

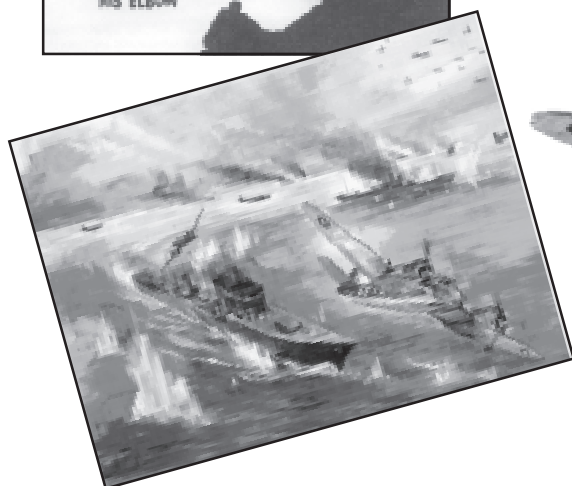
The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

MARCH 2006

BLACK JACK A GREAT C.O.



Wing Commander Brian (Black Jack Walker DSO)

A Great Commanding Officer

30 Squadron, Richmond, NSW Hudson, Beaufighters

Early in June of '42, I climbed into my delightful private transport, the Douglas dive-bomber - for my last flight in it before handing it over - and hiked myself up to Richmond where Charles Read had been holding 30 Squadron for me. I think he was probably the first CO, although not officially. I was the first real CO of that squadron and Charles became one of my Flight-Commanders, Peter Parker was another. I shouldn't say it without a certain amount of deference, but Charles, who was much later to become Chief of Air Staff, stayed with me until we got 30 Squadron to New Guinea and then very shortly thereafter he was posted out and formed 31 Squadron, also Beaufighters. I had a fair bit to do with choosing of the people who came into 30 Squadron and amongst the people, the personnel and the pilots, were a lot of ex-instructors who, though thoroughly brassed-off, were fairly experienced. Fortunately. Because I only had to get into a Beaufighter on one or two occasions to realise that it could be, to an inexperienced pilot, even if he was Wirraway-trained, quite a handful.

You had two very large 1650 horse-power engines, both going in the same way, and, as a student of the art of flying aeroplanes, I could see it was not over-endowed with too much fin-area. In other words, if you didn't open those throttles up fairly carefully the aeroplane would tend to swing because of the torque reaction of those two big engines, both going in the same direction, swinging very big props. The first Beaufighters we got were straight tailplane, and they had non-feathering airscrews, and as a result of that I pretty quickly decided we needed fairly experienced personnel to fly them.

Air Board in its wisdom also allotted me an Adjutant of whom my friend Sam Balmer had given me a poor report from Darwin. There was nothing like the old-boys' network that worked amongst those of us Permanent people who had been able to avoid the administrative posts that swallowed up so many of us during the rapid expansion of the Air Force during the early stages of the war. Sam was one and I was another able to organize myself into a flying command.

Anyhow, I remember getting in touch with Air Board and saying that this Adjutant they had assigned me was unacceptable and I think they realized that they wanted this 30 Squadron to be a pretty good squadron and so we carried a fair amount of weight. They listened to my complaint. I just told them flatly that I was not going to have this man they had posted to me. They said, "Well, who do you want?" I knew there was another man available who was considerably older than us — I think

he had been World War 1, a terrific guy — I had always heard good reports of him — and his name was Wearne. Not having a hair on his head, of course his nickname would have to be "Curley", wouldn't it? So they said, "All right, if you're going to be so difficult, you can have 'Curley' Wearne." It was a very happy choice, as a matter of fact, because "Curley" and I got on very well.

We gradually built up our strength until we had various aeroplanes arriving in dribs and drabs and we kept up the training on them. I shall never forget how the Beaufighter impressed me, in spite of being a little bit of a fistful from the handling point of view. Or, at least, it could be. We found that the best way of taking it off was to lead one engine ahead of the other a little bit and then hold it straight that way until you got up to about forty or fifty knots and then you could hold it straight on the rudder before you gave it full power.

We did all sorts of exercises and we did considerable night-flying. One night as I was watching them come in to land, making sure they were handling the aeroplane correctly, I saw this Beaufighter coming in with only one leg of the undercarriage down. Before we could stop it, it had flared out, touched down on that one leg and stayed upright for quite a while until it eventually collapsed onto one wing ground-looped and finished up facing backwards. And it didn't do a hell of a lot of damage. "It looks as if they can take a bit of a beating, anyhow", I thought, "so that's pretty good." Things were going well, when suddenly they were to be interrupted by my being absurdly court-martialled. I had to go to Melbourne for some reason and we had borrowed a Hudson. On the way back we stopped at Wagga which was then an Engineering station with no flying units attached to it. Although they had a Repair Unit there, the Mess was full of Administrative and Special Duties Officers whom we young flyboys who regarded us as an elite, scorned as "shiny-bums" because they sat at desks and pushed papers around all day. Very arrogant of us, no doubt, but understandable at that age and time.

The place was overdue for a few shenanigans and there were a couple of characters there ready to join in them. One was Les Holton, a Stores Officer, quite a bright spark; another was Kitch Ellis, a RAF officer on exchange to test repaired aeroplanes and he of course joined us flying people. As the evening went on, I noticed that shiny-bums, sitting in their chairs and reading their papers, were taking rather a dim view of these roisterous people from the air. They didn't approve of us. The feeling must have been mutual, because I noticed that one of us crept up behind one of these stuffy

characters who was reading a paper and lit it from underneath. Somebody else produced a revolver and shot out the radio, but I didn't approve of this and neither did Les, who knocked the pistol out of the feller's hand.

