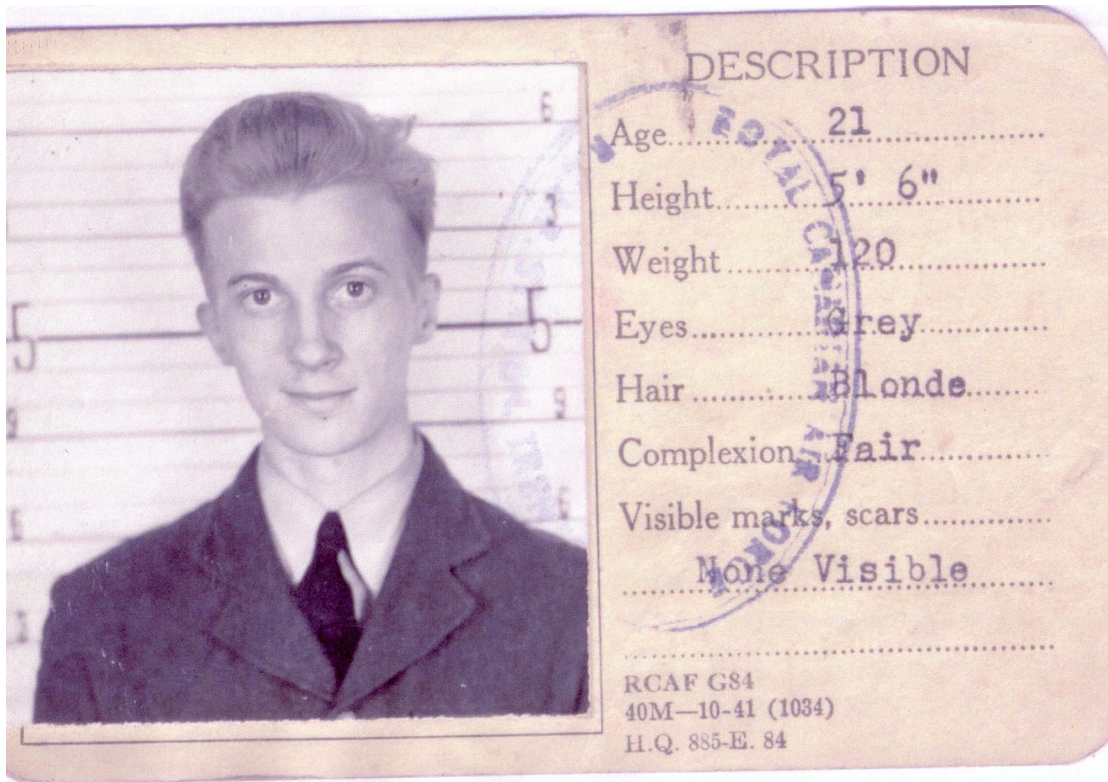


Chapter One

How many Kangaroo Hops This Time?



My Mom wrote, on the back of a photo of me in my RAF Cadets uniform, that I was 17 ½ years old but actually I thought I was more like 18 ½. However, seeing I was born on 20th July 1921 and I enlisted in 1942, then if my sums are right, I must have been at least 21. The RCAF on the ID above got it right though.

At the time I enlisted I was at a company called Electro Flow Meters this was late 1941.

I would have joined up earlier but my employment at Electro Flow Meters was classified as Reserve Occupation. Any civilian working at the outbreak of war in a classified Reserve Occupation could not join up in any of HMS Services. However, when things got a bit tight and they wanted more air pilots and crews, the government put adverts in the national press to the effect "are you in a reserved occupation? Do you want to join in training for air crew? If so send this leaflet etc etc. For me, this occurred in the middle of a punch up I was having with the factory manager Mr Harrington, who was reneging on an arrangement that I made with him when I joined Electroflo Meters at £2 15/- per week, for me to be earning £5 per week at the age of 21 with regular increases of 5/-. As soon as the company became "classified" he said the regular increases would stop but I would get £5 when I reached the age of 21. I said something like "not on your nelly" and told him that I was applying to join air crew. That was the beginning of a clandestine scheme to get out of the

factory on a pass signed by myself, to go sick for a few days when I went up to Oxford for tests etc. Electroflo were manufacturing S6000 and S7000 periscopes for army tanks. The factory was protected by armed guards so it must have been considered as vital work.

