

## **AS I RECALL**

**H.S. HODGES**

### **Early Life Influences**

My father, Horace Sydney Hodges, had been a school teacher in London from about 1912 and had joined the Territorial Army (like the CMF). He served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment from the start of World War I in 1914. He reached the rank of Company Sergeant Major and he married my mother Ethel Page in 1916. He took voluntary loss of rank in order to transfer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion which was still in England until July 1917 when it moved to the Continent for training in trench warfare. Late in September his unit was moved up into the trenches in the Ypres-Paaschendaele area in Belgium. He died of wounds on 5 October 1917 after only a few days at ‘the front’. I was born in London about four months later – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1918 – and my mother gave me my father’s names. So war has had a lifelong influence on me, especially as my father’s life-sized photo in CSM uniform looked down on me from 1918 to 1947. (The photo was damaged by bomb blast during a 1940 air raid).

My first brush with the military occurred when I was perhaps three years old. At an Armistice Day church service military band members had parked their instruments along the aisle next to which I was seated. At some point I reached out, grabbed a drum stick and gave the big drum a hearty whack.

I think it is possible that my father’s death and civilian privations in England in 1917 may have affected my mother in such a way that I, once born, did not speak one word of English until I was nearly three years old – when I uttered “Panama Hat” and from that moment changed entirely to English to my family’s relief. However, I proved myself not to be a complete imbecile when, at 2-1/2 years of age I had drawn a side-view of a person sprinting with all the leg and arm joints at about 90 degrees and correctly oriented.

## **Education**

My mother respected Dad's occupation as a teacher and encouraged me to head in that direction. I attended the local school and when 11 years old was in the class of 13s. (At that time, my story may well have ended. I once went with a teacher and some other boys to the nearest public swimming pool. Having changed into my swimming costume for the first time, I approached the side of the pool and while wondering how best to enter the water, I was pushed in; not being able to swim I was floundering and would certainly have drowned had no one rescued me). At 11 I topped the Essex examination for a scholarship to High School where I became House Captain, School Captain and Scout Troop Leader and enjoyed playing soccer, cricket and competing in athletics.

In the Higher School Certificate exams I gained enough distinctions to be awarded a County Major Scholarship which paid all my university fees for four years including an Honours degree and post-graduate Diploma of Education.

While at High School I made my first trips overseas. At about age 12 I went with other school Scouts to Brittany – one week on the north coast between St Malo and Mont St Michel and the second week on the Bay of Biscay shore at Quiberon. Two years later I was one of 1300 schoolboys from all over England on a cruise from England through the Kiel Canal to Copenhagen, Stockholm Gothenberg and Oslo. Immediately after leaving school, I had a schoolboys' cruise to Lisbon, Casablanca and Madeira. I took a camera on each cruise and in the southern one I was using what I believe to be the first colour films – colour positives. Sadly, after seventy-eight years, the colours are beginning to deteriorate.

For my degree courses I enrolled at University College, London. I topped the Economics I and Geography I courses and in the second year, I found myself as

Secretary of the Economics Society and its President the following year. Leading to my degree I attended several courses at the London School of Economics and that School still regards me as an Alumnus and sends me quarterly magazines and ‘begging letters’.

The year 1939-40 at London’s University’s Institute of Education was spent at Nottingham to which the I of E had been evacuated as WW2 had started. The education authorities instructed me to refer my call up papers to them as I was contracted to them under the terms of my Scholarship. Nottingham was a nice city and I took up ice skating at the same rink used some years later by the famous skating identities Torvill and Dean.

On returning from the ice-rink one evening, I was battling a river-mist that was so dense that I bumped into a man (judging by the voice) who could not be seen at the length of an arm. Then I fell into the circle of a round-a-bout while trying to lead a car but, about twenty minutes later, I walked up the road to Mansfield and, at one point from waist down, I was in fog, and from the waist upwards I was in clear air with stars above.

### **Wartime**

I was called up in mid-1940 into a Territorial Army Anti-aircraft Battery at Stamford on the Great North Road (London-Edinburgh) and pounded the tarmac of a small carpark for a month during which I came to know the Lee Enfield rifle and the Lewis gun. How many times did the instruction start with “Right! Watch me carefully, follow me closely and I will give you a complete demonstration with explanation”? I was then moved to this Battery’s gunsites outside Grantham where any position requiring brains was filled from Norwich Union Insurance and the muscle for the guns, vehicles, etc. came from Colmans Mustard. I was one of twelve reinforcements there including a gypsy who came with his barrow and his dog! (He was discharged as being more trouble than he was worth). I was with that AA Battery – 3 inch First War guns and no radar – for seven weeks,

sometimes doing guard duty with nearly two metres of water-pipe with a bayonet in one end, called a pike (not that my weapon mattered as there were plenty of other gaps in the hawthorn hedge). My last week with that Unit was at Battery HQ where I was trained as a pay-clerk before being posted away for a new battery being formed to train men for a “Z Battery”( rocket launchers). Two weeks back on a parade ground as a shakedown then to the East coast where an experienced pay clerk had just taken up duty. I now had two stripes and was a foot drill instructor after nine weeks of service. Suddenly the battery clerk was posted away and, as the only NCO around who had even been to high school, I was given a trestle table, chair, a pen, some ink and a third stripe and left to get on with it – it being the enrolment of 320 Welsh coal miners – including 29 with the surname Jones.

One of the officers put it to me that I should apply for a commission. This I did and spent five months at an OCTU in mid-Wales. As a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant I was posted to an AA regiment spread around Cardiff. One month on a headland was followed by two months on an island with naval 4.5 inch guns which also had an anti-ship role. The officers’ mess was the lighthouse. I saw no action there.

It was now late 1941 and I was posted again (together with my batman) to a new battery (500 M HAA Bty) being put together in Dorset. I was mainly concerned with teaching predictor drills to young ATS females. We worked with three-ply tea chests painted with dials and wheels to resemble the Vickers predictor. Practice camp was on the west coast of Wales, then to Redcar on the Yorkshire coast to defend the steel works on the banks of the Tees and the railway centres inland: (Four 3.7 inch static guns, radar, height finder and predictor). The other half of the battery was defending the ICI plant near Middlesbrough as well as the steel works.

For reasons I will never understand, I was appointed Transport Officer for the Battery. (My relevant experience was having driven a 3-ton truck once round a

parade ground with an instructor beside me). The Battery had been ordered to provide a guard at RHQ consisting of six ATS girls. The only available transport was a 15 cwt truck which was liable to stop and needed a male to crank it – there was no starter-motor. Our mechanic was on leave and I had to provide the muscle if the engine stalled. The ATS (i.e. female) driver and I collected the guard party but the driver was too scared to drive that load, given the truck's unreliability, so I had to drive the party to RHQ. The truck behaved but when I was just about to enter the gates at the Regimental HQ an oncoming vehicle caused me to make a slightly off centre entry with the result that the side of the truck struck the left-hand gate, wrenching its hinges from the masonry gatepost. The impact broke that stone post in half and the top section – with its round stone ball still on top – rested on the side of the truck. It only needed to be levered away using the crank-handle and it fell into the garden of the gate-keeper's lodge. Had it fallen into the truck there would have been more than one death. I was ordered to report to the Colonel, expecting at best a severe reprimand; but he said that if I could have the gate post and gate restored in three days, that would be the end of the matter. My luck was in – we had two stone-masons in the Battery and the repair was achieved on time.

