



GORDON ROY COLQUIST

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IMMOGEN PERTINI

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Figure 1: Corporal Gordon Roy Colquist, 1945
(Lynette Colquist's private collection)

No one knew if the fighting would cease, or how much blood was to be shed, it was the biggest war ever seen. World War II was a difference of opinion amongst two opposing factions, peaking almost immediately after WWI and resulting in the deaths of millions of innocent civilians and soldiers worldwide (History.com, 2019). It evolved from limitations within the terms associated with the Treaty of Versailles, sparking agitation in Germany, Italy and Japan. From the outset Great Britain offered only sympathy, blindly negating any real solutions (BBC.co.uk, 2020). Subsequently, tensions manifested, oppositions amounted and the League of Nations was formed to actively settle disputes as they arose, yet failed miserably. This harrowing miscalculation caused uncertainty around the globe, as peace and promise struggled to be maintained. Both Japan and Italy were on a mission of economic expansion, invading and occupying other countries, as well as engaging in trade with Germany, which in turn provided Hitler with the power and resources he needed for Germany to prosper (Wells, 2014). In an attempt to resolve the crisis British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler and a policy of appeasement was instituted to avoid any war. The

Munich agreement, although signed by Hitler was not honoured. Hitler continued in his unbridled expansion of German territories forcing the hand of the Allies to a Second World War (Australian War Memorial, 2020).

Accordingly, Australia, part of the commonwealth, governed by the British Imperial War Cabinet joined the campaign (Wells, 2014). Australians fought in battles against the Germans and Italians in Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean, and the Japanese in South East Asia, the Pacific and the Australian mainland (Wells, 2014). Thousands of courageous Australian men and women contributed, serving in the Navy, Army, Airforce or Nursing (Anzacportal.dav.gov.au, 2019). Stories of bravery, mateship and perseverance have emanated from these annals, one such story is that of Corporal Gordon Roy Colquist (Figure 1) "a gentleman, loyal and brave" (L. Colquist, 2020, personal communications, 2nd April).

Gordon Roy Colquist was born on December 26th 1922, in Greenock, Barossa Valley, South Australia (Figure 2). Gordon was the last-born child to his Swedish father, Herman Julius Karlvist and Scottish mother, Matilda Rose Née-Monson. His father was a boiler, his mother a casual maid (Colquist, 2003). After marrying the year they met, Gordon's mother gave birth to their first child, Harold Leonard Karlvist on November 17th 1916, and two years later on August 10th, birthed a second son, Laurence George Karlvist (National Archives of Australia, 2000). Gordon's parents then welcomed him into the world four years later, where the family name was changed from Karlvist to Colquist, as it sounded all too German (Colquist, 2003).

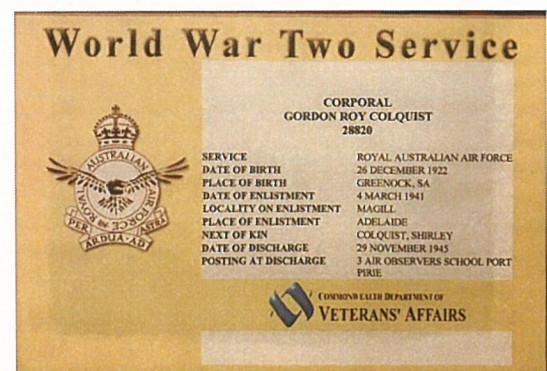


Figure 2: Gordon Roy Colquist's WWII Servicemen Record (National Archives of Australia, 2000)

In the 1920s, shortly after Gordon's birth, the family joined the tight-knit community at Seppelts Vineyard, where Gordon's father worked as a boiler (Seppelt.com.au, 2020). By 1928 when Gordon was just six years old, his father was approached by Penfolds and offered a job at Magill Cellars. This saw the family move to a little cottage at the heart of Penfolds estate (Colquist, 2003). The community at Magill was scarce and the

wages low, in spite of this every family showed great compassion for one another, as Gordon recalled, "If somebody had fowls, and somebody else grew vegetables, it was shared around" (Colquist, 2003).

