up their hands. Just one hand went up. I felt sorry for the navigator who was there to witness this rebuttal. However, common sense prevailed and not long afterwards every crew included a navigator.

Notwithstanding my strongly held criticism I must, in fairness, say that the transport wing ran three services a week between Sydney and Japan plus a great deal of flying in and around Indonesia, Papua and New Guinea. We never scratched an aircraft. Given the wide range of weather encountered over a vast area of operations; the range and altitude limitations of the Dakota, and the rudimentary navigational aids, it was a commendable effort.

It was at this time that one of the two Flight Commanders decided that I should be given the opportunity to be trained for captaincy. Obviously, the other Flight Commander and the Commanding Officer would have agreed. The curious aspect in this decision is that it could not have been based on my flying ability—I had done little beyond climbing and descending the aircraft. Odd as it may seem, I think I came to notice for two reasons.

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The first was when I was given a punishment duty for some minor infringement—I really cannot remember what it was. But I do remember the duty operations officer, a senior flight lieutenant, saying, ‘You can do a week’s Orderly Sergeant.’ My reply was, ‘I am a warrant officer, I can’t do Orderly Sergeant.’ ‘Very well, a week’s Orderly Officer’, he said.

It was the custom that after a duty week your name went to the top of the crew ladder for the next trip. After completion of my ‘punishment’ the Flight Commander queried my elevation on the duty roster. I explained that I had been Orderly Officer for a week and therefore I go to the top. He said, ‘Not when you are given the duty as a punishment. However, you did a very good job as Orderly Officer so I’ll let it go.’ I said thank you and he said, ‘You did do a good job, I want you to know that.’

Well I guess I did. It was my first time as Orderly Officer and I was quite conscientious. I found the guard on duty at the rather isolated No 38 Squadron hangar, asleep. He did not just fall asleep sitting in a chair or on the ground, he had made himself a bed, was stretched out with his rifle lying beside him for anyone to take. I charged him and the next morning he was given seven days confined to barracks. Two nights later I found he had not reported as required and had gone to town—another charge. Each day I did an inspection of the airmen’s lunch and dinner, and the mess kitchen as laid down in orders. I did a very thorough inspection for cleanliness and the correct dress of those working there. During one lunch inspection I noted a mess hand dishing out food to the airmen as they filed past with a plate held out. He virtually tossed the food on as if he were feeding pigs. I rebuked him severely and then told the flying officer catering officer that this attitude to the airmen was quite unsatisfactory. On the Saturday there was a failure of the electrical supply to the Commanding Officer’s house (he had the only house in the 38 Squadron area) and I managed to get an electrician from somewhere and his dinner party was saved.

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And that is rather an unusual way to become noticed as a pilot, but I believe that is where it started.

The second factor is that I got very bored with the unimportant role of second pilot, so I decided to occupy myself—keeping the engine log (I still saw little use in that activity), noting early in the sortie how much freight we would discharge at the next stop, how much fuel we would need for the next leg and then calculating availability for freight and passengers. We would radio that information ahead. On landing at non-Service airfields in New Guinea and Indonesia, I would refuel the aircraft from the tanker and have the tanks checked for water by the time the rest of the crew came back. I was not trying to make a point but rather to be as useful as I could be as a second pilot.

The conversion to captaincy was not a structured course but rather was conducted at the discretion of the Flight Commander. What had come about at that time was that instrument ratings were introduced and a card issued categorising each pilot as having a limited instrument rating or an unlimited instrument rating. Each set the standard of weather conditions in which you were authorised to fly—cloud base and visibility limits. I was given all the sequences one would expect that I should have done before being authorised to fly as second pilot. Lots of circuits and landings, all sorts of flap settings, single-engine work and instrument flying. During the training period I would do normal transport trips with a captain authorised to fly in the right-hand seat and have me flying from the captain's seat. All told, it took four months with the last sequence being a 78-hour return trip to Japan, supervised by the Flight Commander. My first trip as captain departed Schofield Air Force Base on 5 March 1947 bound for Japan. I had done 700 hours as second pilot. I could have got a lot more out of those hours had the system been different, but what the hell—I was a captain!

On 3 March 1947 I was commissioned. Of course I was delighted. I momentarily recalled my brief call on that flight

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lieutenant in Postings at RAAF Headquarters in September 1945. When I said that I wanted to stay in the RAAF and get a permanent commission he had just laughed and said, 'Wouldn't we all! Well, this was not a permanent commission but hopefully I was on the way.

April, May and June were courier runs to Japan, each taking about 18 days. There was usually a short trip between the courier runs. Then it was a three-month period on detachment at RAAF Base Pearce in Western Australia. The Dakota was the only RAAF working aircraft in Western Australia at that time. Most of that detachment was taking a party of government officials around old wartime airfields in the north of the State to auction off the long-redundant wartime facilities—hospitals for instance. It was of great interest to meet the station owners and families and listen to their stories about the Air Force building an air base on their property and how the Japanese, even though they seemed to be almost overhead, had not found them. An interesting and educational venture for me.

This period, which started in February or early March 1947, had brought another interest. On a Sunday night in that period I was urged to go out to a dance in Sydney—an Air Force dance run by members of the Air Force Club in Sydney. I was very tired and wanted to rest but my copilot was keen to go out and that was the only entertainment he knew of. And so I went to keep him company. At the dance, standing at the back surveying the talent as young men were want to do, I spied a particularly attractive young girl and positioned myself strategically to be first to ask her for the next dance. That went according to plan. Regrettably I had to leave after that one dance—but I left with her telephone number. Gail has been around for some time now—we celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary last August. At that time, however, I was away so much that I still wonder that I was able to hang on to Gail. Not only were the long trips to Japan cutting down on my time in Sydney but I was

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sent on detachment to Pearce again during February and March and April 1948. Nevertheless, we set 29 August for our wedding.

A good thing about Air Force life is that it is never dull. One day in late July the CO said to me, 'The squadron has been allocated a glider. I want you to go over to Richmond [RAAF Richmond was 10 miles away—as the crow flies] and to bring the glider back here. Flight Lieutenant Mueller will tow you back.'

I went to Richmond expecting the glider to be one of those small, frail-looking machines with a very long wing. But it was the 10-seater—the type of glider that landed troops at Arnhem. It had a rope attached to a hook under each wing, both leading to a single rope which attached to the tow vehicle, in this case a Dakota. A squadron leader briefed me on this odd-looking vehicle and then took me flying. In 40 minutes he demonstrated all the things that the glider was capable of, such as engine failure of the tug aircraft on take-off. This simply meant that at about 50 feet and 80 knots he released the ropes to the tow aircraft—we were alone and powerless. However he was able to climb 100 feet or so, turn back to the airfield as he did so and land safely. Next he demonstrated asymmetric flying by letting go of the rope under just one wing. The result was very similar to having one engine of a twin-engined aircraft, like the Dakota, fail. I then got towed off and, as arranged, released at 1500 feet over Schofield. I landed with the whole base out to witness this curious event. The CO said, 'Well done David, you are now the squadron glider instructor.' However, I was saved as two weeks later I left Sydney by Qantas to take part in the Berlin Airlift.

The Airlift venture had been talked about for several weeks. The Wing (86 Wing) had prepared 10 aircraft for the journey. These were lined up on the tarmac ready to go. As the UK Government had made no response to the offer after several weeks, it was assumed we were not required. Then on 21 August, just eight days before I was to be married, we were told that we would be leaving

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for duty on the Berlin Airlift the following Tuesday. Fortunately, Qantas advised that they could not take all 41 members on the one aircraft at such short notice. We would have to go in three groups. Because of my marriage arrangement, I was put down for the last group and so a few hurried decisions were made. The most momentous was that we should get married before my departure. This we did on the Tuesday and so had five days of married bliss before my departure. I really thought the blockade would be a matter of weeks—perhaps a couple of months at the most. Indeed this was the general assessment within the squadron and I left my new bride with that impression. It was 14 months before I returned. It is perhaps not surprising that during my remaining 36 years in the Air Force, every time I went away on duty saying that I would be back in a week or three weeks or whatever, I always got the same reply from Gail, 'I'll expect you when I see you.'

Before setting off on this new venture I had looked back at the last 21 months with No 38 squadron and asked myself how I was going. I doubt that one can do this objectively but it is something I think we all do as we move along our career paths. For me, the main outcome of this assessment was that I felt confident of my competence as a pilot. Most flying is routine, nevertheless, it could throw in a challenge from time to time and, as so often happens with aviation, usually at short notice. Okinawa had a few surprises for me on my Japanese courier trips. The first was when I was advised by Okinawa Approach to divert to Shanghai due to strong cross winds—30 knots, gusting to 40. Good advice if you had fuel for such a diversion. I heard the affirmative calls of two C-54s that diverted as advised. I simply had no option. I sweated it out over the last half hour of that leg but in the end it was no major event. I came in with power on and a tail-high touchdown. I virtually flew the aircraft onto the ground. The major problem was as the tail came down judicious use of asymmetric engine power was necessary to stay on the runway. Then, I could not hold the rudder pedals central

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with the strong wind acting on the large rudder area of the Dakota, so I had a crew member hop out and insert the rudder chock in place. Much ado about nothing in the end—pity, I would have liked to divert to Hong Kong.

My next surprise at Okinawa was when given the basic weather—cloud base 500 feet and visibility five miles—I was asked if I would like a Zippo approach. That was something I had not heard of and when I asked I was told it was a radar-controlled approach that would bring me down to 200 feet on finals. I was not worried about the cloud base—Okinawa was an island and I would have been happy to descend to 500 feet over the water and five mile visibility was fine. However, I said okay to the Zippo approach. This turned out to be the ground-controlled approach (GCA) that we came to know well some months later. The Zippo approach must have been at the very start of this system. I was quite astounded to experience this ‘amazing new technology’—to me it was magic. I could not wait to get home and tell the squadron about this Zippo approach system. I believe that was about April 1947—regrettably I did not note that let down in my logbook.

Thirdly, at Okinawa (Naha) I was warned to keep a lookout for a glider as I approached the airfield. I replied to the Tower’s query, ‘had I sighted the glider,’ with a ‘no sighting’ report. Finally, somewhat exasperated, the Tower said, ‘The glider is in your 10 o’clock position, 2000 feet above you.’ My reply, ‘The only thing I can see in that position is a C-47.’ From the Tower, ‘That is the glider.’ Sure enough, it was C-47 with the engines taken out and fairings over the engine positions.

Japan itself presented more serious situations on occasions. Icing I found on one particular occasion to be a considerable worry. Cruising at 9000 feet because of high ground, in and out of cloud, I was getting all kinds of icing—carburettor icing, engine intake icing and wing icing—the intake anti-icing on, propellers vibrating and so propeller anti-icing on. Propeller anti-icing sent alcohol squirting

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onto the propellers which ended up dislodging large lumps of ice to crash against the fuselage not far from the left-hand pilot's seat. And, lastly, wing de-icing boots designed to stop, or at least slow down, the build-up of ice on the wings. The worrying part of this situation is always that if the build-up continues there will not be sufficient power to climb out of the icing range and indeed, it may even be difficult to maintain height. With high hills beneath this is not a comfortable situation. I am pleased say that I only struck this on the approach into Iwakuni on one occasion. Fortunately, it occurred only 10 minutes before I was able to descend safely into an approved let down procedure.

In the Southern Hemisphere on part of this particular courier run we had to contend with passage through the intertropic front. This was most active on our route in the December–January period and just to the north of Darwin seemed to be the worst area. Often we faced a line of huge cumulus cloud at right angles to our course and stretching forever. Going around them was not feasible and the practice was to push on at 8000 feet and suffer the severe turbulence that resulted. It was at times frightening or very frightening, except for the fact that we were advised by the senior pilots in the squadron that the Dakota could ride it out safely if you stuck to the established and proven technique. That was, not to worry about being tossed up and down hundreds of feet, just concentrate on maintaining the attitude of the aircraft—a straight and level attitude. On no account try to maintain a set altitude whilst in these conditions! There were perhaps hundreds of these penetrations that proved the theory.

It was the sum of these experiences that gave me confidence that I would be able to cope with the rather shocking weather that we would encounter in Germany during the European winter. In general, I felt quite comfortable about the Airlift venture.

## MY HONEYMOON POSTPONED FOR THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

Sadly and far too quickly, the time had come. I was at the airport with my wife, my parents, and the intended best man who could not make the earlier wedding date. It was, of course, right and proper to have my parents and friends there but in reality I only wanted to be with my wife, Gail. Because we had only been married five days we were a prime subject for the press and their photographers. Questions from the media quickly intruded into the short time we had. However that is how it was. Exciting? Yes, my first trip to Europe and surprisingly my first trip in a commercial aircraft. It was also worrying because we did not know how long we would be away. We all assumed it would be weeks or maybe a few months, probably because that is what we wanted to believe. Notwithstanding all these interwoven thoughts and emotions, the major feeling within me was one of sadness and disappointment. I had literally been counting the days to marrying this girl I had been courting for 18 months—but missing on duty for most of that time. Gail had missed what most young women of the day looked forward to and expected, to be a bride and to wear that lovely white dress she had selected. We both were to miss the joyous gathering of friends and relations to wish us happiness. We were both to be denied some two weeks to be alone together on a honeymoon that all newlyweds deserve to have as a lifelong memory. I felt badly for myself but as compensation I would have the comradeship of my squadron mates and the challenge and

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interest of a new and important job on the other side of the world; it was for Gail that I really carried a heavy heart.

An interesting aspect of this posting is that it brings to the fore the attitude to service in the armed forces in those days. It never entered my mind that I should complain or seek to get out of this duty on which I was being sent. Nor indeed did it ever occur to my new wife that I should consider such a course of action. Both of us would have considered it to be a dereliction of duty. I suspect that this attitude will be seen as absurd to young men and women of the 21st century. I have no doubt that today the Australian Defence Force would consider a request for deferral—or even cancellation—to be quite reasonable. I would agree with and applaud this more compassionate and enlightened policy. However, it was a different culture in the 1940s but nevertheless a culture that was widely accepted. It was a time when all Australians had observed, throughout the course of a six-year war, hundreds of thousands of young Australians sent off to all parts of the globe without the slightest idea of where they were going or when they might return. Their families were often left in total ignorance of their whereabouts. That attitude to service in the Defence Force was still alive and well in 1948. Also, I was aware that at least 50 per cent of those being sent on Airlift duty had served in World War II and spent years separated from their families during that conflict. They did not protest—how unprincipled it would have been for me to do so.

And so I was aboard a Qantas Constellation on my way to London. It was a slow trip by today's standards. The seating arrangement in first class was not markedly better than economy class travel today but the food and free drinks did impress.

On arrival in London we were met and welcomed by the Australian Air Adviser and also a wing commander of the Royal Air Force. Then we went on to the Australian Air Force Headquarters in London to be briefed on arrangements for our pay and general administration. We then moved to RAF Station Bassingbourn,

*My Honeymoon Postponed for the Berlin Airlift*

which was the home of an RAF transport squadron assigned to flying very important people (VIPs). It was a typical permanent Royal Air Force base which impressed me as being a very grand establishment. I suppose that was the exaggerated view of a young officer who had only been based at hurriedly constructed RAAF wartime bases at Narromine, Bundaberg, East Sale, Archerfield and Schofield. They were deplorable by comparison—a primitive collection of timber huts with an airstrip thrown in.

However, we were not there for sightseeing but to qualify for an RAF instrument rating and to learn the standard operating procedures that applied in the Royal Air Force. This included operating and using instrument approach systems specific to the RAF and which had no equivalent in the RAAF. This was a Blind Approach Beam System (BABS). The let down was operated by directions given to the pilot by the navigator reading the BABS radar. It worked quite well but did not have the flexibility of a ground-controlled approach (GCA). We were all tested and given Green Cards. A Green Card was the equivalent of the RAAF's unlimited rating; a White Card equated to the limited rating. Some time later the RAAF and RNZAF also adopted the Green and White Card system. All these events were carried out smoothly, efficiently and expeditiously. I had departed Australia on 29 August 1948 and carried out my first sortie on the Berlin Airlift from Lubeck, Germany, on 16 September.

We had also come to understand the critical importance of the Airlift and were aware that failure to sustain that besieged city by air could well bring about a major war with Russia.

To a large extent, the dilemma in which the Western powers found themselves was a result of their lack of attention to postwar planning. Churchill and Roosevelt were totally engrossed in fighting the war, in pursuing victory. Scant attention was given to other planning tasks lest it divert attention from the main aim. On the other hand the Russians, as they advanced through the

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countries of Eastern Europe, set up communist governments and created a distinct Soviet bloc—a classic shaping of their strategic environment. Postwar Germany, defeated and impoverished by reparation payments and the support of the occupying forces, with no government of its own, was in a parlous state and perceived by the Russians to be vulnerable. Clearly, if they could force a withdrawal of the Western powers from Berlin, the traditional capital and symbol of the German nation, it would have a psychological impact on the whole of Germany and indeed the whole of Europe. Russia would be seen as the dominant power, the Western Allies as weak, itinerant visitors. These were the motives behind the Russian intransigence on almost every aspect of the Allied control and administration of the German nation. Gradually, the Soviet Military Governor imposed restrictions on rail and road access between Berlin and Western zones. All routes had to pass through the Russian zone and it was here that the Russians sought to seal off access on one pretext or another.

On reflection, this must have been in their mind when, at the very outset of planning the Four Power occupation of Berlin, the Russians insisted that all food, coal and other resources required for the Western sectors would have to come from the Western zones—they could not be acquired from the Russian zone.

The question was, could the Western powers afford the almost certain eventuality that they would have to withdraw from Berlin and abandon two and a half million Berliners to the Russians. Would they suffer this bloodless, political defeat, or go to war? The situation was put very starkly by General Lucius D. Clay, Military Governor of the American zone and a member of the Allied Control Council, established for the purpose of jointly controlling and administering the German nation. In a signal sent to the American Chief of Army, Clay said conditions being imposed by the Russians would make it impossible for travel between Berlin and the American zone by American personnel except by air. He

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said it was undoubtedly the first of a series of restrictive measures designed to drive us from Berlin. Clay concluded his signal with: 'a retreat from Berlin at this moment would, in my opinion, have serious if not disastrous political consequences in Europe. I do not believe the Soviets mean war now. However, if they do, it seems to me that we might as well find out now as later. We cannot afford to be bluffed.'

The General was absolutely correct. The Russians did indeed take a series of measures to drive the Americans, British and French out of Berlin. By June 1948 Berlin was blockaded—all roads and rail lines closed for maintenance. It seemed that two and a half million Berliners would be starved to death or forced to accept Soviet patronage. The Western Allies faced the grim choice—surrender Berlin and perhaps the whole of Germany to the Russians or prepare for another tragic war. But, there was a third choice—supply Berlin by air. Few entertained any serious thought that a major city of two and a half million people could be sustained by air alone. How could an air bridge, particularly during a German winter, provide all the city's needs for coal, food, power and fuel? Certainly the Russians did not consider such a possibility. They believed that 'General Winter' would be their ally once again.

If you accept that the alternatives to the successful supply of Berlin by air were political defeat or war, the strategic significance of the Airlift cannot be overstated. Many historians believe the Berlin Airlift to be the most strategically important operation of the Cold War.

That was the scene that had been set when the Western powers decided to give peace a chance and adopted the Airlift option. At a meeting with General Clay and the US Chiefs of Staff, President Truman disallowed a proposal by General Clay to send an armed convoy through the Russian zone to Berlin. He directed the Chiefs of Staff to allocate an additional 75 C-54 aircraft (the military

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version of the Douglas DC-4) to Clay and to construct a third airfield in Berlin.

Looking at the 12 000 tons brought in daily by surface transport, for what was a low level of economic life and a life of little comfort, the task seemed impossible. The first planning task was to establish the minimum air tonnage required to sustain the Western sectors of Berlin.

Fortunately, as the Russians had insisted on food and other supplies being brought in from the Allied zones, the daily food requirement was known. One thousand five hundred tons of food a day would meet the minimum requirement but, of course, food alone would not sustain a large city. The Russians had cut off the supply of electrical power to the Western sectors. Consequently, coal had to be brought in for powerhouses in the Western sectors. In all, about 3000 tons of coal was needed each day. Then there were all the other needs of a big city, medical supplies, and raw materials for industry, petrol and diesel fuel. The estimate was that about 4600 tons daily would provide a minimum sustenance in summer and that 5500 tons would be the minimum in winter.

On 26 June the Americans flew in 80 tons and the British 13 tons. Raising their effort to the maximum possible at that time, on 28 June the Americans achieved 384 tons and the British 44 tons. However, by mid-July the daily supply was meeting the food requirements but reserves of other commodities held within the city were falling.

The influx of additional aircraft, technical personnel, air traffic controllers, and administrators and other support personnel working around the clock necessitated additional hardstanding, living accommodation, messing facilities, transport and a host of other requirements. The result was an urgent need to open new bases and this was done in quick time—fortunately, many former Luftwaffe air bases were available.

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More quickly than most anticipated, the Americans, and to a lesser extent the British, were able to build up a force to meet the barest needs of the city. It was a maximum effort all around. The British were restricted by having the Dakota as the main workhorse, supplemented by the Avro York and later the new Hastings. This smallish force was further supplemented by a rather curious collection of civil operators with an even more curious collection of aircraft. These included the Bristol Freighter, the Handley Page Hermes, the Fairchild Packet, the Vickers Viking, the Avro Tudor and the Lancastrian (a converted Lancaster bomber which carried diesel fuel in a huge bomb bay tank). However, everything helped and in particular those civil aircraft carrying petrol and diesel fuel—known as ‘wet loads.’ A celebrated pilot carrying wet loads was Australian Don Bennett. Bennett trained in the RAAF in 1930 and was transferred to the Royal Air Force. Shot down during a bombing mission he evaded capture and returned to England via Switzerland. He became an air vice-marshal commanding the famous Pathfinder Group of Bomber Command. Back in civilian life, he was flying a Tudor aircraft on the Berlin Airlift when he made a near fatal error. He took off with his elevator control locks still in place. By a superb feat of flying skill he controlled the aircraft pitch by elevator trims and made a safe landing. Also making a contribution were the former Coastal Command Sunderland flying boats that operated from Berlin’s Lake Havel. However, the key to success in the Airlift operation was the C-54 Skymaster. It carried a load of 20 000 pounds compared to 6000 pounds for the Dakota and 10 000 pounds for the York. Developed as a military troop carrier and cargo aircraft, over 200 C-54s were eventually used on the Berlin Airlift. In the 1950s it became an efficient airline aircraft designated the DC-4. It is extremely unlikely that the Airlift would have been successful without the C-54.

The pinch was on for aircrews as well as aircraft. Crews were becoming fatigued and flying discipline suffered noticeably.

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Medical officers and supervisory officers expressed concern for flying safety but there was no immediate solution. Australia had offered to send 10 Dakota aircraft and 10 crews. After weeks of indecision, the British Government accepted the offer of RAAF aircrew and the offer of 11 crews from South Africa and three from New Zealand. Why not aircraft? The reason for not accepting the Australian aircraft was uncertainty as to the legality of using other than British aircraft. The written agreement on the use of the air corridors referred to 'aircraft of the nations governing Germany'. Could Commonwealth aircraft be put on the British charter—it seemed doubtful—and so the Australian offer of 10 Dakota aircraft was not accepted. The offer of aircrew was very welcome.

I have included this strategic reflection and set out some of the operational considerations because, at the end of 60 years from the event, few readers will have knowledge of the factors involved. The Berlin Airlift was an operation worthy of examination. Not primarily for the efficiency or success of the actual task, but for the strategic outcome.

Having done that, I hope without being overly verbose, I will now get on with the progress of Operation *Plainfare* (the British operation) and my involvement in that.

I had my last flight at Bassingbourn on 14 September and my first Airlift sortie on 16 September. In the meantime, we had a fleeting tour of the former Luftwaffe Base Lubeck. First impressions—a very well-built and comfortable establishment. We were accommodated on the top floor of a two-storey barrack block about 50 yards from the main mess. The mess itself was very comfortable with a large billiard room on the ground floor and a very adequate bar in the basement. The dining room was pleasant and the meals very reasonable, considering that rationing was still in force in England. Furthermore, we soon found that eggs could be bought; in my case, from the batman looking after my room, who incidentally had fought on the Russian Front. In fact, almost all the

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Germans I met had fought on the Russian Front. One exception was Bruno, a barman in the Officers Mess. Bruno had shot down 17 Lancasters and was considered by everyone to be a bloody good bloke. When asked why he was working as a barman in the mess, his answer was that he thought there would be a war between the Western Allies and the Russians, and that the Royal Air Force might find a place for him in such circumstances.

My first two Airlift sorties on 16 September were quite uneventful. The weather was good but, even so, I noted in my logbook that more than half the trip was in cloud. I also noted that air traffic control at the Berlin end was less precise than I had expected. The Lubeck-based aircraft mostly used the RAF Station Gatow airfield, whilst the Americans used Tempelhof as their main Berlin base. These airfields, and Tegel to be constructed by November, were within a 6-mile (9.7-kilometre) radius of each other so that, with a landing or take-off from each every 90 seconds, the airspace was always busy. At any time there could also be flying boats landing and taking off from Lake Havel. The usual instruction from the Tower was to join downwind but did not specify whether you would be number one or number five downwind. On a dark night with a low cloud base this could be rather dodgy.

Actually, those early trips were the start of a peculiar work schedule that was to dictate our lives for the next 11 months.

We worked to a 20-hour clock not the traditional 24 hours. We were programmed to fly two Lubeck–Berlin sorties on each ‘shift’—that would take eight hours. Then it was 12 hours off before the next take-off. For example, day one take-off 0800 hours, land Berlin (Gatow) 0935 hours—unload and load, take-off 0955 and land Lubeck 1135. Lunch in the flight line kitchen—take-off 1215, Gatow 1340, and land back at Lubeck 1600 hours. We then had 12 hours off so that day two take-off would be 0400 hours and finish at 1200 hours. Day three take-off midnight and finish at 0800. Then

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a welcome 36 hours off. After three cycles (18 sorties) we had four days off duty.

In a way that unusual work pattern set the style of our leisure time. With 12 hours between flights there was no opportunity to do more than go to the on-base movie theatre or have a few beers in the mess or a hit at cricket or tennis in the facility near our quarters. It all depended on the time of the day that the 12 hours embraced. Going into Lubeck was not a common practice. I really do not know why. There was an Officers Club there and plenty of taverns—but the mess on our base took preference. Besides, beer was much cheaper there and, I think, a major factor was that 80 per cent of the officers were married and we were happy to be ‘bar flies’ together.

We did play a good deal of sport. Cricket was popular and we had constructed a reasonable pitch just outside our sleeping quarters. We had a surprising amount of talent and I think about 40 per cent of both the base cricket and football teams were from our small detachment, as were the three members of the base tennis squad—including me.

Often on four-day leave passes one of us would be rostered to fly an aircraft back to Oakington in the United Kingdom and, at the end of leave, to fly a replacement aircraft back to Lubeck. It was a good opportunity for any of the squadron who wanted to go to the UK to travel on the aircraft. When this did happen we tended to continue the ‘bar flies’ behaviour—although the single blokes had other interests.

The English taste for flat, warm beer forced us into a ‘selective’ pub crawl routine. Most of us ‘disliked’ the warm beer on offer. However, there was at most pubs a beer barrel type of container filled with ice and in which could be found bottles of lager or pale ale. We would finish that lot and then search for another pub with the lager stock still untouched. Fortunately, the barrel did not hold more than a dozen or so of the small lager bottles.

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We saw an occasional show in London and, of course, called at RAAF Headquarters to collect our mail, if any, and to get news of the Air Force back home. Communications were very poor in those days; letters took about three weeks or longer and telephone calls were very expensive—especially for a flying officer. Gail, God bless her, rang me occasionally. I think I was the only one of our group to receive a call from home. It used to amuse my navigator friend who would make sure that everyone knew that I had received a ‘Gail Warning’. I think the Air Force pay allotment that she received each fortnight just covered the cost of a three-minute telephone call. How very different the conditions and entitlements for Service people on duty overseas today. Laptops to correspond daily and regular telephone calls are available. It really is a different world for the Service person today and I am thankful for their sake.

The deep loneliness of having no contact with those you are longing to be with gnaws at one’s morale. Fortunately we were conditioned—by upbringing and training—to cope with that. Odd as it may seem, at the end of our four days we were quite looking forward to getting back to Lubeck and resuming our job.

As with all other squadrons based at Lubeck, the RAAF squadron flew as a block, taking off at three-minute intervals and flying at 5500 feet, the assigned altitude for Dakota aircraft. It was very convenient because we had our time off together, did not disturb each other getting up or going to bed in the middle of the night and appeared in the flying program as the ‘RAAF Squadron’.

The tonnage of supplies being delivered into the beleaguered city continued to build up steadily as more aircraft and crews became available. However, optimum efficiency and, indeed, adequate flight safety would not be attained until several procedures were critically addressed and modified.

The first essential, as in all military operations, was to sort out the command and control arrangements. At the start the RAF and United States Air Force (USAF) rushed into their separate

and uncoordinated operations—the British operation codenamed *Plainfare* and the American operation *Vittles*. *Plainfare* was under the command of the Air Officer Commanding No 46 Group RAF who reported to the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Air Forces of Occupation. Transport Command fought against that arrangement strenuously. The American side was little better with the Commander, United States Air Forces Europe clashing with Major General Tunner who commanded the American Airlift Forces. In the end, common sense prevailed and a Combined Air Lift Task Force (CALTF) Headquarters was set up under the command of General Tunner. Air Commodore Merer, Air Officer Commanding No 46 Group RAF was Deputy Commander.

The combined headquarters quickly put in place improved loading and unloading procedures. Rail spurs were put into Airlift bases to expedite delivery of cargoes. Army personnel were responsible for this logistics support and large numbers of displaced persons (DPs) were used for the physical loading and unloading in Berlin. One of the few policy differences that remained was the carrying of passengers out of Berlin. The Americans did not load passengers in Berlin on the grounds that it took time and thus would reduce the number of sorties that could be flown into Berlin. The British on the other hand did carry passengers on many occasions. My observation was that it added about 10 minutes to time on the ground. I rather liked that task. Passengers were mostly young children who came aboard with their name and destination on a tag tied around their neck. I received several very nice letters from those kids but regrettably I cannot find them—hopefully, they are somewhere amongst the mass of paper I have accumulated over the years.

The major improvement was to air traffic control and to the flight profiles into and out of Berlin. This came about when General Tunner, flying into Berlin in a C-54, struck extremely bad weather. Torrential rain had put the radar out: one C-54 had overshot the

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runway and caught fire; a second had braked heavily and blown its tyres, thereby blocking the runway; a third could not identify the runway in the poor conditions and touched down on a construction site. As a result of this chaos on the ground, aircraft were stacked up to 12 000 feet. The air was filled with aircraft milling around in dense cloud. Tunner was furious. He went on the radio to air traffic control and told them to send every aeroplane in the stack back to its home base. Tunner landed and then told his two pilots to stay in Berlin 'until you have figured out a way to eliminate any possibility of this mess ever happening again—ever'. They were given office space, an artist and a navigator, and directed to devise a workable traffic pattern.

The result was a system where stacking of aircraft was out. If for any reason a pilot missed the approach, he simply overshot and returned to base with his load. Inbound aircraft were to report over Frohnau beacon, located at the Berlin end of the northern corridor, within 30 seconds of an allotted time. The Airlift bases were allocated blocks of beacon times and operated their aircraft in waves to cover the allocated period. Aircraft in the waves were separated at three-minute intervals. Each aircraft type had an assigned height to fly, with a vertical separation of 500 feet in the Northern and Central corridors and 1000 feet in the Southern corridor. It was a one-way traffic pattern. Aircraft operating from the British zone flew into Berlin by the Northern Corridor and those from the American zone by the Southern Corridor. All aircraft flew out by the Central Corridor.

The system was good but did not suit all those involved. Nevertheless, it was a vast improvement on the uncoordinated 'fly in at will' that marked the early days. That system, if it could be called a system, could not possibly have worked as the number of aircraft built up and the winter weather descended across Germany.

My statement that the new system did not suit all those involved was based on my personal experience with icing conditions

encountered during the winter months. Quite often during winter the Dakota, flying at 5500 feet, would start icing up. Firstly, carburettor icing, which we expected and controlled by the use of carburettor heating, and appropriate procedures were followed for engine intake icing and propeller icing. However, although the pulsating de-icing boots on the wing leading edge were moving some ice, it continued to build up. The air speed required to make our set beacon time at Frohnau could only be maintained by increasing power. This was done until finally, 'maximum continuous' power was set. After that, as the ice continued to build up, the speed gradually reduced. The first concern was the aircraft three minutes behind you—was he having the same problem? That was easy, quick radio call and you compared indicated air speeds. Obviously, in normal circumstances you would have to descend before the aircraft was near the stalling speed. The saving grace in our situation was that, by the time your speed was back to about 95 knots you were at the descent point at Frohnau. The other fortunate factor was that the wing ice cleared very quickly once you left 5500 feet.

Completion of the third airfield, Tegel, in the French sector, coincided with the enlarged fleet of aircraft available towards the end of 1948. The construction of Tegel's 5500 feet of runway, 120 000 square feet of hardstanding and 6000 feet of taxiway plus the vertical structures, took just three months. The Americans provided most of the money, all of the construction expertise and also conducted the flight operations. The French contribution was small, but greatly appreciated. There were two transmitting masts belonging to the Russian-controlled Radio Berlin. It was a curious set-up. The broadcasting station itself was in the British sector but it belonged to the Russians. The transmitting masts were in the French sector. Both masts were close to the final approach into Tegel and, as one was 400 feet high and the second near that height, they were a definite hazard to flight operations in poor weather.

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When requested to do so by the French, the Russians refused to remove them. Without further ado the French Commander had them blown up. To the Russians furious protest he simply said, 'I advised you that the towers would not be available after 15 December.'

And now there were three airfields in the Western sectors, all within a six mile radius. So close that the landing direction had to be the same for each. If a change of wind necessitated it, the three had to change runway at the same time. In bad weather this often meant overshooting several aircraft back to their home bases while the change was made.

In spite of winter with its low cloud, ice, fog and snow, the daily tonnages into Berlin built up. In February it averaged 5437 tons per day and by April it was 7845 tons per day. As an Easter present and a morale booster to the Berliners, General Tunner put 1398 flights into Berlin carrying 12 941 tons, between noon on Easter Saturday and noon on Easter Sunday. Allied authorities, Service chiefs, politicians and bureaucrats were now convinced that it was within the capacity of the Western Allies to increase the supply to 9000 tons per day. And to sustain that rate for as long as it was necessary. Allocate additional C-54s and 11 000 tons was certainly achievable.

More importantly, the Russians started to recognise that the tactic of blockade had failed. Some lifting of the blockade therefore occurred in May but there were still pinpricking delays. The Airlift continued at full pace. It was not until the Paris Conference in June 1949 that a full lifting of the blockade was agreed by the Soviets. The Western Foreign Ministers were able to stand firm in their negotiations, confident in the knowledge that Berlin could not be held hostage to the blockade threat and confident that the Russians knew the 'game was up'. However, the Western powers were not taking any chances, they decided to continue the Airlift, at a reduced pace, to build up reserve stocks for five months in Berlin.

They calculated that they could from then, return to a full Airlift within three months should it become necessary.

The Russian bid to expel the Western powers had failed. It had been defeated by air power. Air power, for the first time, had taken on a traditional role of the Army and Navy; it had relieved a siege. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Berlin Airlift had a profound effect strategically. The alternative options of abandoning Berlin or embarking on another disastrous war were avoided. But, more than this, it brought the Western nations together in a mood of confidence, and with the will to stand firmly against Russian intransigence and threats. Certainly, it facilitated the formation of the NATO Alliance in a far more cooperative atmosphere, and more expeditiously, than would normally be expected.

I feel I should complete this chapter with some comment on the operations of the small RAAF contingent in this significant operation—described in the RAF report on Operation *Plainfare* as the greatest air operation of any type to be undertaken in times of peace.

Two RAAF crews on exchange with the RAF took part for short periods as part of their duties in No 24 Squadron RAF. However, I will speak of the 10 crews sent from Australia, from Nos 36 and 38 Squadrons, specifically for Airlift duties.

While I will write of my own experiences, they would be representative of the environment and conditions encountered by all Dakota crews operating from Lubeck. They would apply particularly to the RAAF crews as we flew in the same block—and we were there longer than others.

The winter weather really was appalling. On more than one occasion I flew my six sorties of a cycle without seeing the ground above 400 feet. The visibility was at times so poor that at Lubeck, which did not have lead-in lighting to the runway, some poor airmen would be based at the end of the runway to fire Verey pistol flares to help pilots identify the start of the runway and centre-line.

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Flight Lieutenant Mel Quinn, the only RAAF pilot killed on the Airlift (he was on exchange with the RAF), crashed at Lubeck. He could not identify the runway and overshot from very low height to fly a low circuit—regrettably, he flew into the ground. I had to take the same overshoot action on two occasions, fortunately with a better outcome. I think it probable that all Lubeck-based pilots had the same experience from time to time. A GCA system was used in Berlin at each of the three airfields and, of course, lead-in lights were available. The position at Lubeck was that these aids would necessitate flying over the Russian zone. Flight Lieutenant Quinn actually crashed in the Russian zone—just two miles away.

Actually, after the second occasion I determined never to use that low-level procedure again—it was far too risky and not smart airmanship. The night that led me to declare, ‘No more of that!’, was really a shocker. There was very low cloud, with visibility down to a couple of hundred yards and cloud base varying between 300 and 400 feet, and nothing whatsoever to see. On the initial approach, following my navigator’s course and height steers, I was below 100 feet when I saw a flare path light—I was about 20 yards to the left of the runway. In the conditions I could not safely do the right and left-hand turns necessary to centre myself on the runway. Now at 50 feet I had two options—one was to apply full power, climb away and call air traffic for further instructions. They would put me in position for another instrument let down. The other option was to keep under the cloud base and fly in a low-level circuit. Foolishly, for the second time, I chose the latter option. I levelled at 300 feet and as I saw the last runway lights disappear I stayed on runway heading for 30 seconds and then made a rate one (30°) turn onto the reciprocal of the runway heading. Well aware of Mel Quinn flying into the ground I did not dare look up or out, I stuck rigidly to instruments and 300 feet—not one foot lower. Once on downwind heading, I called to my navigator, ‘Give me two minutes downwind Jack’. He called ‘one minute’, ‘one minute thirty’, ‘two minutes’. Then I

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commenced a rate one turn left on to the runway heading, again not a foot lower than 300 feet. Jack was on his Blind Approach Beam System (BABS) radar and when I was on runway heading gave me, 'dashes one.' This told me I was right of the runway and so I altered course three degrees left and listened for Jack's continuing advice. Here the familiarity between pilot and navigator was essential. I could tell by Jack's voice and speech just how far off centre I was. The dots and dashes went from one to four. Four meant you were well off centre, one meant you were not far off. The navigator's 'd-a-s-h-e-s one', said very slowly, meant we were just in the dashes one field. If said quickly, I would know that we were well into dashes one and near dashes two. I made my alterations accordingly. The distance was given each mile. When I came out of my turn onto runway heading and dashes one, Jack called three miles which meant we should have been, on a normal approach, at 900 feet.

I continued on at 300 feet until he called one mile, then lowered half flap and commenced descent aiming to be about 50 feet at the first flare path light. Jack was then calling slight dashes, which told me I was within a few yards of runway centre—then magically I saw the runway lights, 200 yards, visibility was fine and the landing successfully, and very happily, completed—well done Jack! It was not until I closed down the engines and got out of my seat that I noticed I was sopping wet from perspiration. I said to Jack and the wireless operator, 'Never again, circuits at night in these conditions are out forever!' They both said they were bloody pleased to hear that.

For me, only on two occasions, was Lubeck totally closed for landing. Once because of a snowstorm and the other was fog. It really is quite impossible to land in either of those conditions. Sleet and heavy rain reduce visibility markedly but with lead-in lighting and the runway lights turned to maximum intensity it is usually possible to land. Take-offs are almost always possible. On two occasions during our Airlift operations the whole Australian block was diverted to Schleswigland near the Danish border. As we

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were on the second sortie on both occasions, we simply waited for Lubeck to clear before returning.

One point about frequently flying in bad weather is that you become accustomed to it. The term, bad weather, is relative. I recall going out to my aircraft at about 0300 hours on a sleety, cold night and, as I passed an RAF crew just landed, I asked what the weather was like in Berlin. The answer, 'Oh quite good, cloud base is 400 feet'.

However, I have no wish to suggest that I became blasé about the standard of skill and attention required to operate safely and successfully in the harsh winter conditions that applied in Germany. I certainly did not. Indeed, we undertook our missions with an inbuilt zeal, well aware of keeping the beleaguered city supplied with the essentials of life. We were all aware of the marginal standards of living they endured with such courage and steadfastness. At the same time when I climbed aboard my aircraft at 0300 hours on a cold, miserable night and saw several large boxes of condoms amongst the freight my first reaction was negative. Then reflecting on the conditions in which the Berliners existed—1500 calories a day for an adult worker, heating available for only four hours a day in minus 10 to 20 degrees—I was glad to be of help.

Fortunately, all the RAAF crews were well experienced on transport operations. I think all had flown a good deal around Papua and New Guinea and participated in the long courier service from Schofields to Japan. That flying had been demanding and had involved flying in a good deal of bad weather—often through the intertropic front. Also we flew through intense build-ups of towering cumulus cloud and, in Japan, icing of all types. But we were not accustomed to the fog, snow, sleet, very low cloud with minimal visibility and iced runways, nor were we used to being confined to a corridor with no freedom to change height or speed to counter these conditions. My pet aversion was iced runways—not the runways themselves or even the ice—but the absurd advice given routinely by air traffic controllers. When asking for landing

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clearance on finals, the reply would come, 'Alpha Bravo clear to land, the runway is iced over, land at pilots discretion.' That was a masterpiece of 'tin-plating.' Clearly, if you bent the aircraft after that well-informed advice, it was your fault!

As far as I know, no RAAF crew had to overshoot because of an error of judgement on the approach into Berlin, no-one scratched an aircraft. This in an operation where the USAF had 70 major and 56 minor accidents, and 30 killed in aircraft accidents. The combined RAF and British civilian aircraft had 98 accidents, with 18 RAF and 10 civilian aircrew killed. Considering that we spent more time on operations than any other aircrew, I believe we did quite well!

On 7 April 1949, taking off from Gatow with 23 passengers on board, the port engine made disturbing noises at just 200 feet, at 400 feet it had failed completely. It was a cool day with dense air and I was able to climb and position myself downwind at 800 feet. With just 23 passengers on board, mostly children, the aircraft was lightly loaded. Tower gave me a priority and I was able to land without any concern at all. I was surprised and delighted to get a Green endorsement in my logbook.

Another occasion that I recall vividly was being in dense cloud all the way from Lubeck to Gatow. When I taxied up to the line for unloading, the aircraft in front of us was one that had taken off three minutes behind us at Lubeck. Somewhere in that corridor, both flying at 5500 feet, he had overtaken us. Some very strong words were exchanged and the two navigators may well have come to blows if I had not ordered my very aggressive warrant officer navigator to 'get back into the aircraft and stay there.' Where that happened and how close we will never know. Nor will we ever know who was right and who was wrong. Sadly, the other pilot involved passed away some years ago. It was always a good incident to recall over a drink.

There was, I suppose, a good deal of stress on many occasions, although it never occurred to me at the time that I, David Evans, could be stressed. But how come there were many times I got out

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of the aircraft sweating profusely? I am quite sure that I was not the only one to do so.

On the lighter side, I remember that a pint of beer was fourpence (3 cents) and if one had a Benedictine chaser the total cost was sixpence (5 cents). This was occupation money and a sixpence was the smallest sum in paper money. Pennies were a cumbersome bit of bakelite. Clearly, it was better to have a beer and Benedictine than to get two of those horrible coins as change. Of course the other alternative was to have three pints for one shilling (10 cents)!

I remember staying in the plush Four Seasons Hotel in Hamburg, then an Officers Club, for one and sixpence (fifteen cents) a night. And I remember that when shown to my room by a distinguished looking man in black striped trousers, waistcoat and black bow tie, being asked what time I should like my bath prepared in the morning. Looking into the large ensuite, I wondered why it needed to be prepared. Not wanting to give the impression that an officer of the Royal Australian Air Force was not used to this sort of treatment I said, 'Oh! Nine o'clock would be fine.' He then said, 'And what temperature, Sir?' I was stumped.

So that was the Berlin Airlift. I think that we acquitted ourselves well—as RAAF people usually do. We were left there far longer than others and I believe this reflected badly on RAAF personnel administration. When we left Australia, at short notice, most thought it would be a matter of weeks or at most a few months.

In the event, it was 14 months before we got home. In the interval we were given absolutely no idea of whether we would be replaced, withdrawn or left there for good. It would have been logical to return us the moment the blockade was lifted, in June 1949. The RAF and USAF had the capacity with UK and European-based units to continue at the reduced rates until the reserve had been built up in Berlin. In any event, when we flew the last Airlift sorties on 19 August 1949 we were still left sitting about in the United Kingdom until 24 October, then treated to a very

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uncomfortable trip by an RAF York aircraft—a seven-day, nine-stop trip. Had the RAAF shown the slightest concern for its long-deployed personnel—sent to Germany at short notice—we could have been and should have been home five months earlier.

The final frustration in regard to our homecoming was that the York aircraft conveying us elected to remain overnight at Amberley—just two hours short of Sydney where all members had their families. A small matter perhaps, but not when we had been separated for 14 months. It simply confirms my view that the Air Force of that day had scant regard for the personal wellbeing of its members.

A few months before the Airlift ended I applied to the Air Force to be posted to a flying instructors course on my return to Australia. Although I had received no response, I was hoping that my preference had been noted. However, on arrival at Amberley we were met by a group captain from the Personnel Branch who welcomed us back, read a message from the Chief of the Air Staff and proceeded to advise us of our postings—Flying Officer Evans to be Air Movements Officer, RAAF Mallala! A great shock; not only did I not get the course I had requested but I was going to, what I considered, a low-grade staff job.

After dinner in the Amberley Mess, and over a cold beer, I told the group captain of my feelings. I ended by saying, ‘Oh well, I have seen many Air Movement Sections on my travels and noted the good and bad things about them. Perhaps that will help me do it well.’ He replied that that was a good Service attitude. Nevertheless, I was still very unhappy.

Next day we landed at Schofields at about 1100 hours. There on the tarmac was Air Vice-Marshal McCauley, Air Officer Commanding Home Command, talking to my wife. Oh happy days! Gail looked stunning and now we could enjoy the remainder of our honeymoon—postponed for 14 months. Then I noticed my parents and the other families.

