

SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

PLTOFF ELDRED (TED) QUINN

80 SQN (RAAF), Kittyhawk Pilot



Eldred Quinn, known as Ted, was born on 17th September 1922 in Gumeracha, South Australia. His parents were Albert John Quinn and Evelyn Kate Pannell. He went to Forreston Primary School and Birdwood High School and became a farmer after leaving school.

On 25 April 1942, ANZAC Day, Quinn enlisted in the RAAF at No 5 Recruit Training Centre, Adelaide. He then completed initial training at Victor Harbor and Parafield, South Australia, during 1942. In 1943, he attended No 11 Elementary Flying Training School (11EFTS) at Benalla, Victoria, with his training being disrupted by being hospitalized at No 2 RAAF Hospital from late March to November 1943. He then returned to 11 EFTS before proceeding to No 7 Service Flying Training School at Deniliquin where he received his Flying Badge on 28 June 1944. Quinn then completed fighter conversion training on Kittyhawk aircraft during August and September at No 8 Operational Training Unit.

He was posted to No 80 Squadron in November 1944, a Kittyhawk squadron formed in September 1943, which saw action in the Southwest Pacific Theatre. During 1944, the squadron conducted operations in New Guinea, operating from forward airfields such as Nadzab, Cape Gloucester, Tadj and then Hollandia, in support of the advancing allied ground offensive. By late January 1945, the squadron had relocated to Morotai in support of the offensive in the Dutch East Indies. Operating from Morotai, Quinn and his squadron flew close support missions for the Army.



No 80 Squadron Kittyhawk being loaded with 500lb bombs at Kamiri Airstrip, Noemfoor Island, November 1944. (AWM)



A flight of 80 SQN Kittyhawk aircraft with 500lb bombs on a tactical strike mission against Galela in the Maluku Islands, Dutch East Indies, in December 1944.

On 15 February 1945, Quinn was uninjured when the port tyre of Kittyhawk A29-681 blew out on take off from Wama airstrip, Morotai Island, causing significant damage to the aircraft. He then received a new Kittyhawk, A29-1161, which he nicknamed "US Feller's" and gave it distinctive nose art – a caricature of Ginger Meggs sitting on a bomb. Appointed Temporary Flight Sergeant on 1 January 1945, he was recommended for commissioning in July 1945.

On 9 August 1945, he was involved in an 8-ship mission tasked with attacking Japanese forces in eastern Borneo just north of Balikpapan. It was to be his final mission as he had just completed his operational tour at 80 Squadron. The eight aircraft attacked individually in line-astern formation, diving from 6,000 feet, releasing bombs at 2,500 feet and pulling out at 2,000 feet, at a speed of 350 mph.

He was carrying a 500 lb demolition bomb with instantaneous fuse. A total of 14 bombs landed on the target area, with four near misses. Three buildings were demolished and another three were wrecked by the strike.

The aircraft then carried out strafing runs on targets of opportunity around the town of Anggana, encountering ground fire of varying accuracy and intensity from various emplacements. A Japanese motor transport building was camouflaged and hard to identify but they destroyed six trucks and four vehicles during the attack. They then turned their attention to an oil-cracking plant, located just behind the garage, which was not camouflaged.



Ted Quinn with his 80 SQN P-40 Kittyhawk and unique Ginger Meggs nose art (AWM)

During the attack, the mission commander's aircraft had part of the port elevator shot away by ground fire. 'Ted' Quinn was not so fortunate. His aircraft was hit behind the rear engine cowling, probably by a 25mm anti-aircraft gun, at about 1,500 feet as he commenced his strafing run. Flames were observed by another pilot along the underside of Quinn's aircraft as he continued his attack. He levelled out and turned to port and crash landed. His aircraft skidded along the ground into the oil pumping plant where both the aircraft and the installation exploded and burnt fiercely. There was no chance for him to escape.

The next day 80 SQN heard about the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On 15 August 1945, one week after Quinn's last mission, Japan surrendered. Quinn was the last RAAF pilot to be killed in combat during WWII in the last offensive mission carried out by 80 SQN during the war. He was posthumously promoted to Pilot Officer in October 1945.

In the 9th August 1947 edition of *The Advertiser* there were a dozen tributes to Ted Quinn including one from his parents which read:

*"In proud and loving memory of our dear son,
who gave his life in air operations over Ang-gana, Borneo, August 9, 1945.
We carry on, dear, lonely and still wondering why,
But always you walk beside us, our happy boy,
And when the great call comes and the sunset gleams,
You'll walk beside us in the land of dreams,
We who loved you, need you so."*

Ted Quinn is buried at Labuan War Cemetery in Malaysia with a cross and headstone bearing the words:

"Under the shadow of thy wings he rests, lovingly remembered."

His name is listed on the Australian War Memorial, the World War 2 Wall of Remembrance, Adelaide, and the Forrester War Memorial, Gumeracha. The Gumeracha Methodist Church has a memorial stained-glass window with a RAAF insignia at the top and inscribed at the bottom of the panel is the inscription:

*"In loving remembrance of Robert Colbey, Howard N Cornish, Colin Hanna,
Eldred Quinn, who laid down their lives in WWII 1939 – 1945."*

On the outer wall, at the base of the window, is the inscription:

"Greater Love Hath No Man Than This. That a Man Lay Down His Life for His Friends."

PLTOFF Eldred Quinn was one of almost 1,350 RAAF members who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Pacific Theatre during World War 2.

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August 2022