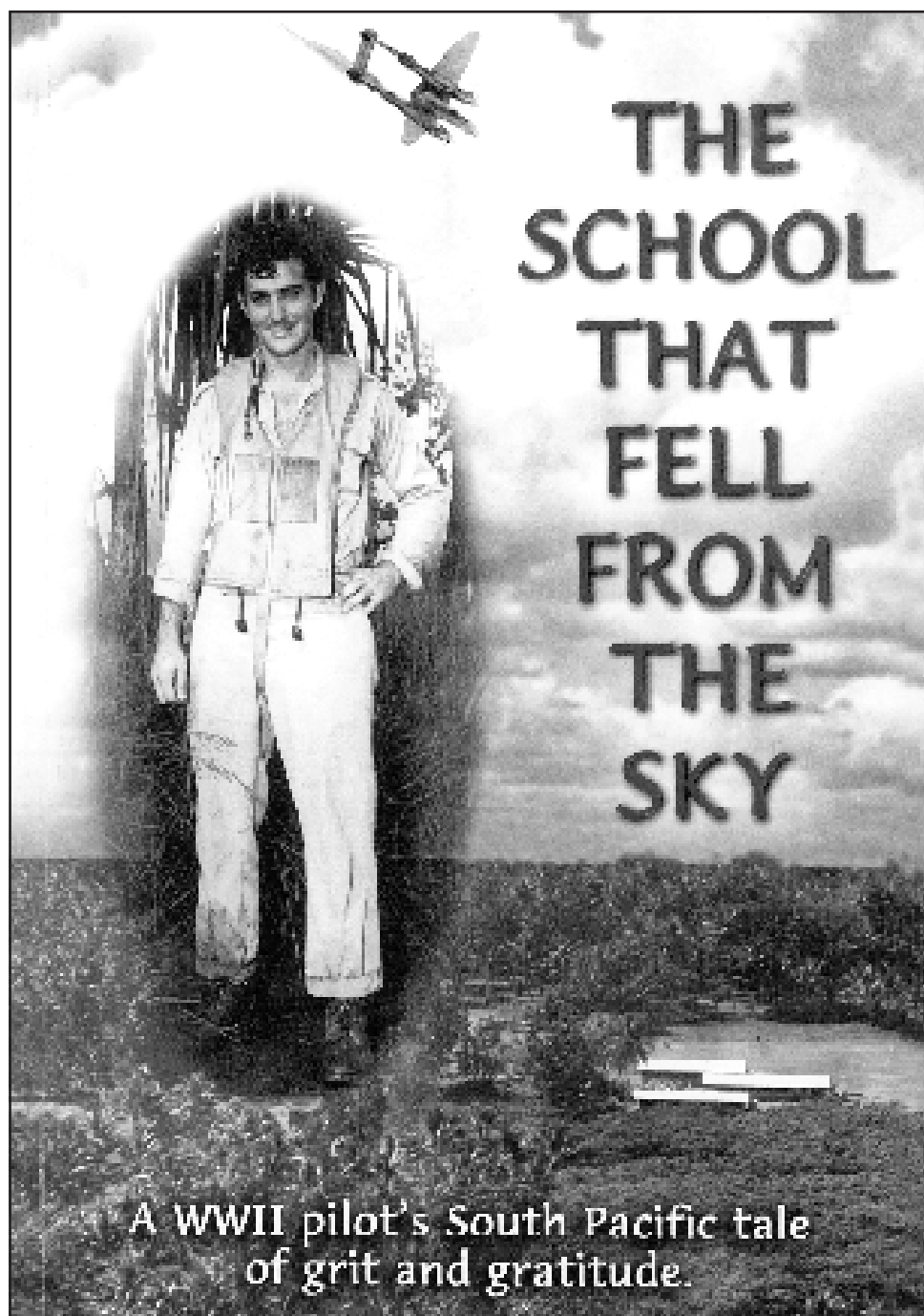


The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

JUNE 2006



The School That Fell From The Sky



Photo Airman's School New Britain

THE AIRMEN'S MEMORIAL SCHOOL at Ewasse, on the north coast of West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea, is a gift to the children of today and tomorrow in the Nakanai District in recognition of the heroism and generosity of the people of Nantabu Village (then called Ea Ea) during World War II. The people, led by Luluai Lauo and John Gabu, risked their own lives to rescue an American pilot, Fred Hargesheimer, and to care for him for six months during the time when Japan occupied New Guinea.

On June 23, 1943, Lieutenant Fred Hargesheimer of the 8th Photo squadron, US Army, was flying his Lightning P-38 twin-engined reconnaissance airplane (the F-5) near Lolobau Island when a Japanese fighter attacked him. One engine burst into flames, the other stalled as Fred tried to escape by turning inland over New Britain. He climbed out and parachuted to the ground while the plane crashed and burned. Fred landed in jungle, high in the mountains. People in Nantabu village on the coast had seen the plane on fire, but had not seen where it crashed. When they decided to make one of their occasional treks up the Pandi River into the mountains some weeks later, they wondered if they would find out what had happened to the plane. Imagine their surprise when they walked around a bend and found Fred Hargesheimer, naked, fishing in the river! He had been alone in the jungle since he was shot down 31 days before and had survived by eating river shellfish, *modo*, after finding their shells in the ashes of a fire left by the Nantabuans.

