

The

WHISPERER

**The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland**

JANUARY 2000



Model of 30 Squadron Beaufighter A19-137 which was presented to The Association by the Aspley Model Association. This particular Beaufighter was flown on a number of missions by member S/Ldr Arthur Thomson with Hon Sec as Nav.



Hon Sec. , Members Ron Wardlaw and Stan Curran handing over the model of 30 Squadron Beaufighter A19-137, (together with enlarged prints of the recovery of Boston "Big Nig" from a swamp in PNG) to War Planes Museum at Caboolture. Stan also made one of his very special Squadron plaques for Ron.

President's Corner



A belated Happy New Year to everyone. It certainly was for Joan and me, as our youngest daughter presented us with our 9th grandchild - a beautiful healthy girl, just prior to Christmas. I am sure the miracle of birth never ceases to enthrall all of us.

On 15th. December 1999 members and their wives attended the Annual Combined Trophy Day at RAAF Amberley, which was a great success. The difficulty I face is that, that as President of the most Junior of the Associations, I am the last to speak and when our turn comes there is very little to be said.

Our trophy was won by Cpl. Peter Bounty who was away on temporary posting and 82 Wing Flight Commander, F/Lt Georgina Trotter, accepted the trophy on his behalf.

Air Commodore Peter Growder is retiring, and I understand he will be living in Brisbane. As he has been such a good friend to us I will be writing to him soon to thank him for the many kindnesses he has shown us over the years and to wish him well in his retirement.

Also my thanks to Peter for his continuing efforts on our behalf. I know he won't be completely recovered until he can go fishing again. I know a number of our members have already complemented him on the layout of The Whisperer which he says is now easier to prepare anyway. I would also like to thank him for contributing the enthralling article on A19-137. How much closer can one get to getting your "DSO".

Incidentally on another tack altogether, the Madang Sub-Branch has just received it's charter, but has only 11 members. It is appealing Mainland Sub-Branches for donations and memorabilia (I suppose WWII PNG) to help furnish a club house. If any members have any such items lying around which they or their families don't want would they please let me know.

Regards

RALPH.

COMMITTEE

Patron	Raymond Smith	3263 1274
President	Ralph Ind	5538 5439
V. President	William O'Connor	3286 1067
Secretary	Peter White	3287 5488
Committee	Stan Curran	3290 2980
	Jack Chamberlain	3648 2194
	Les Turnbull	5537 7953

FOOTPRINTS

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes of his life. For each scene he noticed there were two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. I don't understand why, when I needed you most you would always leave me. The Lord replied "My precious child. I love you and you know I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was when I carried you".

DO YOU KNOW THIS AIRCRAFT?

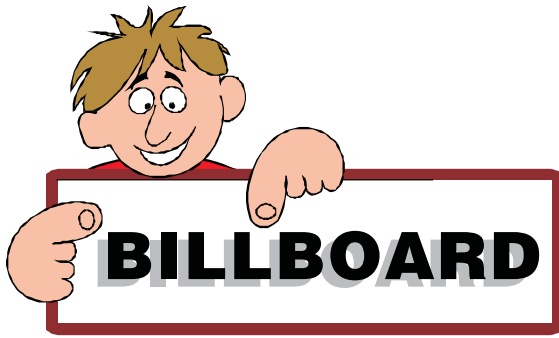


The answer to last issue's question is:

D.H.2 was designed by Geoffrey de Havilland. Powered by a 100 h.p. nine cylinder Gnome engine with a top speed of 93 m.p.h., it had an endurance of 2¾ hours. Armourment was one Lewis gun firing forward. The D.H.2 went into service at the end of 1915 and 400 were built before they were retired in March 1917.

Try this one for the next issue.





Annual RAAF Memorial Mass

The Annual RAAF Memorial Mass was once again held at St Aquinas Catholic Church at St Lucia and was again very well attended.

The celebrant was WNG/CDR Paul Goodiand, RAAF Chaplain. The Eulogy was by WNG/CDR Alex Freeleagus CBE AM RFD (Rtd), who had served with 23 RAAF City of Brisbane Squadron.

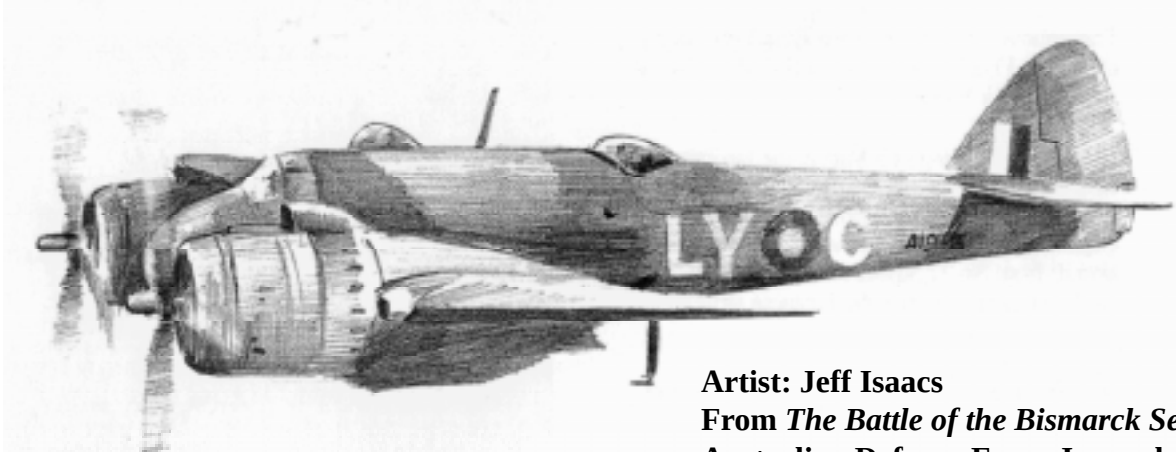
President Ralph, Stan Curran, Vic Pearson, and Sec. Peter White represented the Association.