Everything quietened down but another Stores Officer named Stolz had gone to get the CO and by the time this Wing Commander Seekamp arrived, even Squadron-Leader Walker was sitting down on a table reading the paper. Seekamp came up to me and the following extraordinary conversation took place.

"Walker, go to bed", he said.

"Why, sir?"

"Who fired a gun?"

"I didn't hear any gun fired." Obviously, whatever Seekamp was going to do, I wasn't going to snitch on anybody. "The situation is quite quiet."

"Go to bed, Walker", he repeated.

Well, the next morning all hell let loose. Here was Walker, serve him damn right, in the poo once more. The Station Commander paraded me in front of him and said, "Walker, next to treason and infamy" and all sorts of other things - not that I was very impressed - "your crime is the next worst." "What was that, sir?" I asked. "You refused to obey a lawful command." I said, "I did go to bed, sir". He replied, "That may be so, but you refused to obey a lawful command and I'm going to have you court-martialled." I thought, well, here we go again. So we went through all this nonsense of a court-martial and I can tell you right here and now, I think the Air Board must have realised there was a clash of personality there and that the whole matter could have been handled without going through all this cafoofle.

Anyhow, they held this court-martial within about a week or so and I don't think it was particularly stacked. I've forgotten even who was on it. At my first court-martial, Group-Captain Wrigley¹¹ who was the President and a pretty good old guy warned me that I shouldn't be court-martialled again. But all that happened was that I was reprimanded which was about the least they could do to me. I did wonder if my promotion to Wing-Commander would be delayed but it came through shortly after I got back to Richmond, just as if nothing had ever happened. So much for court-martials. "No, sir, I don't want to go to bed." It was a ridiculous command; I think I had at least some moral right to query it.

After a few seconds, Les Holton called out from the door, "Come on, Brian, let's go to bed", and so I did. The night was getting on and we wanted to get on with our job anyhow. I'm afraid I can't resist adding that after serving in New Guinea for several months, over nine months it was, I was coming back through Wagga, by which time I had been decorated, because

my boys had put on a pretty good show. And one of the first people who came up and congratulated me was Seekamp. I felt like telling him to shove his hand but refrained.

Back at Richmond we pressed on until we had 30 Squadron in pretty reasonable shape. We then moved up to Townsville before we went on to New Guinea, and the whole squadron moved up there in sections. You know, the ground party went ahead and established a camp at a place called Bohle River, a strip outside Townville, and we followed up with our aircraft a week or two later. We carried out some more dummy attacks on shipping, to simulate what we were likely to have to do, It had been decided that though the Beaufighter had been designed as a night-fighter, the best way to use its terrific armament - it had four cannon and six machine-guns - was as a ground-strafer. ¹²

They were good in that role because they had this heavy fire-power, operating at dot feet, and their performance at sea-level was so good that they were just a fraction faster than the Zero. Nowhere near as maneuverable, of course, so you had your problems if you were attacked. You had to just get going and I know that on one occasion I was so low over the water that if you could have got a cigarette-paper between the belly of the aeroplane and the sea you would have been lucky. As often as not the sea in tropical waters can be pretty dead calm and you had to be careful judging your height above it.

As we moved north, we made contact with some Americans at Charters Towers and at this stage we were placed under Fifth Air Force Command, for operations, which was under General Kenney¹³, a pretty good guy whom I met a couple of times. We operated particularly with B-25s and B-26s and all the American squadrons we met with were a good bunch, too. The boys were a little bit scared of the B-26 Martin Marauder, I think. These had a fairly high wing-loading and a Davis aerofoil, which was a pretty thin wing-section for those days. Don't forget that this was 1942. They had a fairly high approach speed. I never flew one with a bomb-load on it. But anyhow we'll come to that later on.

Group Captain Brian Walker DSO RAAF
To be continued.



PALMALMAL SPLASHDOWN

Continued from December 2005 issue.

We were to go early next morning when the Japs or their boys started shooting. Not until then did the Japs know we were there. When the Japs fired into our camp at break of day, Bill and I in the rush down the hill, became separated. Bill and No 1 ended in a water-hole with just their heads out. Bill said to No 1 he could hear the Japs. No 1 said: 'He no Japan, he puk puk, dasall.' (PukPuk is a crocodile). We felt our presence was endangering Golpak and his natives so sent word to "the captain belong English seeking permission to join him. Word came back that permission was granted and we set out in a northerly direction, towards the centre of New Britain, and on the 20th December reached Millie, where we were met by Captain Ian Skinner, officer in charge of the Commando Unit, which included former patrol officer John Stokie and a radio operator, Mat Foley.

'On the second day, after a five and a half-hour walk and a crossing of the Pandi River, we arrived at the radio station where we remained until 1st of February. One day, with Ian Skinner, we saw 56 fixed undercarriage dive-bombers, escorted by 30 fighters, heading for Cape Gloucester. This was reported by radio and it was pleasing to see only five return.

While there we were supplied with whatever we needed by aerial drops from a Liberator. Ian learned from natives that there was an American living with them on the north coast so had him brought in. He was Fred Hargesheimer, a Photo Reconnaissance Unit pilot. For the first 30 days of his nine months in New Britain, before he met up with the natives, he lived mainly on snails. He was suffering from dysentery and malaria, as well as a painful ulcer on his instep, and it took some time to get him right with good food and medicine.