The Nantabu people, with three Tolai Methodist missionaries, Apelis Tongogo and his wife, Aida, and Brown Timian, who had sailed their canoe nearly 200 kilometres from Rabaul to Nantabu to escape the Japanese, knew that if they handed Fred over, he almost certainly would be executed. They had previously helped three other American airmen; now

they decided to take the risk of being killed themselves by keeping Fred with them until they could find a way of helping him get back to his own people.

The Nantabuans looked after Fred for six months, teaching him to speak Tok Pijin, hiding him in the village, sharing their food and clothes with him, and taking him with them everywhere they went, always ready to hide him when they met Japanese patrols. Then an Australian coast watcher group in the mountains picked Fred up. He stayed with them for another three months, assisting their young radio operator, Corporal Matt Foley, until an American submarine, USS Gato, came to take Fred off with two Australian fliers. One was Bill Townsend, later to become Air Vice-Marshal. Fred Hargesheimer, now promoted to Captain, returned to the USA to work in the US Army headquarters. In 1946, Fred, now a Major, left the army to return to his prewar job helping to develop FM radio, then moved on to work in radio and digital computing at Sperry Rand Corporation. He met and married Dorothy, his beloved wife, and they had three children, Richard, Eric and Carol.

But Fred never forgot Nantabu. 1960, sixteen years after he left on the Gato, Fred returned to Nantabu to see his saviours again and to repay his debt to them. They greeted each other with joy then got down to the serious business of planning for the future. What was needed, they decided, was a school so that the children would be able to be part of Papua New Guinea's future as an independent nation.

The problem was that Nantabu was so small and isolated with only thirteen children in the village - hardly enough for a school. Other villages were a long distance away. The elders and Fred eventually made a difficult decision - to locate the school at Ewasse, about 50 kilometres west, where there were many more children. They would build a dormitory at the school so that children from Nantabu could stay there to attend school and go home at weekends.

Fred returned to the USA and began telling his story. Many people gave generously to help build the school, Bill Townsend and other Australians helped too, and the Methodist Overseas Mission, now the United Church, provided the land for the school. In 1963, Fred was ready, with the help of Matt Foley, now a businessman in Rabaul, and the Methodist Mission. Fred flew to Rabaul with his 17-year-old son, Richard, who had just graduated from high school. They boarded a coastal ship loaded with cement, steel frames, corrugated iron and other materials and sailed to Ewasse. There, Fred and Richard joined with a contractor and the people from local villages to begin building the school. It was completed and opened in 1964 with four classrooms and forty students. Two American navy jets did a fly-past for the official opening in June.

Fred continued to raise money to support the school and to find volunteer teachers. In 1969, with all their

children now grown up and away from home, Fred and Dorothy went to Ewasse to join the school staff. They had planned for a year there, but stayed for four. Forty years on, the fruits of that 1960 decision were everywhere. In 2004, 350 students were attending the school which had hundreds of graduates in all walks of life, including many business people, lawyers, teachers, sociologists, a linguist, and a sustainability expert.

In July 2004, Fred made his thirteenth journey across the Pacific from his home in California, again accompanied by Richard, to join the school's 40th anniversary celebrations and see his old friends at Nantabu and Ewasse for the last time. Aged 88, now, sadly, a widower, and rapidly losing his sight to macular degeneration of the eyes, Fred spent a joyous week receiving a hero's welcome wherever he went.

Fred was happy to accept the Nantabuans' gift to him of the title, Suara (warrior), but he rejects the 'hero' tag. "The real heroes are the people of Nantabu," he says. "Every man, woman and child put their lives on the line to save me. They saved my life, shared their food and guarded me from the enemy. Who can ever repay such a debt?"

Fred is a hero for one special reason in addition to his own feat of survival in the jungle. He went back to repay his debt. So many others made promises, and so many were unable to keep them.

Courtesy Fred Hargesheimer.

President's Corner



The Anzac Day March this year was a great success with at least 20 people marching under our banner. As usual Peter is once again to be thanked for his tireless efforts in rounding up our members, their families and friends.

I am sure that the much enlarged attendance will greatly encourage the members attending the AGM in January 2007 to approve & fully support our participation in next year's march.

Our banner is also still attracting a few odd bods who were in other units in WWII and who, for various reasons, do not have a unit banner under which to march. At least they also help to swell our numbers.

Our banner was carried this year by two officers from the Airforce Cadets John Shepherd and Dave Thorpe and I know that this was largely due to Peter's efforts and particularly as a result of the stuff up which occurred last year when no rostered Cadets turned up to carry the banner.

