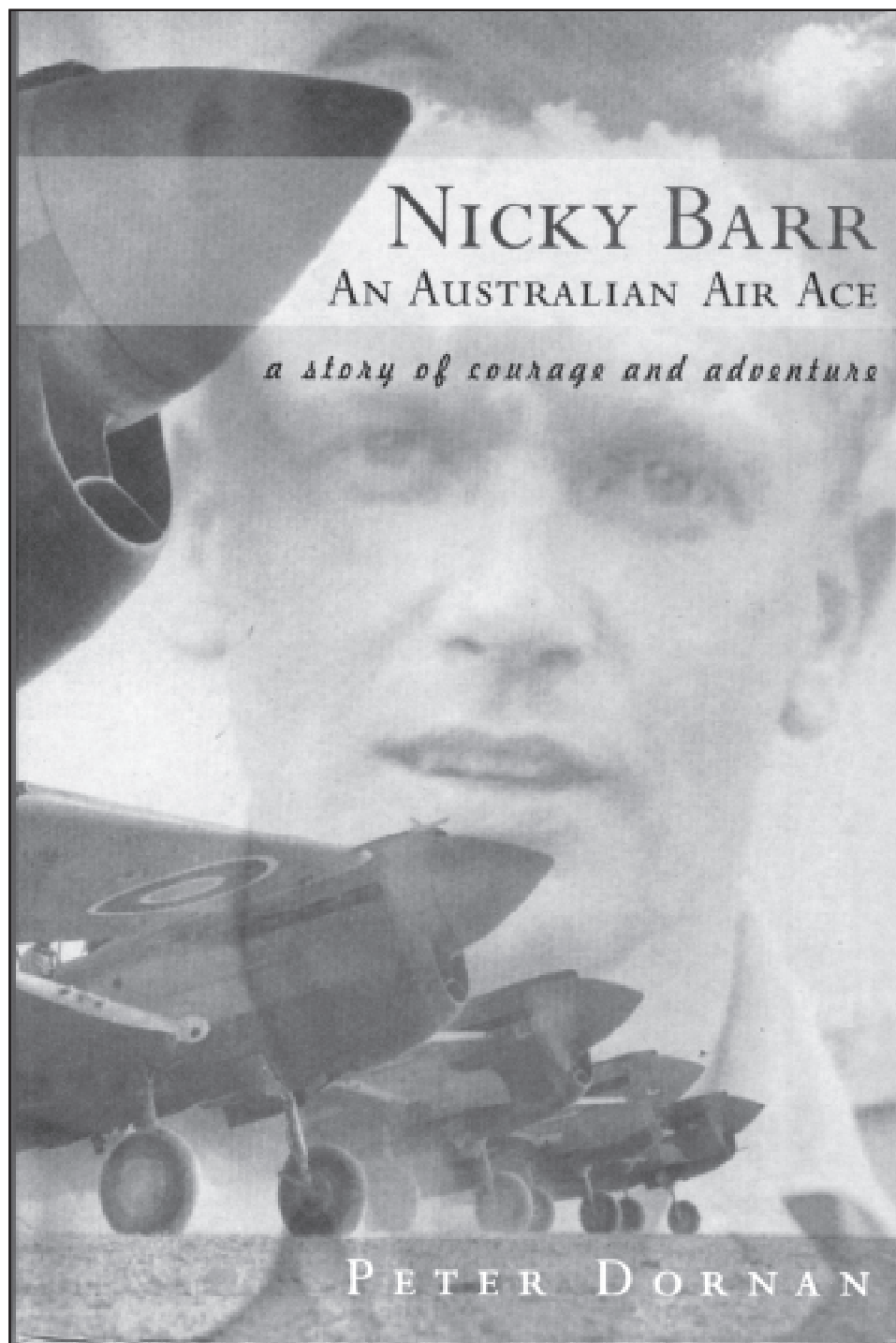


The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

SEPTEMBER 2006



Nicky Barr OBE,MC,DFC & BAR –

Air Ace, Sportsman, Businessman

1915-2006

In 1939, as a Victorian, to be selected in one of the great prizes of the sporting world – an extended tour of ten months with the Wallabies, Australia's national rugby team, playing a large number of matches against all United Kingdom countries, Canada, United States, France and New Zealand - was an exciting start to life for any young man.

Thus, began the remarkable adventures of Andrew "Nicky" Barr. If, with twinkling deep blue eyes and an infectious smile, he had set out to court adventure, he could not have orchestrated a more interesting and exciting full-blooded narrative than that which was to befall him, firstly as a sportsman, then as a fighter pilot, and later as a businessman.

To represent his country at rugby – as Nicky had – would have satisfied most young men. However, Nicky was to far surpass this. He became a double ace, shooting down twelve-and-a-half enemy aircraft confirmed and at least three more probables in combat. He was also to be shot down three times, once in flames, and to force land in enemy territory and escape, then to be captured and escape at least three times and then, while behind enemy lines, take part in clandestine activities while helping Allied prisoners of war to escape. Who could ask for more?

As well as becoming one of Australia's most decorated and legendary fighter pilots of World War Two, Nicky's exploits earned him the right to claim membership in several select air force 'clubs'. He qualified for the 'Caterpillar Club' (that is, he 'hit the silk' and had his life saved by the use of a parachute – his caterpillar had red ruby eyes because his plane had caught fire), three times for the 'Flying Boot' or 'Late Arrivals' club (earned by those who reach their home bases after forced landings behind enemy lines and then return to operational flying), and three times for 'the Escaper' (awarded to flying men who were prisoners of war and succeeded in escaping).

Nicky was born as one of twin boys in New Zealand on 10th December 1915, but remembered very little of his first six years. However, he had warm memories of growing up in Melbourne after his family moved to Australia. He attended Swinbourne Technical College, and started work as a wool buyer at Bradford Mills. He eventually earned a diploma in accountancy.