One day, at the end of January, we received a radio message saying that if we could be at a given longitude and latitude two and a half days hence we would be picked up and taken back to Allied held territory. There was little enough time, but we decided to give it a go. We had to traverse at least 20 miles of rough unknown country to get to the coast, and then ten or twelve miles along the coast to the take off point. We had one police boy, Balus, one mission boy and four other carriers from a nearby village. After much hard walking we reached the Canoe River, a swiftly flowing stream, about 100 metres across, which we forded with some difficulty. On the other side we climbed uphill in torrential rain and wind. When we got to the top, cold, tired and aching, we found that the guide was bushed and unsure, which way to go. However, after going up and down and crossing muddy little streams, it was just before dark, when we came upon a village. We had been walking solidly for six hours and had covered, probably, only six or seven miles.

We had a native house for the night and a hot meal from our '4 by 3' ration pack, which was a four gallon kerosene tin with a press lid and contained dehydrated

meat and vegetables, fruit, tins of M+V and bully beef, chocolate, salt, tea-tablets, sugar, lime tablets, curry powder, tobacco, cigarette papers and matches.

Next morning we were ready to leave by 0720, with a new guide. First we went south, skirting a ravine, then north-east, up hill and down on muddy tracks

in pouring rain, and after lunch came to a brown, raging, foaming stream, which was clearly uncrossable in that condition. We turned back and at about 1400 hours we came upon two deserted houses and decided to camp in them for the night.

The next morning, after three hours walk we arrived at the village we had left the morning before. We were disheartened, to say the least, to find that after two and a half days walking we were only half a day's walk from our starting point. Then in came some natives, sent by John Stokie to tell us that the pick up time had been put forward by a day and we were to proceed as fast as possible. Next morning we set off with a hill native as guide and plenty of carriers and walked hard, and now that the rain had stopped we were able to cross the stream that had stopped us before, but soon we came to another one, which was still muddy and flowing strongly and was a real test. However, with the invaluable help of the natives, we succeeded in getting across, but with some difficulty. About mid-afternoon we reached the second largest swamp in New Britain and followed a slow-flowing river, occasionally fording small tributaries, until we crossed on a huge tree trunk that had fallen across it. On the other side we walked through rotting, stinking sago palm swamp, that pigs had been rooting in. That night we slept in a hastily erected shelter beside a crocodile infested backwater. We started early and walked on through the swamp beside the sluggish Pandi River, sometimes up to our knees in mud and slime. But at 1130 we reached the coast, took off our boots so as not to leave tracks and walked about a kilometre down the Jap road to where canoes were waiting to take us to Baia. The road was just wide enough for soldiers to march three abreast and too narrow for vehicles and well concealed from aerial surveillance. The natives said that the Japs were very afraid of strafing attacks by Beaufighters and Bostons.

At 1540 hours the three of us, together with two police boys and a crew of four local natives, embarked in a big war canoe with outrigger and a big white sail visible to 70000 Japs at Rabaul, to cross the bay. At first a light breeze kept us going steadily, the water was



F/O DAVID McCLYMONT

calm and blue, and we had a fine view of the green jungle of the Macolcol country coming right down to the white sandy beach. Mid-way across we sighted the sail of another boat, which one of the boys said was probably manned by Jap police boys on periodical patrol down the coast. He suggested, that if they came close enough most of us should hide under the deck, call them over and give them a broadside with our armament of four carbines two pistols and a revolver! A diabolical scheme, but one which we did not have to put to the test.

We could see the smoke of the Japanese cooking fires at Fosin, a few kilometres up the coast, and after being becalmed and having to paddle, we made land just about dusk, at 1910 hours. We had deliberately arranged to be dropped short of our destination so as not to give away the actual pick-up point, and now had to walk further along the beach. The going proved to be difficult with soft sand and three small rivers to cross. We had envisaged that the pick-up might be a Catalina flying boat, but, with moonlight and reasonable visibility, we saw what looked like a submarine out in the bay. We started to break into a run, when about eight natives armed with carbines suddenly appeared, (for a moment we thought they were Japs!); they were a guard put there to cover our departure. Then we saw two big rubber boats about 100 metres offshore, and before long we were wading out through the breakers and clambering aboard.

The officers and men of the *USS Gato*, a submarine of 1700 tons with a crew of 70, treated us to hot baths and a good hot dinner. Squadron Leader Bill Townsend recalls that after we came aboard, a young officer came up to him, saluted and said: 'Is it all right to start engines, sir?' to which he replied: 'My bloody oath!'

It was just three months since we had arrived, so unexpectedly, in New Britain.

ADDED FACTS

Rear Admiral Foley, on course to the Japanese shipping lanes was instructed to rescue a party of coast watchers and allied airmen from a beach on New Britain. He waited two days, on the second day spotted the agreed upon signal. (A parachute strung in a tree). They picked up the party, but Bill, Fred and David were not among them, so they waited and about ten minutes later they saw lights flashing. The rest is history. Gordon Manual, who wrote, "70,000 to One", was in the first party to be picked up.

Ian's party killed seventy two Japs after we left, for the cost of one boy wounded. This was Arkas. Old No 1 used to point his 44 rifle at the Japs, as they walked the road, but held fire until more help arrived.

FINAL REMARKS:

We arrived at Ian Skinner's camp at the time that he was away doing a reconnaissance of Lake Hargersheimer (named after Fred) to see if it were suitable for a Catalina to land and take us off.