My Anzac Day began with a Dawn Service held on the esplanade at Surfers Paradise overlooking the Pacific Ocean. I had been invited by the President of Surfers RSL to lay a wreath on behalf of the Association. I might add that the wreath I used had been purloined on behalf of the Assoc. sometime ago and will be used again at no cost to us. I noted with considerable interest the greatly increased numbers of the public present at both the Dawn Service and also at the Parade in Brisbane.

On Sunday the 30th April, being the 70th Anniversary of the formation of 22 Sqdn, Joan and I attended a Memorial Church Service at RAAF Base Richmond to mark the occasion, which was followed by a luncheon at the Sergeant's Mess. The NSW Governor attended the Service & afterwards all WWII veterans (too few unfortunately) were introduced to her.

At the Mess I met up with "Young Harry" Rowell who had come all the way from WA for the occasion. He had been staying with his daughter and son-in-law who had accompanied him to Richmond. I learned that 'Young Harry' had been awarded the OAM in the recent New Years Honours List. On behalf of the Association I wish to formally congratulate him on his award, which was well deserved.

Goodbye till next time.

Yours Sincerely

RALPH

A Bitter Pill

A man wakes up his wife during the night with a glass of water in one hand and two aspirins in the other.

She asks, "What's this for?"

"This is for your headache," he says.

She says "But I don't have a headache."

He smiles and says "Gotcha".

Senile

The nice thing about being senile is you can hide your own Easter eggs.

When you are young, you want to be the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. When you are older, you will settle for being the master of your weight and the - captain of your bowling team.

The Wreck of Beaufighter A19-33.

On September 5th 1943 six 30 Squadron Beaufighters were detailed to carry out a barge sweep From Cape Gloucester to Walinda Point in north western New Britain. The flight was A19-138 Burrows / Burgoyne, A19-33 Woodroffe / Brookes, A19-132 Newman / Binnie, A19-53 Robertson / Pitman, A19-54 Tapner / Thomas and A19-141 Albrecht / Cain.

This sweep netted thirty barges, four of which were left burning. Strikes were also carried out at aircraft parked on Cape Gloucester strip. A19-38 attacked a twin engined aircraft and holes were seen in its wings and fuselage after the attack.

A19-33 was seen to be hit in the starboard engine by low level intensive ack ack fire. Smoke was seen pouring from the starboard engine and the aircraft was losing height. It was seen to crash into the base of a hill two miles south east of Sake, near Natamo, and Borgen Bay. Some photos were taken.

A19-33 is the only Beaufighter and crew that have not yet been found, in the New Britain Area. Whilst there has been much information about the location of crashed twin engined aircraft in this location, RAAF sources will not undertake an official search until concrete evidence can be produced to identify the wreck.

It is to be hoped that the proposed further search by locals can produce the evidence needed and enable the crew's remains to be discovered and given an honourable burial.

Is the following evidence to indicate that A19-33 and its crew might at last be found?

Recently a very good friend of our Association, Ms Ceciele Benjamin from the Walinda Plantation Resort and Dive Centre at Kimbe New Britain sent a copy of the following fax to George Robertson.

20 Apr. 2006 9:17AM. HP Laser Jet Fax

Informer Joe Kuku, ward councillor, Namato Village. Spoken to 11th April 2006 at Gloucester by Steve Saunders. He mentioned that Nick Thomson had asked about the site before.

No such village as Sakai. (WGR says there was a village Sarke (Sake), but Sakai Mountain is a couple of kilometres SE of Natamo. (NW coast of New Britain) a half to one days walk from Natimuk Village. On the NW flank of Sakai is a twin engined aircraft, described as being about the size of an Air Link passenger plane (Bandanattes and Islanders). It has no wings past the engines, and the cockpit is not visible.

It was reported that no paint was obvious. They will re-visit the site to look for numbers on the fuselage or fin. They will make contact via the Disaster Office HF radio. They related stories from their parents of a group of aircraft coming over Gloucester Strip. The wrecked one was hit by AA and veered off into Sakai. It was related that the AA gun was on Komali Ridge prominent kunai covered half cone near airstrip.

The operator of this gun was famous locally as he seldom missed, and fired on boats as well as planes. Also another AA gun on a Big Fig Tree towards Sag Sag from Milangi. Also could sink boats so must have been quite big. During the war the Japanese never visited the crash site. Villages were on Sakai at that time and descendants say Japanese stayed on the coast.

There is a small plane on prominent hill (cone) SSE of Gloucester Station next to Tulava River. This wreck has no engine, no wings and the fuselage is folded in halves.

Villagers at Gloucester Station and Kilangi say there are lots more wrecks.