## 5

# LIFE AS A FLYING INSTRUCTOR

It will be no surprise that our homecoming brought great joy to all—Airlift members and their families. As I had virtually no married time before leaving, Gail and I had not put our minds to housing, furniture or the normal things that most of my colleagues came back to. In any case we did not know where I was going until I was told on landing at Amberley the day before going on leave. Fortunately, Gail had found a flat at Manly for a couple of weeks. That was fine, at the end of the two weeks we rented a room at a reasonably nice place at Double Bay.

The uncertainty of Air Force life and the separations that might be expected were put to me repeatedly by my mother, always in Gail's presence. She was urging me to find a job, flying if I must, in some other branch of aviation. Mother quite foolishly (through ignorance) considered Qantas or other airlines would bring stability. Then there was the Department of Civil Aviation for me to try. I guess I was under some pressure but not really from Gail.

In the middle of this ongoing discussion on my future career direction, I received a telegram from Personnel Branch, RAAF Headquarters, advising that I had been posted to East Sale in Victoria to undergo No 3 Flying Instructors Course. That wonderful news stopped my giving any further consideration to civil aviation in any form. It was to East Sale on 9 January 1950.

Looking back I find it interesting to recall how much of our social activities during that leave period was spent with other Airlift fellows and their wives and girlfriends. I suppose we had all lost touch with the squadron we left 14 months before and until we

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settled into our new units our closest mates were the 'Lubeck Lot'. Indeed, the 'Lubeck Lot' remained a close-knit bunch throughout our Service lives. Many of us served together in other units and on courses—Staff College was one example.

We drove to East Sale and here we encountered our first brush with life as a married couple. Prior to this it had been simple for both of us. I had Air Force accommodation provided on bases, the Officers Mess for comfortable relaxation and dining, and sporting facilities were provided. Gail had lived at home or rented single accommodation when living out of Sydney. However, the fact of life in 1950 was that housing was extremely difficult throughout Australia. Landlords were asking for key money to rent a property. Many refused to take people with children—although that was not legal at the time. The simple fact was that we could not find a house or a flat in Sale. The rental we could afford to pay added to our woes. The Air Force was no help in this regard. We were on a six-month posting, the length of the Flying Instructors Course, and did not qualify for rental assistance. One of those absurd but frustrating impositions put in place by the 'bean counters'.

We finally settled for an arrangement whereby we shared a house—that is part of the house—with the owners. They also had a place outside Sale and came in for a few days a week. Our bedroom was only a back veranda that had been added on. One wall that backed onto the backyard was weatherboard to about two metres and then chicken wire for another 30 centimetres up to the roof—not very compatible with winter in Sale. Worst of all, the owner would rise early on Sunday and rake up the leaves in the backyard and have a burn-off. When you have only chicken wire to fend off incoming smoke, dress and evacuation is the only choice. The shower was serviced by a chip heater—which meant you gathered chips of wood or kindling or whatever could be found, and put it in the chip heater with lots of paper to get the fire going. Then a quick shower before the fire died and cold water rained down. That

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experience and Gail's experimental cooking was quite a daunting step into married life for both of us. It did not take long for us to realise that there had to be a better way. There was, but not much better.

We found a boarding house in the main street of Sale, the Prince of Wales. We rented a room but, of course, ensuites were unknown in those days, certainly not in country towns or boarding houses no matter how princely the name. Nor was sewerage—the 'dunny' was down the backyard. As we were on the second floor, front, it was quite a journey as the pregnant Gail was to discover some months later, and in midwinter. The meals were reasonable and the proprietor and his wife nice friendly people.

The relationship between the Air Force and people of Sale was something of a love-hate affair. It was recognised that the RAAF Base was a very significant contributor to the town's financial structure, but the RAAF seemed to get blamed for all manner of petty issues. Noise was a particular problem, but the Air Force really did its utmost to minimise that scourge. Gail took a job in a local office and in a conversation during unseasonal cold, wet weather, was told by a coworker that it was the Air Force dropping those 'Platonic' bombs on a nearby range that was responsible for the weather. However, I think it would be true to say that the civilian sector and the RAAF existed in a friendly state of disharmony. Years later, when hundreds of people associated with the oil wells in Bass Strait flooded into town, the Air Force came to be regarded as an old and loyal friend.

The base itself, which I had left in September 1945, had not changed markedly when I returned in 1950. Weather has always been a controversial subject at Sale. There are those who point to the bad weather and lost flying days, and those who laud that factor because it demands high standards of instrument flying based on survival rather than simulated instrument flying conditions. I go

with the ‘make ‘em fly in lousy weather’ school but, then again, I would not want to live in a lousy weather location.

When I was posted to RAAF Base East Sale it was the home of the Central Flying School, the School of Air Navigation and the Fighter Gunnery School. Three schools that set the operational skills and standards that applied throughout the Royal Australian Air Force. Skills that were critical in establishing the combat capability of the RAAF. It was a bit daunting to face the fact that you, if you passed the course, would share the task of maintaining those standards. We were all well aware of the fact that, at that time, Central Flying School instructors would visit all operational units on an annual basis to fly with and assess a proportion of the pilots—including the unit flying instructor and the instrument rating examiner.

Another point that I only came to recognise some years later was that there was no other establishment for the training of flying instructors that matched the six-month course at Central Flying School. The course covered all aspects of military aviation including bombing, gunnery, and all associated ground subjects—meteorology, theory of flight, instruments, engines, avionics et al. The Central Flying School remains a national asset that should never be outsourced.

The first step at the start of the course was to be allocated to your flying instructor. The second was to be partnered with a ‘crash mate’. The drill was that after your instructor took you through a sequence or two, you would practise them with your crash mate—first as the instructor teaching and demonstrating to a student, and then as the student responding to that instruction. You carried out both roles in the pre-flight and post-flight briefings. At intervals, a Flight Commander or the Commanding Officer would fly with each student instructor to assess standards of flying and instructional patter.

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I was lucky on two counts during my course. The first was my allocated crash mate, Flight Lieutenant Ken Godfrey. While I had more flying hours than most of those on course, I had not flown a single-engined aircraft or flown aerobatics since my elementary flying course on Tiger Moths back in 1943. Since that time I had flown only twin-engine, non-aerobatic aircraft. However, Ken Godfrey had flown Hurricanes with the Royal Air Force, Typhoons in Burma and Meteors in Korea. He was an excellent pilot and taught me more about aerobatics than my instructor, an ex-Lincoln pilot, could ever have done. And, as well as aerobatics, he much improved my skills flying single-engined aircraft. In return, I think I was able to improve his instrument flying. My second piece of good luck was during a period with another student instructor when we engaged in the childish fun of cutting a toilet roll in a Wirraway. At about 3000 feet we threw a toilet roll out and as it unrolled, the aim was to see how many times the roll could be cut before it hit the ground—if it did hit the ground. We decided one would fly the aircraft and the moment he cut the toilet paper the other would take control and cut the paper again as quickly as possible.

As we got near the ground I thought our manoeuvring looked a bit dicey. At about 30 feet the aircraft went into a steep climbing turn and then nosed down sharply. This was getting very hairy. Then I heard my partner call me, rather anxiously, 'Have you got control David?' I replied, 'No, but I have now!' That was, on both our parts, a shameful lapse of airmanship. It was such a basic error. One of the most stringent rules in changing over control of an aircraft between pilots—and it is particularly critical in a tandem seating aircraft—is for the pilot handing over control to say clearly 'you have control' and the response 'I have control'. The pilot taking control gives the control column a little shake either way to confirm the spoken word. Our breach on that occasion was gross negligence—inexcusable. We were both chastened and annoyed with ourselves—and feeling very lucky indeed. Not a story that I am proud of but I also realise

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that there are a number of times in the lives of most people when luck takes a hand.

I finished my course with 131 flying hours, including 1.5 hours on the Mustang—the famous P-51 of World War II. I note that in that time I did stalls, spins and aerobatics. Incidentally, I passed the course and was posted to No 1 Flying Training School at Point Cook. While all that flying knowledge was being pounded into me, Gail was having her own challenges. She was bearing our first child and, as noted earlier, in less than ideal conditions. As I was unsure of where we would be living, Gail went to Sydney for the birth. Unfortunately, I arrived three days late. I was sorry to see this poor little girl—just three days old—she had clearly defined creases across her forehead, just as I have. Poor kid, but it made my mother happy. This was Wendy—our firstborn.

At Point Cook a married quarter was, once again, out of the question and, as everywhere in Australia, rented accommodation was very difficult to find. It was not helped by the isolation of the base. Eventually, in desperation, I accepted a proposal where the landlord, a middle-aged chap living alone, said he would rent me his house (he lived in a shed or a garage on the property) if my wife would cook him an evening meal. Foolishly, I accepted this offer. When I say foolishly I mean just that. Gail was not impressed with the arrangement and, above all, not with the house.

Eventually, I was able to find half a 15-metre former barrack block that had been converted by an officer into a two bedroom flat—a very, very primitive flat. It was not much, but it was something, and it was on the base. When I look back to those very austere days I realise just how appalling the conditions were in which we strived to set up a home. And of course our inexperience in these things was of no help whatsoever. Undeterred, we went into town and purchased what we saw as essentials—a lounge suite, a refrigerator, (run on kerosene, the cheapest available), a washing

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machine and a mattress. We acquired a handmade wooden bed, courtesy of a local carpenter, for a couple of pounds.

The flying course I was appointed to was near the end of the elementary phase on Tiger Moths. The students I was given had about 50 hours flying at that time. I was surprised that the first three periods of instruction were formation flying. I guess if an instructor is going to be nervous or feel a little apprehensive, formation flying would be the last lesson chosen as a first up. However, we survived and I hope the students learned something—as I did.

In January 1951 I moved into the advanced phase of the course, which was on Wirraways. This I really enjoyed. The Wirraway was a good training aircraft for its time. It presented a challenge—quite a sharp and sudden wing drop at the stall and a marked loss of height before full recovery. A wing drop and scraping on the ground on landing was not uncommon. On that matter, my mind goes back to an occasion when the Commanding Officer called all the instructors together and read the riot act. We were letting this happen, in his opinion unnecessarily, by not anticipating its onset. We should take control before the student got into the position where a wing drop was imminent. That very afternoon, the Commanding Officer had two sessions where he (or the student) scraped a wing. It really could happen to anyone!

An important lesson I learnt was to have sympathy for the struggler. This feeling stayed with me throughout my time as a flying instructor but manifested itself during my first Wirraway course at Point Cook. I had two permanent students on that course. One was weak on the flying side, always struggling to make the grade. However, for dedication, love of flying and application to the task he was 100 per cent. My other pupil was good. Flying, ground subjects were just a breeze for him. He was indeed an excellent student, although total dedication he did not exhibit. One got the impression that, if he had had trouble meeting the standard required, he would simply walk away. Nevertheless, he was going

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to make a good pilot and, hopefully, a good Air Force officer (he later joined Qantas). I was determined to get the struggler through, although I feared his test with the Flight Commander would not be satisfactory—nor was it. After reading my reports on each flight the assessing officer decided to scrub him. I asked him to give this lad an extra couple of hours to catch up, but he refused. I asked him again later and I pointed out that in his assessment he gave this student low (D) marks for flying ability, airmanship, and application. I said that he was unfair in that he had no idea of the application of this student. As far as application was concerned he should rate an 'A'. For the sake of a couple of hours, we could graduate a pilot who would provide average capability and total dedication. I think the unfair 'D' for application struck home and he agreed to an extra two hours. He may well have put me in my place for questioning his decision but he was a nice man and did not resent me speaking out. The pilot did graduate and served us well for many years.

One rare experience—and again my own fault—was on a night flying exercise. I was with a student doing his second night sortie and, when running up the engine before take-off, we had a huge rev drop when testing the magneto switches. The aircraft was unserviceable. I told the student to taxi back to the flight line and we would get another aircraft. When we got there I checked the serviceability status and signed for a replacement aircraft. I then said to the student, 'Go and strap in and start up, I'll have a cigarette and then hop in.' That I did and as I was strapping myself in the back seat he was taxiing out to the take-off point. Cleared for take-off, as we were gathering speed and getting near the lift-off stage, I put my hand out to be near the control—no control column. Damn! It must still be stowed (as it is for solo flying) on the right side of the rear cockpit. By this time we were airborne and I discovered there was no control column stowed. Now an interesting question, do I tell the student and perhaps panic him or do I just let him go and talk him around the circuit? However, I decide that if he thinks that

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I can take control if necessary he may well do a bad approach or bad landing and just sit there, assuming I will put things right. So I said, 'This is your second night sortie, how did your last trip go?' He replied, 'My circuit and approaches were quite good Sir, but I was not getting the flare-out correctly'. I came back, 'You had better get it right this time because I have no stick in the back'. He went around well and I must say I did talk a good deal as we came to close finals but he did a good landing. I got a control column, gave him one more circuit and sent him solo. He was dismissed before graduating on disciplinary grounds.

My own stay at Point Cook was more limited than I had expected—or that anyone else expected. On 28 March there was another night flying session, mainly to get a number of students solo. A close friend was officer in charge of night flying, and I was his deputy. At about 10 o'clock when we had planned to finish I asked, 'Shall we go in when the two airborne aircraft land?' He said that there was one more he would like to get solo before we packed up for the night. I was standing at the side of the take-off flare path and saw him strapping in and then my attention was diverted to other activity. A minute later one of the instructors standing beside me shouted out 'Look at this!' and pointed skywards beyond the take-off path. At about 500 feet I saw the aircraft lights twisting as if the aircraft was in a spin and going straight down into the bay. We went through the emergency procedures—had the search and rescue boat on immediate stand-by, had the Tower inform the base commander, medical officers and others, and had the students and instructors stand by for any duties that might be required. Only two minutes away, I drove to my quarters and told Gail that I would be late, I was going out in the search and rescue boat to search for the crew. She knew the instructor and, of course, was shocked but I did not have time to do more than tell her it would be hours before I got back. It was after daylight that the aircraft with both pilots was found. Both had died in the crash. When I came home Gail said,

'Ron is dead, isn't he? I heard three knocks on the wall during the night'. That I thought was rather odd.

The outcome for me was a posting on exchange duty with the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) as a flying instructor at Wigram, a base in the South Island. I was to replace my friend who died carrying out that last solo check. My last event at Point Cook was to have my logbook endorsed, upgrading me to a B category instructor. That was on 5 June 1951.

We travelled to New Zealand on the Cunard liner *Dominion Monarch* and enjoyed the first luxury travel of our lives. Gail even had a minding facility available to care for our eleven-months-old Wendy. We disembarked at Wellington and were met and flown to Wigram by an RNZAF wing commander. After introduction to the Commanding Officer and others at Wigram, we were taken to a hotel in Christchurch just five kilometres from the air base. In 1951, it was not a modern hotel and indeed more of the average suburban pub. It was owned by the aunt of an RNZAF officer who I knew well and had served on the Berlin Airlift.

Our stay in New Zealand was comfortable and I suppose easygoing. The RAAF and RNZAF are very much alike; both formed and developed on the model of the Royal Air Force. The RNZAF was formed some 14 years later than the RAAF and still, in 1951, had many senior RAF officers holding top executive positions. That was not well received by the more junior officers but, at the same time, they had great admiration for the Royal Air Force, just as we Australians did. They were a bit jealous of the RAAF; we were larger, far more senior and experienced as an air force, and we had our own distinctive dark blue uniform—the dark blue that the RAAF has today. The RNZAF then wore the grey-blue uniform of the RAF, as did the Canadian Air Force and the Indian Air Force. I served the first year of my exchange with the Flying Training School and the second year at the Central Flying School, both based at Wigram.

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I thoroughly enjoyed working with and the friendship of the New Zealanders with whom I served. It was a relationship that lasted throughout my Air Force time and beyond. My closest friend and with whom I served at Wigram was then Flight Lieutenant Ewan Jamieson. Ewan became Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal New Zealand Air Force at the same time that I was Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force. Obviously, this made for a very close and cooperative association between our two Air Forces. I was delighted to see Ewan awarded a knighthood during his time as Chief of the Air Staff and later appointed as Chief of Defence Staff. I was particularly saddened some years later when Prime Minister Helen Clark disbanded the fighter and strike capabilities of the RNZAF. It was a mortal blow to a very small but professional air force.

One of the tasks I was given early in my exchange was to visit a few aero clubs and check their flying instructors and a student or two. This was because aero clubs were given a government subsidy to train young men who may later join the RNZAF.

I was somewhat surprised at the low standard of flying instruction and the standards of academic knowledge on aviation subjects. On my first weekend visit to two aero clubs, I recommended that five of the instructors I had tested have their instructors licences taken away as far as training government-sponsored students was concerned. This caused something of an uproar. The Officer Commanding Flying at Wigram pointed out, quite correctly, that I was judging these aero club instructors on standards that applied in the RAAF and the RNZAF. I admitted that this was so. He said to me, 'Ask yourself if these fellows could teach pupils to fly the aircraft safely on simple elementary flying sequences. If the answer was yes then pass them.' He went on to say that having the instructor endorsement of civilian pilots taken away could cost them their jobs. Furthermore, to have this done by a bloke in an Australian Air Force uniform was like red rag to a bull.

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I accepted this advice and, what is more, I understood the sensitive nature of the situation. I had not been briefed on the subject, although perhaps I should have deduced this for myself. As I got to know the system better I realised these instructors were imparting a reasonable knowledge to the students and setting good ethical standards.

Actually, I could have been on an Australian base serving on a RAAF training unit. The culture and standards were almost identical. We got a laugh out of each other's eccentricities such as being asked, 'Had you been home?' When actually they were asking have you been to England. It gave me great pleasure to tell them that the biggest danger I found in New Zealand was drinking the home-brew that they all seemed to produce. In return, I was regularly reminded of the superiority of the All Blacks and the Australian tendency to act as 'Big Brother'. Really, we got on just fine. One amusing situation was when the RNZAF, following RAF protocols, introduced a Master Green instrument rating. As it happened, I was the only one qualified for a Master Green rating at that time. It was with good humour that they explained how odd it would be for an RAAF exchange officer to carry the No 1 Master Green Card. I gracefully accepted Master Green Card No 2 and it is still in my logbook.

Elementary flying training was done in the trusty World War II Tiger Moth just as it was in the RAAF. Then it was on to the Harvard, an aircraft similar to the RAAF's Wirraway—the latter designed by Australian L.J. Wackett. It was, in my view, a poor copy of the Harvard. However, in spite of that, the Wirraway was the more challenging and thus a better vehicle for training aspiring pilots. For multi-engined training the Airspeed Consul was in use when I arrived but was replaced by the more up-to-date de Havilland Devon during my stay.

During my exchange at the Central Flying School I was given a couple of what I call 'outfield missions'. The qualified flying

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instructor (QFI) at No 41 Squadron was due for reassessment and renewal of his instrument rating. He was the instrument rating examiner for the squadron and had to be current. The catch was that not one instructor at the Central Flying School had flown 41 Squadron's Bristol Freighter. However, it had to be done and I was nominated. The instrument flying was no problem; it is the same for all aircraft types. The examining officers simply have to note that the accuracy is within set limits. The flying sequence is much the same but, ideally, the examiner should be qualified on the aircraft type. When we strapped into our seats I said, 'Let's do the instrument flying test first. Then give me a demonstration and brief about stalling, turns, circuits and landing. If you can send me solo at the end of an hour general flying, I guess I would have to say that you exhibited satisfactory instructional ability'. Of course he sent me solo and was duly endorsed. I am sorry to say that about six months later he flew into a hill and was killed.

A similar situation occurred a month later when I went to check the QFI at No 5 Squadron—a Catalina flying boat unit. With no experience in flying boats, I decided to follow the same procedure, except for the going solo part. The instrument test was straightforward and ended with the instrument let down to minimum height and then a visual landing. That completed successfully, we taxied to the take-off point. I said, 'You do a circuit or two, briefing me and demonstrating, then I'll try a circuit following your briefed techniques'. Well he did so, very well—in the main! The patter was very good, he pointed out the attitude of the aircraft to the horizon, the ideal rate of descent—750 feet per minute reducing to 500 feet per minute for landing. But his landing was a shocker. The aircraft banged onto the water with a loud crashing sound, jumped a little and banged on again and that was it. We taxied back to the take-off point and I had control. Then away I went, waiting to get up onto the step and careful to keep my wing tip floats out of the water. I did what he had told me on finals

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with the correct power and rate of descent—the aircraft was hardly heard or felt as it brushed the water, slowed and finally came to a halt. It was indeed a beautiful landing. I heard the flight engineers say, ‘Christ and he has never flown one before.’ I adopted the old adage, stop when you are ahead, and said, ‘You’re an excellent instructor. Let’s call the test over.’

One of the more enjoyable activities was to join in with the Wing Commander Flying and the RAF exchange squadron leader, in formation aerobatics—an international team. An aerobatic team of three Harvards was not the most exciting display one could imagine, but given the power limitations of the Harvard it was indeed hard going for numbers two and three. The power the leader needed to carry out a manoeuvre, even a loop, left very little for the others to play with.

We went to several air shows and our act seemed to be well received—for want of better I suppose. The occasion I remember most vividly was at Dunedin. Travelling down from Christchurch in very loose formation—just going in the same direction really. I needed to urinate, so I undid all my straps, parachute etc. and fumbled for the tiny tube provided for such occasions. It was at this stage that the Wing Commander called, ‘Let’s have a last practice before we get there.’ After a minute or so, ‘Where are you number two?’ And again, the voice a bit terse, ‘Number two will you get into formation—now!’ My response, ‘Sir, I’m having a leak.’ His reply, with a note of concern, ‘What’s leaking?’ Me again, ‘Nothing leaking, Sir, I’m having a piss.’ Eventually, all strapped in again, I joined up and we carried out our practice.

When we landed at Dunedin we were met by the public relations fellow running the air show and a couple of media people. A radio station journalist, when I was introduced, said—on air—‘Oh! You were the one having a piss in the cockpit were you?’ I think everyone I met in Dunedin that evening asked the same question.

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Due to return to Australia in June 1953, I received a letter from a friend in RAAF Headquarters saying I would be going to a Vampire conversion at Williamstown on return to Australia and then to No 77 Squadron in Korea. That I thought was very agreeable. However, as seems to be my way in life, a truce was concluded before my return to Australia and my actual posting was back to No 38 Squadron.

I returned from New Zealand with an additional 915 hours in my logbook, an A2 Instructor category and an additional daughter, Darilyn Joy. Soon after Darilyn was born I went to the Australian High Commission in Wellington to register her birth. I was asked for a copy of my marriage certificate and, when I could not produce it, I was told that Darilyn could not be registered as an Australian. I pointed out that I was administered by the High Commission; they paid my salary and an allotment to my wife. My papers that they held, said I was married and paid a marriage allowance. No go, no marriage certificate, no Australian registration for Darilyn. I said politely, 'To hell with you, she can stay a New Zealander'. I flew back to Christchurch and it was 10 years later before Darilyn was registered as an Australian.

We departed Wellington by ship in June 1953, again enjoying a few days of first-class travel with two children and enjoyed the ship's baby minding service. I was due to report to No 38 Squadron at Richmond on 25 July. Once again we faced the trauma of finding somewhere to live. I knew that there was no hope of a married quarter at Richmond!

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## 6

# PILOT TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

In June 1953 we were back in Australia—all the joys of catching up with parents, siblings and friends. But also plagued with the administrative chores—finding temporary and then permanent accommodation, clearing car and other items through customs and retrieving what little furniture we had from store and then surveying the damage with dismay.

We managed to get an apartment at Lane Cove on the North Shore of Sydney. It was closer to RAAF Base Richmond than the Eastern suburbs where Gail had grown up but still a full hour's drive from the base. Looking back I can only assume that we did not try the adjacent towns of Richmond and Windsor because rented accommodation was extremely difficult there and married quarters, with a long waiting list, not an option.

The rented accommodation we settled for was far from ideal for a family with two young children—upstairs flat, no lift of course, and laundry down in the backyard. Returning to a transport squadron would mean frequent absences from home on interstate or overseas trips. It was not a great life for young couples—or old couples for that matter. Again it was the wives who got the worst of a raw deal. I doubt that I, or any of the young men I worked with, appreciated that at the time.

My posting to No 38 Squadron I accepted with some reservations. I was pleased to be given another flying job, although disappointed on the Korean War ending because I wanted to see how I would perform in combat operations. Also, I had always taken the view that a career military pilot should have experience

in several roles. Three would be the optimum spread to give a high level of competence in each. It has also been my view that, ideally, one of these tours should be as a flying instructor. However, the fact was I was appointed to 38 Squadron and that was the end of it—for the time being.

On arrival at Richmond I reported to my new boss. He was one of the senior captains who had served on the Berlin Airlift with me and whose friendship I had enjoyed. He told me that I would be the squadron flying instructor and instrument rating examiner as well as a line pilot for squadron tasks. That all sounded appropriate to my experience and was what I expected.

The role of a squadron instructor pilot (IP) is to convert pilots, who are posted in, to the aircraft type with which the squadron is equipped to solo standard, day and night and instrument rated, and also, on occasion, to route check pilots being upgraded to captain status. Usually there are several senior pilots authorised to do this. The IP is also responsible for carrying out annual instrument rating tests on all squadron pilots and ensuring their currency. If he is required to lecture on aviation subjects, it is generally confined to those relevant to the squadron role; for example, icing conditions on some of the routes flown or loading limitations at certain airfields. In all, the job of squadron instructor is an interesting and satisfying one.

I noted that my first trip was a short sortie with the squadron commander. Although an old colleague who knew me well, he still wanted to check that I was up to the mark. He must have been satisfied because next day I was given six new pilots to convert to the Dakota. Four of these were RAAF sergeants and two Navy lieutenants. All graduates of a recent pilots course at Point Cook. The conversions were straightforward with all six meeting the required standard. The asymmetric work was the most important and was an aspect of multi-engine flying that was new to them.

## *Pilot to the Governor-General*

It was during this first course that I reflected on the unfairness of the systems whereby the RAAF—again following the RAF—persisted in these commissioned and non-commissioned rank levels for pilots and navigators. I had been through it without any resentment but that was a product of wartime. Even then there was little logic in it although, at that time, we were all more concerned in winning a war than in being fair to individuals. Now it was peacetime and more attention should have been given to personnel matters. Indeed, it was only a few years before this that the RAAF had followed the RAF in introducing an even more bizarre system of calling non-commissioned pilots P2s, P3s or Master Pilots, rather than Sergeant Pilot, Flight Sergeant Pilot and Warrant Officer Pilot. However, I was a flight lieutenant and had no more involvement than to train them all to the same standard and to recognise the absurdity of the system.

My first month set the pattern of what my activities would be like with the squadron. It consisted of conversions and other training and two route trips, one to Port Moresby and Momote, and the other to Woomera. Flying hours for the month were 76—this included a 90-minute sortie in a Mustang that I was able to wheedle out of No 21 Squadron. I was always pleased to get a Mustang occasionally to get me off the straight and level path. As it was only an hour or two about every second month I was not ‘crash-hot’—but safe? September was much the same but included a trip to Japan via Iwo Jima and Guam. I had not flown that route before. It was done in 11 days, considerably less than the earlier trips to Japan. We had only one day off—a schedule that may have been influenced by my now married status. When I said that my first month set the pattern of what my activities in the squadron would be, I obviously forgot a basic fact that, in Air Force life, nothing is certain.

In November 1953 I was given an aircraft, a Jeep, a utility truck and extra ground and aircrew, and deployed to western New South Wales to conduct chemical spraying to counter a grasshopper

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plague. This was totally new to me and, as far as I know, to the Air Force. We did know enough to fit, within the hull of the Dakota, two large tanks to carry the chemical, dieldrin. Far too toxic to be sprayed around today, I imagine. We knew nothing of that at the time and without masks or other protection we handled the fuelling of the tanks and the ground storage in open water tanks. The cabin, but not the cockpit, carried the strong and irritating smell of that chemical. To the best of my knowledge it did us no harm. But then, I have no idea what may have happened to the others in later life. I guess it was not unusual at that time to be ignorant of the toxic effects of various chemicals. Certainly no-one advised us of this, nor did the agronomists and their assistants show any concern as they stood beneath the spray we were releasing. I really do not think I gave any deep thought to that matter until many years later when I witnessed the copious quantity of Agent Orange being disbursed in Vietnam and became aware of associated toxicity problems.

It took some actual spraying flights to work out the system as to distance between runs over an area to be sprayed and the heights to be flown. Obviously, the wind strength and direction played an important part. For instance, if the wind was 15 knots or above we would need to fly at about 50 feet. In calm air, 100 feet. We also had to measure the amount of chemical to the square yard (not metres then) to meet what the agronomists required. To ensure the correct distance between the parallel runs over a property, we devised a simple system. We took the signal mirror from the aircraft search and rescue kit and showed some of the agronomist's staff how to signal the aircraft. A staff member would simply move the agreed distance between spray runs and I would line up on his mirror. I was told at the end of our five-week task that many significant crops between Narrandera and Tocumwal in New South Wales had been saved from ruin by locusts. This represented millions of pounds to New South Wales wheat farmers. I wrote a detailed report on crop spraying. I doubt that it was ever read.

*Pilot to the Governor-General*

Just two months later, during February and March 1954, my efforts were involved fully in preparing for the Royal Tour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth to Australia. My major task was to facilitate a full program of training prior to the tour, to renew instrument ratings as required to maintain currency and to arrange appropriate continuation training as the tour proceeded. In addition, on many sectors, we provided real-time weather information by preceding the Royal and the VIP aircraft. This role played a critical part on our very first task—flying the Queen and Royal Party out of Sydney for travel to Canberra.

On that day I was the first of six aircraft of the Queen's Flight to fly from RAAF Base Richmond to Sydney Airport. The other aircraft were just minutes behind. It so happened that the cloud was eight-eighths (totally overcast) at a low height. I carried out an instrument let down, well aware of the chaos that would eventuate if the flight were unable to land because of weather. When I broke cloud and called 'visual,' I was asked by Sydney Tower what the cloud base was. I replied, 'What is the minimum?' and the Tower replied 640 feet (that figure is from memory). I called, 'Cloud base 640 feet'. Visibility below the cloud was quite good and landing for my colleagues would present no problem.

Royal Flight One went off on schedule and I do not believe there was a hitch for the whole tour. I should add that Squadron Leader John Cornish, appointed to be the Queen's pilot, was quite an outstanding pilot and a very distinguished officer. He was one of the senior captains when I joined No 38 Squadron in 1945. Since then he had flown on exchange with the Royal Air Force and been a captain in the RAF's VIP Squadron. During that exchange he had also flown on the Berlin Airlift for several months. Her Majesty could not have been better served. His crew was of similar experience and ability.

Shortly after the end of the Royal Tour, 38 Squadron was moved from Richmond to RAAF Base Fairbairn in Canberra. Again, a

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married quarter was not available and I commuted to Sydney each weekend, firstly by train and then by car—this was a dreadful bind and again not much fun for Gail with two young children to care for in a small upstairs apartment. After a few months we were allocated a Swedish prefabricated house at Fairbairn, acquired as a temporary measure for married quarters. It was a 12 square (111 square metres), three bedroom house and, in spite of its size, we settled in comfortably. So good to be living on the job in spite of the fact that the job took me away for so much of the time. Those temporary married quarters were still in use at Fairbairn when I left the Service in 1985.

In May 1954 I had VIP flying added to my other responsibilities. That was, I suppose, a compliment and I shared the task with three or four other pilots of the squadron. Our distinguished passengers included the Prime Minister, Ministers of State, Chiefs of the Services and visiting foreign statesman. The Governor-General had his own aircraft and a dedicated crew. With all these duties, converting pilots, instrument rating examiner, VIP flying and squadron instructor pilot, I was very fully occupied. In spite of all this and the considerable time away, I thoroughly enjoyed my work. In retrospect a rather selfish attitude but one I think I shared with my pilot colleagues. Gail and the other wives were good enough to put up with itinerant husbands. The transport squadrons were, without doubt, the most demanding and stressful for the families involved.

In December I was appointed as pilot to the Governor-General, together with a crew I selected. While we always flew the Governor-General, it did not exclude being assigned other VIP tasks as required. I also retained my other duties. Flying VIPs has its good moments and some moments of concern and frustration. Would you believe that we carried parachutes in the Governor-General's aircraft? It seems absurd now—and it was absurd then—but they were the rules. In fact, there were a whole range of rules that applied

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to VIP aircraft that were quite ridiculous. That is, ridiculous if one expects that any aircraft assigned to passenger flying was serviced to meet the highest possible standards of safety—and I believe they were. Why add special requirements for Royal or other VIP passengers? I certainly had every confidence in our normal RAAF maintenance.

In the passenger compartment of the Vice-Regal aircraft there was an altimeter and an air speed indicator—why? That basic information available to the Governor-General, Sir William Slim, and Lady Slim caused me some difficulty on occasion. Lady Slim did not like turbulence, even reasonably slight turbulence. Therefore, if I was flying at say, eight or nine thousand feet and there was any turbulence, the Governor-General would come up or send the word, ‘Her Excellency is uncomfortable with the turbulence, can you go a bit higher?’ On the other hand, if the altimeter in the cabin showed 10 000 feet or a little over, I would get a message from Her Excellency, ‘My husband gets a headache flying at 10 000 feet, could I please fly a little lower?’ It was moving to observe the concern they each had for the other’s comfort and wellbeing—but a Catch 22 situation for me.

On the other hand, I was always supported to the fullest extent on any decision I made in regard to their comfort and safety. One example was when taking Lady Slim back from Admiralty House in Sydney to Canberra. The catering staff returning with her had brought into the passenger compartment several large trays of crystal, porcelain, and silverware. This was quite unacceptable from a safety point of view and I told Her Excellency that I must insist that it be removed. She understood perfectly and left it to me to give that instruction to her staff. Later she thanked me for the action I had taken, adding that she had not realised the risk of having such loose freight in the passenger compartment.

I did have more daunting situations. On one occasion I flew his Excellency to Melbourne for a major ceremony, which culminated

in him taking the salute of a long march past. The crew and I went into Melbourne to witness the event. Towards the end of the parade we looked for a taxi to take us back to Essendon Airport. We simply could not find a taxi. The streets were absolutely packed, some roads closed. We reached the panic stage when I sought the help of a policeman. He appreciated the problem and eventually got us a cab, but it took about 15 minutes and then, because of the crowd and traffic, progress was very slow. We were well on the way to Essendon when I saw a motorcycle policeman stationary at the side of the road. I had the taxi pull over and asked the policeman if he were waiting for the Governor-General's car and escort. His reply, 'No, he went past 10 minutes ago, be on his way back to Canberra by now'—how wrong he was.

We arrived and ran at full speed to the aircraft where Their Excellencies and staff were standing outside the aircraft waiting. I, rather breathless, explained and apologised. The Governor-General and Lady Slim laughed and he said, 'Just stop and have a few minutes rest. I don't want you flying me whilst panting for breath.'

That was not one of my better episodes but I had worse to come. This was during a period when New South Wales was suffering disastrous flooding. The Governor-General wanted to tour the flooded areas, accompanied by Lady Slim. We covered a very wide area and the Governor-General requested that we land at Brewarrina, one of the worst hit areas. I had some difficulty in getting information on the state of the Brewarrina airfield. Eventually, I decided to go and assess it from the air. Well, I saw a Signal Square and a third-rate but acceptable airfield and decided to land. Of course with the view from the air so distorted by widespread floodwaters, nothing was very clear. On final approach I realised this was a very poor airfield but Brewarrina was a country town—I should not expect anything grand.

We landed and the soil was so soft that it took a good deal of engine power to taxi. I got to what seemed to be the parking area,

*Pilot to the Governor-General*

not a soul in sight, although we had radioed our intention. We had put the steps down, the crew and I scampered out to salute the Governor-General and Lady Slim as they alighted. His Excellency was halfway down the steps when a young boy ran over shouting, 'You're at the wrong airfield mister—the new airfield is over there,' he said pointing. Again that sinking feeling in my stomach until Lady Slim burst out laughing. All tension had gone when the Mayor and his party, who had been waiting—speech in hand—at the 'new' airfield about one mile (1.6 kilometres) away, arrived to greet Their Excellencies. While the Governor-General and party were visiting the town and flooded areas I flew over to the proper airfield to pick them up.

Our next landing was at Bourke. When we touched down there was not a soul to be seen. My immediate thought, 'Oh no, this couldn't happen again!' Fortunately, as we turned off the runway, the gathered crowd came into view—it was a wonderful sight to behold. I should not relate this period of my service without mentioning the kindness and consideration of the Governor-General and Lady Slim. Little things I suppose but typical of so many courtesies extended to me, the crew and my family. When I flew the Governor-General to Melbourne to attend a test cricket match against England, the crew and I attended. We were standing in the sun watching the game—and happy to be there. The Governor-General was with the Club President when he saw us and said to the President, 'I can't have my crew standing out in the sun all day, can you find them somewhere to sit?' We were then invited to the Members' Stand and lunch.

When I landed him at RAAF Base Williamtown for a one-day visit to Newcastle, he said to the base commander, 'I am sure you will be able to find transport for my crew to have a look around while waiting for me'—the response, 'Of course, Your Excellency'. The first time I had received such an offer from a base commander.

Gail and I were invited to many dinners at Government House. They were very formal but, at the same time, very enjoyable. Formal

## *Down to Earth*

attire for men was easy, dinner suit or mess kit. For ladies it was full-length gown and white gloves extending to just beyond the elbows. Also practice was needed to make perfect, the full curtsys to Their Excellencies on arrival. Drinks were served before dinner, where Their Excellencies mixed easily, ensuring everyone was at ease. At the end of dinner, Lady Slim would nod to the female guest opposite and they would leave the table, walk to the door, then turn to the seated Governor-General and give a full curtsy. The other ladies in turn would follow suit thus leaving the gentlemen to themselves for 20 minutes or so. The ladies would retire en masse to a sitting room, powder their noses and chat before rejoining the males for coffee in the lounge. This would be followed by some form of entertainment—perhaps a piano recital, a film or dancing. An evening I will remember was a treasure hunt which took us right through Government House, both upstairs and downstairs. I tried to avoid the formal dances, but Lady Slim invariably spied me and had me dancing. Gail was always exhilarated after such evenings, but always nervous beforehand.

The Governor-General was an inveterate traveller and I was often away on extended trips. On one such occasion, Gail was invited, among other ladies, to a luncheon with Lady Slim at Government House. She had long before purchased a book of etiquette by Emily Post—an essential guide for such high-level invitations. This invitation was her ‘first solo’! She hastily referred to Emily Post on how to refuse a Vice-Regal invitation and learned you must always accept such an invitation then give a reason for your inability to attend. Her reason was that she would be in Sydney. So that is what she did, drove to Sydney on that day, even though she had just got her licence.

We appreciated very much the present and handwritten card sent by Lady Slim to our four-year-old daughter Wendy, when she was in Canberra hospital recovering from a tonsillectomy. And

*Pilot to the Governor-General*

during a formal visit to the hospital, Sir William asked specifically to see our daughter.

I was aware that Lady Slim was not keen on flying. She said that her head told her it was safe but her heart did not like it. Taking her on an outback tour, I had a fire warning light come on after taking off from Alice Springs. I had no alternative but to shut the engine down and feather the propeller. I sent the copilot down to assure her that there was no real problem, that this was a cautionary procedure. But the poor lady's view from the window was of a propeller not moving. Talking to her after we landed she said she had no idea that an aircraft could fly on one engine. Fortunately, the copilot was a reassuring and convincing man and quickly put her mind at rest. It was, as I suspected, a specious warning light that we confirmed after a thorough inspection. I called the squadron and gave a full account of the incident to the Commanding Officer and Engineering Officer, and was asked to call the Governor-General. I did so and assured him that it was quite safe for us to continue the journey.

This is a personal account of my association with the then Governor-General, Field Marshal Sir William Slim and Her Excellency Lady Slim. I found them considerate, courteous and kind—but at the same time very formal and insistent on high standards. To illustrate this, I recall the visit to Whyalla. The Governor-General and his party had been touring the city and surrounds. At the appointed time of departure the crew and I were lined up outside the aircraft, next to the steps. The police escort of two motorcycle officers led the Vice-Regal car to the aircraft steps. The Governor-General and Lady Slim exited the car and said their farewells to the official party. Then the Governor-General, as was his custom, walked over to the two police officers standing at attention beside their motorcycles. He thanked both officers and then talking specifically to one said, 'I thought you had used

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your uniform to clean your motorcycle—until I saw your cycle.' He turned his back and boarded the aircraft.

During a tour of outback Queensland, the Field Marshal visited Winton where he attended a civic reception. It was an extremely hot day and he wore his full ceremonial Army uniform. When he returned to the aircraft his heavy red tunic was soaked in perspiration. Later, I asked him why he had not worn a light summer uniform. His reply was that, 'People out here have never met or perhaps ever seen a Governor-General before. When I visit them I should look like a Governor-General.' He always did and when he walked, unannounced, into the bar of the pub at Daly Waters in the Northern Territory, a bloke at the bar turned and, totally surprised by this spectacular presence, involuntarily uttered, 'Jesus Christ!' His Excellency's response was, 'No, Slim, Governor-General.'

I felt great affection for both the Governor-General and Lady Slim and was happy to serve them to the best of my ability. The whole crew felt this way. Perhaps the closest member to His Excellency was the corporal flight steward who knew intimately the Governor-General's likes and dislikes and was aware of Lady Slim's close supervision of what her husband was allowed to eat and what he should avoid. When Her Excellency left for a month in England, the Governor-General said to the steward, 'Corporal, while Her Excellency is away we will have braised steak and onions, every meal.'

Most of the VIPs I flew were pleasant and easy to please. The Minister for Defence, Athol Townley, was a private pilot and he liked to come up into the cockpit and chat. He would pull out his pocket diary and say, for example, 'We are heading for Holbrook now, can I tune in the beacon frequency?' He would do this from the jump seat between the pilots and was good company, although some of the stories he told about his flying prowess were a bit questionable! Being the Australian Minister for Defence he was

*Pilot to the Governor-General*

given the opportunity to fly in many aircraft that major companies were trying to sell to the RAAF. He told me of flying the Vulcan jet bomber when visiting the United Kingdom and went on to say how he did a barrel roll in that aircraft and added that the test pilot who had taken him on the flight said, 'I am glad you did that Minister, we had not got to that stage of the flight test program'. Yes, he could be a bit suss, but he was also entertaining. Well aware that Air Marshal Hancock had described the F-111 as the bomber aircraft best suited to Australian needs, he contracted to acquire it for the RAAF. In doing so, he did Australia and the RAAF a great service. Unfortunately, Athol Townley died at an early age.

The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was always pleasant although he was not keen on flying—that was the impression he gave to the media. We unwittingly committed more than one cardinal sin when flying Sir Robert. The first faux pas concerned the Prime Minister's penchant for mixing martinis for himself and colleagues during a flight. We knew this and ensured that the necessary ingredients were available. However, on my first flight carrying the Prime Minister we got a failed rating. For the Prime Minister, the only acceptable vermouth was Noilly Prat. Unaware of his tastes, we provided some other brand—a major mistake. Of course we ensured that Noilly Prat was available on the next occasion. As only a quarter of the bottle was used on that flight we kept it for the next flight with the Prime Minister. Wrong again! Never use an opened bottle. A new bottle to be opened on each flight was the requirement. That message was received and the error was not repeated. However, the most disastrous oversight was on the occasion that the ice had been forgotten. I gave my apologies to the Prime Minister and assured him that it would not happen again. I also gave the message loud and clear to the steward. Nevertheless, and this is hard to believe, on every trip with the Prime Minister after that incident, his Secretary for many years, Hazel Craig, boarded the aircraft with a small vacuum container full of ice. I

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would say to her, 'Hazel it is not necessary, we will never forget the ice again.' Her answer, 'David, I'm never going to take that chance.'

I was somewhat surprised by the degree of deference accorded to the Prime Minister by his Cabinet colleagues. On one occasion when I went down the back to ask if they were comfortable the Prime Minister was asleep in the front cabin. The other four Ministers were in the rear compartment talking but peeping around the partition 'waiting for the old man to wake up'. No-one was going to disturb him. On two occasions I flew him from Canberra to Sydney on Christmas Day. As he left the aircraft he thanked me and said there was some sustenance down the back. That turned out to be a bottle of Scotch and a case of beer.

The Prime Minister never caused me any trouble but for a careless, throwaway line to the media. I had flown him from Canberra to Adelaide where he was to board a ship bound for England. When he disembarked the aircraft he was greeted by the usual throng of journalists. One of the first questions put to him, more of a friendly greeting than a question was, 'How was your trip Prime Minister?' His answer was, 'Anyone who flies is an idiot.' By the time I got back to Canberra I had the base commander waiting for me to say that the Air Officer Commanding at Glenbrook and the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to know what happened to cause the Prime Minister to make that remark. I said truthfully, 'Absolutely nothing, the weather was good, there was no turbulence—nothing'. Ten years later, travelling to America with my family, I was on the same ship as the Prime Minister and his daughter. We were invited to his cabin for cocktails and he was mixing the martinis. Present was his Secretary, Hazel Craig. I recalled the early incidents regarding his supply of vermouth and ice and was assured by the Prime Minister that all was forgiven.

It was obvious by 1955 that consideration should be given to acquiring a more modern fleet of transport aircraft. Aircraft could not be bought off the floor like a motor car and waiting time,

from signing of a contract to delivery, was generally a minimum of two years. For Australia, the options for aircraft to complement or replace the Dakota for VIP work were limited to the Vickers Viscount and the Convair 440 (Metropolitan). I was not involved in the selection in any way and, at the time, had no preference. As the decision was to acquire two aircraft with minimum waiting time, the Minister for Defence initiated talks with the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force. The Chief agreed to allow the RAAF to acquire two Convair 440 aircraft on order from the USAF. In early 1956 the Commanding Officer of the VIP Flight was sent to America to do a Convair conversion and ferry the first aircraft to Australia. The Convair decision, I believe, was made on availability. Several years later two Vickers Viscount aircraft were added to the fleet.

It was May 1956 before I started my conversion to the Convair. Because of my other work and the fact that the only pilot able to give me a conversion was the Commanding Officer, it was a leisurely, drawn-out course. However, later in the year plans were being formulated for the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to open the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Planning was initiated to assess on which sectors he would be flown by the RAAF, either by Dakota or Convair. It came as a surprise when I was nominated to fly His Royal Highness in both aircraft. This news expedited my Convair conversion as regulations required that I had 200 hours as captain on type before approval was given to fly the Duke. This brought about a foolish situation where I flew, more or less aimlessly, around Australia just building up flying hours to meet the 200-hour requirement. In October I flew 80 hours on the Convair and 52 hours in the Dakota. It was indeed a busy month but my conversion and minimum requirements were met in time for the Royal Visit.

