

Distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen, good morning. My name is Ingrid Schodel and I am representing the Children of 18 Squadron NEI RAAF foundation.

Nearly 85 years ago, something extraordinary happened in Australia. For the first time in its young history, Australia allowed a Government in Exile to be formed – the Netherlands East Indies government.

The escaping Dutch did not however come empty handed – the Dutch funded their own war efforts to a large extent. They aided Australia's defence with ships, submarines, destroyers and aircraft. They also came with substantial cash, gold, and diamonds carried by their escaping aircrew. But more importantly, they came with experienced men – skilled pilots, navigators, radio operators and gunners. The one thing the Dutch lacked were engineers, and ground maintenance crews. And so, an alliance between the Dutch Airforce and the RAAF was born, each organisation working together towards one goal.

4 Dutch Squadrons were raised - not 1 but 4! The first was 18 Squadron NEI RAAF – a joint squadron – their commands being uniquely Australian and Dutch. RAAF governed all Australian personnel, and likewise, the Dutch governed all Dutch personnel – pilots, co-pilots, radio operators, bombardiers as well as other military men. The Dutch squadrons were No 19 Transport, 119 and 120 Squadrons who flew Kittyhawks. 18 Squadron is not well known, and the Squadron often felt overlooked, so much so, that they nicknamed themselves the “Forgotten Squadron”.

18 Squadron was raised in Canberra on 4 April 1942 and consisted of 242 personnel (my father Joop van Doorn being one of them), eventually growing to over 4,000 men comprising 38 different nationalities, at their permanent base in Batchelor NT. Initial operations were submarine patrols in and around Sydney, with Ace pilot Captain Gus Winkel sinking a Japanese submarine in Sydney Harbour itself. All aircraft crew were Dutch, except for the tail and turret gunners.

18 Squadron flew B25 bombers, targeting Japanese shipping in the South West Pacific Area and they were very successful. They flew over 900 missions and over 2500 sorties during WWII. They sank over 25,000 tons of Japanese shipping in one year alone. Dutch pilots also undertook the training of pilots of No 2 Squadron, who also flew B-25's, and they flew joint missions together from time to time.

There is no doubt about the B-25's capabilities - she was a deliberately lethal straffer. Fitted out for maximum destruction - carrying bombs for the highly specialised, mast height skip bombing, and an array of impressive eight 50 calibre nose guns, 4 waist guns, not forgetting the tail and turret guns. A massive amount of fire power. Can you imagine that much fire power coming at you - at almost 300 miles per hour - 50 metres above sea level - delivering over 2600 rounds in 8 second bursts? I am terrified just thinking about it, and it would have certainly been terrifying for the Japanese who were being attacked.

18 Squadron despite their nickname, should not be forgotten, nor should the 105 men who did not come back from missions. The men in this Squadron were courageous and brave beyond measure, displaying great skill in their missions.

With the 105th year of the RAAF upon us, it is wonderful to see that 18 Squadron have 2 remaining veterans, Tail gunner Flt Sgt Roy Porter at 101, and Mr John Iskov at 103."

Ingrid Schodel

The children of the 18 Squadron Netherlands East Indies RAAF