

LIFESTYLE



THE PISTOL CLUB

Bob Davis

After more than 13 years in the Terr Sit, I decided to head South.

Like many others, my first postings were in the bush after which I steadily worked my way into the larger towns.

While the towns had attractions lacking at patrol posts and stations, there was a price to pay.

The most obvious was the civil violence and breakdown in law and order.

In the bush, whether home or not, I was accustomed to leaving my door unlocked.

And zipping along a bush path on the station motor bike I collided with a local (neither of us badly hurt) to be surrounded by yelling villagers.

But they were venting their ire at the victim who damaged *motabaik bilong masta*.

In Moresby I would have been beaten up.

In Lae and Moresby my humble dwellings had been broken into a dozen times. Twice when I was home in bed.

At first unnerved, I began to get blasé about all this - as if it were normal.

In a moment of clarity, I knew I could no longer accept as a solution the act of replacing record player and tape deck each time they were stolen - only to provide another tempting target for the thieves.

I concluded I needed to legally get my hands on a gun. So I joined the Moresby pistol club.

I learned to shoot and purchased a .357 Magnum for the right hand and a .22 Browning for the left.

But a new problem emerged, as I reasoned that a couple of hand guns plus ammo in a house would be an even choicer target for the lads of the night.

I went to great lengths to dismantle the guns: hiding a barrel here, a trigger mechanism there, ammo somewhere else.

The two weapons ended up as bits of metal scattered across the house.

As the dispersal of the parts was accompanied by the knocking off of a cold SP or two, I began to worry about remembering where the bits were.

To compound my paranoia, I realised if I ever had to use a gun, I might not have long to reassemble the scattered parts.

So I started to time myself locating and reassembling and kept practising until I broke the 60-second barrier.

One day, after some cogitation and rumination, I decided I didn't have to live like this and, after checking out the best time to go south, I did so.

The departure was accelerated by one of my last break-ins being investigated eventually by a nice but callow sub-inspector Meremo Goroba who had been a student of mine in Wau just a few years earlier.

I took my guns south, joined a pistol club in Canberra and never fired a round from either. I sold them six months later.

HEADING SOUTH ON LEAVE

Col Booth

The north coast of the New Guinea mainland and the south coast of Kar Kar Island form the perfect ladies waist, or hour glass, shape.

Between the island and the mainland, the tide runs like blazes to the west and the waves increase in height and steeple nastily as the strait narrows.

A bulk freighter had its deck rolled back like a sardine can while heading into that tidal rip.

So we always tried to travel from Kar Kar by air but, whenever there was a holiday exodus from the island, it could be difficult to get a flight on the small Cessna 180.

Desperate to get out of the place and on home leave one year, we happily accepted a ride on the MV 'Karwell', a 50 foot copra boat.

We motored at 90 degrees to the sea swells, which were running anything up to 15 feet.

Wendy might not be the greatest air traveller but she's in her element on the ocean. She can't even comprehend seasickness.

On the other hand, I get seasick having a bath.

Consequently, on that trip, I vomited all down the port rail and then back up the starboard side from stem to stern.

I challenge anyone to call Arrrthuur and Geooooorrrggge and Barruuucce non stop for three to four hours and still laugh.

I certainly can't.

SPOTLESS IN SYDNEY

Henry Bodman

On my first trip down from PNG I was in an old DC6B and had just been served coffee when we hit turbulence, which grew in intensity.

I rode the violent up and down gyrations with the coffee rising and falling.

Janelle waited at the other end after 13 months of 'sex by correspondence'.

I had on a new cream suit and there was no way a cup of coffee was going to besmirch my triumphant return.

Eventually, when we hit the mother of all air pockets and again plummeted groundward, I felt my arm totally drained of its ability to cushion the coffee's inexorable surge.

So, as the aircraft rebounded, at the last possible moment just short head-butting the low cabin ceiling, I gave the cup the flick, drenching the poor buggers behind me.

Naturally I was full of effusive apologies and of course they received the close ministrations of the lovely hostie, as they were in those days.

