

# 1953 - 1975

I was posted as RAAF Liaison Officer at D.C.A Essendon in 1953. Essendon was Melbourne's major airport at the time, and I was there for the Queen's arrival on her first tour of Australia. Norma and kids were at Point Cook Officers' Mess for her visit for afternoon tea. Unfortunately I missed out on meeting her as I was on duty at Essendon for her flight from Tasmania.

Posted to RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia in '54. It was a new base to service the Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury SA, Maralinga and Woomera.

Initially I was SATCO, Operations, Adjutant B. Sqn. and Canteens Officer. The base eventually had about 1,000 RAF personnel. Norma and children moved to Salisbury. I came home to assist and we all flew across in a DC4. It was Norma's first flight and she enjoyed it once she opened her eyes about the SA border!

My youngest son Frank was born Calvary Hospital, Adelaide, South Australia on 5th March, 1956. While Norma was in hospital I looked after the three kids, 7 and 10. I decided to bake them a sponge cake and I must say it looked pretty good. I sifted icing sugar on top and served it to the children who, to my horror, refused to eat it saying it was horrible. My prowess in the kitchen was proven when we discovered I had iced it with salt!

## **Maralinga**

The British, with assistance from the Australian government, conducted nuclear tests at Maralinga in South Australia from 1955 to 1963. In total 700 trials were conducted during that time, with seven major tests occurring in 1956 and 1957.

A group of us, Air Force and RAAF personnel, were required to stand outside and turn our backs until instructed to turn back and watch moments after the blast.

1957-8 – Stood in open with other officers for Atomic Blast at Maralinga!

1958-61 – Senior Air Traffic Control Officer, Point Cook. Family lived on Base.

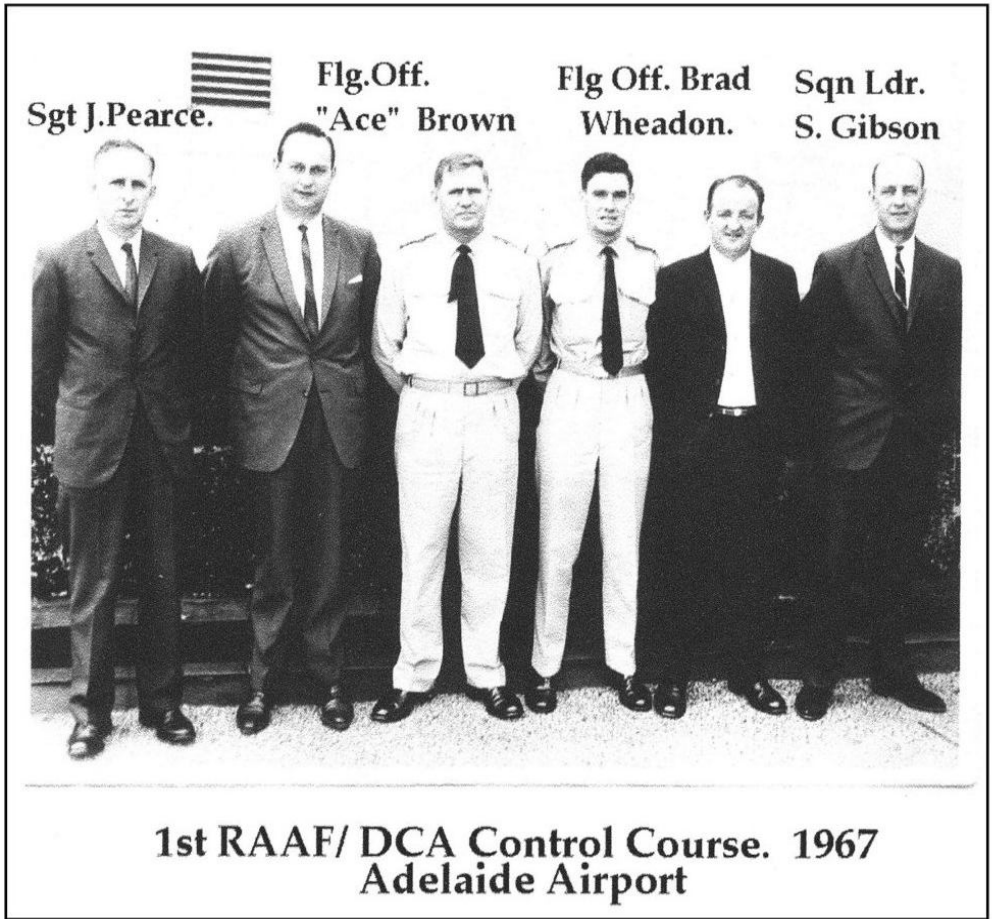
1961 – Promoted to Squadron Leader and posted to Central Flying School, East Sale.