But he revelled in sport, winning the Victorian Schoolboy 100 Yards Championships three years in a row, in 1926, 27 and 28. He was able to capitalise on this gift and love of athletics by receiving an invitation to join the Lord Somers Camp and Power House

organisation in 1931 as a 15 year old. It was here that Nicky began to fully learn the spirit of service and duty and to understand that he had responsibilities to himself and others. Power House became one of the most impressionable and formative experiences of his young life, and he remained grounded with the Institution to his final days. Here, in 1938, he also met the love of his life, Dot (Dorothy) Gore on a blind date at the theatre.

The Wallaby team of 1939 had only disembarked a few hours in England when they learned war had broken out against Nazi Germany. Nicky was incensed and tried to join the Royal Air Force immediately. However, the team returned to Australia, where Nicky joined the Royal Australian Air Force on March 1940.

Nicky's independent spirit often rebelled in the RAAF's environment of conformity. He was a free young spirit who sought freedom in the air, and accumulatively, his instructors tagged him as displaying elements of devilry. He gained a sobriquet of "Nicky", as in "Old Nick", the name given by the Puritans to the devil.

Nicky graduated to "wings" standard in September 1940 and was posted to No. 23 Squadron in Brisbane at Archerfield. While here, he became aide-de camp for the Queensland Governor, Sir Lesley Wilson. With this stability in his job, he proposed to Dot and married her in Melbourne on 12th August 1941. Three weeks later, he received a posting to No.3 Fighter RAAF Squadron in the Middle East. By 17th November 1941, Nicky began his fighter pilot career flying Tomahawks. At this stage of the war the Desert Air Force and the British Eighth Army were desperately trying to relieve the besieged Tobruk Fortress in Libya. No.3 Squadron was the pre-eminent fighter squadron among 20 Allied Squadrons fighting Rommel's famed Africa Korps, and Nicky was soon in battle.

Over the next few months, such was the attrition rate, Nicky quickly rose through the ranks to become Squadron Leader of 3 Squadron. There was opportunity for conflict virtually daily. At one stage, he flew twenty operational missions in fourteen days, six of them on June 16 1942, a record for a fighter pilot.

In January of 1942, he was awarded his first DFC. On a particular mission, flying a Kittyhawk, Nicky shot down three enemy planes in quick succession, a Fiat G50, and two Me109's. He was then shot down himself, crash landing into the desert. He was injured and stranded kilometres behind enemy lines, but was saved by some friendly Arabs who dressed his wounds and mounted him on a camel, clothing him in white Arab



All-round great: The late WGCDR Andrew “Nicky” Barr with FLTLT Dave Temme, WGCDR Michael Kitcher and FLTLT Steven Bradley at the Gold Coast in 2004. Nicky Barr passed away in June 2006 after a life of service to the Air Force and rugby.

Photo: LAC David Gibbs

clothes and headpiece. They then guided him back to safety over the next few days. Along the way, he noted Rommel’s troops and guns, reporting them to Headquarters.

He was shot down again on the 1st June, during the “Battle of the Cauldron” an intense land and air battle outside of Tobruk. The power of a full battery of German 88mm guns spun his plane upside down where he finally crashed to the desert floor. He landed in a minefield between the two warring armies. With luck and some determination, he was saved as he was reached first by a British Army team.

He was shot down again on the 26th June, for the final time, in flames. He was taken as a wounded prisoner, badly burned, and shot through the leg, to Italy. When he recovered, he escaped by crawling naked and freezing through the sewerage system, but was caught by guards not far from the Swiss border.

After a severe belting, he was transported to Germany but escaped by jumping out of a moving train. For the next six months he linked up with and worked with Special Operation Forces who had parachuted into Italy, harassing and blowing up German trains and troop trucks. He was caught twice more, but escaped each time, his adventures reading like a Boys Own Journal.

Eventually, after twenty months behind lines, he became sick with malaria and malnutrition and led a group of Allied Prisoners of War to safety over the Apennines. He received a Military Cross for his services. Back in England, he flew 108 operational missions from Britain, where he attained the rank of Wing Commander.

After the war, he eventually accepted a position in Brisbane as general manager of the rapidly expanding civil engineering firm Thiess Brothers. There were 180 staff Australia-wide then and Nicky’s main responsibility was to manage them and the contracts. Open-cut coalmining provided growth and operational stability. These were heady days and often exciting times as they built offices, made roads, carparks, bought and worked coal mines and shipped the coal to Japan and Pakistan.

In 1952, Nicky bought a farm, “Glencoe”, near Grantham, in Queensland, but his war injuries prevented him from working it efficiently, so he accepted an invitation to return as general manager/director with Thiess Brothers. This was just as the ambitious Snowy Mountains project got underway and Nicky became involved in the challenges of the contracts won by Thiess.

In 1956, he joined William Cooper and Nephews as marketing director. This was a large international firm that specialised in sheep dips, and sold a huge range of pharmaceutical goods and arsenic products. It was the beginning of the use of organic phosphates. Then, in 1961, he became general manager of Meggitt Limited. This was a company that operated mainly in the oilseed crushing industry, particularly linseed oil and vegetable oils, owning land and mills all around Australia. Nicky concluded his corporate life as executive chairman of Meggitt Ltd.

Nicky enjoyed his time there immensely and he stayed for more than 23 years. He was instrumental in bringing in soya beans, rape and safflower seeds, as well as setting up a scheme for future trading for growers, processors and users to allow them to hedge the value of their crops and products against market fluctuations. He was also chairman of a number of industry organisations.

In 1983, he was awarded the OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to the oilseed industry, and in 1983-84 he represented Australia as Chairman at the international Oilseeds Group.