I would like to record that:

1. We owe men like No 1, and Gabu, Sockover, and many others our lives.

2. This escape story is one of the softest of which I have ever heard; but please, Lord, never surround me with pigs on a pitch black night again.

POSTSCRIPT

Golpak was later made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his service to the Allies, and on his death a plaque was set up by the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society, at Sali, on Jacquinot Bay, which pays tribute to their, 'Number One Friend Belong Australia True'.

Back in the USA, Fred Hargersheimer raised funds to provide some practical recognition to the native community that had saved their lives, and in Australia Bill Townsend, through the RAFES, also raised money. The result was The Airmen's Memorial School at Ewasse, PNG, the erection of which was supervised by Fred Hargersheimer personally. It has provided education for hundreds of native pupils over the years. Its first teacher was none other than Golpak's son, Kaolea.

Letter from John Stokie: (at top camp to the bottom camp) 27/1/44

Dear Dave,

News ex Lae. Plane shot down Palmalmal. Crew of three: one killed in crash. Two others suicided rather than be captured. All loyal, Lu.luais and Tul Tuls still in prison. News from this beach more assuring.

Lowa now free. Japs now at Allamana. Report says search over, they think.

Herewith potatoes, sugar, boots for you. Yanks advanced Borgan Bay Section. Leningrad now free. Russians still advancing all sections.

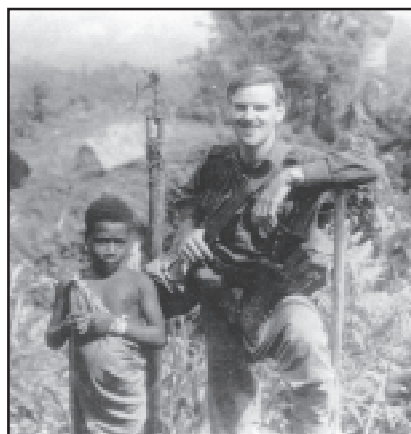
Best of luck

John

Keep AKAS and let TOMAS come back.

Thanks : John.

Courtesy Mrs Sue McClymont



F/O DAVID
McCLYMONT
AND
GOLPAK'S
SON

Diary of F/Sgt Donald C Kirkwood

RAAF – 30 Squadron



1943 September.

*Continued from
December 2005*

Saturday 14th

Nothing spectacular apart from the fact that we will have an aircraft to ourselves for a few days. No letters or parcels.

Sunday 15th

Briefed at 8.15am for an armed recco up to Cape Archway (Wide Bay) down coast to Arawe and then home. Bob Mills and Bill Coleman were the other crew. Weather was intermittent on way up to and from New Britain. Weather mainly dull with occasional heavy showers along coastline.

Small jetty from land of Wide Bay out towards Brown Island (Wide Bay) had heavily camouflaged 35 ton boat tied up to it.

The other crew missed it and even after returning when they saw us attacking, did not see it. One photograph taken which proved its existence alright. Whilst the other crew repeatedly attacked a u/s barge beached east of Owen Point we sighted what appeared as a bogey. This aircraft was claimed by the others to be a Liberator but if it were Allied I'd say that it was a B25.

Road around Waterfall Bay looked well worn and the Berg Berg River presented several interesting features. Jacquinot Bay supplied us with our prize. In a deep, sharp inlet several hundred yards inside from Mal Mal mission a 150 ton ship was cleverly concealed flush up against the bank with the overhanging palms almost obscuring it. Several cannon runs were made and I consider that the ship is now u/s for some time. Light MG fire was seen to come from Mal Mal again.

During these cannon runs 3 good photographs were taken. Also one of our shells exploded inside the aircraft, filling it with cordite fumes and ammonia. I might add that it gave us one helluva fright into the bargain. A very successful day indeed.

One letter dated the 11th received from Mary. No parcels.

Monday 16th

The C.O. caused a panic by smartly disappearing whilst on a test flight. A search was organised and he was found in Hughes Bay, Ferguson Island. Five minutes after take off his motor failed. The good motor would not keep him up so he was forced to ditch it in 150ft of water. It sank in 15 seconds but the C.O.,

his brother and the observer (F/O Kelly) got away OK. The dinghy inflated but was punctured by the tailplane. They were forced to swim the last 70 or 80 yards to shore.

No letters or parcels. Raining like the dickens all night.

Tuesday 17th

Still raining this morning. Sleepy day again. No letters or parcels.

Wednesday 18th

Nothing spectacular for ourselves. Japs bashed at Wewak and Borum to the tune of 170 aircraft.

Mail, for a wonder and very acceptable I'm sure.

Ted and Bunny on night trip last evening.

Thursday 19th

Navvyng at new camp site for our mess. Ruddy stupid idea all told.

No mail.

Friday 20th

Short trip with S/Ldr Boulton viewing smoke screen laid by the Bostons. A good turn and very successful.

No parcels or mail.

Saturday 21st

Big polling day today. Went along and had my vote. No mail again. Hope poor Mary receives mail better than we do here. Life becomes very boring here with no mail, crook food, no work and stupid ideas from the powers that count.

Miss Mary and kid a lot of late. Would be much better if we were fully occupied during the daylight hours.

Sunday 22nd

Working like mad on new camp site again. Blisters beginning to rise.

The RAAF is afraid of a big reprisal raid for the bashing the Japs have had at Wewak so we have to do

a standby duty as well. Consists of sitting on the bronze down at the strip all day or part thereof.

No letters again.