I spent three days in Oxford, where I went through all the tests and passed. I told neither my employer nor my mother that I had enlisted. About a week later I received a letter saying I was given the number 1323050 and instructed to attend the enlistment centre in Regent's Park.

This gave me the pleasure of going to my manager to show him the letters and confirmation that I had been accepted. He took details and the next day informed me that he had arranged for my application to be altered to join up in the Army and then, as I was in a reserved occupation he could veto it and the status quo would remain. I walked out on him, period!

I chose the RAF as I had seen the Battle of Britain going on above my head where I lived in Hampstead and wished I was up there doing my bit. I also used to go down to Kent at the weekends to watch the aircraft in action and strongly felt the urge to join in with them. The only friend or associate I knew to be joining up with me was a colleague from Electro Flow Meters and I met up with sometime later in Macon, Georgia. His name was Bill Anderson.

When I received my papers the overwhelm feeling was in the satisfaction of having had one over on Mr Harrington, my manager. He was desperate, for some reason, to see that I didn't join up but I was equally desperate to get away.

I had five sisters and I was the only son. People used to say I must have been spoilt but I wasn't. On telling my mother I had joined up she said she was very proud of me.

Initially, the new recruits met near the zoo in Regent's Park to get all the injections and we also formed up into squads for the first time. The corporal got half-a-crown if he visited, with his squad, the many restaurants in Regent's Park, so we frequented many, many restaurants.

After this we were transferred to the initial training wing at Newquay, Cornwall. Here we spent three or four months going through the various courses. This is the time when we all began to respect our uniform and were changed from being civilians to being members of the armed forces. We were given the rank, as cadets, of leading aircraftsman; this gave you a little propeller on your arm. During this time I was stationed in one of the big guest houses on top of the cliff. We were No.11 flight "C" squadron and it was all "bags of swank and B.S., with "stand by your beds" and "officer on parade" stuff. I loved it so much that I helped our flight to win the Drill Cup and the PS Cup. As I recall the latter was rifle drill without any verbal orders, just the whistle now and again. In later years I witnessed the Yanks doing a similar thing, except theirs was more like a music hall act. Anyway, we were the first and possibly the only flight to bring off the double. This was in February 1942



**No.11 Flight "C" Squadron Winners of Drill Cup and PS Cup
Newquay, Cornwall, February 1942**

I fitted in well with all the blokes and I was never concerned about being in amongst such a group. This was probably made easier because I had run a youth group when I was sixteen or so. I was also a gang leader, not the kind of gang leader we understand it to mean today, as back then it meant something good. All of these were pleasant experiences.

The only time I got homesick was later on when I was training in Canada during Christmas and New Year. Naturally, I was wondering what my family were all doing back home. You can see from my expression, in the photos taken during that Christmas that I was not amused.

There was not a girl at home to be missing at that time, as I was too young for that sort of thing. I was alright for fighting but no good with girls. I was becoming very proud of the white flash on my cadets cap, which indicated that I was an officer cadet. They were, initially, training us to be pilots but if you dropped out on that, then you would go on to some other activity within the crew. So we all started off as potential pilots but not all became pilots. To qualify one had to go through several interviews, as well as physical tests. They span us around and around, up and down, to see if we could handle flying. They wanted to see if we could still talk sensibly while this was all going on.

It was all very exciting; I trained at the start on Tiger Moths type DH82. The RAF were losing air crew at an alarming rate and so wanted to get air crew trained to be up and ready as soon as possible. The USA offered training,

under the General Arnold scheme, to our government, and I became involved in their scheme and was shipped off to Macon, Georgia.

On arrival in the depths of Georgia I was guided to my billet and saw a chap fast asleep on my bunk. I kicked it to wake him up and no sooner than I was asking "What's it like here?" than I spluttered out BILL ANDERSON. I couldn't believe it. Bill who also had worked at Electroflo, had joined up but had done his initial training in a different part of the country to me and finished up in a batch of cadets, a few weeks earlier than my group.

