

= Peter Raw =

Air Commodore Peter Frank Raw , DSO , DFC , AFC (5 June 1922 ? 14 July 1988) was a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) pilot and officer . He joined the RAAF in 1941 , and served as a flight instructor , bomber pilot and the commander of a communications unit during World War II . After the war he became a specialist navigator . Raw was appointed the commander of No. 2 Squadron in January 1953 , but temporarily left this position for part of the year to participate in the 1953 London to Christchurch air race , in which he placed second . He returned to lead No. 2 Squadron at the end of 1953 and held this position until 1955 .

Raw subsequently served in staff and diplomatic roles until 1965 , when he took command of No. 82 Wing . Between May 1966 and April 1967 , he served as the air support coordinator for the Australian forces in South Vietnam ; his initial refusal to commit RAAF helicopters to assist the Australian Army force that was heavily engaged during the Battle of Long Tan in August 1966 generated lasting controversy . Raw served in various staff and training positions until 1972 , when he was appointed the commander of RAAF Base Butterworth . He returned to Australia in 1976 and retired from the RAAF two years later .

= = Early career = =

Raw was born in the Melbourne suburb of Glen Huntly on 5 June 1922 to Alfred and Eleanor Raw . He was educated at Tooronga Road State School and , later , Melbourne High School . Raw began an electrical apprenticeship at Carlton & United Breweries in 1939 , and studied part @-@ time at Melbourne Technical College .

Raw attempted to join the Royal Australian Navy as an electrical artificer in 1941 , but was rejected and told to reapply in twelve months . Instead , he joined the RAAF on 15 August that year . He departed Sydney bound for Southern Rhodesia in November 1941 to be trained as a pilot under the Empire Air Training Scheme . Arriving in Southern Rhodesia in January 1942 , Raw completed his training and was commissioned as an officer in December that year . He subsequently served as a flying instructor in Southern Rhodesia . In May 1944 Raw became engaged to Dorothy Maggs , whose family lived in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa .

In mid @-@ 1944 , Raw was transferred to Egypt and undertook an operational conversion course that prepared him to fly Consolidated B @-@ 24 Liberator heavy bombers in combat . In July that year he was posted to No. 178 Squadron RAF , a British B @-@ 24 Liberator unit based near Foggia in southern Italy . While serving with this squadron , Raw took part in operations in the eastern Mediterranean region as well as Hungary , Romania and Yugoslavia . During August 1944 the long @-@ range bomber units controlled by No. 205 Group RAF , including No. 178 Squadron , undertook several risky operations as part of the Warsaw airlift to supply the Polish Home Army during the Warsaw Uprising . Raw participated in three of these flights . His bomber was the only aircraft to deliver its cargo to Warsaw during a mission on 16 August ; Raw subsequently received the Polish Cross of Valour in February 1945 for this achievement . One of his other flights to Warsaw was conducted on 1 September , but Raw was unable to see the city at the time he dropped the load of supplies due to bad weather .

During a raid on the northern Italian city of Verona on 12 October 1944 , Raw 's aircraft was hit by two anti @-@ aircraft shells that destroyed its hydraulics system and an engine , wounded the radio operator and opened 166 holes in the fuselage . Despite this damage , Raw was able to return the B @-@ 24 safely to its base . He suffered frostbite to his feet , as damage to the plane 's nose caused icy winds to enter the cockpit .

In December 1944 , Raw was promoted to flight lieutenant . He assumed command of No. 205 Group Communication Squadron in 1945 . In February that year he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross . Following the end of the war , Raw returned to Australia in November 1945 and was demobilised on 17 January 1946 . He married Maggs at St Mary 's Church of England in Caulfield on the 19th of the month ; they had a daughter .

Raw rejoined the RAAF in May 1946 , and retained his wartime rank of flight lieutenant . Between

1947 and October 1949 he was posted to Britain to undertake specialist training in navigation . On his return to Australia , Raw served as an instructor at the RAAF 's School of Air Navigation , and later held training positions at No. 78 Wing and No. 2 Operational Training Unit (No. 2 OTU) . During 1952 he served as the acting commanding officer of No. 2 OTU , which at the time was responsible for training pilots for combat in the Korean War with No. 77 Squadron .

