

AN AIRMAN'S STORY



Service No.: 26063
Name: Basil Denholm Mitchell TUCKER
Nick Name: Tom



Medals and Decorations

1939 - 45 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939 - 45

Australian Service Medal 1939 - 45

Rank: Leading Aircraftman

Service: RAAF

Enlisted: 18 Mar 40

Discharged: 31 Oct 45

Tom was born on 1 Jun 1917 at Mount Pleasant (SA) to Robert George Tucker and Florence Tucker (nee Mitchell). He was the youngest of 4 children, 3 boys and a girl. His father was employed as a “pruner” in the orchards of the River lands.

Tom attended school at Brentwood on the Yorke Peninsula, leaving at Grade 7 (as was the norm of the time) to seek employ. As this was 1930 (the middle of the great depression), it is not surprising that the young lad found it difficult to find permanent employ, so he tried his hand at a number of tasks over the next 10 years.

On 18 Mar 1940 he enlisted in the RAAF at Minlaton (SA) and was sent to Laverton (Vic) for his basic training. On completion of this he was posted to Mt Brecken at Victor Harbour (SA) for additional training as a medic. Whilst undertaking this training he met Joan Allen at a dance at Victor Harbour in late 1940; romance blossomed and the couple were married on 6 Sep 41.

After 6 months of marital bliss, Tom was posted to Werribee (Vic) and then in late 1942 to Townsville (Qld). After further training at this location he embarked for Goodenough Island, north of Milne Bay, where he was posted as an ambulance driver attached to the US forces; it was during this posting that he discovered his talent for sketching. Whilst at Goodenough Island he was remustered to the Airfield Construction Squadron and began operating heavy machinery for the repair and maintenance of the US airfields in the area.

In early 1945 he was medically repatriated to Australia and after recovery was posted to Pirie Street Depot in Adelaide. His duties here included transporting personnel to Woomera and Maralinga and returning with stores for disposal.

On 31 Oct 45 he took his discharge from the RAAF and returned to Yorke Peninsula, where he worked as a farm labourer at Port Rickaby; he did not enjoy this work, so in early 1946 he and the family moved to Snowtown and Tom took employ with the Council as a grader driver. In 1947 the family was on the move again, moving to Tumby Bay and taking residence in one of McNair's Cottages on Bratten Way; Tom was employed by the Tumby Bay Council as a grader driver.

Whilst living in Tumby Bay, Tom undertook various occupations, including baking for Oswald's Bakery (which was located in Spencer St where the Garden shop is now situated) and as a self employed sign writer. During these jobs he supplemented his income by fishing. In 1950 he decided to become a "full time" professional fisherman: to this end he bought the vessel "*Doreva*" for Cray fishing at Coffin Bay, the family remaining in Tumby Bay.

By 1956 he was tired of commuting between Tumby and Coffin Bay, so the family moved to Streaky Bay where he built another boat, the "*Water Witch*" to continue fishing; but this time it was scale fish not crayfish that was targeted. At this time he also took a position on the SAFCOL Board of directors.

In 1963 he decided that a change was necessary, so he left the fishing industry and established an earth moving business, using many of the skills that he had acquired during the war years. This was a very successful business and Tom continued in this line of business until his retirement in 1974.

After retirement Tom and his wife moved to Port Lincoln (8 Beaver Court) and Tom reacquainted himself with painting and sketching as hobbies: his seascapes and landscapes became well known throughout the area.

Tom was not only known for his painting and sketching, but he was also a gifted musician playing the piano, organ, piano accordion, guitar and banjo. After his wife and family, these were the true loves of his life.

He was a member of the Tumby Bay Sub Branch of the RSL, before transferring to Streaky Bay. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge at Streaky Bay. Tom was known to enjoy a game of bowls.

Seven years after retirement he was diagnosed with cancer and passed away on 30 Nov 81. He is buried in the Port Lincoln cemetery.



Right:
Tom and
his truck