Gordon attended Magill Primary School and then went onto Norwood Technical High School (Figure 3), where he achieved a sheet metal diploma (Marryatville History, 2020). Shortly after, at the age of fifteen, Gordon started working at Penfolds (Penfolds.com, 2020).



Figure 3: A photograph of Gordon Roy Colquist at Norwood Technical High School, 1936. Gordon is seated second row, first on the left (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

On the 4th of March 1941, Gordon, only eighteen years of age enlisted in the air force with his parents consent. He was called up for service just 20 days later (Figure 2). Gordon commenced his training immediately at the Air Observers School in Mount Gambier (Lang, 2018). From here he was sent to Britain to join the 452 Squadron, as an aircraft mechanic. Before arriving in Britain via the Trans-Atlantic route, Gordon was subjected to more rigorous training in New Zealand, Fiji and Halifax Canada, where he acquired advanced engineering skills (Australian War Memorial, 2020).

When Gordon embarked from Halifax, concluding his training and continuing on to Britain, his ship collided with an iceberg and was severely damaged, so much so that reinforcements were called to return them to Halifax (Schwinghamer, 2020). Despite this setback, Gordon was placed on another boat and sent on to Liverpool, where in an interview in 2003, Gordon re-called "half way across the Atlantic on the way to Liverpool the ship encountered a German submarine" (Colquist, 2003). Fortuitously, other ships came to their aid, allowing them to dodge the pistons blown their way, permitting them to escape (Colquist, 2003).

Moving at half speed his ship eventually landed at Liverpool, where he joined the Spitfire Squadron for several days, later transferring to the night fighter-bombers (McGowen, 2018). Shortly after he was stationed in Sierra Leone in Africa (see figure 4), where the 452 squadron, maintenance and fighter pilots alike spent many days and nights guarding battleships from the Germans. This time spent together as a unit established the means for "life-long friendships" (Colquist, 2003).



Figure 4: A photograph of Gordon Colquist and members of the 452 Squadron in Sierra Leone, 1941. Gordon is first on the right (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

By July of 1941 Gordon's squadron had encamped to Kirton-in-Lindsey (Figure 5), where he repaired Super-Marine Spitfires (Lang 2020). From this base Gordon worked tirelessly, repairing all spitfires so that the 452 squadron could conduct regular defensive patrols over the English Channel (Colquist, 2003).



Figure 5: Aerial photograph of RAF Kirton in Lindsey, showing the technical site with three C-Type hangars to the top (north), 27 July 1948. (Americanairmuseum.com)

During its first year of operations his squadron established itself as one of the most successful squadrons in Fighter Command, destroying 62 enemy aircrafts and damaging another 17 (Barnes, 2000). They also ravaged a German destroyer with a strafing attack mounted during the "dash", through the English Channel on February 11th, 1942 (Australian War Memorial, 2020).

Under orders to return to Australia for training, the 452 Squadron withdrew from operations in Britain on March 23rd, 1942. They arrived in Melbourne on the 13th of August, re-assembling at Richmond Airfield, New South Wales on the 7th of September (Lang, 2020). The squadron commenced refresher training at Richmond, with its Spitfires having being commandeered in

transit by the RAF in the Middle East (Airforce.gov.au, 2020). Gordon trained with his maintenance crew throughout his whole time in Richmond (Colquist, 2003).

After finishing training the 452 Squadron travelled to Darwin on January 17th 1943, ready to defend their soil against the Japanese (Australian War Memorial, 2020). After a successful victory, the squadron relocated to Strauss on February 1st, having brief leave between the 9th and 27th of March, 1943 (Helson, 1997). During leave, Gordon was billeted out to Mount Gambier to Shirley May Norman's cousin. It was here that he was first introduced to Shirley, became well acquainted with her and when interviewed in 2003 said he had developed a "deep fondness for her" (Colquist, 2003). As Gordon left Mt Gambier to be reunited with his squadron he left with the promise to write to Shirley every other day, of which he did (L. Colquist, 2020, personal communication, 2nd April).

