

Monty Julian: One of the last ANZACS

Maurice (Monty) Leslie Julian was introduced to TOM by his daughter, Debbie Julian, as “one of the last ANZACS.” I visited him recently in his New Plymouth home.

In 1940, aged 16, Monty joined the Air Training Corps No 8 New Plymouth Squadron, a non-combat division designed to help address the shortage of airmen during World War II. Having gained consent from his parents, he joined the RNZAF combat force two years later. “We left our jobs and trades and couldn’t get (to war) quick enough,” he says. “We thought it was our duty to protect our homeland but didn’t fully realise the consequences. We were men before we were boys.” For the next year or so, he kept up his aircrew studies and performed aerodrome defence duties at bases in Levin, Rotorua, Seagrove (Auckland), Wigram and Palmerston North. General guard duties meant shift work, for the air bases had to be patrolled round the clock. When he was at Seagrove, there was a “Jap” scare on. “Luckily,” says Monty, “they didn’t land!”

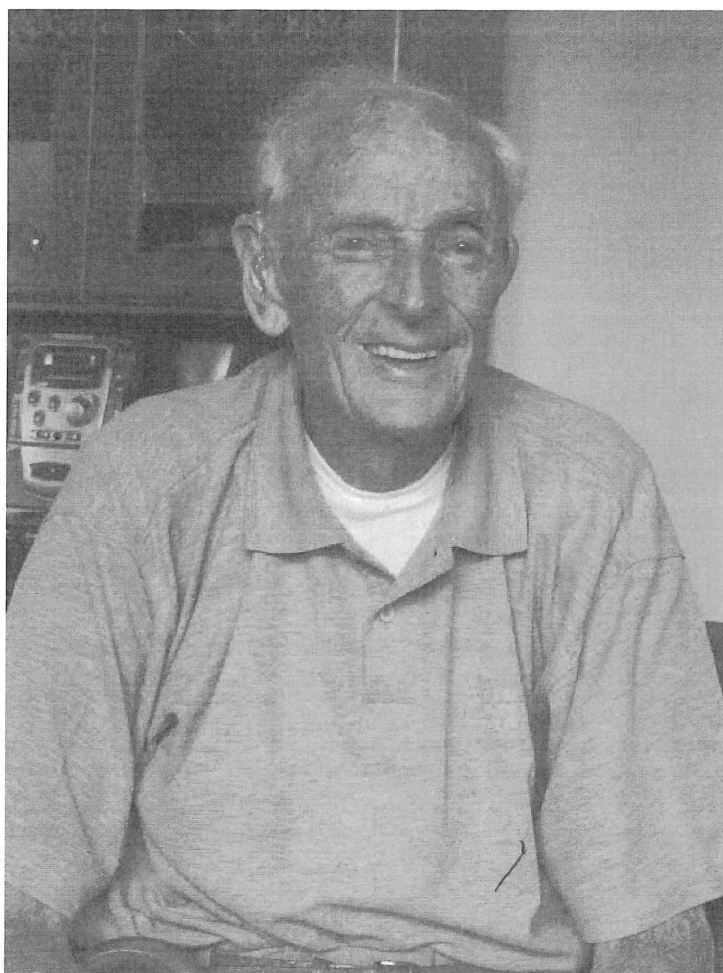
In 1943, Monty was posted to the Solomon Islands as a radar/radio operator based on one of Guadalcanal’s western beaches. There, he swam a lot to get relief from the intense heat and humidity, scanned the skies for both high flying and low flying aircraft, and alerted the American Air Force to any enemy presence in the vicinity. “It gave us a start of about 100 miles,” he said. The hand-to-hand fighting of the Guadalcanal campaign was over but a few Japanese soldiers had been left on the island, and the allies had no idea where they were, “...so you never knew whether your next breath would be your last one.” Monty left the island on leave in 1944 and, due to ill health, was unable to return.

These days, Monty is proud to be a life member of the Okato Sub Branch of the New Plymouth RSA Incorporated Branch, along with six others — Arthur Hogg, Des Corbett, Don Brash, Ivor Ellis (long-time president), Ken Keel (current secretary) and Peter Brightwell — and about 20 other esteemed members, including two women — Dorothy Withell and Ngaire Scown. “In our depleting

ranks we have a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) in Ross Priest, and a QSM (Queen’s Service Medal) in our very own Don Brash,” boasts Monty. He is proud too of the wonderful support the coastal people give the Okato branch, on Poppy Day and at the service at Hempton Hall each ANZAC Day. The locals’ generosity has enabled the branch to donate to numerous local clubs and organisations down the years. This year, the collection of \$479 was presented to the Cape Egmont Rescue Trust.

TOM and its readers honour Monty and all the other men and women who have endured warfare on behalf of their fellow countrymen and women, and pay special tribute to those who have made the supreme sacrifice. “Lest we forget.”

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley



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