

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

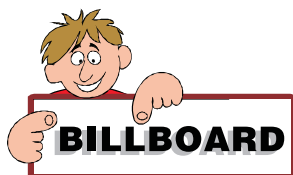
SEPTEMBER 2002

BEAUFIGHTER COURSE No. 10 AT 5 OTU WAGGA



**If you can provide the name of any of these course members,
please advise Hon. Secretary.**





Vale

S/Ldr Vic. Pearson DFC CSM

Died on 23rd June and was cremated at a private service. He had been in poor health for a considerable time and it was over twelve months since he last was able to attend any functions.

Vic stayed on in the RAAF after cessation of hostilities. He served with No 455 RAAF Beaufighter Squadron and spent his last years of service before retirement at RAAF Amberley, with The Strike Reconnaissance group, where he was awarded the CSM for his meritorious service.

May they now rest in peace.

Air Commodore Dereck Kingwell CBE DSO RAAF (rtd)

Dereck died on 31st May 2002 after a lengthy illness. He served in the RAAF for 35 years, graduating as a pilot from RAAF Point Cook as the winner of the Sword of Honour, for topping his course. He went on to command 23 and 32 Squadrons and 82 Wing with great distinction. His civilian service included terms as secretary to Queensland Governors.

A thanksgiving service with Military Honours was held at St Johns Cathedral in Brisbane, conducted by our Chaplain Cameron Smith. Our newly elected Patron the Hon. Sir James Killen KCMG presented an eloquent eulogy, as a close friend of the families.



219 SQUADRON BARBECUE

219 Squadron Queensland Air Training Corps invited our members to a barbecue to thank us for our support during the year. Members of Logan RAAFA were also invited

The barbecue was held at 219 Queensland Air Training Corp's location at Archerfield Aerodrome. It was a great afternoon at a most appropriate location (light aircraft taking off and landing continuously). In addition the food was very good. Seven of our members were able to attend. Our interest in this Cadet Squadron is very much appreciated, and it is intended to continue this way. At the end of the year President Ralph will be presenting our Annual Award to the Cadet of the year, which has now been updated, to the Association providing a week's flying camp at RAAF Amberley.

A raffle was conducted, and first prize was won by Hon Sec. Jack Chamberlain won second prize. A very good result I reckon. We are in receipt of invitations to attend their Annual Dining Night, and their Passing Out Parade.

Stan Curran presented them with an RAAF plaque he had made, and we also presented them with some prints of Brian Woods painting of a 22 Squadron Beaufighter, which was signed by our 22 Squadron members last year.

COMMITTEE

Patron	
Hon. Sir James Killen	
President	
Ralph Ind	5564 0181
V. President	
William O'Connor	3286 1067
Secretary	
Peter White	3287 5488
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Committee	
Stan Curran	3388 6053
E-mail:	currans@powerup.com.au
Jack Chamberlain	3848 2184
Les Turnbull	5537 7965



SICK PARADE

S'Ldr Norm Tritton MID, ex 31 Squadron has had a spell in the Mater Private Hospital in Brisbane, undergoing some major by-pass surgery. When I saw him in hospital he was well on his way to a good recovery. His 31 Squadron CO (Bill Mann) had paid him a visit to speed him on his way to recovery.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Not a great deal has happened since the previous *Whisperer* other than we have moved to Unit 49 Atlantis West 2 Admiralty Dr. Paradise Waters 4217 phone 55-640181. There are first class rain proof facilities here which are available for functions so Peter & I will be seeing the building manager in the near future to book the date for our next AGM & BBQ in January. You will be advised in due course when the date has been confirmed.

The two Atlantis buildings are landmarks on the main road just south of the Nerang Bridge between Southport & Surfers Paradise & are easy to find. A mud map will be provided in the next edition of the *Whisperer* so I don't wait to hear any excuses at the AGM about your lack of navigational skills & getting lost etc.

Unfortunately Peter will be entering hospital again shortly & I know I speak for all of us when I wish him well & a speedy recovery.

Quite recently a few members & our wives were guests of 219 Squadron AIRTC for a BBQ at Archfield & there will be other Cadet functions including a Dining In Night & the Passing Out Parade in the coming months of which you will be kept informed.

Regards

RALPH

"Old Geezers"

(slang for old men) are easy to spot:

At sporting events, during the playing of the National Anthem, Old Geezers hold their caps over their hearts and sing without embarrassment. They know the words and believe in them. Old Geezers remember World War I, the Depression, World War II. They remember the Atomic Age, the Korean War, The Cold War, the Jet Age and the Moon Landing, not to mention Vietnam.

If you bump into an Old Geezer on the footpath, he will apologize. If you pass an Old Geezer on the street, he will nod or tip his cap to a lady. Old Geezers trust strangers and are courtly to women. Old Geezers hold the door for the next person and always, when walking, make certain the lady is on the inside for protection.

Old Geezers get embarrassed if someone curses in front of women and children and they don't like filth on TV or in movies. Old Geezers have moral courage. They seldom brag unless it's about their grandchildren.

It's the Old Geezers who know our great country is protected, not by politicians or police, but by the young men and women in the military serving their country.

This country needs Old Geezers with their decent values. We need them now more than ever. Thank God for Old Geezers!

Evans Head Tragedy

We all know the old saying "it is better to be born lucky than rich" except for my family & friends I certainly am not rich however I may well have been born lucky as a glance at my log book would certainly indictate I have been involved in a number of very near misses & I know many of you are here also just by the grace of God One corollary of the above old saying is that some chaps are born unlucky. I know you will get my drift from the circumstances outlined in the story of F/Lt Young DFC and others who were very unlucky. One beautiful morning almost 60 years ago at Evans Head when I first met him Young had had completed a tour of Ops. in Boston's with 22 Sqdn. & at that time he was an instructor at No.5 OTU. In fact he took me on my first orientation flight on Beaus at Williamtown.