Monday 23rd

Up at 4am, scheduled for a job but our port engine lost oil pressure so it was scrubbed for us. Meant a morning's work on the digging at new camp. Afternoon was standby again.

Haven't had time for a shave for 2 days and am looking filthy. ½ hour for lunch and going from 5am to 6pm is proving a little boring.

No letters or parcels again. Curse our blasted mail service. It all stinks.

Tuesday 24th

Up again at 5am. Standby all morning. Digging all afternoon. Am slowly becoming a physical wreck.

Sweltering hot all day. No mail once more. I'll riot soon.

Briefing till 8pm. After necessary arrangements about retrieving borrowed gear we are here for bed at

9.30pm, happy in the thought of a 2.30am rise tomorrow.

Wednesday 25th

Up 2.30am. All set for a 4.40am take off. One crew had to fall out due to an overheated motor, so Ted and Bunny had to take their place.

It was the first time that Cohn and I had a chance of leading. Target area was a recco of Garove and Mandua Islands 60 miles north of the New Britain coast. Landfall on the south coast was a little out due to it being night flying to this point. Crossed the north coast 20 miles west of Talasea (a Jap strip) and within sight of the volcanoes and peaks behind Rabaul. As we neared Garove Island we went down to zero feet and made for Wilder Lilu in search of floatplanes. None were there so we circuted the island to John Albert Harbour where we discovered a veritable nest of barges, boats and patrol craft. We caught and set on fire a patrol craft which was in the open making for island cover like Hades. He actually led us onto an island where 6 others were sheltering. All were pashed severely and damaged. About 12 other barges were up against a 1000 foot cliff making really effective fire well nigh impossible. In fact one chap had a grand stand seat in a position useless for us to attempt attacking. It was a grand days outing and well worth our trouble.

No letters from home, again.

Thursday 26th

Standby during the afternoon and when we arrived at home our tent had been shifted to the new camp site. All bustle and getting nowhere.

Arrived up at the new camp at 7pm to find everything in order. No parcels or letters again. Friday 27th

A helluva day. Scrounged and bargained hard for a tent and then worked like galley slaves fixing up our area. Had to procure all our own tent poles, no mean job.

However, I received 5 letters, 3 from Mary which brightened the future considerably.

Mary appears quite lonely these days but I think that I am the lonelier.

Saturday 28th

Normal day. At last things are returning to peace. Tent is up secure and we are quite comfortable. Had an excellent evening, beer was released and all were very happy with one another.

Received 2 more letters from Mary which climaxed the evening.

Sunday 29th

Washing all day, that is, all morning. Swinging compasses during afternoon.

Writing letters tonight for a change.

The boys had a great day out today, bashing and exploding 2 barges up at New Britain. The photos

are excellent. Been raining heavily for an hour. Hope it calms down again.

Monday 30th

Digging all day at our new tent site. Steaming hot all day.

Informed that we have an aircraft to ourselves today. A19-141. Brand new.

No letters or parcels.

Tuesday 31st

Usual digging day, but was interspersed with some squadron formation flying. 3/4 hours of same.

Quite good indeed. 12 Beaus off in 8 seconds apiece and landed at 1 a minute which is very good.

No letters or parcels.

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 1st

Morning interrupted by briefing for a job. Armed recco Archway to Awul. 4 barges sighted Brown

Island, 2 burned, ack-ack at Palmalmal. Jacquinot Bay strafed by us.

First op in our own aircraft which proved excellent.

No letters again. Parcels never expected now.

Thursday 2nd

Finally outfitted ourselves with throat microphones. An improvement on the cumbersome old mask mike. Up at our new tent site all afternoon and if we are clear tomorrow we will be able to shift up.

A letter from Mary tonight and 1 from Dad.

Friday 3rd

Shifted up to new tent site.

4 letters today which were acceptable after our

Continued on Page 8

Continued from page 7

afternoon of standby. Sleeping in ops room tonight on a 1 hour standby.

No parcels.

Saturday 4th

Briefed at 08.30am for another barge sweep from Cape Gloucester past Cape Bushing to Gasmata. Airborne 10.30am.

Good flying weather experienced for the whole trip.

We approached from Cape Busching and out over the strait between Gloucester and Umboi (Rooke Island) to make our photographic and strafing run of No 1 strip. We were "tail end Charlie" and by virtue of our position were forced higher, about 100 feet, than is desired. This lost us a lot of our element of surprise and the nips gunners were firing at us before we were right onto them. Maybe they sleep in their pits. We screamed across at 250 knots passing within 50 yards of the pits. I could see the barrels and flashes from several. 3 large shells burst just ahead and above, while 10 further shells chased us down the strip, each falling 20 yards short. Miraculously none of us were hit, and a deal of information was gathered. 2 twin engined kites and 2 zekes were on No 1 strip, No 2 was serviceable with a gravel surface.

Rest of the trip was just routine. A submarine was sighted on the surface 10 miles distant at position 0650S 150.50E heading east. Although we increased speed to maximum it successfully submerged before we could reach it.

No letters or parcels again.

Sleeping in ops. tonight. 1 hour standby.

Sunday 5th

A morning off spent with washing and a good swim.

2 kites had a crack again at Gloucester strip. One was hit in the starboard motor which spewed oil and

petrol. Losing his 50 feet of altitude rapidly the kite crashed into the foothills 4 miles east of Gloucester and burst into flames.

Woodroffe pilot and Brooks observer

DELETED BY CENSOR

No mail or parcels.

Hope Mary receives mine a little more regularly.

