

## Danny Boon



I left the apprentices with the 85th, in December 1959, having spent half my time with them following an operation which took me out of play for a term. This might explain my rotten memory for all things 84<sup>th</sup>!

I was posted to REU Henlow, (Beds) to work with the travelling fitting parties - what a breath of fresh air!

I had a wonderful time, mostly in East Anglia, fixing or modifying things, (and avoiding the local SWOs), until Sep 1961. I was then posted to North Coates, Lincs, to become one of the first half dozen fitters on 17 JSTU (Bloodhound 2).

I took up that posting straight from honeymoon with my first wife. By 1968, BH 2 was becoming obsolete, along with my marriage. My wife took our son and daughter to live with her parents in Sussex, while I was posted to Buchan, near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. Oh, thank you... after 7 years working on a marsh, I'm deported..!

Having a total breakdown, I completely lost a month in dock, leading to a compassionate posting to Stanmore Park, Middlesex to be nearer my kids. I finished my RAF days with HQ 11(F) group at Bentley Priory, during which time I persuaded ATV in Borehamwood to give me six weeks free training in TV graphics - then my primary aim. The best six weeks of my 12 years!

At about four minutes past one on 26th July 1969, I left Stanmore Park at the speed of light, grew a beard, and became an apprentice again - in an animation company. I was really lucky to find a company willing to train a 30-year old, but I



had some RAF experience in photography, and they were making flight simulation animations - a happy marriage!

After 3 years, I felt sufficiently confident, and competent, to try teaching post-grad level illustration, animation, and typographic design for film. Besides making the occasional animated short, I ran the animation camera dept. at the Royal College of Art film school for eight years, then was poached by the National Film & Television School in Beaconsfield (the only other post-grad film school in UK), where I taught again for about 16 years, including, for 3 years, the adventure of working with Nick Park (of 'Wallace and Gromit' fame) who was a student in my department.

I made some of the special effects shots on 'Grand Day Out', his first film, for which I also designed and shot the title/credits sequence, the latter half of the film being finished with Aardman Animation in Bristol. Nick secured an Oscar nomination for that film, so we were all happy that six years' work had been worth the trouble!

Alongside the teaching posts, I practised Photography, Airbrush painting and Typographic Design as a freelance. Despite swearing never to marry again, I remarried (in 1974) to Rosalind, a special effects camerawoman and typo- graphic designer - with whom I have yet to have a serious row! She worked freelance in the film industry for many years while I was teaching. Then we became broody...

We have a daughter, Polly, born 1990, who has just started a degree course in theatre studies at Warwick University. My other kids, Coral (46), and Floyd (44), both live in Sussex, and each has a teenage son.

The inexorable progress of the computer made me redundant from teaching in 1995, (Ros and I did our thing on film with sprocket holes!) so we then made and sold crafts for ten years or so, initially via county fairs such as Woburn and Sandringham, later through our own shop, first in Langham, later in Holt. We thought we'd retired in 2005, but still seem to be as busy as ever, but now much more for ourselves than for customers! I now make the occasional stained glass window, amongst other things.

I'm currently recovering from radiotherapy for some cancer earlier this year, which seems to have fixed the problem - but I still hate electronics! (Actually, Ros programmes all our Video and PC stuff!)

Ros and I lived near St Albans for 22 years, moving to north Norfolk in 2000, where we are now settled at the end of an unmade road, overlooking fields near a large village. We do a lot of gardening, and walk our German Shepherd (dog, not migrant worker) that we rescued via the RSPCA. I don't aim ever to move again - it's too much like hard work!

May I wish all of you a very happy reunion - as the 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 will be my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, I'll be at home...

My regards to you all,

Danny Boon