Morning tea was provided by the church Ladies Guild, and was very nice indeed. A show of hands was called for to establish what War the attendees had served in, and this indicated that of all of those present some 95% served in World WarII. As the ranks of these Vets is now rapidly thinning it was suggested that an increased effort should be made to improve the attendance of the younger generations, to enable the Mass to continue to be successful.

20 Flight AIRTC

We did not receive a nomination of the winner of our Annual Award of \$200 for the top cadet for the year 1999, in the Flight. Enquiries revealed that no cadet was selected due to an oversight on someone's part within the Flight Command.

Our committee considered suggestions to rectify the matter, and decided to put this award on hold for the present.



Artist: Jeff Isaacs
From *The Battle of the Bismarck Sea*
Australian Defence Force Journal

Boston Model



We have been advised by Garry Heineman, secretary of the Aspley Model Building Club, that the scale model of a Boston aircraft, which they have been building for presentation to us, is nearing completion.

He has invited us to attend their meeting to be held at 1900 hours on Wednesday 15th March 2000, to enable them to present it to President Ralph. The invitation is extended to any member of our Association who would like to come along on that night.

The model is to the same scale as the model Beaufighter they had previously made for us, and in a similar display case. We have requested that the model be of 22 Squadron Boston -A28-7, the aircraft F/LT Bill Newton flew when he earned the Victoria Cross, post humously awarded. We have also requested that the plaque in the model, honours his crew, F/SGT Lyons (Nav), and SGT Eastwood (WAG), who also lost their lives.

The model will be handed over to the Warplanes Museum at Caboolture for display and safe keeping alongside our Beaufighter Model.

PRAISE BE A PEACEMAKER

Due to unprecedented, thanks to Telstra, The Australian Defence Force(ADF) has established a fax number, 02 5301 0222, so that the Australian Public can send messages to the Peacemakers. The ADF has also established an e-mail address for people who wish to send their best wishes to the Peacemakers. For those on the internet, send your e-mail to

peacekeepers@defence.gov.au

STAN'S PAGE

COMEDY OF ERRORS



Before I tell this story I must describe one of the characters. Desmond John Cronley, a general hand, was very well respected. No one knew his background or anything of his private life. He had a scar on the back of his head which appeared to have been caused by a serious injury. He was well mannered and gave the impression that he had been well educated, however, at times he would seem to be off the planet. He was employed on various odd jobs and always worked cheerfully.

One day just before lunchtime the crash alarm sounded. When this happens on an Air Force Base everyone is galvanized into action. The Duty Pilot activates the alarm and directs the crash tender to the site of the crash. On this occasion a Dakota had crashed at Doonside about five miles away. The crash tender is continuously manned while flying is in progress and in seconds it was on its way.

There is usually a back up crash tender unmanned but near the hangars, the nearest airmen to this man it and follow the first tender. I was handy and jumped on the back up tender.

The roads were unsealed. There had been a lot of rain and there were potholes everywhere. We had gone about three miles and caught up with the first tender which had broken down. Some of the crew jumped on our tender and off we went. About half a mile further on our tender broke down. A jeep with an Of-

ficer and a Driver came along. Someone said, "grab fire extinguishes and pile on the jeep". We were all over it. I was on the bonnet. We had left the road and were going through a lightly timbered paddock in sight of the crash about two hundred yards away when the jeep ran into a tree, I shot off the bonnet. There was a sound of tearing and I had a stinging feeling in my right buttock. I had torn my overalls and left a piece of my behind behind. I hit the ground running together with the rest of the jeep crew.

When we arrived at the crash site the aircraft was a burnt out skeleton. The crew were unhurt. They could do nothing but stand by and watch it burn. The crew consisted of a pilot, navigator and an airframe fitter. There were a few grass fires so we put them out by beating them with green branches.

There were four of us in the gang where I was working. One was Desmond John. Another person appeared he was taking photographs and identified himself as a newspaper reporter. He asked us about the crash but we told him we were not allowed to say anything. We continued with our work. Desmond John spoke up. He commented on the coolness of the pilot and his presence of mind. We asked him what he meant, he said he was on the first crash tender and heard the pilot call the tower. He told the duty pilot that they were about to crash and he asked the duty pilot to order three late lunches for them. We realized that the reporter was still within earshot and Desmond John was saying this for his benefit. Sure enough the headline next day was "COOL PILOT ABOUT TO CRASH ORDERS LATE LUNCHES."

You must be wondering what caused the crash. I can't be sure of this. I didn't see the crash critique but the word was that the aircraft simply had not been refuelled and just ran out of fuel.

STAN CURRAN

MAGIC

I was a Corporal engine fitter in number 30 Beaufighter Squadron at Schofields near Sydney. One of our aircraft was unserviceable at Archerfield near Brisbane. The reported problem was a propeller oil leak. Incidentally before the Second World War they were propellers, but during the War they became airscrews, and then in post War years they became propellers again. It seemed that the fitters at Archerfield had a problem, as they were unable to stop the oil leak. I was flown up to Archerfield in a Beaufighter complete with a toolbox and an overnight bag, and told to ring for a pilot when I had the aircraft ready to return to Base.

