

# A Gentleman and a Rascal



LAURA COLE

Autobiography  
by  
**Brian Buzzard**

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## **CHAPTER 13**

### **21 Squadron**

**Front Cover:** I wish to thank artist Laura Cole for her kind permission to use the second painting from the triptych **Kimberley Grasses**.

**Disclaimer:** Every effort has been made to contact the people mentioned in this book, we apologise if any omissions have been made.

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## CHAPTER 13

### 21 Squadron

On the 29th September, 1944, we returned to Amberley to form our own 21 squadron. While I was at Amberley, my wife Don, managed to travel up to the Queensland border, now known as the Gold Coast, for a few weeks. When we left to go back up north, she went back to Sydney for a short time, then onto Yarrowonga to stay at Babe and Frank McKnight's place. Frank had been transferred from the Australasian Bank at Gnowangerup to Yarrowonga. Don was a few months pregnant with David.

Don stayed at Yarrowonga and David was born there in the local hospital on the 3rd July 1945. She was looked after in a wonderful manner by Babe and Pat McKnight who was also home at that time. While all of that was happening I had been shifted from Darwin to Morotai and at that particular time we were in the Philippines in Southern Palawan in a town called Princessa Pureto. From there we covered the landings of the AIF in Borneo. While I was on Liberators, I completed forty four operational flights which took four hundred and forty eight hours in duration, and by that time, having travelled to many different places, I had amassed a total of two thousand and twenty flying hours.

Republika ng Pilipinas



Embassy of the Philippines

Canberra

*In honour of the Australian veterans  
who participated in the liberation of the Philippines*

*The Ambassador of the Philippines*

*H.E. Delia Domingo Albert*

*cordially invites*

*Mr. Brian Sheridan Buzzard*

*to the awarding ceremony  
of the  
Philippine Liberation Medal*

*at the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle*

*on Monday, the 18th of March 1996*

*at 4 o'clock in the afternoon*

*RSVP: Please return attached  
response slip by 12 March.*

*Note: Awardees may be  
accompanied by one person.*

1 Mornah Place, Yarralumla, A.C.T. 2600  
P.O. Box 3297, Manuka, A.C.T. 2603. Phone: (06) 273 2535, 373 2336. Telex 62665 PHILEM. Fax: (06) 273 3264

## **Awards night at the Fremantle Barracks.**

There are occasions when I attend functions which are important to me. One of those functions was an award ceremony attended by the Ambassador of the Philippines where we were thanked for our part in the liberation of the Philippines.

Recently, all Australian servicemen who spent time on the liberation of the Philippines were awarded a Philippine Government Liberation Medal.

We also received one recently from the Dutch Government for helping to retake the Dutch East Indies.



**"On Liberators in 1945. Our living quarters in Morotai."**

While we were stationed at Morotai, a rhesus monkey attached itself to a group of four of us who were sharing a tent. On the whole he became a good pet, except for the times when he was very destructive and would tear a whole carton of cigarettes into little pieces in a few minutes. The squadron adopted him as its mascot. When we had occasion to fly to Darwin for an engine change we took the monkey mascot with us. At that time, crews from 25 Squadron, Cunderdin were up there doing some missions; shipping, reconnaissance and bombing raids in the Celebes. One of the crew of 25 Squadron asked me to give him the monkey, because we were going back to Morotai where there was an abundance of them. That crew returned with the monkey to Cunderdin and all hell broke loose. She became a great pet of the squadron at Cunderdin until the Customs and Agricultural Departments found out about him. May McCormack, a nursing sister, had the job of looking after him and to put him in the

engine room at night. The doctor at Cunderdin had given him a needle, but it was winter time and he needed warmth after coming from the tropics. I met May recently and she enlightened me on what had happened to him. They confiscated him and I believe that he ended up living at the Perth Zoo. Fortunately, the Cunderdin crew did not give us away, but said that they got him in Darwin from persons unknown.

The officers in the Customs Department were no fools and they soon found out about our 21 Squadron planes which flew in and out of Darwin. Our CO received a signal from the Air Board telling him to investigate the incident. He replied that he had no knowledge of a monkey and that there was a war on and he was too busy engaging with the Japanese to make any further investigations. I wonder to this day, if many at Cunderdin or in 25 Squadron remember the incident which happened in late 1944 or early 1945.

Early in July, 1945, after I had completed my tour of duty, I managed to get a transport aircraft travelling from Morotai, through Darwin and on to Melbourne. From there I caught a train to Yarrawonga to spend time with Don and David. My stay there was vety short because I received a telegram from Airboard to report to Amberley, Queensland. On the 1st August, 1945, we flew via the Marshal Islands, the Admiralty Islands, Hawaii and San Francisco to ferry a Liberator back to Australia. While we were waiting for a plane to be allotted to us, peace was declared.



**"Brian and the monkey, Morotai, 1945."**

The Americans informed us immediately that the Lend Lease Arrangements were over and that there would be no more aircraft for Australia. When we asked how we were going to get home they told that it was our problem, not theirs.

In due course we were put on an old Liberty ship at Portland, Oregon and we set sail for Sydney. We were thirty one days at sea. The ship did not call in at any port on the trip. All American ships were dry, meaning there was no alcohol, and when we were only a week out to sea, we ran out of fresh water for showering. The food was mostly Spam, pancakes, bread and a bit of Australian Bully Beef, which we enjoyed more than anything else. We were all most relieved to arrive back in Sydney on the 6th October, 1945. From there I travelled to Yarrawonga where I found our son David in good health, but Don had not fully recovered from the bad time she had while giving birth to him.