

MORGAN, LANCE

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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

The following biographical details are required for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London.

SURNAME MORGAN NUMBER

CHRISTIAN NAMES LANE

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING F/O

DECREES ETC.

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE

EDUCATED

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE

PLACES OF TRAINING

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES

SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC.

FATHER

WIFE

HOME ADDRESS TAGRAH S. AUSTRALIA

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE OF EMBARKATION

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AWARDS

CATEGORY INTERVIEWS

RADIO OTHER REFERENCES

Misc V.H.

Unable to locate personal file

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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS

2029

R.A.A.F. Bulletin No. 356

March 9, 1944

(Feature)

FOUR SORTIES, FOUR COMBATS

Adventures of Australian in R.C.A.F.

To an already vivid civil career, Flying Officer Lance Morgan, of Toorak, South Australia, airgunner, who is one of the small group of Australian members of Canadian squadrons in Britain, has just added the experience of four air combats in his first four bombing sorties.

His Canadian comrades say that Morgan attracts adventure as some people attract success; and here, in the picturesque style of a Canadian Service writer, is the story:

Lance Morgan, in his first four bombing flights, has had to use his guns on each trip, and already has two damaged enemy aircraft to his credit.

Both victories were fought over the flames of Berlin. The first encounter happened while Lance's Lancaster was still heavy with bombs; they had not yet reached their target area.

A Ju.188, a twin-engined night fighter with a midupper turret, appeared flying head on for the bomber, its guns spitting incessantly. Yet not one tracer hit the lumbering target. As the German kite sped by, its midupper gunner swung his turret to rake the Lancaster but he too missed. Lance figures Lady Luck was with them that night. He was ready behind the guns of his midupper turret when the main event of the night began.

They still had not dropped their bombs when a single-engined night fighter streaked out of the dark sky, from the port above. The great bomber corkscrewed and rolled, trying to shake it off. But the night fighter raced relentlessly after them until Lance's guns spat 300 rounds at it. He saw his tracers dotting the German aircraft just before it broke off and dived.

The Lanc. roared on and dumped its deathload where it would do Berlin the least good.

Lance's next successful flying battle happened when he was in the midupper turret of the Lanc. skippered by the squadron C.O., Wing Commander D.S. "Jake" Jacobs, D.F.C., of Toronto. He is in the Winco's regular crew now.

They were in the flak-stormy night sky over Berlin, their bombs discharged, their port outer engine afire.

It was a dangerous spot and Wing Commander Jacobs told them to don their parachutes. Some instinct made Lance stay on lookout in his turret. As several crew members left their posts to get into their chutes, a night fighter charged the Lancaster.

The Lanc. twisted into a series of combat manoeuvres as Lance's guns opened up. Again he saw his bullets bite into a German aircraft. Then the Lanc. nosed over and screamed toward the fires below. When it pulled out of the dive the fighter could not be seen.

The port outer engine was still afire but they got it out, feathered the engine and flew back on the remaining three.

Before becoming an air gunner Lance did a spell with the R.C.A.F. in Canada as a Works and Buildings officer. During his service in Canada he became engaged to a Winnipeg girl, Miss Rhoda Jones (Florence Apts., Arlington Street).

Four Sorties

As a student of agricultural science at Scotch College in Australia, he distinguished himself in inter-collegiate boxing and swimming. He also took his private pilot's licence under the personal instruction of the famous Jim Mollison.

Years later, he was to be disappointed when after travelling thousands of miles to enlist in the Canadian Air Force as a pilot he found that he was over the age limit for that calling. Now 36, he makes an efficient air gunner.

The wanderlust got into his blood in 1931 during a pleasure trip to Java, Singapore, China and Japan. He returned to Australia but in the following year he left for China and hasn't been back since. Lance plans a visit home "after the war."

In China his reckless career got well under way. He made his living selling tanks and armoured cars. But the exploit he is proudest of is a minor one; he sold a Morris car to a gent named Chiang Kai-Shek, who was also among his best customers for munitions of war.

