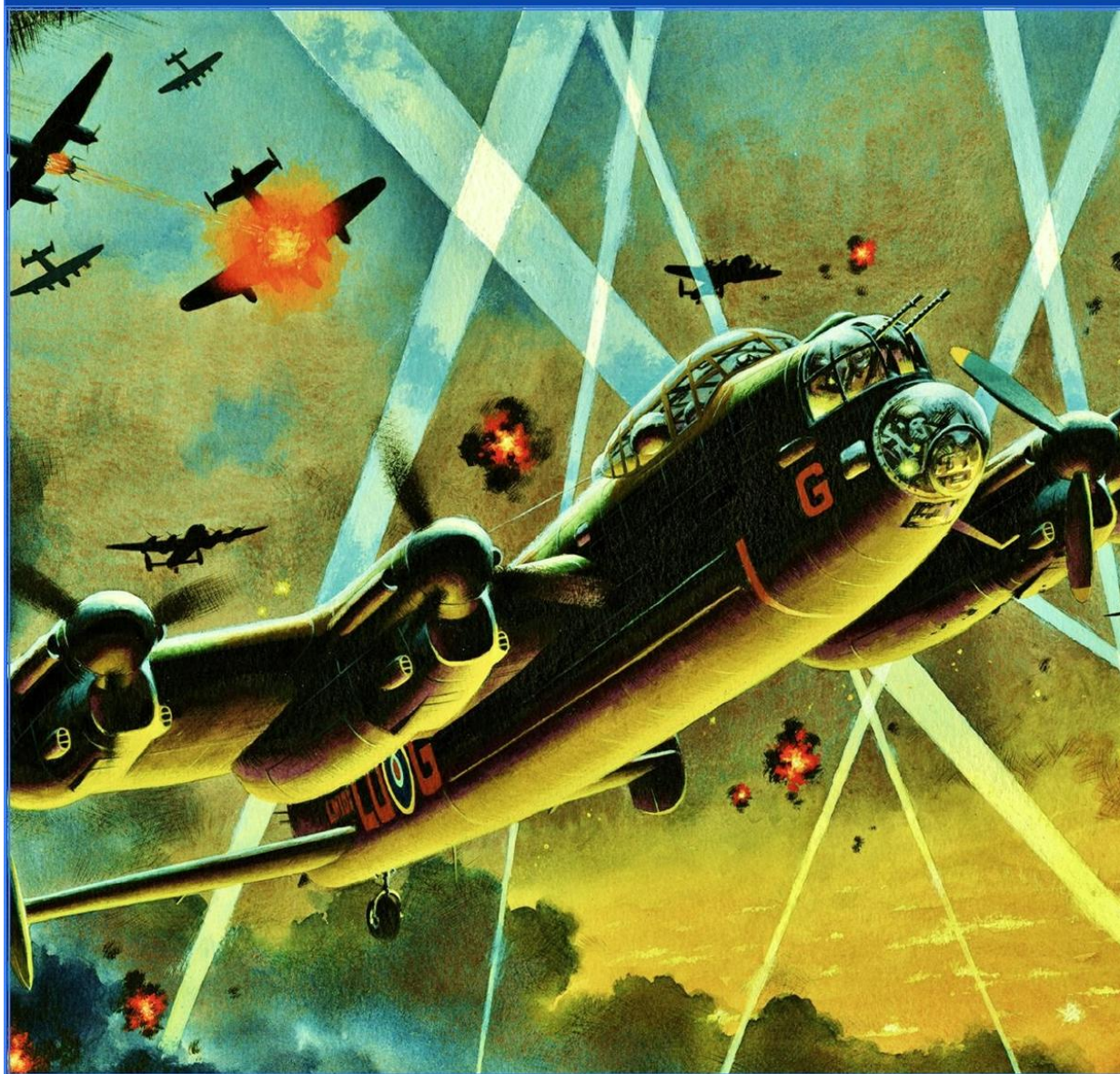


Wings of Valour

In Honour of Australian Air Force Cadets, 7 Wing



Charles Page

In *Wings of Valour* we follow the brave deeds of Australian Air Force Cadets 7 Wing WA, who died in service, and although saddened by their loss, we take pride in their achievement. Writing this book has been a journey of privilege and discovery.

Finding the names of the West Australian air cadets who died in service ensured they would not be forgotten, but what of their lives? For the sake of their sacrifice, and our heritage, there was a compelling need to put faces to the names and stories to the names. Thus began an intensive search that has reaped great rewards.

The stories that unfolded from seventy year old files never ceased to amaze. Of the 48 Honour Roll cadets, 32 died in WWII, 3 in the Korean War, 6 in the Vietnam War, and 7 post-1945. Many of these cadets never reached their 21st birthday, but their experiences were extraordinary, although ultimately tragic.

Finding these men and their stories was something that needed to be done, because our duty of care extends beyond the field of battle. I hope when you read these stories you will care as deeply as I did when I recreated their short lives. We can look back with pride.

Charles Page is a retired international airline pilot, with over 15,000 flying hours. Aircraft flown include the DC-3, DC-6, Convair 640, Electra, Hercules, 707, 747-200, and 747-400. His published books include *Vengeance of the Outback*, and *Wings of Destiny*, which was selected for the Chief of Air Force's RAAF Reading List in 2010. Charles' interest in the Australian Air Force Cadets stems from his time as a cadet in the Air Training Corps.