Everybody smiled at each other, then wanly, in mutual understanding of the rigours of air flight in 1961.

And I arrived in splendour in a spotless cream suit to be outdone only by Janelle in a beautiful silk number.

JUDE'S BIG BREAKFAST

Wendy Booth

You'll remember the exodus at the end of the school year.

Teachers in the New Guinea region heading for Madang to catch the early morning DC6 or Electra South.

At Madang airport you'd bump into many people you knew, including ASOPA lecturers swanning around on study tours.

From Kar Kar we'd overnight in Madang after flying out of the island the previous day.

Early on the morning of departure, Col and I drove the 20 km from our school to the airstrip.

There we met the Lane family from Miak – Ted, Lori and three children - and other travellers.

We boarded the single-engine Cessna with the with the cargo pod slung underneath.

Or, I should say, the adults boarded the plane while the children were passed in to sit on available knees. The pilot and I were the only ones not nursing a child.

The aircraft was so overloaded, it had trouble taking off but eventually crept aloft.

Once airborne, Lori Lane proudly informed everyone that young Jude had been a very good boy and eaten all his breakfast.

The praise was too much for Jude who decided to show us exactly what he'd consumed.

Cleaning up in the confined space of a crowded Cessna was, shall we say, difficult.

MEN, TAKE UP YOUR AXES

Richard Jones

The unforgettable Norm Donnison was given the task of giving the end-of-course sex talk to an earnest group of late teenage and early twenties second year males.

"Boys, when you find yourself beset by those awful temptations of the flesh and the unrelenting allure of dusky maidens, arm yourself with a trusty axe.

"Go outside to the *boihaus* and chop wood.

"Chop heaps of wood, very vigorously, and the longing will soon pass".

In the Central District on a humid Saturday afternoon, four of us from Aroma in the Marshall Lagoon sub-district walked up the beach eight miles to Jack McGavern's trade store and boozier at Kupiano.

Here we sat chatting and whiling away the time with a few long neck SPs.

Across our field of vision came a line of nubile teenage girls from a stilt village built over the water at the far end of Marshall Lagoon.

Wearing grass skirts *tasol*, the girls were carrying produce on their heads from BP's coastal boat at the jetty up the hill to McGavern's trade store

In unison, Aroma head teacher Hunk Thompson – also an ASOPA graduate - and I turned to the others and said, "Quick fellas, out the back and start chopping that bloody wood".

Footnote: It was a good idea to check the tides before starting to walk down the beach to the Aroma coast on a Sunday afternoon.

I was caught by an incoming high tide a mile or two from the school and, in the rapidly fading light, the last section of the trek was completed wading waist-deep with what looked suspiciously like sea snakes swirling around my legs.

CHICKEN RUN

Colin Huggins

Towards the end of 1965, with some reluctance, I was transferred from Dregerhafen to Gagidu for the second phase of my time in New Guinea.

Prior to leaving Dregerhafen I had, in my wisdom, decided to acquire some chooks, as eggs were difficult to obtain at that time.

To purchase eggs from local villagers was always dicey as quite often you got the added bonus of an embryonic chicken.

But the only alternative was to wait for eggs flown in as part of the 'freezer' order on the twice weekly aircraft from Lae.

Other heavier and less fragile supplies, such as tinned food and sacks of rice, came on the government-owned boat, Morobe, or by a coastal trader if one happened to be sailing in the area.

Unfortunately the eggs flown in rarely survive intact.

Loading and unloading planes left a lot to be desired as boxes and packages were hurled on to the strip.

Thus I went into the egg production industry.

My initial venture was with a dozen largely useless local kanaka chooks, which were certainly not renowned for their egg laying ability.

The few they did produce brought out immediate motherhood instincts in the hens and they became clucky and aggressive.

But, by feeding my chooks assiduously with laying pellets, I was at least able to commence my business.

Some time later I flew in some six-week old chickens from Port Moresby.

With an eye to my commercial future, I made sure these imports survived.

Survive they did. But unfortunately most of the chickens turned out to be roosters.

