

Ray Thorne



On leaving Locking, I was Posted to Cottesmore with Yo Yo Youhill, and spent four years on Victor bombers with XV Sqn. Then to 390MU, Seletar, Singapore where I ran into Derek Orgill again. I spent two and a half years there repairing GreenSatin and Blue Silk Navairs, then my last four years were spent at RAF Lindholme with Red Hunter (FSAA of 79th??). We ran the Radio Repair Section.

I left the RAF at 30, and for a year worked for an American seismic navigation company. This involved living in a tent with one other guy for a few weeks, along the coasts of Sumatra and Indonesian Borneo, manning equipment 24 hours a day navigating a ship carrying out under-sea surveys for oil companies. We had some adventures, including the tent burning down one night in Sumatra, and being threatened with being shot another night in Borneo. We knew they were serious, because they had killed two Japanese doing similar work earlier, and a few months later, blew the head off one of our colleagues, but the Creator didn't want us two back just then, so we saw the dawn come up next morning.

Eventually, with contracts drying up, I decided it was time to get a proper job, and joined Decca Radar, being trained on the radars used on the British Aerospace Rapier missile system. Meanwhile, Red Hunter, with whom I had



I had maintained contact, had joined BAe direct from the RAF, and was appointed Technical manager of a Rapier contract in Zambia, Central Africa. When he got there, he found the Decca-trained radar man had done a runner to Southern Rhodesia, and the u/s radar boxes were piling up alarmingly! By the simple ruse of offering to double my salary, BAe persuaded me to join it and go out to Zambia to maintain 12 missile systems. Sadly, Red Hunter died of Parkinson's at the age of 57.

I spent two years in Africa, and continued to work for BAe on my return, until 1993 when I retired when the company were making it very attractive for the over-50s to leave, with large sums and a pension. I was asked to go back in 1996 to make one more training aid of a type I had designed and built several of while employed. I spent twelve months doing that and updating a missile firing range in Turkey I had made some years earlier, then I decided it was time to head back into retirement, where I have been ever since, happily creating shavings off my wood-turning lathe! I also make at least one long-haul trip a year visiting interesting places, the latest being a walking safari in the African bush this September, returning to Zambia for the the first time in 34 years!