On 12 November I positioned the Convair at Momote to be the stand-by Royal aircraft. Qantas was to fly His Royal Highness from there to Darwin. That went according to plan and Qantas

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flew the Duke from Momote to Darwin. On 16 November, back in the Dakota, I flew His Royal Highness from Darwin to Brunette Downs cattle station and to Tennant Creek. On the completion of his rather short visit to Tennant Creek, I had the Convair to take him to Alice Springs. When he came aboard and saw me in the pilot's seat of the Convair he remarked with a wry smile, 'A man for all types'. Next day it was the Dakota for a short trip to another property and then back to the Alice. Then the Convair from Alice Springs to Canberra on the 18th. That was a straightforward trip of five hours. We landed to see a large crowd waiting to welcome the Duke of Edinburgh. He was greeted by the Governor-General and Lady Slim and was whisked off to Government House. My mother was present and before the Duke's arrival Gail introduced her to Lady Slim who apparently said nice things about me. That made my mother's day; the Duke was of secondary importance. Gail and I were invited to a luncheon given for the Duke at Government House. Gail sat opposite Prince Philip and has told me many times, and everyone else, how very blue are his eyes. The remainder of the Royal Tour was to Melbourne for the opening of the Olympics, and visits to Mildura, Cooma and Sydney. Then onto Melbourne, a short visit to RAAF Base Point Cook before returning to Essendon (to avoid a traffic build-up). Before departing for the United Kingdom, he gave me a signed photograph of himself in RAAF uniform. I still have that photograph although his signature is fading.

The Duke was pleasant enough. Not much small talk but plenty of questions about the Convair and about flying in Australia. He did take some interest at my irritation at the circles painted on the tarmac where the Royal aircraft should stop. They were placed so that one wheel would go into each circle. However, from about 50 yards (45 metres) distance the pilot could not see the drawn circles and could only get the wheels in place by leaning out the cockpit window as far as possible—like a train driver shunting. Of course, if the wheels were not in the circles the waiting throng seemingly

*Pilot to the Governor-General*

viewed this as poor judgment. Anyhow, His Royal Highness saw the point and was aware that I had asked that the circles not be used. When we got to Cooma the circles were there again. I said damn, or words to that effect, and the Duke, sitting in the jump seat agreed. He said, 'Stop the aircraft right here'—this was a good 50 metres from where the greeting party was waiting but I continued taxiing. The Duke said, 'No, stop here, I mean it, they can walk down here to greet me'. He certainly was serious but I said, 'Sir, you are here for just a few days, up there is the Air Officer Commanding, he is going to be here for years. I had better taxi to where he is waiting'. From the Duke a very curt, 'Oh, very well'.

On 1 December I was back in Canberra and once again the Governor-General's pilot. This would be for a short time only. A few months before the start of the Royal Visit I had been told that I would be posted to RAAF Base Point Cook to do the 1957 Staff College—an 11-month course that would commence on 29 January. I thought I had been lucky staying in flying jobs since joining in 1943. I had amassed over 6000 flying hours and a good range of experience—it was time to do Staff College. However, just a few weeks before arranging our move to Melbourne I was called to the base commander's office and given an alternative. The Air Member for Personnel, Air Vice-Marshal Scherger, had spoken to my group captain and asked him to request me to stay with the VIP Flight for another year. He, the Air Member for Personnel, would guarantee that I would do Staff College the following year. Then the group captain gave me some personal advice, for which he has my heartfelt thanks. 'If you stay here you could not possibly get more kudos than you now have. In spite of the Air Vice-Marshal's undertaking, nothing is certain. There could be some change that would prevent you doing Staff College in 1958. My advice is to say no, that you have planned on doing it in 1957'. Well, he was advising me to reject a proposition from the Air Member for Personnel. I thanked him for his advice and said I would follow it. He undertook to advise

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the Air Vice-Marshal. And so I did my last VIP flight on 7 January, flying the Governor-General and Lady Slim to Melbourne.

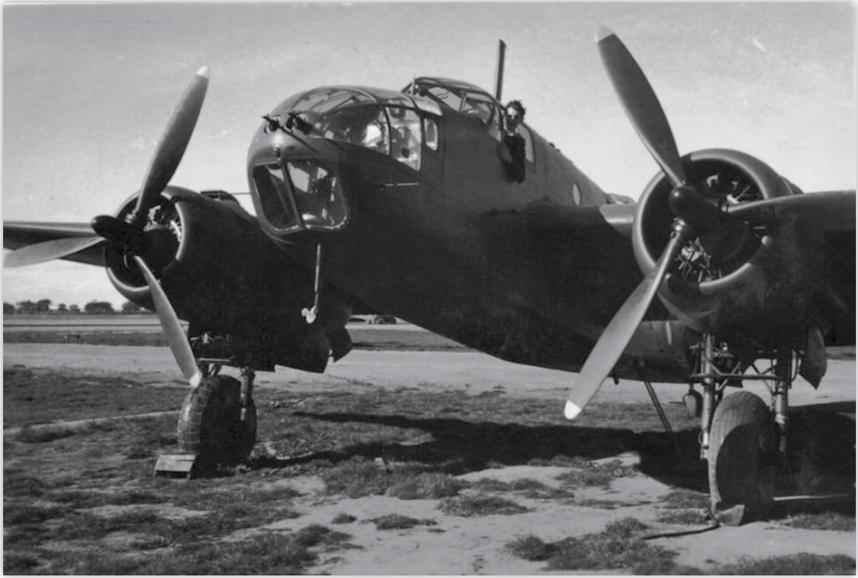
On the Saturday prior to my last VIP flight they invited Gail and I to lunch at Government House and presented me with a silver cigarette box bearing their initials. During that lunch the Governor-General told me that when he did Staff College in India the comment on one of the solutions he had submitted was, 'Your knowledge of tactics remains abysmal, however your wife's spelling is improving.' Apparently, like Gail was to do later, Lady Slim had done his typing during his Staff College year. In summary, the three and a half years after my posting to New Zealand was both a productive and interesting period of my Service life. It was not ideal from a family perspective but we both hoped the future would give us more stability.



*Above*  
Hopeful young aircrew  
at Bradfield Park, near  
Sydney, two weeks after  
joining the Air Force in  
June 1943. David Evans is  
the first seated on the left  
in the second row.



*Left*  
The author at 18, off  
to the flying school at  
Narromine, NSW, in  
1943.



*Above*  
In the cockpit of a Beaufort,  
1945.



*Left*  
The author and wife Gail  
on his departure from  
Sydney to join in the Berlin  
Airlift, five days after their  
wedding on 23 August 1948.  
It was 14 months before he  
returned to Australia.

*Right*

Unloading at Berlin during the Airlift, 1948; Evans pictured with RAAF navigator Flight Lieutenant Kevin Carrick.



*Below*

Instructor Flying Officer Evans with his first aircrew student, Cadet Col Roff, pictured against a Wirraway at Point Cook in 1951.





*Above* VIP aircraft flown by the author during a visit by Governor-General, Sir William Slim, to Mt Hagen, New Guinea, in July 1956.

*Below* Investiture ceremony at Government House, Sydney, at which Squadron Leader Evans received his Air Force Cross. Among the other RAAF recipients pictured was Flight Lieutenant Milton Cottee, second from right.



## STAFF OFFICER TO THE MINISTER FOR AIR

I was somewhat surprised at my decision to choose Staff College rather than spend an extra year flying with 34 (VIP) Flight. Whilst most Service officers hope to get selected for Staff College at the earliest possible opportunity, pilots are generally in no hurry to do so. They prefer to keep flying until a staff course becomes inevitable. Although I was devoted to the Air Force, I had no thought of reaching a very high rank. I had been a non-commissioned pilot for four years and believed the graduates soon to be emerging from the RAAF College would limit me and other wartime enlistees. I thought group captain rank was my likely limit and for a former sergeant pilot that did not seem a bad outcome.

Moving brought other issues into play—ones which I had not given much thought to because they were mundane and boring. Mundane or not they were important to our quality of life for the next year. Firstly, we had to vacate the married quarter we occupied on RAAF Base Fairbairn. Secondly, because my posting to Staff College was for less than two years I was not entitled to have my furniture moved to Melbourne, nor was I entitled to receive any rental assistance. This latter restriction was a double whammy. With no furniture we were forced to acquire more expensive furnished accommodation. Therefore, we had to look for a house in a less salubrious location than we would like. The best we could afford was a weatherboard, two bedroom abode, without sewerage, in Brooklyn, 200 metres from a crowded migrant hostel. Even then the

rent was above what a squadron leader could afford to pay. Really these were quite outrageous and unfair administrative burdens to inflict on servicemen and their families. However, that was the Department of Defence in 1957.

The course was based on the Royal Air Force Staff College and had commenced as a wartime staff course at Mount Martha, Victoria, in 1943. It ceased at the end of the war and was re-established as the RAAF Staff College, at RAAF Base Point Cook in 1949. Initially a six-month course, it changed to a full 12 months in 1954.

Whilst I subscribe to the description given in Doug Hurst's book *Strategy and Red Ink*—'a course to be tolerated rather than enjoyed'—it was designed to produce high-quality staff officers capable of thinking 'outside the box'. For example, a solution did not have to produce a correct answer, but rather, show by 'logical and rational argument' that the solution offered was achievable. This sometimes could be a diverting factor if the problem presented was an actual operation of a past conflict. Students had all of the information, intelligence etc. given to the planning staff of that conflict—and you were aware of the outcome. Obviously, if it had been a failure, the temptation would be to recommend an alternative plan—but this had to be supported by logical argument. The World War II operation *Market Garden*—to take the bridge at Arnhem—was a typical exercise where the temptation was to be guided by hindsight.

There was an emphasis on brevity—busy people should not be burdened with verbosity. Short, pithy papers and reports were the object of good staff work. Unfortunately, when a staff officer eventually came to the Defence environment in Canberra, the size of the report seemed to establish its worth. The thicker and heavier the document, the more impressive, and the more knowledge it will impart to the reader. Nonsense of course, most recipients only have time to read the executive summary. What a pity all those serving

*Staff Officer to the Minister for Air*

in the Department of Defence are not required to take the RAAF Staff College course!

In general, problems were set out in a 'Green' issued on a Monday (not every Monday). The solution had to be in at 0900 hours on the following Monday. It was a demanding schedule with lectures during the day and study in our rooms at night. Usually we would have completed about 75 per cent of an exercise before leaving the College on Friday afternoon. To me this usually meant that Saturday was a day off for family and Sunday to complete the exercise. Gail was invaluable. As I was writing, she would type up the document as well as looking after the kids, getting meals etc. Carried away with the task and thinking only of myself, I gave little thought to the legibility of my writing. When Gail asked me to decipher a word, I would get irritable at having my chain of thought interrupted and annoyed at her not being able to decipher a simple word or sentence. I well recall the Sunday night, about 10.30, when such a scene occurred. Gail, frustrated and angry, tossed the remaining 14 pages or so on the floor and told me to type them myself. I typed all night, not pausing even for a quick breakfast before setting out for the College at Point Cook. I had spent the night typing and coughing, thinking that she would feel a pang of compassion and come to help. It did not happen. That was a lesson I have never forgotten—what is more, the Directing Staff member commented adversely on my many typing errors and spelling mistakes. Incidentally, my coughing during the night was not entirely for effect. On the Monday after handing in my paper I was admitted to hospital with pleurisy.

The Staff College accommodation at Point Cook, both the lecture rooms and sleeping quarters, were very ordinary. I was upstairs in an old 1920s weatherboard building with showers and toilets downstairs, not much comfort in the Melbourne winter. Also being required to live in was not good for family life. We were able to go home on Wednesday nights and weekends. It really was

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a hard year with days full of lectures and discussions, but thankfully broken up by visits to business organisations or major works/engineering projects, such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. It was an unfortunate trick of fate that the course visited the Gilbey's Gin establishment in Moorabbin on our ninth wedding anniversary. Gail was not impressed!

One's first impression of the quality of the work we had submitted was the amount of red ink comments by the Directing Staff and, heaven forbid, the green ink of the Commandant's pen. I was thankful when the year had finished and to be awarded the pass symbol beside my name in the Air Force List. However, the course ending was not without its dramas. To address, what seemed at the time, the bad news first—my final interview was with the Deputy Commandant. He went through my performance during the year, all of which was assessed as satisfactory, but thought I had been somewhat underconfident in regard to advanced staff work. (He was wrong—I had noted the general standard of people who had graduated over the years and decided I need have no concern about passing.) The Deputy Commandant then went through the list of more advanced courses and told me if I was recommended to take them or not: Joint Services Staff College—not recommended; RAF Air Warfare Course—not recommended; Royal College of Defence Studies, London—not recommended. I said this seemed rather odd. How did I pass with a satisfactory performance if I were not suitable for further training? He responded with a rather nonsensical explanation that my talents lay in other areas. I think the explanation may be found in the fact that we disliked each other—for what reason I do not know. In any case, I did in fact do the top two courses for which he did not recommend me, the RAF Air Warfare Course and the Royal College of Defence Studies. It was with some satisfaction I noted that the then Deputy Commandant did not advance from the rank he then held.

*Staff Officer to the Minister for Air*

On a more positive note, two other graduates and I were sent into RAAF Headquarters to be interviewed by the then Air Member for Personnel, Frank Headlam, regarding an appointment to be Staff Officer to the Minister for Air. Given the list of non-recommendations I have just mentioned, it seems rather odd that I should be considered for that position. I was selected for the job. Final approval came after an interview with the Minister, the Hon. Fred Osborne. He was an ex-wartime Navy commander who had commanded a destroyer and, indeed, sunk a German U-boat. He was very pleasant and I looked forward to the job.

Firstly, we had to decide where to live. Canberra seemed the obvious place because of Parliament. However, the Minister lived in Sydney and travelled frequently to Canberra when Parliament was sitting and between Sydney and Melbourne for meetings of the Air Board. The Air Board, in those years, was still located at the RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne. They were interesting days in Canberra as the Federal Government departments were moving to the national capital and a huge building program was underway to accommodate the influx. I was given the keys to a number of houses in the suburb of Campbell to inspect and accept if I wished. In the end, we figured that our separations would be minimised by living in Sydney. After much hunting, we located a furnished house at Balgowlah Heights. It was a nice house in a nice suburb. Nevertheless, Defence Department regulations required that I submit, every month, evidence that I was trying to find an unfurnished house so that my rental allowance could cease. Accordingly, every month I submitted receipts and copies of advertisements placed in Sydney newspapers and evidence to show that I had called upon real estate agents in this hunt for the 'Holy Grail'. It really was bureaucratic humbug gone mad. In spite of this we were happy in our new surroundings.

The job was staff work as I had been trained to do but with significant differences, including working in the parliamentary

environment. The Minister received a great number of files and correspondence for approval or to note. Also there was Air Board business, minutes of meetings, briefing notes and Cabinet submissions. Added to this was a host of correspondence from organisations and individuals germane to the RAAF and aviation generally. My basic job was to read the above and if necessary to brief the Minister on the salient points. This seems routine for any kind of office administration but here we were a travelling office. All those files would travel from Sydney to Canberra, back to Sydney, or to Melbourne and back to Canberra, awaiting the Minister's attention. I carried those files so many times they were getting more flying hours than some RAAF pilots. In Canberra I would get into the office at 8.30 am and leave when Parliament stood down, usually about 10.30 pm, sometimes later, and then I would travel to RAAF Base Fairbairn where I was accommodated.

I drafted answers to a good deal of correspondence for the Minister. That was an interesting but also a frustrating task. It often took weeks to get correspondence to the Minister for signature. Often he would read a draft letter and cross out one word. It might be at least a week before that letter would get to him again. I started out like all staff officers trying to anticipate and use my boss's style and his vocabulary. That was not easy. After a month or so I summoned up enough courage to ask the Minister if it were not better to leave a word or two as submitted rather than cross it out and have it delayed for a week or even two before he would have another opportunity to sign. I pointed out an example where, in one letter where I said that the Air Force could not *take part in*, he crossed out *take part in* and wrote *participate*. A few weeks later, having noted his use of *participate*, I wrote in another letter that the Air Force was not able to *participate*— he crossed out *participate* and wrote *take part*. He laughed and said, 'Oh, don't take any notice of my inconsistency in changing words, it's no criticism of you David.'

*Staff Officer to the Minister for Air*

One of the more interesting, but not unusual, political approaches to a request was when the City of Adelaide Squadron, Citizen Air Force (CAF) wrote to the Minister complaining that the squadron had not been re-equipped with Vampire aircraft as had other CAF squadrons. The Minister's instruction to me was: 'David, the Air Force does not want to do this. Draft a letter from me to this person and when you have finished, read it to yourself and if it actually says anything, tear it up and start again.' I did as told and was glad when the Minister read it and said, 'Excellent David,' and signed.

Actually, it was the matter of writing notes and letters for the Minister plus one or two extraneous tasks that required me to establish my position as a member of his staff. I shared the office next to the Minister, which had a connecting door, with his Private Secretary. The position of Private Secretary is now titled Chief of Staff. The person filling that position at the time assumed he had some authority over me. I did not accept that. This came to a head when I had been in the position for a month or so. I noted the Secretary altering one of the letters I had drafted for the Minister. I made it quite clear that the only person to change or alter my drafts would be the Minister. The other task was when I was presented with a bag of mail in the Sydney office and asked to take it to the GPO two blocks away. I refused on the grounds that the RAAF Squadron Leader was a staff officer not an errand boy. This did not go down well but I held my ground. Taking the mail bag down Martin Place to the GPO was not an arduous task but I felt I had to establish my position as the Minister's RAAF Staff Officer, not a general hand. I was the second RAAF officer to fill that appointment and was not certain if I was being imposed upon as a newcomer or whether my predecessor had been more obliging than I was prepared to be.

Another duty during parliamentary sitting days was to draft a question and answer, and arrange for a member to ask the Minister

during Question Time—the well-known ‘Dorothy Dixier’. Odd as it may seem, it is not easy to come up with a good question day after day after day. The Minister mentioned that it would be wonderful if I could get a member of the Opposition to ask a question, but this I saw as far too risky. What a scoop it would be for an Opposition member to be able to rise and say he had been approached by the Minister’s Staff Officer to ask a prepared question in the House. During Question Time I stood in the press gallery ready to respond if the Minister should covertly signal me. There were areas of intense interest to which I was privileged to have access. I read Cabinet documents, Top Secret documents, and was often briefed by the Minister of considerations the Government had in mind. It was also interesting to have a close association with the staff of other Ministers and, indeed, with some other Ministers. The Non-Members’ Bar was a treasure-trove of information, rumour and humour, as Minister’s Chiefs of Staff and advisers discussed their day. Walking through a corridor in Parliament House one day, a backbencher came up to me and said, ‘Jim Killen, ex-Flight Sergeant Air Gunner. Are you from Fred’s staff?’ We chatted for a few minutes and before parting, ‘What about inviting me down to the Non-Members’ Bar some time?’ I did so on several occasions. Jim was a great raconteur and kept all within earshot amused. Arthur Fadden, the Treasurer, was a man of the same ilk and had stories galore of Parliament and parliamentarians of days gone by. Again in the corridor I passed the Defence Minister, Athol Townley, walking with the Prime Minister. In passing he simply said, ‘Would you go to my office I will join you in a few minutes.’ He came in and I was wondering what to expect. ‘Have a beer’, said the Minister. I did and we chatted about aeroplanes and the Convair 440 that he had acquired for the VIP Flight.

More important was having the opportunity to grasp the workings of Parliament and the political culture that lay behind the governance of the Australian nation. To learn that what you

hear is not what you get or even what is intended; that decisions are often based on extraneous considerations not necessarily in the best interest of the nation at the time. It was this type of situation that put me in a dilemma as to where my duty lay. I am not sure, even to this day, whether my determination of this factor was right—in accordance of what was expected from me. One such episode concerned the acquisition of a squadron of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) for the RAAF. The role of these weapons was to supplement the fighter air defence capability and, in particular, to provide point air defence for priority targets vulnerable to air attack. Government had approved the acquisition of such a system and the RAAF had sent an evaluation team of appropriate experts overseas to evaluate available systems. The team was to submit a report and recommendations to the RAAF. After further examination in Air Force, a Cabinet submission was prepared and submitted by the Minister for Air to Cabinet. Two systems had been examined in detail. They were the British Bloodhound and the American Nike. The evaluation report strongly favoured the American missile and that was the system recommended in the Cabinet submission. Before a decision was taken by Cabinet, the British contacted the Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, and arranged to send a British politician and senior RAF officer to discuss the Bloodhound proposal. After that meeting, a direction went to the Air Force to produce another Cabinet submission, this time recommending the British weapon, the Bloodhound.

Two members of the evaluation team were well known to me and I had discussed their mission in some detail when they called on the Minister. One was an experienced fighter pilot well versed in air defence and the other a pilot/electronics engineer with sound operational knowledge. They were adamant that the Nike was the superior system and would provide the better air defence capability for Australia. They had outlined the areas of clear superiority of the Nike in discussion with me.

I was aghast at this turn of events. Did the Minister actually appreciate the significant operational superiority of the Nike and the limitations of the Bloodhound? Why was our air defence capability to be compromised by acquiring the inferior weapon? And most importantly, was it my business to intrude into this top-level decision? I was a squadron leader, an inconsequential rank in such considerations. I agonised about this for two days—what should I do? In the end two factors influenced me to put my views to the Minister. One, I was the Minister's military Staff Officer and surely had a duty to him. Two, I was an Australian and my prime concern must be to see the best thing done in Australia's interest. I did not overrate my position or my ability; I simply thought it could do no possible harm to tell the Minister of my concerns. I would not mention it to any other person. My relationship with the Minister was such that he was prepared to listen to me, and if necessary discuss my point of view. On this occasion he believed that the differences in the two systems were actually shades of grey. I responded forcefully by saying that in capability tests the Nike had shot down a target drone at 70 000 plus feet whereas the Bloodhound had flamed out at 60 000 feet or less. This, in my opinion, was a black and white fact.

He then amplified the crux of the Government's decision by asking me to consider the big picture. The situation was that the British Government hoped to market the Bloodhound system in Europe. Norway was showing a strong interest and might well be the first European customer. Now, if Australia, a Commonwealth country, should select the American weapon, after a full evaluation, the likelihood of selling the Bloodhound in Europe would be diminished significantly. The Australian Government felt that it should support the Commonwealth in this matter. I suspect that he and probably the Cabinet still thought in terms of shades of grey. I had done what I thought was the right thing but the decision was made. I would not raise the subject again with anyone. I still have

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slight guilty feelings for having gone to the Minister on that subject. It was a matter for the Chief of the Air Staff, not a squadron leader staff officer. A factor in my decision was that the Minister was wont to discuss confidential matters with me, probably because I was in the next office.

The Minister would often call me in when attending to his correspondence, to get me to explain a technical word or expression or to query some operational doctrine. To the extent that I had time to do so, it necessitated me reading all Air Force correspondence before putting it to the Minister. Where there were parts that I did not understand—and there were many—I would ring the staff officer involved and get a telephone briefing. Unfortunately, he often asked questions that I had not anticipated.

About 10 o'clock one night I was called into the Minister's office. He was talking to Billy Snedden—who later became Liberal parliamentary leader for a short time. The Minister, clearly displaying an air of disbelief at what he was hearing, said, 'David, Mr Snedden is saying that our Canberra bombers are virtually useless, unarmed, no modern navigation system, bombing accuracy poor. He says he gets this from Air Force people. Would you give him the facts?' I went into a great spin story beginning with the fact that the fleet was now being equipped with Green Satan, a modern and very accurate system of navigation that would give a huge improvement in accuracy. The fact was that the Canberra's modus operandi was to operate at night and at an altitude to be out of the range of modern surface-fired missiles. In our region, potential enemies did not have credible air defence radar systems nor radar-equipped fighters to challenge high-level Canberra intrusions. In our area it remained a capable offensive aircraft. Bill Snedden thanked the Minister and said this explanation put his mind at rest—and then departed.

The Minister then expressed surprise and some irritation that these misguided views should emerge. I pointed out, 'Minister, you seem to believe what I was saying'. He exploded! 'Well, that was

true wasn't it?' I replied, 'No, Mr Snedden was right. The Canberra is not a capable weapon system. The Green Satan will give it some improvement in navigation accuracy, but it is not a modern state-of-the-art system. Bombing accuracy with iron bombs is appalling and the aircraft with no radar of its own, no defensive weapons would be extremely vulnerable even in a modest air defence environment.'

The Minister's reaction was still explosive, 'Why hasn't the Chief of the Air Staff [CAS] briefed me? I should not hear of this from a backbencher. I will ask the CAS to come over tomorrow and ask why I was not told.' Oh God! What have I done, was my silent reaction. He obviously read my mind and said, 'I'll just say what I heard from Mr Snedden—you're not involved.'

Next day he did ask the CAS, Air Marshal Frederick Scherger, to come over (RAAF Headquarters had moved to Canberra by 1958). The Chief said that the Canberra had served the RAAF well but, although the air defence capability in our region was very limited, the Canberra was in urgent need of replacement. He also pointed out that our use of a low-level profile, in training for daylight penetration, increased the fatigue damage to the aircraft and that was another reason to address the replacement issue. CAS told the Minister that the Air Force had been working on this.

The Minister was still exhibiting some resentment at not being informed of the situation and said he wanted to visit the bomber base at Amberley and talk to the aircrews. That was arranged and within a few weeks I accompanied him to Amberley. The Officer Commanding No 82 Wing, Group Captain Charles Read, grinned and mentioned privately, 'What am I to do, tell the truth and ruin my career—or?' My reply was, 'I hope you tell it like it is, Sir'. And that he certainly did.

That was the time, 1959, when the Canberra replacement project really began as far as Air Force was concerned. The fact that the Minister for Air was now aware of the need did not produce immediate approval or funds for acquisition. It is a long story

but the simple fact is that it was 1974 before the first Canberra replacement arrived in Australia—the F-111C.

The Minister took a deep interest in the deployment of two fighter squadrons and a Canberra squadron to Malaya. The RAAF's No 5 Airfield Construction Squadron had carried out the conversion of the Butterworth air base from a wartime airfield suitable for aircraft of the 1940s to a modern military airfield capable of operating any military aircraft, from modern fighter aircraft to the British nuclear V-bombers. His interest covered all stages of the deployment from the departure of the Sabre squadrons to the setting up of the RAAF School on Penang Island. He visited RAAF Base Butterworth in 1959 and was very impressed at the strategic position Australia, together with the British and New Zealand forces, held in the Malaya and Singapore region. Notwithstanding the discomfort, he enjoyed the experience of flying in the jump seat of a Canberra bomber.

At the time of the Minister's visit, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) No 224 Group—the operational command, under Far East Air Force—was the RAAF's Air Vice-Marshal Hancock. Hancock was an impressive man, over six feet tall, ramrod straight, always impeccably turned out and a bristling moustache to complete the picture. His manner was direct, no nonsense but pleasant. I have always looked to him as the epitome of a distinguished military officer.

He kept himself physically fit and led the Minister's wideranging visit, including to jungle camps and visiting an aboriginal tribe, on the run. The Minister, almost trotting to keep up, was bathed in sweat, and so was I. The Air Vice-Marshal seemingly did not sweat and remained cool and immaculate. At the end of a very long day we returned to our hotel. The Minister suggested a cold drink and asked the Air Vice-Marshal what he would like. Hancock, a teetotaler, asked for a fresh lime and the Minister said, 'That sounds like a perfect drink the way I feel'. I was asked what I would like and

lameily said, 'A fresh lime please'. That was certainly not what I had been thinking of for the past several hours. The Butterworth visit was useful. The Minister received high-level briefings from the top brass at Far East Air Force and the Australian High Commissioner and, importantly, took the opportunity to talk with and listen to the Service people and families stationed at this very large RAAF base. The base was home to Royal Malay Air Force units, an RAF fighter squadron, and a visiting base for RAF V-bombers. There were British, Australian and Malay Army formations in close proximity.

It was decidedly more useful than a visit he did in company with Athol Townley, the Minister for Defence, to Anna Plains, a cattle station on the northern coast of Western Australia. Dr Alan Butement, the Chief Defence Scientist, accompanied the Ministers and I went along as Osborne's Staff Officer. The purpose of this trip was to talk to the people at Anna Plains, to tell them about some tentative thinking regarding their property being developed as the impact area for missiles fired from Woomera. I do not know how far that investigation went, but my impression was that it got no further than the exploratory stage. However, it was presented as a matter being seriously considered at the time. The trip turned out to be interesting and amusing if nothing else. In conversation during the flight, looking down at the desert-like features of the Australian terrain, Dr Butement told the two Ministers that an adequate and simple plan for the defence of Australia was an easy matter: acquire a stock of nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles, hide them in silos in the desert below and simply announce Australia's defence philosophy:

We want to live in peace and harmony with all nations and have no aggressive intentions towards anyone. However, if we are attacked we have the means to respond with catastrophic effects to the attacker.

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The Ministers were not impressed but it provided half an hour of interesting discussion.

On arrival we were greeted by the very hospitable owners of Anna Plains Station and taken up to the homestead and offered a drink. We were staying the night and so settled down for some wideranging conversations. Athol Townley, a pleasant extrovert, went through the kitchen cupboards and the pantry saying that he was looking for ingredients to make a liqueur to have with tonight's dinner. Apart from brown sugar I do not know what he found, but he did produce a liqueur of sorts. Athol Townley took over the activities during our stay, much to the surprise and amusement of the inhabitants. We had a general look around the area learning little that was not apparent from photographs and maps of the area. The Ministers talked of the extended missile range as if it were a reasonably firm proposition but there was certainly no in-depth discussion.

Next day when we landed in Adelaide, if I recall correctly, Minister Townley was interviewed by a number of media people and briefed them on the full and useful discussions we had at Anna Plains. I suppose that even today, as I write this in 2010, Anna Plains remains a dormant plan in the Department of Defence. Or maybe, I am the only one that remembers that fleeting thought!

I found my posting to the Minister's office to be different but interesting. I certainly had access to much that was going on in the Air Force and, indeed, the opportunity to observe the actual response of Government to these matters. It really was high altitude stuff for a squadron leader. But of course, the same situation applied to all those young men and women working with Ministers. It is pleasing that I can look back and reflect on the faultless integrity displayed by the ministerial staff with whom I was associated. Lots of amusing stories in the Non-Members' Bar—which, incidentally, was 'males only' in those days, as were hotel bars.

## *Down to Earth*

The Minister was essentially a good, decent man, with a happy family life. He lived from day to day, having, as he thought, a rather loose grip on his portfolio. He believed that the Prime Minister did not like him and mentioned this to me more than once. With that mindset he was always fearful of letting the Prime Minister down. One occasion that caused him serious concern was when the VIP aircraft ordered for the Prime Minister was unserviceable. The other aircraft were committed (the RAAF only had about four VIP aircraft on line) and the Minister told me to phone Command and, on his behalf, say that the Minister insisted that they recall an aircraft from another mission. This was an interesting situation from which I learned a great deal. I spoke to the Senior Air Staff Officer, Air Commodore Geoff Hartnell. He said very calmly, 'David, tell the Minister that he can not order this Command to do anything. The Air Officer Commanding takes orders only from the Chief of the Air Staff. The Minister exercises no command authority whatsoever. If he wishes to pursue this path he must talk to the Chief of the Air Staff'. I conveyed that message to the Minister and stood by. After a minute's reflection he said, 'The Air Commodore is quite right. I have no command authority and should not have acted that way'. However, he was still very concerned about the Prime Minister and asked me if I thought he should charter an aircraft from TAA, the government-owned airline. The answer was very clear in my mind. The Prime Minister would be furious to have an aircraft chartered for his lone use. Imagine the outcry if the media were to learn of such indulgence. He quickly saw the point and personally put the situation to the Prime Minister's senior adviser. The Prime Minister flew on a scheduled commercial flight.

Fred Osborne could be pompous on occasions. After landing at RAAF Base Fairbairn and driving into Parliament House he was not saluted by the guard as he went through the gate. He always flew the Minister's pennant when arriving at or leaving a RAAF base. The Minister told me that this was not satisfactory and to call

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the Officer Commanding at Fairbairn and have him come in to the Minister's office. I knew this was wrong and decided to do nothing. After consideration I thought the Minister would realise he was being unnecessarily petulant. An hour or so later he called me and asked if I had contacted the Officer Commanding. I said no, and told him why. He tore a small strip off me for not doing as I was told and then said, 'It is too late to do it now but in future do as I tell you.' I apologised and replied I would let the base commander know the Minister's view on saluting.

I will finish on the Minister's overall appreciation of his position. I have adequately covered his assessment of where he stood in regard to the Prime Minister and indeed other very senior Ministers such as Sir Richard Casey. But looking downward, his attitude to the Air Board was quite different to what I had expected. On one occasion, returning to Sydney following an Air Board meeting in Melbourne, he referred to a Board agenda item and said the Board was opposed to his view and that he was disappointed. I asked if he did not have authority to overrule the Board members. He said that he, as Minister, could not survive the political repercussions if the Air Board were to resign in the face of such action on his part. I must confess I was surprised but, as an Air Force officer, I was pleased. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine a group of top officers being so strongly united as to test the Minister's resolve.

I had made it known to the Personnel Branch some months before my tour was to end that I would like very much to return to flying and particularly to the Bomber Wing to fly the Canberra. I was fortunate to have that accepted and was posted to No 1 Operational Conversion Unit at Amberley.

*Down to Earth*

## A LOVE AFFAIR WITH AN ENGLISH LADY

On 16 November 1959 I arrived at Central Flying School, East Sale, for my refresher flying course. Sadly, at East Sale that day, a Vampire aircraft crashed killing both the instructor and student pilot. Gail, in Sydney, was anxious when she heard the radio news, knowing I was arriving at Sale about the time of the accident. Not one for waiting she called the Minister's office to ask if she was a widow. They did not know but did find out very quickly that it was not me and so put her mind at rest.

The course, to get me back in the flying mode, was three weeks and consisted of 60 hours flying—mostly on the Vampire and to solo stage on the Canberra. I found that I was tired at the end of each day and on the fourth day went to bed at 8 pm—my reaction to doing two or three sorties a day. However, by the time I finished the course the tiredness had vanished. Surprisingly, I noted after three years in ground jobs my flying skills returned very quickly. The most troublesome issues were radio communications and air traffic procedures. I was out of practice with 'airmen speak' and stumbled over radio calls, did not repeat certain instructions, and repeated those that did not need to be repeated. I felt very foolish and unprofessional. A couple of weeks of humiliation cured that. I did my instrument rating on the Vampire, went solo on the Canberra and, after some Christmas leave, was off to No 1 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) at Amberley.

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Housing was a prime consideration. We found a reasonable house between Ipswich and the base. A modest weatherboard with a dunny down the backyard, a cemetery and an asylum within a few hundred metres—but the house itself was quite comfortable. I had been advised I would be going to No 2 Squadron at Butterworth, Malaya on completion of the conversion course, so the location and quality of our accommodation was not of overriding importance.

I do not recall anything daunting during the course. The one vice of the Canberra aircraft was asymmetric flight. Flying with a failed engine at low speed created a tendency to yaw and roll towards the dead engine. It could be fatal below safety speed and at a high power setting. Take-off could be tricky when lifting off at 140 knots at full power yet below the safety speed of 155 knots. It was even more dangerous with tip tanks or bombs attached on the wingtips. In that configuration, safety speed was about 180 knots. Unfortunately, in that danger zone, inexperienced pilots were involved in a number of fatal accidents during the life of the Canberra.

Quite apart from that one vice the Canberra was a very safe and docile aircraft. It was, however, a very uncomfortable aircraft to fly in, especially when strapped tightly into the ejection seat. A further cause of discomfort was the 'bowyangs' which automatically pulled your legs back during ejection. And if we did have to eject, it was through the non-opening canopy. Temperatures inside the cockpit could reach more than 130°F (54°C) if there was a delayed take-off or during prolonged flight at low level in the tropics. To add to the pilot's woes, the auxiliary controls, bomb doors, radio compass, fuel system were not well placed or user friendly and the cockpit lighting at night was from antiquated violet ray bulbs. And from a personal point of view there was always a feeling of discomfort because a safe ejection could not be made below 2000 feet. Surprisingly, in spite of all the negatives, for those who were

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lucky enough to fly the Canberra it was a love affair with an 'English Lady'.

The one point I found hard to accept was the very poor bombing accuracy accepted by the squadron crews. My navigator and I were getting between 100 and 150 metres. I thought that appalling and said so. The experienced Canberra operators at the OCU said those results were quite reasonable. Therefore, dropping a bomb within a 100-metre target from 30 000 plus feet was good—as good as you could expect from the system in the Canberra. I remained sceptical—but I was a student and bowed to the view of the more experienced Canberra crews.

I finished OCU on 16 May 1960. Gail and I, with our two girls, had a wonderful two-week trip to Penang on the Dutch ship *Orange*. Then a short stay at the historic Eastern & Oriental Hotel and into a very comfortable married quarter. There was the usual administrative hassle of buying a car, getting driving licences, setting up electricity accounts etc. I was picked up by taxi each morning, shared with two other officers, and taken to the ferry—then another taxi to take us to the base about three kilometres up the road. A major attraction for the wives was having servants—a cook, an amah and a gardener. A good way of life—yes indeed!

It was wonderful to be in an operational squadron again. That is what the exercise of air power is all about. No 2 Squadron had an outstanding operational record, having been active on the Western Front in World War I and played a significant role against Japanese shipping in the Pacific during World War II. I was to replace the senior Flight Commander due to return home at the end of July. I was filled with enthusiasm, as indeed were all members of the squadron. To put it in military terms: 'morale was high'. There were several factors that generated this enthusiasm. Butterworth was a very busy and effective operational base with two RAAF fighter squadrons, one RAF fighter squadron (Javelin aircraft), an RAAF bomber squadron (No 2), a Transport Flight of

three Dakota aircraft, and a radar station. No 2 Squadron was one of three Canberra squadrons in No 224 Group. We operated with No 1 Squadron RNZAF and No 14 Squadron RAF—both based at Tengah, in Singapore. There was constant rivalry between these three squadrons, which naturally had each of them operating at a high level of capability. Butterworth also saw frequent detachments of RAF V-bombers. It was one of those detachments we suspected of stealing a cherished silken banner set above the bar in the Officers Mess bearing the words *All Poms are Bastards*. We felt pride in the fact that RAAF Butterworth was a major addition to the operational capability present in this important strategic area.

Another factor was that the fight against the communist terrorists was still going on, with the Canberra squadrons occasionally called upon to undertake strike sorties against suspected terrorist locations. I frankly believe those sorties to have been a waste of time and money. In the first place, to be effective, such strikes must be based on accurate and timely intelligence. In the second place, a very high degree of accuracy in weapon delivery is essential. Neither of these basic elements of a bombing strike was available. The lack of accuracy was not due solely to the deficiency of the Canberra—although at that time it could have been—but manifestly because in the 1960s it was not possible to get acceptable accuracy from targets hidden by dense jungle. However, the RAAF, RAF and RNZAF felt they were contributing to the war on communist terrorism. In retrospect, I doubt that these air strikes, like many such strikes carried out by the RAAF's Lincolns of No 1 Squadron in previous years, caused the enemy any inconvenience.

The third factor creating additional interest was that Australia, with the other Commonwealth forces based in Singapore and Malaya, was part of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). America was also a major member. We took part in SEATO exercises and generally No 2 Squadron was based at Don

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Muang Airport in Bangkok. The role of the squadron was frustrating for the Canberra crews. It seemed to me that the whole purpose of the exercise was to make Thais believe that the air defence of Bangkok was effective. To this end, our task was to attack targets in the Bangkok area. Flying in at 30 000 feet or higher we would be picked up by radar a hundred or more miles away and attacked by fighter aircraft before, during and after penetrating the target area. In reality, one would have to be out of their mind to attempt such suicidal tactics in real life. If doing it in daylight, we would go under radar and fly very low. If at night, we used World War II 'bomber stream' tactics that were still in fashion in No 224 Group and Far East Air Force. It was not a safe tactic, but as most fighter aircraft of those days did not have radar or a look-down/shoot-down capability, it gave us good chance of survival. The squadron took part in interesting exercises in Thailand, the Philippines and, on one occasion, in Okinawa, where we operated with USAF's No 13 Squadron of B-57 bombers (the American version of the Canberra) which deployed from Japan for the exercise.

The two major problems I struck as the senior Flight Commander were the weather and bombing accuracy. The bombing tactic used by 224 Group involved a bomber stream at night of the three Canberra squadrons flying at 30 000 feet or higher. Often the build-up of cumulonimbus cloud was a hazard because the Canberra had no weather radar. The canopy was almost always iced over creating difficulties in a visual reference of conditions ahead. Encountering severe turbulence, therefore, was not uncommon around Butterworth. I have inadvertently flown into cumulonimbus cloud at 46 000 feet or higher. I was told that, prior to my arrival, the inadvertent consequences of these encounters with cumulus cloud ranged from fracture of the forward edge of the tail fin to a double-engine flame-out. The result was a strong reluctance to fly at night when large build-ups were reported to be in the area of a planned mission. I discussed this with the squadron flying

instructor, known as the QFI (Qualified Flying Instructor), who was an experienced Canberra pilot with an analytical mind and sound judgment. I stated the obvious; a bomber squadron that was limited by the prevailing weather encountered in its area of operations was hardly a reliable weapon. What could we do to overcome this? We needed an outcome that would give us all confidence in our ability to cope at night.

The fin fracture had been overcome by replacing the wooden leading edge with a metal item. In regard to the control of the aircraft in the very severe turbulence experienced and to avoid engine flame-out, we discussed and experimented. The control problem was no different to what has always been preached—to maintain the aircraft attitude at all costs. Do not worry about gain or loss of height, just maintain attitude. In very severe turbulence, engine revolutions for the Canberra should be set at 7400 and not disturbed. Generally this would provide a speed about 0.74 Mach. The QFI and I used these parameters and had no serious trouble—it was, however, always quite frightening to stumble into a monstrous cumulus cloud. We then sold this formula to the squadron aircrew. They were sceptical but, with one exception, overcame their fears and mastered the art of night flying in tropical areas. The policy adopted was not to fly into cumulus clouds if it could be avoided but if you found yourself in that situation, adopt the technique now set down in Standard Operating Procedures. That really put an end to the practice of cancelling night flying at four o'clock in the afternoon if the weather report was threatening.

The bombing accuracy was difficult to resolve. The reason was largely the 'bomber stream' tactic—a relic of World War II—that Far East Air Force and No 224 Group embraced. Clearly, bombing from 30 000 feet and above, target accuracy within 100 to 150 metres had to be accepted. And, indeed, finding and identifying the target from 30 000 feet at night was itself problematical. My concern heightened when I looked at one of the SEATO targets

allocated to No 2 Squadron. It was a bridge in the vicinity of a fighter base operated by a potential enemy. Using 'bomber stream' accuracy, more than 100 sorties would be required. Three Canberra squadrons could potentially be wiped out attacking just one target—and not a high-value target at that! With the Commanding Officer's approval, No 2 Squadron set out to evolve tactics that would enable the squadron to carry out successful operational tasks with minimal, sustainable losses. I set the squadron's average bombing error to be no greater than 50 metres. Some of the older Canberra crews actually laughed and said it was not possible with the Canberra bombsight. But in the first instance we had to accept we could not attain that accuracy from 30 000 feet. In reality this could put night bombing operations out of consideration on target identification alone, without even considering bombing accuracy. Other questions arose. Should we be used only for daylight bombing? At what height could we attain a 50-metre maximum error? How could we penetrate and bomb at that height without heavy losses? After much experimenting we found that we were achieving the required accuracy at 10 000 feet—clearly not an ideal height to be at in the target area. The final flight profile the squadron adopted was to penetrate below radar until the last 50 miles (80 kilometres) and then as low as possible to a position about 10 miles (16 kilometres) from the point target, set a final heading and pull up to 8000 or 10 000 feet, acquire the target and release bombs. Then low level again for the escape. The aim was to be no more than 30 seconds at 10 000 feet. Fortunately the Canberra carried a great deal of fuel and could sustain this low-altitude profile for most targets on our list.

There still remained the problem of the bomber stream. It seemed that the 'stream' practice would continue. However, there was no reason why, over suitable terrain, the height could not be much lower. The first task would be to locate the target at night. In the squadron we formed a flight of four aircraft to be target

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markers. It would be the same principle as adopted by Bomber Command during World War II. I selected three crews—two very experienced and one crew more junior. We would carry flares and coloured target marker bombs as in the last war. The system we devised was to arrive at an identification point as low as the terrain allowed. The lead aircraft would run in 8 or 10 miles to the target area at 3000 feet, drop the six flares and then go into a steep climbing turn to the left. As he climbed he should see the target in the light of the flares and at 5000 feet carry out a dive-bombing attack to release a target marker. Dive-bombing at night from 5000 feet was not a healthy exercise. Obviously, the pilot could not judge a safe pull-out height—this was a matter for very well-developed coordination with the navigator. Commencing the dive at 5000 feet, the navigator would call the diminishing altitudes until at 2200 feet the pilot would release the bomb (the target marker) and pull out at a maximum of around 4 g. Recovery should be achieved by 1000 feet. A vital element was to know precisely the height of the ground where the target was located and an accurate QNH (barometric pressure datum setting—with QNH set, an aircraft altimeter indicates height above mean sea level).

The other marker aircraft would remain in the vicinity to remark the target if called in by the master bomber. The bomber stream would then be advised to bomb on a particular marker or to bomb so many metres to the left, right, beyond or short of the mark. The bombing height of the stream aircraft was flexible and depended on terrain, air defence, fuel state etc. It was a great improvement on what had been going on for years. I thoroughly enjoyed the role of master bomber and my small flight equally enjoyed the important skills we had developed. As I have said, dive-bombing from 5000 feet at night was dicey. Looking back 65 years, the thought frightens me more than that task did at the time.

Life was quite pleasant living on Penang Island. Those living on the base enjoyed life and were glad they were spared the daily travel

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to work. On the other hand, Gail and I were pleased that our two girls did not have to travel from Butterworth to the RAAF School on Penang. There was a good social life and plenty of sport for those interested—swimming, golf and tennis all readily available, and many cheap dressmakers to keep the ladies happy. Our third daughter, Edwina, was born on Penang. Gail had refused to go to the Army hospital at Ipoh and was very sorry for that decision when she endured a difficult time at a privately run hospital on Penang.

Radio RAAF Butterworth, an initiative of those first posted to the base, broadcast to Penang and the area surrounding the base. It was a great boon to the RAAF fraternity and enjoyed by many others in the broadcast area. It was well run by a succession of volunteers and succeeded in avoiding sensitive areas that may have jeopardised the Air Force's presence.

In about April 1962, I received advice that I was being sent to the United Kingdom for the Air Warfare College at RAF Manby in Lincolnshire. It was a six-month course and thus unaccompanied. Personnel Branch thought it would be less disruptive if Gail and the family stayed in Malaya during my absence. However, Gail felt very strongly that she wanted to be back in Australia where she had the support of her family. I advised the personnel people and they obliged. It was something of a hassle to move from Butterworth, car and all, to Sydney, find accommodation and then set off for the UK. Indeed, it proved to be difficult with suitable accommodation only found at the eleventh hour at Bondi—the suburb where Gail was raised.