THE MINJ BALL

Rod Hard

Minj in the Wahgi Valley - where I taught the Primary A School - may not have had the clear waters and white sand beaches of the coastal centres but it was as beautiful a place as I've been anywhere in the world.

The community revolved around the Minj Club, built with help from the local kalabus abutting a great self-constructed nine-hole golf course.

The highlight of the year's social calendar was the Minj Ball, which ran for three days. The shortage of single females was so acute that DC3's were chartered from Moresby and Lae - with free places for single girls.

Overland travellers came into town from Friday lunchtime and the planes arrived on Saturday morning.

Accommodation was wherever you could find it. I regularly gave over my house to the ladies and camped in the kiap's office for the weekend, moving his desk aside and setting up a *palliasse* on the floor.

Saturday afternoon was set aside for a 'getting to know you' drink at the club with the local lads checking out the imported talent and laying foundations for what they hoped would follow.

At five or six, when most headed off to get themselves done up in their finery for the evening's celebrations, we'd relax and look forward to greater things.

The ball went all night and it was only the old and those lacking stamina who were not still there for breakfast next morning - although most made it back at some stage and continued to party.

The festivities continued until the planes flew out on Sunday afternoon, at which point the locals subsided into semi-consciousness and Minj slowly settled back into its usual routine.

AFTER THE BALL WAS OVER

Pat Dwyer

In 1963, government officers in Kundiawa spent a month erecting tents, painting the club and boasting about bringing girlfriends from various nambus locations to the Chimbu Ball.

Not to be outdone, I flew Margaret (McKenna) in from ASOPA.

Then the rain came, bridges fell down and planes couldn't land.

Apart from three hardy souls who came from Gumine by tractor, Margaret was the only outsider there.

It was a total financial disaster but we managed to drink the spare kegs before they went off.

ADO Barefoot Boy fancied Margaret, so two days before she was due to return to Australia, he sent me on a week's patrol.

I put her on the pillion seat of the BSA Bantam and off we roared.

It was an enjoyable patrol but Margaret wasn't too keen on the rat's running over us in the *hauskiap*.

Nor the corpse that 'talked' when I cut her down from the tree and removed the rope from around her neck.

The District Medical Officer gave Margaret a pass for a week, with choice of diseases, so all was well back at ASOPA.

I was in the Kundiawa pub some months later when a bloke at the next bar stool gossiped about a student absconding with a kiap who was then pressured from above to send her back to ASOPA.

The bloke turned out to be an ASOPA lecturer, the student Margaret McKenna and the kiap myself.

I introduced myself and suggested he save his bullshit for ASOPA. Ruined his story.

THE LONG WAY HOME

Molly Kreidl

A friend who owned a Cessna invited us to fly with him to the Gusap Picnic races.

He arranged to pick us up at the end of the races and left us at Gusap while he spent the day in Lae.

We had a terrific day - the picnic races were great fun - and we went to the strip to wait for Bob. Who didn't come.

We were offered seats on another plane back to Goroka but, ever trusting, decided to wait. Fruitlessly.

A local missionary took us to his station and arranged for us to be given a lift to the bottom of Kassam Pass the next day, from where we could hitch a ride up the pass into the Asaro Valley.

It seemed a fine idea but the mission's Landrover went two miles and broke down.

When we eventually made it to the Kassam Pass, it had been raining and the road was terrible. The Landrover that gave us a lift became bogged every few metres.

The vehicle eventually gave way under the strain and literally blew up. We jumped for our lives.

A few hours later we were picked up by the one truck that managed to get through the mud and were taken to Kainantu.

Here we spent the night with Jerry Vogelbusch, the head teacher of a local school, and continued our journey next day.

This next lift took us to a settlement only ten miles from Goroka. We rang Fred's work to send out a rescue vehicle, which had three flat tyres before we finally got home.

Bob, the pilot, had been wrongly told we returned on another plane, which was why he hadn't come to pick us up.

PIG GUN Col Booth

When Henry Bodman left Tavui on the tip of the Gazelle Peninsula, he was replaced by Wendy and me.

