

Innledning:

3-7-3-3-1 Kevin Hojem har bidratt med nedenfor angitte elementer av krigstjeneste-historien til sin far, Rodney Clayton Hojem. Beskrivelsen foreligger bare på engelsk.

Kevin uttaler forøvrig:

“Dette er en svært enkel og kortfattet beskrivelse av min fars deltakelse i noen av de mest kritiske dager i menneskets historie, men han var bare en av mange tusen unge menn (noen av dem gutter) som sloss for frihet fra tyranni, og en av de få heldige som overlevde. Mange tusen overlevde ikke, deriblant hans eldre bror.”

A brief synopsis of the war service history of 3-7-3-3 Captain Rodney Clayton Hojem

Rodney Clayton Hojem joined the South African Air Force in 1941. He was given his wings as a pilot at the age of 19 and shipped up to North Africa in May 1942 to join in the war against the tyranny of Hitler and the dreaded Luftwaffe. At an age when most young men were studying at University for their future careers (and enjoying the social side of life!) Rodney was shooting at and been shot at by pilots in the Luftwaffe. He was posted first to Inyoni Base Camp near Alexandria in Egypt living under canvas on the desert sand.

Rodney's next posting was to Carthago in the Sudan where they flew redundant Tomahawks and Hurricanes, one of which he belly landed because of engine failure. He was subsequently to see seven out of twelve Kittyhawks belly-land soon after take-off in the desert.

From Carthago he was posted to No 2 Cheetah Squadron to patrol over the Alamein line and further forward to a veritable hornest nest of Messchersmidt 109's at Fuka. For months on end they lived on a diet of tinned bully beef (hermetisert oksekjøtt) in open slit trenches in the desert next to the air strip. They flew their operations in Kittihawks and were either fighter patrols, bomber escorts or dive bombing and strafing (beskyte fra fly) the German supply lines. They were then equipped with the far superior and capable Hurricanes manufactured in America, a few of which survived and are still flying today.

This is a quote from his logbook of 18 August 1942 (only 20 Yrs old)

“Attacked by 5 109 F’S repeatedly. I collected two holes in the starboard mainplane”.

And again on 29 August 1942:

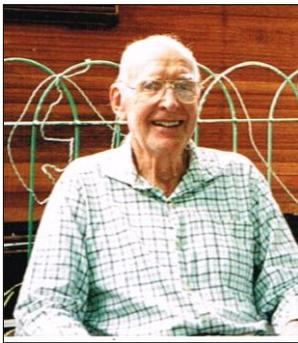
“ Scramble to EL.ALAMAIN. We met 7 109’s and MACCHIS. I was attacked first. A general dog-fight commenced. I fastened on to a MACCHI 202. Gave him a burst from dead astern. No results observed. Pulled out to the left and delivered quarter attack. White smoke poured from his engine. Last I saw of him was diving vertically, still smoking.”

So this was his first victory at the age of 20 after only 21 hours of operational flying.

The Alamein Line started to buckle on 23 October 1942 and the Squadron made steady, but costly progress through to Tunisia. After a few more skirmishes and STUKA parties hostilities in North Africa ceased on 7 May 1943.

Rodney at this stage had 5 confirmed victories to his credit and had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Because he had exhausted the permitted number of operational tours he was sent back to South Africa as an Instructor and married Mary Campbell. It was as an Instructor training pilots that he was involved in two narrow escapes, in each instance with the pupil pilot behind the controls. He was released from The South African Air Force in September 1945 having accumulated thousands of hours of operational and training flying hours.



He never spoke about his war experiences to his family except in his latter years but not in any detail preferring to keep those memories private. He never flew again except shortly before his death when his son Kevin arranged a flight for him in a Harvard (one of the planes he trained pupils in). After the flight he was markedly emotionally and physically touched by the experience. He went as a co-pilot and the owner and pilot of the Harvard told me he had given Rodney the controls and Rodney (in his 70's) had executed a perfect barrel roll and loop!