In the interims of this dangerous business he trained with the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. Lance still wears the insignia of that gallant but doomed organization on his Air Force battledress. Another souvenir from the Corps is a silver flask on which is inscribed the fact that Lance won a tent-pegging championship of theirs. Tent-pegging is a risky Anglo-Indian sport: men armed with lances and riding horses charge full tilt at tent pegs stuck in the ground and endeavour to hoist them up by spearing them. Lance did the trick a little better than anyone else the year he competed but he still regrets that the Corps didn't put in more time on modern battle training and less on such pukka-pukka affairs.

Though he had mastered the Malayan language and a little Chinese, he tired of the intrigues of the Orient in 1935 and travelled to Argentina. There he worked with an English Diesel motor firm. He also tried oil mining in that country.

Then came a chance to join a crocodile-hunting expedition to the jungle-sequestered headwaters of the Amazon. Lance jumped at it.

On his way out of Argentina native police made the fantastic mistake of arresting him as a mass-murderer. He was imprisoned on a charge of having committed 12 or so killings! After a short time in jail his employers managed to get him freed.

The voyage to the headwaters of the great river was a lifetime's adventure in itself. His expedition landed at the port of Guayaquil in Ecuador, crossed the towering Andes and descended their slopes into the steaming, little-known jungles below.

Some of the most savage country in the world lies in that green hell. The swampy jungle is a place of monstrous vegetation, great cats, enormous snakes and huge spiders. Most dangerous of all are the head-hunting Indians to whom a white man's head is just an ornament for the home.

Lance made friends with them, visited their villages, bought three shrunken human heads as souvenirs. They showed him a red-haired one, too rare a novelty to sell. It had belonged to an American who they had disliked.

With his expedition Lance harpooned and shot crocodiles for their skins. He also tried his marksmanship on jaguars and the fierce black puma, and has several pelts to show for his efforts.

On the way back he decided to stop in the hot little Republic of the Equator and, with a partner, settled down to running a lumber mill in the back country.

Lance was fighting the Axis as a part-time occupation long before he came up to Canada to make it his full-time business.

Four Sorties

With an American who was out to locate secret Nazi radio stations on behalf of an un-named agency, and another American, Lance tracked down three of the Nazi espionage-communication centres in Ecuador.

Though their job was only to locate the stations, the two Americans and the Aussie actually burned down all three. At one there was a gunfight when Lance and his pals, all armed, rushed the Nazi hide-out. In the exchange of shots that followed, Lance got an arm wound, the American agent a clean wound through the chest. But one Nazi lay riddled when it was over and two more and an Ecuadorean had escaped from the house and disappeared into the jungle. The American recovered, and Lance had another souvenir for his collection, a beautiful Luger revolver for which the dead Nazi no longer had any use.

Later Lance heard of a Jap expedition to find gold in the Ecuadorean jungle. He decided to investigate this for himself, hired a canoe and five natives and sneaked up the jungle river that his quarry had taken to reach their destination. By careful scouting he found the Japs clearing the jungle for an airfield! It was within bombing range of the Panama Canal and the time was June '41, a few months before Pearl Harbour!

Lance reported the matter immediately to the British Consul in Guayaquil who took the matter up with the Ecuadorean Government. A few days later a passenger plane landed at the airport of the nearby town of Esmeraldas. An armed guard emerged and disappeared into the jungle. They returned with the Japs in protective custody and flew them to the capital, Quito.

There was a desultory unofficial war going on at the time between Ecuador and Peru and the natives had an idea that Japan was behind it. The Ecuadorean Government told the Japs that because it feared the natives might harm them under the circumstances, it could not permit them to further their gold-mining!

Despite his anti-Axis activities, which also included a number of brawls with arrogant Germans and Italians in Guayaquil, Lance found himself tiring of the routine of the lumber mill. So late in '41 he began the long journey to Canada and, at last, Britain and the midupper turret of a Canadian night bomber.

The bomber by the way is called Santa Maria. When he's not flying in it, seeing that his guns are in good shape or chatting with his aircrew pals in the crew-room, Lance may usually be found nowadays behind the wheel of his stripped-down little racing car. The Canucks on his squadron call it "The Green Hornet."

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