When Nicky walked over the Apennines to freedom, he considered it to be the most euphoric feeling that anyone could ever have. It wasn’t just a short-term sensation; it lasted and lasted. Anything of value that has happened to him since then has simply been a bonus.

One question remains. Why did Nicky take so long to allow his story to be told? Firstly, he realised he needed the wisdom that time grants to analyse and come to terms with the emotional, physical, spiritual and political events he has withstood. The second reason relates to privacy. He wanted to put his war experiences behind him and to be accepted as an individual in boardrooms and social situations without the distraction of having to explain his often exciting exploits.

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While behind enemy lines, the thought that motivated him most strongly to persevere, the one which triggered a strong incentive and compelling purpose to survive, was the constant objective to be reunited with his wife, Dot. She was the light and magnet in his soul, his thoughts of her providing him with the spirit and energy to stay alive, particularly while he was languishing in prisoner-of-war hospitals, and later while operating in snow-covered enemy-held territory. His memories of her were with him all the time, during each plane flight and while under enemy attack. She provided the resolve for Nicky to discover hidden reserves in every challenge he encountered. She was an integral part of Nicky Barr's achievements.

Ultimately, theirs was a story of enduring love. After 64 years of marriage, Dot died in September last year. Nicky had great trouble coping with this loss, and on 12th June 2006, he peacefully passed on himself, his two sons Brian and Rob by his side. Fittingly, during his funeral, two FA18 Hornets from 3 Squadron at Williamtown flew overhead and waggled their wings in a final salute.

The weekend after Nicky's death, the Wallabies played a test against England for the Cook Cup. As a mark of respect, the stadium honoured him with a minute's silence, and the Wallabies wore a black armband. They then proceeded to a stirring victory winning 43-8.

As well as his sons, Nicky leaves six grandchildren and two great grand-children as his immediate legacy but he has also bequeathed a rich heritage covering many aspects of Australian life – in sport, military and business. Australia has lost a gem, but the afterglow will enlighten and warm us all

PETER DORNAN

Biographer – "Nicky Barr: An Australian Air Ace"

Editor's note

Peter Dornan has done a great job with this biography of Nicky Barr. When I opened my copy I was unable to put it down until I reached the last page. I know of others who say the same thing. I can recommend this book as one of the best reads of World War Two in the air.

Copies are available from most book stores or from

P Dornan, 13 Morley Street Toowong

Phone

07 3371 9155

E-mail <prdornan@bigpond.com.au> at \$24.95 plus postage.



**Stan Curran, Nicky Barr and
Hon Sec. Peter White**

WHY WORRY?

***In this life there are only two
things to worry about.***

Either you will be rich or poor.

***If you are rich, there is nothing to worry about
But if you are poor, there are only two things
to worry about.***

***Either you will be healthy or sick. If you are
healthy, there is nothing to worry about.***

***But if you are sick, there are two things to
worry about.***

Either you will live or you will die.

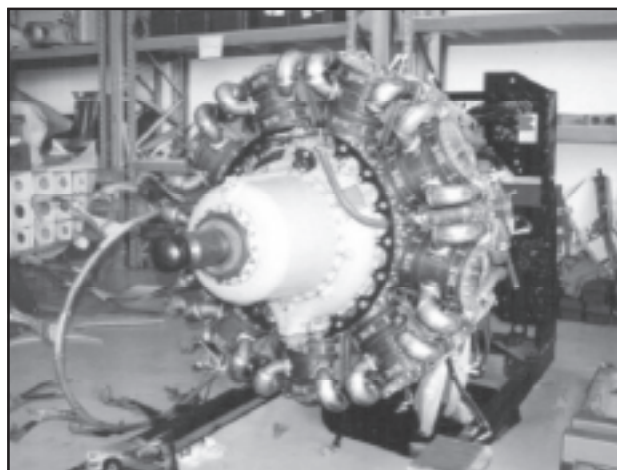
If you live, there is nothing to worry about.

***If you die there are only two things to worry
about.***

You will either go to heaven or to hell.

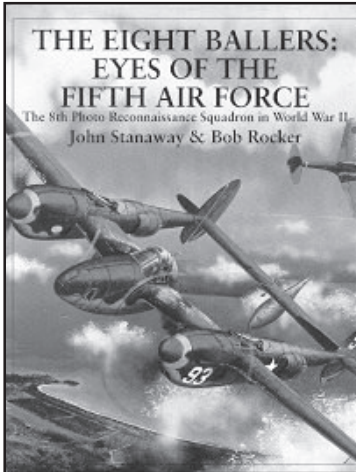
***If you go to heaven, there will be nothing to
worry about.***

***if you go to hell you frybusy shaking hands
with all your friends,
you won't have time to worry.!!!***



Bristol Hercules Sleeve-Valve Engine

CORRECTION



F/Lt Peter White

ss Fred Hargesheimer sent a copy of June 2006, The Whisperer that covers his remarkable story. I served with Fred in the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, Port Moresby, from Dec 1942 to March 1944 flying 91 combat missions in the P-38H fighter and F-4A and F-5B P-38 photo recon aircraft. I noticed an error in Black Jack Walker's story on page 12.

I was present when Walker was invited to the 8th Photo party to tell us about piloting the Beaufighter. He gave out P-38 reconnaissance pilots a vivid and entertaining description of the Beaufighter's characteristics. That night our Squadron Commander, Major John G. Foster and Walker agreed to check out each other in the Beaufighter and the P-38. The next day Black Jack Walker showed up at the squadron for his checkout. We let him take aircraft No. 30 that we used to transition new pilots. All our aircraft were painted blue camouflage and easy to identify as reconnaissance aircraft. After a few minutes in the cockpit Black Jack made a successful takeoff. A few minutes later our telephone began to ring. "Why is one of your airplanes buzzing so low over our airfield?" Then another call, "One of your airplanes is continually shooting touch and go landings on our strip." It seemed that Walker was having a pretty good time piloting No. 30. After about an hour's flight he landed safely at K-14. Major Foster did fly the Beaufighter and commented on it's instability and pilot concentration required.

