

= Wilfred Arthur =

Wilfred Stanley (Wilf) Arthur , DSO , DFC (7 December 1919 ? 23 December 2000) was a fighter ace and senior officer of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) during World War II . Commonly known as " Woof " , and sometimes " Wolf " or " Wulf " , he was officially credited with ten aerial victories . As a commander , he led combat formations at squadron and wing level , becoming at 24 the youngest group captain in the history of the RAAF .

Arthur joined the Air Force the day after Australia declared war in September 1939 . He first saw action with No. 3 Squadron in North Africa , where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down four aircraft in a single sortie . Posted to the South West Pacific , he commanded first No. 75 Squadron , and later Nos. 81 and 78 Wings . He earned the Distinguished Service Order for continuing to lead an attack on a formation of Japanese bombers after discovering that his guns were inoperable , and was twice mentioned in despatches . Arthur also played a leading part in ? and gave name to ? the " Morotai Mutiny " of April 1945 . Pursuing various interests in Australia and Vietnam following his discharge from the Air Force after the war , he died in 2000 at the age of 81 .

= = Education and early career = =

Wilfred Arthur was the son of stock inspector Stanley Oswald Darley Arthur from Goondiwindi , Queensland , a veteran of World War I who had served overseas for the duration of the conflict . His mother , Helena Elizabeth Chaffers , was from the Isle of Wight , of Welsh descent . Born in Sydney on 7 December 1919 , Wilf grew up around his father 's home town near the New South Wales border . The boy 's early education was by correspondence , but he later attended school at Yelarbon , Queensland , commuting on horseback . He then spent four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half years at The Scots College in Warwick , where he matriculated .

At the age of 19 and still at The Scots College , Arthur applied to join the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . He enlisted on 4 September 1939 , the day after Australia 's entry into World War II . Training at RAAF Station Point Cook , Victoria , and RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales , he was commissioned a pilot officer on 30 March 1940 , despite being prone to airsickness early on . He served initially with No. 22 (City of Sydney) Squadron at Richmond , operating Hawker Demons and Avro Ansons .

= = Combat service = =

= = = North Africa = = =

Promoted to flying officer , Arthur was posted to No. 3 (Army Cooperation) Squadron and departed with the unit for North Africa in July 1940 . Piloting a Gloster Gladiator biplane , he scored his first aerial victory by shooting down an Italian Fiat CR.42 north @-@ west of Sofafi , Egypt , on 12 December . The next day he himself was shot down by a CR.42 and had to bail out , narrowly avoiding disaster when he became entangled first with his oxygen hose and then with the Gladiator 's wing @-@ bracing wires ; he was only torn loose at a height of 1 @,@ 000 feet (300 m) by the force of rushing air as his stricken plane fell to earth . Arthur claimed one further victim in a Gladiator before his unit re @-@ equipped with Hawker Hurricanes in January 1941 . He was flying a Hurricane when he shot down a Messerschmitt Bf 110 in April .

No. 3 Squadron began replacing its Hurricanes with P @-@ 40 Tomahawks in May 1941 . In October , Arthur was promoted to flight lieutenant and appointed a flight commander . He shot down four enemy aircraft in a single sortie near Bir El Gubi on 30 November . Flying one of No. 3 Squadron 's new Tomahawks , he claimed two Junkers Ju 87 Stukas , one Fiat G.50 and one Macchi MC.200. He destroyed the last of the four after his plane had been damaged and he was on his way back to base ; he had to land in the desert and make his way to the airfield on foot . His " great skill and gallantry " in this action earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) , which

was gazetted on 20 January 1942 .

Around this time , Arthur met his future wife , Lucille , in a shop in Alexandria . They married on 24 December 1941 and honeymooned in Palestine and Syria . The sudden romance came as a shock to Arthur 's parents ; he later recalled , " the first letter I got was a fair imitation of panic I think " . While on leave , he was also able to make contact with his brother Norman , who was serving as a military policeman in Beirut . Completing his tour with No. 3 Squadron , Arthur was repatriated to Australia with his new bride in March 1942 . Their ship journeyed to Melbourne via Bombay and Colombo , where it picked up many refugees following the recent fall of Singapore . The couple eventually had four children .