Our Battery HQ was in a steel-magnate's mansion near Middlesbrough. The initial Battery Commander got to know of a piano whose owner would donate it to any army unit which could look after it and make good use of it. Our BSM was sent immediately with a truck and brought back a Bluthner grand piano. I helped to get it back on its legs and the BSM asked if I could read music. "Of course", I replied, so he produced a book and launched into a faultless rendering of Cesar Frank's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue, as I turned the pages.

While at Redcar I attended a gas course, a bomb-disposal course, an ordnance course at the Military College of Science as well as a radar and plotting course. It seems I scored remarkably well in the last of these as it led me to being sent later to Manorbier in south-west Wales for a Regimental Gunnery Officers'

Course which led still later to a solo inspection tour of the gun sites (equipment and drills) of the Brigade on the west side of Scotland.

500 MH AA Battery was moved in 1943 from Yorkshire to the Edinburgh suburbs. We were there for about a year, saw one Junkers 88 for a few seconds but never fired a shot. Brigade gave me the interesting job of designing a box barrage to cover the Rosyth Naval Base near the Forth Bridge – elevation, bearing and fuse setting for every single gun in the Brigade.

At times, our tipsy padre failed to turn up for Sunday morning service so I would lead an Anglican (C of E there) service with no sermon. I had to vary the blessing's words as I had no authority to dispense what a sober parson would offer his flock.

In Edinburgh I lost a game of darts in which I did not compete. The BC and I threw "for centre" to see which of us played first. I was happy with my "25" ring but the boss hit the exact centre of the 50. Then double 6, treble 19 and double 16 gave him the "101 up" game before I had a chance to throw.

Flying bombs, or 'buzz bombs' started falling around London while I was in Edinburgh. Five hundred Battery was to go to the south coast to take them on. Lt Phillipson and I went as advance party to have a one week course at Washington in Sussex on destroying the bombs before they reached the coast. Then "Phil" and I went to take over an eight gun site at Bexhill – eight 3.7 inch static guns along the flat before the beach, a school and some vacant houses for accommodation. The guns were electronically aimed by remote control from an American predictor (with 120 of the old glass valves) and the American SCR 584 radar. This combination gave our Battery 20 confirmed destructions of flying bombs but also caused me to voice an order which probably never got into the drill books. A flying bomb was approaching. I was GPO, about 40 metres behind the guns. No. 4 gun's controls were defective – out of phase – so the

barrel was pointing straight at me and depressed about five degrees. “No 4! For Christ’s sake elevate!” was my novel order. Instant reaction at the gun allowed me to write this.

About this time I became engaged to my long term friend Hilda who, in 1942, had enrolled in the Women’s Royal Naval Service and whose only posting was to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force – General Eisenhower’s SHAEF. She worked directly to Admiral Ramsay (of Dunkirk fame) in Allied Naval Command Expeditionary Force – address simply ANCXF London.

After the Normandy landings, the Allies advanced to the east, capturing the ramps from which the flying bombs were launched. The Battery was moved to the east near Rye but the flying bombs soon stopped coming so the Battery moved again. I returned from leave to find the Battery half way to the Portsmouth area. No action there saw the Battery moved to the London suburbs in the vain hope of helping to stop the V2 rockets. They were, however, too high and too fast to track and a further move followed to a football ground adjacent to Royal Artillery HQ at Woolwich. We had fired our last shot.

My closest Army mate, Lt Bousfield, called up after two years at Oxford University and probably the best aircraft recognition officer in the Army (and best man at my wedding) – and I were both posted away from 500 Battery to Caterick, Yorkshire, for conversion to field artillery. That took about four to five months ending with two weeks at Lark Hill near Salisbury. By then the German Army had capitulated.

### **Overseas Service**

Embarkation leave followed, during which the nuclear bombs fell in Japan and hostilities ceased. Our training had been preparing us to join General Slim’s 14<sup>th</sup> Army in Burma. He no longer needed us but the embarkation papers had been signed and we went. I was draft conducting officer taking about 30 gunners to

the 14<sup>th</sup> Army. We disembarked at Bombay and moved by train to Deolali, an enormous British complex. Here Bousfield and I were parted. I went to a large camp near Poona – to 16<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, 2 Div – which was taking a breather after a stint in the Burmese jungle. In exercise shoots, I showed that I was a competent field gunner and I was encouraged to switch my enrolment to the Regular Army but I declined. I became the Regiment's Education Officer, put up another pip to Captain and, when the Regiment went off for field training I was left in charge of our camp – together with Lt Phillipson who had been in 500 AA Bty in the UK. One problem was a Gunner under close arrest in a marquee. Overnight he crawled under the canvas wall, took a 15 CWT truck with a drum of petrol and disappeared. I reported this to Regt and Area Command and, as already ordered, boarded a DC3 from Poona – the start of a journey back for demobilization.

Before leaving India, I had been going with my hut-mate and the Padre to augment the choir in what we would call an Anglican Church. The congregation was Anglo Indian; Easter was coming up and the choir was to present Stainer's "Crucifixion". I knew it in detail having sung it about nine times at the local church in the UK, so I became temporary choir-master for the rehearsals. I had been a chorister for those nine years but with the HSC exams coming up and suddenly realizing I had been saying things weekly in the church that I did not really believe; I quit – except for Poona (now Puna).

The DC3 took me to Karachi for one night. I transferred to a Liberator for the Karachi – Lydda leg and was sitting next to an Indian Army Captain. I mentioned that I had known a few Indians at London University before the war. He asked for names and when I said Sen, he said, "Hey – that's my brother". And the brother turned up in Canberra in the mid-fifties as High Commissioner for India.

We had a few days near Tel Aviv getting accustomed to cooler weather, then on to Mussolini's air base behind Tripoli in Libya. The pilot became ill on the flight so

I had four days in Libya until a replacement came from the UK. The plane crossed the south coast of England right over my old gun site at Rye and landed at Cambridge. Trains took me home from there and formal demobilization took place at Royal Artillery Headquarters at Woolwich.

Four weeks later I went to Guildford for civilian clothes: scruffy jacket and suit but the hat and excellent raincoat both came eventually to RMC where the hat was borrowed for the cadets' Reveues.

### **To Australia**

Before leaving anti-aircraft, I had seen a War Office instruction calling for qualified servicemen to go to Burma to set up a Military government – to ‘get things going again as General Slim moved South’. My Commanding Officer had advised against this as I had recently married and suggested that, if I did not want to live in the UK after the war “Why don’t you see what the Dominions have to offer?” Several letters went out. Australia sent the most encouraging reply but referred us to State governments as the Commonwealth had no role in education then. The nicest response was from the Tasmanian office where a very friendly official offered me a Senior Master position in a High School; a position it would take decades to reach in the UK – if ever. I accepted and had to wait several months for sea transport. Towards the end of the delay it snowed all over England stopping the trains and coal supplies to the south for several weeks. Southampton was still under snow when we sailed on 7 February 1947.

