

## PETER ANASTASIOS COMINO:



Peter Comino with his nephew, Leo Comino on the left and Sydney historian, Vasilis Vasilas on the right.

# An ANZAC Story

*With the recent ANZAC commemorations, it is a fitting time for reflection upon our war veterans' experiences on the war fronts and pay tribute to all their efforts and sacrifices. With the inevitable passing of time, the dwindling numbers of Australian war veterans from the Second World War, who are still alive and can recount their war experiences, make it of national importance to capture these life stories. Sydney historian, Vasilis Vasilas, was very fortunate to be introduced to Peter Anastasios Comino who served in the 79 Spitfire Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War and was based on the small island of Morotai, of the Netherlands East Indies during the Pacific War.*

**B**oth his parents, Anastasios, and Stratoula (nee: Mavrogeorge) were from the island of Kythera; they settled in Guyra, a small town between Armidale and Glen Innes, NSW, and ran the Red Rose Café. Peter was born and raised in

Guyra too; they were the only Greek family in the town.

It was during high school that Peter's school friends proposed they should all join the local Air Training Corps, which groomed teenagers to eventually join the Royal Australian Air Force (R.A.A.F.). While School Principal, Charles Ebert, was in charge of the Air Training Corps, the local postmaster, Mr Jones, would take night classes and teach them Morse code. When Peter turned eighteen years old, he volunteered to join the R.A.A.F.; when he broke the news to his parents, his mother began to cry while his father tried to make a joke of it. Peter remembers the stark contrast between Australian and Greek families- their attitudes and values towards family- when the local young men were farewelling their parents at the railway station before they made their way down to Sydney to present themselves.

"At my final leave we were on the train station's platform; there was this Australian

"The Japanese taught me the very meaning of fear! I was scared. Not long after I was there, there were two guards on the night shift and both were found with their throats cut. So, I was very frightened!"



A RAAF portrait of Peter Comino

soldier with his father and when the train came in the father just shook his soldier son's hand, said «goodbye son», and that was it. My parents would not stop hugging me- they did not want to let go- so my farewell was very different to the Australian family's experience," recounts Peter.

Completing his medical examination at Woolloomooloo, Sydney, he did his six-week general training in Cootamundra, where they did their passing out parade. Being sent to Melbourne and Adelaide air bases for further training in warplane maintenance, then to Williamstown, he was finally sent to the embarkation depot at Bradfield; as the 'wharfies' were on strike, the Government



Peter Comino (right) with his peers in the Royal Australian Air Force.