

# Frederik (Fred) Mellenbergh.

I was born in Amsterdam, Netherlands in August 1938.

After getting my degree in Chemical Engineering and after my military service and working for a year or so with Shell I migrated to Australia in 1961 with my wife and 6 months old son.

Below is the story of my life background in 4 pages.

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## A SHORT LIFE BACKGROUND.

Well, the first thing that should probably be exposed, is my background.

I was born in The Netherlands and my whole family has an engineering and technical background. My father was an electrical engineer, my uncle and brother mechanical engineers. I wanted to be different, and thus I chose Chemical Engineering.

Without realizing it at the time, this profession covers electrical, mechanical, and chemical processing technology. But in addition, there is a substantial emphasis of science, being chemistry and physics.

Where do Chemical Engineers work? They design, manage and trouble shoot operations and processes for every-day products. They are more associated with factories rather than laboratories. If you buy it in liquid, powder, granules, tablets, chunks or in gas cylinders it usually had the input from a chemical engineer. Things like – medications - soaps and toilet preparations – fuel, petroleum & solvents – paints – plastics & rubbers - adhesives & sealants – cement – steels, aluminium & other metals – beer & wine etc - food products -- like packaged cereals & soups – dairy products – flour – sugar – fertilizers and germicides - and any other chemical substances.

That makes me an allrounder and I always wanted to be a generalist. I graduated in Holland and then migrated, but I did my masters in Sydney. Later, I also studied for a master in business administration with subjects like accounting, economics, law, psychology, information technology, management & organisation.

My first job in Holland was in the air force, where I received officers training plus training to become an aviation weather forecaster. More science insight.

I had a varied professional and business career, progressing from process engineer, to factory manager and manufacturing manager, to operations director, to business owner. I have been a business owner for some 50 years. I worked in Holland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and America. I was always chosen for my speciality, and I was good at that, which was trouble shooting and projects. This gave me a chance to do some very interesting tasks, over and above my daytime management tasks.

I also had the opportunity to delve into computer programming and create several business programs, websites and also automated spreadsheets using macros. Over my career I have been in control of- and been responsible cumulative for several 1000 people over the years, which honed my people skills and judgement.

To round off my science insight, my earlier hobbies were biology, astronomy, photography, and electronics. I had a pinned-up insect collections in my youth, which even now I am still collecting insects to teach my grand and great grandchildren about bio diversity. Also, in Holland, we had compulsory subjects in biology, geography, local and world history. I can understand where and how things fit together.

*I feel very blessed by the fact that I am handy (I can build most things), I have a good brain (with technical, scientific and mathematical insight), I am a fast, logical thinker, and I can, and I am keen to keep learning. I also start to realise that I have now reached an age, where I can reflect on things and extract the bigger picture.*

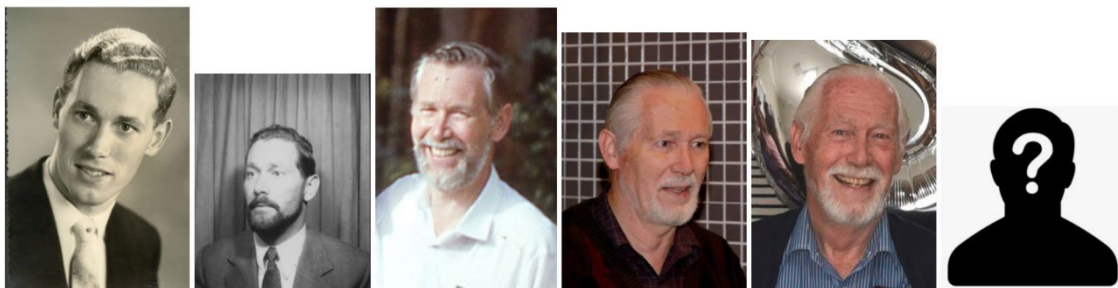
I retired from serious business in 2006 (at the age of 68) and even then, I was still learning. I purchased specific DVD courses, presented by renowned academics, on a large number of subjects. These are not small courses, most of them are 36 by 30-minute lectures and they go in quite a bit of depth. I have purchases in excess of 50 of them. I always was and I still am the proverbial sponge for knowledge. Of interest to mention some of the course topics are:

life in the universe—astronomy -- biology – microbiology – ecology – geology – earth changing climate – fundamentals of sustainable living – economics – Voltaire and the era of enlightenment - capitalism vs socialism – globalism vs nationalism.

As English actor Alfred Hawthorne “Benny Hill” said “Learning all the time”, while putting on his silly smile.

I met my first wife, Joan, in the Dutch Airforce, where she was a professional in the weather forecasting centre where I worked. We married in 1960 and migrated to Australia in 1961, with our 6 month’s old son, Erik. The marriage lasted 24 years and ended, when Joan wanted to return to live in Europe. A year later, in 1985, I started a de-facto marriage with Mary (an Australian born), she was my computer room supervisor. Mary and I undertook many and varied business ventures during our relationship. That relationship lasted 33 years, when Mary died from terminal cancer in 2018. Mary battled the cancer for 4 years, but we knew there was no cure. Therefore, I was also able to condition myself with the prospect of being alone once more. All of us, Joan, Mary and I loved the bush, in particular rain forest. Personally, I lived on bush acreage for more than 20 years. I built our home with Joan around 1974 (on 5 acres) and Mary in 1995 (on 13 acres) plus a partial development on 700 acres for a holiday resort. Mind you I am the gypsy in the relationship. With each partner I lived in some 15 places. I also lived in a caravan 3 times in my life, 2 years with Joan, 2 years with Mary and 6 months alone in Sofala.