On that fateful morning 7 Beaus took off for a simulated low level attack on Evans Head airfield. The flight, which was being led by Young was in two sections. 1 was flying No 2 while F/O (nameless) was flying No 3 with 4 Beaus following we were flying in rather tight formation on the deck ostensibly to avoid radar.

On leaving we headed in a northeasterly direction & turned port on dead reckoning when due east of Evans Head & made the target spot on. After a mock beat up of the airfield the Beaus began to form up over the Evans Head beach area adjacent to the airfield. At about 600/700 feet I was just about to tuck in behind the leader's starboard wing when out of the corner of my eye I noticed No 3 who appeared to be tacking onto No 1 a little too quickly. As we were then pretty close I glanced across & saw No 3 looking down in his cockpit & not where his plane was heading which, unfortunately, was straight at Young's port wing.

I was just about to ring up No 3 & tell him to watch out but I was too late & to my horror his starboard prop. started to carve chunks out of No 1's port wing & in so doing was literally forcing No 1's Beau over on top of mine. If only my reflexes were as quick today as they were then. I was able to do a steep sliding turn downwards & was lucky to get away from the screaming heap of entanglement of No 1 & No 3. The blokes behind said later that I only just made it by the skin of my teeth Both pranged Beaus finished up on their backs at the waters edge with both crews being killed.

The rest of us were supposed to return to Williamtown as originally briefed however we landed at Evans Head in the forlorn hope that we could be of some assistance, which of course we couldn't. Breakfast was a somber dismal affair before we headed back to Base for debriefing.

RALPH IND

RAYMUND SMITH BIOGRAPHY

(Continued from Whisperer June 2002)

On completion of that tour of duty Ray was posted as a Pilot to No.4 Communications Unit with flying duties for RAAF Command. The Unit comprised one Beaufighter and two Beauforts which were called upon to ferry Staff Officers as required. He was demobilised in 1946.

The earlier unfortunate experiences with the court martial and its irregularities had given Ray much to think about during his Wartime service. It was therefore not surprising that he had determined to study Law and possibly endeavour to remedy some of its injustices. On demobilisation in 1946, and with only a Junior Public Examination Certificate he set about gaining the necessary secondary education to gain admission to the Law Faculty. He studied under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme for and passed his Senior Public Examination, matriculated and was admitted to the Faculty of Law at the Queensland University. In 1952 he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Laws, LLB., and commenced practice as a Barrister in Brisbane.

As an Associate Member of the Institute of Arbitrators, Australia, Ray has completed that Institute's courses in Arbitration and Mediation, and is accredited in that discipline, currently being called upon to mediate building disputes at the Queensland Building Tribunal. He appreciates that mediation has much to commend it in taking pressure off the courts and in reducing the time and cost of litigation.

In 1950 Ray married Cecile Judith Margaret Clowes, daughter of Dr Ainslie Clowes, an ENT specialist on Wickham Terrace, and Mrs Eleanor Clowes. She is the grand daughter of Dr J.S.Clowes, the first doctor in the Albion, Lutwyche and Woolloowin area. Judith and Ray have four children; Barbara, who is a Solicitor and tutors at the Labrador campus of Griffith University; twins Michael, a Solicitor and Notary Public and Frank, an Architect, both of them in Nerang; and Peter, a Solicitor in Caboolture.

"I maintained my connection with the peacetime Air Force and joined the General Reserve when that was formed in the late forties. As a reservist who attended camps at Amberley and flew in Lincoln bombers, I undertook to be trained as a flying instructor for the National Service trainees who'd been inducted into the RAAF. However, upon graduating in Law my future involvement in the Service was as a legal officer, one of only two Reserve Legal Officers, the other being a Melbourne Barrister, Opas Q.C. who was RAAF Judge Advocate General."

After acting as Defending Officer at a number of Courts Martial Ray was appointed to act as Judge Advocate and to be in charge of a panel of some 10

barristers and solicitors who'd joined the RAAF Legal Reserve. In 1964 the Commonwealth gazetted him as Deputy Judge Advocate General, a position held until his retirement in 1976. Ray's rank as Group Captain was confirmed in 1964. With a wry grin he says he is the only officer of that rank who has served a term in Holdsworthy! In 1967 Ray served three months as Staff Officer at the headquarters of the Australian Forces in Saigon. For a number of years he was State President of the Air Force Association; he has been President of the Beaufort Squadron's Association; he is Patron of the Beaufighter and Boston Association of Queensland.

Following his admission to the Bar as a Barrister in 1952 Ray enjoyed a general practice in all jurisdictions including the High Court and Privy Council. He especially enjoyed Land Court work with compensation and valuation disputes. Ray feels it was his good fortune as a young barrister to sit in his early years in the chambers of Mr G.A.G. Lucas, later to be Q.C. and Supreme Court Senior Puisne Judge. Ray was Secretary of the Bar Association for a number of years. In the criminal field he was able to make history by being the first prosecutor to conduct a trial using DNA fingerprinting to establish the defendant's guilt.

"After the War I took an interest in things political, joined the Liberal Party, and in 1957 was endorsed for and won the Seat of Windsor in the Queensland

Legislative Assembly. Having held the seat for four terms I had again been endorsed for a fifth in 1969 when I was offered a position on the Law Reform Commission by the Queensland Government. Having been instrumental in having the Commission established I was pleased to retire from Parliament in 1969 to be a foundation member and to sit on the Commission for eight years. From my early days in Parliament I had mounted a campaign for the establishment of the Commission; for the introduction of the Nominal Defendant, to enable victims of hit and run motorists and uninsured vehicles to sue for compensation; and especially for Legal Aid for impecunious litigants."

