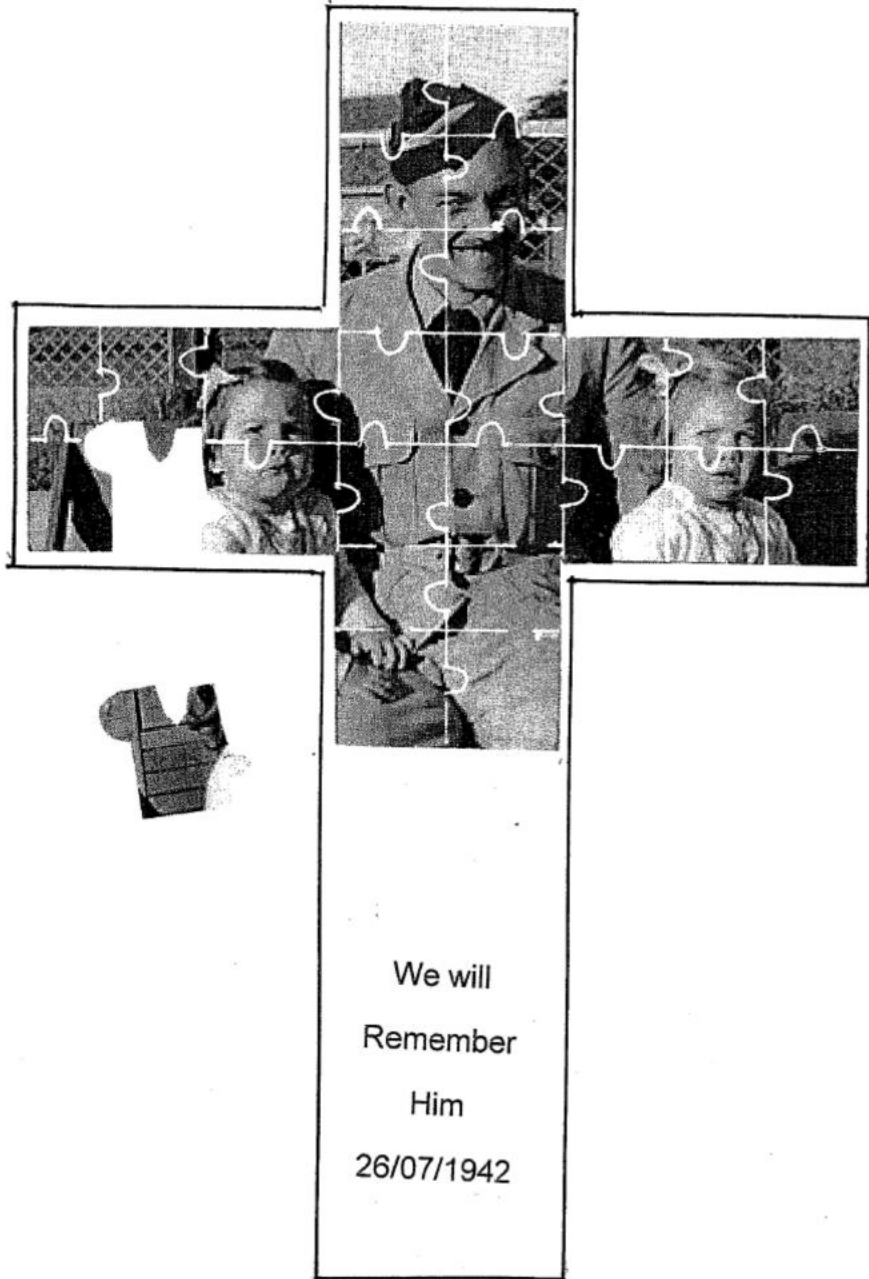


The Last Peace

26 July 2011



We will
Remember
Him
26/07/1942

OPERATION JIGSAW

CONTENTS

Preface

Mum's sharing.

The Little Brown Case.

National Archives of Australia.

The American Connection.

