

TO:



**454-459 SQUADRONS ASSOCIATION
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE**

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**2009 CHRISTMAS BULLETIN
COMBINED 454/459 SQUADRONS**

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*Best wishes for **Christmas & New Year**
to members, family & friends.*

SENDER:

*Mrs. Penny Griffiths
Honorary Secretary
454-459 Squadrons Association RAAF
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Report on Anzac Day 2009

People may not be aware that each year the Air Force Association invites delegates from various WW2 Squadrons to attend a meeting to discuss the part that the RSL expects the Air Force Assoc. to play in the forthcoming Anzac Day March. Unfortunately, in the past few years alterations to the format of the March have been made by the RSL, but not made known to the Air Force Assoc., which of course causes problems. However, our delegates went along to the meeting prior to this year's March, voiced our criticisms and left it with the impression that the Air Force Assoc. personnel were very capable, organised people and our 454/459 would co-operate as usual. The day arrived and we raised our banner at 10.15am ready for move off at 10.30am. At 10.30am we moved 50 yards (30 metres) and stood at that spot for one and a half hours. As marchers we were not happy, for we are all in the 80's plus range! However we have lodged a strong complaint with the Air Force Assoc. and we will bring up the matter at the next meeting. Informally, we have heard that the RSL again altered the format which disadvantaged many people, including our group.

So on to our Reunion luncheon at the CTA Club where traditional observances were made and camaraderie reigned supreme – as usual.

Thoughts for our future

It has become obvious that our marching numbers (individually and wheelchair bound people) behind our banner on Anzac Day are becoming fewer and fewer. However, we have been informed that our banner will always be welcome in the March provided it was carried by ex-squadron members' relatives wearing medals on the right breast. This is good to know and minor details will be put in place for this to be observed when necessary

What of our 454/459 Squadrons Assoc. when we lose our last veteran? This is a problem which will confront your Committee when that time arrives.

In the meantime, it has been suggested that we offer to relatives (sons, daughters etc) Associate Membership of our Association at \$10 per annum with the object of meeting on Anzac Day to commemorate the service of the relatives at a Luncheon as we do now. As this suggestion has not yet been considered by the full Committee we are canvassing opinions or alternatives from our members. As Secretary I would like to have your opinions on this matter.

Many Thanks,

Penny Griffiths
Secretary



454-459 Squadrons marching up George Street, Sydney, Anzac Day



ABSENT COMRADES

It is with regret that we have been notified of the passing of the undermentioned members:

Date	Member	State/ Country	Sqdn	Advised by
29.08.2009	JWN 'Jim' Ingoldby	SA	459	Bob Mitchell, SA.
17.07.2009	JAG 'Jack' Coates	UK	454	Tom Smith, WA.
01.07.2009	R.S. 'Bob' Andrews	NSW	454	His wife Mavis
24.04.2009	James 'Jo' Aitken	VIC	459	John Talbot

We say farewell to old friends and comrades, and extend our deepest sympathy to their families in their loss.

Lest we forget

Commanding Officer John Arthur Gordon "Jack" (Camel) COATES – DFC, MID, CBE [England] – RAF Pilot 74699 – 454 Sqdn. 29.8.1943 – 45.4.1944

Jack Coates was just 23 years old and all of 6' 6" tall in 1943 when he was sent to command the RAAF 454 Squadron flying the American Baltimore medium bomber in the North African desert. Many of the operations were reconnaissance sorties over the Aegean Sea. Coates flew a dangerous operation to photograph the new German early warning radar called 'Freya', he was mentioned in dispatches.



Above: Jack about to take off

One of his roles was locating shot down aircraft – an activity known as "sweeping the desert". "Camel" Coates proved to be an immensely popular CO who led from the front and displayed a keen interest in all his personnel.

Warrant Officer Robert "Bob" Sidney Thorburn ANDREWS – 454 RAAF WOP/AG – No. 422369 – Service - 22.12.44 to 14.8.45

During Bob's time in 454, he carried out formation daylight bombing of designated targets on German lines of communication over a wide area of Northern Italy, including Padua, Bologna and Conegliano.



Warrant Officer Bob Andrews

Later, 454 were converted into a night intruder squadron, air operations extended as far north as Verona, many of them involving low level flying ranging from a few hundred feet to 5,000 feet.