Upon his entry to State Parliament Ray was appointed by the Government as a member of The Committee to investigate Youth Problems which conducted public sittings weekly from May to August, 1958. Amongst the 106 witnesses at the hearings at Brisbane, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville were representatives from fifty organisations. Later he chaired an all party committee which carried out an Australia wide investigation into Motor Vehicle Insurance. Ray was one of the few people to have an Act of Parliament passed bearing his name; to allow him as a Member of the Queensland Legislative As-

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sembly to take up the appointment as Deputy Advocate General to the RAAF, the Ray Smith Enabling Act was passed by the Parliament.

As a practising Barrister serving in Parliament Ray was considered by his contemporaries to have a rare combination of legal ability and political nous. That he was well respected on both sides of the House is evident from T.M.O'Dyer's "Lawyers in Queensland Politics 1950-1961", and from press reports of the day. Probably of all Ray's worthwhile initiatives, his advocacy for and service on the Law Reform Commission from its foundation for eight years was to have the most beneficial effect on the lives of his fellow Queenslanders.

For the later years of his term in State Parliament Ray was Chairman of the Attorney General's Justice Department Committee, and after the Legal Aid Act was enacted, he was Chairman of the Legal Aid Committee. He had pioneered moves in the Queensland Parliament to have the Legal Aid Commission established. When the Bill for the introduction of the Nominal Defendant was introduced by the Treasurer, Tom Hiley the irrepressible Tom Aikins referred to it as "Smithy's Bill".

"As a member of the Government it had become clear to me that the population and industry of the City of Brisbane and South East Queensland needed a traffic crossing of the Brisbane River down stream from the City. For years there had been a push for a tunnel crossing which I did not support. In 1964 I devoted time and energy to making a detailed study of the riverside at Hamilton and Colmslie, and flight paths of aircraft leaving Eagle Farm airport. As a result of discussions with the Co-ordinator General, Sir James Holt, I prepared a proposal together with a map showing my preferred location for a bridge.

The Courier Mail published that proposal on 5th October that year. Although the Government ignored the suggestion at that time, when the Gateway Bridge was built 12 years later it was on the precise location I had proposed!"

During Ray's third term as a Law Reform Commissioner he was again drawn to politics, and in 1976 he resigned from the Commission to contest the Chermside Ward in the Brisbane City Council elections against the then Lord Mayor, Brian Walsh, whom he defeated. This began two terms of a total of six years in opposition to a Labour administration. There was little scope for achievement in those circumstances, though in his last term he was Deputy Leader of the Liberal team. Through characteristic infighting in the Liberals he lost his endorsement for the 1982 elections which saw a Liberal council elected for the first time in years. With the support of a number of his former constituents he joined the National Party and contested

the City Council elections as a National. It proved an abortive attempt by the Nationals to enter the Local Government arena and was not well received by Brisbaneites. Six candidates in a council of 28 would not have been an effective force even if all had won seats.

"As a Parliamentarian and an Alderman I was involved in a number of community activities within my electorate and ward. Being a Charter Member of the Albion Rotary Club when it was founded in the fifties I was able to resume my active membership on completion of my Council Term. At that time Aspley Rotary Club was endeavouring to sponsor a Cardio vascular Research Unit at Prince Charles Hospital with the assistance of Dr McGiffin of the Hospital and Professor Roger Willis of Griffith University. I became involved and, as Chairman of the Brisbane Rotary District's Committee for Cardiovascular Research, achieved pleasing results when the Research Unit was established at Griffith University in 1992."

The numerous involvements listed speak volumes for Ray's Rotary Motto "Service before Self", and his interest in the well being of his fellow Queenslanders in all walks of life, for they go far beyond the community organisations which normally claim a parliamentarian's support.

He has been President of the following: Royal United Services Institutes of Queensland and Australia, United Service Club, Kedron Wavell Services Club, Prince Charles Hospital Auxiliary and Trustees, Lifeline's Consumer Credit Counselling Service, Australia American Association, Building Science Forum, Queensland Branch, Early Birds Association, whose members were involved with flying pre 1939, and a Committeeman of the following:

Lifeline Consumer Credit Counselling Service,
Davis Cup Organising Committees in
1958 and 1962,
Defence Reserves Association,
Institute of Directors,
Royal Queensland Aero Club [Flying]

"For over fifty years I was able to maintain my active flying and logged over 1800 hours, flying being a special love for me. Advancing years and the increasing costs of private flying have been an obstacle I have not been able to surmount. Two outside activities keep me occupied: the professional mediating; and organising gatherings for my colleagues in the Former Parliamentarians Association of which I am Secretary. The way of the reformer is hard, but I have many friends from those days in Parliament. I get enjoyment from working wood in my workshop and looking after a garden which defeats me!"

FRANK REMEMBERS 93 SQUADRON DAYS

I was posted to 93 Squadron on 22nd January 1945. They formed up at Kingaroy. Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver appointed me as his mechanic. 93 Squadron, and No 1 Mosquito Squadron were the two Squadrons that formed 86 Attack Wing.

About the middle of April 1945, three Beaufighters and crews were sent to Oakey to escort 21 Spitfires to Morotai. I was the mechanic sent with these planes. I wasn't too pleased with this as Jean and I were married on 16th January, and I had just got a flat at Kingaroy. They must have thought that was long enough.

We had a very eventful trip north. From Kingaroy to Rockhampton we had a WAAF on our plane and she was air -sick all the way. I used up all of F/O Ken Shirley's maps. At Mackay a Spitfire was up testing it's motors and on coming in to land, it nearly landed on a DC3 that was also landing. On the trip from Merauke to Aitappe two Spitfires got into a spin over the ranges, one pulled out but the other didn't make it.