Here are some portraits of me over the years:



AGE 21 AGE 40 AGE 46 AGE 66 AGE 80 AGE 100  
YES --- I want to reach 100 years of age, I need that time to do all the things on my bucket list!

I decided I did not want the chance to lose yet another partner in my life and decided to live alone. I took an extra step and decided that if I had to live alone, I might as well start a project and live completely alone, leave Sydney, and live on my own in country NSW. My kids and step kids thought that was not a smart idea, if I did not know anybody around. But Erik offered a spot on his 60-acre weekend getaway property in Sofala (50km north of Bathurst) as a location where I could carry out my projects. At least Erik and his family would come over every 2 or 4 or sometimes 6 weeks. This meant that I would not see or speak to anybody for several weeks. This was for me a test to see if I could handle that. Now 3.5 years later I can say I handled it well and adjusted completely. Certainly, having various projects on hand, helped to occupy the mind. I love being surrounded by nature, with the kangaroos, birds and other wild animals.

*Just as a digression: Mary and I started a hospitality project in 1986, on 700 acres half-way between Bulahdelah and Gloucester, smack in the middle of forestry country. If I could, I would return to that place tomorrow (just need to pack a few things). This was a magic place of intense beauty, with about 1/3 dense rain forest with permanent creeks through it, 1/3 open forest and the rest grassland. On that place we had apart from the usual kangaroos, special animals like dingos, koalas, monitor lizards, bower birds (but also ticks and leaches) and more.*

Someone told me once that I was a maverick. I argued that I was no hero or superhero, and I had no special powers, just an ordinary inquisitive nature loving scientist. But when I examined the meaning of maverick, I had a different thought. So, what is a maverick? The Collins dictionary has an explanation as follows. **“A person of independent or unorthodox views.”** Yes, I can relate to that, I just do not only have the views, I also am a very independent person and I do unusual things.

One of the things that I have been most proud of in my work history is the following. I have been headhunted for a new job twice in my career. Obviously, people thought I had something special that they wanted. So, they approached me, made me an offer and I accepted.

Well, what are some of those projects that I wanted to do. First, I wanted to build a novel house, the Robust house, which could be the house of the future, that will withstand all the weather, storm, intrusions, and bushfire attacks. I designed the Robust house and registered the design with IP Australia. But I parked building the prototype in the background.

I got enthused by converting shipping containers for my home and workshops, as this appeared very cost effective. In stage 1 my home is in one 40ft container, quite convenient and nicely finished, with everything I need. At that point I had 6 x 40ft containers, most of them workshops. I called it my container city. Stage 2 was a small expansion of 2 extra 20ft containers (storage and laboratory). Then came stage 3, a more extensive expansion, with 2x 40 ft and 1 x 20ft containers. My home was now 2 x40ft containers side by side. So, now I have 10 containers, which gives me more roof covered space than most houses in Sydney. I live completely off the grid, and I even recycle my grey water for shower and laundry use.

(mind you, I am not doing this by the seat of my pants. I verify the proper treatment process by doing bacterial cultures in my laboratory.)

*So, unorthodox – sure! **Which 80-year-old would live by himself in a caravan for 6 months and start this building project as a one man band?** Sometimes I wonder if I completely lost my mind. It was a challenge to do all the work by myself and certainly not without setbacks. I had to make several aids and jigs so I could do the tasks. I also purchased a specially built tip-truck with a “hayb” type crane on it. That truck-crane has proved to be a major blessing, because it allowed me to manoeuvre heavy things.*

I anticipate that I will complete phase 3 before the end of May 2022. Having done all this work, I thought if I can do this by myself at the age of 80 to 83, then most handy men with a partner can do this also. So, I created the idea to invite likeminded people, who want to live off the grid, for a hands-on workshops. They can see, touch, feel, what can be done and how it is done. I will provide detailed costs, progress pictures and instructions. My stage 1 home of 1x40 ft (12meter) container, cost me about \$45,000 (fully equipped, including computer, Foxtel, fridge, aircon, cupboards etc) and I lived in that for two years, before I started expansions. This new home now gives me a dining nook and a walk-in dressing area.

Another project which I want to commence during 2022 is about growing your own vegetables. This is a very scientific project, where I will build a sealed green house, and try to grow plants “on steroids”. The idea is to get a steady harvest week by week for a small community of say 5 or 10 families. I have already equipped a laboratory where I will analyse and experiment with the nutrient solutions. Also, I am thinking of increasing the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration inside the hothouse. The way most people grow things in their vege-garden, will result in an enormous yield of a particular crop over a few weeks and then nothing for a long time. I trying to find a way to alter that.

Another hobby that I am spending time on is writing scientific and other essays aimed at the average population, who have never learned science. One topic that is in the foreground of most people’s thinking is sustainable living and global warming. I have several essays that provide information towards those topics. Having been a weather forecaster, I have a good understanding of the weather cycles, which supports my understanding of the climate change. I think global warming is a wrong term to use, as it is very misleading to the average non-scientific person and climate change is a more appropriate word. The key is that the oceans are warming up very slowly, which promotes more fluctuating and violent weather. It is also a pity and often misleading, that a lot of people do not understand the difference between weather and climate. But I will explain all that in some of the essays.

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