SJS (Steve Saunders)

PETER WHITE

The Case Of The Runaway Beau

Some of the readers may think this episode of mine is quite funny even hilarious however I can assure that 61 years ago it was anything but, as I am sure those pilots among you will discern if they are able to imagine themselves in the same predicament I was subjected to in 1945. My navigator Roger Blunt & I decided on the eve of a mission to go down to Wama strip on Morotai to check out our Beau to make sure that everything was serviceable. From Roger's point of view everything seemed to be in order & he left the Beau. From my perspective almost everything was OK except that the air pressure gauge for the brakes appeared to be U S as it was reading zero from that I could only assume that there was no air in the braking system & the gauge was not faulty. Not to worry -this

had happened before - all I had to do was to start the engines & in no time the air pressure would quickly build up & the braking system would be serviceable again.

However after the engines had been running for about 5 minutes the gauge showed no signs of moving. Again this had happened once before indicating one of the valves had stuck so I revved the engines in the hope that if there was a valve/s problem it or they would become unstuck.

For those of you who were familiar with Wama Strip, you will remember it had been bulldozed out of coral and on each side of the taxi-ways & around the perimeters of the aircraft bays there were large lumps

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE - 85th BIRTHDAY



MARCH AND COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

The March and Service was held at the RAAF Memorial, located in Queens Park at the corner of George and Elizabeth Streets Brisbane, in the presence of Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor of Queensland.

This Memorial Service is held annually to honour our aircrew and ground staff who served with pride and distinction in the Royal Australian Air Force. It had been considered to discontinue this service and that the celebration of the 85th Birthday could be the last one. However this is not the case as it was announced that due to the increased input from corporations and sub branches the March and service will still be held annually.

The march was led by The Mounted Police and the full Army Band followed by some semi trailers displaying Air Force equipment. A Jeep containing member Stan Curran and the writer followed. This was followed by the marchers, the Amberley Brass Band and then the Banners and vehicles carrying disabled veterans



It was disappointing to see such a few members of the Beaufighter and Boston Association attending. However our Banner was proudly displayed by two Air Force Cadets.

The service was conducted by F/Lt John Hacking from RAAF Amberley; prayers were read by Chaplain Squadron Leader Bob Heath wood, from RAAF Amberley.

Wreaths were laid by dignitaries attending and on behalf of RAAFA sub Branches.

PETER WHITE



of coral some of which were used as chocks for the Beaus. The lumps of coral were not smooth & in many instances were of irregular shape & quite rough.

The revving of the engines was nothing new in a number of Beaus in order to build up the air pressure for the brakes, but on this occasion the coral chunks used as chocks were not as large as they might have been & the rubber tyres obviously loved the rough edges of the coral chocks and climbed over them. This phenomenon had not happened to any other Beau in 22 Sqdn on Morotai to my knowledge. There I was up the creek without a paddle with my Beau in a runaway situation heading out the aircraft bay and onto the adjacent taxi-way where with only the use of throttles & with a certain amount of trepidation I was able to turn to port. Thereafter I throttled right back however I soon learned

that a little more revs were needed if I was to have hope I guiding the Beau by the use of throttles only. I might add that all my flying gear was back at the camp so I had no way of alerting the tower that it had a runaway Beau on its hands and to ask it to keep other aircraft out of my way. As I was proceeding as slowly as possible down the taxi-way I realised there appeared to be only three viable options available to me.

(1) Cut the engines and let the Beau hopefully drift to a stop. However because the taxi-way was slightly undulating there could be guarantee that the Beau would run straight after the engines were cut & there was a very great chance it would collide with one or more of the aircraft parked on either side of the taxi-way (a hanging offence).

Continued on Page 12

2006 ANZAC DAY PARADE BRISBANE CITY.

It was a beautiful cool and clear Brisbane day for this year's Parade. From what always appears to be total confusion, a fine and organised parade takes place. All credit for this must go to the Anzac day Parade Committee and its volunteers.

The parade was bigger than previous years and the crowd lining Brisbane streets was the biggest ever, and as enthusiastic as ever, with lots of children at the front waving flags. I am sure all who took part thoroughly enjoyed the day. The Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC once again took the salute.

Our Banner was paraded by two Officers from the Australian Air Force Cadets 201 Squadron, Aviation, the Officer Commanding F/O John Sheppard and F/O Dave Thorpe a flying instructor. President Ralph Ind led our section. We had some thirty marchers, comprising members, their sons, daughters, grand children and strays and 6 members in 2 jeeps. One of our members in a jeep was S/Ldr Arthur Thomson DFC who was Hon Sec Peter's pilot in 30 Squadron Beaufighters, who flew from Melbourne with his daughter Jenny to take part.

Unfortunately Ron Snell a Townsville member, who drives down each year to take part, caught a wog a couple of days before the parade and was unable to take part.

I am of the opinion this was one of the best parades we have taken part in and look forward to next year being similar, if not better.