The error in the story is that Major Prentice was our squadron commander. Major Prentice commanded the 39th Fighter Squadron that was also based at K-14. The 39th Sqdn. was the first American unit to record 100 victories and had several double and triple aces like Dick Bong, Kenny Sparks, etc.

For your information the 8th Photo Squadron Association for the past 28-years has met in various cities for our annual reunion. There are not many of us left so our reunions will probably end soon.

CECIL H. RIGSBY

Colonel, USAF (Ret)

President's Corner

Dear Members

Recently Peter White & I attended the funeral of Andrew (Nicky) Barr. This sad event marked the passing of one of Australia's most famous WWII airmen.

Peter, incidently, flew with Nicky in Wirraways when they were both attached to 23 Sqdn before the latter was posted to No.3 Sqdn (Middle East) to fly Kittyhawks.

Nicky had 14 enemy planes to his credit. He was shot down 3 times & walked back to base twice. On the third occasion he was badly wounded and taken POW. I recommend that any member who would like to read a story of courage and adventure, should buy a copy of the book *Nicky Barr - An Australian Air Ace* which is an biography of Nicky's career in the RAAF written by Peter Dornan, including his exploits as an escaped POW in Italy. Reading his story is simply fascinating.

On Sunday the 13th August last Peter White, Stan Curran and myself attended the service to commemorate the 61st Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific held at the Shrine of Remembrance, Anzac Square where I laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. The function was hosted by the Victoria Barracks Historical Society. The 3 Services and many ex-Service organisations were well represented.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the function to be held at RAAF Amberley on the 31st August.

Regards

RALPH



Hon. Sec. in normal regalia at the Victory in the Pacific Anniversary. Daughter Bev mad a dash from her Tai Chi class to attend.

Battle of the Bismark Sea 2006 Memorial address

by Chaplain S/Ldr Cameron Smith (ret'd)



It is indeed good to be back with you at this Service which I value being part of so much. Let me start with a question:

What do you call an Irishman who keeps bouncing off the walls? - Ric o'chet! (I will get to the reason why I have asked that question)

I suppose all of you would have heard about the brain-child of Count Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin, and probably some of you would have seen TV documentaries about the Graf Zeppelin's circumnavigation of the globe. I suspect, though, that not many people would be aware that an Australian travelled on the Graf Zeppelin as a passenger - cum technical and navigational advisor, on that amazing, historic journey of circumnavigation.

Even fewer people, I suspect, would have known that that same Australian who was on the Graf Zeppelin, had qualified as a pilot with the Australian Flying Corp at the same time as the founder of the RAAF, Sir Richard Williams, did. However, when the aviator I am speaking about got to England, it was discovered that he was colour blind, so he was restricted to navigating. He was also a very proficient photographer. And if any of you have read Bean's official history of the First World War, you will no doubt have seen the photographs our intrepid pilot took. He became Bean's official photographer and was the first to recognise the importance of aerial reconnaissance photography. Before the war had ended, as a photographer, he had been awarded the Military Medal, not once, but twice; was twice "mentioned in despatches", and was described by General Monash as "the bravest soldier he had known". He is probably the only photographer to have been awarded the Military Medal.

Fewer people still would know that this intrepid pilot, colour blind as he was, was among the first aviators who attempted to fly over the North Pole. He bought an aeroplane from Fokker, which he crashed in a fierce Arctic blizzard. After the year he took to rebuild his aircraft, he made a second polar attempt, only to again crash in a fierce Arctic blizzard. By then the American explorer Byrd had claimed success in a Polar flight and our pilot's Fokker, no longer needed for a cross polar flight, was repaired, crated, and taken to San Francisco where he sold it to another Australian aviator, namely, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. That Fokker aeroplane now sits in a museum hangar at Eagle Farm Airport, in Brisbane, and it bears the name "Southern Cross".

Now you might be wondering where all this is leading. I'm getting there.

In the Raffles Hotel in Singapore in mid 1940, our pilot met with the Japanese Consul. They knew each other, having first met in Tokyo when the Graf Zeppelin had landed there on its circumnavigation journey in 1929. The Japanese Consul, in 1940 remember, told our pilot 'that in mid December 1941, the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbour'. Why was our pilot given this information? Because his friend the Consul told him that if he went back to the US Government with the news, because it was such a preposterous idea, they would laugh him out of the room and think he was crazy.

However, there was an even stranger connection between this Australian pilot and Pearl Harbour. One of the guests aboard the Graf Zeppelin's historic round-the-world trip, in 1929, had been a young Japanese Lieutenant Commander, Ryunosuke Kusaka. History reveals that long before his journey on the Graf Zeppelin in 1929, Lt Cdr Kusaka had written a proposal describing a Japanese aerial attack on Pearl Harbour.

On the morning of 7 December 1941, the Chief of Staff of the Japanese Armada, now Rear Admiral, Ryunosuke Kusaka, stood on the bridge of the Japanese carrier Akagi, shouted BANZAI, and his attack squadrons took off for Hawaii.

The Australian pilot who had these amazing connections was Captain, Sir Hubert Wilkins, one of the most amazing explorers to live; a South Australian, and almost no-one has heard of him. His biography "The Last Explorer", Hubert Wilkins, Australia's unknown Hero, by Simon Nasht, is published by Hodder and in bookshops now. If you read it, you will not be disappointed. Wilkins - as General Monash noted - was one of the bravest and most intrepid personalities our country has produced. A hero in time of war and a hero in time of peace.