Given the civil situation, we decided a gun in the house would be handy.

So, before catching the flight north after leave, we visited a gunshop in the Haymarket area of Sydney.

We wanted a shotgun - cheap but reliable.

"What do you want to shoot?" asked the gunsmith.

"Pigs," I replied diplomatically.

"Pigs! You need a proper gun for that".

I tried to settle him down by telling the truth: that PNG pigs were not really dangerous but people could be and that, if we were burgled, we needed the gun to defend ourselves.

This, of course, made him agitated and he became suspicious about who exactly he was dealing with.

So I tried another tack, explaining we only wanted the gun for show.

And that's how we acquired an 1868 model by H O Mayne, London, for which he charged us £10.

After numerous hassles with airline staff, we got the gun to Rabaul and installed it on the wall above the bed head.

We also showed it to various people around the school, and explained how I wouldn't know the difference between a person or a pig in the hibiscus hedge at night.

On the one occasion Wendy thought she heard noises outside, she couldn't get the damn gun off the wall.

Anyway, we didn't have ammunition for it. It has never fired a shot.

PLAYING FIELD WAR Henry Bodman

Primary colours will always mean something special to me. Green for Malaguna. Red for Malabunga. Yellow for Vuvu. And sky blue for Johnny Waters' city thugs

These were the shirt colours that distinguished the four charter teams of Rabaul's Aussie Rules competition.

A handful of shirt was often all that was left in your hand after trying to tag the opposition. Result: I patched up 20 tee-shirts each week.

The Australian Football League was interested only in promoting Rules in Brisbane and would not support us in any way. Not even essentials such as balls.

But we got the comp up in 1965 and, when I left for Moresby in '68, there were 50 teams (1,000 people) playing throughout the Gazelle.

Much awareness and enthusiasm was stimulated by the Waters / Badman clashes which *oli* loved to watch.

Two *mastas* belting the tripe out of each other - and afterwards going off to the Cosmo together to drink the kegs dry.

Not hard to understand *oli's* confusion when serious bodily harm delivered with intent became *samting nating* at the Cosmo.

SISTERS IN WAR

Justine Finter

Because of my husband's business, my postings were mainly around Port Moresby. I enjoyed my time there as I was close to family and had a support system around.

I was privileged to captain a hockey team known as the Rockets that won the local premiership for five consecutive years.

I remember having to face up to Diane (Speakman) Bohlen's team, Vikings, one of our main rivals. Those games were always fast and furious.

I was part of the Port Moresby hockey team that visited Lae to play against Margaret (McKenna) Dwyer's team.

It was a wet weekend and I had to defend my goal line, which was under more than ankle-deep water.

I had a false sense of security when I thought that there would not be many chances of the ball rolling past the line.

Margaret had other ideas and sent the ball whizzing past my ear.

YEARNING FOR CHINESE

Col Booth

After an extended period on Kar Kar Island, I convinced myself I would go troppo, perish or do something drastic if I didn't get a Chinese meal.

Wendy finally agreed to go to Madang for some chow mein and fly lai, so the Cessna was chartered and a room at the Coastwatchers booked for one night.

We arrived in Madang, got settled, then went by taxi to the Chinese restaurant. The bloody proprietor had shut up shop to go on holidays.

Worse still, TAL couldn't get us back to Kar Kar for three days and there were no boats, so we had to stay in the motel for another three nights.

The Chinese meal I didn't eat cost a couple of hundred dollars - 1970 dollars.

MALARIA

Keith Jackson

As instructed by Dr Black at ASOPA, I took Chloroquin every Sunday night (never falling for the new chum trick with this vile-tasting drug of "holding it under the tongue until it dissolves").

Then, at Gagl in '66, I went down with a dreadful fever and was delirious for three days. When I asked the *mankimasta* and school teachers why they hadn't sent a pass to the medical assistant at Kerowagi, just 7 miles away, they told me it was "only malaria".

After the fever passed, and I felt fit enough, I walked to the station for a blood test and, sure enough, I had the dreaded plasmodium.