Bill introduced me to a beer called something like "Splitts" (probably it was "Schlitz"), which was to my liking. In a much later period, after I had finished my ops tour and completed "Flying Control" course (now called "Air Traffic Control" and was operating, on a rota basis, as controller at Northolt, which was a PPO (prior permission only) aerodrome, a spitfire entered the landing circuit and despite all action to stop him landing, he did land and in doing so, smashed one of the runway lights. Yes, this was Bill Anderson again, now having been made up from Sergeant to Pilot Officer. He got married a week or so before and, without going into details, I managed to get him an extra week's honeymoon, while we were inspecting and repairing his kite.

Here in Macon, Georgia, we flew Stearman aircraft, type PT17, this was not unlike a Tiger Moth but it was bigger and instead of an in-line engine had a large radial engine. It was easier to fly this aircraft than say drive a car. I flew solo in this type of aircraft for around thirty hours but this was to be my only solo flying experience. The Stearman aircraft was also used in crop spraying by the Americans. These crop duster pilots were an integral part of their aircraft and were very skilled at low level flight and manoeuvres. They truly flew by the seat of their pants. We could tell our speed by the singing noise produced on the guy wires connecting the upper and lower wings.

I was about seven months in Georgia. They ran the courses in three stages, whereas in Britain it was in two stages. First stage was the twin winged Stearman aircraft. I could take off, fly around but I could not seem to master the knack of approaching for landing. I could not get the glide path right to produce a smooth landing. I was more like a bloody Kangaroo. I am convinced the blokes in the tower were taking bets on how many times I would bounce on landing this time. They tried hard with me but I am sure it was a mutual agreement to not further my flying experience. I had gone one Kangaroo hop too far!

I transferred then to air crew training, which covered navigation, bombing, wireless operation, gunnery etc. This was conducted on the Air Observer Training Programme at Port Albert and Picton, Ontario, Canada, which in those days would earn a half wing or a big O (O for Observer).

We didn't get our stripes until we had actually qualified. During training you were a leading aircraftman, you were identified by the propeller on your sleeve and, that you were an officer cadets, by the white flash on your cap. In the States during the first half of our training we were designated as lower

class, the second part of the course you became upper class men. These upper class men carried the rank of officer and we had to salute them as though they really were officers. This class system was only during the US training. We were effectively in the American Air Corps, wearing the same uniform the only difference being the RAF cap with the white flash and we were paid only about a fifth of what they were paid.

I had completed pilot training and had flew solo to the level of the RAF training but I was very disappointed not to be able to be a pilot. This was decided for me during my training in Ontario. Incidentally, I went AWOL for fourteen days during the time I was to transfer to Ontario from Macon, Georgia and had decided to go walk about. I arrived at my posting in Ontario fourteen days late. So automatically I got fourteen days in the glass house. That meant that wherever you went in the camp, you were covered by a corporal, even to go to the toilet. I was not alone in the glass house, there were about twelve others. We were made to do various tasks, which lasted an hour each, dressed in full uniform, white gloves, with rifle, to earn our points against our punishment. The point system was based on these hourly fatigues, we perhaps got two or three hours of points to earn. In the States the system was similar but points were called merits. There was a lot of bullshit involved and I will expand on these later. During my walk about I was able to see much of the eastern seaboard of the States and parts of Canada, so it was well worth being put in the glasshouse.

The Americans were much softer people, probably due to the fact that they were not, at that time, actually at war. They were also not as independent as we Brits. They had to be broken away from Mummy but once they got a bit of authority, they were just as much bastards as our lot were.

I had no problem adjusting to life in the airforce or the training but the single most frustrating thing was trying to get that plane down in one smooth movement. Academically I sailed thorough everything from then on. I did dedicate myself to doing well. They told me that the first course of seventy-two and the second course of thirty odd, the top four would be offered commissions. So that was what I was aiming at and achieved too. I did well at all aspects of the training, I was never below par and usually above par. I came top in many cases and was well within the top four. In fact I was top of those seventy-two entrants. At that stage I got the sergeants stripes and the half-wing.