Monday 6th

On the job again today. This time a search for pranged crate of yesterday, barge sweep of Borgon

Bay, Garove and Unea Islands and the Talasea peninsular.

4 barges attacked in J Albert Harbour, Garove

Island. Why we must leave other ground targets alone is a mystery to me when it is obvious that they are in use by the Japanese.

DELETED BY CENSOR

return journey we passed directly over Gasmata strip without any interference. No mail or parcels.

Intense AA was encountered at Garove Island. This place will prove a death trap for some poor crew one day.

TO BE CONTINUED

WHO IS JACK SCHITT?

Many people are at a loss for a response when someone says: You don't know Jack Schitt". Now, you can handle the situation. Jack is the only son of Awe Schitt and O. Schitt. Awe Schitt, the fertilizer magnate, married O. Schitt, the owner of Knee-deep in Schitt, Inc.

In turn, Jack married Noe Schitt and the couple produced 6 children: Holie Schitt, the twins (Deep Schitt and Dip Schitt), Fulla Schitt, Giva Schitt and Bull Schitt, a high school dropout.

After being married for fifteen years, Jack and Noe divorced. Noe later married Mr. Sherlock, and because her kids were living with them, she wanted to keep her previous name. She became known as Noe Schitt-Sherlock

Dip Schitt married Loda Schitt and they produced a cowardly son, Chicken Schitt, Fulla Schitt and Giva Schitt were inseperable throughout childhood and eventually married the Happens brothers in a dual ceremony. The Schitt-Happens children are Dawg, Byrd and Horse. Bull Schitt, the prodigal son, left home to tour the world. He recently returned

with his new Italian bride Pisa Schitt.

So now, when someone says you don't know Jack Schitt, you can correct them.

Anzac Day Parade, Brisbane City

Members who require transport to take part in the parade are advised they must advise me within one week to book a place for them. Members are requested to make a special effort to take part in this year's parade. You are reminded that your relatives can march with you.

The number of members who take part in this year's parade will have a large bearing on whether we take part in future parades. It will be a sad day if the Beaufighter and Boston Banner is not proudly carried in an Anzac Parade

Please make a special effort.

**EDITED VERSION OF A TALK GIVEN TO A
DARWIN DEFENDERS GATHERING AT
CHELTENHAM RSL ON AUGUST 22, 2003, BY
KEN McDONALD**

31 Squadron assembled at Wagga, after three months of training, was sent to Coomalie Creek strip about 80 km south of Darwin.

Our purpose was to protect Australia against any landing attempt by enemy also to attack the enemy in Timor and other NEI (Indonesian) Islands.

We arrived in November 1942, our first operation on 17th attacking enemy occupied villages in East Timor. At that time an AIF force called 2nd Independent company was operating in East Timor in a guerilla operation, ambushing Jap patrols and disappearing into the mountains. No doubt Mr Johns (Army speaker) will tell you more about their operations on the ground there.

They received much help from the local population, including each soldier having a local boy attached to carry his personal gear, his "criado", so the soldier had only his gun, ammo etc to carry. These boys were also handy for their knowledge of the terrain and bush tracks etc.

By December Japs landed 20000 troops and started a determined attempt to wipe out the Aussies. Portuguese, the original colonists were being rounded up for concentration camps. Aust Govt agreed to rescue women and children.

On November 30, three ships left Darwin. *HMAS Armidale* and *Castlemaine* (now at Williamstown) corvettes and *Kuru* a little workboat of 55 ton, max speed 6 knots they carried about 80 Dutch troops as reinforcements, an AIF doctor and a few AIF gunners. Their Mission was to land troops and supplies and pick up Portuguese civilians.

Rendezvous was to be at night with AIF on Timor south coast beach. The ships were sighted en route by Jap recon planes and shadowed. As they got closer to Timor a substantial Jap air raid attacked. They asked for air cover and we sent relays of Beaufighters to give them cover.

Our fighters, Spitfires and Kittyhawks did not have the range to operate at this distance, and Beaus were the only aircraft able to assist.

Mostly no attacks when Beaus were there but Zeros attacked one Beau and shot it down with loss of crew. No serious damage to ships on first day. *Kuru* got through at night but no corvettes, so she unloaded her supplies and loaded as many civilians as possible, about 100, and departed around 2 am.

The Corvettes were held up by Jap air raids and arrived at the beachhead later but there was no reception on the beach, AIF having departed inland. Next day they caught up with *Kuru*, and *Castlemaine* took the civilians back to Darwin. *Kuru* and *Armidale*

were ordered to try again that night to complete operation. Suicide Mission???

Both ships were attacked but *Armidale* was hit with torpedoes and sunk in 3 minutes. Crew plus 80 Dutch soldiers abandoned ship and were being strafed in the water by Zeros.

Teddy Sheean, 18 year old seaman strapped himself to the oerlikon and continued firing till ship went down. Posthumous M I D but should have been V/C, some said. (Survivors story will be told by Dr Ray Leonard so I won't go into it).

They had 2 boats both severely damaged. The ship's launch was floated and took about thirty men. Rest in water on rafts and wreckage and second boat under water. Dutch (Javanese) troops were aggressive and took the best rafts and parted from the Aussies. After two days no rescue planes or ships sighted so the launch set out for Darwin. Engine trouble was finally overcome and they were able to motor, row and sail towards Aust until sighted by Hudson, and *HMAS Kalgoorlie* was sent to rescue them. Meantime a valiant attempt was made to refloat other boat, amazingly successful, about twenty of sickest and injured got into the boat. Still no rescue planes so the boat set off to row to Aust. After 6 days Hudson spotted them and *Kalgoorlie* picked them up. Boat fell in half on trying to lift it on to ship. Other survivors on rafts were spotted and *Catalina* sent but could not land due to rough sea. Next day there was no sign of any survivors, apparently found by Japs and killed.