What to do now, I asked. Just keep taking the suppressives, I was told. Pig's arse, they don't work.

So I cut that routine out of my life, limiting myself to persuading new chums to hold theirs under the tongue.

I didn't have another bout for five years, when I was in the Kieta *haus sik* for a fortnight with fever and its cell-mates, pneumonia and bronchitis.

The drugs warped my sense of taste for two months - making vinegar out of beer and turning cigarette smoke into nerve gas.

Though even that wasn't enough to stop me drinking and smoking, such is the obstinacy of youth.

A BIT OF HIDE AND PEEP

Helene East

In Madang, Pam Kruger and I shared a house and Rodger Philpott would visit occasionally from wherever he was posted at the time.

The house was an old place set up on concrete blocks and while nosing around, the sort of thing Rodger does, he made an interesting discovery.

Underneath the house was a hide made of hessian bags.

This turned out to be the vantage point from which our *hausboi*, Jonah, would watch Pam and I having our bucket showers.

He had a bird's eye view and, from the butts lying around, was confident enough to have a smoke or two while watching us ablute.

Needless to say the police were called and he was sacked - in roughly that order.

Many years later, I met Jonah in Port Moresby.

By now he was quite the sophisticated cook at the University of Papua New Guinea.

And to his powers of observation he had added a good knowledge of English.

I was somewhat taken aback when he asked could he come to visit my husband and I at our house in Boroko.

While I was genuinely pleased to see he had done well in life, I said no.

It was hard to go past Jonah for sheer gall.

MISIS ISAVE WINIM RESIS

Molly Kreidl

In 1968 I was in charge of a group of 50 local teachers at the Roman Catholic convent who were marking test papers for the primary school final examination.

On the Monday night before the Melbourne Cup in 1968, some friends came round to play cards (remember how they were banned?).

For some unknown reason, it was suggested we set up a ouija board. We commandeered the kitchen table, put the alphabet in place around the edge, got a tumbler and off we went.

It was actually scary - and the tumbler was whizzing around. We asked all the usual questions like, "What was my mother's maiden name?" Then someone asked, "Who'll win the Melbourne Cup?"

Rainlover. I felt scared and, as I'm no gambler, didn't do anything about the hot tip.

At morning tea next day, however, I told the teachers what had happened, thinking no more of it. Later in the afternoon they asked me if they could listen to the Melbourne Cup.

Rainlover won and there was complete pandemonium - cheering, screaming, hugging.

To my horror, I discovered they had decided there must be something in the 'white man's magic' and had gone out at lunch time to take their savings from the bank and borrowed all they could to put every penny on Rainlover.

My blood runs cold when I think what might have happened if it had lost. I didn't have a cent on any horse.

ORDEAL BY WORKBOAT

Wendy Booth

In 1969 Col was on transfer and I couldn't return to the Territory until a posting was finalised.

After a three-day stay in Mendi, Col was despatched to a boarding school at Saidor.

So I arrived in Madang from South and stayed in the hotel awaiting transport to Saidor.

After some days I was told to be ready at midnight the next day when a trawler would leave for the outstation.

I was scared stiff and had visions of being at sea in a workboat alone with an all male crew. I couldn't believe how casual the DEO was.

On departure day, to my relief, I was told it was all off.

Col was arriving in Madang and we were posted to Kar Kar Island instead.

It was arranged we'd leave for Kar Kar next day.

The trawler-size boat was packed with supplies with cartons of SP being the only place to sit. Worst of all, there was no toilet.

Apologising for the inconvenience, the DEO told me all I had to do was tell the crew to move to the bow, grab hold of overhead straps at the stern and hang out over the back of the boat.

Due to bad weather, the journey took several hours longer than planned , arriving at Kar Kar wharf just on dark.

The crew had not been asked to go to the bow, the strength of the straps had not been tested and my back teeth were floating.

A NICE NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Colin Huggins

At T Dregerhafen Girls Boarding School in 1965 there was a prank-driven female teacher called Judith, who, strangely enough, belonged to the Bible-Bashing Fraternity but mixed with the best of them in the Drinking Fraternity. In this respect Judith was a rarity.

