



Port Hedland SOTA 1964

A MEMORY BY PHILIP SCHUBERT



My name is Philip Schubert and I lived at Pardoo Station from 1962 to 1966 before moving to Louisa Downs in the Kimberley in 1966. During that time I did correspondence lessons in 1963 and 1964, and remember well the opening of the School of the Air in Port Hedland. I was in Grade 7 when it opened and the oldest pupil . (Here are some Philip Schubert's photographs of the original students on a camp at Mundabullangana Station, 70 kilometres west of Port Hedland).

I became the Head Boy by default, and did all the speeches etc. on behalf of the pupils when required. We all got dressed up on the station for the opening of the SOTA. Mr Worthington was the RFDS Base Operator at the time. I cant at this stage remember the teachers name, but it might have been Ross Graham.

We used an old RFDS Traeger Radio (I have a picture of a similar one), and I was not happy about the School of the Air as it mean we had to have a "fixed time" for the radio session.

I, and my younger sister Margaret, would normally start school at 6.30 AM with our Governess Betty Magee (nee Rowe) and generally have school over and done with by about 10AM and then went walkabout of fishing with the large group on indigenous folk who lived with us on the station at the time.





My Mother and thus me (by default) have remained life long friends with Betty and two years ago we met by coincidence back at Pardoo Station and took photos together outside our old school room. Can post those too if your are interested.

The Itinerant teacher was a young guy by the name of Ross Graham who travelled around in a Landrover panel van. In late 1963 after his visit to us at Pardoo he was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour but he continued to work and visited us at again at Pardoo the following year. I remember being shocked at the loss of his hair. I think he died not long after and it was a bit distressing that such a young grown up could die. There is a lookout in the Kalbarri National Park named after him.



The teacher I had at the WA Correspondence School was an mature and conservative old "lady" called Rita Rodd. My God was she a stickler for spelling. I dreaded the "corrections" arriving on the fortnightly MMA DC-3 that called at Pardoo at the time. Reading Dickens, Poetry and other classical literature was pare for the course in those days. I can still recite "The Highwayman" and "The Inchape Rock" from memory and as for metal arithmetic and times tables, well.....



I attended my first Camp School at Mundabulangana (Munda) in 1964 and had a ball. I was a keen kid photographer at the time and took photos during the camp, with a few still surviving. I have pasted the links to them below. Only children Grade 4 and above were allowed to attend, and thus my sister never got there.

You can see us all packed into the back of Ross's Landrover for the School Excursion into Port Hedland where we had the delights of touring a MMA F-27 at Port Hedland Airport as well as a guided tour (including the engine room) of the old State Ship "Koolama."

I was able to identify most of the kids in the Landrover and by coincidence one of the Miller girls from Strelley came across the photos on Flickr and was able to identify some of those that I had forgotten.

Sadly I was packed off to Boarding School on Perth in 1965 as a boarder at Hale. The two years of correspondence schooling did not affect my education and I was top of the Year in 1965 my first year of high school. Not too many kids could top my boast that I had an Airliner as my School bus and it dropped me at my front door when returning home for School holidays.





I went on to win a Commonwealth University Scholarship in 1969 and studied Geology there before taking up a career as a pilot, being based back in Port Hedland from 1977 to 1982.

I have since retired from the workforce after pursuing various careers, and now concentrate my photography and regularly travel on photo shoots to the Kimberley and other places for clients.

Anyway have a look at the links below and be sure to read the comments and annotations. There is quite a bit of history wrapped up in them, especially the full set on Pardoo. I will be writing a book of my experiences as a kid in the North in the 60's over the next couple of years.