Next day after sinking, Beaus ordered to attack Jap Airbase at Penfoe, near Koepang, West Timor. Overnight to Drysdale Mission to refuel. Left at dawn arrived about 8 am and surprised enemy and in one run by 6 Beaus destroyed or damaged about 30 planes on the base. Our first really successful raid.

A new sub has been named for Sheean. She was commissioned in WA in February 2001 along with *Dechaineux*. The commissioning ladies, were sister of Teddy and widow of Capt *Dechaineux*

Our surviving aircrews were invited to the commissioning as we were the only RAAF Sqdn involved in the action, ie the loss of *Armidale*.

During next two years the Squadron continued to attack enemy positions until the war moved on through New Guinea and squadron was moved to that theatre.

Annual Raffle Results

First Prize	George Drury	Sandy Bay Tasmania
2nd	“ Kevin Quinn	Applethorpe W.A.
3rd	“ Les Moore	Innisfail Qld

IT TOOK TWO TO TANGO IN A BEAUFIGHTER



These two learned to tango pretty well

Pilots come in all shapes and sizes. Some, if not all, have odd quirks, and some are taciturn not unlike a broad cross-section of humanity in general. It is asserted that there are two types of men, those who fly aeroplanes and those who don't. Perhaps this was put about by the pilots' confraternity. So when we newly qualified Navigators came face to face with them at a certain stage, the facial appearance, the quirks and even the personal appearance of these gentlemen, greatly taxed our ability to sort the wheat from the chaff.

This, of course, took place in the Operational Training unit, and after some two years or so training, it seemed a pity to jeopardise all the costs of this, not to say or bodily safety, by committing ourselves, willy nilly, to a pilot of short acquaintance and talents not obviously apparent. At first impact, our two respective groups, size each other up with hopefully disguised nonchalance. Should I plump for a 'large' fellow, with hands that seemed likely to be able to do useful work with a control column hailing, it would appear, from the "high Veld of South Africa", and probably not prone to panic when things were not going to plan? Or perhaps a "small" one, maybe a used car salesman from Sydney, New South Wales, with lots of volatility. Small men, however, usually pick fights, and did I want to pick fights with Me 109s or Fw 190s?

These days, when boarding a 747 which will climb to heights unheard of in our day and obviously much more dangerous territory, do we expect to be able to give the Captain the once-over to gauge his skills in his glass cockpit? Frankly I don't see why not, but here we were, trying to pair off, my group all from 'Blighty', confronted airmen from the most remote parts of the Empire (as it was). Did I prefer: the "Blue", the "Springbook" or a "Kiwi"? What did I know of the Czechs, the Belgians or the Poles on offer? Not a lot really. A bad choice here could result in an attack of the dreaded LMF (lack of moral fibre) should incompatibility subsequently set in.

There followed gentle probing to see how many hours and on what they were able to offer me, bearing in mind that few of us had more than 20 hours or 'not a little' when, in 1918, operations were started, and usually abruptly terminated, with as little as 20 hours total time.

There was little time to gauge personal habits, like capacity for alcohol, late night party going stamina in pursuit of pipsies 'etc. Individuals had their own order of priority in such matters, complicating ready assessment of compatibility to indulge jointly in these essential diversions. It became readily apparent that the "Colonial" types would not be wanting in earning merit points in all these subjects. Later experience showed that adventurous activity in all these delights had little effect on some, and next morning a compass course would be flown with more than the usual precision prompted, no doubt, by a sense of deep satisfaction of a successful outcome of the foray of the previous evening. What impression we callow youths, sporting our hard won brevets gave our opposite numbers is a matter of conjecture. Our self confidence to be able to navigate with skill and style was still fairly fragile.

Moreover, some of us were still in some awe of the general run of pilots, who tended to be more hearty in manner and could do things with aeroplanes which often startled us, and tended to hurl our navigation instruments on to the floor of the aircraft. At Air Observers School, they invariably forgot to say "please" when the undercarriage of the faithful old Anson had to be wound up one hundred and twenty turns and, of course, wound down again, although it was not unknown for a pilot and trainee navigator to experience a moment of mental aberration, and be brought sharply down to earth by the unpleasant noise of the impact of rapidly turning propellers hitting the runway.

Anyway I write about our impressions, and if any pilot is prepared to put pen to paper on the subject of "crewing up", I promise his views will be read with objective interest, our shoulders are wide enough to take a ribbing and umbrage will not be taken.

The general format for the establishing of individual crews had been well thought out by the senior officers concerned. There was little or no pressure, although time was important so that real training could continue, with the added incentive to polish our skills, at both ends of the aircraft, as the "real thing" was just about on us or, in the hackneyed phrase of fiction writers, 'our mettle was about to be tested'. At this stage I had a sneaky suspicion that we were all concerned as to the quality of our own mettle, but after the requisite number of ales in the Mess, such doubts rapidly disappeared in the general festivities, and the rendition of traditional Air Force songs, seemingly harping on being crushed beneath heavy aircraft engines or indulging in physical acts which I personally didn't quite comprehend or if I did, thought highly incapable of achieving.

