

= Peter Isaacson =

Peter Stuart Isaacson , AM , DFC , AFC , DFM (born 31 July 1920) is an Australian publisher and decorated military pilot . He was owner of Peter Isaacson Publications , the publisher of various trade publications and suburban newspapers including the Southern Cross and the Sunday Observer in Melbourne . He served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a pilot with RAF Bomber Command during World War II and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross , the Air Force Cross and the Distinguished Flying Medal .

Isaacson grew up in Melbourne and started working for a newspaper when he was sixteen . He joined the RAAF in 1940 . Following his stint in Bomber Command , he became well known in Australia for his tours in the Avro Lancaster Q @-@ for @-@ Queenie to promote the sale of war loans and , in particular , for flying his plane under the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1943 . He transferred to the RAAF Reserve after the war , retiring as a wing commander in 1969 . Since 1956 he has served as a Trustee , Chairman , and finally Life Governor of the Victorian Shrine of Remembrance . In 1991 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his publishing and community work .

= = Early life = =

Isaacson was born in London on 31 July 1920 to an Australian father and an Austrian mother ; his parents moved to Australia with him when he was six years old . Growing up in Melbourne , he was educated at Brighton Grammar School and started work at sixteen as a messenger boy on The Age , where his mother Caroline edited women 's features . All of Isaacson 's immediate family would eventually serve in World War II : his father , Arnold , a World War I veteran , joined the Volunteer Defence Corps , his mother became Public Relations Officer in the Australian Women 's Army Service (AWAS) , and his sister Joan became a photographer with the AWAS .

= = World War II = =

On 8 December 1940 , the nineteen @-@ year @-@ old Isaacson enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . After completing his training in Australia and Canada , he was posted to the United Kingdom and joined No. 460 Squadron RAAF at RAAF Brighton , Yorkshire , as a sergeant pilot . Operating Vickers Wellington medium bombers , No. 460 Squadron had been raised under the Article XV provisions of the Empire Air Training Scheme and was one of a number of nominally Australian formations taking part in RAF Bomber Command 's strategic air campaign against Germany . The squadron commenced operations in March 1942 and participated in 1 @,@ 000 @-@ bomber raids against Cologne , Essen and Bremen in May and June . It converted to Avro Lancaster heavy bombers in October . Isaacson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal on 6 November 1942 for " many successful night attacks on the enemy " with No. 460 Squadron . The following month his Lancaster was damaged by a Junkers Ju 88 night fighter after a raid on Munich .

Commissioned as a pilot officer , Isaacson was subsequently posted to No. 156 Squadron RAF of the Pathfinder Force , based at RAF Warboys , Huntingdonshire . He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 30 March 1943 for his actions during a raid on Berlin . His citation , promulgated in the London Gazette , read :

One night in March 1943 , this officer was detailed for an attack on Berlin . Following the attack and while still over the target area , his aircraft was hit by anti @-@ aircraft fire and severely damaged . The mid @-@ upper turret frame was twisted , the perspex and 2 engine cowlings blown off , the aileron controls damaged and the aircraft forced down to 4 @,@ 000 feet . On the return journey the aircraft was driven off the route and held in a cone of searchlights for 15 minutes ; during this time a further loss of height down to 900 feet occurred . In the face of this perilous situation Pilot Officer Issacson , showing coolness , resolution and skilful airmanship , succeeded in flying his aircraft back to base . This officer is an outstanding captain of aircraft who has a fine record of many successful

operational sorties .

Isaacson completed forty @-@ five sorties with Bomber Command , when the likelihood of surviving an operational tour of thirty missions was never more than 50 % and , at times , much less . Promoted to acting flight lieutenant , he was chosen in May 1943 to captain Lancaster Q @-@ for @-@ Queenie on a landmark flight from England to Australia across the Pacific Ocean , and then from Melbourne to New Zealand and back , non @-@ stop in both directions . He was awarded the Air Force Cross on 27 August 1943 for this mission , the citation noting that it was " the first occasion on which an aircraft has flown to Australia by this route and the direct flights between Melbourne and New Zealand are the first of their kind " . The Lancaster was brought to Australia so that it could serve as a template for local production of the type , but this never took place and it was instead used for exhibition flights to encourage purchase of war bonds . On 22 October 1943 Isaacson flew Q @-@ for @-@ Queenie under the Sydney Harbour Bridge , flouting a 1931 regulation that prohibited such activity ; the Lancaster remains the largest aircraft to have been flown under the bridge . Isaacson gave his crew no warning of what he was about to do and when asked later why he did it , replied " Because it was there " . It was , however , reported at the time that he undertook the stunt to support the war loan effort for which he and his crew were actively fundraising .

Notwithstanding the publicity the escapade generated for war loans , Isaacson recalled that when he landed at Mascot afterwards :

I was threatened with a court martial . Two authorities wanted to court martial me : Eastern Area in which the crime was committed and Southern Command to which I was attached at the time . I was told later there was a great fight among the bureaucrats of each of these commands as to which would court martial me . Apparently they could not agree on which should be the prosecutor and the idea either lapsed ? or maybe is still being pursued by the successors to each of these commands !

In December 1943 , following his promotional tour with his crew in Q @-@ for @-@ Queenie , he settled down to instructional work at an operational training unit before undertaking a further tour in the Lancaster commencing in March 1944 .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

Isaacson stood as the Liberal candidate for Prahran in the November 1945 Victorian state election , but was defeated by Labor 's Bill Quirk . His wartime commission was terminated on 21 February 1946 and he transferred to the RAAF Reserve . He was state commandant of the Victorian Squadron of the Air Training Corps from 1950 , and commandant of No. 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron from 1961 , before retiring in 1969 with the rank of wing commander . He also served as an honorary aide @-@ de @-@ camp to Queen Elizabeth II from 1963 to 1965 .

After working as aviation correspondent for The Argus in Melbourne , Isaacson set up his first newspaper , the Advertiser , in 1947 ; he established Peter Isaacson Publications the same year . The Advertiser took over other community newspapers and became the Southern Cross , which Isaacson edited and published along with Sunday Observer and various business and industry magazines . In 1986 Peter Isaacson Publications took over the Asher Joel Media Group . Southern Cross was bought by APN News & Media in 1993 and Isaacson became APN 's director , serving until 1998 . He chaired TW Media from 1997 to 2005 .

Isaacson married Anne McIntyre in Melbourne on 21 December 1950 . The couple , who had known each other since their teens , had delayed their wedding during Anne 's five @-@ year struggle with polio and Isaacson carried his future bride to the registry office on the day . The marriage produced two sons . On 10 June 1991 Isaacson was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia " for services to the print media and the community " . He published As I Remember Them : Men and Women Who Shaped a Life , a collection of eulogies he had delivered for friends and colleagues , in 2012 . In May of that year he was among a group of thirty @-@ two veterans selected to attend the dedication of the RAF Bomber Command Memorial in London as part of the official Australian delegation . Isaacson is a Life Governor of the Victorian Shrine of Remembrance , having previously served as a Trustee from 1956 to 2000 , and Chairman from 1983 to 2000 . He

and his wife live in the Melbourne suburb of Toorak .