



By Chance or by Choice: To Where I Have Been & From Where I Came

Geoffrey Higgs

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By Chance or by Choice? Which of your life-changing moments have happened by chance, and which by choice, by destiny or by desire? Like millions of others, I had nothing to do with starting World War Two in 1939 which nevertheless was responsible for completely changing my life; on the other hand, in 1957 I did choose to change direction by emigrating to Australia from England. Sometimes it is a combination of both chance and choice, such as when an unexpected opportunity arises, do you make the most of it? I had never been interested in airplanes, but when the opportunity to become a pilot came out of the blue, I chose to take it - but were the fatalities with the jet fighter which I piloted caused by pure accident, or was the inherent design of the airplane the problem? Again events can happen in reverse, for example when I chose to join a computer dating service in 1971, serendipity gave me my wife of 40 years. This book covers the author's early life, work experiences and retirement. At 18 years of age he was trained as a fighter pilot during National Service in the Royal Air Force. This was followed by 6 years with Nos. 616 and 501 fighter squadrons in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, then 6 years as an airline pilot with Trans Australia Airlines and Swissair. Particular attention is paid to his experiences flying the Gloster Meteor, the Allies first jet fighter, and the saga of the well-kept secret of the many lives lost flying this airplane. The author's other occupations described here are his job with the Bristol Aero Engines Company as engineer responsible for the flight testing of the Olympus engine in the Avro Vulcan, and Orpheus engine in the Folland Gnat and 3 European Light Fighters, his extensive experience teaching engineering at the South Australian Institute of Technology and University, together with continuing practical experience consulting to industry and the national Defence and Research Organisation, and some post-retirement business activities. The author's private life is also mentioned in some detail, especially his evacuation as a 9 year old from England to Australia in World War II, resulting in 5 1/2 years away from his family. Also included are comments on his first marriage, divorce and second marriage, his studies for various qualifications, a brief medical history, and interests in sport, music, video, and the internet. Finally there is a large section on travelling, with many photos covering more than 60 countries (see below). The book is intended to fill the gaps in the life of the author left by two previous books – “How Meteors Hit the Ground”, and “Out of the Frying Pan”. The author has always been interested in movie making, starting with Pathe 9.5 mm film in the 1950s, but since retiring in 1991, video and photography have become more serious with the evolution of digital cameras and the power of the internet to display, share and sell photos, together with the time for more holidays! So it seems appropriate that Appendix 9 should be included as acknowledgement of the part that travelling and photography have become in the lives of the author and his wife, Carole-Anne Fooks (see livingtravel.com). Similarly, to give some recognition to the author's love of crosswords and quizzes, (evident in previous publications), some chapters end with questions which could be like standard cryptic crossword clues, but with no crossword! Since retiring in 1992, travel videos have been created (many becoming available on Create Space & Amazon!) and photographs taken in the following countries: Australia, UK, Italy, USA, Antarctica, Southern Ocean Islands, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Mauritius, Russia, Iceland, Malaysia, Thailand, Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, Singapore, Mongolia, South Korea, Cambodia, South Atlantic Islands, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Netherlands, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, India.

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