### **Arrival**

It took just over a month to reach Fremantle where the wharfies would not unload passenger luggage – cabin crew had to do that. Before we reached Australia, the captain had announced his intended haste to get out of Melbourne and carry on to Sydney. Some passengers asked him to explain, which he did, saying the Melbourne wharfies had never shown him any zeal and the less he had to do with them the better. He did not know that the passengers who asked for his reason

were a delegation of wharfies returning home. So the union played rough in Fremantle and Melbourne where Hilda and I disembarked, still dressed for UK snow and the temperature at 37 degrees celcius.

In Melbourne I called at the Commonwealth Bank to change some travellers' cheques and had to sign a large register. On the line above was the unmistakable signature of a female officer from my old 500 Battery, obviously on her way back to New Zealand.

The temperature the next day was a nice 15 degrees C which suited us and, having made arrangements for our crates to cross Bass Strait, we boarded the "Taroona" and woke up to fine weather at Beauty Point – downstream from Launceston.

Hilda and I were met off the train in Hobart and were requested to be at the Education Department next morning. We were on time and were introduced to Mr Percy Hughes, Secretary of the Education Department. The Director, Mr Fletcher, happened to find us with the Secretary and asked us to come to his office. So we conversed with him for perhaps 15 minutes at which time he remembered the Minister (Mr Howroyd) was in the building. Thus we were taken to the Minister's office where it occurred to him that the State Premier (Mr Cosgrove) was also there that day – so we had the pleasure of meeting him too – all within one hour!

We travelled by train to Burnie the following day and were met and entertained by the Headmaster. Within hours, he had offered Hilda the job of teaching shorthand and typing to the senior girls.

The Burnie community treated us as family and referred to England as "Home". Within three weeks we were sleeping on the West Coast at the River Pieman "Heads" with a party of about a dozen including a fellow teacher who had been

awarded the DSO and two bars for one-man submarine work in the Norwegian fjords during WW2. In Burnie, I came to know the family of Colour Sergeant, Geoff Leary – still at the Royal Military College, and soon gained a favourable impression of the College. Thus I was intrigued when shown an advertisement in a Hobart newspaper calling for applications for a lectureship (at about 60 percent more than I was receiving as salary) to lecture at RMC on one or more of four subjects, all of which I was familiar with at the HSC and degree levels. I was later interviewed in Hobart by the RMC Commandant (1945-48) Brigadier E.L. Vowells, (one of the very first graduates from RMC). Maybe I struck a friendly chord with a fellow ex-gunner.

### **To Canberra and the Royal Military College**

A month later I was offered a position as lecturer, subject to passing a medical examination for the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme – which I did in Launceston.

Hilda and I flew to Canberra on 19 July 1948 and were met by Eric Shepherd, lecturer in mathematics. I could be housed in the Officers' Mess, but Hilda had to spend an unpleasant fortnight at the Hotel Kingston in a room situated right over the bar. We found much better conditions for her in Deakin where the host family's daughter later married an ex-cadet and became Lorelie Hooper.

After a while, Hilda joined her folks (who had recently flown out from England for health reasons and were literally building a cottage themselves south of Hobart) in Tasmania for a couple of months until I had arranged temporary use of a cottage in Duntroon whilst awaiting a converted army hut in "Siberia" (just up the hill from the Chapel which was built later) where my mother joined us from UK.

The following year, 1950, the then Commandant, Major General Henry Wells, offered us the use of part of the Commandant's house (now Bridges House).

There I was probably the world's only lecturer with the second function of Commandant's 'after-hours boiler man'. As a second claim to fame, I was instructed by a General (almost with a "watch me carefully..." prelude) as to the way in which to sweep up leaves without spinal damage i.e. push the broom rather than move it sideways.

However, family relations had not improved and my mother found accommodation at Barton House in Canberra and employment with the UK High Commission. Subsequently, she was the very first person to move into a unit in the "Eight Storey Flats" near the Civic shops. While there she bought a small car which made it easier for her to visit Hilda and me about once a month.

Unfortunately, she developed cancer and had radiation treatment in Sydney which I think aggravated her pain. She spent her last few weeks back in our care, and died in the Royal Canberra Hospital. Four RMC Professors assisted at her burial in 1964.

Hilda and I had good relations with Commandants Wells and Hopkins but would have preferred our own home and were lucky in 1952 to be able to move to 3 Plant Road in Duntroon; an old stone cottage with a weatherboard extension, a large garden with several fruit trees, a chicken house, five lawns and a family of possums under the floor and a solitary possum under the roof.

Whilst living in what is now "Bridges House", Hilda resumed her secretarial career; this was with the Secretary of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. When the secretariat moved from the ANU to Western Australia, Hilda – by this time living in 3 Plant Road, Duntroon - took up pottery for several years before switching to weaving under the guidance of the last of the female Campbells to be born at Duntroon. She graduated from a hand-loom to a four-shaft pedal loom which we bought from an uncle of my first lecturer, Jim Ramsay. I made a wooden revolving "warping swift" for converting balls of wool into many strands of equal length for warps, and I did all the setting up.

Hilda did the weaving: but not for long, as the Australian National University called Hilda back for a confidential task that was to last fourteen days. She remained there for fourteen years, editing the University's official publications and seeing them through the printers. However, worsening mobility terminated the work she loved: she could spot a comma printed in the wrong font.

One of Hilda's typists was a young woman from the Ukraine who came with her Polish electrician husband as a Displaced Person. After a period in the Bonegilla migrant camp they were sent to Canberra where the husband worked for the electricity supply organization; his wife was given a job as a housemaid in The Lodge whilst Sir Robert and Dame Pattie Menzies were in residence. On taking up duty, she was handed a pile of clean sheets and pillow-cases and pointed to the staircase. The housekeeper went upstairs later to check that the beds had been properly re-made but was horrified to find a mattress hanging over the balcony in the sunshine. The Menzies were very kind to the maid who, after her retirement from ANU, had been widowed and then married another Ukrainian. That couple invited Hilda and me to afternoon tea together with Dame Pattie and her daughter Heather.

After visiting us in 1954 to attend the parade at which Queen Elizabeth presented new Colours to the Corps of Staff Cadets, Hilda's parents decided to move from Tasmania to Queanbeyan. Her stepfather died in 1956 during the Melbourne Olympic Games and her mother stayed on in Queanbeyan.

Hilda and I could see that we could not live in Duntroon for ever so, after fourteen years in Plant Road, Duntroon, we decided to move into Canberra and were lucky to learn through Professor Traill Sutherland of a house soon to be sold in Deakin near The Lodge. It turned out that we knew the owners on either side and across the road so, in 1966, we moved to 11 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin.