When I arrived at Archerfield I met by a F/Sgt.- I knew him, he had been one of my instructors on my Flight Mechanic's course. I forget his name now, but he was well respected in the Air Force, and he was known as Carburettor Claude

Carburettor Claude explained that they were unfamiliar with the Beaufighter propellers, but they

thought it may have been incorrectly assembled. They thought it should have a spacer behind the shaft chevron shield, and they had the parts laid out and I checked them and said "No it is all there." I re-assembled the propeller, fitted it to the aeroplane, and cleaned away all traces of oil, of course I had an audience. Archerfield fitters were watching me like hawks. My next move was to run the engine, operating the pitch control a couple of times. When I shut down the engine and climbed down to have a look. There was oil all over the propeller. It was dripping from the blade tips, also it was covering the reduction gear housing. There were a few smiles. I was getting the message- this Beaufighter expert is not so smart. Carburettor Claude said to me "What do you think now?" I said "It is as I expected it is coming from between the reduction gear housing and the crankcase." I knew he was thinking that I was quite mad, he said "It is impossible for oil to come forward against the slipstream and cover the propeller like that."

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At that time I had six or seven years experience on Beaufighters and was getting to know them. The particular oil leak was a classic one, which had tricked a lot of fitters in the past. I had often seen it before. I think that when the engine is running on the ground the propeller acts like a centrifugal pump and throws the oil out towards the blade tips, causing a low pressure at the propeller hub and so causing the oil to come forward.

To repair the oil leak I needed to remove the reduction gear from the crankcase and fit two new "O" oil ring seals that were between the reduction gear and the crank case. In the field the easiest way to do this, is with the propeller in place. I had borrowed an "A" frame with a block and tackle to fit the propeller and the reduction gear. I now put the sling on the propeller again and took some weight, and removed the nuts from the reduction gear studs. I climbed down and pulled the "A" frame forward a metre or so to put forward tension on both the propeller and reduction gear and chocked it there. Then I climbed back up with a hide faced hammer, and gave the reduction gear a few good whacks and "Bingo" off came the reduction gear and propeller together, swinging in the air. My audience had increased by this time. I don't think they had seen anything like it before. The seven layshaft gears and the fourteen ballcrank gears, twenty one in all were exposed. Then I took a small scribe from my pocket and took two small "O" rings from a recess in the crankcase, from another pocket I took a match box with two new "O" rings and fitted them into the recess. I hadn't intended to be secretive about this, but later realised that from the ground my audience could not see what I was doing. Before I had left Schofields I had a fair idea what the problem was and I had put two new "O" rings in my pocket.

I got my audience to push the "A" frame up to the engine, while I guided the reduction gear onto the studs, then I put the nuts on and tensioned them down. Then I cleaned the engine down and prepared both engines for a run up.

I ran both engines this time, the port engine was due for a run, while I was running the the starboard engine I operated the pitch control again, the "O" rings that I had replaced sealed the oil gallery line, which went to the pitch control.

When I climbed out of the aeroplane this time there was not a trace of oil anywhere. Carburettor Claude said "What in the hell did you do?". It was then that I realised they hadn't seen me change the "O" rings. I showed him the old "O" rings and explained to him what I had done. I can still see him walking away shaking his head,

After completing all daily inspections which I was authorised to do, except armament, which wasn't required. I thanked Carburettor Claude for his assistance, and then I paid my compliments to the engineering officer, and asked him to ring for a Pilot, which he did.

It wasn't long before I was back at Schofields.

STAN CURRAN

RECRUITING.

After World War II the RAAF had an interim Air Force for about two years, this was to allow time to change over from wartime to post war Permanent Air Force. The standard for the new Permanent Air Force was very high and towards the end of the interim Air Force it was realised that too many skilled men had been culled out, and new recruits were required. It was decided that a recruiting drive was necessary.

It was 1948, I was in No. 3 Squadron in Canberra. We were equipped with Mustang and Auster aircraft. I think the Austers were mainly used for instrument flying. Most personnel were World War II veterans. To say the pilots were a bit "Gung Ho" would be an understatement. They were very skilled Mustang pilots and to them the Austers were mere toys.

No 3 Squadron's share of the recruiting was to embrace the South Coast of New South Wales between Nowra and Stanwell Park. We were to take three Austers, three pilots and two ground staff, also the new Sikorski helicopter, which was still on trials, to meet us at Nowra.

The plan was to go to HMAS Albatross at Nowra, stay overnight, and fly over to Nowra the next day, then go on to Wollongong, book into an hotel and operate from there for the next week.

I was selected to go as Corporal engine fitter NCO in charge. A Corporal was needed to sign the daily serviceability checks. The other groundstaff was a flight rigger.

Although I was stationed at Canberra, my wife Daisy and I had our home in Sydney, and I was lucky to get home at week-ends. It would be a good opportunity to have a weeks holiday with Daisy at Wollongong so we made a double booking at the hotel and arranged to meet there.

We met the Helicopter crew at Nowra, and next day we flew around the Nowra district. The pilots were authorised to do low flying, and also to take civilians on joy flights, providing they first signed an indemnity form.

The pilot I was flying with decided to fly low up the Shoalhaven River. It was pleasant flying up the river, when suddenly the pilot pushed the "stick" hard forward and at the same time he was saying something unprintable. It was only then that I realised we were flashing under a cable that was strung across the river, we must have missed it only by inches. That was the end of low flying up the river.