Bob's posting as a Wing Operator Air Gunner required him to conduct the formalities with base by Morse code when airborne, to use the Verey pistol at times, drop flares and operate the six guns (two free travel and four fixed firing to the rear). He also had to hang out of the open ventral hatch to see that all bombs went out OK. In 1966 Bob joined The Royal Aero Club at Bankstown, where he eventually gained his unrestricted pilots licence and night flying rating.

Flight Lieutenant James Kenneth "Joe" AITKEN, WAG No. 409366 - 459 Service - 1 Mar 44 to 6 Jan 45

Joe trained in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) graduating as an observer, navigator-bomb aimer. 459 Squadron started with Hudsons, converted to Venturas and later to Baltimores. He was involved in reconnaissance and daylight bombing in the Aegean. When he returned to Australia Joe took up a legal career, married and had 3 sons.





NOTICE BOARD

Website Revamp

As you may well have noticed our website has had a bit of a facelift and hopefully it is much easier to navigate around. If you are experiencing any issues with the site please use the 'Contact Us' option within the site – an example of this page as shown below. We hope to have more information on the site in due course and there are many members still to be added to the Squadron listings.



Your Name

Your Email

Questions

Squadron Silk Blazer Badges – 454 & 459 Squadrons

Penny our Secretary advises that she still has a few of the hand embroidered wire and silk blazer badges of your squadron for A\$12 each including postage. If you are interested you will need to place your orders asap, and you can make your cheques out to "454/459 Squadrons No. 2 Account". Don't miss out! Penny's mailing details are in the letterhead.

'The Taste Test'

Story by Kev O'Brien 454

One day we had been dropping a few bombs on Jerry [only 30] as usual, and he had reacted in the usual bad-tempered manner. We had crossed the front, the air was clear again, we had started to breathe again and pulse-rate had slowed to about 100 B.P.M. I had just wound down the belly hatch-cover, when I noticed something. I switched on my mike --- "Hey Ron, we must have got a lump of flak through the tank! It looks like petrol washing over this perspex!" Ron from the Cockpit --- "Rub your hand in it and smell it, that will tell you". Blue from the turret "Taste it!" Bunny from the nose "No, no, don't do that! It's O.K. don't worry about it."

Of course we all knew what it was but we never missed the chance to embarrass each other. If a red hot piece of shell casing had gone through the petrol tank our war service would have ended in spectacular fashion in the Italian sky!!

In Baltimores, the pilot and navigator each had his own cosy little compartment where he sat in lonely isolation. There was a length of hose that went through the fuselage in to the slipstream. This was a concession to comfort. Blue (Munce) and I didn't have one. Perhaps we were meant to open the bottom hatch - - - not recommended. Sometimes we dropped leaflets inviting Jerry to surrender and join his mates in five star comfortable P.O.W. camp. As often as not these leaflets blew right back into our compartment!!

You had to admire Bunny, he was able to connect with the hose through this uniform, flying suit and parachute harness from a sitting position. As well, the tale he could tell that night in the Mess over a few glasses of vino would have had a neat ending if it finished. "There was Kevvy down the back smelling and tasting it!"

“A Unique Travel Experience”

Story written by the late Bill East – 459 – [note – Bill flew with Joe Aitken]

Cruising the Pacific would usually be sufficient to gratify the urgings of the most virulent travel bug. We had just spent 14 wonderful days on a 40 tonne luxury liner - ‘The Miss America’ en-route to the war. Departing Melbourne, calling at Auckland and disembarking in San Francisco. The trans-Pacific trip will not even rate a mention, for I am about to record a most unique travel experience. Indeed, a never before and probably never again experience shared by 200 travelling as a party. How would you like exclusive use of a ‘State of the Art’ train?

As I sat in the luxurious observation car I pondered an unlikely situation, here we were, a party of 200 - hurtling at an express speed across America from San Francisco to Boston. Believe it or not, the entire fully staffed train had been placed at our disposal in San Francisco. I had been appointed one of a trio to ‘manage’ the trip, including the 200 participants. We were known as the Committee. With United States Government approval we were scheduled to spend up to a fortnight crossing the States – ‘The Pullman Troop Train’.

The **Pullman Palace Car Company**, founded by George Pullman, manufactured railroad cars in the mid to late 1800s through the early decades of the 20th century, during the boom of railroads. At the time the Pullman train was famous for its Sleeping and Dining Cars and it was the principal mode of transport between East and West America. Aeroplane travel had not yet become the norm. Pullman’s slogan read “Sleep Going to Keep Going”. Sit back as we go back to the era.

