What a world it was. After leaving school at 16 with NSW leaving certificate and matriculation I joined the RAAF in 1965, after flunking the pilot's entry at interview time.
Who is winning in Vietnam? "Not us," was my incorrect reply.

Well do you want a job as a Radio Technician? Why not, as I had already built my own crystal set and amplified it to take small speakers.

Sign here. Off to Edinburgh for basics. Instruction "Take what you need for a weekend away. " I was a country boy so 2 pairs of Jeans 2 shirts 3 sets of jocks and sox and a pair of sneakers and I was off.

"You can't go on Weekend leave in jeans", from the WO. Don't have anything else was my reply. "Go in uniform then," was the suggestion. So can a uniform pull the chicks? It was an interesting 6 weeks. Who can hit anything with an SLR? Managed a 97 which was disappointing because I never missed anything that I was aiming at on the farm. What is about marching in boots? I had always worn them and couldn't see a problem. Someone else could (the DI) so I was banished to the middle of the formation and called the cadence from then on.

Pulled up for not saluting an officer and my excuse was, "Sorry sir, I have never seen an officer before." "Carry on" was the stern admonishment with a fleeting smile.

Radschool, then 34 Sqn Canberra, then Radschool. The theory was harder than building a crystal set but it was logical. 481 Sqn Willytown then 3 Sqn and the big fly up to Butterworth through Indonesia. I enjoyed Penang and all its foibles except perhaps the riots.

What, you are not going to re-sign up, then off you go to Supp Command Vic Barracks. What a drudge. I was probably the only person to get a married quarters house while on a B grade posting. Error? Out in August 1971.

What to do. Advertisement in the paper for technicians in IBM. This can't be harder than a Cyrano radar surely. Application then aptitude test and hired within 1 week to work in Melbourne. Found out later there were 150 applicants.

It was a bit harder than Cyrano but I was retrenched 26 years later after being in the second best job in Australia. Long training courses and real live working systems were a fact of life. Most training was done in Sydney at Lidcombe and naturally took you away from family. Being in the forefront of the technology industry in Australia was daunting but like radio I found it very logical and each update and new piece of equipment was simply the next step. Watching the growth of systems over the 26 years was amazing. A laptop today can have more memory and storage than a large mainframe in 1968.

I worked for various managers and in different geographic areas in Melbourne and eventually did a stint as a manager. Not for me. Back to the job I loved. Fixing the machines and the customers. IBM was like a big family (although a lot of wives did not see it like that) and group dinners and trips to restaurants were some of the highlights. Good performance was rewarded and I received 3 Service Awards with I trip to Perth and a trip to Hong Kong and one to Singapore as a reward.

Shift work was hardest and leaving for work at 11PM Friday and have your wife ring the after-hours support to find out where you were on Sunday evening was a reasonably normal thing. I have slept on a tiled computer room floor for 4 or 5 hours and then continued working. There was not many extra staff and you had to soldier on if no one else could be called out. I woke up one night at traffic lights in Caulfield Melbourne and had no idea how long I had been there. What a wake up call. No more shift work.

Life after IBM was interesting. After all what jobs can an ex Rad tech and computer service tech do? Well it turns out that between the RAAF and IBM I had a lot of knowledge so was able to get a job as a computer operator for a couple of years as a contractor. Next after that was a job as a shift leader for computer operators at a chemical company also as a contractor. What is it about not employing people who are over 50? I was told when I left IBM by an employment trainer I would never get a job with any grey hair. Full head of dark brown hair was the winner.

Then the computer jobs dried up and I found a job as a factory hand in an engineering company by accident. They repaired and manufactured paper and other material rolling machines. I was originally supposed to plan the set out of the metal working machines in their new factory but the owner went in and did it himself the weekend before I started. They felt sorry for me so I got a job. They taught me to weld and cut metal with all sorts of devices and other things. Very interesting for a while but then the work dried up there and I was unemployed again.

John Howard told me that I could start drawing my super tax free after I was 60 so I waited 6 months and at 60 and 1 day pulled the plug. Not that I have been idle. All who retire wonder how they had any time in their day to go to work.

I have helped out our children in their businesses and played golf and fished and ridden bikes and walked and gardened and repaired the house. All the jobs you would all be familiar with.

Now I'm looking forward to the rest of my life. I joke to the family that I am going to live to be 110. I got a fortune cookie that said I was going to live a long and fruitful life - and they never lie do they. Their response is, "What, we are going to have to put up with you for that long". I smile sagely.