- *Picton 31 Bombing and Gunnery, Qualified (1st) 10th January 1943*
- *Port Albert Navigation, Qualified (1st) 19th February 1943*
- *Commissioned March 1943 Pilot Officer 151372*



Just qualified as Sergeant Observers. This is the only photo of me (at the back without a cap) with stripes and ½ wing, as at the time I was unaware that I had been granted my commission as pilot officer for being 1st on the course.

We were all treated very well, from the time we enlisted, and the advertisements asking "Do you want to be a pilot" indicated we would be treated as special and we were. We were the brylcream boys and considered by the public as, perhaps, glory boys too. I grew what was considered the traditional RAF moustache. Mine had turned blonde and in Italy they called me something like piccolo capitano bianco (the little captain with the white moustache, or at least that is what I took it to mean). It grew from ear to ear and looked quite distinguished. If you were to grow a moustache then it had to be a big one.

I got on well with all the lads but once we had our commissions we were separated and didn't even eat with them anymore. So a lot of social contact was lost. I didn't make any enemies in the RAF we were all too busy fighting our common enemy, the Germans, after all they were always trying to shoot us out of the sky!

There were no special duties during training, other than treating it like a school. We concentrated on our classes and learned all we could about the theory of flying to gunnery. It was really just like being at college. The only regular duty was kit inspection. This was a most meticulous procedure. We had twelve pairs of socks and these had to be folded in such a way that they formed an oblong to fit perfectly on the correct shelf of our individual metal cabinet. The door to this cabinet had to be opened, ready for inspection, at exactly 45 degrees, not 40 or 50 degrees. If any thing went asquew then you were awarded demerit points, which meant walking around the office block for an hour.

We had drill but we were not as polished and proficient as the Americans. Back in Georgia every night the music of "Maria Lana Yours" was played as the American flag was being slowly and reverently lowered, an officer took sideways steps along the ranks of the men and lowered his head in synchronization with each phrase of the music as he moved and was effectively performing an act in which he was inspecting the men but without actually looking at them.

The four that went through with commissions at that time were?

From Picton we returned to the UK via New York on the Queen Mary. As officers we were entitled to travel first class and it was great.

I felt ready for active service and looked forward to getting into the thick of things. Because I had come through training with flying colours I knew I would be picked to join the best of crews.

This proved true as my crew was chosen by a Squadron Leader Packe. This was a privilege, as generally a pilot coming through from training would pick his team.

Our skipper unfortunately went, allegedly, LMF soon after our crew was formed. He had an AFC awarded to him, as he had trained over 200 pilots, which is quite an achievement. He was a brilliant pilot. His two year service saw him after gaining his AFC, promoted from flight lieutenant to Squadron Leader. Before a pilot gets his own crew and goes operational, he had to fly with another pilot who had a few ops under his belt. We had finished our three ops and we were ready waiting for him to do his final trip. Then we would all go operational, fully trained. He apparently went on a Berlin trip but we heard that he had spent most of the flight crouched behind his second pilot's seat, all crumpled up.

I didn't witness his return but when I asked where he had gone was told that an ambulance had picked him up from the aircraft. He wasn't even allowed to walk back to the barracks. He virtually evaporated. This was no doubt done because of the risk of lowering the morale amongst the crewmen.

So we had to go all through the sequence of selecting a new crew, which is when my skipper Johnny Corke appeared.



IDENTIFICATION
ROYAL AIR FORCE PERSONNEL

Name **FOSKETT, William, G.N.**

Rank **LAC** No. **GB 1323050**

Signature of holder..... *[Signature]*

Signature of issuer..... **A.S. McNeil F/L** *[Signature]*

Place **R.C.A.F. Stn. Trenton** Date **Oct. 12, 1942.**
Ont.