Stan Curran and Barbara Smith. Barbara is the lovely daughter our foundation president the late G/Cpt Raymond Smith. One of her hobbies is photography and she took the photos for this article. She is indeed a shutterbug and gets much pleasure in taking photos and meeting people. Many thanks Barbara



This is a great shot of Stan Curran. He carries a lot of medals on his left breast; these clearly indicate that he has had a distinguished career in the RAAF. I understand he has two more to be added when he gets around to it. Stan has been a strong and generous supporter of our Association.



John Rehburg, a nephew of Arthur Thomas, Cliff White, and Hon Sec's lovely daughter Beverley. This was the first Brisbane Anzac Day Parade that they had marched in, and have said how much pleasure they experienced taking part



Geoff Rose and Norm Tritton both ex Beaufighter pilots meet again for the first time in many years. Dave Thorpe (From Cadets) in background.



This is a group of some of those who marched behind our banner. It includes from left to right Stan Curran, Ralph Ind, John Sheppard (with banner), Arthut Thomson, Geoff Rose, Bill O'Connor, Frank Beadle, Geoff' Rose'ss Grandson, Peter White, Cliff White, Keith Marks, Norm Tritton, John Wilson.



Two very well respected ex Beaufighter Pilots. F/Lt Norm Tritton MID (ex 31 Squad) who flew many missions from Coomalee Creek and had some hairy moments getting back to base. The other, S/Ldr Arthur Thomson DFC (ex 30 Squad) flew missions from Moresby, Goodenough and Kirawina. Destroyed many barges and one Betty bomber in aerial combat. Got a Beau back to base after being badly shot up by Zeros.



Barbara Smith and Norm Tritton. Barbara is proudly waring her dad's medals. Norm has a 31 Squadron plaque presented to him by Stan Curran, who made the plaque specially for him.

A minor miracle also occurred. The Parade Marshall responsible for inserting the jeeps behind their respective organization's banner, managed to insert three "foreign" jeeps and one of our jeeps behind our banner. This, strange as it may seem was a great improvement, as he has failed for the last four years to even get one jeep with our members aboard behind our banner.

Diary of F/Sgt Don Kirkwood

RAAF 30 Squadron

(Continued from March 2006)



Tuesday 7th

Renovating and working around the house all day.

Some crews were up at Garove Island again. One kite received 4 shots causing a lot of damage to it. Ted and Bunny were flying in a formation which was led too close to Gloucester for safety. Heavy AA barrage was sent up while 2 Zekes were seen airborne at 200 feet. Apparently they had

been short of petrol as they did not molest them in any way. Possibly the same 2 which were escorting 3 Bettys down the south

DELETED BY CENSOR

No mail or parcels again. Have given up hope of seeing any more parcels.

Wednesday 8th

Spent morning collecting metal strips and then laying down the floor.

A day off again. Our aircraft is in for its first 40 hourly inspection.

Nothing drastic for the remainder of day. No mail or parcels received.

Thursday 9th

8 kites out on a job early this morning. Up to Garove Island again. Listening into the radio we heard that 3 were hit in about as many minutes.

DELETED BY CENSOR

All chaps hit in the above operation returned safely, one chap's motor is ruined after having collected 7 .5's, one being thru' the prop.

During an afternoon mission Joe Newman A19-132 was hit from extreme range, from a pet ack-ack possie at Pal Mal Mal Mission in Jacquinot Bay. This position has fired on our aircraft repeatedly since our activities along the south coast of New Britain 2 months ago.

DELETED BY CENSOR

Joe Newman, pilot, Ron Binnie, observer and Tom Gill A.L.O. were forced down into sea at position 0604S 151.53E.

Friday 10th

Up at 3.30am, take off 5. 10am, to conduct a

creeping parallel line search for our 3 fellows. On datum at 0615am, Col and I commenced our search at 0616 and found the boys at 0619 in position 0623S 151.49E. A flame float was released to mark the spot, but after 3 circuits

DELETED BY CENSOR

type, making in our direction. We diverted course and lost sight of him, so we returned to the western most island in Waterfall Bay setting course from here for our position of sighting 0623S 151.49E. After extensive searching for 1½ hours we were forced to return without sighting them again.

New crews took over and they then found them near our reported position and were able to drop supplies and a dinghy. The three of them made the dinghy and they successfully retrieved the supplies.

After our findings and continued circling of them from 12 noon until 6pm the damned rescue Catalina let us down by not being able to find them. There

DELETED BY CENSOR

displayed real zest and excellent work but we have been sadly let down by other persons.

The 3 men although now in a dinghy are still afloat and are in grave danger of being blown up onto the New Britain coast. All we can do is pray for their safety and fine weather tomorrow.

The whole 3 were due to return south in a few days.

No mail or parcels again.

C.O's motor gave trouble and he was forced to land at Kiriwina and stay overnight.

Saturday 11th

Still searching for our lost chaps but no sight was seen all day. It now appears on the hopeless side.

Another tragedy occurred in that one of our observers Ned Kelly went along in a Walrus amphibian from Kiriwina on above search and they are now missing. Apparently there is a hoodoo on this squadron.