The Pullman cars looked sharp as they glistened in the sunlight. This train oozed class! Cigar smoking, friendly guards made sure we found our way along the never ending aisles of decadence. They were there at the start of each new day to make sure we woke up on time, greeting each of us with a delicious steaming hot cup of coffee. The sleeping cars were luxuriously appointed with every conceivable convenience for comfort and enjoyment.

If the Pullman sleeping car was a legend in its lifetime then the Pullman dining car was really over the top. Uniformed waiters glided through the car dispensing largesse. Famous personalities and film stars were photographed regularly embarking for Hollywood and vice-versa we became your typical tourist!

It should be explained that we were traversing the famed Santa Fe Trail. Early in this epic journey we met with the Head Guard and a representative of the Engine Drivers, (there were more than one)! At the meeting it was confirmed that the authorities in San Francisco had given us incredible latitude for this journey.



Our Committee of 3, joined by a representative of the train drivers selected fascinating stops for our journey. We wound our way through the Mojave Desert just south of Death Valley. We pulled in to Tucson which was once a Spanish army post, later becoming the capital of Arizona Territory. The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880 and discovery of nearby silver and copper deposits assured Tucson’s prosperity. Other fascinating places included Albuquerque, New Mexico, which history states in 1846 was occupied by the U.S. Army, here they built a fort, however the city was captured by Confederate forces in 1862. Once again the arrival of the railroad in the 1880’s spurred its growth. Further on Gallup, which had been founded in 1880 as a supply base for the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, is a major market for the nearby Hopi, Navajo, Zuni, and Acoma Indian reservations. Atchison a city in northeast Kansas, located on the Missouri River, has been an important rail, river, and road terminal since the Atchison & Topeka Railroad was chartered in 1859 however, the most spectacular stop over in my opinion had to be **Kansas City**.

As a Committee we planned to stay in Kansas City just the one day, from 10.00am till 12 midnight to be exact. The decision created headaches! Historically, Kansas City was a railhead for most mid-west cattle drives. A massive expanse of rail lines sprawled across the landscape!

By 12 midnight we had 200 well inebriated revellers trying to find their way back to one train! Or, as we say, in search of the proverbial 'needle in a haystack'! Not surprisingly we discovered later that we had left a dozen passengers behind, miraculously they turned up again in Boston.

As we moved on we scenically savoured the Rocky Mountains and Colorado a wonderland of alps and snow. As time slid by we had to pinch ourselves. Could this really be happening? Were we really luxuriating in a multi-million dollar train discovering the pioneering delights of the famed Santa Fe trail? So on we travelled to Chicago and Cleveland. Boston our ultimate destination was everything we had imagined. The Charles River, the proximity of Rhode Island, a fitting end to an amazing travel experience.



It was not the Santa Fe Company but the U.S. Government who supplied the luxury train for our "party of 200" and according to all our checks it appears that the US Government were not at all generous normally. As a contingent of Air Crew Officers being transported from Melbourne to the United Kingdom as part of the war effort in the 1940's we clearly had a the best start you could hope for under the circumstances.

Just for a Laugh

A plane with German para-troopers above Greece, the instructor guides every single parachutist to the door and pushes him out. "Come on , come on , come on !" "We don't have time to mess around !" "Out with you cowards!" "Come on ! The next one ! Go go go!" But one of them resists the jump. He kicks, punches and screams, and tries to stem his legs against the doorframe. "Out with you !" "We have no time for cowards !" At last, the instructor gives him a kick and he flies out of the door... The remaining parachutists start to laugh.. "You think that was funny or what ?" "Funny ? Yes indeed sir.....that was the pilot"

The following are some great 'life' statements sent in by Bob Mitchell 454, South Australia.

*I love cooking with wine – sometimes I even put it in the food!
Everyone has a photographic memory, some, like me, just don't have any film.*

*Never be too open minded, your brains could fall out.
If you look like your passport picture then you probably need the trip.
Middle age is when the broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.*

*Whatever hits the fan will not be evenly distributed.
..... and some more from an anon. contributor...*

*Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time because then you won't have a leg to stand on.
When everything's coming your way then you're in the wrong lane.
Accept that some days you're the pigeon and some days you're the statue.*

*The second mouse gets the cheese!
Drive safely it's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker!*