Australians should know more about him - military historians should know much more about him.

On another occasion, almost two years ago, at Bill Garing's funeral, some of you will remember the view I expressed then, was that we do not know our heroes; we do not know our history.

We all know about Gallipoli - by annual proud ceremony it is etched into our national memory. But few know about Passchendaele, where a far greater number of ANZACS died, and in a much shorter time frame, that was the case in the Dardanelles.

Closer to home, who could fail to be moved by the accounts of terrible, middle of the night, hand to hand combat at Milne Bay, or the bloody frontal battles up and down the Kokoda trail, or against entrenched

enemy along the northern New Guinea coast at places like Gona and Buna, or at places at sea, or in the air.

These are places where our heroes fought and where many died. Sacred places.

When we know what an awful business war is, of the cost and sacrifice, what sentiment, or power, is it that stirs our people into wanting to be involved?

When the clarion call comes to enlist, knowing that they might be killed soon afterwards, why did our people volunteer? Was it for God? Was it for King and Country? Was it for families? Was it for one another? Some of you know, far better than I, the answer to those questions, for when continental Australia was threatened for the first time, you were part of the contingent who responded: part of the contingent Australia acknowledges as it's heroes. Heroes, I hope, never to be unsung.

It is hard to imagine an Anzac day without tales of Gallipoli being told, or seeing the long lines of veterans marching proudly behind the banners they fought under, the campaigns they fought in acknowledged and publicly re-declared. As a nation we need to know our heroes. We need to know our history. What we recall and remember here today, must be recalled, must be remembered. We recall and remember a land battle, fought at sea, won by air power. Devised by the late Bill Caring, planned, practised, then brilliantly executed, with minimal loss of allied life and massive destruction of enemy troop and assets. There can be no doubt the Battle of the Bismark Sea, in 40 minutes of war, dealt a blow that was the beginning of the end of any threat to Australia, as well as the Pacific area in general.

During Federal Parliamentary proceedings a week or so ago, a Member of the Opposition offered an aside comment of criticism directed at Government Ministers who had "allowed" the desecration of Gallipoli when a road was recently rebuilt at Anzac Cove. "That soil is sacred to Australians", he said.

He is right of course. That ground is sacred. And so is the ground where all of our veterans have died, alone or in numbers. But in the greater scheme of things we need to remember that the same ground is sacred also to those who were our enemies at the time. And that consideration is valid not only for wherever our servicemen and servicewomen have been in action, but is valid where they are engaged today or tomorrow. Friend and foe all belong to God.

War is madness: people can be friends in a Zeppelin today, foes tomorrow; cousins today, killers tomorrow; business partners today, beasts tomorrow; an incomprehensible nightmare for those drawn into it, injecting suffering and sadness wherever and however people are involved in it, directly or indirectly.

And anyone who has been in 'the thick of it' understands Christ's words when He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers" - blessed are those who stop the

madness- "they will be ranked Sons of God." And stands the sense of "beating swords into ploughshares". (With the exception, that occasionally a sword that flies should be kept, restored and made a permanent display, in a national war museum, to remind all future corners that their heroes flew in it and played an important role in operations in New Guinea and further north, and played a decisive role in the Battle of the Bismark Sea.

There is a solemnity to be felt in the company of our heroes - a sense of awe of being with those who have enlisted; who have been there 'in the thick of it'; who have been there done that, and who have survived to tell the tale. That solemnity is encouraged by a banner perhaps, a window in a Chapel wall perhaps; by a flag, but most of all by the company of the heroes themselves, in whose sacred debt we meet here, in freedom, and in peace, to once again hear their story, hear our history, reverberate and ricochet, to together reflect on the accomplishments of our heroes, of the sacred ground where they have fallen and been laid to rest; heroes, now remembered.

S/Ldr CAMERON SMITH (ret'd)

DISPOSABLE CAMERAS SOLVE WAR MYSTERIES

Disposable cameras are proving an invaluable aid in finding missing US and Australian aircraft in the jungles and mountains of New Guinea.

New Guinea tribesmen still regularly report a broken "balus" (aircraft) on return from a hunting trip in some remote area or mountain peak. Now Australian and American authorities have a reliable and cheaper way to assess the discovery. It's a simple \$20 disposable camera and a few minutes tuition on how to use it.

Previously it was an expensive helicopter and days of searching with the result often being a known wartime wreck, a jettisoned aircraft fuel tank or a piece of abandoned mining machinery.

Now it's only a matter of point and press. With the flash equipped cameras and instruction to stand at one or two metres, the island people are returning with proof positive of their discovery. Before departing they are instructed to try and photograph identification numbers or aircraft tails, if possible, and bring back the evidence. The results have been astounding.

The disposable camera idea was first tested by Richard Leahy, of Lae in New Guinea. Leahy is well known as an island pilot who has assisted both the Australian Air Force and American army over the last twenty in identification and recovery of crew remains from wartime aircraft. So successful was his technique that it has been officially adopted by both the Australians and Americans.

However, most credit should be given to the people of New Guinea who so willingly and enthusiastically trudge for days on end back to their discovery on some freezing peak, in a sweltering swamp or distant damp valley.

DIARY OF F/SGT DON KIRKWOOD

RAAF 30 SQUADRON

Continued From June 2006



Friday 1st

Cape Jacquinot to Lindenhafen Plantation. Nil sightings. Mal Mal Mission opened up on us in Jacquinot Bay at extreme range and succeeded in straddling us but no hits registered.

Saturday 2nd

Ted and Drury with Arthur Thompson and Peter White tackled a Betty and destroyed it 40 miles 200T from Gasmata. It was seen to explode in mid

air and a photo taken shows 2 columns of black smoke rising from the water.

It is the first aircraft shot down in actual combat by our squadron. Many have been destroyed on the deck.