Pilgrimage

Acknowledgements.

PREFACE

For most of my adult years, I have been troubled and disturbed about the lack of information my Mother apparently received following the death of my Father, who was killed on Active Service whilst serving with the Air Force in P.N.G. during World War II. My Mother had no opportunity to grieve or mourn for him, no funeral service, no thanksgiving service or no memorial service. Her grieving was a very lonely and private experience with no opportunity for healing or sharing.

It has been 69 years since Dad's death and we have only recently received information which has given us the opportunity to visit Isoge, the site of his death.

I will finally be able to acknowledge his bravery and sacrifice, which no member of his family, his colleagues or his country has done in the past. Bit by bit the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that had been the story of his service have been found. His story is now complete. I will be able to write his Amen in my heart.

Prepared by Jenny Read (nee Mobsby) August 2011

MUM'S SHARING

Following are the facts that my Mum had mentioned to me about my Dad's service. I believed that he had enlisted a few months after war was declared. He joined the R.A.A.F and trained for about 18months, being away from home for most of that time. After he had graduated he was transferred to an American Squadron and was posted to Charters Towers to join in the defense of Papua New Guinea against the Japanese. On the morning of July 26th 1942 my Mum woke during a nightmare or vision, calling out and weeping, she had heard my Dad calling to her ("wild spirit calls to wild spirit" with apologies to Paul Gallico in his book Snow Goose) as his plane was shot down near Buna. My Nana, who we were living with, witnessed and verified this experience. About 6 weeks later Mum received a brief telegram telling her that Dad had been shot down at dawn on July 26th 1942 and was reported as missing in action. Some time later, I always believed it was several years. Mum received another telegram advising her that Dad's body had been found and he had now been listed as killed in action. I also new that his body had been reburied in the Bomana War Cemetery, I didn't know the date but knew that it was many years later. These were the only details that Mum had shared with me.

THE LITTLE BROWN CASE.

I discovered more details about my Dad's service from a small brown leather case that I found after my Mum's death in 1993. It contained many items that were obviously treasured by Mum.

In the case was my Dad's blue Royal Australian Air Force Log Book, I have selected a few extracts from it.

The first entry was dated March 7th 1941 -Type of Aircraft, Moth, Place Parafield. The first month it is recorded he flew 13.10 hours as Second Pilot or Passenger-taking off into wind, gliding approach and landing 5 days a week. April 25th 1941 last training in Tiger, and on May 7th 1941 started training in Anson. July 7th 1941 first bombing instructions and then during July had experience as Pilot Navigator, Navigator, Camera Gunner, Camera Bombing and Safety Pilot. There were no entries for September (I assume he was on leave). After this he was transferred to the American Air Force which was based at Charters Towers.

On May 14 1942 - Summary of flying and an assessment for period commencing

26/11/1941 Assessment of Ability. Pilot average. Pilot Navigator average.

349 Hours Day 44 Hours Night, Total 399.30. Grand Total 588 hours 10 mins. I guess this was his graduation assessment.

On May 29th 1942. Transferred to B-25C 41-12470. On June 6th 1942 he flew with Lt. Schmidt as Pilot in plane 41-12496. It then appears as though he flew in both planes throughout June and July. The entry for June 9th 1942 is 41-12496 from Pt. Moresby Bomb Lae, June 16th Bomb Salamaua, June 19th Bombing June 25th Bomb Salamaua, July 4th Bomb Lae, Bomb Lae (repeated) and the last entry July 5th 1942 Pt. Moresby Charters Towers.