She and I were good friends and she taught me how to cook, as my *hausboi's* food hygiene left much to be desired, and that was when I was looking.

To surprise me, he once baked flying fox. He achieved the surprise but copped a verbal thrashing for despoiling my new electric fry-pan.

One night around nine, Judith and I were sitting on my verandah listening to a new batch of records when, coming along the road towards the school, we heard the clip-clop of feet on the coral road.

It was Peter, the junior expatriate teacher.

As he neared my house, his pace quickened until he was in full flight. Eventually we heard the clang of the dormitory 'lights out' gong and then the clip-clop as he made the return journey.

Again the pace quickened and with a sustained burst of speed he flew past my house and around the bend out of sight, only slowing as he made his way towards his house on Finschhafen Point.

This strange event intrigued Judith and me so next morning at school assembly I sidled up to Peter and asked why he'd rushed by my place.

He informed me sheepishly it was because of the *masalai* in the old cemetery near my house.

He'd received this startling information from the *draivaboi* of the school truck, who lived on the other side of the cemetery.

The old cemetery was a relic from German days. It had largely returned to jungle - but a tall white cross was still prominent.

For the rest of the week, I observed this astonishing nocturnal burst of speed from my verandah to ascertain it was not a one-off happening.

Then Judith and I decided on a malicious plan, but first a path would have to be cleared to the cross.

After much trouble, I convinced some of the boys on punishment duty to hack their way with *serafs* to the base of the cross.

The cemetery was full of pythons and other reptiles and this work detail sent many snakes to their happy hunting ground.

Judith and I could not have wished for more perfect weather on Peter's next night of duty.

There was a tropical breeze and a full moon cooked up by Warner Bros. Shortly before nine, Judith and I, carrying white sheets and torches, gingerly made our way to the foot of the cross.

We donned our Ku Klux Klan style robes, readied our torches and awaited the clip-clop of boots on coral.

As Peter got within his speed-up zone, we commenced a sing-song howl. He kept coming then spotted us just as we switched on the torches and started to sway and howl even more diabolically.

He seemed to rise rocket-like into the air, his feet rotating like Catherine wheels. He made no audible sound of alarm. Perhaps his vocal chords were frozen with fear.

As we continued the ritual, he flashed past at breakneck speed, his feet seeming to make no contact with the road for the next 200 metres.

We gaped in amazement at his acceleration.....it was as if he had been fired from a cannon.

We heard the lights-out gong but when we called it a night at 2 am, flushed with success, he still had not reappeared.

At next morning's assembly a distraught Peter trudged in from the direction of Finschhafen.

After his almighty scare, he'd continued his flight all the way to town.

The shock had been severe enough to have made a shocking mess of his underwear, which he showed me in verification of what he had seen.

His gibberish version had very many *masalai* jumping all over the cemetery, a'hootin' and a'hollerin' with white lights flashing all around place.

When I was transferred to Wau in 1968, I was told Peter had been retrieved from his next school at some remote outpost and flown back to Australia in a straight-jacket.

Ah yes, they were very strange days in the land of the fuzzy-wuzzy.

ON TRANSFER Keith Jackson

While on 6-month secondment to Unesco in Java in '73, I was transferred from Kieta to Moresby.

I gave instructions for my chattels to be crated and shipped while I was away.

PWD built a box made of unreinforced five-ply.

In transit this was turned on its side causing my hi-fi gear to crush the much used and deeply loved cocktail cabinet.

Still on its side, when it reached Moresby the crate was thoughtfully stored in the open air in order that the prescribed 'Water, Rain, Tropical, 10 inches' could wash through it.

When we returned from Indonesia, it was only fancy talking that kept my first marriage afloat for another ten years.

I told my wife the water had pretty well drowned all the cockroaches brought over from Bougainville.

I still feel sentimental when I pick up an old water-stained book and there, nestling between a couple of pages, are the dried remnants of a cockroach egg.