We recognized that Hilda's mother would need to move in with us at some stage so I designed an eight-square granny flat extension (800 sq. ft) in which the living room was provided with shelving for my books. (The building of this extension was under the supervision of Clem Cummings of the RMC 1955 Class, who had left the Army to become a professional architect). Most of the books and all my academic journals were donated to the RMC Library when later I moved to Yarralumla.

Soon after moving to Deakin, Hilda began having walking problems and, in 1972, she had to resign from the position of editor of the ANU's official publications. She was bedridden for about 15 years with MS but in January 1988 she died of cancer in Calvary Hospital. For years my situation at home had been known at RMC and the College was very helpful with my weekly teaching programme.

### **Teaching**

From the early 1950s RMC's curriculum was reviewed by a standing committee comprising the Commandant, DMA and representatives of the Department of the Army and several professors from Australian universities. The result of these biennial meetings usually reflected the personal interests of committee members, so the Engineering, Science and Arts courses were intermittently diversified. Thus Government and Recent International Affairs, came under my wing in 1952. History of Australia and New Zealand followed, so with Economics and Geography, I eventually managed what might have been described as the Humanities Department. The Department's staff grew to ten and my position was upgraded to Professor from Senior Lecturer.

Incidentally, the first lecturer to join me back in 1952 was James Ramsay who later in life became a Minister in the Victorian State Parliament and was the man behind the monarchist case against Malcolm Turnbull's republican case in the

debate in Old Parliament House in 1999. Jim died in 2013 and leaves me (in 2014) as the last man standing from the RMC academic staff of the early 1950s.

### **Affiliation**

In 1967 the Royal Military College affiliated with the University of New South Wales as that University's Faculty of Military Studies and University College. Geography, Government and History came to be handled by separate Departments, leaving me as Head of the Department of Economics for several more years. Faculty meetings dealt with matters and recommendations forwarded by the Faculty Executive Committee which, in turn, was advised by the separate Arts, Science and Engineering Committees (which had overlapping memberships). I chaired the Arts Committee for seven years before retirement and was thus a member of the Executive Committee for that period.

When I first joined the RMC academic staff, I was encouraged to join the Professional Officers' Association in the Commonwealth Public Service. We were, at that time, employees of the Department of the Army. (I was not reluctant to do this as I had a warm regard for responsible Unions which, in large, part derived from the fact that my father had joined the National Union of Teachers in the UK before the First World War and, after my birth, that Union paid my mother a regular allowance right up to my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.)

I had become the de facto representative of the RMC academic staff in the Professional Officers' Association CPS in the 1950s. In fact, I became the POA's Branch Secretary for 12 years and President for four years. I resigned soon after RMC joined UNSW and was awarded Hon. Life Membership of the POA which has since merged with the CPSU where my Life Membership continues.

As the only one of the staff with experience in conditions of employment and as President of the RMC Staff Association, I had a major hand in negotiations with UNSW on staff employment conditions. The outcome for existing RMC staff

was a choice between three employment options: Stay as public servants and remain in the Commonwealth public service superannuation scheme or, secondly, become university employees but retain the CPS superannuation option, or thirdly, quit the Public Service and become university staff and switch to the university's superannuation arrangements. Most of the RMC staff opted for the second arrangement, myself included.

### **Other Memories from the RMC 1948-83**

In the early fifties, we set up the RMC Residents' Association. I was, for a while, Treasurer then Secretary but cannot recall any achievements of the Association. I played hockey for the RMC Staff team for two seasons as its goal-keeper. I once conducted a tour of the partly constructed Snowy Mountains Scheme and also took the Geography class on a tour of industry around Sydney and Port Kembla as well as the open-cut mine near Lithgow in which town we saw the Small Arms Factory making heads for golf clubs!

I credit working at the RMC with putting an end to my smoking. I had smoked a pipe(!) infrequently while I was of High School age. It was while I was chairing a meeting of the Arts Committee at RMC that I suddenly realized I was the only one among perhaps sixteen who was smoking. So I stopped temporarily. Later while marking exam papers I smoked several pipes one after the other and began to feel somewhat 'kippered'. I went home for lunch and back to my desk but not feeling the need to resume smoking. It was as easy as that.

I retired from the Royal Military College and UNSW on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1983.

### **Personal Affairs**

Nearly two years after Hilda's death in 1988 I married a lady we had both known for about thirty years – Adele ('Del') Bateman. Del had been an original school girl at Canberra Girls Grammar School and her father (Jack Mildenhall) was Canberra's first official photographer. As a late teenager Del had attended Cadet Balls at RMC. She said she once pinned the two pips on the shoulders of one

Senior Cadet. She worked as a shorthand-typist in the Public Service and, for several years was the Private Secretary of John Curtin – then Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament.

A few years after the Second War, Del was Secretary to Professor Herbert Burton, Principal of Canberra University College, followed by about ten years as Secretary to three Israeli Ambassadors; the last of whom helped to have my father's First War death recorded in Belgium where he died – instead of Jerusalem! (The War Graves Commission did not know of his transfer from the Second Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment – which did go to Gallipoli and Palestine – to the Third Battalion which fought near Ypres in Belgium).

Del's first marriage broke up and she later married William Bateman who was at one time Deputy Director of the Forestry Bureau, I believe. He died and it was about two years before Del rang to ask about Hilda's health only to learn that Hilda had died only five hours earlier. It was nearly two years before Del and I married. We lived in my house in Canterbury Crescent, Deakin, for about four years before moving to a unit in Yarralumla with a view of the Lake. One could see from the front door that it was a large unit but there were fourteen steps up to that entrance and there were going to be more stairs up to the bedrooms. I warned Del that all these stairs would be a serious hazard because of her breathing problems but she was enamoured. We moved there in 1993. However, I was right and, in 1999 we had to move again – this time to a unit newly constructed in The Grange, Deakin, to which access was by a lift and, only in an emergency, by stairs. A second advantage in this retirement village was a dining room which made life easier for Del and continues to be a great help to me.

Del had two daughters from her first marriage and, of course, they are now my step-daughters. Jeanette has lived in Italy for several decades and worked for the United Nations in Rome as Secretary to the Head of Freedom From Hunger. She was married to an Italian for about a year but although they divorced through having different interests, they remain close friends. Jeanette took up oil painting

some years ago, exhibits frequently and has won prizes. She visited her ageing father in Melbourne regularly for many years and came on to Canberra to visit Del and me, and then just me.

Jeanette's sister, Jill, travelled around with Jeanette for years until Jeanette dropped anchor in Rome. Jill came back to Australia, went through tertiary education in Canberra and found employment in the field of university research which took her to America where she qualified as a PhD in the medical field at MIT in Boston. She has worked in the fields of testing new pharmaceutical products, of assisting the Federal Police and in evaluating workers' compensation claims (so I understand).