Gordon's squadron protected Darwin until June 31st, 1944, traversing on to Sattler in the Northern Territory thereafter, where they were employed in ground attack for the remainder of the war (Australian War Memorial, 2020) (Figure 6). Initially, the squadron operated against targets in the Dutch East Indies, but on the 11th of December 1944 they joined the 1st Tactical Air Force and relocated to Morotai to support Australian operations in Borneo (Lang, 2020).

The squadron's ground crew, in which Gordon was a part of, established themselves at the airfield in Tarakan on May 10th 1945 (Chen, 2006). The squadron's last sorties were flown on the 10th of August 1945, and only three months later they were disbanded (Helson, 1997).



Figure 6: A photograph of Gordon Roy Colquist and two members of the 452 Squadron in Darwin in 1944. Gordon is first on the left walking past. (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

After four and a half years of service, Gordon was offered a position in the army of occupation in Japan, however he declined as the proposition meant longer years in the hot city of Butterworth, Malaysia (Colquist, 2003). Hence, on November 29th 1945 Gordon was discharged from the army Air Observers School in Port Pirie (see Figure 2) and headed home to start his life with Shirley Norman.

After marrying Shirley in 1946, Gordon returned to work at Penfolds (Colquist, 2003). In 1948, Gordon had his first child, Norman Roy Colquist on the 10th of September, and two years later his second, Lynette Joy Colquist on the 1st of June (National library of Australia, 2020).

During the year of 1951, Gordon helped to create the experimental basis of the Penfolds Grange (Penfolds.com, 2020). In 1952 Gordon's third child was born, Barry Ian Colquist on the 27th of July (National Library of Australia, 2020). In that same year Max Schubert travelled from Penfolds in Adelaide to France, refining his knowledge, returning with hopes of improving the Grange (Gent, 2018). By 1956, after the birth of Gordon's last child Glenys Dianne Colquist on the 27th of October, Ray Beckwith joined the team at Penfolds and the Grange turned a corner (Colquist, 2003; National Library of Australia, 2020).

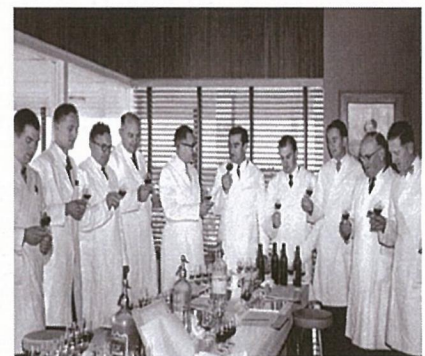


Figure 7: Gordon Roy Colquist and the members of the Penfolds team. Gordon is second on the left. (Penfolds history.com)

Gordon was transferred into the laboratory at Penfolds to test red wines, where he learnt the importance of pre-bottling and after-bottling (Penfolds.com, 2020), (Figure 7). Shortly after the Grange was refined, having the perfect ratio of shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine grew in popularity worldwide winning more than 50 gold medals, being labelled "the most magnificent wine" (Schubert, 2017).

After the success of the Penfolds Grange, Gordon continued to work in the vintage cellar up until he retired in 1988, exactly 50 years to the day he started (Colquist, 2003). He was spoilt with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren before peacefully passing in his sleep on May 21st, 2009 (L. Colquist, 2020, personal communication, 2nd April).

PART A: 1498 WORDS

Gordon retained a collection of medals in which he had earned from his service in WWII. From 1939-1945 he was decorated with the 1939-1940 Star Medal, Australian Defence Medal, The Defence of England Medal and The Australian service Medal as seen from left to right in Figure 8. These medals are symbols of his extraordinary sacrifice, his virtues and his spirit, the spirit of an ANZAC.



Figure 8: Gordon Roy Colquist's personal collection of medals received from service.