DELETED BY CENSOR

• will not be forgotten by us.

No mail or parcels again. Four lots of mail have arrived now, without any for yours truly. Hope Mary is still OK.

DELETED BY CENSOR

Sunday 12th

Nips have had another day out, this time cracking hard at our neighbour Squadron 22. 4 Bostons were engaged on a barge sweep when ground fire hit 3 of them.

One crashed into the sea, 25 miles south of Gasmata, one kite and 3 of crew missing completely, one chap got back but made a crashed landing on return. Only

DELETED BY CENSOR

Our own 3 chaps missing since Thursday were last seen at 6pm Friday 6 miles south of Cape Beechy, and drifting towards shore They should have made

DELETED BY CENSOR

The Seagull or Walrus is still missing with poor "Black Ned" Kelly aboard. This is a mystery. Col and I were on standby for a while this afternoon but it was finally scrubbed. Between our 2 squadrons, 30 and 22, we have 12 missing or killed since last Sunday with the loss of 2 Beaus, 2 Bostons, 1 Boston damaged on return and 5 Beaus damaged, 2 seriously. A19-138 will be out of action for months.

A good score for the Japs and we achieved practically nothing. The Seagull is an addition to this. Two letters from Mary tonight but they are very much back dated. No parcels in sight at all. Had ½ hour test flight today, after the inspection and compass swing.

Monday 13th

Lined up the drift recorder in A19-141 today. She was still u/s due to sheered tail pin.

Pictures and stage show during the night. Stage show was excellent.

Received a couple of parcels.

Tuesday 14th

A day off for the squadron. Found the large pool today. It is ¼ hour from here and is really worth the trip. A large 50 foot fall spills into it at one end. A splendid morning was spent there.

No letters today.

Wednesday 15th

Another day off. Spent the morning at the pool swimming and sun baking. A lazy afternoon was had.

Thursday 16th

Swung 3 compasses this morning. A full time job. Spent the afternoon at the pool.

Briefed at 5pm, for a midnight job. A barge sweep from Cape Monto to Cape Busching.

In bed at 6.30pm to prepare.

2 letters tonight.

Friday 17th

Up at 0001, tea and bun at 0020 ready for the take off at 0150. The job was scrubbed due to bad weather en route at the last minute. Back in bed at 3am.

Up at 8.30am, too late for breakfast. Briefed again at 1000 hours for a barge sweep and recce from Kaimo to San Remo just east of the Talasea peninsular.

Take off 11.30.

Trip over was average but had to dice around at 10 to 12000 feet over the centre of New Britain to find a break through in the cloud. Result was we did the run in reverse order.

When approaching the Cape Hoskins peninsular the flights split. Red to pass inland Blue 3 miles seaward.

One barge was caught ¼ mile at sea and attacked. It burned. Red flight moved on while Blue flight remained.

In 3 runs said barge was aflame. Col and I spotted another and it burned after an amazingly short burst of .303 blue nose only. Cannons were out on this run.

At the end of the strip located on the western tip of the peninsular 2 barges and a petrol dump was noted. Three 150 ton ships and one 50 ton lugger were tied in 2 lots of 2, about 200 yards off shore.

They were attacked on several runs. Nips and boongs went overboard like rats from a sinking ship. Some of our fire passed amongst them. Vehicles were in plenty along the strip. Ack-ack was very light. Results were 2 barges gutted by fire, 1 pair of ships aflame at the stern, stores along the shore damaged. Many nips butchered. A field day for the boys.

No letters or parcels.

Saturday 10th

A morning at the pool again. Several kites attacked same target of yesterday. Ships were beached. A registered package and 2 letters tonight.

Sunday 11th

On standby today in A19-107. Several chaps went back over Cape Hoskins peninsular drome. The C.O. was shot down, it is remote that he could have escaped. A19-133 W/C Glasscock pilot and John Cain P/O observer. John was a 23 Squadron man. We have lost 3, 23 Squadron observers in Beaufighters. The boys saw one ship sunk, two ships beached. Good news. Had some beer in the mess this evening. Quite enjoyable taking everything into account.

No letters today.

Monday 29th

A day off again. Spent the morning at the pool, while wrote letters during the afternoon.

Tuesday 21st

DELETED BY CENSOR

Wednesday 22nd

Awakened at 4am unexpectedly. At 4.20am the raid alarm sounded but nothing eventuated. Spent the morning on standby down at the strip. Swimming during the afternoon.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

Thursday 23rd

Average day. Chap who flew in our aircraft reports compass, drift recorder and wireless out. All fixed during the afternoon, only minor points.

DELETED BY CENSOR

Mail again tonight.

Friday 24th

Spent the day fooling around the kite. Shifted a few little gadgets to clear the table.

Pictures tonight.

No mail.

Saturday 25th

2 test flips today. Tested cannons on A19-141 and a general test on A19-111.