From Aitappe to Biak and then Middleberg Island. On taking off from here, the plane that I was in blew a tyre on the metal strip. F/O Ken Shirley and the navigator, "Smoky" Douglas just removed anything that might cause injury. It was a one and a half hour trip to Morotai and we knew we had to belly land. When we were approaching the strip the chap on duty advised Ken to land with his wheels down. "Wirra" Williams in one of the other planes heard this and told Ken to belly land. I was standing behind Ken, and when we hit the ground I was thrown against the cartridge box with my right side. The plane was a write-off. In the year 2000 I had to have a chest x-ray and I found out I had four fractured ribs and a fractured spine.

I was with 457 Squadron on Morotai until 4th June. In that time I flew with "Wirra" Williams a few times to Biak, when the balance of 93 Squadron arrived at Morotai on the 4th June. We boarded the "Simon Benberger" a 10,000 ton Liberty ship for the invasion of Labuan Island in Borneo. There were 44 ships in the convoy, including battleships, corvettes and a mine layer.

The first three days sailing we had severe storms, and everything was wet. The latrines, and the kitchen were on the top deck, and we ate our meals there. I think everyone had dysentery. I had it very bad.

On Sunday morning 10th June we arrived at Labuan Island, then half the convoy went on to Brunei. The boats bombarded the shores of Victoria Town, for a few hours. Liberators were also bombing and Beaufighters were strafing. One Beau I saw did a terrific climb, and when I was in Amberley in 1998, I mentioned this to a pilot there and he smiled and said it was him. I asked him what happened, and he said, a Liberator was

bombing the target below him and he got the hell out of it. Yes it was Charlie King.

The Army went in at 1030 hours, and to see them going in on the landing barges, it was something to see, though it was war.. They pushed the Japs back a long way in no time. One Jap plane was shot down and it landed between the "Simon Bernberger" and the shore, and the Captain ordered us all down below, and they then closed the hatch on us. It wasn't a good feeling when you realize some of the Jap pilots were flying their planes into the ships.

I went ashore the next day, and as the air strip was all swimming holes, we were appointed to do different jobs. W/O Beattie asked if any one would particularly like to do any particular job. I put my hand up, and he said "Frank what do you want to do"?

And I said "Dig Latrines", He said "You're bloody mad, no one volunteers for that" I said "If you are like me you would. I finished up in charge of the gang, as I knew how to timber up, and on Labuan you had to do that, as the ground was soggy, so you see I wasn't mad after all.

Later on we were put on 12 hour shifts, unloading the boats in the harbour. Six Hours on the boat and six hours on the forehore, unloading the ducks as they came ashore. I had finished my shift on the boat at 0200 hours on 20th June 1945 and I came ashore and was enjoying a cup of tea at the Salvation Army tent, when all hell broke loose. About 100 suicidal Japs came through the Swamp from The Pocket, and hit the beach at Victoria Town. I was in the middle of it, with no rifle or side arm a piece of shrapnel entered above my left knee (It's still there) I then got down low, as rifle fire and machine guns and grenades were exploding everywhere. Some of the Japs had grenades and small bombs strapped to their bodies and a lot blew themselves up.

As luck would have it a bullet hit the carby of a truck and it burst into flames. For a few seconds a Jap was standing not far from me. He made a lunge at me with his sword and missed. I made for cover and in doing so fell into a trench, it was so dark I couldn't see where I was going. I stayed there until it was all over at 0700 hours. When I climbed out of the trench an Army Sergeant drove up in a jeep with a private asked me to give his man a hand to throw the dead Japs onto the back of the Jeep. We did this for a few hours. What a job!! Some had blown themselves up. I had injured both knees and back when I fell into the trench. Trouble is I never reported anything.

Life in Labuan settled down after this, but the engineers didn't have the strip ready to land on until the middle of July. The planes then started to come in and

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we were kept busy as the Squadron was busy bombing Kuchen and other places. We lost one plane over Kuchen, Vern Simms was the Pilot and Reg Farrant the navigator. They were dodging the Japs for fourteen days and they finally arrived at an Army Post just South of Brunei. They were told the War had been over for three days. They wouldn't believe it.

After the War The Japs flew up from Kuchen in one of their light planes. Tachikawa, code name Hickory, with surrender markings on it. They still had their swords, and some of the boys tried to grab them. The head officer took his life that night, and another cut his throat, but the Sisters at the hospital saved him and at

the War Crimes Trial on Labuan, later, he was found guilty and executed. Such is life.

About the end of October Squadron Leader Gulliver decided to fly to Saigon and I went with him. We stayed for a week at the hotel on the river, it was in control of the British Army, and there were machine gun pits on every corner of the block. Saigon was divided into different sections, The British and the French. Egyptians and the natives were mainly down by the wharves. I made friends with a French family, and I had the evening meal with them. Yes: buffalo meat.

FRANK BEADLE

(To be continued)

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE COLD WAR

by John Castle

My first real understanding of the Cold War and the nuclear deterrent that made it seem so dangerous to my generation, came about when I joined the ATC unit belonging to my school in Surrey, England, in the early 1950's. We were given lectures on the effectiveness of the atomic bomb, its area of total destruction, the limits of its heat and blast waves, and finally what could be expected from its deadly radiation fallout. This made us quite fatalistic about what might or might not happen, and because we were geographically on the outskirts of London, we surmised that we would be in the midst of the area of total destruction and so needn't worry any further about it, and so we didn't.

I was given a very similar lecture when I joined the RAF for my stint of National Service in 1956. The only added information being about what we had to do for our personal defence. With the aid of diagrams we were informed that we had to dig a trench one metre deep, and at the bottom dig one metre sideways. We were then told to huddle in this hole for as long as it took! We presumed that this meant how long it took us to leave this world! One bright spark asked how much warning we would have in order to dig our personal foxholes. The answer was that if we were stationed in the UK, twenty minutes, and if in Germany much less. This naturally did nothing to alter our fatalistic attitude to the nuclear deterrent and so we continued as before.