Corporal Gordon Roy Colquist was a genuine ANZAC. He had all the values of a true serviceman and more, he transpired the virtues of courage, perseverance, mate-ship and resourcefulness. He not only possessed passion for Australia, he had pride and honour for it too (Colquist, 2003). These themes, these values could be seen through his courage and mate-ship. Gordon was only eighteen when he voluntarily enlisted and was sent off to war, into the unknown (Colquist, 2003). This in itself at such a young age is the epitome of courage. Faced with extermination by a German submarine on the way to Liverpool, he showed bravery. Luckily his ship managed to avoid the inbound pistons, sustaining no physical damage, yet the mental angst shared by all on board, Gordon included would have been extreme. To not know if you were going to live or die, but to have to pick yourself up and continue on displayed great mettle. Gordon was resolute and determined throughout his whole time in service, persevering, maintaining a level of valour that allowed him to do his job to the highest levels, under extreme pressure, in a field of which he had no prior knowledge (L. Colquist, 2020, personal communication, 2nd April).



Figure 9: A photograph taken by Gordon Roy Colquist of members of the 452 Squadron swimming in a waterhole in Darwin in 1943. (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Many long lasting friendships were made and cemented by Gordon during his time in the 452 squadron (Colquist, 2003). After long days of work repairing spitfires, Gordon would often spend the rest of the afternoon with his squadron, "having a laugh, regaling their lives before the war and after" (Colquist, 2003). When times were difficult Gordon always felt the hands of his mates supporting him, as he would do for them (Colquist, 2003). This mate-ship they shared was unwavering. Encamped in Darwin they generally found themselves in the waterhole every day after work as can be seen in figure 9. When Gordon was discharged he immediately reconnected with some of his close friends from the squadron, and it wasn't long before he progressed to seeing them each and every week, alongside the usual ANZAC Parades (Figure 10), Dawn Services, birthdays (Figure 11) and births. His mate-ship with these men continued



Figure 10: A photograph of Gordon Roy Colquist attending the yearly ANZAC day parade in Adelaide in 1988 with other members of the 452 Squadron. Gordon is in the middle at the front. (Lynette Colquist's own private collection)



Figure 11: Gordon Roy Colquist's close friends from the 452 Squadron gathered together for Gordon's birthday in the year 1988. Gordon is third from the left. (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

after his death as they rallied around his widow and continued to do so until her passing (L. Colquist, 2020, personal communication, 2nd April).

Although Gordon did not serve on the battlefield, without him and those that maintained the machines of war, there would have been a limited amount of Spitfires to defend Britain, Sierra Leone and Darwin, the Japanese might have invaded Australia and the Germans may have taken the British Channel. Gordon in his service was a true Australian, ANZAC and my Great-Grandfather, and without him and the many others that contributed our lives could be so very different.

PART B: 499 WORDS

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IMAGES/FIGURES:

Figure 1 - Colquist, G. 1945. Corporal Gordon Roy Colquist. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 2 - National Archives of Australia (2000), Gordon Roy Colquist's WWII Servicemen Record. Australian Government, Adelaide, South Australia, viewed 3 April 2020, <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=6343499&isAv=N>>.

Figure 3 - Colquist, G. 1936. Gordon Roy Colquist at Norwood Technical High School. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 4 - American Air Museum (2000). Aerial photograph of RAF Kirton in Lindsey showing, the technical site with three C-Type hangars to the top (north), 27 July 1948. Royal Air force. <<http://www.americanairmuseum.com/place/202>>

Figure 5 - Colquist, G. 1941. Gordon Roy Colquist and members of the 452 Squadron in Sierra Leone. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 6 - Colquist, G. 1944. Gordon Roy Colquist and two members of the 452 Squadron pictured next to a spitfire plane in Darwin [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 7 - Penfolds.com (2020), Penfolds History, Adelaide, South Australia. Viewed 3 April 2020, <<https://www.penfolds.com/en-au/about-penfolds/heritage/our-history>>.

Figure 8 - Colquist, G. 2020. Gordon Roy Colquist's personal collection of medals received from service. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 9 - Colquist, G. 1943. Members of the 452 Squadron swimming in a nearby waterhole in Darwin. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 10 - Colquist, G. 1996. Gordon Roy Colquist attending yearly ANZAC parade with 452 Squadron members. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

Figure 11 - Colquist, G. 1998. Gordon Roy Colquist and close friends from the 452 Squadron gathered together. [photograph] (Lynette Colquist's own private collection).