The flight to London, first class for officers in those days, was the equivalent to business class of a decade ago, albeit with better food and service. I reported to the Air Adviser on arrival in London and then immediately set off to Manby—a typical RAF base of that era. The buildings were solid, but uninspiring, with bluish/red bricks for the messes and administrative buildings. The accommodation was good but did not include showers—a bind for

Australians. I had not had a bath for years and doubt that I have had one since. The bath process added a good 10 minutes to my shower/shave process each morning. I resented losing those 10 minutes and berated my British friends accordingly. I was astounded when a few of them maintained, 'You really can't wash properly under a shower'. I have not figured that one out yet!

The base and all units located there were commanded by an air commodore. A group captain was Commanding Officer of the Air Warfare College and all courses at Manby were run by that unit. It was an arrangement I considered top-heavy.

The course itself was interesting but required more out-of-hours research than other courses at that level. It really looked at warfare from the strategic level. At that point in my career, and it has not changed entirely, I was pro-British. That is not to say that I was in any way anti-American. There were two reasons for my attitude. Firstly, I joined an air force in 1943 that was based on RAF practices and operational doctrine. My generation of RAAF airmen had developed a great admiration and respect for the quality and courage that members of the RAF had displayed during the long years of World War II. Secondly, I had strong reservations as to whether America's dominant wealth and military strength was good for the Western alliance that had been created since the end of World War II.

At the time I felt that there should be a second, complementary, powerful force. This could be a United Kingdom/European alliance or, preferably, a British Commonwealth arrangement. In line with this thinking, the solutions to two of the exercises I submitted were weighted in this direction. On a global, strategic setting, I proposed that nuclear-armed, intercontinental ballistic missiles be located in the Australian desert, Canadian mountains, in India and the United Kingdom. This would provide a widely spread deterrent, one that presented considerable difficulty in neutralising by a pre-emptive attack. I was complimented by my supervisors on my

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'Commonwealth arrangement' and then told how politically inept it would be to even contemplate such a strategy. The staff pointed out that, Commonwealth or not, they were all sovereign nations and would insist on making decisions in their national interests. Further, their combined wealth and industrial capacity was a fraction of what the United States could contribute to the Western alliance. In retrospect, their criticism was valid. I should have realised the facts of life and it was a salutary lesson that put my thinking on a more credible path.

I was advised towards the end of my course that, on my return to Australia, I would be posted into the bomber operational requirements section in the Air Staff Division. I was well aware of the need to replace the Canberra and that the British TSR2 bomber, then under development, was a strong contender. When our course visited Weybridge, where the TSR2 was being developed/built, I was keen to gather all the information I could. At the end of the course the Air Adviser offered me an attachment to his headquarters for a week to further evaluate the TSR2. However, I was anxious to get home and declined. The information I would need would arrive in due course. That is why we have air advisers and attachés, and staff officers in these countries.

The course ended in December and I was to start my new job in Canberra in late January 1963.

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## THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Arriving back in Australia in December 1962, I had the joy of being home in Sydney—even though it was a very temporary home. We would move to Canberra and hopefully be allocated a married quarter.

I learned on arrival home that Gail had not been well for some time. She suffered gall bladder problems with bouts of acute pain and treatment was compromised by the impending move to Canberra. In spite of Gail's medical issues we went ahead with the move. We were allocated a house in the northern suburb of Watson, now almost an inner suburb, but at the time referred to as 'South Yass.' In those days landscaping of married quarters was entirely a matter for the tenant. The fact that this was a new house with a large backyard full of thistles, about 70 centimetres high, was of concern only to me. There was no garage or carport. However, we did consider ourselves very lucky to be allocated a married quarter. Fortunately, we chose a good surgeon for Gail and an operation proved very successful. She had very patiently and bravely put up with that condition for several months

As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a need to replace the Canberra with a new bomber. Amongst my other responsibilities I saw this project as a priority task. It suited me well as I had been dedicated to the bomber role from the time of my graduation in 1944. In 1963 the bomber project had not advanced beyond the stage that a replacement for the Canberra was necessary—but that was about all. The search for a new bomber was based on the long-held assertion that effective offensive air

operations were an essential capability required by the RAAF. Throughout the 1950s the rapid advance in the performance of fighter aircraft, their weapons and radar together with ever-improving surface-to-air weapons, signified, in no uncertain terms, the vulnerability and limited operational capability of the Canberra. The major problem was simply that a suitable replacement had not emerged. The V-bombers of the RAF and the B-47s of the USAF were almost as obsolete as the Canberras.

During the same period much thought was given to the efficacy—perhaps the wisdom—of Australia acquiring a nuclear capability. There was some enthusiasm within the Air Force, particularly during Air Marshal Scherger's time as Chief of the Air Staff. Athol Townley, when he was Minister for Defence, pursued the idea. In the end it was not really an option that was available. In discussion with the British Prime Minister, Sir Harold Macmillan, Menzies was told, courteously, that 'the time was not right'. A similar lack of support was evident in the American response to our overtures. However, there was no apparent objection to a selected bomber being configured to carry a nuclear weapon if circumstances should change.

I was aware of the parameters for a bomber set out in Air Staff Requirement (ASR) Air/36 drafted in 1954. It was endorsed by the Air Board in May 1954 and set 1959 as the in-service target date. Initially, the Air Staff Requirement called for a radius of action of 2000 nautical miles (3700 kilometres), although it did not specify a weapon load. Nine years later a study of available aircraft revealed a dearth of aircraft offering that radius of action. Furthermore, there had been significant advances in avionics, navigation systems and, importantly, accuracy in weapon delivery—particularly by smart bombs and missiles. Clearly, a 1963 Air Staff Requirement would need to address extant and emerging technology. Performance characteristics should represent the best available from advances in aerodynamics and engines.

Australia being an island nation, the RAAF would certainly need an effective anti-shipping capability. We would also need the capacity to attack enemy bases within our area of interest. In this regard, I aligned our operational stance and tempo to be similar to that of Israel—to be proactive rather than reacting to a myriad of hostile probes by forces superior in number. Whilst I did not believe an Australian Government would authorise pre-emptive strikes, I held the hope that our response to hostile action against us would be swift and unexpectedly aggressive. We should be able, and have the will, to escalate the rate and level of combat from the outset. The next step was to define the operational task and then to specify the operational capabilities required for a Canberra replacement.

A study of our geography made it quite obvious that any major attack on the Australian mainland would have to come from the north—through the Indonesian archipelago or Papua New Guinea. Here, it is essential to explain that this conclusion does not, in any way, assume, or suggest that Indonesia is presented as the likely aggressor. Indonesia itself could have been invaded and defeated by a potential enemy. The nation then occupying the archipelago islands could pose a threat. That surely was a logical conclusion given that just two decades before our 1963 considerations, Japan stood threateningly across the Indonesian islands.

At this stage the air staff planning maps came into play showing radius of action distances to possible targets in the Indonesian archipelago and in Papua New Guinea—from several Australian northern air bases. Ideally, we should be seeking a minimum radius of action of 1500 nautical miles (2780 kilometres). This would enable our bombers to reach targets in any part of Java from both Learmonth and Darwin, and from Learmonth covering a good deal of Sumatra. It would also allow some flexibility in the route to be flown and the flight profile. I discussed these factors with my boss, Group Captain Charles Read (later Chief of the Air Staff), and Air Vice-Marshal Hannah, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff. They were

concerned that the 1500 nautical mile radius may not be achievable from aircraft available, or becoming available, in time to meet our target date. It was decided to put 900 nautical miles (1670 kilometres) as the absolute minimum and 1100 nautical miles (2040 kilometres) as desirable. The 900 nautical miles minimum was not really enough to reach several important target areas—Jakarta for instance. However, the Air Staff Requirement also included the facility for in-flight refuelling. Thus we were all fairly confident that we would, with that facility, be able to meet the 1100 nautical miles mark. However, whether there was an aircraft that could make the minimum 900 nautical mile range using the flight profile that required 300 to 350 nautical miles at sea level at 500 knots was questionable.

Aware of the bombing accuracy of the Canberra, my first assessment for weapon load required was 14 000 pounds. My thinking was on the 'dumb bomb' (unguided weapon)—which was all that the RAAF had at the time. But a reassessment stemming from knowledge of missiles and smart guided bombs available at the time when the new bomber came into service indicated that a much smaller weapon load would be effective. Consequently, the amended requirement would call for a weapon load of two air-to-ground missiles or six 1000-pound high explosive bombs. It also included the carriage of 'special stores' (nuclear) if required. Essentially, this load was based on achieving a required accuracy of delivery of 30 feet (9 metres) for air-to-ground missiles (AGMs), 150 feet (45 metres) for high explosive (HE) bombs and 1200 feet (365 metres) for special weapons. The Air Staff Requirement set out reconnaissance capabilities and specified the performance expected from a modern navigation system, together with communications and electronic warfare capabilities. The last sentence, 'the air staff requires this aircraft in service by June 1965', was indeed very optimistic. Nevertheless, it was endorsed by the Air Board in mid-1963.

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With a federal election due at the end of 1963, the Opposition was attacking the Government relentlessly on defence matters and specifically on the obsolescence of much of the RAAF weaponry. The matter of the Canberra replacement was fertile grounds for attacking the Prime Minister. Now, with an agreed and up-to-date requirement, Mr Menzies was able to announce the dispatch of a team to evaluate potentially suitable aircraft. The mission was to be led by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Val Hancock. At the same time as drafting the Air Staff Requirement, I was examining all the aircraft that could possibly meet the specifications. Much of the data available, especially for those aircraft still in development, could only be found in the glossy brochures and so were of dubious value. Nevertheless, it was all I had available at the time. The list of aircraft to be assessed included British V-bombers, TSR2, Buccaneer and the French Mirage IV, although I never considered the Mirage a serious contender. American aircraft considered included the Hustler, Vigilante and the TFX (Tactical Fighter Experimental—later designated the F-111). I also had the opportunity to discuss most of these aircraft with representatives of the manufacturers who came to Australia to promote their product.

When the Prime Minister announced that he was sending a team overseas to seek a Canberra replacement, I foolishly thought I would be included. I certainly knew more about the contenders than anyone else and understood the requirements and the rationale behind all the considerations that led to the specific capabilities set down. I told my boss, Group Captain Read, that I should be included in the team. His answer was that any evaluation team that could not fit into one taxi was too big. The team was slightly larger than those sent on current evaluations but still absurdly small. Clearly, I was not going to be included. There were sound reasons why I was not included. With such large contracts being discussed, the aircraft companies have their top executives out to woo the customer—and mid-level executives to brief on capabilities. It was

important for the RAAF team to be seen as experienced, senior and authoritative. Wing Commanders simply do not fill the role at that level. I mentioned to Group Captain Read that the TFX appeared to be the leading contender. His reply, 'That's only a paper aircraft; it has not yet entered production.' I responded, 'Sir, if it is only one third as capable as claimed in the glossy brochure, it will still meet our requirement.' Odd as it may seem, it turned out to have a performance and capability about a one third of what was set out in that brochure. Before leaving, Read asked me, and others, to write what we thought would emerge as the selected aircraft—or rather the aircraft recommended to Government. I had no doubt that it would be the TFX and wrote that down.

Whilst the evaluation team was away I concentrated on my other responsibilities, to draft an Air Staff Requirement for an advanced training aircraft to replace the Vampire. Firstly, I had to talk to others who had an interest, or a responsibility, in the pilot training role. Personnel Branch, I thought, must have some thoughts on how we should train pilots. But no! I got a blank stare from the staff officer who I thought should have an interest in the subject. As far as he was concerned this was a matter for the Air Staff. Personnel Branch were interested in the numbers to be recruited and trained, the course duration and locations, but not how they should be trained. Support Command simply wanted a replacement for the Vampire. They thought what was required was a continuation of the current system. It was meeting our RAAF requirements and at reasonable cost, why change it?

Without any encouragement to take a wider appreciation of the training scheme, I set out to look at possible aircraft—just to replace the Vampire. This was the classic replacement syndrome—the Vampire was older and suffered many engine limitations, plus inadequate avionics and navigation systems. I looked to 'Vampire-like' solutions. I was slightly mollified by the fact that the three aircraft presently in production for this role, the British Jet Provost,

the Canadair CL-41, and the Macchi 326 were virtually up-to-date Vampires. They gave a slightly better performance with a more reliable engine, a modern cockpit and instrumentation. I did wander from this conservative and not very innovative track to look at a Japanese aircraft—the designation of which I do not recall. It had a much higher performance than any of the contenders set out above—a landing speed of about 120 knots. In all, a performance much closer to the F-86 (Sabre) than the Vampire. I was inclined to take it to the evaluation stage but was discouraged from doing so after discussing it with colleagues. The general consensus was that the performance was too high for a training aircraft—even advanced training. It was 1965 before a team was sent overseas to evaluate the three aircraft noted in my desktop examination. By that time I was in Washington filling the post of Assistant Air Attaché.

Before departing the Operational Requirements (Bomber) job I had some flying clothing tasks to undertake. The first of these came to notice when a new flying boot was proposed. I had noted that several changes in flying boots had taken place over the past five or six years. These recommended changes came from the Ground Defence organisation that was responsible for, amongst other things, escape and evasion training for aircrew. Their major concern was to use a boot suitable for walking out after an ejection or forced landing, possibly in enemy territory, in environments ranging from desert to jungle terrain. My reaction was that the USAF had used a single design of flying boot for many years. The only modification I was aware of was to introduce a zipper on the side to ease fitting. As the USAF operated in all parts of the globe and found that single style adequate, why should we be continually changing? I set about introducing that American boot to the RAAF. The process for boots required a full-blown Air Staff Requirement and an evaluation paper. Aircrew members were very happy with the change and I am pleased to say it was still in use when I retired in 1985 and, as far as I know, it is still in service. There were, in 1963, two items of flying

clothing used in the RAF and USAF but not supplied in the RAAF. One was a flight jacket and the other socks—thick warm socks to keep the feet warm and to provide additional comfort if walking any distance. Before they were introduced, the same procedure was required, an Air Staff Requirement, evaluation and a paper setting out how they were to be brought into service.

At the end of 1964 I was posted to Washington to be Assistant Air Attaché. I was to take up my new appointment on 28 January 1965. From a work point of view, I was quite happy to go to another job. I had had quite enough of writing Air Staff Requirements! We were, on balance, also happy to go from the family point of view. The only concern was that our two elder daughters were 14 and 15 years. We were not particularly impressed at the thought of them going to high school in the United States at that time. One read a good deal about drug abuse being rampant in America and, in any case, the social culture in regard to teenagers was quite different to our relatively conservative mores in Australia. However, we determined that we should depart and return to Australia as an Australian family. I threatened that the first one to adopt an American accent would be sent home to boarding school!

We departed on the good ship *Arcadia* just after Christmas and had a pleasant trip, somewhat spoiled by our three-year-old Edwina getting a serious dose of measles.

The Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, travelling with his daughter Heather was on board with the ever-faithful secretary, Hazel Craig, in attendance. Gail and I were invited to his cabin for cocktails and enjoyed a very pleasant hour or so. I recalled the glitches regarding the brand of vermouth and the failure, on one occasion, to carry ice when flying him in Australia. We were able to laugh at the fact that Hazel personally carried ice aboard every flight after that oversight. Unfortunately for the Prime Minister, his holiday was interrupted by the death of Winston Churchill and he had to leave for London the moment the *Arcadia* reached

Vancouver. Our trip was also disrupted by Edwina's measles. We had planned to travel to Washington by train across Canada and then down into the USA. However, medical advice was for her to rest in Vancouver for several days and then to fly to Washington. So much for our well-planned itinerary! We arrived in Washington to find that the officer I was replacing had made all the arrangements in regard to accommodation, several social events to meet Embassy staff and American contacts with whom I would be dealing on routine matters. I had several briefings from him on-the-job and also from the Air Attaché, Group Captain 'Ginty' Lush. Ginty had a rather gruff manner but was an experienced, straightforward boss and we ended up with a good working relationship.

We found a very comfortable house in Arlington, Virginia, owned by a retired naval Captain. Both he and his wife became close friends and indeed we later saw them on a number of trips we made to the States. I called on a good number of people in the Pentagon and learned the trick of starting my search for a particular office on the inner circle—it could be a most confusing journey. Australia was involved in several major projects with the Americans. For the RAAF, there was the F-111C project which had its problems with the wing carry through box. This was to delay delivery to Australia until 1973. In the meantime, Australia had a large workforce at Fort Worth, Texas, assessing spares and developing an F-111C logistics plan. Although this project had its own manager, the Air Attaché had an administrative responsibility in regard to the personnel deployed on that project. I visited from time to time and spoke to the Air Force staff to see if there were any issues where I could assist. The same visit activity applied to all RAAF personnel on exchange duty with the USAF. My visit to our exchange officer at Shaw Air Force Base, flying the F-4 Phantom, turned out to be very traumatic. I was in company with the Staff Officer Navigation, Squadron Leader Couldrey. The exchange officer, Flight Lieutenant

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Lyall Klaffer, arranged for both Couldrey and I to fly a sortie in the Phantom. I flew with Klaffer and Couldrey with an American pilot.

For the first 20 minutes or so I flew the aircraft, forming in number 2 position on the other Phantom. Then Klaffer said, 'We'll take the lead now, go into full AB [afterburner] and climb to 40 000 feet—you'll see how quickly it climbs'. He advised the other pilot of our intention and it was acknowledged. I was still flying the aircraft but naturally closely supervised by the captain. In any case, there was nothing overly difficult in this manoeuvre. I simply went into full afterburner, raised the nose and climbed very quickly to 40 000 feet. At height we looked for number 2 but no sign. Klaffer called him repeatedly but there was no answer. We were not particularly concerned—possible radio failure, in which case he would return to base. More calls and a visual search, but nothing. We called Shaw Air Force Base and other bases in the area but there was no sighting or radio contact. We returned to base and a search of the area was immediately initiated. Some time later the aircraft was found. It had crashed in the area where we last had contact. Before dark, the pilot's body was found but Couldrey was not located until the next morning. As soon as we landed, I reported to the Air Attaché, Group Captain Bob Thompson. He had the unenviable duty of informing Mrs Couldrey that her husband had been killed. The cause of that tragedy has never been established.

I was also accredited to Canada as Australia had no military staff there. I accompanied the Trainer Evaluation Team when they came over to assess the Canadair CL-41. We were taken to the corporate offices of Canadair in Montréal and given the sales pitch and a detailed brief on the aircraft. The RAAF team was led by Air Commodore Brian Eaton. The Engineer Officer was a senior test pilot, Wing Commander 'Jell' Cuming, a man with a sharp wit and sense of humour. While at the briefings, which went on for three days, we were given an office to ourselves. At the end of the second day, Jell scribbled on a piece of paper words along the line of 'doubt

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that they have ever tested to Mach .8 [around 520 knots] although the glossy brochures say they have'. He crumpled the paper and threw it into the wastepaper basket along with all the scrap paper we had accumulated. We all found it difficult to suppress a knowing smile when, next day, they emphasised the work that had been carried out to Mach .8.

From Montréal we went to the Air Force Base at Moose Jaw, near Regina. It was a bitterly cold, minus 20 degree day. I walked about 300 yards (275 metres) from my room to the Officers Mess and was frozen in spite of the sun shining brightly. It was amusing to hear our hosts' wives say, 'Isn't it wonderful, the Australians have brought us an early spring'. The next day we flew the aircraft and I was very much aware of the total coverage of snow below and was more than usually attentive to the engine instruments.

In discussion, we were all of the opinion that the aircraft was something of a 'kiddie car'; not challenging enough for an advanced trainer aircraft. I went back to Washington and the team continued on their evaluation mission to the United Kingdom and Italy. The Italian Macchi 326 was finally selected and served the RAAF well for many years.

One aspect that really should not have come as a surprise was the swift change in our relationship with the Lockheed Company once we had signed a contract for the Hercules C-130E and were then required to deal with the customer support division. Naturally, pre-contract, the relationship was effortless, all queries and requests were responded to with alacrity and courtesy. However, with the aircraft purchased and our acceptance team down at Atlanta, the environment was very different. The RAAF was charged for every possible service. This ranged from the number of telephones provided to the use of tractors to tow our aircraft. Our airmen, showing their natural initiative, would jump on a tractor to do the job only to have the local union rebel—that was their job. Of course we paid. We complained that many of the charging practices were

petty but rarely did we win. All the negotiations were between our team in Atlanta and the Lockheed people there. The Air Attaché and his staff could only express surprise and concern when talking with Lockheed representatives.

Looking back, I recall our bid to get two of the larger jet-engined C-141 aircraft for medical evacuation tasks out of Vietnam. Our use of the C-130 had received some criticism in Australia and the C-141 was the Government's response. Unfortunately, the aircraft were not available at that time. Later, the Air Attaché was informed that the C-130 was nearing the end of its production life and we would need to order extra aircraft within the next 12 months. Whether it was a ploy by the company or not I do not know, but the RAAF did not order further aircraft. Interestingly, we have acquired many Hercules since and the C-130J and other variants are still in production 40 years later.

The pre- and post-contract attitudes of defence companies were not the only surprise I experienced in my post of Assistant Air Attaché. I was taken aback the first time I was denied information—classified information—by the USAF foreign affairs agency in the Pentagon. I was told, 'Sorry, but that information is not available for foreigners.' I indignantly replied, 'Hey! I'm not a foreigner, I'm Australian.' Naive, of course, but we had been involved in wars alongside Americans for nearly 50 years. Surely, as trusted and reliable allies, we were different. The answer, and it still prevails, is that buddies we may be, but we are just as foreign as any other non-US citizen.

Another aspect of American life I noted was the strict, but covert, ranking system. As a wing commander I talked with the USAF lieutenant colonels. I did not get to talk with colonels—my boss spoke to his colonel equivalents but not to generals. Of course, there are always special events when mixed ranks attend and all concerned are relaxed but boundaries remain. Obviously in the military this is normal. But even in civilian life I noted the

unmistakable divisions. They may use first names and converse in a most friendly and congenial manner—but the boundaries are very much in place. After attending many official functions in America, my observant wife says the difference between young Australian officers and young American officers is that, at receptions and such events, Australian officers congregate around the young girls present whereas the young American officers give their attention to generals' wives. It suggests that while we Australians do observe and respect rank and seniority, we do not surrender the general egalitarian character that exists in our country.

While I am on differences I will note another observation we made living in Arlington, Virginia, in a lovely street. The neighbours for the most part were friendly and helpful people that you could meet anywhere on this planet. They knew each other by sight and when passing or seeing each other across the road would bid each other compliments of the day—but they had never been in each other's home or socialised. They all remarked on this when they met at our place for the occasional barbecue or for drinks. I thought that was very strange but, on reflection, I suppose our more gregarious practice came from living on Air Force bases.

The job of Assistant Air Attaché had plenty of interest for military airmen. I was able to visit USAF bases and talk with the operators of the most modern air weapons systems, to visit the major aircraft and other defence companies and be briefed on systems still being developed. Of course to do any of these things I had to apply to the foreign affairs division of the USAF and be given clearance that would set the classification level at which I could be briefed. I got to fly many aircraft including the T-38 twin-engine jet trainer, the forerunner of the F-5 fighter aircraft produced by Northrop. I still regard the T-38 as the most delightful jet aircraft I have flown—not the most capable but aerodynamically superb.

From a family point of view the most productive thing we did during our two and a half years was to produce a son, William David

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Evans, born at the Walter Reid Army Hospital, Washington DC. Medical treatment is provided not only to serving personnel and their families but also to retired Service personnel and to foreign Service personnel on duty in the US. We enjoyed the travel, and we still exchange Christmas cards with friends we made. We enjoyed the experience of a culture that is different enough to be interesting but not so different to cause us any discomfort. We appreciated being able to use the commissary, the post exchange (PX) and the medical services and facilities. The commissary is where we did 90 per cent of our shopping for household groceries and other food. They were about 30 per cent cheaper than supermarkets. The availability of these facilities to retired members is the reason why a very large proportion of United States retired servicemen and their families settled in areas near a military establishment.

On receiving advice from the Director General of Personnel that I would be posted to No 36 Squadron (C-130 aircraft) on return to Australia, I wrote back asking if I could be posted to No 2 Squadron instead. The answer was a disappointing no. However, a second submission was successful and in June 1967 we returned to Australia and moved into a married quarter on RAAF Base Amberley. I commenced a refresher flying course on the Canberra prior to a posting to Phan Rang, Vietnam, taking command of No 2 Squadron.

In summary, a really enjoyable two years for all of us spoiled only by the serious illness of my boss and close friend Group Captain Bob Thompson. About six months into his tour as Air Attaché he was diagnosed with bowel cancer. After an unsuccessful operation, his health deteriorated and he was adamant that this was not to be transmitted to Canberra. Trifling though it may seem, he was determined that he would not go home before he had qualified to take his American car home duty free. The few of us who were aware of this respected his wishes. At times this became rather difficult. The Colonel in the USAF foreign affairs division invited

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the Air Attaché on an attachés tour to Hawaii and other USAF bases including Alaska. He was disappointed when I said that the Air Attaché was unwell and could not accept. He then assumed that I, as Assistant Air Attaché, would be going. When I said I could not accept (I was staying so that the Air Attaché could rest when he needed to or just to be there if required). The US Colonel was clearly angry at this response to what would be a very interesting Air Attachés tour. He said to me that he would contact RAAF Headquarters and seek their intervention. I told him that it would be taken as a serious affront to the Air Attaché if he should try to interfere in the running of his office and the Group Captain would certainly go to his boss, a two-star general, and lodge an official complaint. He withdrew his threat. Even so, I had some difficulty in persuading the Group Captain not to pursue the matter. Sadly, shortly after returning to Australia and taking command of RAAF Base Amberley with the rank of Air Commodore, Bob became ill and was hospitalised. He died shortly afterwards. I had his obituary placed in the *Washington Post* to inform the many American friends he had made during his time in Washington.

In general, we enjoyed our Washington posting. The serious illness of my boss and friend blighted what should have been a totally happy two and half years. All of us, including Bob and Ina Thompson, kept our deep concern within ourselves and life went on with hope being the dominant feature being displayed. It was patently obvious at the high-spirited and fond farewell given to Bob and Ina at the Dulles Airport, Washington.

*Down to Earth*



*Above* Wing Commander Evans at the Washington reception hosted by General John McConnell (at left), the USAF Chief of Staff, in 1966.

*Below* As Commanding Officer of 2 Squadron, Wing Commander Evans briefs Prime Minister John Gorton at Phan Rang in June 1968.





*Above*  
Hosed down on  
completing his final  
Canberra mission in  
Vietnam, 17 November  
1968.



*Left*  
Air Commodore Evans  
celebrating his first flight  
in 1975 as captain in an  
F-111 with his navigator,  
Flight Lieutenant 'Bushy'  
Bushell. (The glasses  
were empty.)



*Above* As commander of RAAF Base Amberley, Air Commodore Evans addresses children at the Amberley Primary School in August 1975.

*Below* Inspecting the Air Training Corps band during launch of the Salvation Army's annual appeal in Brisbane, 1976.





*Above* F-111 crews at Amberley on 4 October 1976, the day that the RAAF put up sixteen of the new aircraft for the first time.

*Below* Visiting the Rotary Wing Aviation Unit serving with the UN Emergency Force in Sinai in November 1978.



## VIETNAM – COMMANDING OFFICER NO 2 SQUADRON

I was pleased to be given a married quarter on the base at Amberley. It meant that Gail and the family would have friends able to help, if required, and be in the company of other wives whose husbands were serving in Vietnam. Ipswich was well served by good schools and there was a primary school adjacent to the front gate of the base.

I was to undergo a refresher course rather than a full conversion to a new type. It was not really a challenge, although during my first few sorties I was far from being a sound and experienced Canberra pilot. Four years off flying had taken its toll. Again, radio procedures and air traffic were noticeably deficient. However, at the end of the first month I was back in the groove and anxious to get to the squadron at Phan Rang. Gail was not as anxious of course but accepted, without equivocation, that this kind of call was a part of Air Force life.

It may seem quite odd to many when I say I was anxious to get to the squadron when it meant leaving my wife and family, including a young son, for 12 months. However, I am sure most servicemen in my position would have taken the same view. I had been in the RAAF since 1943—24 years—and had not seen a shot fired in anger. My big disappointment was I did not get to an operational squadron before the Japanese surrendered. In 1952, when a colleague was killed in a flying accident, I was sent, at short notice, on an exchange posting with the Royal New Zealand Air

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Force. At the end of that two-year posting I was to be posted to No 77 Squadron in Korea—but this time it was the Koreans who stopped fighting by negotiating an armistice. Vietnam would be my last chance. Of course I was keen to get there—anxious to find out how I would react to combat.

I left by Qantas for Saigon on 22 November 1967. On arrival I was met at the airfield by the Commander RAAF Vietnam (COMRAAFV), Air Commodore 'Ginty' Lush who, two years ago, had been my boss in Washington. He was aware of my having actively sought the job and briefed me on his views of the squadron's tasks, its performance and morale. After this half-hour discussion I was in the jump seat of a No 2 Squadron Canberra being flown back to Phan Rang. I was met on the tarmac by Rolf Aronsen, the incumbent Commanding Officer, and taken to my temporary room. Then it was off to the Officers Mess for introductions, a drink and dinner, and an opportunity to chat with Aronsen and the Flight Commanders. The senior Flight Commander was Wing Commander Bill Hughes who was on a six-month tour with No 2 Squadron before being posted to Nellis Air Force Base, in Nevada, for an F-111 conversion.

The routine takeover procedure in the RAAF was that the incoming commander spent one week with the incumbent before assuming command. This was in stark contrast to the American system where the incoming and outgoing commanders met, saluted and shook hands, and then the outgoing man left the scene immediately. Frankly, I would prefer the American system. Aronsen introduced me to the USAF's senior officers on the base, escorted me around the various units of the squadron and shared with me his views on how the unit should operate. All very courteous of course but for me, and I suspect most incoming executives, a waste of time. I spent the week being anxious for it to be over so that I could start running the squadron.

## *Vietnam – Commanding Officer No 2 Squadron*

Phan Rang was a large base, home to four tactical fighter squadrons of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, a B-57 squadron and No 2 Squadron RAAF. Situated on the other side of the airfield was a wing of the three squadrons of C-123 aircraft. It was a large and very operationally active base with six full colonels and the Wing Commander of the Tactical Fighter Wing, who had absolute authority. For operational tasking, No 2 Squadron was under command of the Seventh Air Force. I was subordinate to, but not under the direct command, of the Wing Commander 35th Tactical Fighter Wing. I was under the direct command of the Commander RAAF Vietnam in Saigon.

The squadron was housed in accommodation built by the RAAF's No 5 Airfield Construction Squadron. Our whole complex was RAAF built and manned—messes, including our own kitchen, equipment store, hangar and headquarters building. The only downside was that we had to generate our own electrical power—240 V. The upside was that we were the only unit on Phan Rang with flush toilets!

Also important was the fact that Australia paid for all supplies with an administrative cost added. I soon got the impression that everyone on the base assumed that we were living free. At one stage, I noted that all USAF facilities had vinyl tiles provided for messes and other administrative buildings. I took a copy of the financial agreement between the RAAF and the USAF to the Wing Commander. It showed the costing agreement in regard to our presence, which covered both operational and domestic requirements for goods and services to be supplied—and the costing basis agreed. The Wing Commander was astounded when he saw that we were paying for everything; our rations, our fuel, and bombs that we needed to acquire from the USAF. We were much better serviced and appreciated once this was established. However, there is no doubt that the vast majority of people on the base just assumed that we were provided with all these things free of charge.

## *Down to Earth*

When I took over command the squadron was flying six radar-directed bombing attacks and two visual bombing sorties each day. The visual sorties were on trial to assess the suitability of the Canberra for this role. Accuracy of delivery was a critical factor. It was immediately evident that the Canberra achieved at least the same accuracy as the F-100 fighter squadrons. Furthermore, the Canberra could drop six bombs in a straight line with adjustable separation settings. The Canberra had exceptional endurance and could loiter in an active operational area for two hours or more or could be diverted to an urgent task an hour's flying away—a very versatile aircraft for our task in Vietnam. However, these attributes would not have been viable in a more hostile air environment. Very quickly the Seventh Air Force changed the daily schedule to six day visual bombing sorties and two night radar missions.

At 1700 hours each day the Wing Commander held a debriefing session on the day's operations. The squadron commanders and other executive officers lined up against one wall of the briefing room while the Wing Commander and his colonels sat on a raised platform at the end of the room. A seat was allocated to the Commanding Officer of No 2 Squadron on the raised platform and the senior RAAF Flight Commander lined the wall with the other officers. I told the Wing Commander that I would prefer to take my place with the other squadron commanders—I was a squadron commander. His response was, 'You are the senior Australian National Officer here and I want you here with me and my senior officers.' It would have been churlish to argue on this minor matter and I guess it was a courtesy to Australia and the RAAF.

Over the first month I noted the type of targets allocated to our squadron. It was obvious to me that the accuracy we were achieving was not good enough to destroy them or even to cause major damage. As discussed in chapter 8, I had found that the bombing accuracy being achieved by the Canberra squadrons in Malaya (RAAF, RAF and RNZAF) was hopelessly inadequate. The

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number of sorties required to destroy a medium-sized bridge was virtually beyond the capacity of a full squadron. In a hostile air environment the squadron would have been wiped out before the target was rendered ineffective. As a result of tactics developed by No 2 Squadron in Malaysia, the average accuracy was reduced to 50 metres. Vulnerability to ground fire and fighter defence was increased only marginally. Here in South Vietnam there was no enemy aircraft to trouble us, ground fire was largely confined to small arms. There were many .5-inch machine gun positions capable of downing any aircraft, and in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) were strong anti-aircraft and missile defences.

I discussed the accuracy situation with all aircrew and impressed on them that the essential factor in achieving successful operational results was accuracy. We needed to achieve a squadron average of 20 metres. For certain targets, troops in combat and enemy installations, often along the banks of a river, it was essential to minimise errors. In these cases crews should bomb from 1000 feet. Here a sensible judgment must be made in regard to the importance of the target and the ground fire in the area. Troops in contact would always demand top priority. For other targets, and subject to cloud cover, 3000 feet was a suitable bombing height, otherwise we would bomb below cloud as required. This was an important provision as the prime force; the USAF fighters always had to deliver by dive-bombing from height. On several occasions the Canberra with its level bombing was the only aircraft able to prosecute a mission.

Technically, the squadron did everything possible to ensure the accuracy required. Every aircraft had the bombsight string aligned after each sortie. Each day I examined every bomb photograph taken on every sortie. If for any reason the inaccuracy was excessive and no specific cause apparent, the bombsight was given a full overhaul and alignment before the next mission. The bombing leader and I separately viewed the photographs and discussed the day's results.

## *Down to Earth*

I counselled any crew that was not achieving the standard I had set for the squadron. On welcoming new crews arriving, I made clear to them that my welcome was provisional. It was up to them to confirm it by meeting the squadron standards in bombing accuracy and flying discipline. A bit harsh I know, but all of us were proud of what we were achieving. The squadron's performance was noted by the Seventh Air Force and we were assigned to many of the more important targets.

It was also noteworthy that while our squadron flew only 6 per cent of the missions out of Phan Rang, we were credited with 16 per cent of the bomb damage inflicted on the enemy. This included the number of enemy soldiers killed by air (KBA). Perhaps not a thing to boast about 40 years later but I felt very strongly at the time that successful missions by our squadron contributed directly to saving the lives of the allied soldiers fighting in a far more threatening environment than us.

On the odd occasion, when the bombsight was found to be unserviceable at the target, the standard operating procedure, subject to cloud base and terrain, was to dive-bomb. My emphasis on bombing accuracy put a particular strain on my own performance—or rather myself and my navigator. It was the navigator who aimed the bomb. To carry this out he had to vacate his ejection seat and lie in the nose of the aircraft with his head poised over the bombsight and calling directions: 'Left, left, steady, steady, slightly right, steady, steady—bombs gone'. The pilot's job was to fly speed, height and heading very accurately. Whilst I looked at every bomb dropped, I realised that all crews took pains to examine the bombing accuracy of myself and my navigator. Like everyone else we had good days and bad days. The most embarrassing, and one that brings the Australian sense of humour to the fore, was when we were diverted from the briefed mission to a new forward air controller (FAC) who pointed out a village which he said had been evacuated and was now the base of an enemy

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force of company size or more. It was a perfect day, no cloud and unlimited visibility. The village on the side of a river looked to be deserted, not a thing moving on the ground. This of course was not unusual. If an enemy force were there they would not want to give their position away by firing on a single aircraft as it could bring on a far greater retribution. The FAC then advised that permission had been granted to attack the target. We lined up for a run parallel to the river with the first line of buildings some 30 or 40 yards from the river's edge. We elected to drop six bombs at 20-yard intervals on one run. I heard the familiar, 'Bombs gone', and then the navigator swore—unusual for him. I dropped the port wing and had a look. There, in the middle of the river, six bombs had exploded. I was not pleased—there was little conversation between us on the way home. Immediately on landing I directed that the bombsight be thoroughly examined and the result given to me immediately. Back in the crew room we confessed to all and sundry that we had stuffed up.

Some two months later, one of the officers who had been given the job of designing a squadron Christmas card came to me with a proposal. He handed me a nicely worded and embossed card saying Christmas greetings from No 2 squadron on the front. When you opened it up there was a photo of six bombs exploding in the middle of the river with the target buildings 40 yards out to the right, with the inscription 'Missed you at Christmas'. I admired the sense of humour that delighted the whole squadron—and I was asked if I liked it. I did not select it as the squadron Christmas card!

In early March 1968 the squadron was ordered to carry out a night formation of two aircraft for a radar-directed attack on a target in 'I Corps', up near the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ). We were told it was the Vietnamese battalion headquarters. The problem was that No 2 squadron did not fly night formation.

The RAAF bomber force tactic was for a bomber stream—aircraft at three-minute intervals, at the same height and heading.

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However, I was aware that the USAF fighter squadrons at Phan Rang carried out formation missions every night and I was reluctant to say to Seventh Air Force that our squadron did not fly in formation at night. I therefore selected one of the senior crews and we sat down and worked out how we would go about this task.

We devised a technique whereby the senior crew would lead and I would formate in the number two position. The lead aircraft would turn on the adjustable light in the nose of the Canberra and swivel it to shine out to the right side at the four o'clock position. I would then line that light with my starboard wing and fly that position. Later we heard, unofficially, that the mission had been successful and that some 40 of the enemy had been killed or wounded in that attack. I sent the squadron intelligence officer up to 'I Corps' to confirm the results but he could get no information.

The odd sequel to that mission was a signal to me from Air Force Headquarters in Canberra warning of the danger of carrying out formation flying at night, particularly in tropical areas. My blunt reply was modified by my boss, the Commander RAAF Vietnam, in Saigon, but it carried the message.

The role of a Commanding Officer entails much more than flying operations. This applies particularly to an operational squadron deployed to an overseas location as an independent lodger unit on an allied air base. Our squadron at Phan Rang was self-contained domestically except that we drew food rations, fuel, bombs and items of a domestic nature from the USAF. As stated earlier, our living and operational areas had been built by No 5 Airfield Construction Squadron. All these facilities were of a high standard for an operational unit and fitted in aesthetically with the USAF buildings. No attempt had been made to landscape buildings. Set on clay, stony ground the living area for the base was bare and unattractive. The only exception was the chapel which had minimal landscaping. The squadron had been in situ for seven months when I arrived and paths had been established by foot traffic tramping

between the various elements. Thus it was clear where proper paths should be established. In conversation with the Commanding Officer of the US Red Horse Squadron (heavy operational repair squadron), Colonel Meredith (he was made an honorary member of the Officers Mess), I had mentioned that we would like concrete to put down proper paths. He said that Red Horse often had a 'pour' available when the intended recipient was running behind time and could not take it. I said we would be pleased to take concrete at any time. About two days later at 6 am a Red Horse concrete truck arrived and asked if we could use it. I and other officers raced through the officers' quarters calling for members to work the available mix. Fortunately, we had laid some form work and had the timber to quickly extend this. All went well and I think that the Colonel was very impressed to see a dozen or so officers responding at 6 am to this unexpected gift. After that incident we became a Red Horse favourite. They saw that we were the only people on the base prepared to do our own thing in improving our living area. Within a month the squadron living area had a full walkway of concrete paths which certainly made life easier after a heavy downpour.

We asked RAAF Butterworth for paint to brighten up our buildings, selecting a lightish blue for the timber shutters that adjoined every window. When painting was completed our buildings took on something of RAAF character.

On an inspection with the Barracks Officer I said that I wanted to see lawn sown and grass on all the bare ground of our area. He was quite horrified at this and pointed to the clay/stony ground and said, 'You can't grow grass on that Sir.' I pointed out that there was good topsoil available from the river area a mile or so away. He remained horrified, but was told to get on with it. At the same time we wrote to the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) in Australia and asked what grass seed we should plant. The response was swift and sacks of grass seed arrived by RAAF C-130. All ranks were involved in the development, with

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varying degrees of enthusiasm. I was quite prepared to accept the resentment, feeling it was better to have them fully occupied and complaining than just sitting around moping in their off-duty hours. As the landscaping progressed, enthusiasm increased immeasurably and all of us became proud of our area. The American senior officers used to bring senior visitors around to our squadron area presenting it as a showpiece. Driving up to the area from the airfield, the first thing that stood out was white rocks on the green grass spelling out 'RAAF'. We were well pleased with ourselves.

The work continued with the addition of tables and umbrellas for the Sergeants and Airmen's Clubs. The sergeants were well behind in planting grass and were shocked when I gave a time limit with a threat to close their bar if it was not planted in time. I was pleased to see that I did not have to take such drastic action. Notwithstanding the minor reluctance exhibited, the work and the vast improvement did have a salutary effect on morale. All of us were proud of the squadron and ourselves for what we had achieved. We built a chapel, having the pews constructed in the local village. After some discussion it was decided to name it St Christopher's. The chaplain at the time was Father Pat McCormick, an immensely popular member of the squadron. He was involved in everything, he knew the first name of every squadron member and any concerns or troubles they may have. Father McCormick's role went beyond spiritual care; he was also responsible to me for administering our civil aid program, working closely with the Province Chief. He was a reasonably important political figure entitled to due deference. On the other hand, Father Pat was a straightforward and straight speaking man. When paying for certain, selected projects to be carried out he had some suspicion that the money was not being used as honestly as it should. He came to see me and, expressing that view, said that he told the Province Chief if a project we were financing was not carried out, 'My Commanding Officer will have

you shot'. I explained to Pat in some detail, 'That is not the way to speak to a Province Chief, Pat, you had better put that right. You can say that you meant that I would have you shot!'

Another job (one to which he appointed himself) was support of a local orphanage run by Catholic nuns. He went into the village of Phan Rang several times a week working to improve the facilities. He had plenty of squadron members ready and willing to help. I went in occasionally to support him and saw how the nuns appreciated what was being done for them and the children. I did notice that our chaplain was really working far too hard, trying to do too many things. He was quite invaluable to me in regard to the morale and wellbeing of squadron personnel. He would come to me and tell me that one of the squadron members had a serious domestic problem back in Australia and there was a sound reason for a week's compassionate leave. He would have carried out the necessary checks with people back in Australia and I had confidence in his advice.

On the other hand, he was quite prepared to come to me and say, 'Sir, so and so is going to apply for compassionate leave on the grounds that —. I have checked with local police and his church and found that it is a shonky; it's all lies'. A Commanding Officer is fortunate to have such a compassionate, but fair-minded chaplain. Finally, I had to tell Father Pat that he was doing too much work with the orphanage. He was going in most days of the week for an hour or two (armed with an automatic weapon because there were Viet Cong in the area) and wearing himself out. I told him that on three days a week he must stay on base. A week later I saw him swinging an axe chopping wood in the heat of the day. 'Whatever are you doing?' I asked. His reply, 'I am chopping firewood for the orphanage as you won't let me go in there.'

I felt during my Vietnam tour how fortunate I was to have people, at every rank level, so dedicated, so loyal, so highly skilled and always displaying outstanding initiative in resolving problems

that inevitably turned up from time to time. Mind you, the praiseworthy initiative of which I speak could at times, fuelled by enthusiasm, get out of hand and one had to exert some control. It was due to these initiatives that we had, at the excellent beach just 8 to 10 kilometres from our base, two boats for waterskiing. Both came from an American source and the first was appropriately renamed ‘Two Dozen’ for obvious reasons—a couple of slabs of Australian beer. On another occasion, I was walking out to my aircraft for a 6 am take-off and I noticed a huge prime mover in our transport yard—emblazoned with a USAF emblem on each side. I said to a sergeant near me, ‘Where did that come from?’ His reply was that some of the blokes got it for four cases of Australian beer. I exploded, ‘Get the bloody thing out of here. It’s to be gone by the time I get back.’ When I got back it was gone and so I did not press the matter. A week later I was wandering around the various sections and Flight Sergeant Gabby Hayes, in charge of the Air Movement Section, said, ‘G’day Sir, care for a cup of coffee?’ I was sipping Gabby’s coffee and noticed how nice and cool it was on this 35° day. Then I saw the two air conditioners that were providing comfort. ‘Where did you get those air conditioners, Gabby?’ I asked. ‘Oh, we got those for the prime mover, Sir’. It seemed that Gabby could get anything that was needed. I sent him a note on his 80th birthday in 2009 and said what I firmly believe, ‘Every squadron needs a Gabby Hayes’.

A big contributor to morale was the excellent standard of our meals. We had our own mobile kitchen located conveniently to service the three dining rooms—officers, sergeants and other ranks. The food was exactly the same for all and we were always offered three choices. These excellent meals were produced from rations drawn from the Americans and supplemented by additional items such as sauces, spreads and the like obtained from RAAF Butterworth. Given that the food supplied to us by the Americans was the same, and on the same scale, as provided to their airmen,

the difference in the standard of food presented by our cooks and messing staff was quite incredible. While the American Officers Club served quite a range of à la carte food, which they paid for at menu prices, the other ranks filed through a line with the dreadful stainless steel tray divided into a number of spaces into which was shovelled the various items, meat, potatoes, beans etc. The point I am making is that our cooks were given virtually the same rations as USAF cooks but they managed to build a reserve of extras so that they could offer several choices—indeed a professional and caring approach to looking after their squadron mates. While I admired greatly what our cooks were able to achieve, I was nevertheless quite meticulous in my inspection of the kitchen, storage and dining areas—which I did every week.

I tended to be critical of the slightest blemish. I adopted the stance for two reasons: firstly, I have always given great weight to the cleanliness of food preparation, cooking and service areas for health reasons; and secondly, because I wanted the catering staff to note my intense interest in their work.