Also in the case were two letters from my Dad, I now know where I inherit my poor hand writing. The first letter dated 30/5/42 "I should be putting on weight, not doing much work, eating plenty.....gee the night's are cold as you know I only had 2 blankets issued to me but I have "borrowed" 3 more and today threw the fur lined pants that match my jacket that makes a pretty warm rug as the pants open right down each leg with the zip fastener trousers, it's certainly a honey of an outfit much better than ours. No mail from you yet dear, am anxious to hear how you are." And the second letter dated 17/6/42. " You make mention of the war news but I'm not very up to date with it- I know about the submarine round Sydney and more bombing in Germany but then I'm in the dark. Glad you have started to get some of the letters I've been posting to you because although there isn't much news it's nice to get a letter. I know.....Good work getting the fowl yard fixed up it might have been a bit late for this generation of fowls if you had waited for me to do it. Also getting a few eggs is good, I know they are scarce up here and I guess the price is high....The lad I share a tent with is Murray Wilson, a West Australian I was at Mt. Gambier with. Well dear lots of love to you, Rae and Jennifer. Hope you are all O.K. Cheers dear yours Ted."

In a PIX magazine Vol 10 No 15 10 October 1942 was a photo of Pilot Officer Edward T Mobsby and Lieut Ralph LL Schmidt autographing a bomb destined for Japanese targets. They were both crew members of B-25C 41-12470.

There were also several letters of condolences in the case including one from King George R.I. from Buckingham Palace .Dated 17/11/1943.



AUTOGRAPH Pilot-Officer Edward T. Mobsby (left), of Australia, and Lieut. Ralph E. L. Schmidt, of Greenville, Illinois (USA), autograph a bomb at a United Nations' air base somewhere in New Guinea. These bombs were used in raid on a Japanese base.

Two letters from W/O Wilson, R.M. 90th Squadron 3rd Bomb Group dated 13/11/42. "To date there is no fresh news and we can only hope that our advance in New Guinea may reveal something". His second letter which was undated read in part "Although I have never met you I feel I know you very well, Ted was always talking about you and the children. Mobs, as Ted was known to every one up here, was one of the most popular officers in the Squadron. We all had great respect for your husband's courage and eagerness for all duties assigned to him and we were all very upset on hearing the bad news. He has been recommended for an American Decoration and this should soon be approved. Should I get the opportunity of going to Adelaide I would very much like to meet you and have a chat. Yours sincerely, Murray Wilson."

A telegram addressed to Mr.E.M.Mobsby advising him that his son had been killed in action was also in the case.

A letter dated Dec 3rd 1943 from the Directorate of Graves Registration which reads in part that F/O E.T.Mobsby " had been laid to rest in the Soputa War Cemetery" included in the envelop was a photo of a cross which the letter noted " is a temporary memorial only, and will be replaced by a permanent memorial after the cessation of hostilities. The design of this permanent memorial has not yet been decided, but you may be assured that it will be in keeping with the gallant sacrifice of our men".

On July 7th 1947 a letter arrived addressed to Mr. Mobsby stating "I beg to advise that information has been received that the remains of your late son, 407799 F/O E.T.Mobsby have been buried in the Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby Plot A.7 Row B. Grave 26.

(In 1988 whilst Tony was working in Brisbane on a job for Lihir Gold in P.N.G. he went to Pt. Moresby to get some information so I accompanied him and we visited the Bomana War Cemetery).

Finally I found an undated note that Mum had typed which I have included here. I was thrilled to have read some of these pieces of history. A few more pieces of the puzzle have been found.

My husband was away opening a branch for the bank in which he worked when war was declared. I knew as soon as he returned to Adelaide that he would want to enlist, his father having fought during the Boer and World War 1 and coming to Australia when W.W.I finished-my husband was then 10yrs old.

By 1939 we had been married some years and had twin daughters 6 mos. old in the Sept of that year, my husband asked me into which of the services he should enlist, stating that, with the Air Force he would have at least about 12 mos. before being called up and that anything could happen in that time.

It was in May 1942 that he was attached to the American Air Force and stationed in Charter Towers and bombing sorties were flown from Pt. Moresby on the Japanese who had landed in Buna and Gona in New Guinea and it was somewhere near these towns that he was shot down and apparently killed-- 6wks went by before I received any notification although the men he went through the Air Force knew immediately & were enquiring from my sister how I was coping, ofcourse we knew nothing at all, 6wks later, at 9.30 at night I received a telegram saying he was missing and months after that I was advised that his body had been found and buried in a cemetery his remains were moved 3 times before he was at last laid to rest at Pt. Moresby.