We were making our way up the coast. At Kiama the helicopter was on the oval, and my pilot did a demonstration of slow flying flying. I could hardly believe an aircraft could fly so slow without stalling. I was a little concerned as the oval had a ring of tall

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trees around it, if we stalled we would have no where to go but the trees.

All went well, we landed at Wollongong, secured the aircraft for the night and went to the hotel where Daisy was waiting to meet me. Next morning we went down to the strip, which was parallel with the beach. One of the pilots coaxed Daisy to go for a flight for the first time, she had some reservations but bravely went along. As soon as they were airborne one of the other pilots said to me "Give me a start, and we will go up and formate on them". Imagine Daisy's surprise when she saw another aeroplane only feet away tucked behind the starboard wing.

After we landed and re-fuelled, the pilots decided to go in different directions. My pilot decided to go north up the coast. Soon after leaving Wollongong we were passing over a large surf club building. The club house was in the middle of two large open-top dressing sheds, men's on the south side. Ladies on the north side. It was obvious that the members were sun lovers, as each shed had numerous benches for the members to lie on, and get an all over sun tan. I soon became aware that the pilot was intent on recruiting more females than males, judging by the number of times we flew over the north shed. I thought they may become offended and complain, instead quite a number stood up and waved. Needless to say that during the week the surf shed had plenty of attention. I didn't tell Daisy, as I thought she wouldn't have approved.

We went up to Stanwell and back, low flying both ways. The surf club just happened to be in our flight path on the way back. When we landed the rigger saw us in. By the look on his face I guessed that something was wrong. He said "A kid kicked a football when we were flying low on the beach, and we hit it". The ball had gone through the propeller, damaged the front engine cowl, then bounced into the leading edge of the port wing. The dent in the wing wasn't too bad, but it would be a big repair job and was O.K. to fly

The engine cowl was a mess. I took the propeller off and then the cowl. Then I took the cowl to a garage in the town and borrowed some panel beating tools. I had to be careful not to stretch the metal or the dzus fasteners would be out of register. After about an hour it looked pretty good, so I took it back, and was pleased to find it fitted perfectly,

This is where the sequence of events may come undone, I think it was the next day we were flying over Port Kembla at about 1.000 feet, the pilot said "That looks like a nice big flat paddock down there, I've always wondered how these would glide. If anything goes wrong we can land there". With that he switches off the engine, it glided O.K. but he had left it a bit late to re-start the engine. When he tried there was no response. We were getting dangerously low so he gave away the engine, to concentrate on a dead stick

landing. I was getting concerned, the paddock looked like a bowling green when we had height, but the lower we got the worse it looked. There was some livestock cows and hens and the ground was rough, it looked bad. We were lucky enough to land without incident. We pushed the aircraft onto a road about 20 feet away.

The road went for about half a mile in a sweeping bend. The pilot was confident he could take off, if I lightened the load, by going back in a taxi. I blew the engine out: open throttle, switches off, petrol off, and turned the engine several revolutions. The engine started first time, and the pilot did a clever take-off following the bend of the road. Of course we had quite an audience for all this, one of the locals rang for a taxi for me, and I met the pilot back at Wollongong.

The next incident was the following day. We were flying over Port Kembla, and there was a man on top of a flat roofed shed, painting it green. The pilot said "Watch me put him off the shed". I thought I rather be watching from the ground. The pilot flew in real low and straight at the man. I expected to see him jump off the roof. To my amazement he stood up, feet apart, and shook his fist. The pilot said "He is mad. I'll put him off this time". I had reservations about who was mad, and I wasn't too fussed being where I was. When we went around again, the same thing happened. The man still shaking his fist. I thought, I'm glad that's over, when to my dismay the pilot said "This time or never". I really thought it was going to be never. This time he went in below the height of the shed, ever so close. I had a vision of the man between the port wheel and the wing tip, as we flashed over I saw his right arm go up in a throwing action. The pilot said "He's absolutely mad. I didn't say anything, but a lot of thoughts were going through my head. On the way back I was wondering, whether the man had thrown anything at us. As soon as we landed I had a look at the port side of the fuselage, and sure enough there was wet green paint splashed along the side. I put some petrol on a rag and wiped it off. I wonder how many people have been in an aeroplane, and had it painted when flying over a shed?

On the Friday night the pilots went to a dance and a party with the nurses at the hospital. During the party it was arranged, that they would put on an air race on the Saturday morning. The course was to be around the lighthouse at the beach in line with the main street, then up the main street for about two miles to the hospital, about ten laps, doing very tight turns around the hospital and the light-house. Well it certainly stirred things up in Wollongong.

We ground staff heard some of the senior hospital staff made complaints in high places. There were questions asked in Parliament. It was feared the pilots may be in trouble. However, we didn't any more about it.

Daisy went home on the Sunday. We had a great week and the No 3 Squadron recruiters went back to Canberra.

STAN CURRAN

How lucky can you get?

Whilst doing a tour of operations with RAAF 30 Squadron (Beaufighters) in the South West Pacific Area in World War II operating from a strip on the Island of Kirawina, we were briefed to carry out a barge sweep on the south west coast of New Ireland from Kabanga Bay to Lindenhafen.



Final briefing from Intel Officer Hutchinson before take-off. Peter White, centre back row with forage cap.