At Phan Rang, included in our squadron was a flight of airfield defence guards (ADGs). Their task was something less than the full role for which the mustering was trained, because defence of the base was the responsibility of the USAF. Essentially, this meant that the ADGs were responsible for our flight line and domestic areas. However, they played a far more significant role and formed part of the base security force. The officer in charge of the flight, Flight Lieutenant George Foskett, attended the planning committee meetings and, after reading the base security plan, reported to me that it was a recipe for disaster. As he had been a wing commander in the Royal Air Force Regiment, and had served in Aden, I had a good deal of respect for his judgment on such matters. I knew the USAF Wing Commander well enough to put this matter to him, tactfully. He was receptive and suggested that George deal with his people about the existing plan. That was done in a friendly and

cooperative manner and the plan was reviewed and a new version produced. In essence, a Korean battalion was responsible for the defence of the base outside the perimeter. However, the Koreans were something of a law unto themselves—and to the American Army command. There was scant planning and discussion with the air base. The other factor was that the American security forces were the Air Police. They were well trained with light arms but they were not trained, and consequently had no capability, to operate outside the base perimeter. The only personnel so trained were the RAAF ADGs. From time to time Phan Rang was subjected to mortar attacks. The enemy tactic was to have a small force set up a base plate, fire off five or six mortar rounds into the base and quickly withdraw. Clearly, something had to be done to counter that tactic, to deter or limit it, by increasing the risk to the enemy. I accepted the logic in the proposal put to me by Flight Lieutenant Foskett that I should authorise the ADGs to patrol, at night, up to 2000 yards (1800 metres) outside the perimeter. Not only did that provide enhanced security to the whole base but it gave the ADGs a role more suited to their training and capability. We were all quite proud of the fact that our small force played such a crucial part in the base defence.

My ruling on dress in the Officers Mess was not well received. The general feeling was that this was an operational area and standards that were appropriate back in Australia were out of place. However, I insisted that flying suits not be worn in the mess after 6 pm. Officers could then wear civilian shorts and a shirt or, if in uniform, it had to be long trousers and a shirt with sleeves. My reason was that I did not want officers to gather in the mess straight from work and not leave until closing time at 11 pm. The rules set out required them going to their rooms to change by 6 pm. As was customary in Australia, long socks were to be worn with shorts. This latter item caused some initial unintended results as Americans, when in shorts, wore ankle-length short socks. When

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they were invited to our mess, their host would lend them a pair of long socks for the occasion. Later we purchased long socks in Penang and were able to offer them to our regular guests. One of my friends from a 1962 exercise in Okinawa, a member of the 13th Bomb Squadron (B-57s), could not come to the mess because the only clothes he had for his entire tour in Vietnam were flying suits!

Another decision causing surprise was placing a local ‘village’ out of bounds. It was known as ‘the Strip’ and consisted of a row of brothels and bars. I checked with our medical officer and American doctors and noted the high level of sexually transmitted diseases emanating from the ‘village’. Our involvement was not alarming by any means but the chance of infection for those who did make use of the place was high. I did not want young fellows getting burnt and then suffering remorse and depression. At the 4 pm talk I had with the assembled squadron personnel every Friday I told them then that ‘the Strip’ was out of bounds. I explained that it was not my job to control their morals—that was a personal responsibility and for them to make their own decisions. However, I viewed it as a health matter and that was my concern. There was a good deal of discussion which I did not limit. The main thrust was that, ‘We don’t want to go there for sex, but it is somewhere to go for a drink’. My response was that I was quite sure that was the intention of most of the squadron—a situation I fully understood. But I also knew that the best of intentions were thrown to the wind after a few beers. I did add that, if they particularly wanted to go, I would arrange for Father McCormick to take a party in for a drink. Father Pat liked a beer or two. That got a laugh. On the other hand, the USAF commander did not place it out of bounds but he would not allow any transport to the ‘village’.

Being away from home, located at a base that was closed at 6 pm each evening and well away from a large town, personnel were confined and restricted from the normal social environment. The security situation was that all Vietnamese employees had to be off

the base by 6 pm and our own people, unless specially authorised for a specific duty, remained on base. Viet Cong emerged after dark and presented a risk in the local villages, thus the restrictions on movement off base. In the circumstances, morale was largely dependent on the resources available on the Phan Rang Air Base. The Americans had the usual Officers, Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Airmen's Clubs. These were well-managed establishments where we were made most welcome. However, our own messes were equally comfortable and drinks much cheaper. American personnel were welcome, but they had to be invited. Obviously we could not cope with an open slather for 6000 Americans. From time to time there were concert shows by visiting entertainers—Bob Hope, Raquel Welch and people of that ilk—and, for the Americans, some shows hired by the clubs. The latter were of a far lower standard. We had the occasional concert with artists from Australia. I particularly recall the excellent concerts provided by the ABC Band. Our members noted that our concerts had a more natural, genuine presentation than the celebrity-stacked American version, where the stars often read from large cue boards and signs were held up reading 'APPLAUSE'. If the applause was not as loud or as enthusiastic as expected, the audience would be asked to do it again. I was at a Bob Hope concert when the troops turned around and started reading the cue boards out aloud. Mr Hope was very annoyed and this prank was stopped immediately.

In regard to sport, the base had a number of tennis courts available. We constructed a rough but playable cricket pitch, and we had our two ski-boats and half a dozen sailboards on our beach. The main sport though was volleyball, at which we challenged all comers and each other. In all, I would ascribe our high morale to successful operational results, to pride in the superior living environment we enjoyed, to sport, and to being fully and interestingly occupied with our 'day jobs'. Perhaps a bit jingoistic, certainly not modest,

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we thought we were just a little bit better than the other units with which we served at Phan Rang—and we were.

I was perfectly happy with the performance of No 2 Squadron during my tour. However, I was not at all impressed with the progress of the war—the failure of military commanders, and particularly politicians, to recognise, or to admit, that the war was not going at all well. As far as I could see we were making no progress towards bringing an end to this conflict. It was difficult to discern what the Americans had as their strategic aim. As a military person I had always understood that in any operation there had to be a definite aim. That before committing to war a strategic aim had to be selected and maintained throughout the conflict. That is not to say that the aim could not be modified if circumstances were to change. The ‘Aim’ is generally recognised as the cardinal principle of war. I recorded my views on this subject in an earlier book, *War: A Matter of Principles*. The essence of my thinking was put clearly in the following passage taken from that book:

To go to war – a war in which countless lives will be lost and on which may depend the future of the nation, or the freedom and lifestyle of its people – without a clear and attainable objective, would be criminal negligence or sheer folly. In either case it is unforgivable. And yet, the world has witnessed such political ineptitude or irresponsibility on more than one occasion. One might judge the entry of America and its allies into the Vietnam conflict to be such a case ... The fundamental error was the failure of the president, the commander in chief, to articulate a clear, unambiguous and attainable political aim/objective.

However, here I simply want to log the increasing awareness brought about by my presence in Vietnam. Whilst there I was able to weigh, and compare, what was actually happening and adherence of events to the principles of war. In simple terms, ‘What are we

trying to do?' The general impression being put to the media, and thus to the American and the Australian public (and to the world) was that we were winning because we were killing more of the enemy than he was killing of us. We were ahead on the attrition stakes—the futile 'body count' concept of fighting a war.

The crass stupidity of this was brought to the forefront of my thinking after the Tet offensive. On 30 January 1968, America and Australia were basking in the comfortable feeling that the war in Vietnam, although a wretched drain on resources, was progressing satisfactorily. On that night I had gone to Saigon to attend a farewell to Major General Vincent, the Commander Australian Force Vietnam (COMAFV). At about 11 pm, my navigator (Squadron Leader Mark Robin) and I, together with Group Captain John Hubble, returned to the Embassy Hotel. It was so named because it was about 100 metres or so from the site of the American Embassy. The three of us were sharing a large room and when preparing for bed we heard the loud banging of gunfire. John said, 'It's probably kids letting off crackers.' We had been imbibing quite well at the General's farewell and so put the light out and slept fitfully. At about 4.30 am John Hubble woke me and said, 'You had better get dressed and get out of here, the "White Mice" [Vietnamese police] are firing from positions outside the hotel.' Ten minutes later we were in the car that had been sent to pick up the Group Captain who was returning to Vung Tau. As we left we noted that fighting was going on outside, and perhaps within the grounds of, the American Embassy. On the way to the airport we were challenged by various roadblocks but were allowed to continue. When I got to the operations room at Tan Son Nhut I was told that fighting was going on at the end of the strip and I could not take off. I went to the small hut used by our air movements people, but it was locked. We had to get in as our flying gear and pistols were inside.

I telephoned the Australian Headquarters in Saigon and spoke to someone sensible enough to give me the combination to

the padlock. Back in flying clothing and armed, Mark Robin and I joined some USAF members armed with rifles on top of the revetment near our aircraft. We saw the oxygen plant about 100 metres away hit by mortar fire. After half an hour or so I thought we should try to get away to the relative calm of Phan Rang. I contacted operations and said my aircraft was needed urgently at Phan Rang. I was given permission to take off. Fighting was still going on at the end of the strip and so a steep climb out was the order of the day.

It was a day or two later that we learned the scope of the Tet offensive. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces had attacked 36 of the 44 provincial cities and 23 air bases. They had launched their offensive to coincide with the Vietnamese New Year, 29 January to 31 January. The extent of these attacks made it quite clear that the information being put out by the military and government spin doctors of the day was totally misleading. South Vietnam had not been pacified. The enemy we had supposedly been suppressing was indeed alive and fighting fit. North Vietnamese General Giap's offensive was a brilliant strategic operation. Obviously the American people and those observing the Vietnam conflict would be disillusioned. I was genuinely shocked a week or two later when General Vincent came up to Phan Rang to be flown to Singapore in a squadron aircraft. We were discussing the Tet offensive and the General remarked on just how 'bloody stupid' Charlie had been to launch the Tet offensive. 'He lost 90 000 men in those attacks', said the General. Firstly, I doubted the number of 90 000 and, in any case, I felt sure that General Giap and the North Vietnamese Government would have considered the attacks were overwhelmingly successful, whatever the cost! My shock was that an Australian general did not recognise that. I hoped that he was pushing a line of propaganda to keep up the pretence.

During the same period (the first quarter of 1968) a Marine outpost at Khe Sanh came under attack. The US commander, General Westmoreland, had set up a Marine garrison of 5000 in

that isolated American base near the North Vietnamese border. His plan was to lure the North Vietnamese Army into a major battle to face superior American firepower. The base was soon surrounded by a Vietnamese force of between 20 000 and 40 000. In late January the Vietnamese launched rocket attacks that caused serious damage to the Marine base, including destruction of the airfield navigational aids. The rocket attacks continued for 76 days. American transport aircraft and RAAF Caribous delivered supplies in increasingly hazardous operations. It seemed that the Americans would suffer a defeat similar to the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. That defeat brought about the withdrawal of the French from their Indochinese colonies. In a desperate situation, where it seemed an American force would be trapped and overcome, massive air strikes were launched against the North Vietnamese in the hills surrounding the Khe Sanh base. These attacks, using B-52 bombers from Guam, with their massive bombloads, plus all the tactical assets the Americans could muster, including our Canberras, forced the North Vietnamese Army to evacuate the area. The garrison was saved but it had achieved nothing.

Given the earlier Dien Bien Phu disaster, one must wonder why the American commander would set up a very similar situation—an isolated base, surrounded by high ground, dependent on air supply and a relatively small force.

I noted when the American officer commanding in Khe Sanh was asked by a journalist if he had studied the Dien Bien Phu battle the reply was along the lines, 'No I have not read up on that.' I wondered at the time if General Westmoreland was equally ignorant of the French experience. These depressing events got me thinking of that cardinal principle of war—the 'Aim.' Just what was the aim in Vietnam? In thinking about that I recalled a remark by the American President to the effect that, 'The United States is not trying to win the war, but simply to preserve the independence of South Vietnam.' What joy and comfort that must have brought to

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the enemy. I also recalled the advice of that ancient master of the art of war, Sun Tzu:

In war, then, let your great object be the victory, not lengthy campaigns.

Here it is appropriate to quote General William C. Westmoreland, who very generously wrote an addendum to my chapter ‘Selection and Maintenance of the Aim’ in a previous book, *War: A Matter of Principles*:

Major nations have codified certain principles which some consider immutable in the successful conduct of war. Indeed, such is the case with the British, the Australians and Americans. Such principles are guidelines for the military and are not always accepted by political leaders. Indeed it is doubtful that politicians, excepting a few, are even aware of such codification of battlefield principles.

And later:

The war in Vietnam was yet another confused story from the beginning when we took over from the French the support of South Vietnam following the 1954 Geneva Accords.

America’s policy – the US political objective – was not to unify North and South Vietnam but to police the Geneva Accords of 1954 and be a party to securing South Vietnam as a free, non-communist independent state. Hence, the US military were required by orders of President Lyndon Johnson, to confine the ground war to the territory of South Vietnam as determined by the Geneva Accords. The objective of the armed forces of America and her allies was to protect the territory of South Vietnam until the South Vietnamese were considered strong enough to protect themselves. President Johnson was adamant in his effort not to risk bringing the Chinese to the battlefield as in Korea and

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hence expand the war geographically on land and to the sea. The strategic objective of the president of the United States was to confine the battlefield – not to expand it. We must leave to history the wisdom of that policy, which is broadly misunderstood.

During the rest of my tour I found myself addressing the principles of war codified by the British and United States Armed Forces, and which Australia had accepted. In the case of Vietnam, the ‘Aim’, if the President’s statement could be given the status of a military aim, left the operational initiative with the enemy. General Vo Nguyen Giap had been quoted as saying that a nation should not engage in war if it does not believe it can win.

He would have been delighted with the President’s statement. Looking at the other principles, I asked myself if they were still valid. I asked myself this because the United States seemed to be paying little attention to them or ignoring them completely. I continued to analyse the principles during the rest of my tour and made a personal undertaking to do an in-depth study of the principles of war when home in Australia and able to look back with the advantage of hindsight. I had begun to look upon the Vietnam War as an immoral war. Not because the reason for engaging in the conflict was not logical, given the ‘domino theory’, but because the aim was unsound. Defeat and heavy casualties were the inevitable results of the strategy declared by the American President.

Naturally enough, I discussed my views with other officers of my level and found them generally thinking along the same lines. If we, at a lower level, could see this, those senior and far more experienced officers—for example the American Joint Chiefs of Staff—most certainly could. They were of course loyal to their Commander in Chief. Where was the loyalty to the men fighting in Vietnam I wondered?

Some years later I did my review of the principles of war and, after a fairly exhaustive study, I concluded that they remain as valid as when first addressed by Sun Tzu in 490 BC and later introduced into British Field Service Regulations in 1920. The operative word is that the principles are a guide. They should be considered before any operation of war. On many occasions there will be conflict between one principle and another to consider. For example, the principle of concentration of force may conflict with economy of effort or surprise. The commander's experience, skill and judgment will always be needed to adopt the right course of action.

To my mind, one issue is sacrosanct. One should expect a government to give absolute priority to minimising casualties to its own people, both civilian and military. What could one expect to be the attitude of the civil community, in a democratic society, towards a government that so limited the options available to its own military that it significantly advantaged the enemy—to the extent that its own forces suffered unnecessary casualties? Surely, if such truths were known, there would be anger and outrage. But these issues are never quite clear to the public. Black and white is presented as shades of grey on the grounds of security or political expediency and so, instead of anger, there is just unease. However, if this situation continues, if combat and casualties linger as a running sore, the unease erodes morale. The people become fed up with the government—and with the armed forces that are presumed to share responsibility for the lack of progress, the lack of will.

Vietnam was a classic example of that syndrome—of the government's lack of will, lack of courage, lack of resolve, of fear of escalation and, because of this, tying the combat hands of its own military. A central issue in these situations is the responsibility of a government to its own servicemen and women. Loyalty should be high on the list. Government expects, and has every right to expect, the unqualified loyalty of its military forces. But loyalty should be a two-way affair. When a government pursues a policy that puts

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its servicemen at greater risk than is necessary, then that loyalty is questionable. If the government believes that proper, strategically sound prosecution of the war entails an unacceptable risk then it should withdraw. With the constraints placed on commanders in Vietnam, an ongoing defensive war and ongoing casualties was the only alternative to defeat.

Victory was not an option, nor was it being sought by the American President. As Commander in Chief he owed his servicemen a better deal. I do not know how history will judge Lyndon Johnson. I suspect that historians will be influenced by the cost in lives lost or ruined. And perhaps even by the dollar cost to the American nation—and by the outcome!

Americans killed in Vietnam	58 145
Americans wounded	308 000
Australians killed in Vietnam	521
Australians wounded	3 462
Vietnamese casualties, both North and South, military and civilian	Around 5 million killed or wounded
The dollar cost to America	\$5 billion in 1992 dollars

The outcome for America and its allies was very simply, defeat. The North Vietnamese Government achieved its goals, albeit at high cost. I do not believe historians will accept the belated claim that the ‘domino theory’ was thwarted by the American action in Vietnam or that it saved the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia being taken over by communists. To my mind, that is a futile argument, clutching at straws to vindicate the American stance. I repeat that I had no qualms whatsoever about the Government’s decision to go to war in Vietnam. I saw logic in the ‘domino theory’—I thought Australia’s joining with the Americans was good insurance for the future. I did, however, think it was wrong to conscript young men to fight in Vietnam. As for the

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Australian Defence Force, of course it was our duty to go as directed by the democratically elected Government.

Regardless, I was pleased to have the privilege to command a RAAF squadron in that campaign. Notwithstanding this, I left Vietnam uneasy at the way the war was being conducted—the violation of the principles of war that I had embraced as part of my military training and my reading of *The Art of War*. However, this was not without a measure of self-doubt. Surely I must be missing some vital aspect of this complex issue. Why had American generals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff for instance, not put this to the President and asked for a review of the strategic policy. On the other hand, perhaps they had done so and been rejected. To put it simply, I left Vietnam somewhat perplexed on this larger issue of the strategic aim. I was determined to pursue some way of instigating a review of the principles of war and to establish the extent to which they remained valid.

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## RAAF SABRES TO THE INDONESIANS

On 12 November 1968 my replacement, Wing Commander John Whitehead, arrived at Phan Rang to take command. The next seven days were spent in going through the nugatory procedure of handing over command. This involved introducing him to the commander of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, the commander of the Red Horse Squadron, and a host of other officers with whom he would be dealing. We went through every section of 2 Squadron giving him plenty of opportunity to put any questions that came to mind. He, no doubt, had ideas of his own but suffered the motherhood litany I put to him without complaint.

On 19 November I was off to Saigon. There I had discussions with the Commander RAAF Vietnam, Air Commodore Geoffrey Newstead, and then departed on a Qantas flight for Brisbane. Filled with returning servicemen, the only departure from a routine Qantas flight was that the captain shouted all passengers a beer. Loud applause followed that announcement. When I arrived at the gate of my married quarter at Amberley, Gail and son William, all of 22 months old, were there to greet me. William had obviously been well briefed by his mother, the moment he saw me he put his arms up and ran to me. It was indeed very good to be home.

That was the start of a month's leave, much of it used in preparing for the wedding of 19-year-old daughter Wendy. I doubt that I was much use during that interlude but Gail had it all under control. I guess that was not surprising as she had been managing four children, two of whom were typical temperamental teenagers,

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a three-year-old and toddler William. She had also had the worry of a sick mother who passed away during my absence. After Christmas we went off to Canberra where I was to take up my new job as Director of Air Force Plans. Incidentally, I was promoted to the rank of Group Captain on 1 January 1969. The removal from Amberley and moving into our home after four years brought the usual trauma of damaged furniture and arguments with the damage assessors, which seemed to be part of the process of getting a fair deal. Moving house was always a trying experience.

Starting work on 28 January, I met my new boss, Air Commodore Des Douglas, a decorated pilot who flew Sunderland flying boats with 10 Squadron during World War II. I then went from office to office meeting staff of the directorate and getting briefed on the function and current work of the plans organisation. New to the planning world, I was comforted by the standard and experience of the staff officers I had inherited. I was slightly surprised that the planning role of the directorate did not include operational planning, but I should have known that was a matter for Operational Command (now Air Command).

Among the early tasks then in progress was a review of the RAAF Reserve structure. A basic deficiency, applicable to all elements of the Reserve, was that no Reservist could be called up for service, short of limited war. In cases where additional manpower was required—Korea, Malayan Emergency and Vietnam—none of the Reserve services could be called upon for manpower. The RAAF was forced to recruit and train personnel to meet the new establishment figures required by those warlike operations. In 1969/70 the Reserve consisted of the Citizen Air Force (CAF) of which there were three elements. There were the two active elements—the CAF Auxiliary Squadrons and the University Squadrons. The third CAF element was the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve—the inactive element. The express aim of the Citizen Air Force was to provide a reserve of trained or partly trained

personnel, which, in time of war could be mobilised for productive employment with minimum additional training.

There was also the Air Force Emergency Force (AFEFF). In broad terms the AFEFF's purpose was the same as the Citizen Air Force. However, it was a separate and distinct component of the RAAF with different conditions of service. For example, they had to be qualified and experienced to the extent that they required no further training. But given that towards the end of their AFEFF enlistment—perhaps 10 years—their former skills, sustained by only 14 days training a year, would be of doubtful standard. Considering the strategic circumstances of the time, it was unlikely that they would ever be used. In any case, despite a financial inducement of \$200 per year and \$350 per year for the fourth and subsequent years, the AFEFF had no officers and just 668 airmen against an authorised establishment of 259 officers and 1029 airmen. Clearly, the RAAF was getting little value for the \$151 000 bounty calculated for the year 1969/70. The Operational Command Status Report, and other evidence, indicated that CAF squadrons exhibited a high level of competency and enthusiasm. However, notwithstanding that, they had to be assessed as being of limited use to the Permanent Air Force (PAF) whilst the legislation made it impossible to call them out in situations short of limited war—and the essential declaration of a national emergency by the Governor-General.

Researching the activities of University Squadrons back to the formation of the first squadron in 1950, it was difficult to find evidence of any value to the RAAF. The response by undergraduates had never been encouraging. At no time had the strength exceeded 70 per cent of the authorised establishment and it was then, in 1969, only 50 per cent. The decline indicated a drastic reduction of interest in the University Squadrons Scheme. A further disturbing feature was that the squadrons were serving as a safe haven for undergraduates wishing to avoid National Service. Of the 28 cadets enrolled in 1969, 24 gave avoidance of National Service as

their reason for joining. The unanimous view of the Commanding Officers of the squadrons was that they were of little direct value to the RAAF. They were adamant that cadets with the right motivation were few and far between. It seemed that there would be advantage to the RAAF in expanding the more productive Undergraduate Scheme.

The largest element was the inactive RAAF Reserve with 8500 members. Apart from a number of medical and legal professionals, plus instructors for the Air Training Corps, it included members with qualifications in all trades and categories. There was no time limit that members could serve on the inactive Reserve, other than the PAF retirement age limitations for rank and mustering. As the availability and competency of most members was not known, it represented little more than a list of names.

Taking account of the constraints imposed by legislation, the likelihood of Reservists being called out was minimal. Also to be considered was the level of expansion that would be required, even for limited war. A reasonable assumption was that the RAAF would go to war with the resources it had at the outbreak of hostilities. Therefore, the increase in operational effort available was limited. Going some way to offset the increased need for manpower when operating at maximum effort and extending over a 24-hour period, was the planned wartime rate of effort of 60 productive work hours per week per man against the 30 hours provided in peacetime.

The paper, having set out the inadequacies of the current Reserves schemes at a cost of about \$1 million per year, recommended changes that would reduce the total Reserve force to 3400 personnel. This would comprise a General Reserve of 2600 ex-PAF people who would be required to serve for four years, and Citizen Air Force Auxiliary Squadrons totalling 800 personnel to provide first line operational Reserves to augment PAF forces. The annual cost was calculated at \$625 000 per year.

*RAAF Sabres to the Indonesians*

The Air Force Emergency Force and University Squadrons were to be disbanded. The latter was to be replaced by an extended Undergraduate Scheme. This was my first planning task and although I did not see it as an exciting job there was a degree of satisfaction in proposing, and getting accepted, a more efficient organisation.

The Director General of Plans and Policy, Air Commodore Hurditch, gave me a quotation he suggested might bring the attention of the board members to the limitations of our ability to call out the Reserves. I was pleased to use it as the heading of my paper:

Everyone will now be mobilised, and all boys old enough to carry a spear will be sent to Addis Ababa. Married men will take their wives to carry food and cook. Those without wives will take any women without a husband. Women with small babies need not go. The blind and those who cannot walk, or for any reason cannot carry a spear are exempted. Anyone found at home after receipt of this order will be hanged.

Emperor Haile Selassie, 1935

A plan that did give me considerable satisfaction was the gift of a squadron of F-86 Sabre aircraft to Indonesia. Concomitant to President Nixon's Guam Doctrine announced in 1969, Australia's commitment to provide aid to our allies in the South-East Asian region resulted in Prime Minister John Gorton, announcing in April 1969, that 10 Sabre aircraft would be presented to the Royal Malaysian Air Force. A short time afterwards my Director General asked me to give some thought to what we should do with the remaining Sabres. Maintaining them in reasonable condition was a drain on our resources. Aware of the Malaysian gift, I was also aware that the Russians had given a number of MiG-17, 19 and

21 aircraft to Indonesia some years earlier. It was well known that the Russian's gift had been something of a disaster. While it did provide the Indonesian Air Force entry into the jet fighter world, the operation was short-lived. There was practically no logistics support from the Russians and, as aircraft became unserviceable, they stayed unserviceable because the required spare parts were not available. Furthermore, little or no thought had been given to training Indonesian officers in logistics. To me, the Sabre presented a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to the Indonesians, and others, the advanced technology, operational capability and managerial skills of the Royal Australian Air Force.

I went back to my boss and outlined my proposal and the reasoning behind it. He thought it had merit and said I had better put it to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Charles Read. When I did so his response was, 'David! You expect me to put that to the Air Board?' When I finished my coverage of the good outcome that could accrue to Australia and the RAAF, including our future relationship with the Indonesian Air Force at all levels, his response was along the lines, 'Go ahead, if you can make a convincing case I will put it to the Board.'

Clearly it was not difficult to make a strong and convincing case on this matter. Certainly it would be attractive to the Indonesians and, I believed, just as valuable to the RAAF and Australia. The Air Board did approve the project and no less a person than the Prime Minister of Australia, William McMahon, announced the gift to the Parliament in December 1969. In all, we gave 23 aircraft to the Indonesian Air Force (TNI-AU), commencing in February 1973. A Sabre Advisory Unit was formed and operated in Indonesia for 26 months, ending in 1975. In addition, about 150 Indonesian personnel carried out additional training at our fighter base at Williamtown.

It was a most successful project. Although it imposed a far greater effort on the RAAF than had been anticipated, the

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Australian Sabre project stood out in stark contrast to the dismal performance of the Russians. In particular, we covered much more than teaching Indonesian pilots to fly fast jets operationally. We included in-depth education in engineering and logistics. In return the RAAF learned much about Indonesian culture. Some of this was frustrating to us, particularly in fairness and propriety. For example, anxious to get TNI-AU personnel properly trained, officers of the Sabre Advisory Unit would recommend Indonesian personnel who they judged to be suitable for advanced training in Australia. Their names were submitted to the Indonesian Commanding Officers and, much to the surprise of our people, other officers were selected in place of the ones they had proposed. Usually the changes were based on the status of the selected officer's family or some other form of recognition.

The 1967 announcement by Great Britain that it intended to withdraw all forces east of Suez during the 1970s caused considerable concern in Singapore, Malaysia and indeed in Australia and New Zealand. Singapore and Malaysia were concerned for their own security and that in our region by the strategic vacuum that would be created. This situation was exacerbated when Britain later announced the intention to withdraw 26 000 personnel from Malaysia and Singapore by the end of 1971.

The seriousness of the pending withdrawal expressed by Malaysia and Singapore and supported by Australia and New Zealand led to the formation of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) in 1971. The basis of this organisation, comprising Australia, Britain, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, was an agreement to consult in the event of a threat, externally based, to the security of Malaysia or Singapore. The five powers agreed to consult and to consider response options. At the time, the FPDA was thought to be a short-term device to hold the fort while Malaysia and Singapore developed their own military capabilities. Contrary to that expectation, the FPDA has now been

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in place for 40 years. For the RAAF, the critical point was that two Mirage squadrons and a small transport flight were to remain at Butterworth. In essence, our planning was concerned with the sharing and responsibility for the vacating British operational and infrastructure facilities. The first operational matter to be resolved was a system for the air defence of the Malaysia/Singapore area. This was complicated by a significant degree of animosity brought about by Singapore's withdrawal from the Malaysian Federation in 1965. It was a matter that was diplomatically and politically sensitive. In setting out the command arrangements, it was decided that the organisation would be titled the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS). It was agreed that the Commander would be a RAAF officer and this is still the case today. The IADS staff would be fully integrated with representatives of the five participating nations.

While much of the ongoing arrangement was negotiated in Malaysia and Singapore, the overall planning in regard to the RAAF was allocated to the Directorate of Air Force Plans. Among the arrangements agreed with the other members of the FPDA was that the RAAF took over control of the Song Song weapons range in 1969. The control tower, all telephone facilities and navigational aids at Butterworth, except the instrument landing system (ILS), were transferred to the RAAF. Although the telephone exchange was owned by the RAAF, the British Army would continue to service it technically and administratively. The armaments section, gas production, battery charging facilities, hospital and nursing services were transferred to the RAAF. The planning went on for some time, and indeed was still being worked on in 1973 when I returned from my next posting in England.

There were many other matters to be addressed within the Directorate. Plans were developed regarding the deployment of Caribou and helicopter units to Townsville to support the Army brigade. The efficacy of retaining Glenbrook as the

Command Headquarters was reviewed. In the process, Amberley, Brookvale and Bankstown were considered but, on the grounds of convenience and costs, the decision was to stay at Glenbrook. I can claim that I had not had a boring moment in my three years in the job. A two-week break doing the South East-Asia Treaty Organisation orientation course was welcomed as a change and was quite informative.

Late in 1971 I was notified that I would be going to London to undertake the 12-month course at the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS). I was able to take Gail and the two younger children. Daughter Darilyn was at university in Canberra but able to join us towards the end of the year. January weather in London was not the best environment in which to go house hunting. To make matters worse I suffered a bout of encephalitis and spent two weeks in hospital. Gail was left to make arrangements, enrolling Edwina and William in a grammar school, buying uniforms and generally running matters from the apartment we were temporarily occupying.

I felt privileged to be a student at RCDS, the highest level course undertaken by members of the Australian Defence Force. The rank level was generally one-star for military people and equivalent status for civilians. Students were from all parts of the Western world, Europe, the Middle and Far East, the United States and, of course, the Commonwealth. In 1972 Australia was allocated six places—one civilian, an Army brigadier, two naval captains and two airmen. As I had expected, the course was excellent. We had first-class guest lecturers from all parts of the world. On overseas trips, we were in teams of about 12 including a senior and a junior member of the Directing Staff. We met with people of the highest level in the countries we visited. I well remember having an hour and a half with the Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir. She chatted with us as if she had all the time in the world and I do not think she wasted a single word. In Cyprus we had beneficial sessions with

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both Greek and Turkish leaders. As well as Israel and Cyprus, the tour covered Jordan, Turkey, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

On a later trip, flying into Berlin to visit a British tank regiment, I was sitting next to a British general. As we looked down on the city he said to me, 'I don't suppose you have been to Berlin before Aussie'. My answer surprised him, 'Yes Sir, 255 times to be exact'. I then told him of my 12 months on the Berlin Airlift operation.

During general discussion and syndicate work I chided the Brits for not having supported our stand on the Vietnam issue. I reminded them of our loyal response to every call made on us by Great Britain—World War I, World War II, the Malayan Emergency and the Berlin Airlift. We were part of the British Commonwealth Force in Korea and, indeed, at Britain's request, we deployed a fighter wing to Malta in 1952. The Vietnam conflict raged when the 'domino theory' was accepted by the Western alliance. The strategy was to contain communism. The response I was given by the Brits was that Vietnam had been a disaster and that they were quite right in not getting involved. Privately I agreed with them but was not willing to cede that point; I added that many Australians thought we deserved their support. I asked what the response would have been if East Germany had invaded West Germany. Notwithstanding the criticism, these discussions were conducted in a civilised manner.

A feature of the course was the reasonably relaxed pace set by the Directing Staff. It was one of those rare periods where there is time to think—a luxury that few at executive level get to enjoy. The syndicate work was an interesting and informative exchange of views. Given the diversity of the student body, some quite unique solutions were proffered on every problem discussed. We were required to produce one major paper at the end of the course.

My paper was on the validity of the policy of 'Flexible Response' initiated by Robert McNamara when he became American Secretary of Defense. A British Army officer, Brigadier Richard Ohlenschlager, said he was also interested in the subject I had

proposed and suggested that we produce a combined paper. The Directing Staff agreed to the proposal. The essence of the flexible response strategy was a logical and timely review of the strategy that had been the basis of NATO defence policy from 1945 to 1961. During that period the superiority of the Warsaw Pact countries to NATO was overwhelming. Taking just the Central Front, covered by the NATO Northern Command as an example, NATO had 580 000 in manpower to the Warsaw Pact's 960 000, 5500 tanks to 16 000 and 2000 tactical aircraft to 4100. NATO defence throughout that period relied entirely on the deterrent capability of American nuclear superiority which for several years was absolute. Regrettably, under the shelter of that superiority, NATO nations had allowed their conventional forces to degenerate to a dangerously low level. Everything was geared to a policy of massive retaliation by American nuclear forces.

However, by the time McNamara initiated his review, the nuclear capacity of the Soviet Union was capable of inflicting massive damage and casualties on the American homeland. Clearly, neither side would want to seek a Pyrrhic victory. When in 1962 McNamara indicated that US strategy might concentrate, in the first place, on military targets and avoiding cities, while retaining force to pose a threat to cities should the first exchange not bring the Soviet Union to the conference table, the impression given was that the scale of contact would be an American initiative. That US stance was quickly invalidated when the Soviets declared that any nuclear exchange would be an all-out exchange involving cities as well as military targets.

While a policy of flexible response drifted to ill-defined palliatives, it did remain the stated policy of the United States and NATO. However, at the time our RCDS paper was being developed, NATO countries did not have the conventional military strength to provide the range of options that the policy required. The obvious question was, would a nuclear power risk certain retaliation on its

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homeland for the sake of a small piece of territory on the European mainland? Our conclusion was that the only way to make a policy of flexible response viable would be to have the conventional strength to oppose and defeat an attack by the Warsaw Pact. Even then, a nuclear capability would be necessary to deter the opponent's use of such weapons.

This was a pretty challenging piece of analysis and before leaving RCDS I was asked for permission to publish the paper should the College wish to do so, and to obtain for them the approval of the Department of Defence. I have, however, no knowledge of it ever being published.

Packing up was the usual bind with an inventory to be made up and all the paperwork submitted to RAAF Overseas Headquarters. However, we did have a pleasant week in a Mayfair apartment before departing for home. Fortunately, our house was in good order after being rented out for the year. The one unfortunate matter was that the American tenant, obviously very intent on pruning, had treated our weeping cherry tree to drastic cutting back.

On 2 January 1973 I reported for work. As I had not received a posting, I went to the Personnel Branch and was then informed that I was the Director General of Plans and Policy (DGPP)—with an apology for this late notice. I then reported to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and after a chat on the general state of play I went to my new office—there was much to be done. My promotion to Air Commodore came through a week or so later. Among the many issues, always in the planning agenda, were two matters of major concern. First, to respond to a direction from Lance Barnard, Minister for Defence, in regard to reductions in Defence manpower. Air Force was to reduce manpower by 1200. The second matter, of even greater significance, was the review of the Defence group of departments by Sir Arthur Tange, Secretary of the Department of Defence, as directed by the Minister.

The manpower issue required an immediate response. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Charles Read, told me to produce a plan for his consideration and discussion with the Air Board. It was an unenviable task. No matter where manpower was cut back it would reduce the output of that unit or organisation, or put extra strain on those serving in the depleted areas. This latter consideration was becoming acute. Over recent years, tasks were increasing without corresponding increases in manpower. It is an ingrained feature of military lore that commanders at every level are reluctant to say that a task, ordered by higher authority, cannot be met. They do so knowing the *can-do attitude* of those under their command will see the job done. Whilst this attitude is to be applauded, the reality is that those doing the work are being exploited. Regrettably, governments do not recognise this and perhaps it should be put to them more forcibly. Commanders are also well aware of the situation but at the same time recognise that, in war, they and the force they command may well be called upon to perform a seemingly impossible task and they must at least try to achieve the impossible.

In addressing this particular task of reducing Air Force by 1200 people, the first aim was to do so with the least possible effect on the operational capability of the Service. Naturally, I had to engage every division and directorate of the Service in these considerations. A planning fact that immediately surfaced was that No 5 Airfield Construction Squadron was about to complete its work at Learmonth. Indeed, there was already the problem of what to do with the squadron until approval and allocation of funds was available for the planned future development of an airfield at Derby on the north-west coast. In the past it had been feasible to support a less than fully employed airfield construction squadron for a limited period on strategic grounds. It had been the only civil engineering organisation available in the more isolated regions of northern Australia. However by 1973 that situation had changed. There

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were construction companies operating with mining ventures and seeking other work, with the expertise and equipment to construct airfields and roads that may be required by Defence in the future. Clearly this unit that had contributed such sterling service over many years, in many locations, would have to go.

Looking further for units that could be disbanded without detracting from operational capability, an Air Force band became a candidate. At that time the RAAF had two bands, the Central Band located in Melbourne and the Operational Command Band at Richmond. After a proper assessment, it was decided to disband the Richmond Band. This was not an easy decision. Bands do play an important role; they raise morale and engender a sense of pride in the Service. Their appearances at ceremonies and other engagements outside the Service play a part in recruiting and present the RAAF as a Service of which the nation can be proud. However, the Richmond Band was included as a unit to be disbanded. The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) was popping into my office at regular intervals, asking how I was going. The telephone was ringing constantly and others were dropping in to ensure their part of the Service was not being stripped. I was pleased to be finished and to have the Chief's acceptance of my final list. The mandatory figure of 1200 was achieved. There is always an atmosphere of gloom when this type of situation is running and this was no exception. How would Air Force's proposed reductions be received in Defence? That of course was for CAS to carry in consultation with the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the other Chiefs, and the Secretary of Defence and his staff. Actually, I felt reasonably confident of the outcome.

I was therefore shocked when a crestfallen Chief came back and briefed both myself and the Deputy Chief. With an air of exasperation he said, 'I have lost a fighter squadron!' Quite startled, I replied that the loss of a squadron was not one of the proposals. He continued, saying that he outlined to Tange and the committee

that if he was required to reduce the Air Force by 1200 he would have no option but to disband a fighter squadron. The response was, 'Very well CAS we accept that, what else was included in the 1200?' He then included the Band and the Airfield Construction Squadron. I could see how devastated the Chief was. Charlie Read commanded a Beaufighter wing in World War II and was well aware of the significant loss in operational capability that this unsuccessful ploy had brought about.

The Air Force manpower cuts, together with those of the Navy and Army, were widely publicised and commented upon. The thrust of this comment astounded me, and indeed I still find it quite extraordinary. The protest at the disbandment of the Operational Command Band was massive—letters to the editors of major newspapers, letters to politicians, including the Minister for Defence. In the face of this criticism, Minister Barnard directed that the Band not be disbanded. It seemed not a soul was concerned at the loss of a fighter squadron or the Airfield Construction Squadron. Well may Nino Culotta have titled the book on his Australian experience, *They're a Weird Mob*. However, the loss of 25 per cent of our fighter strength came from the CAS 'shooting from the hip', thinking such a drastic cut would never be accepted. Looking back some 36 years, I still wonder at the short-sightedness, the lack of concern that motivated those in attendance at Tange's meeting. It seems that their sole aim was to comply with the Minister's direction, giving little thought to the consequences. As for the Minister, I can only conclude that he was more wedded to martial music than martial arts more relevant to the defence of Australia. That decision was a real blow to the RAAF and its ability to defend Australia. My feeling at the time was that Sir Arthur Tange and his 'bean counters' would have been more interested in the dollar saving—that came as a bonus. Flying hours to keep 12 to 16 fighter pilots current is a substantial expense.

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Nevertheless the deed was done and, like good soldiers, we had to put it behind us and get on with the job. In company with Air Commodore Fred Barnes, the Director General of Personnel, I had the dismal task of going to Learmonth and explaining the decision to the Airfield Construction Squadron (ACS). They were naturally very dejected at the prospect and I really felt for them. I was well aware of the ethos and spirit of these skilled, hard-working men of the ACS. They were typical Australian 'rough diamonds'. Not without blemish on parade, but a more loyal and dedicated unit did not exist. The official disbandment date was deferred to December 1974. It would have been ideal to have had the resources to assign the ACS to construct the next planned operational airfield at Derby but that did not come about for several years.

Another major event taking place during my time as DGPP was the reconstruction of the Defence organisation. The Whitlam Government that came to power in 1972 immediately called for a rationalisation of the existing departmental structure of five departments—Defence, Navy, Army, Air and Supply. The Secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Arthur Tange, was directed to develop and carry out a plan for this rationalisation.

It is difficult to convey to a reader in the 21st century the intense anxiety this caused within the armed services—certainly at the more senior levels. The military accepted the wisdom of consolidating this vast array of people and departments into a more centralised organisation. In the first place, five Ministers of the Crown to preside over one function—the defence of Australia and its interests—was manifestly absurd and cumbersome. However, it was the direction Tange was taking in regard to the internal organisation that was a matter of deep concern to the military. Tange was seen as the consummate old-style public service 'mandarin'. The impression, uppermost in the minds of the senior military officers involved in the review, was that Tange was shaping a Defence organisation that would give him virtual control

of Defence policy and force structure—even the appointment of senior officers. One of the Secretary's skills was the subtle ability to divide those opposing him. There was a time during this review when the Chief of Naval Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff would pass each other in corridors without a word. This went on for a week or two during a critical period. Also, the Secretary would have planned, in meticulous detail, the running of the agenda. The Chiefs went in having been briefed only by their own staff. I practically begged the Air Marshal to meet with the other two Chiefs well before the meeting to present a common approach. This he sharply rejected on the grounds that it would be collusion. I then suggested that the Deputy Chiefs do so and got another sharp response.

Notwithstanding how the formidable Sir Arthur was regarded by the military, and also a sizeable portion of the public service, he was a man with immense influence, a reborn Sir Frederick Shedden. John Gorton had brought him back from his appointment as High Commissioner to India to be Secretary of the Department of Defence. My impression was that Defence Ministers themselves accorded Sir Arthur the respect he thought he was entitled to demand. The final outcome—the Tange Report and the Defence organisation he recommended—justified the concerns the military had held during the review process. The various committees recommended in the report were designed to produce decisions on all the major functions of the Defence organisation—budget expenditure, strategic policy and force structure. They were all chaired by civilians. While diagrams of the Defence structure showed the Secretary of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force Staff to be of equal status, it was something of a 'smoke and mirrors' presentation. The very top committee at the time was the Defence Committee. This was chaired by the Secretary of Defence with the Secretaries of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury, Foreign Affairs, and other mandarins, and the Chief of the Defence Force Staff. The Defence Committee met very rarely and only when

called by the Secretary of Defence. It played no part in the day-to-day running of Defence.

The Defence Force Structure Committee considered all bids for equipment submitted by the Services. That committee was chaired by a Deputy Secretary. It consisted of four Service officers (the Chiefs of Operations of each Service and the Chief of Materiel) and from eight to ten public servants. The agenda was prepared by the Force Development and Analysis Division headed by a First Assistant Secretary (FAS). The minutes were produced by the public service and the report on each item discussed was produced by the Chairman of the Force Structure Committee.

The next step in the acquisition process was consideration by the Defence Force Development Committee chaired by the Secretary of Defence. The Chief of the Defence Force Staff and Chiefs of Staff were members, together with an overwhelming number of civilian offices of Deputy Secretary or First Assistant Secretary level. Again, the agenda, minutes and report to the Minister were matters for the civilian side of the organisation.

The appointment of senior public servants within the Defence organisation was, of course, a matter for the Secretary of Defence. He would simply inform the Chief of the Defence Force Staff of this action and his recommendation to the Minister. In regard to military appointments within the Defence organisation, the Secretary—certainly in Tange's time—had a strong influence. This was demonstrated in 1975 when Sir Arthur Tange proposed to the Minister that Air Vice-Marshal James Rowland be appointed Chief of the Air Staff. At that time the regulations required that the Chief of the Air Staff be a pilot and a member of the General Duties Branch. Air Vice-Marshal Rowland had been an operational pilot in World War II. After the war he finished his aeronautical engineering degree and joined the Technical Branch of the RAAF. During his postwar service of 25 years or more, Jim Rowland was concerned with matters of airworthiness and the structure and

*RAAF Sabres to the Indonesians*

management of the Engineering Branch—not with air operations, strategy or tactics. For those reasons the Air Board, of which Rowland was a member, refused to accept the proposal that he be appointed Chief of the Air Staff. I understand that Air Vice-Marshal Rowland absented himself during that discussion. Tange put his case to the Minister, who promptly directed the Air Board to reinstate Air Vice-Marshal Rowland as a member of the General Duties Branch and accept his appointment as Chief of the Air Staff.

That was all part of the Tange era in Defence. I shall have more to say on this later. However, towards the end of 1974 I was delighted to be posted as Officer Commanding RAAF Base Amberley with effect from 10 February 1975. The opportunity to command a base with a number of operational squadrons was the first wish of every officer of the General Duties Branch. Coupled with this was the relief of escaping from the depressing atmosphere and confrontational environment obtained in the Department at that time. Hopefully it would be changed before I returned to Canberra.

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## OFFICER COMMANDING RAAF BASE AMBERLEY

Prior to taking command at Amberley on 10 February 1975, I undertook a 30-hours refresher and renewed my instrument rating at East Sale on the Macchi 326.

The Change of Command Ceremony was reasonably formal and consisted of the outgoing commander addressing the parade, turning to me, saluting, shaking hands and getting into his car and being driven off. I realised the huge responsibility of commanding Amberley and told the assembled personnel how privileged I was to lead men and women with such high levels of skill. I added that I was looking forward to the challenges in maintaining the elite status of the base.

I really was quite thrilled to be back with the real Air Force. There were 3000 men and women at Amberley—it was a well-oiled, efficient team. There was rivalry, which I encouraged, but this was good-natured competition between the various units. A great morale boost to us all was the fact that we had in our stable two F-111 squadrons (Nos 1 and 6), the most operationally effective elements of the Australian Defence Force. All of us, indeed the RAAF as a whole, were aware of the deterrent and strike capability of the F-111s and proud of the state-of-the-art technology in our care.