= = = South @-@ West Pacific = = =

As the Japanese advanced in the South West Pacific during early 1942 , the RAAF hurriedly established three new fighter units for Australia 's northern defence , Nos. 75 , 76 and 77 Squadrons . Arthur was posted to No. 76 Squadron in April , flying P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks in New Guinea . His brother Norman was killed in action on 9 November 1942 while serving with the 2 / 31st Infantry Battalion in Papua . Promoted to squadron leader , in February 1943 Wilf succeeded Les Jackson as commanding officer of No. 75 Squadron , based at Milne Bay under the control of No. 9 Operational Group RAAF . Arthur developed a reputation for diligence , courtesy , and concern for the welfare of his men . Despite the fact that , at 23 , he was the youngest officer in his new squadron , he commanded the respect of his fellows because , he believed , " they like that I work hard ; they like that I am not frightened of anything (i.e. Pretends not to be) and above those , they like that I don 't boast " . Having shot down a Mitsubishi G4M " Betty " bomber on 10 March , Arthur was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his " gallantry , matchless leadership and devotion to duty " on 14 April 1943 . On this occasion , in spite of his guns jamming , he led 34 Allied aircraft , including Kittyhawks of Nos. 75 and 77 Squadrons and P @-@ 38 Lightnings of the USAAF , in " a determined head @-@ on attack " to intercept 100 Japanese raiders , 14 of which were destroyed by the defenders . Arthur described the situation of being in combat but unable to shoot as " sort of awkward . Fortunately nobody else would know except me . " To compensate for his lack of offensive weaponry , he repeatedly made as though attempting to ram one of the raiders , to try and force it down into the sea .

Promoted acting wing commander in June 1943 , Arthur became wing leader of No. 71 Wing , which controlled No. 75 Squadron and three other combat units . On 5 November , he was involved in a collision at Kiriwina Airfield with a Spitfire of No. 79 Squadron . The Spitfire pilot was killed , and Arthur received serious burns . He later recalled , " ... I felt my hands disappear , felt my face go but the rest of my body was ... was just flames ... And then all of a sudden the flames dropped down a bit and I got out and went like mad and I was running away from the aircraft and trying to guess how far I could go before I 'd try to put the flames out ... " Although his family was informed that his injuries were " of a very slight nature " and that he had been " burnt but not badly " , Arthur was close to death for weeks while he was treated in Kiriwina . He was finally repatriated to Sydney where he underwent plastic surgery at Yaralla Military Hospital (now Concord Hospital) . After his recovery in April 1944 , he attended a staff course before taking over command of No. 2 Operational Training Unit at Mildura , Victoria . In August , at the age of 24 , he was promoted to temporary group captain , the youngest in the RAAF . That December he took command of No. 81 Wing of the Australian First Tactical Air Force (No. 1 TAF) , based at Noemfoor and Labuan in the Dutch East Indies .

In April 1945 , having recently assumed command of No. 1 TAF 's No. 78 Wing , Arthur helped trigger an incident that became known as the " Morotai Mutiny " (a phrase originating in one of his aide memoires at the time) . He was one of eight senior pilots , including Australia 's top @-@ scoring ace , Group Captain Clive Caldwell , and fellow veterans from the North African campaign , Bobby Gibbes and John Waddy , who attempted to resign their commissions in protest at the relegation of RAAF fighter squadrons to apparently worthless ground attack missions . Frustrated at the lack of attention paid by Headquarters No. 1 TAF to a " balance sheet " he produced showing

that operational losses outweighed results , Arthur later said that his object for the " mutiny " was to " make as big a fuss as I possibly could with the object of getting the position corrected . " A government inquiry into the incident exonerated the pilots , finding their motives in tendering their resignations to be sincere . Arthur remained in charge of No. 78 Wing for the Battle of Tarakan , which commenced on 1 May . He handed over command of the wing on 24 May , but remained on Tarakan until the end of the war .

In addition to receiving the DFC and DSO , Arthur was twice mentioned in despatches during the war . His official final tally of victories was ten enemy aircraft destroyed , though this has also been reported as eight confirmed kills and two " probables " . Reflecting later on being a fighter pilot throughout his military career , Arthur said that he was glad to have flown single @-@ seat aircraft rather than bombers , because " I would always have felt very uncomfortable with anybody else for whom I 'd be responsible " .

= = Post @-@ war life = =

Arthur was discharged from the RAAF on 14 February 1946 , and took up residence in Darwin , Northern Territory . Initially working for the Repatriation Department , in 1950 he joined the Australian School of Pacific Administration , and later travelled to Vietnam to establish a dairy farm at B?n Cát under the Colombo Plan . He was captured by the Viet Cong in 1961 and was not released until a ransom was paid ? reportedly an Olivetti typewriter . He continued to work in Vietnam after this incident , and by 1966 was running a business supplying duck feathers to the American military for use in life jackets . Returning to Australia , he was administration manager for Geopeko , the exploration unit responsible for discovering the Ranger uranium deposit at Jabiru . Wilf Arthur died on 23 December 2000 , at the age of 81 . The Kittyhawk " Polly " that he flew in his DSO @-@ winning action of 14 April 1943 was purchased by the Australian War Memorial , Canberra , in 1992 and put on display in its Aircraft Hall .