Card Serial No. **4 0 71 0**

[Red Stamp: CANADIAN AIR FORCE, ORDERLY ROOM, STATION, OCT 12 1942]

My Flight Log Book Entries

MEMORANDA

DATE	
July 25 th 42.	FIRST SOLO TODAY. ~ JUST MADE IT WITH 10 MINS. TO SPARE. 11 HRS. 50 MINS. DEAD.
" 27 th 42.	CHANGED INSTRUCTOR TODAY. ~ AN EXCELLANT PILOT, BUT WHAT A BINDER!!
" 30 th 42.	LEFT CIRCUIT TODAY. ~ FIRST SOLO SPINS.
Aug. 5 th 42.	PASSED 90° ACCURACY STAGES TODAY.
" 8 th 42.	HAD A PROGRESS CHECK TODAY AT 26 HRS. 46 MINS. MADE A HOPELESS MESS OF THE MANOEVRES, JUST MISSED ANOTHER PLANE IN A STALL, FORCE LANDED IN A FIELD FULL OF TELEGRAPH WIRES, & TO CROWN EVERYTHING - GOT LOST! NATURALLY I DIDNT PASS, & WILL HAVE ANOTHER IN 4 HRS. TIME.
" 10 th 42.	I COULDN'T DO A THING WRONG TODAY. EVERYTHING WAS A.1. (WHERE'S THIS GETTING ME?).
" 11 th 42.	PASSED 180° SIDE APPROACH ACCURACY STAGES TODAY.
" 17 th 42.	DOUGLAS PLATEAU & INSTRUCTOR HOLLOWAY WERE KILLED TODAY. DOING 180° OVERHEAD APPROACHES.
" 18 th 42.	PASSED 180° OVERHEAD APPROACH ACCURACY STAGES TODAY. (WHAT A RELIEF).
" 22 nd 42.	HAD SECOND PROGRESS CHECK TODAY AT 42 HRS. 46 MINS. ~ PASSED THIS TIME OK.

(CONTINUED BACK OF BOOK.)

MEMORANDA

DATE

AUGUST 23	FIRST CROSS COUNTRY TODAY (157 MILES). I HAD THE HONOUR (BY MISTAKE) TO LEAD OUR FLIGHT.
" 24	PASSED 360° OVERHEAD APPROACH ACCURACY STAGES TODAY.
" 26	DID FIRST SOLO LOOPS TODAY.
" 27	PASSED MY FINAL PRIMARY SCHOOL ARMY CHECK TODAY.
" 30	GRADUATED TODAY. ~ BEST SOLO RIDE EVER.
SEPTEMBER 9	FIRST RIDE IN A VULTEE BT.13A TODAY.
" 17	CHANGED INSTRUCTOR TODAY.
" 20	THINGS ARE GOING BAD AGAIN. AM EXPECTING A CHECK RIDE SOON.
" 21	PROGRESS CHECK TODAY: A PRETTY FEEBLE ATTEMPT.
" 22	ELIMINATION CHECK TODAY. WAS BETTER THAN YESTERDAY BUT STILL FAR FROM GOOD.
" 23	FINAL ELIMINATION CHECK RIDE TODAY WITH A MAJOR. THIS WAS THE BEST RIDE UP TO DATE, & HE COULDN'T ELIMINATE ME ON IT. ~ WHAT NOW?

MEMORANDA

DATE

SEPTEMBER 28	HAD FIRST RIDE WITH NEW INSTRUCTOR TODAY. ~ BY NO MEANS BRILLIANT.
" 30	I THINK THAT I'VE HAD IT NOW. ~ ANOTHER CHECK TODAY
OCTOBER 2	LAST RIDE TODAY ~ WHAT A RELIEF. ~ "SO YOU CAN'T FLY EH?"
Later!!	We mutually agreed that the best thing would be for me to retrain as an 'Observer'. Well, I did fly nearly 30 hours SOLO!!
Match	Picton Ontario, Canada
Match 1	Sailed through all examinations. Came first in class of 72 with
Later	84% in Bombing & Gunnery courses, & first again in course of 32
	with 80.66% in Navigation & Photography (Navigation alone 92%)
	Qualified as Sergeant Observer with 1/2 wing Feb 43 & informed that I would be gazetted as Pilot Officer on return to England.