The Canberra bombers of No 2 Squadron were then engaged in photo reconnaissance and aerial photography in support of the Army's mapping program. Covering the unmapped or inadequately

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mapped areas in Australia and our region was a huge project. Papua New Guinea and, with the support of the Indonesian Government, some areas of Java were included. It was a cooperative effort made easier because of our close relationship with the Indonesian Air Force—a state of affairs that had existed since the Sabre gift.

Amberley was also home to the Iroquois helicopters of 9 Squadron and the heavy lift Chinooks of 12 Squadron. Those squadrons were manned by some very experienced aircrew and maintainers, many of whom had served in Vietnam. Added to the five flying squadrons was a maintenance squadron, part of 82 Wing; No 23 Citizen Air Force Squadron; Base Squadron Amberley which provided domestic facilities, messing, transport, fuel, air traffic control and medical services etc.; No 3 Aircraft Depot; an air defence radar unit, No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit; and, of course, Headquarters RAAF Amberley. In those days, all units at a locality were under the command of a base commander.

It took the first month to visit and get a feel for of all those units. Protocol required me to call on the Mayor of Ipswich, then into Brisbane to meet the Premier, the Lord Mayor and other civic leaders. During that period I had a call from the office of the local federal member saying he would like to meet me. That was Bill Hayden, then Minister for Health. I greeted him in my office still wondering at the purpose of his visit. Before I could ask the question he said it was simply a courtesy call to welcome the new Officer Commanding (OC). I thought that was a courteous gesture and thanked him. It gave me the opportunity to give him a run-down on the base and to highlight my desire that the Ipswich community not only welcomed our presence but recognised it as a valuable asset. Of course, the fortnightly pay envelopes of 3000 Service members were a good start as far as the business community was concerned, but we wanted to be welcomed by the whole Ipswich population. Hayden was a positive force for us in that regard. His wife, Dallas, was a welcome and frequent guest at an organisation Gail had set

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up—wives of mess members (WOMs). They had a monthly lunch in the mess which got the base involved with the community, as well as giving the wives themselves a forum to discuss matters of mutual interest. Later, when Jim Killen became Minister for Defence, his wife Joy also joined that band of Air Force wives in their activities.

In mid-March I commenced flying. Over many years I had built up considerable experience on the Canberra but required a conversion onto the Iroquois helicopter. The helicopters were essentially for Army support and, not infrequently, called out for civil emergency tasks. I was therefore anxious to be familiar with their operational capabilities and limitations. After I had fully consolidated my return to flying on the Iroquois and Canberra, I commenced my conversion to the F-111. In early October I flew my second sortie as captain. On returning to the flight line, the base photographer was there to get a picture of the event—having not been informed of the first sortie. Immediately I opened the canopy he handed me a champagne glass (empty). I held it as if to have a celebratory sip and click went the shutter. Next day the photograph appeared in the *Courier Mail*. Good photo I thought. For the next few days the letters to the editor rebuked me severely—‘Drinking in the cockpit, disgraceful’, ‘Shocking example to set’, and a host of other critical comments. Fair enough, it was quite legitimate criticism. I should have realised that it was not appropriate, particularly for the Officer Commanding, and not a good impression to give to the public. I thought it best to tell the media, even though the glass was empty, that I had made a mistake.

My flying was not an act of self-indulgence. I believe very firmly that officers commanding should fly at least one of the aircraft under their command. Ideally, that should be the most operationally capable. I believe that has become the norm in the RAAF today. In my early years, officers commanding rarely flew as captain but would occasionally fly, supervised by a check captain or flying instructor. However, I did not continue to fly the three types.

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After about 10 months I concentrated on the F-111. The aircraft had several unique design features, including the ability to sweep the wings from 16 to 72.5 degrees depending on speed. It also had terrain following radar and an advanced navigation system, a speed of Mach 2.5 (two and a half times the speed of sound) and an escape system that ejected the whole cockpit module. It was magic to all RAAF pilots who flew it—particularly for me. I had moved from the 1930s Tiger Moth and Avro Anson, the Dakota (DC-3 or C-47) of 1935 vintage to the Beaufort of the late 1930s and finally the 1948 Canberra. I had of course flown other more modern aircraft but more or less on a casual basis, not operationally. I was also particularly satisfied to have flown the F-111 as I had drafted the Air Staff Requirement for the swing-wing bomber which remained a formidable fighting machine right up to its retirement.

Another feature of command, to which I held firmly, was that commanders should be well informed on everything that is going on in their command. That puts an onerous responsibility on the incumbent, but it really is important. Consequently, the Commanding Officers of all units were made well aware of their duty to ensure that I was so informed. I held a meeting of unit Commanding Officers each Friday morning when current matters and coming events were discussed so that we were all well informed. In keeping with that policy was a requirement for me to approve every squadron or unit party to be held on the base—that is, in the base working areas, not married quarters. This was done by providing me with a form naming the unit, location of the party, number attending, amount of alcoholic drinks involved, time of start and finish, and the officer in charge.

Most of the clubs, golf, bowls and tennis for example, were self-regulating but there was an officer appointed in each club to supervise all activities and to keep me informed. Sporting facilities on base included the usual ovals for football and cricket, a swimming pool (built by RAAF personnel), a nine-hole golf

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course and a bowling green. The latter also built entirely by RAAF personnel. I was pleased to open the bowling green and was invited to deliver just one bowl. The theory was I would then be dedicated to the game forever. I did so and was not. However, I did remark that bowls was the only sport where you were never more than 50 yards from a bar. For any organisation composed of mostly young, healthy men and women, sporting facilities were essential. Amberley, like most RAAF bases was well served in this regard.

One of the most frustrating aspects of running a base in those days was that the Department of Works had to carry out practically all works required for base maintenance. That department had a day workforce at Amberley for that purpose which resulted in unnecessary expense. For example, to have a new power point installed would cost about \$120 when I could have called an electrician to come out from Ipswich and do the same job for \$50. I, and I suppose all base executives, complained at this waste—but it was the system at the time.

The operational effectiveness of all units was of paramount importance. And with 10 major units on base this was a challenging task. Many flying exercises were conducted from Amberley and involved overseas air forces and squadrons from other RAAF bases. It was during such exercises that our squadrons gained valuable experience with air-to-air refuelling tankers and airborne early warning and control aircraft—courtesy of the United States Air Force. Both those capabilities were missing from the RAAF order of battle during my tenure at Amberley.

In the late 1980s, four Boeing 707 aircraft were acquired and later modified to provide drogue air-to-air refuelling. It was a limited capability for F/A-18 aircraft only. These refuelling aircraft were phased out in 2008. In May 2010, the first of the long-awaited airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft arrived. With state-of-the-art radar and sensors aboard the well-tried Boeing 737 airframe they will provide a critical enhancement in Australia's air

defence capability. A similar upgrading of the combat capability will be the air refuelling tankers due in service in 2011. I am of course delighted at these essential capabilities becoming available—and at the same time I lament it has taken more than 30 years to achieve!

I was very satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of the five operational flying squadrons but well aware that constant supervision at all levels was essential. The most important personnel in this chain were the Commanding Officers. One of the first aims of an officer commanding is to assess, in his own mind, the professionalism and character of his commanding officers and to establish a level of confidence in them. It was also necessary to ensure that authorised flying hours were productive and used in a responsible manner. The Canberra squadron was engaged in aerial photography and also had a target towing task in support of other squadrons. They were straightforward commitments with set flying hours allocated to each. Here, I should mention, that the durable Canberra was an excellent aircraft for the photo/mapping role. It had sufficient endurance to allow it to go to the first priority task and if cloud cover prevented photography, to go to a second location to carry out a secondary task. It was a wonderfully stable platform at photographic heights and produced the high-quality aerial photography so essential to map making.

The helicopters were mostly employed in support of the Australian Army and thus the allocation of flying hours were set to meet Army requirements. However, they were often called out for emergency operations such as floods, medical evacuations and search operations in support of the civil community. My helicopter flying alerted me to the great responsibility we regularly put on our inexperienced helicopter crews. We often sent one helicopter to do a task, often in appalling weather and challenging terrain, in an aircraft lacking modern navigational aids. It was a situation quite different to the close supervision applied to junior pilots flying fighter aircraft whilst they gained experience.

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The two F-111 squadrons had the roles of the land and anti-shipping strike. No 6 Squadron had the additional role of training—converting pilots and navigators to the swing-wing bomber. Naturally 6 Squadron instructors had to be ‘up to speed’ in all operational roles to ensure students were current. Whilst both roles were very demanding, I personally found that strike flying to a target, through mountains and hills at 500 feet on a black moonless night, was something to keep the adrenalin flowing. To me, a pilot trained in the 1940s, it was a magic aircraft. A few such flights brought confidence in the aircraft systems and one went happily along with what I will call the Howard way, ‘be alert but not alarmed.’ Anti-shipping strike was more relaxed and I suppose more enjoyable. Mind you, that feeling of joy applied only to training and exercises. Being shot at in a real operation against heavily-armed warships would be quite dicey. It was important to ensure that the proper balance was applied to training for each of those roles. On the training routes flown by F-111s, and in areas where we practised low-level helicopter operations, we drew understandable complaints. Our maps in the operations room had a red-top pin to locate each complaint received. It was known as the ‘measles board’ and was a warning to keep noise to a minimum.

One of the tasks of a base commander, and indeed those serving on the base, is to have the support of the local community. At Amberley it was the communities of Ipswich and Brisbane. One method we used was to invite appropriate guests to social activities—air shows, receptions, RAAF birthday celebrations and the summer and winter balls. The list of the VIP guests could be quite extensive and had to be managed appropriately. However, it did not always go smoothly. I recall getting a telegram from a local Member of Parliament, the Aboriginal Senator, Neville Bonner. It was along the lines, ‘I will not be attending the winter ball on the 30th of June as I have not been invited. As a local Member of Parliament I take this as a slight to the Government.’ Neville Bonner

was a decent man and Gail and I enjoyed the company of the gregarious Senator and his wife Heather. I therefore wrote to him explaining that we were limited in the number of guests we could invite to these functions. Apart from the matter of space, the cost of our guests had to be met by the officers. I said I had to consider this and was reluctant to ask my officers to bear an excessive amount being put onto their Mess accounts for this purpose. I sought to limit costs by sharing invitations over the year. I got an immediate response apologising. Neville had been under the impression that the cost of entertainment was met by Government. Such simple things are actually seen to be important to those who do not understand and feel slighted.

I was chuffed when Amberley won the Hawker Siddeley Trophy as the most efficient base in the RAAF in 1976—particularly as I did not know such an award existed and thus did not contrive to *go for it*. I recall the annual inspection by the Air Officer Commanding Operational Command (AOCOC), Air Vice-Marshal Fred Robey, in that same year. At the completion of his inspection he turned to me and said, ‘Well everything seems to be in order, now you can get back to playing golf every day.’ I shot back, ‘Sir, I have been here 18 months and have not had a single game of golf in work hours since I got here. I just haven’t had the time!’ He gave a wry laugh and got onto his aircraft. After he had gone I thought, well the inspection has gone well, why don’t I have a game of golf, just for once! So around 2 pm the following afternoon I organised a social hit with a few staff on the base golf course. Half an hour later my administrative officer drove onto the course in a staff car (no mobile phones then) and said, ‘The AOC would like you to call him Sir.’ I went to the nearest phone and called. His opening words, ‘I knew you spent your time on the golf course—you had better go back and finish your game.’ Well, what do you do in a case like that?

Fortunately, we did not have any aircraft accidents at Amberley during my tour. We had several incidents that could have been

tragic but for the skill of the pilots involved. One involved a Chinook helicopter shedding a turbine blade which cut through the hydraulic lines. With considerable skill, and more than a modicum of good fortune, the pilot was able to put it down in a clearing near Gatton, about 15 kilometres from Amberley. It was later picked up by another Chinook and flown back to Amberley for repair. The Air Staff Officer, Group Captain Billie Collings, declared that the defunct Chinook would fly sideways when it was hung beneath the rescue aircraft—and he was right. The enquiry carried out found that the reasons for the blade shedding occurred in the plant during manufacture. During an industrial dispute and strike, staff members were used on the production line and in this case the blade was not fully tightened.

Another incident applied to an F-111. A fuel pump fractured resulting in fuel being siphoned off at a very high pressure and emptying the tanks. Fortunately, the pilot, Wing Commander Ray Funnell (later Chief of the Air Staff), was able to land at Coolangatta airfield before his fuel was exhausted. It was a close thing and pilots were alerted to the problem. When a third incident occurred, flying was stopped whilst we assessed the problem. All fuel pumps were inspected and the flying hours of the failures noted. One failure occurred at 500 hours while others were well above that figure. I discussed the problem with the Air Staff Officer, the two F-111 squadron commanders and the senior engineers. It was agreed that we would continue to fly those aircraft with less than 300 hours use. Later that day, the two Commanding Officers came to see me and said that they had had a rethink on the morning's decision and now thought it would be better to stop flying altogether. I thought about it for a minute or two and then said I believed our earlier discussion had covered all the factors involved and that the decision to limit flying to fuel pumps with less than 300 hours was sound—we would stay with the original decision. Regrettably, fuel pumps in the majority of our fleet had more hours than the 300 limit. At

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one stage we had only one aircraft on line. That was when I got a call from a journalist from the *Courier Mail*. He said he had heard that all our F-111s were grounded. I told him that it was not so and I would divert an aircraft to fly over Brisbane during the lunch hour. I mentioned that he might care to keep a lookout for it. I did get the aircraft to fly over but whether he bothered to look out for it I do not know. The problem turned out to be a fuel issue. The refinery we had recently changed to (it was in Singapore) did not use the required lubricant additives. Our engineers went worldwide with the problem and it was resolved quickly. Our RAAF engineers did suggest early in our discussions that it could be a lack of lubrication. I remember saying something along the lines, 'Come on fellers, you're clutching at straws.'

It really was wonderful and refreshing to spend two years on a RAAF base—to see the real Air Force at work. Highly skilled, dedicated people, enthusiastic about their work and not a single thought or care about the goings on in Canberra. However, challenging and intensely interesting as it was, it was not all 'froth and bubbles.' The fact was that the Officer Commanding was involved in virtually every aspect of base life from the operational standards of all units to the morale, health and wellbeing of members and their families—the allocation of married quarters, the proper maintenance of married quarters and other facilities, the standard of meals served in the messes, standards of dress in messes, use of mess facilities by families, giving guidance on base charity contributions, approving speed limits on the base and where speed bumps could be placed, even keeping watch on what was being shown at the base cinema. Indeed, I had to intervene quickly and angrily when I found the base cinema showing the occasional R-rated movie. I made it very clear to the officer whose secondary duty was to oversee the management of the cinema that they were not suitable for the young men and women for whom I had a duty of care. Further, it was certainly not appropriate to associate the

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base with such trash. His response was that by taking those films occasionally, the film distributors gave him a good selection of recent releases. I told him to make it crystal clear to the distributors that we would not accept R-rated movies even if I had to close the cinema. I then counselled the officer at some length on his lack of judgement.

I think the armed services are unique in so far that commanders have such a wide range of authority over all aspects of people's lives when they live on a military base. Perhaps in isolated mining towns there is a high level of authoritarianism to set standards, but it is usually exercised by a council. The extent to which this burden falls to the Officer Commanding really depends on the quality of his senior staff. In that regard I was fairly well served but not across the board. I was fortunate that the Air Staff Officer, Group Captain Billie Collings, was quite outstanding professionally and one in whom I had total confidence. Notwithstanding the odd glitch, it was a very pleasant two years. I would have been happy to stay longer, but I must admit promotion to Air Vice-Marshal had a certain appeal. I was posted to be Chief of Air Force Operations (CAFOPS) with effect from April 1977 and so a return to Canberra. Nevertheless, leaving a base with which one is so intimately involved is like leaving the family home. I had enjoyed the company and the loyalty of true-blue, dependable men and women, whose work ethic was a credit to their units and the RAAF. At the handover ceremony I welcomed the opportunity to say that Amberley remained an elite part of an elite Service. I thanked those on parade for their loyalty and support and told them it had been an honour to be their commander.

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*Above* Air Vice-Marshal Evans talks to the RAF Base Commander at Gatow Airfield, Germany, in June 1980, on the delivery of a gift Dakota to commemorate Australia's participation in the Berlin Airlift. At right is Squadron Leader 'Dinny' Ryan, who also flew in the Airlift as a Warrant Officer.

*Below* On arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, in 1982, Air Marshal Evans is greeted by General Charles Gabriel, the USAF Chief of Staff.





*Above* Handover of first RAAF F/A-18 from McDonnell Douglas, at St Louis, Missouri, in October 1984: Air Marshal Evans giving the acceptance address before the Australian Ambassador (Sir Robert Cotton), US Navy officers, the President of McDonnell Douglas and other company executives.

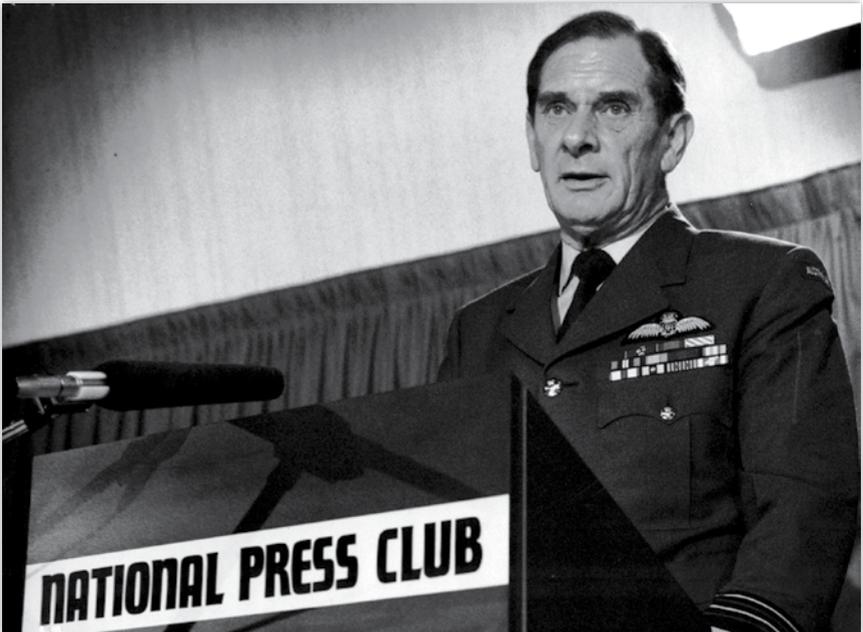
*Below* Sir Robert Law-Smith (left) and Group Captain Trevor Fairbairn (another Berlin Airlift veteran) with Air Marshal Evans, at the farewell dining out night held at HQ Support Command Officers' Mess, 1 May 1985.





*Above* Arrival at Williamtown of the first two F/A-18s direct from the United States in 17 May 1985: the F/A-18s flank the KC-10 tanker, and six Mirages escorted them in.

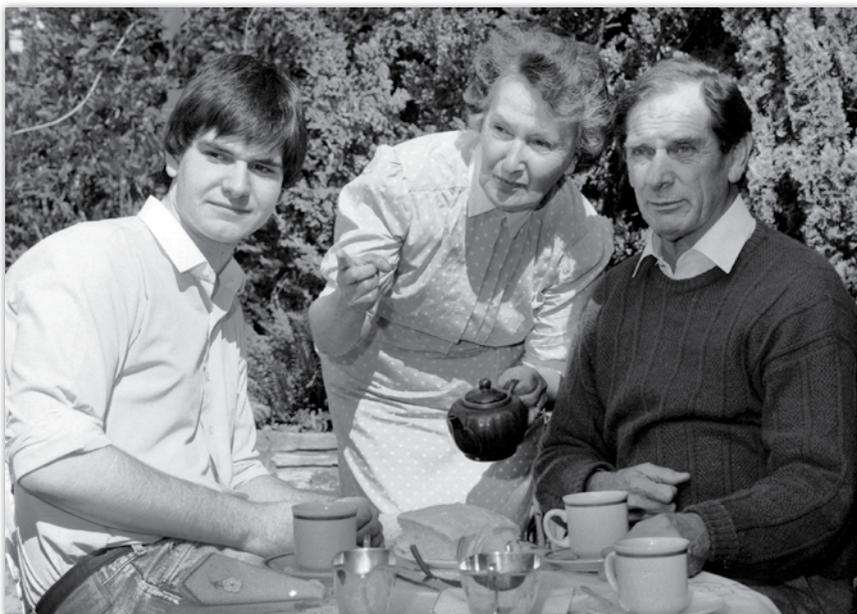
*Below* Addressing the National Press Club in Canberra in May 1985—the first (and only) time a RAAF chief has done so.





*Above* Veterans from seven countries who took part in the Berlin Airlift receiving the Eric M. Warburg Prize from the Atlantic Bridge organisation in Berlin, on 26 June 1998; Air Marshal Evans is third from right.

*Below* At home in Aranda, Canberra, with Gail and son William.



## FIGHTING THE CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACY

**M**y assignment as Chief of Air Force Operations (CAFOPS) was a new appointment and thus I had no history or past criteria to use as a guide. The elements that now came under the control of Air Force Operations were Director General of Plans and Policy, Director General of Operational Requirements, Director of Air Force Intelligence, and Director of Flying Safety. The first two were one-star officers and the latter two group captains. I was well aware of the very wide spread of responsibility carried by this new organisation.

After a briefing by the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal James Rowland, I held a meeting with my executive officers to discuss the way ahead. Particular emphasis was focused on the fact that the CAS now commanded the RAAF. He was not supported by, nor burdened by, an Air Board of members each having access to the Minister. Within the Air Force, his word was final. The Division Heads were his advisers and the field commanders were under his command.

Also, I wanted to be briefed on any administrative and structural changes in the Defence organisation since I left in early 1975. A major change was the creation of a Chief of Materiel for each Service—for the Air Force, Chief of Air Force Materiel (CAFM), established February 1976. The Chiefs of Materiel were tasked with overseeing procedures for the acquisition of capital equipment for their Service and, in turn, working to the Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO). I believe it would be accurate to describe the attitude of the Services to this new procurement

organisation as 'suspicious', even unnecessary. Within the Air Force, project management had been carried out, for the most part, with praiseworthy efficiency. The vision of an emerging new bureaucracy was not appealing. Perhaps that vision was generated by the awareness of many senior Service officers of such a structure in the United Kingdom carrying a less than salutary reputation.

Within the CAFOPS Division there was considerable dissatisfaction at the slow progress in developing a strategy for the defence of Australia, and then addressing the vital task of defining an appropriate force structure to execute that strategy. There was particular resentment that the military had virtually no say in the drafting of the *Australian Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives* (ASADPO). However, a supplement, authorised by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, was prepared and lodged with the Cabinet Secretariat. Its purpose was to illustrate the mix of forces that might be needed in certain hypothetical contingencies. The views expressed were indicative rather than representing actual military planning. The prime consideration was the likelihood of various contingencies ever occurring and the military had no input to those findings.

The consequence was that the military was vainly trying to establish a force structure based on hypothetical situations that ASADPO judged to be improbable. It was on that basis that the Secretary, and his strategic planners, was able to impose the deplorable 'Core Force' policy. Translated into simple language the Core Force policy said, 'As there is no identifiable threat to Australia it is not possible to determine what the nature of such a threat might be. It is therefore impracticable to develop a suitable force structure. In lieu of a force structure designed to accommodate specific operational tasks, the Australian Defence Force should comprise a force of various core elements that will enable it to develop expertise in a number of operational skills. That will enable appropriate elements to be expanded once a particular threat

is identified.' It really was a Clayton's policy. The type of Defence policy you adopt when you do not have a Defence policy.

Being reactive rather than proactive, the Core Force was flawed from the outset. Our military strategy should be based on fighting the type of war that we would choose to fight—symbolically, seizing the high ground and taking the initiative from the outset. However, the very real concern of all the military people I worked with was that we were saddled with Core Force. In highlighting the disquiet that prevailed at that time I am not suggesting that the military, left to itself, could have presented an agreed concept of operations for the defence of Australia.

Army was wedded to the concept of 'boots on the ground' as the only way of winning wars. Whilst that stage is eventually reached, it may well be after the battle was won. The Navy and Air Force saw Australia's weakness as being 'manpower poor' and our strength as being an island nation. An enemy would have to bring large forces across the sea to invade. However, I believed strong leadership by the military, and the cooperative involvement of the Secretary and his staff in analysing the concepts presented, could have achieved a satisfactory outcome. That outcome would be a strategic policy conceived, in the first instance by the military, discussed and analysed in conjunction with the Defence civilians and finally presented to the Minister and Cabinet for endorsement. As it was, following the Tange review, strategic principles were set by the civilian side of the Defence organisation. A hostile adversarial organisation was put in place and continued to be there for the remainder of my life in the RAAF and beyond.

That disquieting state of affairs was brought about by the Tange review, convened by the Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard. The restructured Defence organisation was shrewdly crafted by Sir Arthur to leave the Secretary of Defence with a disproportionate level of executive power and influence. That was not surprising! He had administered and controlled the Department of External Affairs

for 11 years where he did not have a diarchy to share power. Clearly, in Defence, he did subscribe to power sharing, although he did not intend to share any more of executive power than he had to—he would have considered the diarchy merely an ‘informal policy’ with little substance. Indeed, having been denied his former day-to-day exercise of power and influence, whilst sidelined as Australian High Commissioner to India, he saw the new task given him by Government as a vehicle to reassert him nationally. That was the basic determining factor of the new Defence structure whereby the public service chaired, and administered, the three most important committees set out in the new organisation—the Force Structure Committee chaired by a Deputy Secretary, the Defence Force Development Committee and the Defence Committee both chaired by the Secretary of Defence. The agenda for all these committees were drafted by the public service, the minutes were drafted by public servants, and submissions on the outcomes prepared for the Minister were drafted either by the Secretary or his staff. The military was not privy to what advice was given to the Minister. Only occasionally did it filter down to the Chiefs of Staff, even on those submissions that concerned their Service.

Although I enjoyed much satisfaction from progress made during my two years as CAFOPS, I look back on that phase of my career as one of the most frustrating and stressful in the whole of my 42 years service. That stemmed from my membership of the Force Structure Committee. It was extremely rare for a single bid put forward by any of the three Services to be supported by the public service element of that committee. It would be charitable to suggest that the purpose of that opposition was simply to act as a devil’s advocate, to bring out irrefutable argument from the Service advocates. I am not so charitable. A basic factor in all Service bids was the consideration of cost-effectiveness. Given that there is no prize for second place in combat, the military placed effectiveness as the prime consideration, although having due regard for costs.

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The civilians were not prepared to accept the judgement of the military professionals on that point. I recall an incident when I was seeking agreement of the Force Structure Committee to acquire a weapon designed specifically to 'crater' runways. An opposing First Assistant Secretary remarked that only a month or two before I had been seeking cluster weapons for attacking airfields and stand-off weapons. 'Could one suitable weapon not be found for attacking airfields?' he asked. With a raised voice the Chief of Army Operations, Major General Ron Grey, frustrated at the ill-informed and constant opposition, exclaimed, 'Will the operational pilot here stand up and be recognised? I had thought it was Air Vice-Marshal Evans.' Such was the environment in the Force Structure Committee chaired by a Deputy Secretary.

I really was deeply disturbed by the fact that we, in the Australian Defence Force, had no strategic or operational concept for how we should prepare to defend Australia. After all, that was, by government direction, the *raison d'être* for the Australian Defence Force. I knew that it would be fruitless to raise the question in Defence where the Core Force was the concept forced on the whole Defence organisation. I also knew that it would not be possible, certainly at my level, to get unanimous agreement of the three Services on a concept of operations. At that stage I saw the only solution to be for the Air Force to go it alone. Consequently, my immediate aim was to produce a concept of operations for the Royal Australian Air Force. I briefed the staff and tasked the Director of Air Force Plans to produce an outline for consideration.

I was not satisfied with the results—perhaps my briefing had been inadequate. I therefore decided to take what had been done, with other data, on a staff visit to Butterworth travelling on a P-3C Orion. It was here, during the long airborne hours, that I was able to concentrate on the subject and produce a concept of operations. I would send it for consideration to the CAS after my return to Canberra. It was essential to ensure that this paper was consistent

with the strategic, geographical and other factors accepted as germane to Defence policy objectives as endorsed in the 1976 *Australian Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives*.

The crux of the paper was that the defence of continental Australia would involve the offensive use of air and naval power to attack enemy forces at their source, in their home bases or launching locations. We should have the capacity to attack such forces where they were most vulnerable, transiting the air-sea gap to our north. The solution to the meagre manpower available from a population of less than 20 million people was to avoid operations that were manpower intensive. This could be achieved by the use of the high fire power available from modern, high-technology weapons. We needed weapons systems more capable and significantly superior to a potential enemy in our region. The operational concept was designed to deter aggression and, if deterrence failed, to prevent a lodgement on our shores by taking offensive action.

A further consideration was a situation where a hostile nation would seek to take advantage of Australia's relatively small population and massive landmass, including our offshore islands. They might seek to exhaust our limited capacity to respond by feints in the vicinity of Cocos and Christmas Islands or our offshore oil rigs, by flights into our sovereign airspace, by building up their forces in Irian Jaya and even limited, short stay raids into areas of our north-west coast. The appearance of a submarine within our territorial waters would cause a disproportionate response. We had limited capacity to withstand such harassment. The only practical option would be to seize the initiative by offensive action against selected enemy bases, a capacity that should reside in the Australian Defence Force.

The concept of operations agreed, using offensive air power from bases in our north, was approved by the Chief of the Air Staff in July 1979. It was far from new, having been put forward decades earlier by the RAAF's first CAS before World War II, and by Air

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Marshal Sir John McCauley, the CAS in the mid-1950s. Of course, the aircraft available in our early years lacked the power and reach of the F-111C, P-3C and Mirage in RAAF service in 1979.

There are two issues to stress at this point. Firstly, the concept did not in any way suggest that we did not need a modern, mobile, well-equipped Army. The presence and capability of such an Army is essential to commit an enemy to transport a very substantial armed force. At that time, it was estimated that an invading force would require a manpower superiority of about four to one against a competent defending force. The second point was to stress that this concept did not, by its very nature, pose Indonesia as the potential enemy. It did assume, however, that the most likely area from which an attack on Australia could be launched was the Indonesian archipelago. As defence planners we were well aware that in 1942 Indonesia had been overcome and occupied by Japanese forces. We could not assume that a similar situation would not arise in the future.

In January 1978 I was posted to be Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (DCAS). I remained in that position while my predecessor, Air Vice-Marshal Neville McNamara, carried out a review of the RAAF organisational structure. Following the creation of CAFOPS, the Deputy Chief was relieved from duties on several committees and therefore able to apply himself to administering the Air Force. I noted that Sir Neville in his book *The Quiet Man* described the DCAS's function as 'business manager'. I regard that as an apt description. This had become the case following the introduction of the CAFOPS appointment and his responsibility for operational matters. Without it being stated as a function of the Deputy Chief, CAS tended to look upon the position as an unofficial Chief of Staff. One of the situations I noted during my seven months as Deputy Chief, before returning to my post as CAFOPS in August 1978, was the attitude of the Air Officer Commanding Operational Command (AOC OPCOM) and the Air Officer Commanding Support

Command (AOC SUPCOM). While both AOCs recognised their subordination to the Chief, they were well aware that in dealing with the Deputy they were dealing with an air vice-marshal without command authority. In reality, the Deputy Chief was a staff officer talking to executive commanders.

When it was released, the McNamara Report recommended substantial changes to the allocation of authority within the Air Force structure. In essence, sole authority for policy would reside with the Air Staff. The other divisions would execute Air Staff policies. When I first read a copy of the McNamara Report I was highly impressed. It would certainly cut and streamline procedures at all staff levels. I said this to Neville immediately after my reading. However, after I had listened to the views of other staff, particularly those in the technical and logistic divisions, I became concerned that such a radical change would be disruptive. This aspect continued to worry me and when the matter was examined and discussed in the Chief of the Air Staff Advisory Committee I opposed the level of change the report recommended. Rightly or wrongly, I could not support such an extensive change. While I mulled over the issues events overtook my pessimism and in November 1978, at very short notice, I was asked to accompany Rear Admiral Willis on a visit to Iran. It appears Australia had committed to a visit of senior officers following an agreement made with the Shah when he visited Australia in 1974. The Iranians had responded with a visit in 1976 and we had failed to reciprocate.

To take advantage of the Middle East staff trip I decided to pay a visit to the RAAF helicopter contingent deployed to Ismailia. Our contingent was part of a United Nations observer force (United Nations Emergency Force II – UNEF II). The purpose of the force was to supervise peace arrangements between Israel and Egypt after withdrawal of the Israelis from the Sinai. I had been responsible for negotiating Australian participation in this operational project with both American and United Nations representatives. This included

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everything from the flying hours to the provision of quarters and catering services. Naturally, I was concerned to see how the operation was progressing. My colleague, Admiral Willis, would travel direct to Tehran a few days later.

Our people in Ismailia were in good spirits and had earned a most creditable reputation with other nationals taking part and, more importantly, the Israelis and Egyptians. I was also impressed at how well the three Royal New Zealand Air Force crews fitted into our squadron. When I returned to Cairo I was accommodated at the Ambassador's residence where I was advised I might have difficulty getting to Tehran. Apparently riots against the Shah had been going on for some time and were intensifying. Aircraft flights into the capital city were being cut drastically. The Ambassador introduced me to the Cairo manager of American Airlines who advised booking a 6 am flight the next morning for Athens. His reasoning was that Athens was the hub for air travel in the Mediterranean and therefore my best chance of getting to Tehran. I duly arrived at Athens late morning and was surprised that the airline check-in facilities were closed. After sitting and walking around the airport for about eight hours, my best chance appeared to be on an Iberian Airline flight that departed for Tehran at 6 am the following day. It sounded hopeful, but there was nowhere to book a seat and indeed no certainty that the Iberian flight would actually take place. I went into Athens and booked a hotel room and a wake-up call for 1 am.

Through the Embassy, I was able to get a message to our Embassy in Tehran advising my intention and asking to be met at the airport. Fortunately, all went according to plan. I was the only passenger on the aircraft and the male flight steward asked why I was going into Tehran when everyone was leaving. Admiral Willis and a few Iranian officers were at the airport to meet me and briefed me on the local situation. The planned visit schedule was to remain except we would abide by the curfew and be installed in our hotels by 6 pm daily. During the course of the week we

travelled, with adequate security, to several military bases in Iran and spoke to many officers from the three Services. I was surprised at the large number of Iranian Air Force officers who had trained in the United States. The officers and their wives were westernised and exhibited no signs of Islamic culture. Our two escort officers, an Air Force lieutenant colonel and a naval commander, were on opposite ends of the social spectrum. The Air Force officer was a renegade, who boasted of spending more time visiting nightclubs in America, than in class. On the other hand, the naval officer was a very serious young man who told us many anecdotes about the Prophet Mohammed.

With large-scale rioting and demonstrations throughout the country, our hosts were deeply concerned about our security. They were well aware that their positions and standing would be in jeopardy if the Shah was overthrown. None of this showed in their dealings with us nor was it evident when we visited the naval station at Bandar-e 'Abbās on the Strait of Hormuz, when our host was not only the Shah's nephew but also a Navy captain and a Prince. The naval station was generally known as 'shake and bake' because of the extremely hot temperature and the number of the earth tremors it suffered. We stayed in the magnificent VIP quarters reserved for the Shah and very senior officers. When I remarked on the luxurious standards to the Prince, he laughed and said, 'Oh! It's infested with rats.' We were taken on a helicopter reconnaissance trip from the naval base, through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Gulf. The strategic importance of the Strait and indeed the whole area was glaringly obvious. We were well briefed, given an excellent lunch aboard a destroyer and assured that the lobster we were eating had scales! Apparently, Muslims can only eat fish that have scales.

At the end of the week we were back in Tehran. We briefed the Ambassador on our travels and accepted his advice that we should leave at the first opportunity. The situation had deteriorated

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significantly and, with many scheduled flights being cancelled, outgoing seats were difficult to book. The Embassy had managed to get us on an American Airlines flight to Istanbul with an open ticket to Hong Kong. We left that evening. As we were disembarking the aircraft in Istanbul, the chief steward came and told us that we were booked on an aircraft leaving for Hong Kong in 50 minutes. The Embassy had done an outstanding job in making those arrangements at a very difficult time. As a result of my visit, I have maintained a strong interest in Iranian events. Naturally, I am disappointed in the direction it has taken and believe its implacable attitude to Israel and the United States carries a continuing threat of serious confrontation. Looking back I cannot help but regret the failure of the United States to support the Shah. Although he was an autocratic leader, he was endeavouring to bring Iran into the modern world. America had been happy to do business with him, selling modern arms including F-14 fighters. However, when the crunch came, America deserted him. He was forced to flee to the States where he was made to feel most unwelcome and eventually sought shelter elsewhere. I also note with deep regret that the Shah's nephew, the naval captain and Prince who had hosted me in Bandar-e 'Abbās, was murdered in Paris some two years after the Shah's family had left Iran.

On return to Australia, I resumed my job as CAFOPS and was pleased that the RAAF was able to react promptly to a request to evacuate the Embassy staff in Iran. In early January 1979, a C-130 returning from an Ismailian resupply trip was diverted from Bahrain to Tehran. And on 7 February a second C-130 was dispatched from Richmond to complete the evacuation. In spite of my involvement with the Force Structure Committee, and the routine confrontational environment that resided in that forum, I found the appointment as CAFOPS a very satisfying one. In hindsight, and perhaps I have mellowed somewhat in the course of 30 years, I can allow that the public service members may have defined the Core

Force policy differently to the way it was viewed by military officers. We were adamant that the Defence Force should take the initiative and define the type of war that would best suit Australia. This took into account the enduring features of the Australian geography, environment, demography, population size and distribution, and the likely direction of attack. These features, as set out in ASADPO, were the basis of the concept of operations developed and adopted by the RAAF. Not only did it guide development of our force structure, it also confirmed the efficacy of our long-held plans for the development of air bases along our northern coast. Learmonth and Tindal had been constructed and our next bid for a bare base at Derby was announced by the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, just before I vacated the CAFOPS position in April 1980 to be Chief of Joint Operations and Plans (CJOP).

In my new position I was responsible directly to Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS), Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot. I say at this juncture that Tony Synnot was the most competent military officer I encountered in my 42 years of service. He was firm, direct, knowledgeable and totally professional. When I realised that he was not as fierce as he appeared, I wanted to ensure that I served him well. One of my tasks was to oversee the general anti-terrorist arrangement within the Australian Defence Force. In exercises mounted to test our capability, and to increase my knowledge, I would represent CDFS at the Crisis Centre. I would work with a Minister representing the Prime Minister and representatives of other departments and agencies. Only a few months after I became CJOP, Admiral Synnot rang and told me that the Prime Minister had asked that Defence assess the scenario of terrorists taking over an oil rig in Bass Strait. CDFS said, 'I want to know what you are going to do about it—and then I want you to brief the Prime Minister!' Of course I was taken by surprise but it was of no major concern. I would go to the Army give them the situation and, armed with their requirements, I would call Navy and Air Force

to provide whatever support that was needed by Army. I was quite shocked when Army told me that the anti-terrorist element within the Special Air Service, the Tactical Assault Group (TAG), had no expertise in assaulting an enemy on an oil rig. It had never been anticipated. I did not cherish taking this response to the Prime Minister. In some desperation and with faint hope, I asked Navy and Air Force what they might recommend. Navy, without having any idea of what role they might play, said they would immediately dispatch a frigate and a submarine to Bass Strait. Air Force took the prize, saying they would send two Hercules aircrews to bed so that they could be called at any time and be ready for extended duty. I decided that I would not put that response to the Prime Minister.

There was nothing for it but to go to Fraser and tell it as it was. He was not impressed, 'Why had this situation not been addressed and a solution developed?' It was an expected question; all I could say was that we had assumed that the range of skills that the TAG had developed would cover anything that might occur—we were wrong. Of course the situation would be addressed—in fact was already being addressed and Army was giving it high priority. The Prime Minister asked how long it would take to have this capability in place. I replied I had just discussed that issue with Army and was told eight months. The Prime Minister snapped that eight months was far too long, he wanted it done in three months. I pointed out that an assault on an oil rig was a very difficult operation—first there would be an insertion of the TAG by helicopter, therefore surprise would be difficult. It would require several helicopters to insert the TAG in the quickest possible time. These skills would have to be developed and a great deal of training required to successfully assault an oil rig by day or by night. I made the point that nothing could be worse than an anti-terrorist operation that went wrong. However, I assured the Prime Minister that the ADF would do its utmost to obtain the capability as soon as possible. To my surprise

and relief he said, 'I know you will, Defence can do wonders when the pressure is on.'

We had to address getting the TAG onto the oil rig. While several techniques were examined, the helicopter assault was the preferred solution. I had assumed that this would be a job for the Air Force; however, when examined this role was most suited to Navy. This stemmed from the experience gained by Navy pilots of landing in a confined space on ships. It did take about six months to hone the required technique to the high standard required.

Another unexpected task came on a Saturday morning in March 1981. I was umpiring a school cricket match when I got a message to contact the Minister for Defence, Jim Killen. He advised me, because of an airline strike in New Zealand, hundreds of Australians were stranded in Wellington. The Government was considering sending the Air Force to bring them home—what could we do? I told him I would look into the matter and come back to him in an hour or so. I added that the use of the Defence Force in a strikebreaking role was a very serious matter and that I assumed he had given full consideration to that aspect. He replied that nothing had been decided and that he wanted to put all the options to the Prime Minister. He called me later and asked that I be ready to brief a Cabinet meeting at 5 pm that afternoon. At the Cabinet meeting I said that the RAAF could have five Hercules aircraft on the way to Wellington at 5 am next morning. I answered a number of questions about flying times, passenger capacity and the necessity to refuel. Finally, the Prime Minister said, 'Go ahead.' The operation was launched early next morning and to the best of my recall it went on for three days. I was surprised at the political decision and even more surprised to see there was absolutely no criticism. That was probably because it was successful and warmly applauded by the passengers brought home. Notwithstanding that experience, I was even more surprised to see, after I had left the Service, the Hawke Government's readiness to use the Air Force

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to counter a strike by Australian airline pilots. I suppose to some extent they had brought that situation upon themselves when they refused to join an ACTU affiliated union some years before. They could hardly have expected support, or even an impartial reaction, from Bob Hawke's Labor Government.

Towards the end of 1980, CDFS appointed me Exercise Director for the upcoming 1981 *Kangaroo* exercise. An exercise planning group was set up and I was given an experienced and highly regarded Deputy Director, Brigadier Ray Sunderland. In putting my mind to the scenario, my first thought was that there had been a sameness about these *Kangaroo* exercises. The big feature was always the US Marines coming ashore. All the top brass would turn up—the Minister for Defence, CDFS, the Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defence, the media and a host of others—to witness the Marines storming ashore at four knots. It was hardly an exciting spectacle. I told Brigadier Sunderland that we should do something different on this occasion, and suggested a parachute assault as the main 'show'. That was done, and done very well. The setting was that the parachute force dropped a short distance from the airfield to be taken. After the drop, the paratroopers assembled and mounted the attack. In support, fighter aircraft came in on low-level attacks clearing the way for the ground assault. Once the enemy had been pushed back, and the airstrip taken, transport aircraft delivered supplies using the low altitude parachute extraction system (LAPES) at a very low height. It was a very impressive part of the exercise, and I was pleased to offer the visiting brass something a little more stimulating than a beach landing of the Marine Force. Believing that exercises should be used to try out new tactics, or procedures, I questioned the proposal to man both a Task Force Headquarters and a Divisional Headquarters. I made the point to the Brigadier that it seemed rather absurd to have two headquarters for the command and control function of a relatively small force. Why consign so many personnel to sitting in headquarters instead

of adding to the combat strength available? The Brigadier, and his Army colleagues on the Joint Exercise Planning Staff, listened to me and condescendingly explained that there always had to be a Divisional Headquarters. Obviously, as an airman, I could not be expected to comprehend that long-established Army command structure. Well, that was true. However, I did understand that a very large number of personnel tied up in two headquarters to control a smallish task force did not make sense. I insisted that there be one headquarters—the Task Force Headquarters. The exercise went along smoothly enough. Even so, I think the Army looked upon the lack of a Divisional Headquarters as an aberration.

The other command and control procedure that I interfered with was the US Marine Force participating. We were told that the Marines would be under command of the Naval Force Commander until they landed, and would then change command to the Chief of the Defence Force Staff. That to me seemed ridiculous. Surely command should pass to the Land Force Commander—or a Joint Force Commander, if one had been appointed. I insisted that we do it our way. The quick response from the Marines was that they had ‘learned in blood’ the proper command structure for Marines in this type of situation. If we did not follow their procedures, they may withdraw from the exercise. My reply was, ‘So be it.’ However, realising the political repercussions that might flow from my decision, I informed Admiral Synnot. He said I should maintain my position—the Marines duly stormed ashore at four knots and the exercise proceeded. It was, I believe, a very good *Kangaroo* exercise, an outcome realised by the excellence of the Joint Exercise Planning Staff. I am not at all sorry that I changed a few things—exercises provide the opportunity to experiment.

Later that year I went to Washington with the Secretary of Defence to discuss continued American activity in the Indian Ocean. As a cost-cutting exercise, the United States was considering cutting out sending a naval battle group to the Indian Ocean at

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regular intervals. There was pressure for the United States to vacate its bases in the Philippines and deploying a naval force from the US would be a major expense. The discussion ranged rather widely from the frequency and cost of such deployments to the notion of the US setting up a base in Western Australia. The Australian Government was not averse to that consideration, obviously seeing it as a very significant boost to the security of our western flank and our sea lines across the Indian Ocean. On further consideration the idea was dropped. Our mission did not achieve anything more substantial than occasional visits to the Indian Ocean and an assurance of America's continued interest in the area. Personally, I was quite pleased that the idea of an American base did not come to pass. From what I have seen of such arrangements, it entails a breach in sovereignty of the host nation.

Coastal surveillance became an issue in 1981 and I represented the ADF on an interdepartmental committee (IDC) to consider the need and the options. That continued for several months, looking into the cost and effectiveness of the various tasks. These included protection of our fishing areas, surveillance to detect intrusion by drug runners and other smugglers, including illegal immigrants. Essentially, the question was whether these tasks were best and more economically carried out by contracting to civil operators or should they be taken over by the Defence Force. Finally, it was unanimously agreed that it would be done more thoroughly and professionally by the Defence Force. It was also agreed that the standard of surveillance provided by civil operators, at that time, was below an acceptable standard. They were giving their observers only a few weeks training. Added to that, surveillance was only visual with no night coverage. My view was that the ADF would certainly assume the role of reconnaissance and surveillance in time of war, or the imminent threat of war; therefore, it would seem logical to continue that role in peacetime. The IDC clearly would

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prefer Defence to be doing that task and accepted a user-pays provision for departments using the service.