Suddenly the pairing process was complete and all settled down to the final stage of training before joining an operational squadron. For all of us, "that moment in time" when our skills and personalities had been joined for our mutual benefit and survival, and also in the wider sense of the effectiveness of our duty in the activity of the Air Force, was, indeed, a "moment of truth".

Almost without exception, the fruits of this procedure of crewing was the establishment of that almost indefinable quality of comradeship and bonding that occurred between each individual Beaufighter crew; from then on the vagaries of "Lady Luck" could be faced with hope and confidence. Who can forget that last operational sortie, whether it was in number, in hours, or in time on "ops", when the anxieties of all previous trips seems to roll up all into one, until that very sweet moment when the wheels hit the deck, and the feeling, almost of disbelief, that the 'tour' was over.

The unique experience of facing considerable hazards together, with a blend of skills and a sense of harmony, greatly enriched our lives - and this has remained with us in later life, to be recalled with pride and pleasure. The Australian expression "Good Mates" describes so aptly those days now so long ago, but which are never very far from our daily thoughts.

SAM WRIGHT

Editors note. The same method of pairing off as a crew in Beaufighters also applied at the Beaufighter 50TU.

LONG DISTANCE FLIER



Ron Snell, who travels down from Townsville each year for Anzac Day and our AGM, has had a problem with speed cameras.

He reckons that he had no trouble when he worked hard to get the Beauies going faster.

SENDING OLD MEN TO WAR

They've got the whole thing backwards. Instead of sending 18 year-olds off to fight, they ought to take us old guys. You shouldn't be able to join until you're at least 35. For starters:

Researchers say 18-year-olds think about sex every 10 seconds. Old guys only think about sex a couple of times a day, leaving us more than 28,000 additional seconds per day to concentrate on the enemy. Young guys haven't lived long enough to be cranky, and a cranky soldier is a dangerous soldier. If we can't kill the enemy we'll complain them into submission.

"My back hurts!" "I'm hungry!" "Where's the remote control?" An 18-year-old hasn't had a legal beer yet and you shouldn't go to war until you're at least old enough to legally drink. An average old guy, on the other hand, has consumed 126,000 gallons of beer by the time he's 35 and a jaunt through the desert heat with a backpack and M-60 would do wonders for the old beer belly. An 18-year-old doesn't like to get up before 10 a.m. Old guys get up early every morning to pee

If old guys are captured we couldn't spill the beans because we'd probably forget where we put them. In fact name, rank, and serial number would be a real brain teaser. Boot camp would actually be easier for old guys. We're used to getting screamed and yelled at and we actually like soft food. They could lighten up on the obstacle course, however. I've been in combat and I didn't see a single 20-foot wall with rope hanging over the side. Nor did I ever do any push ups after completing basic training. I can hear the Drill Sergeant now, "Get down and give rne.er.one." And the running part is kind of a waste of energy.

I've never seen anyone outrun a bullet. An 18-year-old has the whole world ahead of him. He's still learning to shave, to actually carry on a conversation, and to wear pants without the top of his butt crack showing and his boxer shorts sticking out. He's still hasn't figured out that a pierced tongue catches food particles, and that a 400-watt speaker in the back seat of a Honda Accord can rupture an eardrum. The last thing the enemy would want to see is old farts with attitude.

Share this with your senior friends (It's purposely in bigger type for us old guys)

Courtesy Bet Wicks



President's Corner

Dear Members

The New Year is well & truly with us & I would like to take the opportunity again to wish all of you a healthy & prosperous 2006

It's that time of the year when our AGM takes place & this year it was again held at Greenbank Services Club. There is no doubt about it the Club provides an excellent venue for such meetings. We also had the Club President Eric Cavanagh as a guest. He is very sympathetic to our cause & he ensures we lack nothing in the way of refreshments etc.,. The meals for which there is a modest charge are very acceptable.

The members reappointed the previous executive for the year 2006 ie., Peter White Secretary/Treasurer, Bill O'Connor Vice-President, Committeemen Jack Chamberlain & Stan Curran & myself as President. I can assure that I am very honoured to be President of our Association.

We had 19 members & guests at the meeting which I believe is the best turn out for sometime. Bill O'Connor apologised for his absence as he was in Darwin for the functions commemorating the bombing of that city.

During the meeting Padre Cameron Smith commended a book he had just finished reading entitled "The Unknown Explorer" concerning the exploits of Hubert Wilkins MM&bar at the South Pole, WWI & elsewhere.

In view of the fact that our veteran members are all in their 80s the question of our Association's future was raised in general business, particularly as we have a number of ongoing commitments eg., the flying scholarship, the annual RAAF Amberley award & the presentation thereof.

There were a couple of suggestions put forward one of which was that we might amalgamate with the Logan



branch of the RAAFA of which Eric Cavanagh is also the President. Such branch has much younger members & could assist us to carry on our future commitments well into the future. However there may be other options.

Eric has indicated that his branch would be honoured to help us, if so requested. Members have been asked to consider this important matter as it will be discussed at the next AGM.

I would like to congratulate Frank Beadle (93 Sqdn) on his impending 90 th birthday on the 8/4/2006 - not a bad innings 90 not out.

Regards

RALPH



Pres. Ralph presents print of Beaufighter to Logan City RAAFA president, Eric Cavanagh



Members and guests waiting for the meeting to begin. Get it over quickly and into lunch!



The Old/New Committee still rearing to go! Stan, Peter, Pres Ralph, Jack. Bill was AWL.



Greenbank RSL functions co-ordinator, Stacey, with Peter and Ralph