### **Family in England**

Hilda and I had no children, partly from choice and partly from Hilda's medical problems in her earlier years. Hilda's brother, Alan Viner and his wife Stella (both now deceased) had two sons – my nephews. The elder, Brian Viner, has two daughters by his first wife Diana and two step-children with his second wife, Sally. My younger nephew Malcolm Viner and his wife Nina also have two daughters: the elder is married and visited me in Canberra. The other will possibly marry soon. We keep in touch.

It has been discovered recently that my father's grandfather and his family moved to London from Cork in Southern Ireland in the 1850s. I am not sure whether my father's father had already been born. Maybe the Irish connection may account for a touch of copper in the hair colour of some of my father's generation. My father had an elder brother who fathered three girls. Sadly now all have died. Father's younger brother had only one son as far as I know. He married but had no children. Of my father's three sisters, the eldest – Grace – did not marry; the second became the mother of a boy, Leslie, who became a Trinity House pilot, and a girl, Jean, who is now a grandmother having had four daughters and an ever growing family of youngsters. Father's youngest sister – Rose – had two

daughters: Kathleen who has died and Sheila who survives and has two sons. I am pleased to be still in contact with two of these cousins – Sheila and Jean.

I can trace my mother's family history back to the early 1800s thanks to my maternal grandmother's fabulous memory and her family bible. About 1938 I was able to draw up family trees going back in time on my grandfather's and on my grandmother's side; over 100 names in all. I did not bring that research to Australia but recently I discovered these two trees among my mother's large wedding photographs which she had brought.

My mother's father – James William Page – had an uncle –William Creswick – who was said to be the “Laurence Olivier” of his day. James himself came from a family of butchers in Kew who had the meat-supply contract to supply Kew Palace. When the Palace ceased to be a royal residence, my ancestor (great-great-grandfather) attended the auction sale and bought a Chippendale bureau about 2 metres tall and too bulky to be brought to Australia, as well as two solid silver tablespoons which I still possess. They go back to George III and are considerably worn from use in the Palace.

My grandfather Page was Senior Engineer at a large fire station on the south side of the Thames. My grandmother, Emma Esther Page, ran her own corner-store and had four Page children. The eldest, Emily, eventually married Arthur Horrell in Cape Town and had two sons. I have long since lost contact with them. Emma's next child, Herbert was, at one time, 25 mile road cycling champion of England and was wounded in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Herbert's only child made the fatal mistake of riding his very powerful motorcycle across an intersection just as an oncoming bus was turning to the right, across his lane. Young ‘Bertie’ died instantly. My uncle then took the bus people (London Passenger Transport Board) to court but lost the case.

My grandparents' third child was my Uncle Ernest who became one of the first Scoutmasters in London (the First East London troop whose original rather washed-out Union Jack is still in my possession). Ernie married a divorced lady with a two years old girl who grew up to be a secretary, an army officer and later the wife of another officer who, after the Second World War, went into the Colonial Service in Africa and eventually was Governor of the Seychelles.

Grandmother Page's last child was my mother Ethel – born in 1893, married in 1916 and widowed in late 1917; four months before I was born.

### **Travel and Other Stories**

Hilda and I had short holidays mostly along the east coast from Merimbula to Terrigal though, in the early 50s, we had enjoyed longer stays with Hilda's family in Tasmania. From 1965 we began visiting New Zealand, especially the South Island. (I had wanted to go there since about 1930 when a New Zealand teacher visited my High School and showed some lantern slides). After several visits, the senior NZ Military Liaison Officer in Canberra declared me to be an Honorary Kiwi for knowing the South Island better than he did despite his wife coming from there.

Hilda and I travelled by public transport in both islands in 1965 – aeroplanes, coaches and train – from Christchurch down to Milford Sound, across to Dunedin where I called on my student-mate at London University who, by then, was Head of the Geography Department in the local university. To get to Napier and see something of the north of the South Island we had to fly via Wellington. In Napier we dined with a couple who were on their honeymoon and invited us to join them in their car for a run along the north coast as far as Collingwood. Tom and Daphne remained our good friends from that time. We stayed in their home several times and, just after Hilda died, I paid them a solo visit to attend the wedding of their daughter and to drive alone from Auckland to the Bay of Islands and back.

Four of my NZ visits with Hilda involved a wheelchair and other necessary packages. Hilda's mother came with us on one occasion. It took two whole days for the three of us to get from Canberra to Christchurch via the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney for one night and the second night in the air via Melbourne.

While in New Zealand, I twice ran into former RMC students by accident and, in one hotel, was served dinner by one of the daughters of Professor Corbett of RMC – a coincidence!

Del and I covered both Islands, east and west coasts and from Bluff in the south to the extreme north of the North Island by car.

Hilda had never wanted to return or to even to visit the United Kingdom so it was not until after her death in January 1988 that I paid a seven weeks' visit to England where I visited family, friends and three anti-aircraft officers with whom I had kept in touch.

In 1989 one of my relatives visited me in Canberra for seven weeks during which we drove all round Tasmania and spent a week on Great Keppel Island near Rockhampton.

In May 1990 Del and I joined other members of the Duntroon Society in a self-drive tour of wineries around Rutherglen, Victoria.

In July of that year, we set off on a delayed honeymoon to visit my family and friends in England where Del's breathing problems caused her to spend a week in University College Hospital – just across Gower Street from my pre-war college in London.

In Canberra we had booked a tour from England by coach through Dover and Calais to Amsterdam, Volendam, Lubeck, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm (60 years after my first visit) across to the Norwegian fjords, returning via Oslo and Gothenburgh and back to England by ship. It proved a rough crossing with winds said to be Force 11 on the Beaufort Scale.

From London we flew to Zurich for a coach tour round Switzerland where we met daughter Jill and grand-daughter Elise in Basle. From Switzerland we flew to Rome and were met by daughter Jeanette who took us by coach to L'Aquila (which has been vacated and locked down since a serious earthquake in 2009). Jeanette then took us by car to her village Assergi to the east of L'Aquila. There the local GP ordered Del to stay in bed (with breathing problems) until he declared her well enough to fly back to Australia. Thus we were not able to undertake the tour of Italy which was to have included a cruise to Greece and back from Venice.

In June 1991 I drove for the first of our visits to SE Queensland, returning via the New England Highway and Terrigal. In September we joined in another self-drive tour with the Duntroon Society to visit the site of the Japanese POW outbreak and the beautiful memorial gardens in Cowra.

In the early 1990s Neighbourhood Watch began in at least the northern parts of Deakin. I became involved only to the extent of putting advisory leaflets into mail boxes in the area bounded by National Circuit, Melbourne Avenue, State Circle and the open grassland behind the Lodge. After moving to Yarralumla, I continued that simple task but also delivered packets of such leaflets to others who would actually deliver the single leaflets to mail boxes round their blocks. I covered two nearby blocks.

We visited Tasmania in 1992 and stayed with Hilda's step-brother John and his wife Micky who were still in Burnie. John's wartime injury had caught up with him and he had become a woodwork and metalwork teacher in Burnie.