Rex Pitman and myself went walkabout to hill villages during the afternoon. Frightful climb and quite exhausting. Some photographs were taken.

Sunday 3rd

Daylight saving time started. Had a scare when it was reported that a convoy was sighted. The whole thing fizzled out.

Monday 4th

On the job with a photographic recce from Lagunen Point to Arawe. Nil sightings. In fact quite a dull trip.

Arthur Thompson and Peter White were shot up badly over Wide Bay after being attacked by two Zekes.

They had just set a barge on fire and the column of smoke apparently attracted their attention. Made 3 passes at them and one made 1 pass at Ted and Bunny. Shots entered the port motor cowl and nacelle, the rear cockpit and tore away the trim wires. He crash landed due to a blown tyre on the port wheel. 240 knots kept them at bay and they broke off the engagement.

Tuesday 5th

Average day. Spent the morning at the pool.

Received 2 letters today had an air raid this evening. We heard the bombs coming and exploding.

An eerie sound with a lot of noise. Nil damage.

Wednesday 6th

Raining most of day very heavily.

Average Routine day

Thursday 7th

During afternoon tested an aircraft dinghy and a K (scat) type down at the pool. Plenty of fun was had by all.

Friday 8th

Rained heavily during the afternoon.

Air raid tonight. One tanker hit by first bomb, bursting into flame immediately. Nil interception by night fighters.

Saturday 9th

Took off at 930am on barge sweep from Cape Deschamp to Cape Hoskins. Found 4 barges laden with petrol and ammunition on SE corner of Lolobau Island. 3 burned and 1 wrecked. Many explosions were seen on 3 barges sending up a thick column of smoke to over 3,000 feet. The smoke was visible for 80 miles 1 hour later. No interception. Two false alarms tonight.

Received a parcel containing a film tonight.

Sunday 10th

Lazy day. Aircraft in for its 80 hourly inspection.

Received 1 letter today.

Monday 11th

Much panic today. First call was for a bash on Palmalmal ack-ack positions with Sldr. Boulton in A19-54. The aircraft as nearly always was u/s as regards electrical equipment. This trip was scrubbed.

At 11.53 I was called to be ready with gear and be prepared for a 2 night stay away from camp.

McCarthy turned up so this was scrubbed too.

At 3pm a Boston taking off had its nose wheel collapse. She skidded along the strip on its nose and port wing ran off the end and finally turned over. It burst into flame and during the fire the bomb load exploded, a 500lb included. The gunner and armourer escaped, pilot killed.

Tuesday 12th

Spent morning at strip operations. Went over to Dobodura during the afternoon to be on standby for the "do". Boys had a very exciting day over Rabaul today. As usual our team was late and a bit of misunderstanding crept in. The B25's were coming home as they were going up and opened fire on them. Over the target area, the fighter cover was gone and 30 Zekes ran amuck amongst them.

DELETED BY CENSOR

Wednesday 13th

Spent a lousy night at Dobodura. They are a panicky mob over there, ringing and bashing tins, bells and yelling "yellow alert" etc etc. Were dragged out of

bed twice. Had to stay here again tonight. May have a job for tomorrow.

Thursday 14th

Waited all morning down at the strip for one crew to turn up. S/Ldr Boulton and F/O McCarthy

DELETED BY CENSOR

Had a brief swim at the north beach of Kiriwina before tea. It is a very beautiful strip of beach and the water is warm, the seabed is of white coral and sand.

After tea we had a trip to the pictures for a change.

Friday 15th

Left Kiriwina at 9.30 am and landed Vivigani 10.40am. Usual daily chores during the afternoon.

The nips received a devil of a bashing over at Dobodura this morning. Their whole force of dive bombers were nearly destroyed.

Saturday 16th

Learned today that the whole of the attacking force of 24 dive bombers (VALS) and 24 escorting zeros (ZEKES) were wiped out over Dobodura yesterday morning.

Good news indeed.

Usual daily chores to keep me occupied.

30 Squadron held their concert tonight and was an excellent turn all round. No letters.

Sunday 17th

Plenty of work today. Fitted a rear gun to the kite being amongst the jobs accomplished. No letters.

Monday 18th

Usual morning work. Panic this afternoon again. Packed up for a 1 night stay away from camp pending a job tomorrow in co-ordination with the Yanks.

Returned home after nearly reaching Dobodura due to a Savannah 3 reports although we could still see over 20 miles. Wouldn't it?

DELETED BY CENSOR

4 letters tonight. 2 from Mary.

Hand out of comforts after tea. A carton of Yank cigarettes featuring amongst them. They were promptly sold to Bunny at a fair price for all.

Tuesday 19th

Average day with nothing exceptional.

No letters again. Squadron shoot this afternoon.

Wednesday 20th

Usual morning.

Spent afternoon down at the squadron boat. She is quite good. Has a 4 cylinder Morris

motor with steering wheel provided. Plenty of fun was

DELETED BY CENSOR

Thursday 21st

Daily chores during the am. Took off at 4.15pm today to indulge in a "seek &" hunt in the Cape Orford

Jacquinet Bay area along south New Britain coast.

Jake is a single engined, twin float, float plane with crew of 2 or 3 and 1 7 mm gun in a dorsal position firing rearwards.

A nice juicy target but weather closed in and forced us to abandon the patrol. No mail again.

Friday 22nd

Morning at pool.

Kittyhawk pranged on strip. Chap got out OK.

Poor old boong chief came down and shook hands. They have been kicked off to Ferguson Island.

No mail again. This is getting bad. Too long a break.

Saturday 23rd

Good day for the squadron again. On a barge sweep 1 ship and 1 barge and 1 rowing boat destroyed. During late evening a Jake was nabbed and destroyed.