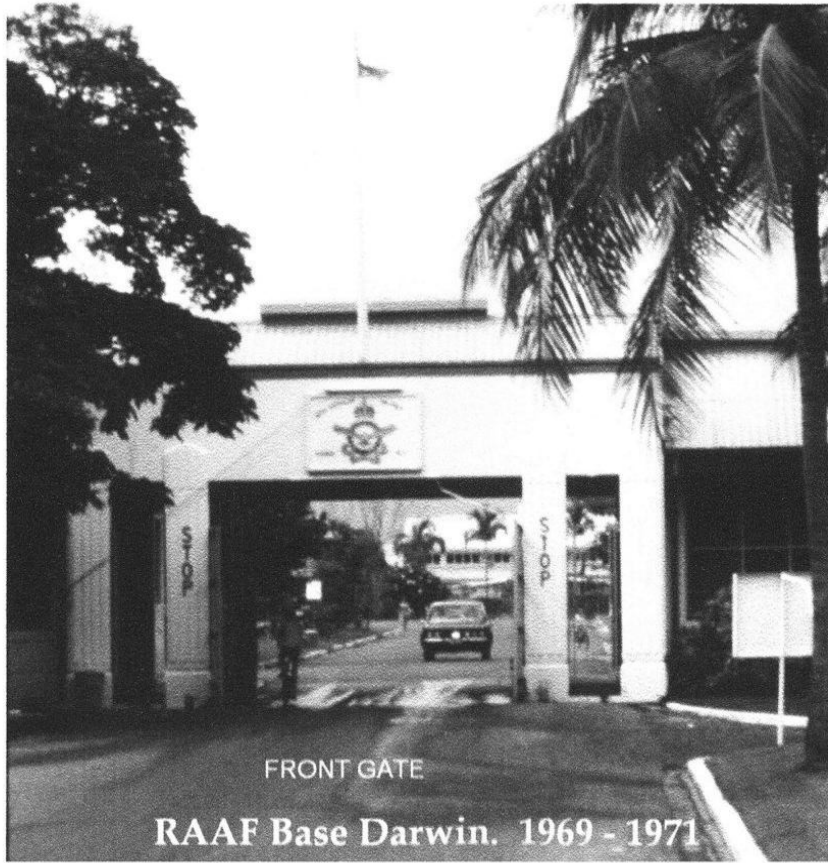
1962-63 CO, Chief Instructor, Air Traffic Control School, East Sale. Family lived on base.

1964-66 SATCO, Base Sqn East Sale.

1969-70 – SATCO Darwin. Also occasional C.O. Base Sqdn.

Requested by Dept. of Air to move to Darwin and take over 'Approach and Tower' from D.C.A., which necessitated a DCA Licence. I undertook a DCA Theory Course in Melbourne and spent ten weeks being checked out in Adelaide Tower. I was then posted to Darwin in April 1967. The takeover was successful! The Air Force never even said, "Thank you".





FRONT GATE

**RAAF Base Darwin. 1969 - 1971**

My first day on the job in Darwin and I arrived at the tower for a familiarization tour. I walked into the control tower and introduced myself saying, "Now, what can you show me?" At that very moment a May Day alert came over the radio – An F1-11 was going down and the pilot ejected into Darwin harbour. It was mayhem! A few minutes later as things subsided I turned to the officer in charge and said, "That was impressive, what else have you got for me?"

1970-72 – Posted to Tullamarine to be first Senior Military Co-ordinating Officer (SMACO) in charge of RAAF Sector in the new Radar Control Section. Lived at Broadmeadows in a RAAF/Housing Commission house. Rough area, migrant hostel nearby, people banging on the door late at night...

Required 16 week Radar course at Brisbane Airport. Diagnosed as having Bladder tumor one week before course started. I was operated on at RAAF Hospital Laverton. Verdict ... "Malignant carcinoma, requiring treatment for life." Despite this the grateful Air Force still sent me to Brisbane where I was domiciled in the Prince of Wales hotel, Nundah.

*Frank writes:* Sept later applied to the Department of Repatriation for coverage for the cost of his medical care. He felt that as he had been at Maralinga, his condition was probably attributable to that. The Air Force accepted the Repat claim, but not for Maralinga. Instead they claimed that the cancer was related to cigarettes as they had sent him cigarettes in his rations during the war.

In the mean time, Norma was in charge of affairs at home which included the building of a home at Greensborough while the twins were at Canungra training to go to Viet Nam – for which they had volunteered! As expected she coped in her usual fashion and everything went well. I had the pleasure of having a couple of meals with the boys as they passed through Brisbane en route to Townsville.

1973-75 – Posted to RAAF Base Laverton. Hospitalised every 3 months for treatment for bladder cancer.

1975 – The senior Squadron Leader in the RAAF, I was told that I would be going to Canberra (Dept of Air), however, having spent all of my time as an "active" aerodrome controller I declined the offer and elected early retirement.

1975 – March 1975 I retired from the RAAF and Norma and I set forth for our first trip overseas. We did a 35 day tour of Europe, had a month in England enjoying the experience very much. We were to revisit the U.K on another 3 occasions, tour Ireland and holiday in Hawaii and the West Coast of America.