

## **ALLEN JACK HURST, O.A.M.**

### **Leading Aircraftman, R.A.A.F.**

As told to Paul Spencer

Allen was born at McLaren Vale in South Australia on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1923 to John & Vivienne Hurst. Allen was to become the eldest of three boys. John was a blacksmith by trade, and Vivienne was born and raised in Orroroo and the family shifted there in 1929 where John started farming. However severe droughts soon forced him to Blyth, also in the Mid-North, where he reverted to blacksmithing.

Allen went to primary school, first at Orroroo and later at Blyth. With no high schools in the area Allen moved to Adelaide and lived with his

grandparents and attended Norwood High School, returning to Blyth in 1941.



**Living the Dream**

War had been going for nearly two years by then but Allen had to wait for his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to enlist. He had set his mind on the glamour of being a pilot but after enlisting was found to be colour blind! So that was the end of that. Instead he joined the Air Corps as a fitter.

Basic training was conducted in the Exhibition Building on North Terrace in Adelaide, and after this he was transferred to Ascot Vale in Melbourne to complete the

training process. On completion Allen was sent as a Fitter 2A to the 12 Squadron in Darwin where most of the Australian planes were Wirraways. This was late December 1941. Allen travelled by train from Adelaide northwards and remembers that some of his female cousins waited at Orroroo Station and handed him his Christmas presents.

The Japanese attacked Darwin on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1942 so Allen didn't have much time to enjoy the sights. In his own words "all hell broke loose" and hundreds ran down the Adelaide Road to get away from the town. Allen suspects that some might have made it all the way to Adelaide! On several occasions the 12 Squadron went into the town to assist in the clearing up process.



Maintenance Crew,  
12 Squadron, 142, B Flight.  
Back:-Stan South, Allen, Allen Hawick Len Grow

The decision was made to shift 12 Squadron to Batchelor, about 124 Kilometres south to provide some safety from the Japanese attacks that had persisted for some time. This was on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of March. In early 1943 the squadron was retrained on American dive bombers called Vultee Vengeances. Allen reckons they were flying death traps.

In collaboration with the Americans, the 12 Squadron helped build four air strips on the Adelaide Road.

In April 1943 Allen was transferred to 13 Squadron and in June the Squadron was transferred to 32 Squadron based in Canberra. Allen has no idea why, but can remember the freezing nights. In July Allen was transferred again to 10 Training Unit in Sale in Victoria for training on the Boomerangs, which were similar to the Wirraways. Allen stayed at Sale until discharge in January 1945.

After eighteen months working as a blacksmith with his Uncle at McLaren Vale he then returned to the Mid-north again in 1946 where he joined with his father and younger brother in an engineering business, JH Hurst & Sons at Crystal Brook. They soon were known throughout the north as efficient and reliable. Allen stayed in the business for 38 years. On arriving in Crystal Brook he immediately joined the R.S.L. which included time as President, Secretary and Committeeman. He remained a member there until 1983.



Soon after arriving he started squiring a young good looking girl called Shirley Close. They were married in September 1948, and had three children, Barry, Desmond and Robyn.

Allen and Shirley retired to Virgo Avenue in Warradale in July 1984, before shifting within Warradale to Pine Avenue, where they are today. Both joined the R.S.L. at Brighton immediately, and played for the Sub-Branch's bowling teams for many years. Unsurprisingly Allen was not content to just be a bowler. His tenure at the Brighton R.S.L. Bowling Club included service as President, Secretary and Committee member until the club was

forced to close in 2007. Life Membership was awarded to Allen in 2002. (Allen had a short transfer to Somerton Bowling Club before returning to the Brighton R.S.L. Bowling Club). Shirley's long service to the Sub-Branch's Women's Auxiliary was rewarded with Life Membership in 2005 and in the same year Allen was awarded Life Membership of the Sub-Branch. They both continue their involvement today.

Allen's list of the achievements in his life is a testament to him willingly giving his time for the benefit of others. Although he has said that his first and foremost achievement was choosing a tolerant wife and children! He soon became involved with many activities in the township of Crystal Brook, but most especially with the CFS, Golf Club, Tennis Club, Church and Lodge. He was appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 1968, a position he held for forty years.

Since his retirement to Adelaide Allen has refused to slow down!



### **List of Achievements:**

**CRYSTAL BROOK LODGE No. 70** – Worshipful Master, Secretary and Director.

**CRYSTAL BROOK GOLF CLUB** – Captain 9 years, President 2 years, Life Member 1979

**NORTHERN GROUP GOLF ASSOCIATION** – President 1962-63, Secretary 1968-1972 and 1976-1982 and Life Member 1982.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOLF ASSOCIATION** – Country Councillor 1982 till 2003, Executive Committee, Junior Committee.

**CRYSTAL BROOK COUNTRY FIRE SERVICE** (Formerly EFS) – Joined 1947, Officer in Charge from 1948, Long Service Award June 1969, Life Membership 1972, Commendable District Service Award April 1979, National Medal with Bar 1981.

**CRYSTAL BROOK CITIZEN OF THE YEAR** – January 1982

**WILLOCHRA HOME FOR THE AGED** – Foundation Committee member from opening until 1983

**NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH** – Certificate of Appreciation Warradale 2 Zone Leader and Co-ordinator

**AUSTRALIAN MEDAL** – Sporting Achievement 2000 (Nominated by the NGGA)

**CRYSTAL BROOK R.S.L.** – 1946 – 1983: President, Secretary and Committee member for 20 years

**BRIGHTON R.S.L.** – (Joined 8.7.1983) Life Member 2005

**BRIGHTON R.S.L. BOWLING CLUB** – President, Secretary and Greens Manager. Life Member 2002

**OAM** – June 2006. Allen was awarded an OAM in 2006 for his outstanding achievements over so many years.