Mail tonight again.

Sunday 26 th

Much working about the strip being done.

No mail tonight, but received a parcel of goodies from Fairfield Patriotic Committee.

Monday 27 th

Spent morning at strip swinging compasses.

Small excitement when raid alarm sounded. Nothing eventuated from the scare.

Tuesday 28th

Cooks tour of the SWPA today with 3 other crews. 2 crews per aircraft sharing in the flying of same.

Kiriwina - Woodlark - Milne Bay - Home.

Cup of coffee at Kiriwina and lunch with the marines at Woodlark. An enjoyable day, although some

anxious moments when Tiny Boehm had to go around at both the Bay and Vivigani.

Wednesday 20h

Average routine day.

Parcels and papers galore arrived tonight. All our back stuff has at last turned up.

Thursday 30

Average day. Routine only. Briefed during the evening for Friday job.

*Courtesy Yvonne Holt
To be continued*

WING COMMANDER BRIAN (BLACK JACK WALKER DSO)

A Great Commanding Officer

(Continued from March issue)

30 Squadron New Guinea Beaufighters, Airacobras, Lightnings, Mitchell, Marauder.

After we'd served about five or six weeks at Bohle River, it was time for us to move up to Ward's Strip that had been bull-dozed out of the wilds for us by the Yanks, not far from Moresby, quite a good strip. An advance party under "Curley" Wearne prepared



our camp and generally organized things for our arrival and when he signalled everything was ready, we sent up the rest of the ground party which was a pretty big deal in those days. We had transport and at least twelve aeroplanes with, at first, six in reserve.

By that time it was early September '42 and we had not been there very long when they gave us our first operational message. It was to attack a heap of Jap barges the other side of New Guinea at a place called Sanananda Point, just over the mountains from Port Moresby on the north coast of New Guinea.

The main thing in New Guinea is to do your flying at the right time, in the morning, before the cloud builds up over the mountains. We had sufficient performance to get over these without carrying oxygen, although we should have had it. I led them across in full force, all twelve aeroplanes. We struck some ack-ack from Buna because Sanananda is pretty close to it, as Japanese had landed there and were pushing from there up over the mountains towards Moresby at this stage. We got stuck into these barges and I don't think any of them would have been much good after being hit by our Beaufighters, each with their four cannon and six machine guns. Anyway, Kenney and General MacArthur both sent us a signal - I don't know whether it was just a morale booster or not - saying, "Congratulations on your first operation. It was a honey." MacArthur was the Allied commander of all forces in the South West Pacific; Kenney was the air commander.

Thereafter, for the next month or two we were kept fairly busy and whenever there was a new target coming up I used to always try to lead. We all took our

turns, the two Flight Commanders and I, in being operationally available and leading the squadron to a target area and on my third operation, we were kept busy strafing lines of communication. We used to go up and down that Kokoda Trail and if we could see anything moving or even if we could see a trail there we'd give it a belt, because we were in enemy territory over there.

On the third operation I noticed that this Japanese character at Buna was making a nuisance of himself and his anti-aircraft again, so I foolishly attacked this anti-aircraft position and promptly got my dear aeroplane, Number Four, which was my pride and joy, holed as a result. Unfortunately even that didn't teach me a lesson. After we had been there several weeks - I think it was on the fifth operation that I conducted - our friend at Buna on that line of communication from Buna up over the Kokoda trail, caused us to suffer our first operational loss. A fellow named George Sayer didn't return and I think this ack-ack position was getting too much practice and was getting a little bit more accurate.

We still struck at various targets but during that September and October we were generally conducting operations harassing the enemy in every way we could in his push to get over the mountains to Moresby. And they came pretty close, too, eventually. They got within thirty miles and many people don't realize that. But their lines of communication must have been pretty well stretched.

Of course American strength was building up slowly and steadily at this time and the Americans in our area realised that they had a peculiar form of Australian nut as CO of the Beaufighter Squadron, in so far as he was an aeroplane buff as well as an operational leader. They used to come to me with various problems, especially with regard to handling their aeroplanes.

One of their squadrons attached themselves to us and we used to talk often to each other. Their CO was Mike Moore and they had a feller named Jimmy Miller who used to spend a certain amount of time with us. They were very friendly; they'd say, "Come and fly our ships". They knew I wouldn't damage them and loved flying aeroplanes. So I flew the Cobra and I found it was a particularly viceless type and I said, "Look, you fellers shouldn't get worried about these things. They're not hot. Bring them in a little bit slower." And to prove my point I actually took one over to Wau later on after we recaptured it, and landed it there. They called me Black Jack or Colonel, because a Colonel was the equivalent of Group-Captain and I did not mind the temporary promotion. I said, "Well, you know, this is the way you should use this aeroplane. You want to attack. You need plenty of warning and it's going to be hard for you get altitude on them, but you've got to try and get it. And when you hit 'em, I think you'd be a bit

faster. Just stand off them and just go straight in, take your pick and go straight through. Don't fiddle around. Get away. And don't attempt to turn with them because they'll turn inside you. And then turn round and come back and attack them again."