My concept was that the ADF would not use expensive operational elements for this role, but rather smaller aircraft with a much lower capital cost and more economical to operate. They would, however, carry adequate communications and sensors to enable operations to be carried out effectively by day or night. I discussed this with the Chiefs of Staff individually, suggesting that the aircraft could be crewed by a joint contribution of air and ground crews from the three Services. While not enthusiastic, the three Chiefs seemed to accept the commitment as the preferred course of action. The Secretary of Defence called a meeting of the Chiefs—Admiral Synnot was not able to attend. The Secretary put the position that the cost of running a coastal surveillance organisation would come out of the Defence budget. He put it very convincingly that whilst we may be assured that extra provisions would be made for this additional capability, it would eventually eat into the funds available for the primary function of the ADF. The Chiefs accepted the Secretary's view and I reported back to the IDC.

As Chief of Joint Operations and Plans I was Chairman of the Joint Services Committee (JSC) comprised of a one-star officer from each Service. We discussed the 'principles of war' and decided to request the Commandant of the Joint Services Staff College to assist the JSC in reviewing the continuing validity of the principles of war as adopted by the ADF several decades ago. After a very thorough review, the report of the Joint Services Staff College was passed to the JSC for its consideration. After further examination by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the outcome was to accept the continuing relevance of the principles of war as set out in current ADF publications. That process was simply a signing off to an undertaking I had programmed in Vietnam 14 years before.

## *Fighting the Civilian Bureaucracy*

In regard to the operations room available to the Chief of the Defence Force Staff in 1981, it could at best be described as 'rudimentary'. It was one very large room, about 7 metres by 7 metres, used by half a dozen operations officers. It was a mass of box files and clipboards. Most of the desks and paraphernalia had to be moved out every Friday morning and chairs brought in for the CDFS operational briefing. I knew next to nothing about computers but, from my travels to the United States, including the operational complex at Headquarters Commander US Pacific Command, I realised that we were light-years behind in the matter of command infrastructure and communications. I therefore went to the whole staff of Joint Operations and Plans and asked what they needed. What would they want to put onto computers instead of box files and clipboards? The sad result was that no-one knew—or had any idea of what was needed. Eventually I found a public service fellow who knew something of computers and, indeed, worked with them. I asked him to come to the operations room and discuss with my staff just what they did and then advise on how we could get into the computer world. After a number of visits and much discussion, I obtained a computer and a laser printer. Regrettably, the computer, which was about one metre high—the size of a dishwasher, and about as useful—did little for us. However, all involved got much pleasure watching the magic speed of the laser printer. Whilst I achieved nothing in so far as computerising the CDFS's operations room, I had set in train the requirement. Significant progress was made over the next 18 months, but by that time I had moved on to become Chief of the Air Staff.

I mentioned earlier the unsatisfactory relationship between the military and public service elements in Defence. Admiral Synnot was well aware of the position and very concerned that it hampered the administration of the ADF and the whole of the Defence organisation. He prevailed upon the Minister to have the whole Defence organisation reviewed. In 1981 the Prime Minister

announced the setting up of the Utz Committee for that purpose. I was interviewed by the Committee during my posting as CAFOPS. I put my concern about the antagonistic environment in the Defence organisation at that time. I made it quite clear that it was an impediment to the proper functioning of the Australian Defence Force. To emphasise this position I suggested to the Committee that it call for the file on any 50 bids for equipment acquisition submitted by the Services to the Force Structure Committee. They would see the negative attitude almost invariably conveyed by the Force Development and Analysis Division of Defence, and always supported by the Chairman and other civilians on the Force Structure Committee. That opposing view was then apparent in the minutes prepared by the civilian staff for forwarding to the higher Defence Force Development Committee.

I very much doubt that the Utz Committee took the action I proposed. The great pity was that Admiral Synnot did not accept the reappointment offered to him, but chose to retire before Utz submitted his interim report in May 1982. Synnot did so in order to let his replacement engage in any discussions or debate on contentious issues that might emerge from the report. Unfortunately, Air Chief Marshal McNamara, only just in the CDFS's chair, did not have the intimate knowledge of the state of affairs in the Defence central environment. The report itself was disappointing. More disappointing was the Cabinet Submission drafted for the Minister by the Secretary, Bill Pritchett (he took over from Tange in August 1979). He skated over the civil/military problems as though they did not exist. However, as the report and the Secretary's interpretation of it did not go to Cabinet until late in 1982, I will leave my concern at the outcome until I write as Chief of the Air Staff.

Some time before I was designated to be Chief of the Air Staff, Neville McNamara told me that he had recommended me for the job. Closer to the time, Jim Killen asked me to go over to his office

where he told me that Cabinet had agreed to my appointment on 21 April 1982. I will risk the criticism of being overconfident when I say that the call was not unexpected. Simply on experience and age, Fred Barnes and I were the prime contenders. Then, when Fred retired in November 1981, it became a likely event—unless I had an enemy tucked away somewhere in the hierarchy of the Defence Department. Always a possibility as I had been in some very robust discussions during my time as CAFOPS.

Whatever role I should play in the future, the matter of the Mirage replacement had been exercising my mind for several months. There were two aircraft I had assessed as leading candidates, the F-16 and the F/A-18. I had followed their development closely giving particular attention to growth potential, radius of action and a multi-role capability. I saw particular merit in having a twin-engined aircraft for a strike role as many sorties would involve long flights over water. At the back of my mind was the probability that the F/A-18 (Hornet) would grow in capability, hopefully with a specially designed strike version. Therefore, in time, it could become a replacement for the F-111. I remember briefing the Minister on the immense economic value if that should come about. The RAAF might have a fleet of, say, 120 multi-role F/A-18s to carry the full strike and air defence roles. The operational flexibility and the savings in inventory of spares and support equipment would be very significant. Officially, I was quite removed from the evaluation process, although I certainly let my opinions be known. I got much satisfaction some 26 years later when the Government announced that they would be acquiring Super Hornet aircraft (F/A-18E/F) to fill the strike requirement, as an interim measure, following the phasing out of the F-111. Regrettably, neither the Super Hornet nor the F-35 Lightning has the radius of action of the F-111. Tanker support, now being acquired, will be an essential requirement for a credible strike force.

## *Down to Earth*

It worried me that General Dynamics, the maker of the F-16, were very active in the promotion of their aircraft to replace the Mirage. They ran a huge advertising campaign and actively lobbied politicians. Also I was aware that the Secretary of Defence and his Deputy Secretary, were attracted to the export version of the F-16. It was a downgraded version for nations seeking a less expensive product and also those nations not likely to be given the most advanced avionics. It would cost significantly less than the Hornet. Added to these concerns, the leader of the evaluation team, Air Vice-Marshal Bill Hughes had been Air Attaché in Washington a few years before and was very close to a number of senior USAF generals. They extolled the virtues of the F-16 and I felt sure Bill was leaning that way. I also knew how very persuasive he could be when his mind was made up. I therefore took the precautionary step of talking to one of the two test pilots before their departure on the evaluation task. I told him how very important the mission was and said there could be some pressure when views within the team were at odds. I hoped he would remain totally professional and stay with his own findings, regardless of such pressures. He assured me that he would not budge from his factual, professional conclusions.

Selection was not the only aspect that worried me. The number to be acquired was going to be debated and argued over at great length. I knew the other two Services were opposed to the number Air Force had bid for—75 aircraft. Admiral Synnot was at best lukewarm to the 75 and, of course, the Secretary would push for a lower number. The absurdity of that situation lay in the fact that, outside Air Force, none of them had the professional ability to look at predicted serviceability rates, the locations where aircraft would need to be deployed to cover the air defence task and how many two-seat aircraft would be required for conversions and combat training. We also needed to assess how many aircraft would be in the hangar for modifications and what attrition could be expected. The opposition was based solely on the cost and the slice of Defence

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budget it would involve. It was the way the game was played and, to some extent, is still played.

Eventually, the Air Force enjoyed the good fortune provided by serendipity—and the Prime Minister. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians in late 1979 had Malcolm Fraser brandishing his sabre, condemning the Russians and shoring up Australian defences. He accepted the bid for 75 aircraft and the deed was done. The number was never seriously challenged; the would-be opponents were pre-empted by the Australian Prime Minister. With Utz proceeding and Admiral Synnot retiring I was ready to leave Defence Central and naturally looking forward to taking up my appointment as Chief of the Air Staff. I had enjoyed the job and have remarked many times since that CJOP was the best two-star job in Canberra. Today it is a three-star appointment.

*Down to Earth*

## A HOME-BUILT TRAINING AIRCRAFT FOR THE RAAF

It was during my tour as Chief of Air Force Operations that we commenced consideration of the replacement of the CT-4 basic trainer. This came to the fore during an examination of the 'replacement syndrome' that had us constantly assuming that when a particular aircraft had reached the end of its operational life, because of obsolescence, cost of maintenance, or fatigue life, a replacement was automatically required. A good example of this process was the Caribou transport. Did we need a Caribou type to carry out the same role in the future? I suggested to the Director General of Operational Requirements (DGOR) and his staff that perhaps a C-130 could do both jobs. The Hercules could land on unsealed strips and perhaps for the sake of providing an extra 1000 feet of runway, we could dispense with an aircraft type and the expensive inventory required, including ground equipment and training facilities. It would also rid us of the logistical problem of providing octane fuel in remote areas. I asked DGOR to set up a joint committee with Army to examine this matter. The end result was that the committee recommended a continuation of the Caribou type.

There was, of course, no doubt that we should seek a replacement for the CT-4 basic trainer, but it was the opportune time to review our system of pilot training. After much discussion it was agreed that we should seek a turboprop aircraft that would produce students from basic training at a higher level of

competence than available from the CT-4. It might even be used for some weapons training. Generally our expectation was that the higher level of training we were seeking would reduce the time taken in converting to the operational aircraft.

I, like most senior Air Force officers, was conscious of the fact that air power, to be credible, must be supported by a strong technically advanced aircraft industry. While Australia lacked the depth of experience, technical and scientific skills needed, let alone the mammoth financial resources, to develop a state-of-the-art fighter, bomber or other operational aircraft, a modern training aircraft could be feasible. We extended our consideration of the subject, looking to the Engineering Branch for advice and their technical assessment of pursuing this course of action. It is true to say that the more thought that was given to the idea of a home design and production, the more the project was grasped with pleasing enthusiasm.

At the time I was initially involved in this project (1979–80), the concept was that the Australian trainer would replace the CT-4 as the basic trainer. However, the higher performance that would be achieved by the specified turboprop engine, the PT6A, would deliver a higher level of pilot capability at the end of the basic stage. Another defining decision made at that time was that the trainer would be designed to military specifications. This was put to the Air Staff by the Engineering Branch. Their view was that apart from producing a more structurally sound and reliable vehicle it would be the only trainer aircraft in the world built to military standards and thus would attract overseas interest—and sales. It was this latter factor that swayed the decision in favour of the Milspec (military specification) concept. To summarise the Air Staff Requirement, we were seeking a Milspec aircraft to provide 8000 flying hours over a period of 20 years, and a turboprop aircraft that would cruise at 200 knots at sea level.

## *A Home-built Training Aircraft for the RAAF*

Further discussion took place on the cockpit design of this new trainer aircraft, specifically whether the side-by-side or tandem configuration should be specified. I found it rather curious that the views of flying instructors were almost 50 per cent for each—although a fair number took the view that it would make little difference. Once again the overseas sales factor emerged as a consideration. The view presented was that there was indeed a dearth of side-by-side configured training aircraft of the performance we were seeking and thus overseas demand could be significant. Another factor that gave some advantage to the side-by-side configuration was that a third seat could be placed behind the two pilots so that a second student could be carried. That would give him an insight on the lesson and would save changeover time. Again it was doubtful that this would provide, as some claimed, additional didactic efficiency but, on the other hand, it would do no harm. The end result was that our Air Staff Requirement specified side-by-side seating which, considering the requirement was for a basic trainer, seemed a logical choice.

Not surprisingly, the Australian aircraft industry was very keen to embrace the concept of an Australian-designed training aircraft and took a high profile in presenting their views to the Government. The cost advice presented to the Government was that the Australian-designed aircraft would be less costly than two similar turboprop designs produced overseas, the Embraer T-37 and the Beech T-34. The Pilatus PC-9 would be slightly below the cost of the Australian aircraft.

In December 1981 the Australian Government approved the proposal for the design and manufacture of the basic trainer by the Australian Aircraft Consortium (AAC). Six months later the AAC was formally incorporated. The consortium had been formed by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, Hawker de Havilland (Australia) and the Government Aircraft Factory, each with equal shares. The AAC was to be chaired by a prominent Australian

businessman, Mr Jack Davenport, AC, DSO, DFC and Bar, who had been a distinguished officer in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II. He had been appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia for his contribution to Australian business. In 1982 the Minister for Defence Support signed a contract with the AAC for two prototypes to be built, with the first flight scheduled for February 1985. On signing the contract, the AAC began work to produce the Australian trainer aircraft, designated the A-10.

In 1980 I had been moved to Defence to be Chief of Joint Operations and Plans and so my next direct connection with progress of the basic trainer project came about when I was Chief of the Air Staff in 1982. In August 1983, the engineers' mock-up was shown to the media and the following month the AAC announced a competition to submit a name for the aircraft. Jack Davenport and I were the judges asked to select the winning name. We selected Wamira, a derivative of Woomera (throwing stick). This was consistent with the informal custom of assigning trainer aircraft with Aboriginal names commencing with the letter 'W'. First was the Warrigal (untamed), followed by the Wirraway (challenge) and the Winjeel (young eagle). The name Wamira had been submitted by Maurice Ritchie of Brisbane. His prize was a trip to England.

At that stage there was considerable confidence in the Wamira project with the AAC claiming overseas interest by three countries and possible export sales of 200 to 300 aircraft. This was a pleasing estimation, although I was somewhat sceptical.

My concern was raised when Jack Davenport came to see me in mid-1983. He started by questioning the cost-effectiveness of continuing to pursue the provision of crash-proof seats. This was calling for the same type of seat the Navy required for aircraft carrying out deck landings, and involved surviving the descent rate of 13 feet per second. He said the AAC had spent three months and significant expense on this particular item. My reply was that I was not aware of the precise nature of the term 'crash-proof' as applied

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to seats. However, I thought a specification such as he described was absurd for a training aircraft. I told him not to pursue this particular requirement. He then went on to complain that Air Force engineers and air staff were almost constantly looking over their shoulder as they worked. Pilots were frequently asking for changes in the cockpit layout, often showing inconsistency in their demands. In many areas insistence on military specifications was unnecessarily costly and of little practical value.

Although I held Jack Davenport in very high regard, with particular respect for his business acumen, I was also aware that contractors would quite often seek to find a way around adherence to difficult contractual specifications. While I did release him from the crash-proof seat requirement, I said I would discuss his other concerns with the Air Force staff involved. When I had followed up his complaints of over interference in the work of the AAC companies, I found that they did have sufficient substance for me to bring the matter to the attention of our own people. Actually, I believe they saw themselves responsible for the design of the aircraft, rather than the consortium contracted to do so.

It was at this stage that I came to question the practicality of the Milspec requirement we had set. It was certainly not going to be cost-effective in a training aircraft. Furthermore, instead of contributing to the appeal to potential overseas buyers, the additional cost of the finished article could well be a deterrent. However, we were too far down track to withdraw from the Milspec concept entirely. What I did say to the AAC, through its chairman, and which I made clear to the Air Force staff, was that where a specific item or area was proving unnecessarily difficult technically or costly, the requirement should be reviewed by the contractor in discussion with the Air Force.

In pursuance of their overseas sales ambitions, the AAC established that the RAF requirement was for tandem seating. Indeed, it seemed that the side-by-side configuration adopted by the

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RAAF was of limited appeal to overseas air forces. Our assumption in this regard had been incorrect. Nevertheless, not to be outdone, the AAC embarked on designing a version with a tandem cockpit. It would retain the name Wamira and would be designated the A-20. An engineering mock-up was produced in Australia. It was shipped to England and was on public display at the Farnborough Air Show in 1984.

I was not concerned that our assessment of the overseas requirement was wrong. While I had a personal preference for the tandem seating I was well aware that an equal number of experienced instructors favoured side-by-side seating. In any case, if the A-20 was produced for the RAF or any other air force, the RAAF could acquire a mixture of side-by-side or tandem configuration if we wished to do so.

At the request of the AAC, the Minister agreed that I should go to Farnborough and promote the Wamira to the RAF and other visitors to the air show. I was able to have a very full discussion with the RAF Chief of the Air Staff and it was fairly clear to me that he was not enthusiastic about considering an aircraft that was some months from its first flight, scheduled for February 1985. I organised to be at the Wamira mock-up at a time when senior foreign air force officers were due to visit the Westland stand. My presence did not foster an encouraging level of interest.

Although the Wamira A-20 was listed on the short list for the RAF in 1984, it was unsuccessful. The two aircraft to reach the final selection stage were the Brazilian Embraer Tucano and the Swiss Pilatus PC-9. The Tucano was selected.

When I retired in June 1985, I was disappointed to see that design work for the A-10 had not been completed. At that time I was told that the first flight would not be achieved before 1986. Furthermore, the cost had escalated to almost double the original estimate. This came at a time when I was desperately seeking funding for an airborne early warning aircraft for the RAAF, and

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for developing an in-flight refuelling capability on the second-hand Boeing 707 transport aircraft we had acquired. Coincidentally with the lengthy delay in the final development of the A-10 and the excessive escalation of costs, was an extension in the life of type (LOT) of the CT-4. A rig test at the Aeronautical Research Laboratories had shown that the previously estimated life of type could be safely extended from 2500 hours to 5000 and possibly 10 000 hours. A need to have a replacement in service by 1987 was no longer a factor. It was at this time the Government announced that the A-10 would be in competition with the Brazilian Embraer Tucano and the Pilatus PC-9. In December 1985 the Pilatus PC-9 was selected. Funding for the Wamira ceased at that time.

In August of that year, after the merger of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation with Hawker de Havilland and the purchase of the Government Aircraft Factory by the latter, the AAC became a subsidiary of Hawker de Havilland

It did seem a pity that the initiative to bring the Australian aircraft industry into the design and development of a turboprop training aircraft had failed, and that \$70 million expended on the project would be wasted. Hawker de Havilland continued in the hope of procuring overseas sales. It sought commercial rights to the A-10B—the modified version and not to Milspec. Curiously, almost two years later when I was a military adviser to Hawker de Havilland, I was sent to China to offer this virtually completed design to the Chinese aircraft industry. It seemed to be quite a good offer, considering the money that had been spent on the project to that time. Starting with that advantage, the Chinese could have produced the aircraft at a bargain basement price. However, the question frequently asked of me when I presented the de Havilland proposal was, 'But why did your Air Force not select the aircraft?' It was a good question and my only response was that 'as the RAAF would only require 60 or so aircraft the cost would be high. On the

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other hand, the Chinese could offer the finished article at very low cost'. Regrettably, the offer was rejected.

In retrospect the Wamira was an unfortunate failure. Why? I think the management structure put in place was appropriate in that it brought the full skill and experience of the Australian aircraft industry to the task. Again in retrospect, the decision to call for military specifications was unwise. Doing so added substantially to the final cost and really, Milspecs were unnecessary in a training aircraft. The thought that Milspecs would attract overseas buyers was wrong, they would be more attracted to a lower cost. In the early stages there was the distraction brought about by too much Air Force 'interest' in the design process. Lastly, I believe that the pursuit of the Royal Air Force selection project diverted management from the main task of building the A-10 for the Royal Australian Air Force. The AAC may well have been successful had it concentrated on a single front.

## CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF

On 21 April 1982 I moved into my new office—the office of the Chief of the Air Staff. Of course I was proud, honoured and very delighted. It was a long way from the graduation of Sergeant Pilot David Evans in August 1944. How I wished my dear mother could have been here to share the achievement. She had made a significant contribution, as had Gail, then my wife of 34 years. My father was delighted, particularly when I explained that the words ‘Air Staff’ meant the whole Air Force! With that recognition I put my mind to the job of commanding the Royal Australian Air Force. I realised the size and the enormity of the task ahead of me, but I had no misgivings or doubts.

I was very much aware that, following the Tange Report and its acceptance by Government, the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) had a critical command role. To me this meant that I was to do more than sit in Canberra and confer with the Defence hierarchy there; the military, politicians and departmental heads and officials. I had a responsibility to the real Air Force, to those dedicated men and women manning all the things that made the Royal Australian Air Force a disciplined fighting force dedicated to the defence of Australia. I wanted them to be aware of my interest in their work and indeed I wanted to be well aware of their capability. As a general observation over the last few years, I had come to the opinion that it did not present as the elite force I knew it could be and should be.

Just three weeks before I became Chief, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. Reaction from the British was swift with a task force, which included the aircraft carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*,

deploying on the fifth day after the invasion. I was disappointed to note that the Australian Government, sympathetic to Britain but not wanting to be involved, insisted that an Australian naval officer serving on exchange with the Royal Navy and serving in the *Invincible* was removed.

In late May, Prime Minister Fraser called the Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFFS) and the three Service Chiefs to The Lodge (the Prime Minister's official residence) to discuss operations in the area to date. There had been a good deal of air activity by the Argentine Air Force attacking Royal Navy ships with moderate success. It showed up the vulnerability of some frigates and destroyer type ships, especially to fire. It also highlighted the skill and courage of the Argentine Mirage pilots pressing attacks very close and to a very low bomb release point. The British ships were saved from greater damage and loss by the fact that a large number of bombs did not explode; possibly because of the low altitude of release and fuze settings. On the other side of the coin, the Harrier aircraft of the Royal Navy, armed with American air-to-air missiles, shot down an impressive number of attacking Mirages.

It really was too early to make comments any more substantial than first impressions. The CDFFS, General Phillip Bennett, made a rather premature statement that Australia 'must acquire some of those Harriers'. Putting a note of caution to that view, I pointed out that the Mirages were on a bombing mission at the very limit of their radius of action. They had not a spare litre of fuel to engage in air-to-air combat, nor did they have the air-to-air missiles used by the Harrier pilots. It would be wrong to make a judgement on the Harrier's worth on the observation of that uneven playing field. The general view was that no definitive judgement could be drawn from the Falklands engagements in those early weeks of conflict. Given the distance involved, the logistics support of the British force was commendable.

## *Chief of the Air Staff*

When he was Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Neville McNamara had discussed with me the introduction of airmen aircrew in the maritime squadrons. The RAAF was the only air force that used commissioned officers to man all crew positions in the long-range maritime patrol (LRMP) aircraft, the P-3C Orion. I knew that he had set up a working party to examine the matter. My understanding was that, as a result, he had directed that an airmen aircrew scheme be introduced. I called a meeting with the Chief of Personnel and other key members involved to check on progress. I was astounded to be told that since the CAS's decision they (the Personnel Branch) had taken a second look and decided that it was not the best way to go. The all officer aircrew was the preferred option. I was furious that the direction of the CAS had been ignored and I was certainly not convinced by the counter arguments put to me. I expressed my displeasure in very clear terms and directed that the first airmen aircrew course commence on a set date some 10 months ahead.

The argument that kept foreign students from our Staff College throughout its long history was one of security, and therefore a curb would have to be put on classified material and discussion if open to foreign students. Curiously, we had students from Britain, New Zealand, Canada and the United States on almost every course. However, I pointed out that we were now in the 1980s and should be taking a more global outlook. My direction was that we should invite foreign students, particularly from our area of interest, to attend RAAF Staff College. The outcome has been of great benefit to the RAAF and the Australian Defence Force. Not only have foreign students added to the breadth of discussion and a sharing of divergent views, but in the years since then, many of the most senior officers in those countries are graduates of RAAF Staff College with many close and enduring friendships formed while on course.

## *Down to Earth*

In May 1982, Ian Sinclair became Minister for Defence. Soon after taking over he called on each of the military Chiefs to be personally briefed. In my office I outlined where the RAAF was and where I planned for it to go. On my wall was a large map of Australia and I pointed out the RAAF bases. When I got to Darwin, I said, 'That will be the location for No 75 Squadron (Mirages) when it returns from Butterworth. It should be at Tindal but I have lost that battle.' He then asked why the squadron should be at Tindal and I explained that it would give depth of the defence. Darwin was on the coast and radar there would only pick up a low-level intruding aircraft at about 20 miles (32 kilometres), which was not enough time to intercept before it would be over Darwin. On the other hand, Tindal was 150 miles (240 kilometres) south; therefore, giving time to react. I also pointed out that Tindal was south of the cyclone area. The Minister noted my comments but did not pursue the issue. A few weeks later he was visiting the Northern Territory with the CDFS, Air Chief Marshal Sir Neville McNamara, and the Secretary of Defence, Bill Pritchett. From Darwin, where he was briefed on the planned location of No 75 Squadron, the party flew to Tindal and there I am told the Minister asked, 'Wouldn't this be a better place for 75 Squadron?' Later I got a telephone call from CDFS asking me to dust off the file on 75 Squadron going to Tindal. Wonderful, another dose of serendipity! However, the logic of basing the fighter squadron at Tindal was irrefutable. The selection of Darwin was based purely on it being a lower cost option, which exposed the ineptitude of always selecting the cost side of the cost-effectiveness equation.

The Utz Interim Report went to Defence and the Minister in May 1982, and the final report in October. Typical of the discourtesy shown to the Chiefs by the Secretary, they were not given the opportunity to comment on either. Surely the CDFS should have ensured that his Chiefs were kept informed and given the opportunity to express their views. A Summary of the Report

drafted by the Secretary of Defence for the Minister and Cabinet made no comment on the bitter adversarial military/public service relationship within the Defence organisation. Ironically, that was the specific situation that had led Admiral Synnot to seek a review of the Tange organisation. In concentrating on giving more power to the CDFS, the summary drafted by the Secretary was clearly designed to appease the incumbent of that position—just as Tange had placated Admiral Smith in 1974. In both cases, that condescending tactic was not challenged. There really had been no problem with the CDFS and his relationship with the Service Chiefs. The Chiefs of Staff accepted the authority of CDFS and he, in turn, recognised their responsibilities within their Service and, importantly, as members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, or he should have. The extra authority being extended to CDFS was at the expense of the Chiefs and did not, in any way, dilute the authority of the Secretary. CDFS now had command of the Australian Defence Force. Prior to the Utz Report the CDFS was, in essence, a *de facto* commander. He was by rank, the most senior officer of the Defence Force and thus could issue orders to his subordinates. However, he did not legally command the Australian Defence Force. Following the acceptance of the Utz Report by Cabinet and Parliament, he was the legitimate commander. The designation was not changed to Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) until 26 October 1984.

In spite of the fact that it created rivalry and confrontation between the military and civilian divisions in the Defence organisation, retention of the diarchy did not come as a surprise. I do not believe the answer to that problem would be found in abolishing the diarchy *per se* but rather by reviewing and redefining the separate and joint responsibilities of the Secretary of Defence and the CDF. To appreciate the situation when Utz began his review it is necessary to go back to 1972 when Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard, directed the Secretary of Defence, Sir Arthur Tange, to report on reorganising the Defence group of

departments. In the guiding principles, Barnard stated that the Secretary of the Department of Defence would be the principal adviser on policy, resources and organisation. The Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee would be the principal military adviser to the Minister for Defence. Clearly, the diarchy was not based on a balance of responsibilities. The responsibilities allocated to the Secretary—policy, resources and organisation—gave him authority on strategic policy, the purse strings, and administration of the Defence organisation. It was pointed out at the time that command, exercised by the CDFS, did not embrace civilian activities associated with programming and producing capabilities that conformed to the expenditure limits and strategic assessments. The military did not really appreciate that the genesis of this came from the guidelines issued by the Minister. To what extent Tange helped frame those guidelines can only be conjecture. However, the military certainly resented being excluded from strategic and policy matters. Nevertheless, Utz and his committee were not inclined to recommend changes on this major issue. Instead they proposed to formalise the CDFS as commander of the Australian Defence Force.

Personally, I do not favour the allocation of command authority to the Chief of the Defence Force. Neither the British nor the American top military chief have been given command authority. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in America commands nothing. He carries the same four-star rank as the Chiefs of Staff and the Commanders of the Unified and Specified Combat Commands. However, he is designated as the most senior officer of the US military.

In presenting his military advice to the US President, the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman is obliged to present a dissenting or other view if a member of the Joint Chiefs requests him to do so. He is required to present that advice at the same time as he presents his own. In the Australian Defence Force the CDF may never consult the Chiefs of

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Staff on any matter if he chooses not to. Or he may simply ignore any advice they offer and present only his own assessments to the Minister or the National Security Committee of Cabinet. There is obviously a danger in the lack of any checks and balances as set down by law in the United States. I would be comfortable with the CDF having command authority if his Directive from the Minister carried similar safeguards. Also, I see merit in the Directives to the Chiefs of Staff being issued by the Minister for Defence. In fact, I go further and believe that the Chiefs of Staff should be given four-star rank to place them above the several other three-star appointments that now exist. That would not, in any way, lessen the authority of the CDF. He, like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States, would be designated as the 'Senior Ranking Officer' of the Australian Defence Force.

The three Chiefs of Staff were disappointed at the outcome of the Defence Review Committee and, indeed, angry at the Secretary's interpretation sent to the Minister. We were all aware of the Secretary's intrusions into military matters and the pettiness of many of those intrusions. The matter of staff officers on overseas trips was surely for CDFS to decide. However, not only did the Secretary object to the Chiefs of Staff taking a staff officer but also sought to deny the CDFS doing so. His opposition to the Chief of the General Staff moving into an Army house at Duntroon was really nothing to do with the Secretary. Yet, on Lieutenant General Bennett's letter to the Minister advising him of that intention, Pritchett had written '*privilege*'. That one word to Labor Minister Gordon Scholes, a devout union man, was a red rag to a bull. His minute in reply was a scathing criticism that General Bennett even contemplated a move to take over the Commandant's house. These are just two examples of the mean spirit displayed by the Defence Secretary to the Chiefs of Staff. In the case of Phillip Bennett and the house at Duntroon, I wondered why he thought it necessary to advise the Minister at all. The Minister did not manage military

housing. The Secretary most certainly did not get involved in the day-to-day allocation of housing to individuals.

The end result of all this was that the three Chiefs met in the Chief of Naval Staff's office to talk over our grievances. I was elected to put them on paper and write to the Minister on the issues. The factor that I emphasised was that the Minister and Cabinet were entitled to the best and most professional military advice available. Surely this should comprise the views of those officers who had been selected to command their Services on the grounds of their military experience and competence. Their advice would normally be presented to the Minister by the CDFS, but of course the Minister could call on any Chief for specialist advice on a specific matter if he wished. The main point was that the corporate advice of the Chiefs was there to be used.

I advised that the Chiefs were well aware that we could only proffer sound advice if we were kept informed of matters being considered. We had noticed that this was not the case. Communications between the Defence organisation and the Minister were tightly controlled by the Secretary and his senior officers—and CDFS in most cases. The Chiefs were ignored. While these circumstances remained, the Minister and Cabinet were denied the advantage of the best military, professional advice available. That letter, containing the unanimous advice of the Chiefs of Staff, was sent to the Minister, Mr Scholes. There was no reply.

Quite apart from the matter of the CDF and his level of command authority, there were other aspects of the command arrangement within the higher echelon of the ADF that seemed convoluted and illogical, untidy even. A simple and more appropriate chain of operational command would have been:

- from CDF to the Joint Force Commander (Chief of Joint Operations – CJOP);
- from CJOP to commanders in the field;

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- from CDF to the Service Chiefs of Staff directing them to allocate forces to CJOP; and
- from the Service Chiefs to their senior force commanders—Maritime Commander, Land Commander and Air Commander Australia—directing them to train and have available operationally ready force elements to allocate when directed to do so.

There was no logical reason for CDF to appoint the three single Service operational commanders as joint commanders responsible directly to him. It was complicating the command chain by having single Service commanders reporting to their Chiefs of Staff on a day-to-day basis but to CDF on operational matters. What operational matters? They assigned their forces to CJOP as directed by CDF through their Chiefs of Staff. I was opposed to these untidy insertions into a structure where simplicity and logic can be critical to success.

Another disaster flowing from the Utz Defence Review Committee was the formation of the Department of Defence Support (DDS). There was immediate conflict between the Secretary of that Department, Charles Halton, and the Defence Secretary, Bill Pritchett. Halton refused to see his organisation as subordinate to Defence and demanded an ever-increasing slice of the Defence cake. He was bleeding Defence funds to build up industry, and was obviously more interested in creating jobs in industry than in a viable Defence Force. He obviously did not realise, or did not care, that Defence activity and thus Defence input into industry would be reduced significantly and jobs lost. Halton was totally obdurate and impossible to work with. A result of this new confrontation was that Air Force had to cut almost \$20 million, allegedly to provide support for the F/A-18, in order to finance DDS.

At the same time, Treasury and Finance wanted to take between \$80 million and \$150 million from Defence. There seemed

to be little sympathy or concern for Defence within the Labor Government. My mind went back to when I was Director General of Plans and Policy in 1973, when we lost a fighter squadron and the Airfield Construction Squadron—here we go again! My great concern was to retain the RAAF force structure, particularly the flying squadrons and those personnel, aircrew and technical manpower who would take 10 years or more to replace if squadrons were disbanded and aircraft mothballed.

To add to my woes, the Minister for Finance was seeking to raise Service rents in spite of the fact that Defence personnel had suffered a two-year pay freeze, against less than 12 months for the rest of the community. He also wanted to remove the steward services from the Officers and Sergeants Messes—cutting the Defence Force down to size.

The debate on the acquisition of an aircraft carrier, which had been going on since the early 70s, took what looked like a final step in February 1982. Then Defence Minister Killen announced that Cabinet had decided to acquire the Royal Navy ship *Invincible*. However, like most things that are in the Defence acquisition pipeline, nothing was certain. The carrier matter still had a year or more to go. It was to be an unsettling journey for Navy and particularly for the Fleet Air Arm.

It was a trying time and I sought to find some way to brighten it up. I had been noticing for some years that it was the march of the Royal Air Force that was used on all RAAF parades. It became more or less our signature marching tune. Although it was a fine march and had served us well, I thought it time we had a march of the Royal Australian Air Force. I contacted the RAAF Director of Music, Squadron Leader Ron Mitchell, and asked him to think it over and, if he could, to compose a RAAF march. In due course, he sent me three marches to consider. I took them home for the weekend and played them over and over in our downstairs rumpus room. To get the feel I marched from wall to wall. My wife and son,

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hearing the repetitive music, peered down to see me marching. Gail, to use her expression, thought I had really snapped. But my efforts were not in vain—I did select one and it is now the march of the Royal Australian Air Force. The first few bars are played when the Chief of Air Force is saluted on parade. I had mentioned this to Frank Cranston, the Defence journalist on *The Canberra Times*, and a few months later he telephoned me to say he thought he had heard it as RAAF Base Fairbairn marched through Canberra when given the Freedom of the City. Facetiously I asked him if he would care to write the words. To my great surprise he said, ‘I’ll give it a go if you send me the tape.’ Well he did and also provided a name to the march, *Eagles of Australia*. A member of the RAAF Central Band altered a few words and so it remains.

A few weeks after the Hawke Government came to power, I held a reception for the RAAF’s 62nd anniversary in the Officers Mess at Fairbairn. For the toast to the Royal Australian Air Force I had the band play our new march. It was very well received. The remarkable part of that particular reception was the number of Ministers of the new Government who attended, including Bob Hawke. Our new Prime Minister was in a jovial mood so I took the opportunity to ask him about his intentions in regard to two, second-hand, Boeing 707 aircraft we were about to acquire for VIP travel and to modify for use as aerial refuelling tankers. He had been lambasting the proposal in Parliament and declaring publicly that the project would be cancelled if Labor came to power. In answer to my, ‘Prime Minister, I hope you’re not going to cancel our acquisition of the Boeing 707 aircraft’, the reply, delivered with a laugh, was ‘Don’t be bloody silly, of course not.’

It was a month or so later when Gareth Evans, then Attorney-General in the Hawke Government, got one of his staff to call the Air Force Office duty officer and request an aircraft carry out a photographic reconnaissance flight over the Franklin River in Tasmania. The issue at stake was the intention of the State

Government to dam the Franklin River for hydro-electricity generation. That proposal had attracted widespread and vocal opposition across Australia and the new Federal Government had directed a cessation of work at the site. Obviously, the reason for the requested photo reconnaissance was to ensure that Tasmanian authorities were complying with the federal order. The duty officer, a group captain, was told that the Minister for Defence had approved the flight. He took it to be a simple request put to the Minister by a government department. No problem, he tasked Operational Command to fly the mission.

The Command's first response to the direction from Air Force Office was the dispatch of a Mirage aircraft from RAAF Base Williamtown in New South Wales to carry out the task. However, bad weather over the Franklin River area forced the pilot to fly at low level. The poor imagery necessitated a second mission, conducted by an RF-111. When knowledge of these flights became public, the Federal Government's opponents accused it of spying on a State government. Adding insult to injury, the Coalition added that it was a gross misuse use of the military for political purposes. I must confess I did not get into a nervous sweat about the matter. It really was not a major event, simply politicians playing politics. Yes, the duty officer should have recognised that the Franklin was a sensitive issue politically and, therefore, should have sought advice from higher authority. However, he simply did not appreciate the political implications. I had no intention of throwing any blame onto the group captain. The CDFS, Air Chief Marshal McNamara, felt differently and told me so. It seemed to me that he had mistaken that task as Aid to the Civil Power—it was not. As confirmed by legal officers, it was Assistance to the Civil Community. The latter did not require the CDFS to be informed. He chose to have the minute he sent me tabled in the Senate and it received wide press coverage. I wrote to Air Chief Marshal McNamara telling him it

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was unfortunate that the publishing of his minute implied criticism of the RAAF which I thought unjustified.

Life in the Defence environment in Canberra was not meant to be a joyous experience. The public service/military interface continued to be adversarial. As I have said in an earlier chapter, the structure put in place by Sir Arthur Tange more or less ensured that this would be so. The list of committees embedded in the Tange structure called for many hours of reading large agenda items and more hours taking senior people away from their desks to attend unending committee meetings, all chaired by a senior public servant. My attitude was similar to most of my military colleagues—it was no way to run a business and certainly not the Australian Defence Organisation. Utz and his Defence Review Committee did absolutely nothing to resolve the problem—the reason Admiral Synnot sought the review in the first place.

In fact, the situation deteriorated even further when Sir Arthur Tange departed and Bill Pritchett became Secretary. An interesting aspect of Pritchett's attitude was his opposition to the Australian Chiefs of Staff and the CDFS taking a staff officer on overseas trips, yet he was willing to pay for Chiefs of Staff or people of General rank from Third World countries to bring one or even two staff officers when they visited Australia. I found it humiliating on the one trip I made without a staff officer, to be sitting in a conference with three- and four-star officers and having to take my own notes on the salient matters being discussed.

I also want to record my embarrassment in hosting a visit to Canberra by the Chief of the United States Air Force, General Charles Gabriel. Chuck Gabriel was Chief of Staff of the most powerful air force in the world. Probably enough power to destroy the globe should the President call for that. More importantly to Australia, the technology that enables the RAAF to perform at the leading edge of technology, and thus to fight well above our weight, is available because the United States Air Force presents us to

Congress as a valuable ally and a friend to be trusted with highly classified material and equipment. On the occasion of his visit to Canberra, the Secretary and the CDFS considered that the Minister for Defence would be too busy to see the General. Secretary Pritchett stated firmly that he was certainly too busy. He also refused to pay for transport to convey the General to and from his scheduled meetings in Canberra. In the States, I and others of Chief of Staff status were provided with all transport, including where required a VIP aircraft. At all times we were treated with courtesy and respect. I ignored the advice of the Secretary and CDFS regarding the Minister. I called the Minister's office and made an appointment, which the Minister accepted without question. So did the CDFS. I did not bother with the Secretary.

There was a marked improvement, in both the working and social rapport enjoyed with the Secretary, when Sir William Cole took over from Mr Pritchett in February 1984. Unfortunately, the system and the adversarial environment it created remained. In this case, the Secretary was a victim of the Tange structure but he was not a petty man. Nevertheless, he supported his staff who had played, and continued to play, a spoiling role in both strategic policy and the development of a credible ADF force structure since 1976. Ironically, I got on reasonably well with Bill Pritchett socially. I travelled to America with him on one occasion and found him to be a pleasant travelling companion—perhaps he regarded me as a staff officer! On the official side I regarded him as a mini-Tange.

After some 25 years, I still find it exasperating to recall those flaws in the Defence organisation and the ever-present confrontation. To what extent they exist today I do not know, although I rather doubt that they have been eradicated entirely. I do know they will never be erased by futile attempts at appeasement or compromise. The only sure solution is for the clear and unambiguous definition of the specific functions and responsibilities of each diarchy member. I hold a strong view that

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the military should be fully involved in matters of strategic policy and capabilities required by the ADF.

When totally exasperated with the goings-on in Defence over which I had limited influence I found it relaxing to move to some in-house Air Force matter where I could exercise some control. As I stated earlier in recounting my Air Force experience, I had not been impressed at the way Air Force was presenting itself in recent years, even on parade. One should have pride in the base on which you serve, pride in your unit or squadron and in yourself and your mates. It has been my observation over many years, that what you see is what you get. Those that take pride in their work—whether it be an avionics engineer, a steward, pilot or a nurse—are proud to show themselves as an elite force on parade. If they are mediocre or sloppy on those occasions it is indicative of their work skills and their attitude. I disagree most strongly with those who say that drill teaches drill—nothing else. However irrespective of what some believe I took steps to improve the way the RAAF presented itself. I stressed this to executives at all levels and made a particular effort with the Warrant Officers Disciplinary (WODs). They were responsible for discipline in dress, bearing, state of quarters, parades etc. I introduced the pace stick for them to carry and be easily identified as the WOD, even from a distance. When I was a young airman and spied a warrant officer ahead, you automatically checked that your hat was on properly, and anything else that might attract a roar of criticism—especially haircuts. I know that I seemed rather eccentric in demanding that haircuts complied with the short back and sides laid down in Air Force Orders. This was introduced initially for reasons of hygiene and cleanliness; however, my reasoning was again related to discipline. If you cannot tell a member to obey orders in regard to haircuts, how can you order him to go out and be shot at if the occasion demands? I was pleased to note that these matters improved markedly.

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In the RAAF, confidential reports are raised on all members every 12 months and on posting. They are quite detailed and in the case of officers, very detailed. Members did not see their reports, although those doing the assessment were obliged to brief members on any criticism that they had reported and which the member could rectify. Naturally, where there was something that could not be eliminated—say an impediment of speech—the member was not to be embarrassed by reference to that. During my time as CAS, there was a move to have these confidential reports shown to the person concerned. I resisted that because I was afraid that those making assessments and reporting might be less inclined to be critical and thus not disclose important character traits. To say that does, I know, imply a lack of moral courage in reporting officers but I needed to take account of human nature. The fact was that many of those being reported on went out on training exercises flying over Australia, with their aircraft loaded with live bombs and ammunition. Also the people who serviced the aircraft going on these sorties had significant responsibilities, therefore it was vital to be aware of any character or mental flaw that could have catastrophic consequences. That was my reason for opposing the sighting of confidential reports. The Chief of Air Force Personnel said to me, ‘You may as well accept it now Sir, someone will take you to court on this and you will be ordered to change the system.’ My answer was that I would be prepared to fight the issue on the grounds I have just set out. It did not come to that in my time but I understand there is now open reporting.

Another losing battle I was fighting was in refusing to enlist women for pilot training. I knew perfectly well that females could learn to fly as well as males. I also knew that the Australian Government, at the time, would not allow women to go into combat. It would have been a waste of resources to spend \$2 million in training a pilot who could not go into combat. The argument that they could be flying instructors, or fly transport aircraft in non-

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combat zones was not a practical solution. Those jobs were best filled by pilots on completion of a combat tour, where they could be rested and where their operational experience could be passed on to students. On reflection, I am delighted to see that RAAF female pilots can now fly in combat zones and they have acquitted themselves very well indeed. In recent times, female pilots have flown with the Roulettes (the RAAF's formation aerobatic team) and commanded a C-17 squadron, and another has successfully completed a test pilots course.

Former union official Gordon Scholes, the first Minister for Defence in the Hawke Government, was a decent man and yet I found him difficult. This was not a personal trait but purely politics and perhaps his trade union background. Trade unionism and Service discipline are not compatible partners. One incident of several where we differed was when the father of an airwoman wrote to Mr Scholes complaining that his daughter's fiancé was posted to RAAF Base Pearce in Western Australia and her application for posting to that location had been refused. The Personnel Branch advised me that Pearce was a popular location for posting and many applications were rejected. Furthermore, to post this particular young lady would mean that a person would have to be posted out. I sent that advice to the Minister and he asked me to come and discuss the matter with him. During the subsequent talk I said that the girl could apply for a discharge and it would be granted. His reply was that I was being discriminatory, breaking the law and what I had advised was against Labor policy. He asked why I favoured the girl being discharged and not the airman. I replied that the female was a steward and had taken 10 weeks to train and the man was a technician who had taken over two years to train. We had invested in the airman and wanted to keep him. The Minister more or less shrugged and said, 'Why do I always have trouble with the Air Force?' However, he did not interfere with the decision we had taken. What I found rather curious was that I could talk directly

to the Minister on this type of matter but it was very difficult to get his personal attention on an important subject related directly to Defence policy on a strategic matter.

Money was always a confining factor in my day. At times there was no money for travel—when important business travel had to wait for Service transport to be available. At times this required a person to be away for three to four days when commercial air travel would have enabled a task to be done in a single day. When budgets had to be cut at the eleventh hour, the ‘bean counters’ in Defence looked to where money could be saved in the near term. Flying hours were a favourite area for cutting costs quickly. This always caused me concern from the point of view of flying safety. Those flying fast jet aircraft—the Mirage and the F-111—needed, in my judgement, to fly 20 to 24 hours a month. I had noticed the result when Tactical Air Command of the United States Air Force, facing a similar financial situation, reduced flying hours to 15 hours a month. The accident rate went up to an unacceptable level. My solution was to reduce the number of pilots in fighter and strike squadrons, and put them into transport and helicopter squadrons where flying hours suffered less because of specific commitments, such as joint or combined exercises. The consequence was that we were eventually very short of fast jet pilots—a situation from which it took years to recover. Similarly, we sent surplus transport and helicopter pilots to flying instructor courses and then into flying training schools. As a result, a disproportionate number of graduating pilots chose transport or helicopter squadrons— Influenced by their flying instructors. In retrospect it was a mistake to reduce fighter and strike squadrons. However, I make no apology for this—I had no practical alternative. Today the excellent fidelity of modern flight simulators would provide at least a partial solution.

