

= Gus Winckel =

Willem Frederick August (Gus) Winckel (3 November 1912 ? 17 August 2013) was a Dutch military officer and pilot who flew for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force (ML @-@ KNIL) in World War II . During the attack on Broome , Western Australia , on 3 March 1942 , Winckel managed to land his plane full of refugees safely on the Broome airstrip just before the Japanese attack . He then dismounted the plane 's machine gun and shot down one of the Japanese fighters , the only Allied " kill " during the attack .

Shortly after the attack on Broome , Winckel was sent on a mission to Bandung , Java , to recover several officers from the Allied headquarters , which was under threat of being overrun . He served the remainder of the war with No. 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron RAAF in Australia . After World War II , he fought in the Dutch Politionele acties .

= = Early life = =

Winckel was born on 3 November 1912 in Muntok , Bangka Island , in what was then the Dutch East Indies . On the island his parents ran a trading store in commodities such as rubber , tin and sugar . Winckel had an untroubled childhood and at age fifteen was sent back to the Netherlands to study at the nautical school in Delfzijl . He stayed with his grandparents while studying , and three years later became a seaman first class for the merchant marine . He specialised in navigation . In 1931 , when he was aged nineteen , Winckel started working as a quartermaster on the freighter Pallau , which sailed between the Netherlands and Java . After his work on the ship he went to the island of Borneo to work on oil rigs . By 1935 he returned to the Netherlands once more , this time to work for the Royal Netherlands Navy as a submarine torpedo calibrator . During his time at the Navy a friend showed him a flyer for a pilot position at the Netherlands East Indies Air Force , which was being formed at the time . Winckel joined the Air Force in 1935 and became a pilot at age 23 . Between 1935 and 1942 he flew transports across the Dutch East Indies , mainly in Lockheed Lodestars .

= = Attack on Broome and flight to Java = =

On 3 March 1942 , Flight Lieutenant Winckel was transporting refugees from the Bandung , Dutch East Indies , to Perth , Western Australia , in his Lockheed Lodestar . He had just stopped on the Broome Airfield to refuel when Broome was attacked by nine Japanese Zero fighter planes on a long @-@ distance raid from Kupang , Timor . Winckel saw the danger of his plane being on the open airstrip and proceeded to dismount the Colt 7.99mm machine gun from the plane . When one of the Zeros , piloted by Osamu Kud? , flew over at low altitude , Winckel managed to shoot him out of the air ; the crash killed Kud? . Winckel was thereby credited with the raid 's only " kill " on the Allied side . He also believed that he hit another Japanese plane that had to ditch in the sea . The Japanese destroyed 22 allied aircraft at Broome , many of them flying boats used for refugee transport and moored in Roebuck Bay . Winckel suffered severe burns to his hand during the attack , as he had to hold the machine @-@ gun barrel to aim . His hand was treated and Winckel flew medical evacuations for the next two days without rest .

Meanwhile , Japanese forces were taking over Java and threatening the Allied headquarters at Bandung . On 5 March , the Allied command decided that several senior RAF and RAAF officers had to be evacuated from Bandung . Winckel was chosen as the pilot . He protested the decision , arguing that his lack of rest would hinder his chances of finding Bandung in the dark as he did not have any electronic aids . However , Winckel was seen to be one of the most experienced pilots because of his terrain knowledge as a flight instructor at Bandung and his recent refugee flights . Another factor was that his Lodestar , although it had been damaged in the attack on Broome , was considered the most suitable plane for the evacuation mission . Winckel flew to Java , where he managed to land his plane on a road lit by jeep headlights . He picked up fourteen passengers , refuelled the plane and successfully returned to Australia .

= = Later service and life = =

Following the attack on Broome and his evacuation mission , Winckel was sent to Moruya , New South Wales , where he joined No. 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron RAAF , which had been formed on 4 April 1942 . From Moruya he patrolled the Eastern Australian shore . At the end of May 1942 , a Japanese midget submarine attacked Sydney Harbour . Winckel and his fellow pilots were subsequently ordered to patrol for submarines . During a patrol on 5 June 1942 , Winckel managed to sink a Japanese submarine in his B @-@ 25 Mitchell bomber . The success was welcomed after the recent submarine attack and Winckel was personally congratulated by Australian Prime Minister John Curtin . Winckel spend the rest of the war with No. 18 Squadron and served from MacDonald Airfield and Batchelor Airfield in Northern Australia as a pilot on operations , and as an instructor working in Canberra . During the war , he was nicknamed " Lucky Bill " by his colleagues and " Babyface Killer " by the Japanese .

While a member of No. 18 Squadron , Winckel flew to the Dutch East Indies in late 1945 as part of an unauthorized " Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees " mission . Winckel was searching for his mother and sister but was unable to find them . Some time later another pilot flew over the Banjoe Biroe internment camp and saw the name ' NINI ' written on the ground with flour . This was the name of Winckel 's sister , to draw the attention of her brother , who she assumed was looking for her . Shortly afterwards , Winckel himself flew over the camp and dropped a letter to her , followed four days by a supply of food . After the war , Winckel was sent back to Indonesia to fight in the Dutch Politionele acties .

Winckel had met his future wife Yvonne prior to World War II ; they were married during the Dutch Politionele acties . The couple fled Indonesia after the country achieved its independence , and returned to the Netherlands where Winckel became an Air Force test pilot . The couple emigrated to New Zealand in 1951 . Winckel gained his commercial pilot license there and joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force Reserve . He flew de Havilland Tiger Moths out of Wanganui for a time but resigned as he considered the flying too dangerous owing to lax safety standards . The family moved to Nelson and Winckel found work in a flying school . He made his final flight in 1960 . Afterwards he ran several businesses and worked as an engineer until 1977 . He and his wife moved to Queensland , Australia , three years later . They returned to New Zealand in 2005 and settled down in Pukekohe .

In 2009 , a statue in Moruya was unveiled for Winckel and the other airmen that flew out of the airfield ; Winckel and Member of Parliament Mike Kelly attended . A street in Broome was also named after Winckel . He died on 17 August 2013 after suffering complications of a broken hip caused by a fall six months earlier ; he was survived by Yvonne and their three sons .

= = Decorations = =

1942 : Bronze Cross with Honorable Mention .

His Bronze Cross was later upgraded to a Bronze Lion .