I was written to by many of the Americans who were with him and they told me that he had been recommended for an American decoration of this I heard nothing further because, on writing these folk on receipt of their letters they had all been killed.

Local Repatriation, although very good now, were not much help in those days, we early War Widows found out benefits that were due to us by word of mouth and by that method only until Mrs. Vasey got to work.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

On the 13/10/2008 my sister Rae and her husband Phil decided to search the "net" to see if there was any information about our Dad and his War Service. I believe they went onto the Website of the National Archives of Australia and followed the links. They discovered notes which included R.A.A.F. personnel files, R.A.A.F Casualty files and then service records totaling 33 pages. Many of these were repeated but what a treasure they had uncovered, a real thrill. We were able to learn so much. I have included some extracts that I found to be most interesting.

The first was the Oath of Affirmation dated July 3rd 1940

A telegram sent Sept 2nd 1942 stated "Edward Thompson Mobsby is reported to be missing as a result of air operations on July 26th 1942". Copy of this notification came 6 weeks after the plane had been shot down.

On June 11th 1943 a letter of confirmation arrived advising Mum. "your husband Pilot Officer Edward Thompson Mobsby, previously reported missing, is now classified as having lost his life on July 26th 1942, as a result of air operations." I have included a copy of the letter to show how "tersely and abruptly" Mum had received the news of Dad's death, even to ask for "an acknowledgement of receipt of this letter" and then the added on P.S footnote that he had been promoted to Flying Officer from 21/8/42. I have also enclosed Mum's reply on 15/6/43 and her questions as to the whereabouts of her late husband's personal effects and asking for information about the recommendation he had received about the Silver

Star Award. An acknowledgment of the above letter was written on 28th June 1943 apologising for not including the "enclosures" of the list of personal effects mentioned in his last letter but including them now. He went on to say "referring to the enquiry about your late husband's effects contained in the blue case they will be dealt with ASAP. Concerning your enquiry about the award of the Silver Star no report has been heard by this office." My Grandfather received notification of his son's death at the same time as Mum's letter. I have included a copy of the letter to him because I am appalled at the crude way they corrected the letter when they referred to "your husband" instead of "your son" I have enclosed my Grandfather's reply to this letter as it is the only time I have seen his handwriting.

10 Rossington ^{Encl} Wm
Fullerton to late
Adelaide
South Australia
163/45/182
15. 6. 43

R.A.A.F. 163/45/182 (28A)

Dear Sir, I am in receipt of
your communication of yesterday,
notifying me of the death of
my son FO E. T. Mobsby.
I thank you most sincerely
for your expression of sympathy.

Yours truly
E. T. Mobsby

61 43

THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

Early in 2010 my younger son Peter found an entry on a website asking "if anyone had any information concerning the Mobsby twins from Australia could they please reply to this enquiry." The request had been there since April 22nd 2003. Peter responded to the enquiry and discovered that it had been posted by a Wally McCollum, from America, who was seeking information about the crew members of the plane that his Uncle Walter Cook had flown in during World War II in P.N.G. My Dad F/O E.T.Mobsby was one of the crew members. So began an amazing transfer of emails which have provided us with many, many more pieces of information to add to the jigsaw that was my Dad's War Service.

We learned that my Dad had been flying a B-25C Mitchell aircraft Serial Number 41-12470 with a crew of five, Pilot Ralph Schmidt, F/O E.T.Mobsby, the only Australian, Bombardier T/Sgt. Robert L Barlow, Turret Gunner Cpl. Walter N Cook and Radio Cpl. M.Wallace. The United States Army Air Force describes the North American B-25C Mitchell as "This was a versatile and most common medium bomber in the 5th Air Force". I have attached photos of the plane and its crew.

