

Roy Ginn was born in Waihi, New Zealand on 24 May 1916, the third son and fifth child of James Ginn born 1874 Tasmania and Ethel Jane May Dunstan born 1879 Thames, New Zealand. On 4 November 1939 he married Sheila Doreen Evans, born 1919 Papakura.

Excerpt of memoirs of Roy Ginn RNZAF Works Squadron in the South Pacific WWII (Service No. 426845). Dictated to his daughter Jennifer Clark in 1993.

War broke out the year we were married. At this stage our building firm Ginn Bros. Ltd was employing 18 tradesmen. We were in a big way for those times. I had strongly considered going to war but decided I didn't want to go until conscription was brought in. We were also expecting our first child and I was assigned to work in Hamilton under "essential workers" building accommodation for ammunition workers. I biked to work from Huntly to Hamilton each morning and evening. The superintendent of the Huntly Fire Brigade wanted to appeal that I was in an essential industry. I told him "No". At the Court of Appeal I asked to be released from my obligation as there were plenty of people around who had the necessary skills. The judge upheld my appeal.

Our son Graeme Roy was born in Huntly Hospital on 9 May 1942. At this point the firm was directed to construct essential buildings for the war effort from their Papatoetoe factory in Kenderdine Road next to the family home.

When Graeme was three weeks old we moved back to Papatoetoe and stayed with Sheila's family in Wallace Road. Sheila and Graeme lived there while I was away at war. I initially tried to go to War but was turned down. However I saw an ad in the paper for carpenters to go overseas immediately with the Royal New Zealand Air Force and volunteered to go, unknown to the Manpower Committee. I was accepted in the rank of LAC (Leading Air Craftsmen). After the interview I was directed up to Whangarei to erect Army huts constructed in our factory. Then a letter arrived on 3 July 1942 with orders to report to Banks Box Buildings, Auckland on Monday 12th July 1942 for departure. Sailed for places unknown about 16 July 1942.

The Air Force unit I joined in 1942, Unit 5, was formed of all skilled tradesmen to erect the sea plane base in New Caledonia. It would appear that the buildings were already constructed in New Zealand but we were urgently needed to erect them. When we arrived in New Caledonia we were attached to the American Naval CB Unit (Naval Construction Unit). The New Zealand Government had supplied buildings for the base and our Unit (approximately 25 men) were in charge of the erection with the help of the CBs. These people really treated us well. They shared all their patriotic parcels with us, took us on tours of their warships, aircraft carriers etc. They were not very impressed with our buildings, nor was I. Everything was built to New Zealand specifications - 4 x 3 window studs, 6 x 2 floor joists, weatherboard timber, 9 x 1 sarking on the roof. All the timber was green as grass and heavy. The Yank in charge would go around the buildings shaking his head and saying "Never again. Never again." They made up the rest of the buildings from America with 2 x 2 studs and light ply exterior, 4 x 2 floor joists and ply floors with reinforced plastic for windows. It was about one tenth of the weight of a New Zealand structure and would require only four men to lift the heaviest of their panels. So much for the buildings.

This was the period of the build-up of forces to attack Guadalcanal. The harbour was dotted with sea planes, small ships, a few aircraft carriers. From the top of our island El Nu, we could gaze out to sea and would view what appeared to be hundreds of ships. The streets of Noumea were crowded with American soldiers and sailors. We awoke one morning to find all the ships and aircraft had disappeared. Several days' later hospital ships, battle ships, one with its bow blown off, others with flattened decks, wounded soldiers and sailors, arrived back in the harbour. They were in a real mess after the battle of Guadalcanal. One of the Americans told me how they landed on an island and there were women waiting to meet