Take off was 5am on 18th November 1943, and we led a formation of three Beaufighters. I was a navigator and my pilot was Squadron Leader A Thomson DFC. The task was to locate and destroy Japanese barges, which travelled at night, and hid up during the day. Generally they were well camouflaged. The method used was for one aircraft to fly at just above water level, and the other two at about 500 feet. Positions were changed at intervals. When barges were sighted all aircraft carried out low level strafing attacks, until the barges were destroyed or damaged.

We were flying in Beaufighter A19-157, F/O Towill and F/Sgt Sweeny in A19-104 and F/Lt Fisher and F/Sgt Lutwyche in A19-90. We set course for our starting point, which was 200 nautical miles distant over the Solomon Sea. We made a good land fall and set off north along the New Britain Coast. We were at about 500 feet above the water, when I sighted four Japanese Zero fighters, almost overhead in a V formation, at about 2000 feet climbing on a southerly course. It was obvious that they had spotted us, as they were changing formation into an echelon to attack us in a line astern pattern. We immediately changed course and flew in a southerly direction underneath them. They obviously did not see our course change for they dived in attack to our original northerly course. They then changed direction when they spotted us again, but it was too late for them as my pilot had the Beau on full



Some of the barges claimed as destroyed

bore and they failed to get within firing range, despite chasing us for about ten minutes.

This was one of those moments that raises the pulse rate, when it was obvious the Zeros had spotted us and started their dive to attack from above. Our fast turn, being painted in camouflage colours and at only fifty above treetops, made us a difficult target to latch on to, and the fact that Beaufighters were the fastest aircraft in the SW Pacific Area at low level all helped us to escape a hammering. For a while the dice were heavily loaded against us.

PETER WHITE.

BISCUITS

Being a very fresh BISCUIT, MONTE CARLO invited the TWIN TARTS, Miss VO VO and MARIE to join him at the RITZ for MORNING COFFEE and a SALADA which was FULL O'FRUIT.

Miss VO VO, with her CLASSIC good looks and GAIETY often HOBNOBS with royalty. She was MONTE CARLO's magnificent OBSESSION, his ray of SUNSHINE, so he always paid a PREMIUM to sit at the CAPTAIN'S TABLE where the waiter CLIX his heels and bows when serving them.

They were having a CRACKER of a time and MONTE CARLO, looking at Miss VO VO sitting beside him thought "IADORA". He put his hands on her MILKY WAY which was not very NICE, but when his SCOTCH FINGERS touched her DATE SLICE she grabbed him by his GINGER NUTS which made him SAO in a loud voice.

Author or authors unknown



NOT MY FAULT BUT AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS

When you first discover to your horror that your conversation to your pilot for the last fifteen minutes has been broadcast, because the R/T switch had been accidentally knocked on by your elbow as you turned around, you expect to get a fair amount of ribbing from your mates. But a few minutes later after we had landed on Wama Strip, Morotai (on a return from a formation flight to Manado), a good friend and fellow navigator Dan Cormack, of Ayr, who unfortunately passed away last year, greeted me enthusiastically. "Good on you Shot (my nickname) you saved me from being injured.

"How come" I asked. "Well just as we were touching down my maps dropped off the table, and I undid my seat belt to pick them up. Then I heard you comment to your pilot that one of the Beaufighters was starting to swing on landing. Deciding to have a look at it I forgot about the maps, looked out and to my dismay found out it was our aircraft that was swinging, So I just had time to fasten the seat belt and brace myself before we went into the ditch".

Footnote - "Mother knows best."

A few weeks later in October 1945, when ferrying an aircraft down to Wagga Wagga, a forced landing at Iron Range led to a change in plans, which meant we spent a night in Townsville which was then the home of my pilot, Charles Melcheirt and myself.

Next day when my father drove me out to the airport, Charles and I showed him over the Beaufighter. My mother in a letter to me told me how Dad had explained to her how cramped were the confines in the back of a Beaufighter. "The Air Force shouldn't put big boys like you in confined spaces like that" was her comment.

So it really wasn't carelessness on my part in accidentally switching on the R/T that was to blame, but the earlier decision of Air Force Headquarters to put me in the wrong type of aircraft that caused the problem.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

AUSTIN DONNELLY

WHAT IS IT?

It is not money. We all have it, but we usually say, we have so very little of it. You cannot give it away, although you are so often asked for it. You cannot buy it, although you often hear of someone who tries to. Some people have more of it than others.

The answer **TIME.**

From Charlie King AH TOO

HE SAY:

It is fun to believe in yourself, but don't be too easily convinced.

Dictionary is the only place where success before work

Not to go out of your way to learn tricks of the trade: just learn trade.