One of the difficulties of forward planning was that the Government may have advised the next year’s budget to be ‘X’ billion dollars. As it got near to budget time the Government would

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ask what would have to be cut from next year's plan if 'X' is cut by 0.5 per cent. There would be frantic work to respond quickly to these possible reductions. It entailed an enormous amount of nugatory work and much rivalry in arguing as to where the cuts were to be made. A common occurrence, but always a stressful and difficult period.

In late 1983 I took the Chief of Air Force Operations, the Chief of Technical Services and two other senior officers to Weipa on Cape York Peninsula and to Thursday Island, stopping at Cooktown on the way. The purpose was to see and understand the inadequacy of surface communications, including the lack of ports for sea transport. I also wanted to survey the area in the vicinity of Weipa for a military airfield on Cape York Peninsula. The limitation to surface transport was obvious—other than by a four-wheel drive vehicle, the road could only be travelled during six months of the year. There was no port on the east side of the Peninsula. Even during World War II, when there was a base at Lockhart River, supplies from ships were taken ashore by lighter, not practical for the logistics support of an operational air base. Who would build an all-weather road from Cooktown to Cape York? The Federal Government showed no interest—nor did the Queensland Government. Given the rain and the huge number of culverts that would have to be constructed, it would be an enormously expensive venture. The only alternative to incurring that expense was to use the port of Albatross Bay (Weipa). From a military point of view, this is far from ideal as shipping coming up the east coast would have to pass through Torres Strait, which could be easily mined. The other alternative would be to provide a road for heavy traffic between Darwin and Weipa and the now new airfield, Scherger.

However, the main purpose of that trip was to select a location for a military airfield. The area chosen was to the east of Weipa on the western side of the Iron Range hills. When I put this to the Defence Force Development Committee, Secretary Pritchett was

not inclined to accept that area, noting that Army had land in the Lockhart River area. He said we should take a wider examination before coming to a decision. I pointed out the lack of a port and the appalling weather on the eastern side of the range and the proximity of hills—a bad combination for aviators. Much of that is now history. RAAF Base Scherger is now established in the area we surveyed 25 years ago.

In 1984 I was acting CDFS when a paper arrived on the pros and cons of a Coast Guard that had been commissioned by Minister Beazley, then Minister assisting the Minister for Defence. It recommended the establishment of a Coast Guard organisation. I discussed the paper with the Assistant Chief of the Defence Force Staff, Rear Admiral Michael Hudson. I told him that I intended to send the paper with a letter setting out my views opposing the Coast Guard concept. I pointed to the additional staff, infrastructure that would be required, headquarters, communications, ports and moorings, maintenance facilities for boats, airfields with hangars and maintenance facilities for aircraft, capital equipment and personnel, plus training facilities. Such expense would surely impact on the existing Defence Force. Also to be considered was that a Coast Guard would not be doing anything that the current ADF was not already able to do. If a greater effort was needed in coastal surveillance it would be far more economical to provide additional flying hours and sailing time for the force-in-being or, alternatively, to extend the present civil contract by requiring better training and the use of suitable sensor equipment—not necessarily to military standards. Rear Admiral Hudson advised me to send the paper as received without my opposing advice. I thanked Mike for his advice and said I felt compelled to give the Minister my views. I am not aware of Beazley's reaction to my remarks—I do know that we have no Coast Guard to date. Notwithstanding that decision, every so often some politician throws the concept into the parliamentary pot for renewed discussion.

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Although I had no direct responsibility, I did have some grave concern for the future of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). At Manus Island an Australian nursing sister had been hit in the face by a male medical orderly. From information I was given, it appeared that discipline in the maritime elements was low. On one occasion a patrol boat captain had asked for permission to go to a wedding at an island village. Permission was refused. Out on a maritime patrol, the captain gave false positions and was heading to the island location. The case probably only became known because the boat ran aground at that location. My real concern was that no disciplinary action was taken in these and similar cases. I wrote to CDFS suggesting that, as we had personnel serving with the PNGDF, Australia had a part to play in seeing that discipline was restored to an acceptable level. However, the official view was that we should keep out of such matters.

Notwithstanding the position I had put to the Defence Force Development Committee in regard to an airfield on Cape York Peninsula, CDFS advised me in March 1984 that a study of airfields on Cape York Peninsula would be undertaken by the Assistant Chief of the Defence Force Staff (ACDFS). I went back saying that I disagreed with the philosophy behind this action. The purpose, I was told, was for greater centralisation of single Service planning functions. If that were the case, surely the single Service most concerned and where the more expert opinion lay should have been involved.

A day or so later I received advice from CDFS that the Defence Force Capabilities paper would be done in this building (Defence Central) by Deputy Secretary B and the ACDFS. Those two jointly signed the paper saying it really was not possible to review the Defence function and that they both agreed to continued adherence to the Core Force concept. They went on to say that it was not practical to look at possible higher-level situations. They would do a series of small papers to see where each one was taking them as they

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progressed. I was appalled at this dreadful document showing that Defence had no concept of where we are going or how we should spend our money. It did not examine critically the Core Force concept but merely said they would clear up misunderstandings of this concept. To me it was scandalous that we were spending some \$5 billion plus per year and did not know where we were heading. In spite of billions of dollars spent over recent years, we were still in a poor situation to defend the country. God knows why CDFS endorsed that hopeless and indefinite approach, particularly as he had endorsed the concept of operations I had submitted to him when he was Chief of the Air Staff some years before. He was also well aware of Deputy Secretary B's well-known adversarial attitude to the military and opposition to any enhancement of existing military capability.

As a measure of my concern I quote from the minute I sent to CDFS with copies to the Chief of Naval Staff and the Chief of the General Staff:

I am not encouraged by the statement in paragraph 6 of Reference B that the 'approach needs to be continuously and sensitively managed within this building, consulting with the services at various levels along the way'. I do not for one moment accept that either the bulk, or even sufficient, military expertise lies within the confines of Building F. Finally, it is discouraging and indeed might be considered scandalous that in the year 1984, with large sums being spent on the Defence Force, we are so very far from knowing what direction we are eventually going to take for the defence of Australia.

I do not imagine this type of correspondence was well received by CDFS; however, I felt obliged to make my position clear.

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I had no idea why he was taking this rather negative approach to the defence of Australia. The only conclusion I could reach was that CDFS was wedded passionately to working in close harmony with the Secretary. In doing so, I believe he did more than most to diminish the standing and influence (and usefulness) of the single Service Chiefs of Staff and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Just a month later the Air Chief Marshal's contract ended and he retired. General Sir Philip Bennett took over on 14 April 1984 as CDFS. He became Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) on 26 October 1984.

The debate on the aircraft carrier continued on. The pros and cons were endless. I know the Navy accepted the 1982 decision to acquire the *Invincible* as final, as they had every right to. Notwithstanding that decision, Prime Minister Fraser was having doubts and made what he might have presented as a gracious gesture. He offered Mrs Thatcher the opportunity to withdraw from the arrangement to sell the *Invincible* to Australia. That discussion ended with a rather vague undertaking for Australia to acquire the *Hermes* or a later build of an *Invincible* type. It was obviously designed to get the Government off the hook without requiring a specific commitment. The matter was finally closed off when Defence Minister Scholes announced in 1984 that the carrier project would not proceed. It was a devastating blow to Navy.

Being aware that members of the Fleet Air Arm would have personal concerns in regard to their future employment I offered to take any personnel that wanted to transfer to the RAAF. I was surprised and disappointed at the low level of response. Was the Air Force's opposition to the carrier project so deeply resented as to cause such a reaction? I could understand that, although I and other airmen opposed the acquisition of *Invincible* purely on professional grounds, and *only* professional grounds. I have said earlier in this book that I gave my utmost support to Navy's bids for helicopters and submarines.

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I wondered if naval airmen believed that they might not be offered fair opportunities in the RAAF. To counter any such notion, I offered a lieutenant commander a posting to be a flight commander in an F-111 Squadron. He accepted and did a fine job, but regrettably left the Service to go into civil aviation sometime later. It is perhaps a mark of the RAAF's objectivity in transferring naval personnel that the present Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Mark Binskin, was a naval pilot who transferred.

Unfortunately, my good intentions in regard to taking Fleet Air Arm personnel were not reciprocated by the response of both Navy and Defence. Navy delayed transfers for months under the spurious claim that they could not quickly assess how many people they would need to keep. Defence refused to allow Air Force to increase its manpower establishment to cover the Navy transfers. This meant that the RAAF would have to discharge or fail to re-engage serving Air Force personnel. Nor were funds made available for moving, housing or supply of uniforms. Actually, Navy's delaying tactics assisted us in overcoming those problems.

I had several talks with academic, Paul Dibb, during my time in Canberra, mostly when I was Chief of the Air Staff. Our conversation was almost always on force structure, strategy and concept of operations. He was aware of the concept of operations I had developed and which had been endorsed by the CAS in 1979. When Paul Dibb left Defence to go to the Australian National University, I had a set of air staff planning maps made up and sent to his new office. I think Paul and I were fairly close on our conceptual thinking, although I looked to a greater degree of offensive action against enemy bases than he proposed in his later report.

Nevertheless, I was surprised when Kim Beazley commissioned Dibb to draft a paper based on the defence of Australia in 1986. I tended to think that the vast array of military talent in the Department of Defence, and the Australian Defence Force in particular, should have been able to provide a professional

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presentation on that subject. However, looking back after 25 years or so I must admit it would have been very difficult indeed. Even with a very strong team leader, the individual members would probably have been under pressure from their Service Chiefs and undoubtedly the Secretary of Defence would have continued to play a spoiling hand.

In August 1984 the Indonesian Minister of Defence, L.B. Moerdani, told the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bill Hayden, that Australia had spy planes over Timor. This, I believe, would not have been much of an issue had the press not exaggerated the 'heat' in Moerdani's remark. However, the Minister asked staff, and not me, what flights over Timor had been carried out since 1982. The Director of Operations briefed me and drafted a letter to the Minister saying that an Indonesian NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) issued in 1978 stated that flights over Timor were not permitted. That information was incorrect. Air route Amber did take aircraft over Timor. The RAAF filed for diplomatic clearance for such flights by Boeing 707s and F-111s—all were approved. I immediately sent this information to the Minister (through CDFS), with my apologies for the earlier mistake. I included a list of all flights over Timor in the past four or five years. A few days later CDFS advised me that the Minister had questioned why I had not been honest with him. The Minister felt that he was getting information at second-hand or even third-hand, and that this was an unsatisfactory way of doing business. There was absolutely no intent to mislead the Minister. Had he called me over to discuss the matter, as was the custom with his predecessors, I would have known exactly what he wanted and could have gathered the information and briefed him completely. CDFS made no substantive comment.

Apparently, the Minister put forward the idea that our command and control arrangements should be based on a Maritime Command and a Continental Command. That theory was thrown about rather loosely by Labor prior to the 1983 election.

Most military people took little notice of it at the time, seeing it as no more than an election ploy. Now the Minister was bringing it to the fore. Obviously, CDFS, and no doubt the Secretary, felt obliged to go into the matter in some detail. I understood that the CDFS saw little merit in the proposal. However, he did feel they should offer something to the Minister and suggested a Maritime Headquarters might fill the bill rather than a Maritime Command. I asked him how he would define a Maritime Headquarters and his answer was that it would control all that took place on, under and over the sea. My response was that such a definition would be rather absurd. One could equally describe all operations that took place in the air as being air-controlled operations to be run from an Air Headquarters. I pointed out to CDFS that most of what took place over the sea in Australia's interest was done by RAAF aircraft carrying out single Service missions. This would continue and it would be absurd to set up a new headquarters and put the control of these purely air operations under a naval officer. CDFS said he recognised this and would have the definition of maritime operations redrafted. He said he did not envisage the assignment of assets for other than 'pure joint operations and that this would be made clear in expanded and more precise definitions of single service operations, single service supported operations and joint operations'. I feel sure Sir Philip understood, as I most certainly did, that splitting the available air capability into 'penny packets' would be the ruination of the contribution that air power could make to the defence of Australia, through reducing the disadvantage we experienced due to our small manpower resources. At the time General Bennett and I served as Admiral Synnot's two senior staff officers, the CDFS considered those same options as the way he would exercise command—for single Service and single Service supported he would have normally appointed a Chief of Staff to command. For joint operations he would appoint a Joint Force

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Commander. Of course, he could appoint a Joint Force Commander for any operation if he considered it to be the best course of action.

The present-day practice is based on a seamless jointery, and this has much to commend it. However, there is a tendency to complicate a simple operation by seeking some way to unnecessarily make it a joint operation. This has led to a number of failed operations carried out by our American allies. Simplicity is still a valued component of the military art and particularly in the command and control of operations. Two debacles come to my mind—the abysmal attempt to rescue hostages from the American Embassy in Tehran in April 1980, and more recently the Operation *Anaconda* battle in Afghanistan. The lack of success in both those operations was very largely due to poor command and control arrangements.

The non-discrimination laws on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy posed some difficulties to the Services. Living-in policy which required unmarried personnel to live in barracks on base was suddenly illegal. No longer could there be a different requirement or expectation that single people would live on base, any more than a married person would be required to do so. I suppose all that was fair enough, it was purely something we had to get used to and comply with the law. In fact, none of these things have caused significant problems.

My last flying post was when I commanded RAAF Base Amberley. When I left there I was current on the F-111 and the Canberra. I had ceased flying the Iroquois helicopter 12 months before. My purpose in flying the Iroquois was to have some knowledge of rotary wing operations as I had two squadrons on base at Amberley. I know I invited criticism when I flew the F-111, usually one day a month, when I was CAS. Although I certainly enjoyed that break from Canberra and contact with people in the field, I did not consider it self-indulgence. I suppose it was to some extent—but I saw it as more than that. To land at Amberley or

another flying base and go to the crew room for a cup of coffee and a chat with the young aircrew; to stay overnight and talk to people in the mess was good for me and I believed good for the Service. I always returned to my office feeling fit, refreshed and part of the real Air Force.

One of the major tasks during 1984 and 1985 was planning for the introduction of the F/A-18 into RAAF service. I had declared that the only change from the United States Navy version that I would countenance was the RAAF roundel on the wing to replace the American star. And I did allow a high-frequency radio because of the vast distances over which we would need to communicate. It is the unique changes called for by various customers that really attract rip-off costs by the manufacturer.

One of the major difficulties I encountered in the F/A-18 program was the ferrying of the first two American-built aircraft to Australia. Having pushed for the acquisition of aerial refuelling tankers since 1978, I wanted to demonstrate to the Government the type of capability that tankers would give the RAAF. Tankers are a genuine force multiplier. Also, it was in my mind to show the New Zealanders an example of the value of the American alliance. The close association they had cast aside by their stance on ship visits to New Zealand ports had divorced the New Zealand Defence Force from this type of cooperation. That was not my business I know, but it was a valid point. Having served on exchange with the Royal New Zealand Air Force for two years I had some affection for it and did not want to see it outside the alliance.

For those reasons I planned to fly the two Hornet aircraft nonstop from Los Angeles to Williamstown using in-flight refuelling. The first sign of resistance was when I told the Director General of the Tactical Fighter Project that I wanted the direct flight. He said that he had planned to ferry the aircraft via the United States base on Guam and then to Australia. That, I gather, was based on the USAF tanker movements. I told him to re-plan, to organise the

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direct flight. Two weeks later on my next briefing on the project I asked what progress had been made on the direct ferry route. He expressed the view that what I had directed was building in an added and unnecessary difficulty. He asked that I accept his planning advice. My response was that he was to brief me in two weeks time on his progress in planning a direct Pacific crossing. If he had not progressed his planning by that time I would have him replaced as the project officer.

At the same time I sent a signal to the Head Australian Defence Staff in Washington, Major General John Coates, asking him to seek the support of the Americans for the ferry flight. The first backfire was the receipt of a copy of the signal sent by CDF to Coates. It was a brief message telling him not to approach the Americans or give any support to my proposal for the direct ferry. I was really taken aback at this interference in what I considered to be the clear responsibility of the CAS. I rang Sir Philip and said that surely there was nothing more basic in the Chief's responsibility than deciding how he should ferry, deploy or route his aircraft. His reply was that the action I was proposing would add a million dollars to the cost of the ferry flight and that certainly made it his business.

In the meantime, the engineers had told me that the F/A-18 did not have sufficient oil tankage to make the direct flight. I asked what the oil capacity and oil consumption were that caused them to make that judgement. Had tests been carried out? They came back a week or two later advising me that tests had shown that there was sufficient oil for the direct flight. Then I was confronted with the news that the oxygen supply would not provide for the two pilots on the long flight. I came back on that pointing out the small oxygen bottles carried on some transport aircraft. Surely, one of those could be carried to make up for the shortfall they had indicated. The second examination showed that, as the aircraft would be pressurised to 8000 feet, the pilot in the rear cockpit could

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stop using oxygen when he was not flying and, yes, there would be sufficient oxygen for the trip.

My last hurdle was the cost that CDF had assumed would occur. As a last throw of the dice I send a note to the USAF Chief of Staff, General Chuck Gabriel. I sent a copy of that document with another note to General Bennie Davis, Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Air Command. I said I was having difficulty with an Army general attempting to interfere with my plan to ferry the F/A-18s across the Pacific. I received a signal from General Bennie Davis saying that he had a KC-10 tanker aircraft flying from Los Angeles to Williamtown, Australia to be there for a static display on a certain date. If I had any aircraft going that way, 'feel free to tag along'. I advised CDF that such a cost-free offer was too good to refuse and he agreed. The ferry of our two aircraft across the Pacific went without a glitch. Interestingly, the KC-10 tanker aircraft itself refuelled from another tanker aircraft over Hawaii. The KC-10 and our two Hornet aircraft were intercepted and escorted into Williamtown by six Mirages of 77 Squadron. It was a very welcome sight.

In my welcoming speech I gave a message to the Government by referring to the flexibility and mobility conferred by having the capability to refuel in-flight. For the benefit of the New Zealanders, I referred to the practical benefit of our American alliance in ANZUS.

A factor of that exercise that did cause me some concerns was that every senior RAAF officer with whom I discussed the ferry was opposed to the direct flight. The final surprise came when I was in Washington a few weeks before the ferry launch. The senior pilot appointed for the task told me that he had some concern. He went on to explain that in some conditions (presumably turbulence) the refuelling basket trailing from the tanker aircraft swirled around and, on occasion, knocked off the angle of attack probe on the F/A-18 causing that object to be ingested into one of the engines.

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Well, I supposed one would not be happy to have an engine fail in the middle of the Pacific, even though an F/A-18 could easily maintain height on one engine. I went to see a US Navy admiral I knew (a pilot) and told him of the problem my ferry pilot had put to me. His answer was that the United States Navy had done about 10 000 in-flight refuellings in the F/A-18 and, yes, the angle of attack probe did occasionally get ingested into the engine. However, the probe went through the engine without causing failure or any untoward result. I told the pilot of that advice and added that if he was still nervous at the prospect I would have another pilot sent over to undertake the flight. His immediate answer was, 'No Sir, I have no worries, I simply thought I should tell you of the possibility'. Nevertheless, the general response had been contrary to my expectations. I thought everyone in the RAAF would have been excited at the opportunity to undertake a new adventure and to demonstrate our capability. Where had we, or where had I, gone wrong? Had we been too restrictive or protective in our training or our conceptual approach to operational flying? I did discuss this with my Deputy, Air Vice-Marshal Jake Newham, the officer who would take my place as CAS a few weeks after the ferry flight.

During my time as a senior officer, and particularly as Chief of the Air Staff, I tried to be as straightforward and informative as I could with the media. I had a good civilian public relations officer, Ken Llewelyn, who recognised the value of positive publicity which can only come from a well-informed media. I made it clear that I could not, and would not, disclose sensitive or classified information but within such limits I would try and keep the media informed. Consequently, wherever I went on a base inspection or interstate visit I always held a press conference of some kind. I am pleased to say that on the majority of occasions I was reported factually and accurately. It was not always the case but I saw no reason to hide the truth. On an interview in Darwin shortly after the Falklands War, I said that the British fleet used in that operation

could not survive within 500 miles (800 kilometres) of Australia. I based that judgement on the RAAF's surveillance, our precision strike capability with stand-off weapons and in cooperation with Navy and its submarine force. I think that was a realistic statement of our capability. Not surprisingly, it got good coverage in the print media. Back in Canberra I got a call from CDFS saying he assumed I had been misquoted. My reply was, 'No Sir, that's exactly what I said'. He continued, as if he was trying to get me off the hook, 'I suppose when you saw it in print you wished you had not said it'. I replied that I said it because I believed it to be true and surely it was good for the ADF to say something positive about our capability. I do not think the CDFS was too happy but I did not understand why. It is a great pity that today, 25 years later, Chiefs are not allowed to publicly air such views.

I continued to speak freely to the media but was careful to avoid criticising the Government or its policies. In *The Australian* defence supplement in 1984 I was invited to contribute, as were the other Chiefs of Staff. I wrote my piece and sent it directly to the journalist compiling the defence review. A few days later CDF, then General Bennett, called and asked that I send him my draft. I replied I had not thought for a moment that he would want to censor me. He refuted that comment and said he simply wanted to ensure we were all taking the same line before he sent them to the Minister. As mine had already gone, he did not press for a copy. Later, Ken Llewelyn arranged for me to speak at the National Press Club. I told CDF and the Minister what had been arranged and that I had accepted. Phillip Bennett said he thought I was being foolish but did not demur. The Minister noted but made no objection.

In my talk to the Press Club I outlined the concept of operations the RAAF had developed a few years ago and was generally positive about the contribution we could make to the defence of Australia. I mentioned two major deficiencies—the lack of airborne early warning and control aircraft and air-to-air refuelling tankers.

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Whilst I said that the RAAF strongly supported the development of over-the-horizon radar (OTHR), that was some years away. In the meantime we could not provide a credible air defence capability. I then pointed out that there were priority items needed by the three Services and appreciated that they could not all be met immediately. I was not critical of Government and I saw no reason to hide these deficiencies from the Australian public.

Given the tolerance shown to me and others of my ilk in regard to speaking publicly, I am astounded by the restrictions applying to our most senior officers today. A year or perhaps two years ago I attended a lunch at the Aviation Club where a senior RAAF officer was guest speaker. His first message was that he would speak on his civilian flying only. He would not be able to speak on any Defence matter as he had not prepared a draft for the Minister's approval. I must confess I was incensed to hear that military officers were so constrained. Did the Government have no confidence in their integrity and common sense? I went to see Brendan Nelson, then Minister for Defence, because I could speak frankly to him. In response to my very strong complaint he said he had no idea that any such restrictions applied. Where did it come from, was it the previous Minister? Of course I did not know but he went on to say that as far as he was concerned there was absolutely no restriction; in fact, he had wondered why he had never heard the Chiefs presenting a view on any of the issues of the day. During further discussions he expressed surprise that they did not come to see him. They were welcome at any time if there were issues they wished to discuss. I did pass on the Minister's thoughts to CDF and the Service Chiefs—nothing has changed. I have not heard any of the Chiefs utter a word in the last 12 months—I believe the public would be interested to see and hear from their Service heads occasionally.

Like most people who have spent many years in the Service I get asked questions on defence issues by my friends and relations.

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A common one today is, 'Can we win in Afghanistan?' Of course, I do not know and say so. And then I add, 'Actually, I don't know what we are trying to do.' If it is to create a genuine democracy free of corruption and have scrupulously fair elections, I would say no, of course we cannot win. Then I ask myself what are we trying to achieve. If we have not determined an end, how can we examine the ways and means to achieve it?

Obviously, I have been too long in telling this story and am now diverging into speculation. I will end my in-Service story by saying that I have had the most interesting and enjoyable career—one I would never have imagined as a young trainee pilot. Flying I loved passionately and was fortunate to accumulate just on 9000 hours. We lived in 23 houses and my four children attended many schools. Only one of the four was born in Australia. The others: one in New Zealand, one in Malaya and one in America. I was often away from home throwing a huge burden onto Gail. My wife handled all the trials and tribulations of my long Service career magnificently and for which I will be eternally thankful. I enjoyed the close friendship, the comradeship and intense loyalty to Service and friends that is part of life in the Royal Australian Air Force.

As I left the Service I asked myself if I had achieved the goals I had set when I became Chief of the Air Staff. I can best describe the answer as yes and no. I have the satisfaction of leaving a Service that knew where it was going, that knew its vital role in the defence of Australia and, as a consequence, understood the capabilities required and the force structure needed to provide those capabilities. An important achievement was the progress on establishing a string of bases across the north of the continent. The Royal Australian Air Force was presenting well to the Australian community and our professionalism was well recognised by our allies and regional air forces. We enjoyed quite a good relationship with the media. I was disappointed with the slow progress in acquiring new air refuelling tankers and airborne early warning

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and control aircraft. But at least we had acquired four second-hand Boeing 707s as strategic transport aircraft and limited refuelling tankers for the F/A-18s—but not the F-111s.

On the other side of the coin, I was well aware that as manpower was reduced and we did our best to provide the same rates of effort we were exploiting the outstanding work ethic of our members. I believe it is an inbuilt characteristic of our servicemen and women that we endeavour to meet the task—regardless.

I was aware that our system of acquisition, and spares assessing in particular, was inefficient and expensive. Computers were increasingly becoming more capable of replacing manpower intensive assessment tasks. I failed to get the logistic people and engineers moving on that task. It was one that both groups saw as their own preserve and that is where the problem existed. Did I give it the priority I should have in regard to my time?

I was concerned that Service personnel were behind the curve on pay. I, together with the other Chiefs, complained to the Minister. I was, to some extent, seduced by the fact that a Defence Arbitration Tribunal was being set up. I wrongly assumed this new body would ensure a fair go for the Services. Regrettably, it did not do so—strong pressure from the Government prevailed.

So, the answer to that question which I asked myself earlier, did I achieve the goals I set when I became Chief? Yes and no. I console myself by placing the balance in the affirmative.

In my farewell speech when being dined out in the traditional manner, I stressed that the RAAF was and must present as an elite force. I said that whatever tasks it was set must be done with a touch of class. I mentioned how proud I was when our two F/A-18s and the American tanker arrived at Williamtown. To see them escorted in by six Mirages in close formation, an initiative of the Fighter Wing, I thought to myself, 'That's icing on the cake—a touch of class—that's the RAAF!'

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## REFLECTIONS

The previous 15 chapters have been about the past. Considering that I retired from the RAAF 25 years ago, it is getting towards the distant past. I will omit references to the years between then and now, except to say that I was not idle. I was National President of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia for seven years, a similar period as Chairman of the National Capital Authority, and patron of several organisations. For 20 of those years I was a military adviser to BAE Systems, a major global defence company. However, I would like my final words to look to the future, particularly in regard to the security and defence of Australia and matters germane to that undertaking. In regard to the use of the Australian Defence Force on expeditionary adventures, I believe we enter these collaborative arrangements too readily, without any clear idea of the strategic or military aim.

At this time, I reflect on the fact that we—Australia and our allies—have not won a war since World War II, 65 years ago. Korea was and remains a stalemate. Vietnam, even considering the limited aim the American President had set, was a defeat. The present campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan present as similar situations to Vietnam in that they just drag on and on. And yet I have not heard a strategic or military aim articulated for either of these military engagements. The whole world is aware of the mistaken premise regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and of the intention to deny terrorists the use of training grounds in Afghanistan. But what of the end results we strived to achieve—the ‘Aim’, the cardinal principle of war. If, and it is reasonable to assume, there

was no specific aim set down at the outbreak of hostilities, I will speculate and say that now it is to develop and train the indigenous forces to the extent that they can carry on the present campaigns to an acceptable conclusion—whatever that may be. One might describe this as selecting the aim on the run, a run that has taken the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ almost eight years to determine. Surely that is an abrogation of the principles of war. Perhaps not totally surprising as the Americans ignored almost the whole 10 (then) principles of war in Vietnam. In spite of past omissions, one must assume that there is now a set purpose to the hostilities in which we are still engaged. No-one would be foolish enough to suggest that it should be the establishment of an incorruptible, democratic government in both Iraq and Afghanistan—or even one of those countries. I believe we, the Western allies, will be happy to see a compromise coalition of warlords in Afghanistan—which will no doubt include a Taliban element. Iraq may be a little more difficult with Iran stirring the pot and the Shi’ite cause. In both cases America and its allies will leave declaring the national forces capable of taking control of the situation. Our collective Western intervention will be declared ‘Mission accomplished’. Once again a great deal of national treasure and lives will have been lost over a prolonged series of inconclusive battles—for what? Perhaps our politicians and those of the nation we so readily support should consider the advice of Sun Tzu, who wrote in *The Art of War* 2500 years ago: ‘In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns’, and again, ‘There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.’

Notwithstanding the many years of combat activity in these four campaigns, with the chaos, destruction, death and injury—to say nothing of its extreme cost in dollar terms—little of value has been achieved. Vietnam has been united as a communist nation, Saddam Hussein was forced to withdraw from Kuwait but again the aim of the coalition intervention was not set down in precise

terms. Was it to press on to Baghdad, to capture and disarm the retreating Iraqi Army, or simply to be satisfied and let them return with the bulk of their tanks and artillery, thus retaining the ability to suppress the Kurds, the Shi'ites and others? The fact is no serious consideration had been given to the ending process until the Iraqi retreat was in full swing. It is not surprising that it was a shambles—a shambles that left Saddam with adequate strength to brutally suppress rebellious elements that the American intervention had encouraged.

The outcome is that both Iraq and Afghanistan have been destabilised to a greater extent than existed before our intervention. Has it been worth the price we have paid and continue to pay? Is the world a better place for what we have done? To me, the answer to both questions is, NO! I was therefore surprised to read American author George Friedman (*The Next Hundred Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century*) suggest that these interventions were strategic decisions by the United States—'the purpose of these conflicts is simply to block a power or to destabilize the region, not to impose order'. I give little credence to this view.

And it does seem ironic that we describe the United States as the most powerful military nation on planet Earth and then record that it has been unable to achieve victory in conflict with relatively minor nations, Korea and Vietnam. To be surprised and frustrated by the fact that it cannot successfully combat attacks by non-state irregular forces as in Iraq and Afghanistan. How do we reconcile this contradiction? Very simply, it is the fact that, morally, the United States is not prepared to use the overwhelming force it has available to crush a minor force incapable of inflicting damage on the United States. The Western democracies would take the same view. In these asymmetric wars there is almost an absurd notion that we should, more or less, operate on the basis of a level playing field. To refrain from any action that might bring about unintended, collateral damage. This brings about a reverse asymmetry as our

enemies care not one whit about what they destroy or how many non-combatants they kill. Politicians in democratic countries are anxious to be seen holding the moral high ground. They are desperately afraid that some error or unforeseen circumstances in a military operation may cause unintended destruction or death—collateral damage—and attract the condemnation of the media, domestically and internationally. One consequence is that excessive constraints are often put on the operations of our own forces with the further consequences that our people are forced to fight at a disadvantage.

Well aware of values governing the operations of the Western nations opposing them, our opponents exploit the moral issue by using civilians to shield their activities and thus deter or severely limit our offensive action. When, as occasionally happens in the fog of war and at the high tempo of operations in the 21st century, collateral damage does occur the enemy gains political advantage by presenting our action as a flagrant attack on civilians. One of the sad features of this is the readiness of politicians and media in the Western democracies to denounce our own forces and give any error the widest publicity, assuming some degree of negligence by their own Service personnel. It does little for the morale of forces enduring stress and danger of combat duty. It is an attitude I deplore and rate as gross disloyalty by politicians and the media.

In a situation where civilians are inadvertently injured or killed we would be better to seize the initiative by expressing our genuine and deep regret and then to expose the calculated brutality of the enemy in deliberately keeping non-combatants in the combat area.

It seems to be in the application of air power that politicians have the greatest fear of collateral damage. Their concern is not supported by fact. In recent combat operations the percentage of collateral damage attributed to air operations is no more than 15 per cent. Of course it should be zero but, in the circumstances I have just mentioned, this cannot be guaranteed. I certainly do not advocate

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indiscriminate bombing or any attack not planned to minimise, to the greatest practical extent, injury to non-combatants or non-military infrastructure. To a person of my vintage and background the change in attitude on this matter is quite astounding and indeed a wonderful transformation. Bombing of Germany during World War II cost the lives of some 650 000 people, mostly women and children. Few people gave it a second thought. We were bombing the German industry and military establishments; of course people would get killed in such operations, it was inevitable. In 1944 I desperately wanted to be a pilot in Bomber Command because that was taking the war to the enemy. I hasten to add that my thinking was much the same as all servicemen I knew and, indeed, the civil population behind us. I now talk to many airmen, those filling jobs I once did, people undergoing staff training and cadets. Their opposition to the type of indiscriminate slaughter that prevailed during the two World Wars is total and genuine. When I suggest that circumstances might arise for instance, where our enemy puts civilians in harm's way to prevent us attacking a vital target, that an attack might be justified, they demur. Their views are quite firmly held. On the other hand, they have no compunction about attacking actual military targets where collateral damage is not a factor. One has to commend such views. However, a factor to consider is that the wars we are discussing are taking place thousands of miles from England, the United States and Australia, and there is absolutely no direct threat to any of these nations. I wonder if the present moral values would persist if we were under attack and in dire peril. I trust we in Australia will never have to face that dilemma.

Having put my views on the nature of these non-state wars—although Vietnam merged into a state-on-state battle—I end this subject by reiterating what I have said above. That is, that our decision to undertake an expeditionary task should be based primarily on it serving Australia's interest. The first essential is to understand, and agree with, the end result being sought—the aim.

Only then can we properly assess the risks, the value and cost we might incur. In general, my assessment would be to limit our involvement to areas of direct interest to this country—within our own region. We have, throughout our history, fought in conflicts half a world away. Now that we have ‘grown up’ we should decide for ourselves when to join a coalition and when not to. The time for ‘follow the leader’ is over. When we do decide to join an ally or a coalition we must have a full and equal say in the end result being sought. This we did when deciding our participation in Cambodia and Timor (UN-supported tasks) and the Solomon Islands.

In regard to our present engagements in the Middle East, I have had serious doubts in regard to our concept of operations. The concept is based on a land battle with the old adage that it will be won by ‘boots on the ground.’ I do realise that victory will certainly require ‘boots on the ground.’ However, I would like to envisage a situation not unlike the first Iraq War, when the aim was to kick Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. There, the Commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, harboured his ground forces carefully and would not commit to the offensive stage until air reconnaissance confirmed that the Iraqi Army, including its communications and radars, Republican Guard, armoured forces and artillery, had been subjected to accurate and continuing air attacks to the extent that their fighting capacity was reduced significantly. His staff, working with USAF General Horner and Brigadier General Buster Glosson, were tasking up to 2000 combat and support missions each day against 240 selected targets. The result is now history. Schwarzkopf’s Army raced through the opposing Iraqi forces as they desperately sought to escape. It became a ‘turkey shoot’ when the US called a halt. The mission had been achieved—but only to the extent that Saddam Hussein’s Army was out of Kuwait. It remained a potent force. One may well ask, if the air campaign had continued, could the same outcome have been achieved without the land war being activated. Could this have saved the lives of coalition soldiers?

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With that in mind, one might question why we have been fighting land battles all this time. I am aware that casualties, in the coalition forces are light considering the quite extensive operations, particularly in Afghanistan. On one or two occasions I was dismayed to read that one of the allied patrols had walked into an ambush. How could this happen? Surely we had adequate air assets that could have the people on the ground made aware of any danger or threat of enemy movement in their area. In response to my inquiries, I was told of the vast array of support that is available to Army on the ground. The ISR (Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance) is quite superb. Above all Army patrols or combat activity there would be an aircraft, or a UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle). The latter can stay in position for extended periods if required. It can continually feed to the patrol, the company or whatever force commander, a full picture of what is around his position. If enemy forces are out in the open and vulnerable to attack, air or other support fire are almost immediately available to carry out the task or, according to the prevailing conditions (risk of collateral damage etc.), the decision might be for Army to mount an attack. I marvel at how far technology has taken a modern defence force when a commander can look at the screen of his laptop and see everything in his vicinity, fed down by an unmanned vehicle thousands of feet above—day or night. The enemy is well aware of this magic and, understandably, shows a reluctance to leave built-up areas knowing the moment they do so they will be seen and be subjected to attack. Staying in populated areas or keeping civilians in their vicinity does not keep them safe but it certainly does make the task far more difficult for our troops on the ground and puts them at greater risk. In essence the enemy is sheltered by our moral constraints. We knowingly give quarter to a ruthless, vile opponent who is unimpeded by any moral values whatsoever. Adherence to this uneven moral playing field results in Australia and its allies suffering avoidable casualties. Again the media gives little credit to

our forbearance in accepting this situation, nor does it censure the sickening brutality of our enemy. Many of our servicemen literally die because of the principles and values we uphold. Nevertheless, in spite of the information I have been given, I doubt that support is always available 'on tap' to the extent that I have been led to believe.

The obvious question for an airmen to ask has been: is air power doing all it can? Can it be used to reduce casualties even further? Can the prime load of fighting this irregular enemy with no formal chain of command, that operates in small groups, that is well armed, that is able to act quickly, that is dispersed and distributed over a wide area, be transferred to air? Can air do more of the job and so minimise the burden being carried by Army? For the reasons I have just enunciated, the answer would seem to be no. The enemy is now less inclined to come out into the open and in many cases has to be ejected. He is taking quite heavy casualties and no doubt is frustrated by the fact that he is being relentlessly tracked from the sky—and there is absolutely nothing he can do about it. This is the *modus operandi* of the tactical campaign being waged. There does not seem to be a sufficiently positive outcome in sight to encourage us to believe in more than a long haul to a compromise and an inconclusive end. Is the Taliban totally devoid of strategic centres of gravity that are vulnerable to air or other attack?

To date, refuge in Pakistan has been an option, and perhaps it will remain so. However, there is now some evidence that the Pakistani Government is taking notice and putting in place countermeasures to deny, remove or destroy the Taliban forces collecting in its border areas. If this should happen, we could then be moving into a phase where the Taliban may find it to their advantage to come to the negotiating table. As stated earlier, the probable outcome would be the departure of foreign forces and the setting up of a coalition of tribal forces (warlords). It will be much the same system that has endured for centuries and that is compatible with their culture. It can be expected that much the

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same procedure will occur in Iraq, although the interference of Iran is likely to complicate the procedure and delay the outcome. Regrettably, I retain my earlier conviction that our intervention in the Middle East has profited us nothing. Nor did Vietnam for that matter. It is sad to make such a comment when so many people have died fighting for a cause. Unfortunately, that is the history of warfare.

Looking to the future, I am perturbed at the spread of nuclear weapons and the threat of further proliferation. India and Pakistan have joined the 'nuclear club' and both North Korea and Iran seem intent on pursuing the nuclear weapons course of action. At the same time I am aghast when President Obama speaks of total nuclear disarmament. I do not think he is seriously contemplating nuclear disarmament for the United States but the thought frightens me. As more nations acquire nuclear weapons, the threat of them being used naturally increases. The best course, when non-proliferation fails, is for the United States to retain an overwhelming nuclear capability to the extent that no nation would risk nuclear retaliation by the United States. This is more or less the nuclear capability environment that was a successful deterrent during the Cold War.

One more issue on the international scene that bothers me is the attitude of the United States and some other Western countries to China. It seems to me that this is based to a large extent—and to the less informed—on the China of Mao Tse Tung and its blatant support of insurgency, particularly in Asia. The major threat of China today is that it stands on the brink of being the economic superpower and, in the foreseeable future, a military superpower. That, quite understandably, will rankle the Americans who have enjoyed unchallenged superpower status since Gorbachev destabilised Russia. I doubt that it does any harm to have a degree of superpower competition.

I was certainly perturbed when I learned that the United States was urging an arrangement between United States, Japan and India, and inviting Australia to be involved, to geographically contain China. The world does not need that ingenuous type of provocation. Strategically, China could not afford to forgo the right to extend its influence across the Indian Ocean. Visits and exercises with Iran, Pakistan and other littoral countries would seem a logical course for China to pursue. Australia's response is to recognise this situation and continue to encourage a strong American presence in the Indian Ocean.

I recall going to America in early 1980 with Bill Pritchett, then Secretary of Defence, for that same purpose. It was a time when the US was facing the prospect of being forced to vacate its bases in the Philippines. The United States Navy was examining the options available. One was to reduce their deployments to the Indian Ocean. The sole purpose of our visit was to persuade the US to maintain their extant deployment pattern. The offer of a US base at Fremantle was an option we put forward on behalf of the Australian Government.

However, I will conclude with matters concerning the security and defence of Australia. My writing to this point has touched on my scepticism in regard to expeditionary ventures involving the Australian Defence Force. Such undertakings that we commit to should be in our own areas of defence interest. Before final commitment we must establish the aim—to know exactly the outcome we intend to achieve. If in a coalition undertaking, all participants must be cognisant of the aim selected. In taking this course Australia will be able to influence and thereby shape the strategic environment that will evolve in our part of the world and on which we can base our own concept for the defence of Australia.

I see no point in structuring our Defence Force for expeditionary ventures. To acquire capabilities not directly relevant to the defence of this country would put an additional burden on

the Defence budget and at the same time reduce what could be spent on our own defence. Furthermore, such expenditure should not be necessary. If we confine expeditionary ventures to our own region, we should be able to select suitable capabilities from the inventory acquired for the defence of Australia. Like most nations Australia is strained, economically, to provide a capable Defence Force. We should not exacerbate that situation by acquiring capabilities specifically relevant to an expeditionary capability.

Finally, some comment on the Australian Defence Force. I will start by commenting on the very much improved allocations of national resources to Defence by the Howard Government and which, to this stage, are being continued by the present Government. I have not known such largess in my whole Service life and can only look upon the recent and present situation with satisfaction—and envy.

When the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) was one of the leading contenders for replacing the F/A-18 and the F-111, I had some grave reservations. Then Chairman of the National Capital Authority, I was sitting next to Prime Minister John Howard at the opening of Commonwealth Place. He said, 'David, you must be very happy with our selection of the JSF aircraft'. His face fell when I replied, 'I believe it is a bit premature, Prime Minister'. To show that I was not totally negative, I said that we had selected the F-111 aircraft before it was in production and were heavily criticised for it. Furthermore, there were many serious problems that had to be sorted out before we took delivery. I went on to say that it turned out to be the best aircraft we could have selected and that it was the strike aircraft best suited to our requirements. That mollified him somewhat.

Actually, I have never been satisfied with the F-35's limited radius of action or that it only has one engine. I would prefer a twin-engined aircraft with two crew. For strike missions that could be up to five or six hours, I would prefer a two-place aircraft. I am well aware that radius of action can be extended by using air-to-

air refuelling and, indeed, tanker aircraft are on order. However, the fact is that it would be dangerous to carry out refuelling in-flight within the range of the enemy fighter aircraft. I recall the comment of a Russian Air Force officer, when noting the American use of tanker aircraft in the first Gulf War, that ‘they would have aimed to destroy the tanker aircraft, even if it meant sending their fighters on a one-way mission.’ Using the F-35 from Australian bases, it would be difficult to keep our tanker support aircraft out of harm’s way when engaged on long-range missions. To some extent, this risk may be reduced by the use of stand-off weapons but it will certainly add to the cost, which in turn may lead to a limited capacity for strike operations.

As for my ‘one engine’ objection, I think it makes little sense to pay about \$80 million for an aircraft that can be lost to a birdstrike, battle damage to the only engine or an error in servicing causing engine failure. I must say that when transiting long distance over the sea or being shot at, I have felt more comfortable sitting on two engines.

Nevertheless, the F-35 is certainly a fifth-generation fighter aircraft. It is at the leading edge of technology designed to give it an outstanding, multi-role combat capability. How successful it will actually be only time will tell. To some extent I feel that those assessing the capabilities of this aircraft have been blinded by its stealth attribute—and understandably so. However, I doubt that stealth will be a ‘win factor’ throughout its 45-year service life or for even a decade more. With Russian and Chinese technology advancing quite rapidly, it would be wrong and dangerous to assume that the very significant superiority of the Western radars and other avionics and sensors will continue unchallenged. I put these matters simply to raise awareness of the continuing challenge before us. Notwithstanding all the concerns I have expressed here, I accept that the F-35 is the obvious choice for the Royal Australian

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Air Force. Its ongoing development will be backed by the most advanced technological nation on Earth.

What of the F-22? Contrary to earlier perceptions that it would be purely an aircraft designed to provide air superiority, it is now being developed to offer a formidable strike capability. I expect it will be superior to the F-35 in every respect. However, the cost will be quite outrageous, far beyond the financial capacity of the Australian Defence budget. I believe we can safely accept the adequacy of the F-35 and take comfort in the fact that its expensive sister is in the inventory of our major ally.

It is pleasing to note that most of the 24 Super Hornets acquired for the RAAF have already arrived in Australia, and the rest will come during 2011. They will, to some extent, fill the gap created by the phase-out of the F-111. I did not like the way the \$3 billion acquisition of these aircraft was decided by the Minister, Brendan Nelson. Although the option was discussed and was well supported within parts of Air Force Headquarters, the Chief of Air Force at that time, Air Marshal Geoff Shepherd, was ultimately surprised by the decision. His words to me were that he had not asked for this buy, but the Super Hornet is a great aircraft and he was happy to have it coming into service.

Turning to the Navy, I must say I was very surprised at the announcement that the Government would acquire 12 submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. Surprised because the Navy cannot crew the six submarines they now have. How they could look to crewing 12 is quite beyond my comprehension—and beyond that of all the people with whom I have discussed the subject. I am well aware that the maintenance of submarines is quite horrific and with six boats now in service it is unusual to have more than two serviceable and battleworthy. Nevertheless, to be useful there must be a crew for each. As far as I can ascertain this acquisition decision was the initiative of the former Prime Minister—it certainly was not the result of a deep and searching examination that a project of this

size should entail. However, it is a project that has a long way to run and there will undoubtedly be many twists and turns on the way. I am a great supporter of submarines as a weapons system and strongly supported the Navy's last acquisition project. However, I do not approve of any acquisition of this magnitude being decided on the run. I would hope the requirement the then Prime Minister envisaged is matched eventually by a professional study showing the efficacy, the need and the number required to meet Navy's operational plan.

I understand from my Army friends that our troops in the combat areas are superbly equipped for their mission. I hope this will always be the case. They have performed and are performing magnificently. They deserve the very best.

The planned acquisition program for the Defence Force covering the next four decades will, if it comes to fruition, provided a very capable force that will take us to mid-21st century. No doubt most of the major weapon systems will require system upgrades as technology forges ahead at an ever-increasing rate. Most of these upgrades will be expensive but are essential if the capability of the ADF is to keep pace with and, preferably, keep ahead of potential enemies.

What gives me total confidence in looking to the future is the excellent standard of the young people now serving in the Royal Australian Air Force and those being recruited. Although long retired, I still feel part of the Air Force family.