

35 SQN. Birthday.

Back on the 27th February 1942 at RAAF Base Pearce a young LAC Alfred Boyd and another LAC were told to report to Flying Officer Giles. He informed them that the three of them were now members of a new unit known as 35 Sqn.

The unit was soon allocated a De Havilland Fox Moth aircraft and an ex Air Ambulance De Havilland Dragon Rapide and this allowed the Squadron to commence operations on 11 March 1942. The squadron initially operated a motley collection of aircraft mostly unsuitable for transport operations. They flew mostly within Western Australia but as they acquired more aircraft they began to operate through Australia. In December 1943 they received the DC3 Dakota and were then able to operate as a transport unit in PNG and South West Pacific area. Post war the squadron helped repatriate PoWs back to Australia before being disbanded on 19 June 1946. The squadron made a considerable contribution to transport operations and the war effort during its four years of service.

We now move forward to July 1964. The third flight of three new Caribou aircraft were enroute from Toronto to Richmond. When they arrived at Butterworth, they were told not to proceed to Darwin but to turn left and fly to Viet Nam. They were now going to war. They arrived in Saigon on the 8th August and became the RAAF Transport Flight Viet Nam. This small detachment became the nucleus for the reformation of No. 35 Sqn. on the 1st June 1966.

History was now repeating itself. In 1942 the squadron had three personnel and no aircraft initially and now in Viet Nam we had three aircraft with crews but no ground staff, facilities or equipment. We started operating within days of arriving in country and with very little Caribou knowledge or experience it was a steep learning curve for all concerned.

The common theme between the events of 1942 and 1964 is the squadron personal. In both cases both air and ground crews fully co-operated and respected each other for the common good of the unit. Through difficult and hazardous conditions we all worked tirelessly to maintain the aircraft serviceability rate and to operate the aircraft at its maximum utilization.

I don't have any figures for WW11 but I do know what 35 Squadron achieved in Viet Nam. In seven and a half years with six, sometimes seven, aircraft we flew 81,000 sorties totalling 44,000 flying hours, carried 680,000 passengers and 46 million kilos of freight. 35 Squadron consistently outperformed any other transport unit in country, flying only 1.4 percent of transport missions but delivering 7-8 percent of the total freight airlifted. These figures were only achievable by the training, expertise and dedication of all the personnel who served with the squadron. Because of these impressive statistics 35 Squadron was awarded the Republic of Viet Nam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation which current squadron members now wear.

After 35 Squadron returned to Australia its efficiency and effectiveness did not decrease. Because of the unit's high standard of proficiency it was awarded the Duke of Gloucester Cup in October 1976 and again in August 1983. Also at this time 35 Squadron became the only RAAF unit to operate both fixed and rotary wing aircraft at the one time

As you can see, 35 Squadron has achieved a long and proud history of service to the ADF and Australia in general. This has covered war service, civil aid and disaster relief both here and overseas. You people are now part of that history. It is a proud history of innovation and determination to excel.

I am confident that the present members of 35 Squadron are as dedicated and enthusiastic as the previous members of the unit have demonstrated and will continue to uphold the proud tradition of 35 Squadron into the future.

Thank you and Happy 79th Birthday 35 Squadron. May we celebrate many more birthdays together. Look forward to seeing you all at the Jade Buddha on ANZAC Day.