them. When they came ashore the women pulled their hands from behind their backs and threw hand grenades at them, killing many. I wonder to this day if they were sent down by the Japs with guns at their backs. Certainly the Americans rounded up and killed many of them. War is hell! New Caledonia was a torn country, undecided whether it was free French (for the allies) or Vichy French (for the Germans). When the job was complete our main Unit went north. Five of us were left behind to finish the job. We were supposed to follow the Unit north but the Americans sent us back to New Zealand in a Catalina flying boat. We then had to report in another seven days. We were sent away again to an unknown destination which turned out to be Fiji for a two year posting. Three of us from the original Unit, Fred Naimie, myself, Woods, stayed together for the remaining two years. When we arrived in Fiji, invasion by the Japs was still on the cards and the bases were all pretty well established. I spent a few months at our Air Force base in Nandi. While there our Unit shifted from Nandi to another base called Nausori. We were left behind to unload gear. It was left for us to clean up our Unit. There was a tidal river and a wharf that had sugar barges 40ft long, 15 ft wide, built of steel. We were sent down to load some bombs (250 pounders) on to it. We found they were too round to be lifted by hand and didn't know how to get them on. If the tide was in, it was only down 6ft but when the tide was out it was about 12ft. We had no equipment. One bright coot reckoned the only way was to roll them over and drop them into the bottom of the barge. Believe you me, I was scared stiff. It was a big drop for a bomb that we knew nothing about. However one was lifted over the edge, hit the barge with a bang but did not blow up. We got a bit cheeky, lifted some more down - we are still here! Then came the decision as to who would go down to lift them away from the bottom. They took quite a while to decide. I said I would go and another guy went too. We lifted them away from the bottom. Boy it was scary but I am still here. Apparently shortly after smoke started coming up through the middle of the barge. We all took off expecting a big explosion. Some of the experts came down and discovered it was only a smoke bomb which had shifted over and gone off. I believe there was quite a stink about that. Our Unit was not meant to be armourers - it was their responsibility to move bombs. However that is war - everything got mixed up a bit.

We shifted around to Nausori. We had a football team there which I joined. We used to play twice a week for a while. Most of the time the ground would be as hard as concrete. We could not keep up the supply of players as there were so many injuries we had to shift to only once a week. When it rained it was muddy and slushy and the ground used to smell like one thing. The first time I saw hornets was in Fiji. We had a two man tent. Up on one end of the tent was a hornet's nest. I eyed it with suspicion for a start. My tent mate said "Don't worry about it, as long as you don't touch them you will be all right". We got used to them as they never bothered us. A gang of Fijian carpenters was allocated to my care. We had a hurricane that blew out half of our burees. It was our job to rebuild them. We had just got them finished when along came another hurricane and blew the rest down! I had an interesting job building a bombing target out at sea for the aircraft bombers to practise. The natives were very friendly and treated us well. The Auckland Star of 18 October 1944 printed an article "*Unsung Squadron: Islands Works Units – Camps for the Air Force*" detailing the work we did.

After two years away we were sent back to New Zealand and posted around Auckland. I thought my tropical service was over. However to my surprise I had to report for a further two years. By now our second child was expected and I tried without success to have my posting delayed. At this stage I was asked where I would like to serve. I said I was quite happy to go where sent and ended up at Emerau, the most northern RNZAF station in the Pacific. I then went to Los Negros where there was a large American repair depot. I was attached to the British Pacific fleet there. By this time I had received another stripe and was now a Corporal. While we were there the war in Europe finished - happy days! I had also received news that my daughter Jennifer Catherine had been born at Huia Hospital, Otahuhu on 16 July 1945. Great celebrations over a bottle of lemonade! VE Day and Germany's surrender was

declared. The Japanese carried on. We left Emerau and sailed for Los Negros constructing aerodromes. When the war finished I returned home and was discharged from the Air Force on 3 February 1946 after serving one year 23 days in New Zealand and two years 189 days overseas. Total three years 212 days.

Auckland Star, 5 November 1945. RETURNING AIRMEN. THE WAHINE'S DRAFT. AUCKLAND PROVINCE LIST
RNZAF personnel from the Auckland Province included in the third draft to return from the Pacific by the steamer Wahine, expected to arrive at Wellington to-morrow, are as follows, the rank being sergeant or lower, unless otherwise stated:— **R – Ginn** (Papatoetoe)... A Press Association message from Wellington states that the personnel in the Wahine for areas near to Wellington will travel to their homes by trains and the others will be flown from Paraparamu to Harewood and Whenuapai. The first plane is scheduled to arrive at Whenuapai at 4.15 p.m.

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Entries in address book:

Joined RNZAF on 7 July 1942

Arrived New Caledonia 18 July 1942

Arrived back in New Zealand 28 September 1942

Sailed again on 15 October 1942 for Fiji

Stationed at Nandi, Fiji, until 27 December 1942

Shifted to Nausori, Fiji, 27 December 1942

Arrived back in New Zealand 6 June 1944

Departed New Zealand 6 March 1945

Arrived Emirau Island, 25 March 1945. Left 18 August 1945. Served Los Negros, Papua New Guinea, 20 days