He was travelling west along south coast of New Britain when he was picked up at Cape Orford. McRobbie made a full deflection pass and apparently missed. The nip immediately whistled in towards the Tigmi River valley but Drury was there first and he was forced to turn out towards sea thus placing George Drury on his tail.

He was forced to fly straight and level. The sea was below, the hills on his right Hastwell on his left, McRobbie on top and George behind. An 8 second running duel with actual firing put him out for good. The rear gunner copped it first evidenced by his gun flapping aimlessly in the air. He crashed into the hills in flames.

And so 2. possibly 3 nips. have met their sought for death and honourable place in the rising sun.

Sunday 24th

Average day.

Took off as reserve at 16.15 but only had a half hour flip.

No mail again, or should we say still.

Monday 25th

Average day all day.

No mail again.

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Continued from page 9

Tuesday 26th

On I hours standby all day. Nothing eventuated. Usual daily routine.

One letter from Mary, written on the 15th October, pretty poor mail service.

Yvonne appears to have a sore leg. I most sincerely hope it is not serious.

Wednesday 27th

Quite a quiet day again. Ed and Bunny nearly came to grief when they actually hit a launch they were strafing.

No mail again, blast it.

Thursday 28th

Swim during the morning. On 1 hours standby all day. again.

Mail tonight. 3 letters from Mary and I from Bub.

Learned tonight that one of my fellow observer course men has been killed. A finer chap couldn't have been found and his loss is felt by many.

F/O Ron Hacking killed when their aircraft spun in at Darwin. Don Taylor was his pilot. Bad luck.

Friday 29th

Very slack day again.

DELETED BY CENSOR

Saturday 30th

Briefed at 1.45am to act as spare crew for a job today. Took off and flew for 20 minutes then returned.

Learnt at 2pm that a week's squadron leave is being granted to crews who have had 3 months up here, in future. Starting off with 7 course crews for some unknown reason and strange but true, or is it strange? Catt leads the list with Fisher.

To be continued

This Diary has been provided by the courtesy of Ms Yvonne Holt (Don's only daughter)

The Wheels of Life



WING COMMANDER BRIAN (Blackjack) Walker DSO

A Great Commanding Officer *Continued from June issue*

Never shall I forget that first take-off in that Lightning. I think things were expected of me in those days, something unusual, and I thought I'd better not disappoint them. Jack Chapman, who later became a senior executive with TAA and was flying transports, was, unbeknown to me, watching.

So I lined this Lightning up. Its engines turned in different directions, so they didn't suffer from the same trouble as the old Beau. There was no swing on take-off, they went straight down the line. I just opened them up, held it on the brakes until I had almost full power and then let her go. She was pretty light. They'd even taken the armour plate out. By the time I got to the end of that runway she was doing over two hundred miles an hour and accelerating. I can still remember. And I just pulled the nose up and rolled it. I later heard that Jack Chapman said, "That overconfident bastard will kill himself one day." Years later still, I remember confronting Jack, or John, Chapman as he preferred to be known, and saying, "Hey, in spite of your prognostications I'm still here."



We found the Americans pretty good fellows to work with and in fact on occasions they would say, "Look, we're not going in to attack that target, it's pretty hot, unless the Beaufighter boys come with us." We found that even if the defense was fairly strong, the operations were such that, occasionally, I think our role was as much to help boost morale with the American forces as being really effective in attacking ground targets as well. Which was all pretty good in some ways.

In the meantime, apart from taking my turn in leading the squadron in operations, I found it was necessary to keep my hand on maintenance and all sorts of things and I used to do a fair bit of the testing of aeroplanes that had been damaged. Of course we did not escape entirely unscathed, because while we were on this strip, although our quarters were a mile or so off, it was attacked, generally at night, on several occasions. We once had three or four aeroplanes pretty badly damaged, in fact I think one of them was written off.

The people who were directing us then came up with another caper. Seeing that we were not very effective as an air-to-air fighter because we were

really too heavy, we would try and destroy aeroplanes on the ground. Lae became a target and I can assure you it was a target I didn't like very much because, boy- was it heavily defended. We used to attack it from various angles. I used to always work it out with my Flight- Commanders. Ross Little was one, and "Torchy" Uren was another, and I used to get their opinions and we'd work on a consensus, roughly, and that was mainly acceptable to all of us.

The Beaufighter had bestowed on it the name of "Whispering Death" because of its heavy armament and the fact that these Bristol Jupiter sleeve-valve engines were fairly quiet. Most of them were fitted with pine-cone exhausts, as night-fighters, which didn't give much back pressure, as they had a lot of little holes instead of one big hole. A 1600 horse-power engine could make a lot of noise but these sleeve-valves seemed to be hushed and the aeroplane would be gone often before the enemy knew we were even there.

We would come down using the cover of hills, pick out our target from about a hundred feet, attack at around fifty feet and, having studied the terrain, pull up just before the Jap strip, because we'd be going like the clappers, then strafe, firing the lot, all four cannons and six machine guns, and go.

The only way was to hit them with the maximum amount of fire-power in the least amount of time and it was stupid to go back, and attack a second time, because by then you would have woken up all the ack-ack posts around the place. We used to spread ourselves out, probably going through in two waves of six aeroplanes in each wave, so that everybody could have a fair go, and hit them with our one hundred and twenty guns.

I almost came to grief attacking Lae. It was towards the end of November '42. On this occasion I'd sent in two flights ahead of me because I wanted to see if there were any duck-shovers and make sure that everybody went through the place; one or two people might have been wavering. Anyhow, that was the worst thing that I could have done because by the time I got there, right behind them, ack-ack that might have been aiming at the aeroplane in front of me, got me. There was a loud clump at the tail and a nasty smell.

"We've been hit", yelled my Wireless-Air Observer.

"We're on fire."

"Go back and pee on it", I said.

"It's gone out."

