

Susan and John Aitken

I was born in Fiji in a little town called Ba pronounced mBa. My father went to Fiji as a 20-year-old staying there for over 40 years, including war service in the Australian Airforce. He met my mother while in a Melbourne hospital near the end of the war, in Australia; they were married in Fiji. This was the first time she left Australia, by flying boat, without her parents or friends, the most adventuresome thing she had done at that stage. He progressed through the ranks of The Colonial Sugar Refining Company reaching Director level of the Fiji Sugar Corporation as it became when the colonialists relinquished Fiji. He became a Tarongalevu (Fijian chief rank) and Burra Sahib, spoke Fijian and Indian, met royalty, played golf with Gary Player etc. Fiji was a major stopping place before the long-range aircraft overflew the islands.

This was the environment that my 3 brothers and I grew up. Fiji was always home though we all left there at an early age to come to Australia to boarding school. I became an Australian citizen through the immigration laws at the time so never having the opportunity of being a British citizen. I would have liked the opportunity to have lived and worked in the UK.

As boarders we initially returned once per year then twice per year and our parents had leave in Australia once every two years.

Fiji was a terrific adventure place; we had boats, sailed, fished, hung out at the local Club swimming pool, rode bikes, and bargained with the Indian shopkeepers probably being terribly obnoxious boys.

CSR being an old colonial organisation looked after their staff and families extremely well. This included assisting with schooling in Australia, airfares and also offered cadetships in Australia to two brothers and myself. This we took up. I trained as a sugar chemist and Industrial Chemistry then transferred to their building materials particleboard - Pyneboard division and was sent to Tumut, NSW. My brothers did the same training however they went into the sugar division and then to Queensland sugar mills. No one remains in CSR now though Andrew tried to keep on in the sugar industry by attempting to set up a sugar refinery in Muscat Oman. This adventure has now finished.

I met Sue in Tumut, where she was working for Thiess Bros on the Snowy project, building the Talbingo dam. She was born in Wagga Wagga, though at this time her family had moved to Young where they had a sheep and wheat property.

We had numerous moves while with CSR to Sydney and back to Tumut a number of times, our 2 girls were born there also.

I resigned from CSR, a mid life crisis, and went farming in Young. Later I was offered a position again with CSR this time at Oberon. My role changed from technical and production to site manager and a further promotion followed to manager of the Tumut operation that was then the largest CSR factory.

Because we were moving so often our girls became boarders at Ravenswood for a period. I also joined the Oberon Rotary club for 5 years and was club secretary for a year. Somewhere during that time I completed a Financial Administration degree at UNE externally

Due to a downturn in the building industry most of the Tumut operation closed down and then followed retrenchment and return to Sydney. For 5 years I worked as

Operations Manager for Futuris Industrial Products making automotive and rail brake pads. They got out of the automotive field and I took another retrenchment and joined Amcor where I am now in the packaging industry located at Botany. My role here is manufacturing Manager of a very large printing and converting factory. Sue is currently teaching at Castle Hill.

Our girls have both finished University, Carile is a Landscape Architect and Sally has just joined a management consultant as a Business Analyst and is part way through a Masters of Commerce Degree.

My interests include carpentry, sailing, and computers.... Generally I make, build what ever I can which is a significant stress reliever for the pressures of my job. As some of you are aware we are landscaping our front yard to Carlie's design and ably assisted by her boyfriend Adam who is a horticulturalist. This is good experience for both of them.

At present I take every opportunity to sail, this is something I have wanted to do for decades, now that we live in Sydney the opportunity is available.

Sue and I are taking off to Greece in a few months for a touring and sailing adventure.