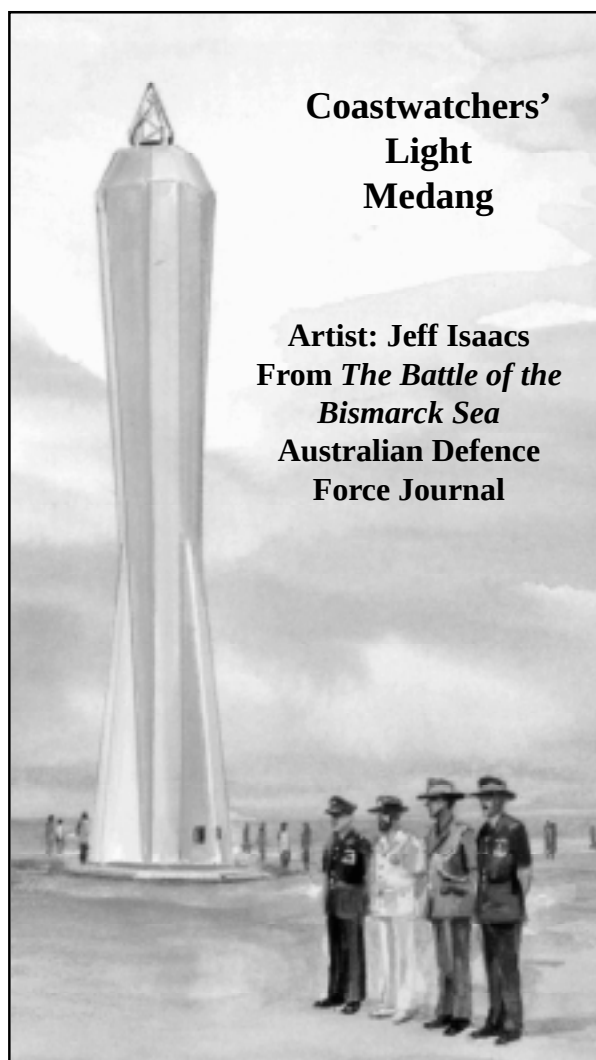
Man is as young as he feels, after he tries to prove it.

If you keep your right eye left open, and your left eye right open, you will keep out of trouble.

One sure thing wrong about the younger generation, they don't belong to it any more

An interviewer talking on T V, to a modern day footballer said "Do you know that you earned more money in the last twelve months, than the Prime Minister"?

"I should dam well think that's so", said the footballer. "I am a better player than he is".



**Coastwatchers'
Light
Medang**

**Artist: Jeff Isaacs
From *The Battle of the
Bismarck Sea*
Australian Defence
Force Journal**

WALK BACK TO WEWAK

I came across this report in George Ogden's book "Air War against Japan" 1943-1945. It is the story of a Beaufort crew of 100 Squadron, the crew was made up of four young Australian Airmen. Flying Officer L.M. MacLaren was the Pilot, age 28 from Kingswood in South Australia. Navigator was Flying Officer S.L. Anderson of Moonee Ponds Victoria, aged 26 years. Flying Officer R.A. Graetz Mt Pleasant South Australia, was aged 27 years, and Flight Sergeant F. Moloney aged 26 were the Wireless Air Gunners

On 20th May 1944, their Beaufort was hit by anti aircraft fire while striking enemy supply lines in the coastal area near Wewak. One of the engines caught fire, and the pilot came down in the sea, about 20 yards offshore from "But" plantation. The crew who were injured took to their dinghy and paddled seaward, but the Japanese soldiers opened fire from the shore with machine guns as soon as the dinghy left the shelter of the aircraft.

Anderson and MacLaren were killed by the machine gun fire which sank the dinghy. Graetz had the lobe of his right ear shot away, and he started to swim westward and eventually landed on the west side of the But jetty. Maloney was last seen swimming seaward, he was never seen again. For the following eight days Graetz was in the jungle avoiding Japanese Patrols, and the information he collected on enemy positions and movements, later prove to be valuable. He was seen on the 28th May near the Denmap river by American Air Cobra pilots, and later picked up by a patrol boat and taken to Aitape

This is the Graetz Diary narrative on his escape and evasion of capture, which was included in the official report made to RAAF intelligence officers. After bombing and strafing a village along the coast of the Ninahau River, a strafing run was made on buildings at the But mission. Just as the run was completed, the port motor of the Beaufort caught fire, doubtless caused from unseen ground fire the pilot turned the aircraft towards the sea to "ditch" well out, but the cockpit filled with smoke making further control impossible. The aeroplane was "ditched" twenty yards offshore from But Plantation

The dinghy was released and the crew climbed aboard on the seaward side of the aeroplane. They began to paddle the dinghy seaward but as soon as it drew away from the protection of the Beaufort, which was lying in the surf, the Nips opened fire with several machine guns from the rising ground behind But Mission. The first burst of about three seconds was very accurate, the navigator being killed outright.

The second burst of fire holed the dinghy which started to fill with water. The three remaining men jumped into the sea and started to swim alongside the

dinghy, towing it seaward, when the third burst of fire collapsed the dinghy completely, killed the pilot and wounded Greatz, who was hit by a .30 calibre bullet, which carried away the lobe of his right ear, causing heavy loss of blood. Graetz then swam westward away from the gun fire. He did not have a jungle kit and was wearing flying boots which were soon lost in the water. Flight Sergeant Moloney was last seen swimming out to sea.

Graetz's narrative follows "I started drifting westward with the current, swimming as well about 200 yards from the shore. The Nips were still firing spasmodically, and sent some patrols along the beach towards the jetty. They did not go right along the beach, however possibly I was out of their sight in the waves. The tide gradually took me towards the shore and I landed on the west side of the But jetty. Which hid my movement from the Nips along the beach. A solitary Nip was sitting on the sand 100 yards westward but he did not seem to see me, so I crawled into the scrub at the end of the beach when he was looking the other way. This would be about 1430 hours, as I felt very weak from the constant bleeding from my wounded ear, I crawled under a bush nearby and just lay there. At dusk I saw guards posted along the beach, singly and about fifty yards apart. I fell asleep but awoke at about 2200 hours.

Hearing considerable motor truck activity both ways along the coastal road nearby, I tried to see what was going on but collapsed and lay there until dawn. In crawling through the scrub after getting ashore I had lost my shirt and trousers and was naked through the night.