Of course when I finished my training as a Ground Wireless Fitter in 1957, I was posted to a Maintenance Unit near Cologne, Germany. Here the Cold War came a little closer. We were all issued with .303 rifles and told we would have to be prepared to go to war at 24 hours notice. What good these rifles would have done us in 1957-I leave to the reader's imagination. The only other sign I saw on the camp, that indicated that we should be ready to move at a moment's notice, was that the rows of trucks in the MT section had an Airman allocated to them, whose sole purpose was to start and run the engines of each truck for a brief time every

day. The camp, like all the RAF stations I visited in Germany, was also to all intents and purposes, shut down from Saturday mid-day until Monday mornings. If only the Russians had known!

I must add here that when the politicians heated their debate, it was all hands to the wheel and we worked non-stop to keep things in working order. However this did not often happen, and with the warning time being less than twenty minutes, one can only have wondered if it would have been much use. Our Intelligence Network was also working constantly, and would have lengthened the warning time, one hoped, by noting any increases in radio traffic or troop movements. I twice worked in one of the underground RAF listening posts, where RAF linguists who spoke Russian and German, were scanning and recording all military radio traffic on the other side of the iron curtain.

I returned to Germany again in 1960 in order to work and learn the language. I lived for nearly a year in a hostel for young men. Apart from myself and two Spanish boys all the residents were young men who had escaped from East Germany. This was a year before the reinforcing of the wall in Berlin and of the border was to be carried out. Escaping through the border was still a very hazardous affair as many of the boys attested. Once over the border there was to be no chance of seeing family and friends for many years. Although a few of the boys had escaped for a better life, most of them had left after being warned by family or friends that they had upset the authorities. The two I shared my two-room accommodation with, had both been warned they would be arrested after imbibing too much, (as young men will) and very vocally criticizing their government. Their stories and their sadness at being apart from their loved ones brought home to me the personal tragedies that the cold war was bringing down on people. This was something we were not too aware of in Britain, where it was still hard to find any

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sympathy for what was happening in Germany.

During this year I was also driving a private ambulance all over Germany and became aware of the constant movement of military traffic on the autobahns and in the air. Although the American convoys were most often to be seen, I also saw British, French, Belgian, and Canadian troops.

In 1964 I returned to Germany, where I was to work before coming to Australia in 1969. During this stay the German media started informing the public of just how much weaponry was stationed on their soil. In Britain we could see the rockets gleaming white in the fields bordering the main road north, all leaning to the east, but I was staggered to learn that there were at least 6,000 nuclear warheads based in West Germany. They were roughly divided into three categories. A third could be delivered by rocket, a third by aircraft and a third by artillery shell. I pitied the soldiers who would have had to fire off the last of these!

In 1985/86 I returned to Germany to teach in a High School hard up against the East German Border. This was to really bring home to me what the Iron Curtain meant to people who lived with it on a daily basis. I travelled 13 kilometres along the fence to work every morning. Occasionally East German helicopters would sweep along it at almost zero feet. The border itself consisted of two wire fences divided by a sandy strip, which covered the land mines. Where an East German village was hard up against the fence, a third fence was erected and fierce guard dogs on running lines patrolled between it and the one guarding the minefield. The guard towers were placed on the East German side of the fences and each tower had the towers on each side of it within view. This system stretched for well over a thousand kilometres. The towers were manned 24 hours a day by border guards, most of whom were National Servicemen. The boredom could only be imagined. They were however always alert, as my wife and I discovered when we approached the border and noticed we were photographed using a telephoto lens. Our friends accompanying us said that the East Germans would know full details of who we were within 24 hours.

Any East German farmers we noticed working land adjacent to the border were always observed by a military patrol vehicle parked nearby. Only East Germans with special permits were allowed to enter or reside in an area 15 kilometres deep within their own country. The border itself was actually between 20 to 30 metres inside West Germany, and occasionally East German patrols would open a gap in the fence and patrol on the West German side. At times of tension these patrols would hide and arrest anyone within their territory, usually releasing them 24 or 48 hours later.

A reminder of how dangerous this area could be

was a large wooden cross in memory of a young man who had been shot and killed while attempting to cross this formidable barrier. Indeed a friend and neighbour still had a bullet in his ankle from his successful attempt some years before.

In 1990 we visited the area again and the scrap dealers had made sure there was nothing left of the fence or towers. A fitting end.



THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

**The eagles have landed and folded their wings,
And around the world many another bird sings,
Sings a song of joy that its home is now free
From the threat of destruction by a cruel enemy.**

**The eagles dropped down from the skies high above,
Down to their nests and the families they love,
Back from battles fought over far away lands,
Over green fields and jungle, over snow and desert sands**

**In my reverie I see them as I saw them long ago,
Different flocks of eagles joined as one against the foe,
I Land eagles, sea eagles, eagles large and small,
Eagles from around the world heeding their country's call.**

**Flocks of ageing Hurricanes were first to join the fray
And though largely unheralded they held the foe at bay
Until the younger Spitfire eagles joined them in the fight,
Attacking enemy eagles throughout both day and night.**

**And many were the big birds that took up their station
With Lancasters roaming nightly causing widespread devastation,
While Mosquito eagles assisted them by lighting up their night
Or mauling the ruthless enemy with their savage bite.**

**For me Beaufighter eagles still rank as number one,
They fought from the beginning until the war was won;
But inevitably all eagles meet the fate that old age brings;
Those eagles now have landed and folded their wings.**

Flight Lieut. WG Robertson DFC

HOPPALONG RIDES AGAIN

Continued from June issue.