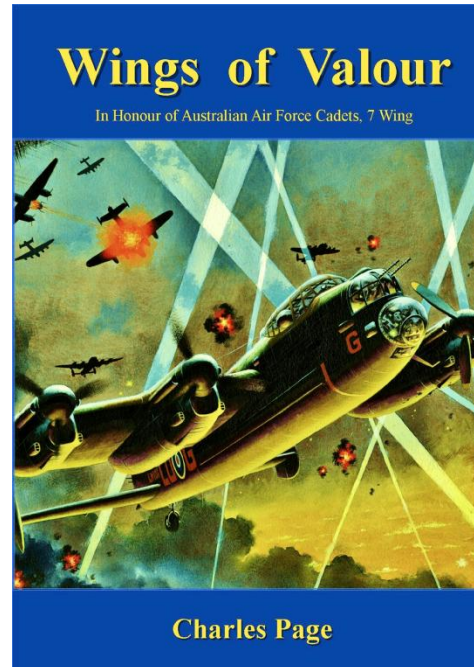


Wings of Valour

In Honour of AAFC 7 Wing WA

In December 2016, 7 Wing (WA) AAFC became the first Wing in Australia to have an Honour Roll Board of cadets who died in service. The Honour Board was funded by a DVA grant and researched and designed by Charles Page and Mike Hampson, of RAAFA WA AAFC Branch.

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And now 7 Wing WA is the first Wing to have a Book of Remembrance, in the form of *Wings of Valour* by Charles Page. On 5 January 2018 at 7 Wing HQ Australian Air Force Cadets, RAAF Pearce, a glass topped jarrah cabinet was placed under the recently installed Honour Board. The cabinet was designed by Charles Page at the request of Wing Commander (AAFC) Rob Caldera, OC 7 Wing WA. The cabinet displays a copy of the book *Wings of Valour*. Each cadet has two facing pages of biography and photographs, and the pages will be turned at regular intervals.

Other copies of the book have been sent to AAFC National HQ, National Library Australia, Australian War Memorial, the RAAF Museum Point Cook, the RAAF Heritage Library, the Battye Library, and the Aviation Heritage Museum, Bull Creek WA. The book records the brave deeds of the 49 AAFC cadets from Western Australia, who died in service. Of these 49 cadets, 32 died in WWII, 3 in the Korean War, 6 in the Vietnam War, and 8 in tragic accidents.

The stories that unfolded from 70-year-old files never ceased to amaze. Finding these men and their stories was something that needed to be done, because our duty of care extends beyond the field of battle.

One of the most tragic cases is that of Beaufighter pilot Billy McGuigan who belonged to ATC 76 Squadron Fremantle, was shot down in the Celebes Islands, captured by the Japanese, but then killed in war atrocity just before just before the end of WWII.

In the European theatre, air gunner Raymond Broad's Lancaster was shot down by a night fighter. After receiving the feared telegram, his proud mother Lucy replied, 'My lad was the light of our house, and everyone had to be bright with him'.

Also shot down by a night fighter, pilot Richard Bennett was killed when his Lancaster was hit by canon fire and exploded in mid-air over Trachenau, Germany. And how could we forget Lancaster air gunner, Edward Charman, who was shot down over Germany on 11 November – Remembrance Day 1944.

In memory of Lancaster wireless operator Phillip Smith, his family have dedicated an Honour Plaque in Kings Park, Perth, and on the anniversary of his uncle's death, nephew Jim Smith places a photograph of his uncle (taken ten days before he died) on the plaque. Phillip Smith and air gunner Charles Barlow shared the same voyage to UK on the RMS *Aquitania*. Barlow was shot down on 21 July 1944, and in 2001 his Lancaster was excavated in the Netherlands.

Another Bomber Command casualty, John Parr Ion, was killed when his Lancaster was shot down over the Dutch coast in August 1944. His sister Norma visited the grave in 1984: 'I still recall watching him walking up our street, rucksack on his back as he turned around for a final wave before boarding the trolley bus for Perth and his final departure. More and more families received telegrams advising their loved ones had been killed or missing in action, but somehow we bathed in the belief this wouldn't happen to us – but it did'.

One of the several air cadets who joined the Navy, Ronald Sharpe was crew on HMAS *Australia* when it was attacked by a Japanese dive bomber in Leyte Gulf, Philippines. Ronald was mortally wounded and died the next day on 21 October 1944 – Trafalgar Day.

In the Korean War, 77 Squadron Meteor pilot John Halley was shot down while ground strafing, on his 77th sortie. Also from 77 Squadron, Meteor pilot Max (Bluey) Colebrook won the DFM and US Air Medal, and was killed by ground fire while strafing near Seoul, Korea.

Of the West Australian air cadets killed in Vietnam, five were in the Australian Army and one in the Navy. Corporal Peter Clements from 12 Flight Christian Brothers College was commander of an armoured personnel carrier at the iconic Battle of Long Tan, and received mortal injuries. Also from 12 Flight, Anthony Waring was called up for National Service, served with 5RAR in Vietnam, and was killed by a rocket propelled grenade at the Battle of Binh Ba. A park in Perth has been named in his honour.

We owe these cadets a great debt, but telling their stories through this book, is one way of repaying that debt. *Wings of Valour* is history written with empathy, and makes for emotional and inspiring reading.

Wings of Valour is a highly reviewed, high quality, A4 soft back, 118 pages, 200 illustrations with some in colour. Author Charles Page is a retired international airline pilot, and RAAFA WA AAFC Branch Project Manager History. His published books include *Vengeance of the Outback*, and *Wings of Destiny*, which was selected for the Chief of Air Force's RAAF Reading List in 2010.

To purchase *Wings of Valour* please contact Charles Page: chaz747@bigpond.com tel (08) 9305 1582. Suggested rrp \$30