MAY 21 Awaking at dawn I had strength to crawl back and locate my clothing which was close by. I saw the P40's come down in the morning and strafe the Beaufort until, it burnt in the surf. (I do not think the Nips got out to the aeroplane to remove any of the parts.) I felt very weak as the wound had bled through the night. Later I became almost delirious and lay under a bush nearby for the rest of the day. Slept there that night.

MAY 22 In the early morning I tried to make my way to Tadjji, and set out towards the east end of the But drome. At Au creek I found two large bomb craters filled with clear water. Having had no water yet, except dew from the leaves of bushes, I lay in a crater for several hours drinking copiously..

In the afternoon I made my way to the But Drome, finding the runway filled with hie craters and many Jap planes around it. At 1800 hours after inspecting the strip, I made my way to the beach, not having seen any sign of life. Having decided that it would be best to

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travel by night, I started westwards, but at the mouth of the Manib creek I almost walked into a Jap sentry who was sitting looking seaward.

I sat down near him and he did not challenge, so I crawled off to the beach. Just then about forty Nips carrying lanterns came out to the edge of the scrub and commenced carrying large packages, which were being unloaded from trucks, up to a small headland at the east of the creek mouth.

I lay watching this for about forty five minutes, and noticed that some of the loads were heavy packing cases. When the activity ceased I crawled back to the beach and slept under a bush. Throughout the day I felt very hungry but had no food.

MAY 23 After waking in the morning I tried to build a raft from empty drums and coconut logs, but it collapsed when I tried to launch it. Along the entire track there were laid yellow telephone lines, so I cut two hundred yards of this in an endeavour to repair the raft, but was unsuccessful. Walking along the beach I located a camouflaged 3 inch coastal gun, which was in an emplacement, the back of which was open so that easy movement was possible, as the gun was mounted on wheels.

The protruding barrel was camouflaged with palm leaves. In an effort to disable the gun several handfuls of sand down the muzzle and in the breech mechanism. Nearby were several weapon pits designed for machine guns. This was about noon and I spent the rest of the day wandering around the But strip inspecting the enemy planes. There I found a waterproof sheet and silk from a parafrag bomb. Henceforth, I used the silk to wrap myself in so that my wet clothes could dry. The evening after spreading grass over the leading edge of an aeroplane I slept under it.

May 24 At 0600 hours two Nips came walking past the plane but did not see me as the grass provide shelter. They were each carrying a machine gun, and probably had come down from the weapon pits seen the previous afternoon. Having decide to push westward I crossed the strip and found the track which would lead me to Manib creek. In some deserted native huts Japs had been living on the east bank of the creek but a strafing attack had just been carried out in the area and the huts were deserted.

Entering the huts I took towels and a water bottle as well as shirts. Went through the personal kit of one Jap but found nothing of interest. Just opposite this hut a three ton truck was pulled in right under and seemed serviceable, so I puled out the distributor wires. Crossing Manib creek a futter group of huts was found. These had been used for a dump for medical supplies which were scattered everywhere, apparently by bomb blasts.

Continuing west along the creek but keeping to the

scrub I found an apparent motor repair pool where six three ton trucks were puled in under the trees. Just as I had pulled the wires from the distributors on two of the trucks I saw two Japs in a hut across the track. They did not see me so I inspected the contents of other nearby huts finding that they had contained spare parts and MAT. tools and aeroplane parts. I had only gone a short way along when a heavy strafing and bombing attack was made by A.20s (Wirraways).

Taking shelter under a tree off the road I found the experience terrifying. Bombs exploded nearby and later a belly tank was dropped on the tree, and it was also hit by tracers. the fire burning part of the tree. At least half an acre of grass was also burnt out by the belly tank, but unfortunately there were no stores in the area. I lay under the tree off the track for the rest of the day, and at 1830 hours about fifty fully equipped and packed troops started assembling. About seven trucks came along and picked up the Nips, going off in both directions. In view of the activity I slept under a large tree, two Japs slept on the farther side from me

MAY 25 Awakening in the morning I found the Nips had gone. At 0730 hours I set out along the track for Tadj. The road was very muddy and was showing signs of the use of chains on the M.T.'s. During the morning at least six Nips, walking singly, came east along the track. They seemed to be very weary and were avoided by stepping into the undergrowth. Earlier in the morning I had seen what seemed to be several gun pits cut out of a scarred hillside, in a position which would command the coastal road. Continuing to walk through the muddy road I started to cross a small creek down a steep embankment when I saw an elderly and tired Nip also crossing towards me. I walked straight past and he took no notice of me. just across another creek in a clearing I saw I saw six more Nips, all armed, but I walked right on past them. They merely looked and said nothing. Several more were met all walking eastward along the track, and they all seemed tired and disinterested with their arms hanging down at their sides. Some grunted to me as I passed them, and I grunted back in reply.

At 1430 hours I rested off the track and drank from the water bottle. Though I had not had any food I was now losing the desire for it, but tried to eat some fruit looking like apples. They had a furry taste like green persimmons. At nearly everyone of the several creeks along the road were men but all seemed tired and dejected. In a clearing on the west bank of a small stream, twenty Nips with packs and arms stacked were resting. They appear to be smarter than the others seen to date, but did nothing but sit up as I walked past. That night I slept on the beach west of Bai, hearing some truck activity during the night. I slept well as I was now feeling stronger.