Then Del and I had short holidays in Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island before re-visiting England for a coach tour from London to Devon, back up through the Midlands and North Wales to Liverpool (visiting both cathedrals) and on to Cumbria and the Scottish Highlands. The return was via Edinburgh, Yorkshire, Cambridge and finally London.

From London we flew to Switzerland. From Basle we went by train to Interlaken where we met Jeanette who came with us on a train trip to the Jungfrau group of mountains and back via Grindelwald. There is a crest on that line near the bottom of the Eiger where the train stopped to allow passengers to have a look round. A few metres from the station and about five metres higher than the platform, was a shop where I was able to buy some films. Returning to the train my feet went from under me on hardened snow – to the amusement of the inevitable group of Japanese tourists; so I can now claim to have fallen on the Eigar and lived to tell the tale.

In 1993, Del and I took Bill Peach's Great Australian Air Cruise: Longreach, Kakadu, Darwin, Broome, Mount Newman and back via Burke and Sydney.

At last, on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1993, I was finally and officially declared to be an Australian citizen.

Whilst living in Yarralumla, I took Del for her first visit to New Zealand and a tour of the South Island. Later that year (1994) we flew to America and north to Vancouver to enjoy a cruise to Alaska, going on by train from Anchorage to Fairbanks. On the way, I had hoped to see the highest mountain in North America – Mt McKinley, just over 20,000 feet high – but there was low cloud

and drizzle when I arrived by coach at its base in Denali National Park. However, that day was saved by the coach having to stop to allow an enormous bear to saunter unconcernedly across the road.

Del and I flew back to Anchorage on a beautiful sunny morning and had a glorious view of Mt McKinley as we passed by. Then on to Vancouver for the popular rail and coach tour to Jasper, Lake Louise, Banff and back to Vancouver. We were unable to include Vancouver Island in our itinerary because HM the Queen was there for the Commonwealth Games and there was no available accommodation.

In October 1994 I traded in our Holden Camira and bought a Holden-Toyota (called an Apollo – a Camry with very minor alterations) and three months later I sold the last of my four Rovers – all safe and comfortable but prone to fuel pump trouble.

1995 saw Del and me flying to Europe again – to Greece via Heathrow for a Greek Islands cruise and back to UK for a coach tour of Ireland. On the last day in Ireland there occurred one of life's great coincidences. I was talking to Del and something I said caused the lady in the seat in front of us to turn and say "You must be from Canberra, I knew Hilda Hodges in the head office of The Australian National University in the early fifties". It turned out that she had worked for David Hodgkin, the Deputy Registrar. Her husband had been Paul Keating's chauffeur when Paul was Prime Minister.

Back in London I arranged for a hire car which I would collect at Stanstead Airport near Cambridge. We made a fruitless drive – my first and only drive in the UK – into East Anglia in search of Del's Mildenhall family history. None was found but just to stay at the historic "Swan Hotel" in Lavenham made the trip worthwhile.

Soon after our return from the UK, Del and I visited friends in Hervey Bay, Queensland. On the way north we stopped for a day or two to visit Eric Shepherd, a former mathematics lecturer at Duntroon. (During the Second World War Eric had led a party of troops behind the Japanese lines in New Guinea in a commando-type of operation lasting ten months). After his resignation from RMC, he ran a newsagency in Bowral for a while then went back into teaching maths in high schools. Along the way – and while he was at RMC – he was Colonel of the local CMF Regiment.

In December 1995, our daughter Jeanette visited from Italy. She visited every year until 2013 when her father died at 98.

1996 saw Del and me back in New Zealand for a drive through about 95% of the North Island. Later that year we went on the road again to Queensland, turning round at “Twin Waters” and returning via a zig-zag route including Toowoomba, Moree, Dubbo and Bathurst where I enjoyed one lap of the “Bathurst 1000” course, but restricted to 60kph.

Five months later we were off again via Albury, Beechworth and Healesville to the bay side suburb of Mount Eliza where we spent some days with a cousin of Del and his family before taking the car over to Queenscliff, The Great Ocean Road, the Twelve Apostles and Portland where we turned inland to return via Hamilton and Ballarat.

I was slow off the mark in 1997 but in August, Del and I flew to Cairns from where we visited the Atherton Tableland, Daintree and Port Douglas. We had a short cruise to Hamilton Island and north to Cooktown where in the Captain Cook Museum I saw a photograph of the church in England where Captain Cook had married – as had my mother-in-law in 1918.

Later in 1997, I went solo on a Bill Peach Southern Air Cruise – Sydney, Broken Hill, Coober Pedy, Kalgoorlie and Perth where I visited Del's earlier friend, John Curtin's daughter. Then I was off to the wineries, Albany, Esperance, Kangaroo Island, King Island, Strahan, Launceston, Flinders Island and back to Sydney.

Three weeks later I was in the air again, this time with Del to view part of Antarctica for about four hours without landing. From 10,000 feet, Mawson's Hut is only a speck.

1998 produced a summer of 48 days of temperatures over 30 degrees C and the wettest winter on record in Canberra. Del and I escaped to Fiji for about eighteen days during that winter.

My left knee started to pain but I could not get treatment until April 1999 – in St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. My first night coincided with the hailstorm which wrecked roofs and cars across eastern Sydney and broke the window of my hospital room. Still in bed ten days after the operation for a knee replacement, I was given 60 minutes to get dressed, packed and out of the hospital so as to be flown back to Canberra for rehabilitation.

While still in Yarralumla, I donated a sideboard to the Officers' Mess at Duntroon. It had originally belonged to Major General Legge, an early Commandant of the College and I had bought it at the sale of his belongings after his death. At that sale, I also came by a family bible which I sent to Legge's grandson in Melbourne.

In between leaving Mountbatten Park and moving into The Grange, Deakin, Del and I cruised on the "Norwegian Star to Vanuatu and Fiji from where we flew to Samoa for a few days at well-known "Aggie Grey's". ( Del's luggage had, unfortunately, been flown to Brisbane instead of Samoa. It arrived the next day).

Jeanette arrived earlier than usual and helped us to move into The Grange (26 December 1999).

Undaunted, Del and I were off again for another cruise on the same ship to Noumea (where I surprised myself as to how much of my school French I had retained); then Vanuatu again, Milne Bay (New Guinea), Thursday Island and Darwin from where we returned home by air via Cairns.

This cruise proved to be my last overseas travel. Going back to High School days, I can say that I have actually had my feet on the ground in thirty-four countries if you treat the Azores Islands as separate from Portugal as they are very far apart, and counting England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Island as one (UK). Of course I have seen several others from the air – Tunisia, Afghanistan and several of the states that are no longer part of the USSR. I was surprised on my first journey back to UK – before the USSR disintegrated – to be able to identify the two rivers feeding the Aral Sea which was drying up because of the irrigation water taken out of those rivers. We actually went as far north as Orsk, judging by the railways, before turning west, crossing the Volga and on over Lithuania and the Southern Baltic Sea, the Friesian Islands and the Essex coast. I enjoyed testing my memory of the geography as we progressed.

During the Noumea/Vanuatu cruise, Del had been diagnosed with pleurisy.