"Thank Christ." Pardon my bad language but those were the words and I can still remember actually using under stress. "Anyway, we're still flying. I think we'll be able to get it back to base."

You couldn't see much damage, but a bloody great Bofors shell had hit us just under the tail-plane and had

done a fair bit of damage there but apparently the basic structure of the aeroplane was still all right, because she still answered the controls and the engines were still going, so we got it back to base and it was' then that I realised we had troubles. Because they'd got the hydraulic lines. Fortunately they'd missed the elevator controls, but I had no undercarriage and no flaps.

There was a taxiing strip at Moresby and an aeroplane flown by Col Campbell had already pranged in the middle of it, obviously with similar trouble to mine, so I had to manoeuvre past Colin's with one wheel down and the other up and of course the one that was hanging just collapsed as soon as we touched the deck and that was the end of dear old Four which was a favourite aeroplane of mine.

The back of it looked like a colander. In fact, I took a photograph of it. The engines were probably all right but they had to be taken out and dial-checked; they would have suffered considerable strain, because you can't feather the airscrews and you wouldn't want to feather them anyhow for a belly landing. She just slid in on her belly and the airscrews folded up underneath the engine as they stopped and acted more or less as skids. This is why the engines would probably have had to be stripped to check the reduction gear and the crankshaft and make sure there was no damage done there. There was no fire.

A lot depended on the weather in New Guinea, but you would probably waste a little bit of time trying to get to the place unobserved, using everything that you could, using light and terrain, anything. We used to come down the river sometimes and go out to sea and then come back and disappear into the mountains again. A return trip could take three hours, with the weather deteriorating on the way back. It could deteriorate up there so quickly. It can be really atrocious. Every cloud has to be treated as if it is lined with rock. The highest mountain in New Guinea is about sixteen thousand feet, so you'd have to be over that to make sure you wouldn't hit anything.

To be continued

SPECIAL NOTICE

In accordance with the agreement reached at the 2006 Annual General Meeting between our members and the President of the Logan RAAFA, regarding amalgamation of our two organizations, I advise members that we will now have a meeting with the Logan RAAFA to initiate this merger.

Members will be advised of progress as made. The aim is, in spite of the reduction in membership due to age and health, it will be possible to keep a viable association for our members for a longer time.

Peter White.

A Night Bombing Mission by 22 Squadron Bostons

One point of my 'active service', as recorded in the Official History, by George Odgers, annoys me a little particularly as we have family connections going back for years. He has recorded that "I could not find the target" Taken literally it means just that but after about 200 miles of Pilot- Navigation at night over the Owen Stanley Range, and getting within perhaps 500 feet of the target I reckon I had found it or did the CO. find it for me, as preached? I certainly found my own way home It was an unusual operation of 22 City of Sydney Boston Squadron On 24th May, 1943.

The Japanese controlled the sea lanes as well as the Island of New Britain, plus the north coast of New Guinea about west of Amanda but the Air Forces had gained 'control' in the area, and had made serious inroads into the water-borne supply lines into Lae. So much so that the enemy had resorted to strapping cargo to the hulls of submarines on occasions!

Coastwatchers reported such a submarine, and it was guessed it would arrive, unload and depart Lae in darkness. The Japanese had been reported as using a Cargo Shipwreck at Malahang, near Lae as a land backed wharf and temporary warehouse on such occasions.

Our over-zealous and perhaps a little 'gung ho' CO gained approval to disturb the unloading operation by dive-bombing and strafing at night. None of us had done this before - and at briefing there was sustained objection to strafing at night. Firing eight Browning machine guns, all within a couple of metres in front of your eyes while pointing at the ground at perhaps 300 miles an hour was hazardous. Eventually one brave fellow said "It's all right for you, Sir you are not taking part" The C.O. immediately elected to replace Charles Learmonth my Flight Commander. I was listed as Charle's No2. (I believe Charles took over from some one else.

It was eventually agreed to dive-bomb only but throughout the tedious briefing the CO. made numerous

asides. "Don't you worry, Harry, you just follow me tuck in tight, you'll be O.K.":to the point of annoyance.

The CO. went in first, overshot to blazes. I was copying his attack angle too closely, and would have overshot the target as well so I elected to go in again last. A particular friend of his broke strict radio silence to comment "You couldn't hit a bull's Arse with a banjo" it was an unusual relationship. Post War they shared the Cessna Agency for Southern Africa.

By the time my second turn came the enemy was wide awake. The first I was aware of any search light was when we were caught in one on our dive in, and almost immediately copped a hail of anti-aircraft bullets. One gunner was killed instantly, the other seriously injured, and I was advised a shell had gone between the elevator cables, and had frayed both. The exploding of the bombs we dropped was not observed.

It was a long trip home, as we were close to our extreme range, and so we could not return 'flat out 'On our return I do not believe I was de-briefed. I was busy assisting my injured crew man to hospital later I was called upon to persuade him to have his leg amputated. No one else could do it - and nor could I. Then I was asked to advise this seriously injured friend/fellow that his father had died the day before, and the press were annoying me too.

It was a very long day but Greer Garson in "Mrs Miniver' kept me awake long enough, that when my head eventually hit the pillow (after being awake for perhaps 20 plus hours) I slept soundly enough to face the world again next day. I shared a tent with the squadron doctor so there was no need for a check-up. Most medical treatment I received in Port Moresby was from 'house calls' except Malaria. As a result my medical records are not complete.

F/LT H M ROWELL



A WELL EARNED REST

Pictured are our members, Stan Curran, Peter White and President Ralph Ind taking a rest on our very own seat at Anzac Square following the Victory in the Pacific Ceremony.

The seat was donated by the Beaufighter/Boston Association Qld. in memory of all those who made the supreme sacrifice during the 1939-1945 war.