= = Commanding officer = =

In January 1953 Raw , who was by now a squadron leader , was appointed the commanding officer of No. 2 Squadron . On 23 February he also became the initial commander of No. 1 Long Range Flight , which had been formed to participate in the 1953 London to Christchurch air race using two of the RAAF 's new English Electric Canberra bombers . He handed this position to Wing Commander Derek Cuming in May , but remained a member of the flight . In July Raw temporarily vacated his position at No. 2 Squadron so he could focus on preparing for the air race . The Canberras piloted by Raw and Cuming departed Australia for the United Kingdom on 10 September , and the race began on 9 October . Raw 's aircraft suffered damage to its nose wheel while landing to refuel at Woomera , but was able to be repaired . This accident cost Raw the lead in the race . He arrived at Christchurch at 04 : 32 on 10 October , finishing second behind a RAF Canberra piloted by Flight Lieutenant Roland (Monty) Burton .

Raw returned to lead No. 2 Squadron on 18 December 1953 . During this month the unit became the RAAF 's first jet bomber @-@ equipped squadron when it replaced its Avro Lincoln aircraft with Canberras ; in doing so the squadron was built around a nucleus of personnel who had served with No. 1 Long Range Flight . Later in December a Canberra piloted by Raw established a new speed record for a flight between New Zealand and Australia , completing the crossing between Auckland and Sydney in two hours and 49 minutes . On 31 December 1953 Raw was awarded the Air Force Cross for his role in the London to Christchurch air race ; the decoration was presented to him by Queen Elizabeth II at Brisbane on 10 March 1954 . A September 1954 story in The Courier @-@ Mail described Raw as being a " shy young commander " .

After completing his term as commanding officer of No. 2 Squadron on 11 July 1955 , Raw was posted to the UK to undertake training at the Royal Air Force Flying College . Upon his return to Australia in January 1956 , he was promoted to wing commander and posted to a planning role at RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne . From December that year he served as a liaison officer to the RAAF force supporting the British nuclear weapons tests in the Montebello Islands off the coast of Western Australia . In 1957 Raw was posted to the Joint Planning staff . During 1958 he and Dorothy divorced ; Raw subsequently married Helen Dorothy Hammond on 21 June that year at St Margaret 's Presbyterian Church in Balaclava . This marriage produced another daughter and a son .

In December 1960 Raw joined the directing staff of the RAAF Staff College in Canberra . In 1963 he became the first president of the amateur Canberra Astronomical Society . Later in 1963 he undertook further training at the United States Armed Forces Staff College , after which he assumed the position of assistant air attaché in the Australian Embassy in Washington , D.C. In February 1965 Raw assumed command of No. 82 Wing , which controlled all of the RAAF 's bomber squadrons . He was raised to acting group captain at this time , and was confirmed in this rank during January the next year .

= = Vietnam War and subsequent career = =

In May 1966 , Raw was posted to South Vietnam as the air support commander for the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) . This force was composed primarily of Australian Army units , and had recently arrived in the country as part of an expansion of Australia 's commitment to the Vietnam War . Although he did not have any background in air / land warfare , Raw 's main responsibility in this position was to coordinate helicopter support for the task force 's two infantry battalions . He was given only two weeks to prepare for the role between handing over command of

No. 82 Wing and departing for South Vietnam ; during this period he received briefings on the situation in the country and began to familiarise himself with the operations of the RAAF 's tactical transport units . Historian Alan Stephens has written that " Group Captain Raw 's background as one of the RAAF 's most respected bomber leaders was inappropriate for the job of task force air commander : too often he struggled to make the timely decisions demanded by tactical air / land operations " . Stephens has also stated that the RAAF 's Air Board should have selected an officer with more relevant experience for the role .