Later in the year she had a hip replacement and cataracts removed.

By June 2001 I was back to pushing a wheelchair again.

At the end of August, Del's right elbow began leaking (a self-draining bursa) and, in September, she suffered hemi-anopia (loss of half of her vision). This was a form of mini-stroke and put an end to her driving and to her playing Bridge. By December, the bursa leak had increased and had the doctors baffled. She was treated on the 20<sup>th</sup> with penicillin for the elbow and (at a different surgery) on the 21<sup>st</sup> she was given erythromycin for pleurisy but on 22<sup>nd</sup> she died quickly of a

massive stroke. Incompatible medications? Daughter, Jill (with her Doctorate in Medical Science from MIT) thinks it's possible.

It was standing room only at St David's Church in Red Hill. At Del's earlier request, the service was conducted by Bishop Chynoweth who had known the Mildenhall family at St Paul's Church in Manuka decades earlier.

About three weeks after Del's funeral (late 2001) I met Pauline and Alf Tame in the dining room at The Grange. Alf died within a month from a fall and some inept brain surgery. I dined with Pauline again some weeks later and as at 2014 our friendship continued, even though she moved to Goulburn for health reasons.

Signs of my ageing began in 2002 with one hearing-aid prescribed. In that year my activity was in and around Canberra with the exception of a few days on the New South Wales south coast.

I resumed picture-framing in 2003. (I had made over fifty frames for Hilda's tapestries and re-upholstered six chair seats for which she had done the floral tapestries). The frames made for Pauline were mainly for enlargements of photos I had taken.

Pauline and I took to visiting country towns starting with Dalton. A trip to Eden did the BMW no good as the radiator cap had not been properly replaced and steam was in evidence about 1km from Eden. The next day the local garage pronounced the car fit to return to Canberra but the steam returned after 1km and we went back to the garage. Arrangements were made for an NRMA car and for the transport of the BMW to Canberra during which it suffered major damage to a shock-absorber and the differential casing resulting from inept roping on to the truck.

Neither Pauline nor I had seen much of the country on the other side of the Hume Highway, so to start another journey to the south-west coast of Victoria we went via Young and Wagga. Two months later we went via Cowra and Dubbo to Narromine where we turned south, eventually making our way back from West Wyalong. Six months later we were off again – north-west to Grenfell then eastwards to Orange where a large house (Kinross) built by Pauline's ancestors is incorporated into PLC Orange.

Water has been a problem in my unit. It has come in over the sliding door tracks several times in rain storms. The patio drains are being enlarged (2014). Back in 2004 water came down from the unit above where the feed-pipe of the dishwasher had leaked in the night. The water flooded the upper unit and came down, largely via the light fittings into all of my rooms.

In October 2004, Pauline and I were driving again to Dubbo, Coonabarabran, Gulgong, Mudgee, Bathurst and Orange once more. The following year we took the Pacific Highway as far as Nambucca before climbing over the Dividing Range to Armidale from where we wriggled back through Tamworth, Scone and Mudgee.

A year later I was privileged to attend the reunion of the RMC 1958 graduating class at Government House in Canberra. A member of that class, Major General Michael Jeffrey had become Governor of Western Australia and then Governor-General of Australia. A wholly unexpected result of that attendance was that Legacy was put in touch with Pauline. (She had been an army nurse during the Second World War).

My first visit by train to Sydney had been in 1953, the next in 2006. Pauline and I walked from mid-city down through the Botanic Gardens to the Rocks and back again. On a visit to Manly I foolishly left my new Lumix camera on the ferry but recovered it at the Circular Quay ferry office on our return. Lucky! With time to

kill the next day, Pauline and I took the train to Katoomba and back before leaving for Canberra.

On Boxing Day 2006, I suffered temporary blindness in a cinema. It only affected my right eye and only lasted about 30 seconds. Apparently that constitutes a mini-stroke amourosis fugax. I told my GP on my next visit and eventually had an ultrasound which led to an operation in March to remove cholesterol from my carotid artery.

It was time to get on the road once more so off via Albury and Deniliquin to cross the Murray at Barham. We continued west to Swan Hill then returned via Bendigo, Bright and Chiltern to Albury. Heading north towards Wagga, Pauline had a “turn” in a country shop (owned by an ex-Duntroon HQ Coy sergeant) and was taken back to Albury by ambulance with me keeping up at 116 kph.

Friends and daughter Jeanette celebrated my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Hyatt Hotel but the rest of the year was marked by the deaths of several friends and former colleagues.

I optimistically renewed my Australian passport in January 2009 but with no real intention of going overseas, even though I would love to visit the Karst country of southern China which extends out to the vertical islands of Halong Bay.

Jeanette managed to ring me from a tent a few weeks after the L’Aquila earthquake in Italy. The rest of 2009 was marked by more deaths and funeral services and an exceptionally hot November (12 days over 30 degrees C and nearly 39 degrees C on the 20<sup>th</sup>).

My left eye cataract was operated on in April 2010 and the other eye in June. Thus I was able to thoroughly enjoy the local exhibition of Hans Heyson’s painting, the realism of which is much to my taste.

2011 opened with floods in Queensland, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Tasmania and north-west Victoria. It was the centenary year for the Royal Military College. I attended the unveiling of the Duntroon Society's plaque on 31<sup>st</sup> January but not the Parade.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Christchurch in New Zealand experienced a major earthquake which destroyed the handsome cathedral which had been the subject of the first photo I ever took in New Zealand (1965). That photo is on a colour slide but I have recently devised a way of copying the slide scenes into digital form for prints to go into an album. (How long since anyone wanted to attend or to present a "slide night"?)

In June 2011, after a Duntroon Society luncheon, I was conducted out on to the lawn to be photographed beside General Gratton. I had no idea why the photo was taken and was thrilled to find the result in the lavish RMC Centenary Book. I feel honoured to have been the only RMC academic photographed specifically for that book – and also for the gift of a copy of that magnificent product.

Diary entries for 2012 record the deaths of more friends, a number of weather records and my falling near the local shops which led to my hands swelling considerably.

For me, 2013, is remembered most vividly for a sideways fall in Deakin in which the top of my left femur was broken off. An operation in Canberra Hospital resulted in a titanium hip joint and seven weeks in hospital; Canberra Hospital for the operation and Calvary John James for the rehabilitation.

It was in October 2013 that my younger step-daughter Jill became a grandmother, so I am now a great grandfather.

On the social side, Hilda and I joined the Commonwealth Club in 1956. Hilda became chair-person/woman [take your pick] of the Associates Committee for a year but retired from that through ill-health. In 2014 there are perhaps only seven members whose admission predated mine.

In 1958, a branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society was formed in Canberra. Hilda and I were members from the very beginning and attended the inaugural meeting at which I pointed out a glaring omission from the draft constitution of the Branch; that may have led to my being invited to fill a vacancy on the Branch Council in 1961. I became chairman a year or so later while Air Chief Marshal Scherger was President.

