

# ***"MEMOIRS OF AN RAF MEDIC"***

## ***OCTOBER 1959 AND AUGUST 1961.***

***SAC JAMES MAJOR***



***Jim in the early 1960's.  
'I certainly don't look like this now'!!***

The first indication I had of what lay in store for the next two years of my life was when Flt. Sgt. Barras called me into his office at RAF Innsworth late in 1959.

He told me I was to be posted. I said "somewhere nice like Hickham Field"? He replied, "No it is to be Aden".

So after months of checking the medical documents of personnel passing through 5 PDU, my time had come to join their ranks. I took my embarkation leave hitchhiking around Scotland, then reported once again to 5 PDU. Here I was pleasantly surprised to meet up again with Brian Webb with whom I had been at Cardington, Bridgnorth and Freckleton and we found we both had the same posting. After "kitting" out we were transported to Southampton to board the "Devonshire" Troop Ship.

Eight days later we awoke to find ourselves in the Middle East

"Shangri La" called Aden. What a shock, barren rocks and not much else.

We were both assigned to the RAF Hospital at Steamer Point, that most modern state of the art building. However for the first few weeks I was seconded to the M.I. Room at the bottom of the hill. There we were treating mainly RAF employed locals.

Next to us was the Education Centre. Every morning a van pulled up outside selling drinks plus hot and cold food. We and the Education Centre Staff took it in turns to buy the hot rolls. The Education Officer always had a fried egg roll for his elevenses.

One morning we decided to spice up his roll by putting rubber finger "cots" inside. Of course that morning he did not fancy an egg roll but the WRAF assistant agreed to eat it instead! Well the look on her face when she bit into the roll was a sight to be seen.

Back up to the hospital where I was told to report to the Medical Ward where a Sister Penrose was in charge. A very good nurse but also a strict disciplinarian. She ran that Ward with a rod of iron taking no nonsense from anyone including the Doctors. One end of the Ward was kept mainly for dysentery patients with the other end for those with medical problems including a few psychiatric cases. I recall that the dysentery patients kept us busy 24 hours a day.

I remember one night when there was a violent wind storm and everything including the venetian blinds were being blown around, and bed screens were being blown over. During the night one patient unfortunately died and we were

very short staffed. I had to get Ginger Collins, one of us, who was in hospital with acute tonsillitis, to help me lay the deceased out.

Another night a patient was admitted with what we suspected to be dysentery but the duty Medical Officer thought otherwise. However this patient was really ill, and we had to change his bed seven times before the M.O. eventually agreed with us and then finally placed him upon a drip.

One merchant seaman who was a little mentally disturbed told me he was going to jump off the balcony. I said "OK, but please be quiet when you go down past the Surgical Ward as there are some very seriously ill patients down there"! He later came up to me to apologise.

My next move was to the Surgical Ward working under Sister Clarke, another very efficient nurse. Here I teamed up again with Brian Webb and we worked well as a team. One patient we had in was a Mr. Boveda being a Spanish Merchant seaman this poor chap was relaxing in his bunk in the Red Sea when a fog came down and another vessel ploughed into his ship, taking off both his legs, one above the knee and the other below.

He was almost at death's door when he was admitted but after many, many weeks of "Tender Loving Care" he was casemated home to Spain accompanied by Senior Technician, Maurice Grant.

When Maurice returned he handed out to each of us a Spanish beret, which Mr. Boveda had donated.

I had a short spell working in the operating theatre and I found that very interesting.

There were two patients in a small ward who needed 24 hour care. One was a Flt. Sgt. with cerebral malaria and the other a young Arab officer who was paralysed with polio. We worked in shifts with one Nursing Sister and one Nursing Attendant.