Next morning they were paraded in full tropical kit, outside Blackjack's tent, ostensibly to face charges. These two flight sergeants were left standing in full sun for quite a while but were eventually marched in to face their Commanding Officer 'So you reckon I'm a bastard?' he

asked. 'Oh, no Sir, they replied. 'Well I am. I'm the biggest bastard you've ever met. I've kept you senior NCOs out in the tropical sun in full kit for over an hour, and you are both going to get it for last night's episode'. What punishment he meted out, I don't know.

'Blackjack' had two main concerns : the aircrew in his Squadron, and the aircraft in his Squadron. There was a period when his aircraft were being made unserviceable because wingtips were being smashed some during air raids and some during taxiing down at Wards. There were so many that we ran out of spares and he threatened that the next pilot to smash a wingtip would be sent south immediately. Not long afterwards, Bob Cummins had the misfortune to do in his starboard wingtip, and of course he had to front up to the boss. 'Cummins, he said, I'm not going to send you south far what you did, I'm going to shoot you' At which point he picked up his Luger from the table and pointed it straight at Cummins. But Bob pulled out his Smith and Wesson thirty-eight revolver and said 'Sir, my bullets aren't as big as yours, but I can pull the trigger just as fast as you.' There was a pause; 'Blackjack' put down his Luger, and sent Cummins about his business.

Brian Walker was the best Commanding Officer I ever had in the Air Force. He was sometimes loud mouthed, sometimes bullying, and not terribly interested in administration which he left to his Adjutant ('Curly' Wearne). He was just right for that particular Squadron, for that particular bunch of aircrew, and for that particular time. For me, that period of the war, June 42 to May 43, was the highlight of my Air Force career.

'Curly' Wearne, was a real nice guy, nothing short of a gentleman, and I never heard of him saying a bad word about anybody. He was of the old school, and I believe he had been in the Army during the First World War. He was a great Adjutant and a great opposite number for Brian Walker; he took up where 'Blackjack' left off, and simply took on all the administrative chores of the Squadron. You just couldn't help liking 'Curly',

though he was the brunt of many jokes from some of the NCOs. I got to know him real well because one of my aunts was his housekeeper for a time after the war. We had a lovely wake for him when he died at Mortdale.

There was a stage when some members got a bit down in the dumps and we got into the habit of saying 'I've had it.' Curly saw that this was adversely affecting unit moral; and while the whole Squadron was on parade decreed that his wrath would descend on anyone who used those words again. He was serious about it, and the practice died out pretty soon.

Three of the pilots who had been in the deployment from Richmond went south before completion of their aircrew operational tour.

Des Moran-Hilford was a very pleasant guy and easy to get along with. But most of the other aircrew were a little wary of him and, within three months of arriving in New Guinea he went back Australia. He became an instructor at No.5 Operational Training Unit and eventually joined; No. 31 Beaufighter Squadron in Darwin, but he bought it only three or four days after arriving there.

Another pilot who went home after a short stay at Moresby with us was Squadron Leader Eric Lansell. He was a Permanent Air Force officer and seemed to be a bland sort of chap, not possessed of any great drive, and maybe just a little too formal to be entirely happy about being with a relatively free and easy bunch of 'Blackjack's' boys. He had 'B' Flight before Torchy Uren.

Bob Harding didn't seem too confident of handling a Beaufighter (they were notorious for their tendency to swing on take-off). he was flown south just before Xmas and went to Forest Hill for some Beaufighter refresher training. He came back in March but was killed when his aircraft struck the mast of the wreck some weeks later.

Don Bain and Dick Beynon were an engaging pair of light fingered fellows who 'acquired' anything from American uniforms to motor bikes. It was said that Don brought back to camp a jeep which some American serviceman had carelessly left unattended during a picture show. Later, he substituted RAAF markings for those of the USAF and so changed the vehicle's appearance that the Military Police didn't give it a second look.

There were other fellows who got stuff from the Americans. Les Bromilow had a good ally in a top sergeant at a nearby Supply Squadron and could get things 'to order. Alec Spooner seemed to be in the know on that score too and I think it was he who arranged for us to be equipped with the American throat microphones. It was Alec who thought up the fitment of the machine gun in the navigator's cupola, and later on, a cam was fitted to make the barrel ride up so that you

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couldn't fire bullets through the Beaufighter's tail assembly.

Padre Reeve joined us at Moresby in October 1942 but he got a very serious attack of malaria and was shipped back home before Xmas. Padre Kirby - the author of a curious piece of fiction called 'Beaufighter' came to us in December. He was a nice enough chap, quite a big fellow, tall and broad shouldered. He went south in March.

Our very first operation stands out in my mind to this day. Buna. was our target. There we were, on our very first engagement in the war, flying over territory controlled by the enemy, with orders to destroy their barges and other installations which they were defending with Ack Ack and fighters. Made all the more exciting because some Japanese Zeros were airborne.

Yes, I was a bit apprehensive about going out on that first mission, and perhaps the next three or four. This was my first time outside of Australia the farthest I'd ever been from our home before the war was probably across the Harbour to Manly. The war wasn't going at all well, for we'd just lost Singapore, as well as the Repulse and the Hood. Things were pretty gloomy, and the Japanese were just over the other side of the range from Moresby. Moreover, we were the first offensive air unit at Wards and there wasn't anybody to pass on any operational experience; we had to find it all out by ourselves. Nobody else was around who could tell us what it was like to fight an air war in that terrain under those conditions. We were breaking new ground with our Beaufighters in New Guinea.