This plane was referred to as "Der Schpy" which was chosen because of the pilot's German ancestry.



On the morning of July 26th 1942 with my Dad as Co-pilot B-25C 41-12470 was flying towards Buna (from Pt. Moresby), when their formation was attacked by 15-20 Japanese Zero fighter aircraft. They were shot down by Japanese Ace Saburo Sakai at 20,000 feet and they went down in flames with NO SURVIVORS. Ltd Col Frank Bender who had been flying in formation with Der Schpy reported that "Co-pilot (R.A.A.F) was last seen halfway out the pilot's escape hatch and Lt. Schmidt was slapping at something" Wally McCollum shared with us a comment from his Uncle's personal folder "It is recommended by the Commanding Officer of the Third Bombardment Group that my Uncle be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the 26 hours leading up to their shoot down. The recommendation contained a note that the same letter with appropriate wording for the other crew members was written to each of them. I don't believe it was policy at that time to award U.S medals to allied officers integrated into the U.S. units, but the recommendation describes your Father's heroism as much as it describes the heroism of the American crew members. The Distinguished Service Cross is second only to the Medal of Honor. Whilst the recommendation was downgraded to the Distinguished Flying Cross the words are no less powerful" (We have been unable to get any satisfaction in obtaining this award for my Dad even though we know all other crew members received theirs.)

Through Wally McCollum we were put in contact with Paul Ekman who had walked the Kokoda Track in 2007. The following year he returned with his wife and three children to make a D.V.D and photograph the wreckage of a plane that had been found near the village of Isoge. It had been discovered after the land had been burnt off to clear before planting a palm oil plantation. It was thought that it was possibly either the "Aurora" or "Der Schpy" He commented in an email to us that the wreckage was "reasonably accessible and you don't have to walk the track to get there- a small jet to Popondetta then a 4 wheel drive track to Isoge and about a 15minute walk into the bush".

Paul sent us a copy of his D.V.D which showed the wreckage and also the cemetery where the villagers had buried "the Australian".

On December 21st 2010 Peter received an email from Rae Phillips who was the Team Leader of the JPAC in Pearl Harbor who endeavor to identify and recover if possible the bodies and aircraft of U.S armed forces. Their motto is "Until they are all home." She wrote to inform us that "Our investigating team located aircraft wreckage with a radio call sign data plate and partial tail serial number for B-25C 41-12470." The wreckage was that of my Dad's plane. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could visit the site.

Wally and Paul have supplied even more pieces for my jigsaw puzzle. I will always be extremely grateful to them for the interest and information that they have been so eager to share with us. As a result of the positive identification of the wreckage of B-25C 41-12470, I plan to visit Isoge with my two sons and my cousin on 26th July 2011 which is the date of the 69th Anniversary of my Dad's death.

.

PILGRIMAGE

We started to make our plans for a visit to Isoge. John offered to make some enquiries in Papua New Guinea and he contacted Tim Bryson, who worked with the Dept of Foreign Affairs in Port Moresby, to seek his advice as to how we should go about fulfilling our dream. Tim who we had known for over thirty years was immediately excited for us and thrilled to be able to help. So began another exchange of emails as he explained details of travel and security issues with us. He also provided us with the name of Dale McCarthy who lived in Popondetta and could help us get to Isoge.

A check with the airlines proved we could be in Isoge on Tuesday 26th July so we made our plans, had our medical checkups and waited excitedly.

At 4.00 am. on Sunday July 24th we left Adelaide and were on our way to P.N.G. flying first to Brisbane and then on to Port Moresby. Tim met us at the Jackson Airport and drove us out to the Bomana War Cemetery where my Dad is now buried. I have decided to leave writing about this until the end of my "story" to put it in the historical sequence as the last piece of our searching.

We spent Sunday night in Port Moresby with the Bryson family and flew out to Popondetta very early on Monday morning. Popondetta is the principal town in the Oro Province and only 36 kilometres from Isoge where we would find the wreckage of Der Schryp. At the airport there was the wreck of the "Bar Fly" another B25C Mitchell, we were thrilled to see it and later had the opportunity to photograph, climb over and touch a sister plane, especially as it was in reasonable condition and still looked like a plane.