In addition to his responsibilities as air support commander , Raw was also the commander of the RAAF units stationed at V?ng Tàu and the overall deputy commander of the RAAF force in South Vietnam . He regularly flew operational missions with the UH @-@ 1 Iroquois helicopter @-@ equipped No. 9 Squadron as well as No. 35 Squadron , which operated DHC @-@ 4 Caribou tactical transports .

At the time Raw arrived in South Vietnam there were tensions between the Army and RAAF over the employment of No. 9 Squadron , with the Army perceiving that the unit was not providing enough support to 1 ATF . Raw believed that the Task Force headquarters had unrealistic expectations as the Army officers did not understand the difficulty of maintaining and operating helicopters .

Raw 's role in the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966 was controversial . During the engagement , he initially refused to allow No. 9 Squadron to fly ammunition to D Company of the 6th Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment after it was heavily engaged and nearly surrounded , as he believed that the heavy rain at the time made flying too dangerous . The commander of the 1st Australian Task Force , Brigadier David Jackson , was angered by this decision and argued that the risk of losing a few helicopters was unimportant compared to the possibility of having 200 infantrymen killed if the unit was overrun due to a lack of ammunition and other supplies . Raw eventually allowed the resupply flight to proceed after the most experienced of the helicopter pilots present stated that the mission needed to be flown regardless of its risk .

As a result of his actions during the Battle of Long Tan , the relationship between Raw and senior Army commanders in 1 ATF was " most difficult " throughout the remainder of his time in South Vietnam . Nevertheless , he eventually managed to educate the senior Army officers within the 1st Australian Task Force about the constraints which affected helicopter operations , leading to a better working relationship between the services . In November 1965 Raw took part in Operation Hayman , which was conducted against Viet Cong forces on Long Son Island . During this operation he flew in with the assault troops and remained on the island to direct air missions , including while under sniper fire . Raw completed his tour of duty in South Vietnam in April 1967 and returned to Australia . In November that year he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his role in the war .

The disagreement between Jackson and Raw during the Battle of Long Tan had long @-@ term effects on the structure of the Australian Defence Force . Raw 's initial refusal to commit helicopters contributed to the development of a long @-@ lasting perception among some Army officers that the RAAF was reluctant to support their service in battle . Some members of the Army also wrongly believed that RAAF pilots had refused to conduct the supply mission , and only did so after the squadron was threatened with being withdrawn from South Vietnam and they were spoken to forcefully by Raw . Influenced by this perception , the Army subsequently advocated for the RAAF 's battlefield helicopters to be transferred to its control , and this finally occurred in the late 1980s .

Upon his return to Australia , Raw was appointed Director of Operational Requirements at the Department of Air . In 1969 he headed an evaluation team tasked with selecting a heavy lift helicopter for the RAAF . The team was faced with a choice between the Boeing CH @-@ 47 Chinook and Sikorsky CH @-@ 53 Sea Stallion , and Raw 's final report recommended acquiring CH @-@ 53s . The RAAF 's governing Air Board and senior Army officers rejected this recommendation , and CH @-@ 47s were purchased instead after Air Vice Marshal Charles Read also reviewed the performance of the two helicopters and concluded that the Chinook better met Australia 's needs . Raw remained the Director of Operational Requirements until 1970 when he became the commandant of the RAAF Staff College . In 1972 he was promoted to air commodore and assumed command of RAAF Base Butterworth in Malaysia . Raw held this position until 1976

when he returned to Australia and became the senior training and staff officer in the headquarters of RAAF Support Command . This was his final military posting ; he retired from the Air Force on 28 February 1978 .

In a newspaper interview shortly before his retirement , Raw identified the 1953 London @-@ to @-@ Christchurch air race as being a highlight of his career . He also observed that RAAF personnel needed higher levels of professional qualifications than had been the case when he joined the Air Force , and there was a greater specialisation in particular fields . Raw further stated that there was a need to improve the defences of northern Australia on the grounds that " political situations can change overnight " . On 15 July 1988 Raw died of lymphoma at Richmond in Melbourne . He was subsequently cremated . Raw 's Australian Dictionary of Biography entry summarises his career by noting that he was " considered to be genial , exuberant , popular and efficient " and " proved to be the type of officer who worked best under pressure " .