Strikes against Lae were the most hair raising. Getting across the Owen Stanley Range, going up the Markham Valley, down the Ramu River, and then coming clown and across the strip with other Beaufighters crossing in front of you or behind you, some below you, some above you. All at speed, and all firing their armament. And of course the Japanese were firing all their armament at us too. In addition to all that, I could see tracer bullets going everywhere (ours and their), puffs from the bursting AA shells, men running along the ground, soldiers in gun emplacements firing their weapons at us. The Japanese had Lae defended pretty well, by both aircraft and guns. We got hit, and nearly everybody who went on a strike against the place came back to base with a hole or two in their aircraft and there were some who didn't come back at all.

There were always Zeros around Lae. Mos and I found three of them on our tail just after we had made a strafing run clown the strip. We were on the deck, just above the water, with one fighter about a hundred feet above, one out to the right and another out to the left. I saw tracers pass under our starboard wing from one Zero, and then the other came from the port, firing

as he made his run. The three of them made two passes each, but of course, those manoeuvres caused them to wash off speed and we gradually pulled away from them at zero height.

Some of the more interesting missions involved finding places that the Army wanted us to attack. We had an Army Liaison Officer in the Squadron Major Bill Harper and he used to brief us about strafing enemy positions which were causing trouble to our ground troops. He'd give us the map coordinates and, tell us, for instance, that at that position there were three native huts beside six very tall trees at the top of a steep hill; a mile to the west of that position wait a small plantation clearing, and he wanted us to make a run southwards from that, and start firing- when we were 900 yards beyond that clearing. Of course, when you got out over the jungle, it seemed that every steep hill had three huts, tall trees, and a nearby clearing.

It was very gratifying when some of the Army fellows came back from the front line and visited the Squadron to find out which crew had been on a particular mission. They would compliment the crew and then present them with a handful of 20 mm shells which 'fell out of your Beaufighter while you were over the top of us on your strafng run'.

We never climbed into our Beaufighter without having worked out what had to be done on the mission. Mos and I always sat down and worked out a complete flight plan to and from the target, what landmarks to look for, where we might make an emergency landing, and what weather we might encounter. Even if we were being led by somebody else, I always kept my own DR plot going, supplemented of course by visual pinpoints, so that if we lost the formation leader then I would be able to take over. I believed that was my responsibility a responsibility for my own neck, for Mos's neck, and for the aircraft we were flying.

Visual observation of the aircraft's position wasn't tremendously useful over the jungle, since every mountain range seemed to be exactly the same as every other mountain range, every clearing the same as other clearing, and every village much like another. It was different at the coast, of course, where the shore line was pretty accurately mapped, and the villages were more clearly defined.

The navigator sat underneath a perspex cupola towards the rear of the Beaufighter. There was an instrument panel above his table, a small magnetic compass beside it and there was a hand held compass stowed in the aircraft. There was a tail drift sight under the AT5/AR8 radio installation and the secret radar equipment. This IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) set was installed behind the navigator, under the AT5/AR8 gear. It had a destruct mechanism which was activated during a crash landing, and so prevented the enemy from copying the equipment. The set had a locking device

which the navigator had to operate after becoming airborne, and reverse the procedure just before touching down..

We also had an Aldis Lamp in the Beaufighter; to this I used to fit a red filter and flick the lamp at chasing Zeros to simulate (I hoped) a cannon firing at them. Somewhere in the aircraft's roof there was an access hole for the Verey Pistol, and I used that, and the Flame Float chute in the floor to dispose of lolly paper and torn up magazines in the hope of confusing the attacking pilots.

The four forward firing 20m m cannons were positioned on the floor just in front of the navigator's station and just behind the armour plated doors which closed it off from the pilot's cabin. The shells were fed from a drum mounted on each breechblock, each drum holding about 100 rounds and weighing about 60 pounds. On take-off a drum would be mounted on each cannon, and another eight would be clipped into their stowages along the interior fuselage. Not an easy job at all!

After the pilot had fired the cannons and emptied the drums, the navigator had to remove the empties and put full ones on to each cannon breech. This was no easy job because there was nowhere to stow the empty drum and that meant there was always a drum loose on the aircraft's floor. And because, during a strafing run the aircraft was seldom flying straight and level, handling the things could be extremely difficult and a mite dangerous.

We always took our tin helmets with us (what for I really don't know), and we took a thick canvas satchel much like the webbing bag for our gasmasks containing our own supply of emergency rations and survival material. Matches were kept dry because they were wrapped up in French Letters. We also had a small pouch with a few survival items, and this, together with a revolver, was attached to our belts - though these weren't needed to hold our khaki shorts up. A jungle knife was stuck down my fur-lined flying boots.

Getting back to Wards through the infamous Gap was frequently very hairy, and if the cloud had built up, we invariably circled round till we got to about 18,000 feet or so. when the Beaufighter would wallow around like nobody's business. We would then head south, fly out over the Coral Sea for about 50 miles, then let down and fly northwards into Moresby, homing in with the DF loop.

For the most part we observed strict radio silence as opposed to the American Army Air Force units who kept up a continuous chatter. I had some crystals for the AT5 transmitter, and tuned the receiver using the beat frequency technique. The Aerial Coupling Unit was the great advantage of the installation. since it allowed you to push a respectable amount of ergs up the stick.

The only time I made a transmission on AT5/AR8 radio equipment in New Guinea was to yell out to the pilots of a pair of American Lightnings. Mos and I were coming down past Lae when we saw those aircraft make a circuit of that strip, drop their wheels and line up for a landing. I got on the R/T and called them up in plain language 'Do you know where you are and what you're doing?' 'Not really', one of them replied, 'but there's a field down there and we're running short of fuel'. You'll have a very short life if you land there, I said, 'because that's Lae, and its *held by* the Japanese' They formed up on us and we shepherded them back to Moresby. The pilots came and visited us in June Valley later on and thanked us for interfering.