Dale McCarthy, an influential businessman in the area, met us at the airport. He had arranged transport, a driver, an interpreter and a policeman to escort us during our two days visit, to ensure our comfort and our safety. Dale also invited us to stay with him and his family for the two nights we were staying in Popondetta which was unexpected but greatly appreciated. They made us feel very welcome and their hospitality and friendship was exceptional.

We drove through Popondetta a very dirty and untidy town crowded with people just lazing around smoking and chewing and spitting Betel nut and then out into the country. The road varied between sealed and very very rough due to heavy rain several years ago. We passed many attractive, well kept tidy villages with flowering Frangipani, Bouganvilla, Hibiscus and Orchids until we came near to the village of Isoge. Along the last section of the road, villagers were throwing petals and leaves into our bus, and calling, waving and laughing. Once we arrived we were given an amazing welcome where maybe 200 villagers greeted us with a full on ceremony. The Chief in his magnificent headdress of feathers and leaves, a large decorated spear, arm and leg bracelets with more feathers, stopped us on the track. Behind him were several barricades of vines and leaves strung between bamboo poles. He chanted and danced and challenged us before we were allowed to pass through and enter the centre of the village. Two young men put on a skit for us, and then about 20 dancers in their native costume entertained us. I found it quite overwhelming. After many speeches and our replies we were offered some refreshments, presented with leis and necklaces, shared some gifts we had for the children and then it was time for us to visit the wreckage.



B-25C Mitchell "Bar Fly" at Popondetta Airport



"Der Schpy" Wreckage at Isoge

As this was the main reason for our visit, I was keen to get started. The track had been cleared and was decorated with petals strewn along its length. Again there was a barricade in front of the site with another challenge to go through before we could continue into the area. Over 100 noisy and excited people joined us, they were climbing and clambering over the wreckage. Not what I had expected. I was a bit disappointed as I had thought we would have the opportunity to photograph, to connect and to reflect. It was not to be. Eventually the interpreter quietened everyone down and organized a minutes silence, I spent the time honouring the crew and thanking them for their sacrifice. The hubbub soon continued as we tried to get some photos and to identify parts of the plane. It appeared as if a lot "had gone missing" since the photos we had received from a couple of years ago. We returned to the village and arranged to come back in the morning when just the family would return to the wreckage for a private time, I was looking forward to that. We also made arrangements to see the site where Dad had first been buried.

Tuesday 26th July 2011. It was 69 years ago to the day that Der Schpy was shot down. We returned to Isoge and were shown the grave site, with a bamboo and leaf fence around it and a neatly swept plot in front of the rocks we had seen in the earlier photograph from Paul. Several men told us their version of the burial which I had difficulty accepting including one man who insisted that Dad's body is still there and "if I return next year he will dig it up and give me the skull and dog tag." I found this very disturbing. After a lot of discussion we were shown the gun and the radio call sign plate that we knew they had, also a second gun which was a surprise. It appears that it is "finder's keepers" for any items that have been removed from the wreckage.

Unfortunately we were prevented by a small group from a separate tribe from the village to return to the wreck site - a great disappointment to me. We had more "stories" from the villagers who had confusing memories of the crash and burial and seemed to believe "compensation was more important than truth."

The majority of the villagers were thrilled to see us, were hospitable, friendly, and were grateful for the sacrifice of the crew. We enjoyed playing with the children and were farewelled with lots of calls of "Oro carva, Oro carva", waves, smiles and the blowing of kisses which I had shown them was an Australian farewell showing love and friendship.