The Australian branches of the RCS decided, in the early 60s, to distance themselves from the London Headquarters of the RCS (largely because of London's financial demands) and I was tasked with revising the ACT Branch constitution. I gave the Branch President a much more active role, not knowing that I would soon be President (with Hilda as Branch Secretary).

The memory I cherish most from my membership of the RCS was the banquet I organised to celebrate the admission of Sir Robert Menzies to the Order of the Thistle. I was successful in getting the Governor-General (Lord de Lisle) who was our Patron, to chair the proceedings and act as MC. Sir Robert and Dame Pattie were very pleased with the Society's tribute.

During my chairmanship, an evening Council meeting of the RCS was held – with the permission of the manager – in the boardroom of a bank in what is now City Walk. Cleaners were still there when we arrived and showed us upstairs to the boardroom. At the conclusion of the meeting, we found ourselves locked in and confined to the boardroom. There was no telephone (this was before mobiles) so we had no option but to go out on to a small balcony, climb over the handrail and down on to the top of the high metal fence, then down on to the roof

of someone's car, its bonnet and then the ground. Even Hilda made the descent. No one seemed to notice our escape and no one was arrested.

I have had a life-long interest in Geography – supported by a good selection of atlases, and in History. I still follow the changing health of the economy but have given up on the casino called the Stock Exchange.

My hobbies now come into play only on a needs basis except for photography. In Australia in the past, I have made kitchen benches, a cupboard, two fireside stools for Hilda's tapestry coverings, a round occasional table (with some factory help) a step ladder, shoe and bottle racks; most of this using a carpenter's bench which I made from reject timber rescued after part of the Sergeant's Mess burned down in Duntroon. My last significant carpentry effort was the making of a mah-jong set – 144 tiles and four walls made from timber – squared, sanded, edges rounded, engraved, coloured, varnished. It took many days to complete.

About once in twenty years, I get the urge to undertake an oil painting. When I was young, I was encouraged to learn to play the piano but I lacked the discipline to profit from the necessary exercises. I figured that if I worked hard to play moderately difficult classical pieces my fingers would acquire the necessary skills. I was wrong.

I remember being taught to read aloud when I was five years old. I joined a School Scout Troop at age 11 and, to qualify for a reader's badge, I had to read and be tested on twelve books in one year. I started a note book for that purpose (about 1930) and have kept the list going ever since; but now just list author and title.

My recording of classical music from radio to tapes began in the eighties and now results in over 300 cassettes with a written register to avoid duplication. My problem is to find time that I can devote to paying attention to a play-back,

otherwise my recording will have been a waste of time. I currently (2014) have about 100 still to play.

Mention has been made of photography. My first efforts involved one of the earliest box cameras (with which I fluked a 30 seconds exposure inside an old church). I progressed through twin-lens reflex (including a beautiful pre-war Zeiss despite its heaviness) to a capable Pentax and now to digitals. I still have all of these cameras except the Minolta which failed to focus after taking my best photographs of New Zealand.

The day before I wrote these words, I finally succeeded in taking decent photos of scenes on the television – one depicting a Scottish castle, which was the subject of the very last of Hilda's tapestries.

Although I had played in representative sides in soccer and cricket and had a couple of medals for athletics, I didn't really get round to golf until I was newly married to my second wife. Del's father had been a keen golfer (and Captain of the Royal Canberra Club) and Del herself was a member too and played regularly soon after dawn. Her wedding present to me was a set of clubs. I applied for membership of the Royal Canberra Golf Club and was accepted but would not be able to play for over two years because of crowding. So Del and I joined the Royal Military College Club and played for several seasons until Del's breathing problems worsened. I recall that on one occasion I lost three balls in a few minutes to currawong birds which flew down from trees beside fairways 3 and 4. On another occasion my drive went into the trees on the side of the third fairway – not unusual – and when I went in search I was met by a policewoman who was asking if anyone had lost a ball. She had been hiding in the trees as part of a security operation while the Turkish Trade Minister was about to travel to the airport via the toad beside the RMC boundary.

To cut a long story short, I confess to having been a moderately proficient amateur dabbler in many things, apart from golf, and I have enjoyed that. I have been lucky in many ways.

Very high on the list of memories, which I now have time to recall, are of being dined-out in the RMC Officers' Mess and in the Cadets' Mess. I see those privileges as expressions of gratitude for my attempted contribution to officer education. Over three years after those farewells I was surprised and appreciative of an invitation to don my academic dress and rejoin the staff at the parade when the last class of cadets to whom I had lectured finally graduated.

I have been pleased to continue my interest in the RMC through membership of the Duntroon Society of which I am now a Fellow.

Regrets? Yes. I am very sorry that my first wife, Hilda, had to give up the editorial work at which she was so proficient and was then mostly confined to bed for about sixteen years before an unpleasant slow death. I am sorry that Adele, my second wife, had increasing heart-lung trouble over several years, before a very sudden death. Now my friend, Pauline, has had to leave Canberra for health reasons. Lastly, I feel guilty that my mother got such an inadequate return on her investment in me.

Computers came into wide-spread use after I retired. The internet came later. At first I could see little use for a computer at home and I am still appalled at the sight of rooms full of persons, even school children, staring at brightly lit screens for hours; their sight may suffer in the long run. I acknowledge the benefits of storing and retrieving information and photographs, making bookings, etc., etc., but it seems to me that there is a potential for loss of privacy and secrecy and maybe deterioration in time of stored information as occurs in photo negatives and music tapes. However, I may be driven to re-join the human race if only to have access to email.

It occurs to me that I have had many contacts with the word “Royal”. My high-school was named the Royal Liberty School after a quirk in the medieval law regarding a local property owned by Henry VIII. I spent nearly six years in the Royal Regiment of Artillery and during that time I married a member of the Women’s Royal Naval Service. Most of my teaching was at the Royal Military College of Australia and I am still a Life-Member of the Royal Commonwealth Society after being Branch President fifty years ago.

I rate the period since the end of the First World War, despite the Great Depression and the Second World War, as the best time in which to have lived. We have had better food and drink, better housing, better transport, education, health, entertainment, etc., than ever before. Unfortunately, much of this has been at the expense of the environment – climate change, loss of forests, ocean acidification and so on. These changes together with the increase in population and in man’s ability to kill either for aggrandisement, to protect himself, or for religious reasons, may well lead to another war from which humanity and other forms of life may not recover. I have no wish to live long enough to see that happen and I do not envy younger folk who may have to face these problems.

Sadly, as I write, it is only a matter of hours since Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 was shot down – killing nearly 300 persons – over territory occupied by Ukrainian separatists. Let us hope that this tragedy does not have the same consequences as the killing of an Archduke in Sarajevo one hundred years earlier, almost to the day.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my family and friends for their kindness, affection and help over decades. More than one has encouraged me to tell my story and two have been kind enough to assist in this endeavour. I hope I will still have several more years to enjoy their affection and assistance. (Being optimistic, I have just had four new tyres put on my car).

However, in life's Test Match, it is now after tea on the fifth and final day and I still need a boundary for my 'ton'. Here's hoping!

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