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MAY 26 - Starting out again along the track at Ninahau River, twenty Nips were found working on a bridge near the mouth. When sighting me they yelled out but resumed work when I made no reply. I worked my way along the east bank of the river, looking for a place to cross. Several attempts were made but none were successful until opposite the village of Niguluwela, where I crossed. (This is about four miles from the coast through the thick dense scrub parallel to the coast.

Taking a course parallel to the coast through the thick scrub in the foothills, I came across a Jap boiling a billy of tea. He came forward calling out, but I waved my hand across my face as if in pain and walked on, changing direction to the coast. Reaching the Anumb river, I found one hundred Japs bathing in the river. At a narrow part I crossed the river and almost walked into a party of fresh looking troops who were constructing a road, along the high bank along the west of the river..

Camps were also being built, the frames of native type huts being erected, and a start made covering them with grass. I hid in the trees until the road was clear, crossed it and made the foothills again. Towards dusk at the top of a high feature, I found a large log, and as heavy rain had started slept under it with leaves laid out each side to keep the rain out. I had lost the desire for food but had drunk much water during the day..

May 27 - The whole of the morning was spent battling through thick bush in an effort to reach the coast again. Near Saliminara Creek the coast road was reached but it was now only a foot track and still very muddy.

A few small groups of Nips were seen washing in creeks as I made my way to the coast. I kept on walking through several inches of mud along the track, and that night slept just off the road in the bush. Again I had no food but drunk at least two canteens of water from the creeks.

May 28- Though feeling weak I continued along the track, which is probably invisible from the air as the undergrowth is heavy and high. Along the sides of the track there was evidence of camp fires. Met odd lone Japs walking eastward and saw several lying on the road -side apparently too tired to be interested in me. Some dead Nips, one putrefied were also seen along the track.

Just before reaching Dumbun Creek, a shot was heard just ahead, but it was apparently someone shooting at game. I lay in the scrub and saw two Japs approaching. They were carrying a pole, between them two wheels, similar to those off a mountain gun, and were going east.

Rested from 0930 to 1000, as I was feeling weaker. When I approached the bank of Dumbun Creek I saw a small native hut beside the track with two Nips sit-

ting on it. The Nips looked up but took no action as I crossed the footbridge of two parallel logs. The village of Neap was deserted with two dead Japs in different huts.

Continued to push on and reached the Denmap River at 1330 hours. A small village just east of the river was deserted as I passed by. While I was trying to get across the Denmap River, P39's which were to the west, flew over me and later two came back, and circled low down, wagging their wings at me.

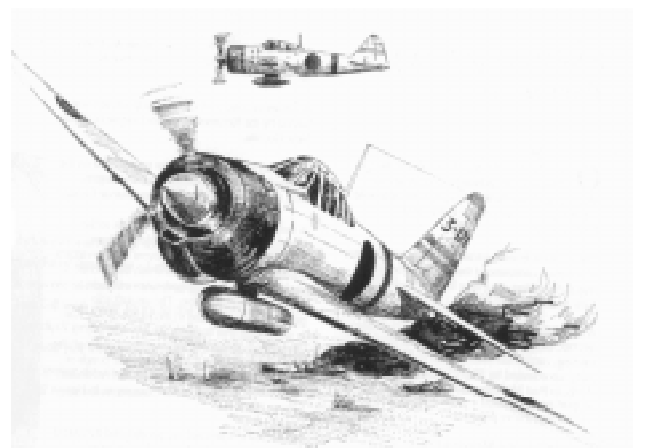
Still having the small parachute, I waved back in reply. I waited until late afternoon, thinking that perhaps a Catalina would arrive, but was surprised to see two M.T.B's arrive, and come towards me. At that moment fire was opened up on them from the previously deserted village, just after a raft had been dropped over to float ashore. The M.T.B's silenced the fire after a heavy strafing of the beach and the village area, and then returned, and shot two lines to me, but I was too weak to risk being carried away by a strong cross current, so could not retrieve the lines.

Semaphore signals were sent to me but I could not read them. Eventually two of the M.T. B crew swam ashore with the raft and brought me to their boat.

Having lost my flying boots in the water and being unable to find a large enough pair of Nip boots, I had walked through-out in bare feet with the result they were very sore. On the first night when I slept naked I was bitten by many insects and the bites pained and itched considerably.

From the Diary of F/O R.A. Graetz M.C.(417175)

Graetz survived the war and ended his RAAF service with the rank of F/Lt. He was awarded the Military Cross for his courage and resourcefulness during his walk back to Wewak.



USAF “BOSTON MYSTERY”

This Sequence of four photos, showing USAF “Bostons” attacking installations somewhere in the South Pacific Area during World War II, was given to a Mr B Roache of Forest Lake, to be framed. Mr Roache conducts a picture framing business. He was told that they were found on a rubbish tip at Eagle Farm, and was keen to get some information concerning them. He wrote asking me if I could help, but I was unable to help him very much, except identify the type and that they were American.

If anyone can help it would be appreciated.

Peter White.

When I received these photocopies of the Bostons’ attack I showed them to President Ralph, being an ex-22 Squadron “driver”.

He expressed an interest in them, and said he would like to have the originals framed if that was possible.

Enquiries were unsuccessful. However I spoke with our Committee members, proposing we obtain good photocopies frame them, and present it to him as a gesture of thanks from all of us for what he has done to build our Association into a happy group.

It was agreed this should be done, it was, and then Stan Curran and Hon Sec. travelled to the coast, and presented Ralph with a 60cm x 50cm framed picture, suitably worded.

