

Determination mark of a hero

Victor (Vic) Cashmore, DFC
War hero

Born: September 9, 1919; Adelaide
Died: December 3, 2007, Adelaide

Adm 291207



VICTOR (Vic) Cashmore, who was born on South Terrace in Adelaide in 1919, became an Australian war hero as a World War II fighter pilot.

He was Squadron Leader with the 454 Squadron and formation leader on more than 40 raids in the Eastern Mediterranean and Italy. He, together with his great friend and navigator George Gray, was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for converting the squadron to daylight formation bombing operations and for leading many subsequent missions. George Gray wrote:

"Every aircraft was hit but none was lost. We were under fire for about five minutes on the run in and on the run out. It was a bit distracting, but one of the things which relaxed me was my pilot. He was singing."

It was Vic.

Victor Cashmore was the youngest of seven children, who spent his early childhood years in Port Pirie where his father Arthur, was a shipping agent. He later attended Henley Beach Primary School and Christian Brothers College in Adelaide.

World War II was declared on his 20th birthday - September 3, 1939. At 21 years old, he had qualified as a pilot of the twin engined Anson aircraft and sailed on the Queen Elizabeth on her maiden voyage to the Middle East.

Vic then was trained to fly the MK1 (short nosed) Blenheims and joined 113 RAF Squadron in the Western Desert flying reconnaissance sorties for the Eighth Army fighting against Rommel. In January, 1943,

he trained as a flying instructor in Southern Rhodesia and in Kenya and taught pilots to fly operational aircraft both day and night.

In May, 1943, Vic's unit was transferred to Egypt and he was promoted to Squadron Leader, in command of A Flight, training pilots on Baltimore aircraft. He was the youngest ever squadron leader in the RAAF. He yearned to be back on operational flights and on February 12, 1944, joined the 454 Squadron - the same day his beloved sister Patty, a nurse, died when the Khedive Ismail was hit by Japanese submarine torpedos.

In 1947, Vic married Annie Seager and they were together for 44 years before divorcing

in the early 1990s. In 1948, Vic took up a soldier settlement block and moved his family to Mt Schank, where he transformed a bleak, barren site into "Risdon", an attractive property with many trees.

He also built a beautiful wooden trimaran, named Amelia after his mother, in which he taught his sons to sail in races with the Pt MacDonnell Sailing Club. He belonged to the local gliding club, played some golf and his greatest sporting achievement was representing Australia in a yachting race in Canada in 1967, winning a place. He was a keenly intelligent man who loved music and reading, particularly Lord Tennyson's poetry.

In 1966, Vic sold the farm and moved his family to Glen Osmond where he worked as a stock inspector for the Department of Agriculture. He bought a block at McLaren Flat and grew grapes and almonds and employed his two sons on weekends.

One of his life fortunes was to meet Ursula Platen, his loyal companion and partner for the past 14 years, in Goolwa. Together they travelled the world and all over Australia. "Ursula has brightened Dad's life over these years, looked after him devotedly and patiently and cooked him gourmet meals," said daughter Janet Cashmore.

In 1999, he wrote a short, self-published autobiography of his war years in *An Oz at War*, distributing it proudly to his family. In May this year, Vic was the patriarch at the book launch of the Cashmore's family history as the last of his generation able to attend.

His family recall a deep thinking, complex personality who was very determined. "That was the very determination that got him and the crews with him, through the war," said his daughter. He is survived by Ursula, his children, Mark, Mary, David and Janet, six grandsons and one grand-daughter.