Well, you wouldn't credit it. Shortly after my pep talk, that squadron went out with these Cobras, which were a little bit maligned in the Pacific theatre at this time, a bit of an orphan as an aeroplane. They were mechanically complex and they were not made in anywhere near the same numbers they made the Kittyhawk, though they were somewhat similar in performance. Anyhow this squadron went out and they adopted my tactics. They stood off and they came back and they were whooping with joy. They said, "We only lost one aeroplane and we reckon we got at least six of the so-and-so's." "Well, that's damn good", I told them.

They were trying to use them also as dive-bombers and they were a bit slippery for a dive-bomber and the one thing I found with a lot of these American boys, they didn't have the general experience I had. I'd had a lot of experience running squadrons, especially dive-bombing in the Wirraway, although the Wirraway wasn't anywhere nearly as slippery as a Cobra. I tried it out in the Cobra and I found that you had to allow yourself just that extra height and with low power come down pretty vertically and, at about three or four thousand feet, pull the nose over the target and let your bomb go and by that time you would get out comfortably at a pretty low altitude, around about a couple of hundred feet, going like the clappers, and no ack-ack would have much hope of getting you. And this is the whole object of dive-bombing.

You see, the aeroplanes that were designed as dive-bombers were pretty slow and a bit unwieldy but later on in the war when they started using fighters as dive-bombers it was, you see, a much healthier situation, for, once the fighter got rid of its bombs, it could be going like hell, from which it could regain height, and if anything attacked, it had very little hope of hitting, and apart from that, the fighter is much more capable of looking after itself than an unwieldy dive-bomber. There was a certain bridge there, at a place called Wairope'6, causing trouble. They'd been trying to get it for quite a while, and they said, "All right Colonel Black Jack, sir, you're so smart, you lead us." This was with the connivance of Mike Moore, who said, "You take Jimmy Miller and a couple of his friends and see if you can get that bridge at Wairope that's been bugging us for so long." I didn't tell anybody that I was doing it, although we were under American command I dared not let our own Group, which was co-ordinating with the Americans, know it; I think Jimmy Miller was supposed to be in it but I wasn't. You can have some luck. We got that bridge.

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(2) Continue to taxi slowly & if I was confronted with another aircraft and if there was no alternative collapse the undercarriage to prevent a collision (another hanging offence)

(3) Continue to taxi slowly to the southern end of the taxi-way & hope like hell I didn't meet a plane taxi-ing towards me. At the end of the taxi-way there was a widish road leading up the hill to the Pitoe strip. My preferred option was No.3 above since if I did make it to road leading to Pitoe Strip my chances of having a collision with another aircraft would be minimal .On reaching the end of the taxi-way thankfully through the maze of planes parked on either side thereof without incident I turned to starboard using the throttles and proceeded to a point about half up the hill where I regulated the throttles so that the Beau became stationary. I waited for about 7/8 minutes in order to detect any sign of a movement back down the hill.

I must confess it was with some apprehension I exited the Beau leaving it to look after itself with its engines running. I then ran to the side of the road and twice brought the largest lumps of coral I could carry and used them as chocks. I then climbed back into the Beau and cut the engines. Just when I was wondering what to do next a jeep arrived with Roger and 3 other 22Sqn bods who were laughing their heads off as they thought the whole affair was a great joke.

I must admit that after I calmed down I began to see the funny side of the case of the runaway Beau which was then towed back to the 22Sqn area & made serviceable for the next day's mission.

RALPH



*Painting of 22 Sqn Beaufighter
by John Castle*



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There was another chap who came across from a photo-recce squadron with a lovely aeroplane, a P-38, and I met him at an American party one night. The Americans seemed to have access to more grog than we had; we had to wait for a Beaufighter to come up from down south and I always suggested that if it didn't come up loaded with fresh food and as much grog as they could stash into it, the pilot'd be in the dog-box for ever.

Anyhow, this fellow, Major Prentice asked me, if I would like to fly it and see what I thought of it. This was before any Lightning fighters squadrons had come into the area and this reconnaissance aeroplane was not even armed. I sat in this thing for a quarter of an hour, perhaps twenty minutes, until I knew where everything was in the cockpit. And they were lovely things to fly. When you started them up, each engine was turbo-blown and it muted the exhaust and it just sounded like a Ferrari, well, like a Ferrari does now, a very, very nice sound, especially when you had the two of them going.

GROUP CAPTAIN BRIAN WALKER DSO RAAF

To be continued



*Norm Tritton and Family members at
Anzac Day Parade.*

Trite sayings.

- God must love stupid people. He made so many of them.
- The gene pool could use a little chlorine.
- I took an IQ test, and the results were negative.
- Consciousness: That annoying period between naps.
- Ever stop to think and forget to start again.