On Wednesday we drove to Soputa where Dad had been buried after being removed from Isoge. We had hoped to find the cemetery but unfortunately it had been totally destroyed 3 years ago by the cyclone "Guba". We did learn that the cemetery had been part of an Australian camp, I was pleased to hear this as I expect it meant that my Dad would have been surrounded by maybe a Padre and some Aussie diggers when he was laid to rest. The villagers were thrilled to see us, they were not expecting us, they sang, danced embraced and thanked us for visiting. We exchanged several articles of clothing with them, and all enjoyed our visit. We flew back to Port Moresby later in the afternoon.

I would now like to report on our visit to the Bomana War Cemetery. It was established in 1942 and contains 3,824 graves 703 of which are unidentified, 3351 are of Australian service men. This is where my Dad was finally laid to rest. It is a well maintained cemetery in a beautiful setting. We were the only people there. To kneel by Dad's grave with my sons at my side, to pay our respect to him, to honour him and his crew mates and all the other young men (and one woman) buried in this "holy" place was one of the most emotional, but wonderful experiences I have ever had.



Grave Site At Isoge



Site of Soputa Cemetery - destroyed by cyclone



F/O E.T.Mobsby RAAF. Tombstone at Bomana War Cemetery.
Port Moresby



Bomana War Cemetery

The inscription on Dad's tombstone reads "In the morning and at the setting of the sun we will remember him" We read this as the sun set behind the surrounding ranges and added an amazing aura over the cemetery.

It has been 69 years and now, at 72, I am able to acknowledge that my Dad 407799 F/O R.A.A.F. was not only a very special, brave man who was shot down and killed in P.N.G. in the Second World War defending Australia against the Japanese invasion BUT he IS my Dad, my hero and I now have a "connection" with him. I know him as a "presence that cannot be seen but can be felt" a relationship that is impossible to explain but a great comfort and of huge importance to me.

My hope is that John and Peter also feel a connectedness to their Grandfather and that both of them and Peter DeG will always remember and be grateful for the opportunity that had to go on this pilgrimage.

The last piece of the jigsaw of my Dad's war service has now been found and with it peace in my heart



"In the morning and at the setting of the sun we will remember "

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I must thank John and Peter for their desire and enthusiasm to go with me to P.N.G. To share with them on the 69th Anniversary of Dad's death at the wreckage site was absolutely amazing.

I would also like to thank Tony for the encouragement he gave me to make the trip and for the support he was, and the hours he spent in helping to format and print this document. To Meredith for her encouragement, and to Katherine and Georgie who gave their support to John and Peter to accompany me. I was also thrilled that Peter DeGaris was able to come with us and I thank Valmai for supporting him.

There are others that I would like to thank; Wally McCollum who supplied us with an enormous amount of information that he had discovered whilst researching the death of his uncle who was part of the same crew as my Dad.

I also owe a very very big thankyou to Paul Eckman. Without his efforts and enthusiasm, we would never have had the opportunity to visit Isoge and the crash site. In 2007 after Paul had walked the Kokoda Track, he was shown an American dog tag. He became interested in finding out whom it belonged to and where it had been found. Through determination and hours of searching he discovered that it came from the wreckage of a plane shot down near Isoge, not far from Kokoda.

In 2008, Paul and his wife and three children visited Isoge and the wreckage. Paul made a DVD of the site which he sent to Wally McCollum and subsequently forwarded a copy to me. The plane was identified as the one which Dad had been in – what an amazing trail of evidence – Thankyou Paul.

To Tim Bryson who supplied invaluable assistance with contacts and advice for us and for the hospitality he and his wife Young Mi and beautiful children Isaac, Jemima, and Charlotte showed to us whilst we were in Port Moresby.

To Dale McCarthy who organized our days in Popondetta and Isoge and generously invited us to stay in his home for two nights with his friendly wife Helen and his delightful daughters Dion, Dillon and Danielle a huge thankyou.

Also to the many friends who have supported, prayed for and encouraged us as we went on our pilgrimage. You have all helped to make possible the most amazing and probably most important few days of my life which enabled me to connect with, to honour and to love my Dad in a way I had never dreamed would be possible.

My thanks to all of you.