Although the Air Board had fixed the aircrew operational tour in New Guinea at six months, the first of those who had arrived up there in September were there for nearly eight months. For instance, Dick Roe, Col. Campbell, Cec McKew, Jack Sandford, and Bob Brazenor moved out during the last week of April 1943. At about the same time, Arthur Jaggs, Fred Anderson, and Jimmy Yeatman were posted to No. 5 Operational training Unit, while Peter Fiskin and Bill Clark went to the Personnel Pool at Townsville.

After we were posted south from 30 Squadron early in May, Mos and I were both sent to Test and Ferry Flight at Bankstown, and we stayed together there until we went back to New Guinea for our second tour. When we came back from. our second tour, Mos was posted to Laverton as a test pilot with Aircraft Research and Development Unit. Mos went back to Robinson's Motors after he was discharged at the end of the war. His wife died in 1985 and he died the following year after a heart attack, but I reckon he killed himself with cigarette tobacco: he was a very heavy smoker. His brother, who was a year or so older than Mos, spent his career in the Air Force as an instructor.

FRED CASSIDY



Sec. Peter White and Stan Curran inspect a restored P-51 Mustang at Caboolture Warplanes.

Keith Nicholson Remembers

Continued from June issue.



They were high up on my port, I pulled up from the attack, did a slight turn to starboard and I had a go at a couple of ships in the Bay. Just as I finished the attack I saw a fighter coming down at me on my port side, he was after someone and we weren't all that far apart. I was probably at about, 100 feet and instinctively pulled up, with the idea of having a go at him, but then I realised that was a dumb thing to do, so went back down on the wave tops again. Ken called to let me know that the Oscar was attacking from behind so I made some quite violent skids and other evasive maneuvers. He fired at us and judging from the spray kicked up by his bullets, his long burst just missed our fuselage but severely damaged an aileron, which caught fire and almost burnt right out. I felt the thumps in the yoke as his bullets struck.

By that time I was right down on the deck. Throttles hard forward, hunting and weaving, and eventually, as our speed built up and the Oscar lost the advantage of diving speed, we managed to pull away from him, even though he was at top speed. I lost sight of the enemy and relied on Ken to watch him and give me directions he made several further attacks and each time he did so, Ken fired his all-tracer scatter gun and rapidly blinked his Aldis Lamp at the Oscar. We were very lucky that day. If he had been properly lined up, and his burst would have gone through our aircraft and we would have been goners. As far as I am concerned, a Beaufighter was a beautiful big brute that I felt quite comfortable in. The Squadron must have been unable to repair that aircraft immediately, as it doesn't seem to have been used for operations until 8th June, when we took it to strafe the Komiatum Trail.

The Squadron's first operation beyond the mainland of New Guinea took place on 14th May 1943 when, in conjunction with Mitchells of the 90th Bomb Group, eleven Beaufighters went across to New Britain to, attack the Japanese airbase at Gasmata. 'Blackjack's' standing instruction was to the effect that we were to make "only one run across any heavily defended target, and we followed his decree on that day, a 'profit and loss' theory that worked well. I flew A 19-87 on that job and we attacked the ack-ack batteries to suppress them for the attack of the Mitchells. I also saw a crashed enemy aircraft in the water, which Johnny Drummond had ago at. The Mitchells dropped their bombs right along the runway causing considerable damage to installations

We had flown across to New Britain at below 500 feet and went through several weather fronts. That operation was a bit scary as we had a lot of ocean to cross and if we had either ditched close to New Britain or crash landed on the island, I don't think we would

have much chance of survival as the, Japanese occupied the entire island. At least the Allies had a portion of New Guinea and some of the tribes were probably friendly, and could give a crashed crew some assistance.

A long trip such as the one to Gasmata or beyond was not the most comfortable experience for a Beaufighter pilot. For one thing, his seat was in the centre of a rather crowded cockpit, and, being strapped in very tightly, he couldn't move around for any personal hygiene needs. Not only was he strapped to his seat but his backside rested on a one man dinghy which was folded to form a cushion but was so rock hard that his thighs and backside became completely numb. Back at base after about 5.5 hours flight, it took quite a lot of stretching and rubbing to walk upright again.

One of my friends, Graham Pozzi, told me he was leaving Moresby on posting to the mainland so we had quite a few drinks at No 33 Squadron the night before he left and I didn't get back to camp until the early hours of the morning. In the meantime and unbeknown to me, my name had been put on the Operations Board for an early morning take off to do a strike at Nassau Bay in conjunction with Bostons of No 22 Squadron. At 4.30 am Ken tried for nearly 10 minutes to shake me awake, finally throwing a bucket of water over me. Harold Kelly was a bit worried about my condition and came on the trip, during which I made about ten runs over the target, firing about 1000 rounds of cannon and 6000 rounds of .303 ammunition at targets in the vicinity of Duall Point.

Towards the end of May, four new crews arrived on posting to the Squadron: Mike Burrows and Alfie Burgoyne, John McRobbie and Clive, Cook, Ted Marron and Vern Gollan, plus Frank King and John Tyrell.

Frank and John went on a training exercise with Bob Harding and Hedley Caine And both of the pilots were killed when their Beaufighter struck the mast of the wreck used for target practice in Moresby Harbour on 31st May. The two navigators survived.

My flight commander, 'Grumpy' Eddison detailed Ken and I to fly to Garbutt in A19-74, taking George Gibson to ferry A19-33 back to Wards. We arrived back at Wards on 29th May, both aircraft heavily laden with fresh food and liquor bought at Townsville. We had our aeroplane so stacked up with goodies, that we had to board through the top escape hatches. With the extra weight on top of our battle load, our take off needed the full length of the runway at Garbutt.

To be Continued