



# NAHC NEWSLETTER

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## MERVYN SCHNEIDER OAM. *Celebrating 100 years.*

**Merv Schneider OAM will celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 16<sup>th</sup>.**

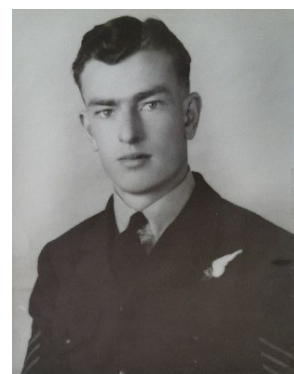
A foundation member of the NAHC Board in 2008 , he was later nominated as a 'Distinguished Life Member' of the NAHC .

During his lifetime Merv has endeared himself to the Nhill Community and continues to take an active interest in the NAHC. **Following are a few highlights tracking his lifelong passion for aviation.**

"Schneider, report to the Headmaster's Office !" When 16 year old Merv heard these words he knew he was in trouble. Two days before, the RAAF had landed in Blackwood's paddock just north of the Nhill school. When Merv saw the Avro Anson and six Hawker Demons he and his mate Ian Creek couldn't resist leaping over the fence for a closer look . The trouble was Merv was a prefect, and a whole stream of students had followed him. The Truant Officer had been called in to investigate the incident, but after a few questions to Merv he let him off with a caution. "Get out of here, Schneider and behave yourself !" he said.

Born in Woomelang on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1925 Merv moved with his family to Nhill in 1937, the year the Nhill Aeradio building was erected at the aerodrome. After graduating from school, he began work as a mechanic at the local garage and much to his delight was often asked to refuel the DC2's and other aircraft that landed at Nhill.

The war began in 1939 and in 1941 the RAAF established a Training Base just across from the Aeradio building at the Nhill aerodrome. Merv entered the Air Training Corps for 16 – 18 year olds in 1941 and joined the RAAF in 1943 , training as a Radio Navigator at Somers (Vic), Ballarat, Maryborough QLD, and Tocumwal (NSW) , flying in de Havillands, Rapides, Wacketts , Avro Ansons and Liberators .



He was assigned to 25 Squadron ' City of Perth', joining a crew of 11 in a Liberator. From 1944 they operated out of Truscott (WA) flying to Borneo, the Celebes and Indonesia. For eleven months at the end of the war they were given the task of bringing home the POW's and refugees from Singapore and Indonesia.



When he finally returned home Merv married Shirley, the daughter of one of the service policemen stationed at the Nhill RAAF Base.

He was re-employed at his former garage and trained as an A Grade Engineer. The garage owner, F J Williams was also passionate about aviation and bought first a Moth Minor, then a de Soutter , the latter now proudly on display in the NAHC. In 1961 Merv learnt to fly and became a member of the Wimmera Aero Club.

During Merv's RAAF training days he recalls flying in a Rapide through heavy fog somewhere near Smeaton in Victoria. The wheels clipped a stone fence sending the plane crashing to the ground. Remarkably, all on board survived. A farmer and his son rushed to the scene and took them to their house where the crew waited to be returned to their Base. Merv's only fear was that he would be asked to pay the £5 fine for not retracting the radio aerial before landing! Coincidentally he met up with the farmer's son at one of the Nhill Airshows and recalled the delicious fruit cake his mother had served them .

On another occasion ,Merv was due to pass through Nhill on a troop train. He phoned his girlfriend Shirley and asked if she could be on the station so he could at least see her as they whipped past. He had written her a letter, placing it in an envelope weighted down with a penny and planned to throw it out the window. Meanwhile Shirley convinced the Station Master to slow the train down giving Merv and Shirley time to touch hands before the train sped up again. This memory was savoured by both of them as Merv set off for overseas service.

Merv has swapped his wings for wheels now and can still be seen riding his bike around town. He has been an inspiration throughout his remarkable life, offering leadership to the community, pitching in to help wherever he can, always with good humour and another story! *An open invitation is extended to all to celebrate with him on Sat July 19<sup>th</sup> 2-4pm at the Nhill Bowling Club .*

**'HAPPY 100<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY, MERV !'**

### **OTHER NEWS**

**The Tiger Moth, on display at the NAHC, will be out of action for the next few months.** Len and Brian Creek are giving it a 'revamp', renewing the fabric on the fuselage. Visitors to the Heritage Centre can watch the construction of this antique aircraft first hand.



Plans are coming together for the **'Start Up Day' on Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup>**. Most of the NAHC aircraft will be moved outside and their engines started up. A 'not-to-be-missed' day.

More details next newsletter and on our website.

*Jenny Creek for the NAHC team*

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**Click on this link to find more on our membership page:**

**<https://www.nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au/membership-contact-form>**

**or Pay by Cheque to NAHC, PO Box 42, Nhill, Vic, 3418.**

**You will be investing in an exciting project that has grown from the seed of an idea ,  
initiated by people like Merv Schneider, to become an important tourist attraction .**