

Two Mates lost in World War II

Greg Ryan

In the front row of a 1934 Under 16 football team photo from Albury's Christian Brothers' College, undefeated in local schoolboy competition, sat two lads who shared much in common.

James Reid was born in Wagga, Edward (Ted) Reis in Albury. Ted was team captain. The surnames of the two boys differed by just the last letter, both grew up in Albury, both attended the same school, both were great football and tennis players. As young men, both became RAAF pilots and tragically, both were killed in World War II while attached to RAF squadrons flying out of India.



James Reis left and Ted Reis right as part of the under 16 CBC team.

Edward Loughry Reis was killed in India in an 'aircraft accident' on October 27, 1942. His Vultee Vengeance crashed near Begumpet Aerodrome, Hyderabad, India. An account of the crash appears in the website rafcommands.com: "Reis was the fourth in the formation of six Vengeances heading out to Madras. As the Vengeance gathered speed on the runway it slowly drifted on to the grass side of the runway and got airborne. Now with the drift, the aircraft flew slowly towards an elevated floodlight. Those watching thought that Reis cleared the floodlight, but a puff of white powder emerged as the wing struck the obstruction. The Vengeance flipped over onto its back and crashed straight into the ground. Edward 'Ted' Reis was killed instantly. His gunner Marklew was pulled out grievously injured, and passed away a few minutes later."

The *Border Morning Mail* reported that Ted "enlisted in Brisbane at the outbreak of war; his call to the RAAF came in August 1940, and his early training was completed in Australia under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In March 1941 he gained the rank of pilot officer and in April of this year, after a course of operational training under the Bomber Command in England, came well-earned promotion to flying officer. Following upon this, he was transferred to serve in India with a RAF squadron. It was in the course of his duty there that he lost his life on October 27, at the age of 24. Ted will be well

as an outstanding player and an enthusiastic member of the North Albury Tennis Club. On the football field, too, he made his mark."

Ted was buried in the Madras War Cemetery, Chennai, India. His name is well remembered in Albury, especially by his extended family.

James Warwick Davison Reid was killed over Burma on February 10, 1945 and has been virtually forgotten locally. The *Border Morning Mail* reported on February 20, 1945 under his photo and the heading "Jimmy Reid is Missing" that "Jimmy Reid, serving with the RAAF abroad has been posted missing. Jimmy, a star tennis player, was employed at Maples Albury branch prior to joining up. A great lad, always with a smile, he had a host of friends."

There was no further mention of 'Jimmy' in later editions of the *Border Morning Mail*. This was perhaps because he had no family left in Albury, his mother had died in 1935 and his father and his sister Joan had moved to Manly before James had enlisted.

James had relatives in Deniliquin and in May 1945, the Deniliquin *Pastoral Times* published an official letter addressed to his father from the Department of Air:

"A written report has been received from your son's unit which states that your son took off in a Dakota aircraft in company with three other aircraft on a special operation over Burma. Your son's aircraft was last seen over the target, and all four aircraft sent messages stating that the sortie was successful and asked for bearing from base. The three accompanying pilots upon returning stated that the weather over the Chin Hills, which lay between them and the base, was extremely bad; cumulus clouds were up to 15,000 feet or more. In the clouds turbulence was excessive, and the pilots reported that the aircraft were almost uncontrollable. Extensive air searches were carried out in the endeavor to locate the missing aircraft, but it is greatly regretted that the results were negative, and nothing further has been heard concerning the aircraft since the navigator asked for the bearing to base. May, I extend to you the very sincere sympathy of this department in your suffering."

A further article of July 12, 1946 in the same newspaper quoted that the Air Ministry London "presumes that your son lost his life on 10 Feb 1945 ... every effort will be made to obtain information which may give you the comfort of more definite knowledge of the manner in which your son lost his life."

In 2006 Alan Storr, ex-RAAF, published "Missing with no Grave," a book "dedicated to the memory of some brave young members of the Royal Australian Air Force, missing while serving on attachment with the Royal Air Force or other Air Forces during the Second World War." Storr's entry on James Read records:

"Dakota KJ 927 of 357 Squadron RAF India, failed to return to base from a ferry flight mission [dropping supplies to allied troops] in Burma on 10 February 1945. A wireless message from KJ 927 reported the aircraft over the target area in cloud and that the turbulence was excessive with the aircraft almost uncontrollable. There was no report of a forced landing and it was assumed that the aircraft had crashed as the range limit had been exceeded. Following post war enquiries and investigations it was recorded that the missing crew (pilot Reid and four crew) had no known grave."

Lest We Forget