

ANZAC COMMEMORATION 2024

AIRCRAFTMAN/SERGEANT ARTHUR JAMES ADAMS

On the outskirts of Manila, capital city of The Philippines, is a graveyard containing 17,600 American servicemen who died in the Pacific Theatre of WW2. In addition to these immaculately kept graves, there is a limestone memorial wall, into which are carved the names of another 36,000 servicemen, missing, presumed dead in the same conflict. Next to each inscribed name is the location that records where each man enlisted. Most, of course, are places in the US, and of the 36,000 names inscribed on that wall, only one is followed by the words 'New Zealand'. He was an airman, a CBHS Old Boy, and he was also my grandfather's first cousin.

Each year on ANZAC Day we commemorate the life of an Old Boy who died in active service, in order to put a more human face on the names read out in the Roll of Honour.

Today we remember **Arthur James Adams, known as Jim: an Aircraftman in the Royal NZ Air Force, service number NZ 413729, and later, Sergeant in the United States Army Air Force, service number 10650009.**

Jim was the elder son of Christchurch couple Art and Del Adams. Art was also an Old Boy, having attended CBHS from 1892-1894. The family emigrated to the USA in 1914, where Art later worked on the construction of the Hoover Dam. **Jim Adams** was born on 26 October 1921 in Stockton, California. Jim's younger brother Jack, also an Old Boy of School, served in the NZ army during WW2.

Jim's early education was in the USA, but in the early 1930's, his family returned to Christchurch and lived at 3 Avalon Street, Richmond. In 1935, Jim enrolled at CBHS, where he was a pupil in 1935 and 1936. His school

life appears to have been unremarkable, with no meaningful mention made of him in the school magazine.

As a young adult, Jim's main recreational pursuit was tramping and he was a significant contributor to the Christchurch Tramping Club and the Youth Hostel Association. After his death, his service was recognised in 1948 by the building of the Jim Adams Memorial Hut in the foothills behind Oxford in North Canterbury.

By 1941, Jim was working for George Weigel, a commercial photographer with a studio in New Regent Street. This employment was interrupted in mid-1941 when he enlisted in the Royal NZ Air Force as an Aircraftman. His work background in photography was utilised by the Airforce, and he was posted to work as a general photographer with No. 3 (General Reconnaissance) Squadron at Whenuapai, near Auckland.

General photography in the RNZAF at that time was largely an earth-bound job, consisting of recording special events at the squadron, along with aircraft modifications and accidents. Jim's Air Force Conduct sheet is sparse, the only entry being a charge for being AWOL for 8 hours on February 8th, an indiscretion that cost him one day's pay.

It may have been a wish for more action that led Jim to enquire in late 1942 about transferring to the US Army Air Force to serve his country of birth. The application was granted, but Jim's transfer plans were interrupted on 21 May 1943 when he was involved in a tragic training accident in Auckland, which resulted in the death of a fellow serviceman. Jim, along with a number of other servicemen, was undergoing a refresher weapons course. During standing practice, Jim's rifle discharged a live round, resulting in the accidental death of Airman Lloyd Littlejohn. A subsequent Coroner's inquest and Court Martial found no liability for the incident in neither the actions of Jim nor those of the sergeant who was leading the course, with the coroner surmising the incident as 'a slip in human element'.

By August 1943, Jim had transferred to the USAAF as a combat photographer. As a member of the 6th Combat Camera Unit, he flew missions recording aircraft in action and their targets. On 20 June 1945 Jim was one of an 11-man crew on a B-24 Liberator bomber mission to photograph two enemy airfields near Makassar, on the southwestern tip of the island of Sulawesi in what was then the Japanese-occupied Dutch East Indies; now Indonesia.

According to US service records, after Jim's B-24 had completed its reconnaissance, it was to fly back to base in formation with another B-24 which was on a similar mission. However, as Jim's plane followed about a mile behind, the lead plane became involved in repulsing a single Japanese fighter. The pilot of this second B-24 recorded seeing Jim's plane turn around to escape the scene, and it appeared to be in normal flight and under control. However, it soon went out of sight and was never seen again.

The American Airforce has documented its very considerable efforts to find the remains of the crew, both immediately after the disappearance and again in 1947 following the end of the war. Sadly, nothing was ever recovered and so Jim's remains, and those of his fellow 10 crewmen, remain unfound.

For his service, Jim was awarded the US Air Medal and a Purple Heart. He is remembered in the American War Cemetery and Memorial in Manila, and on the memorial doors at Christchurch Boys' High School. His family and School remember him with pride.

Jim Adams was survived by his parents, Art and Del, and his younger brother Jack. He was 24 years old when he died.

SERGEANT ARTHUR JAMES ADAMS

Son, relative and Old Boy

Altiora Peto

May he rest in peace

Acknowledgement

Much of this address is based on research by Andrew Matheson, formerly the NZ Ambassador to the Philippines who became intrigued by the New Zealander who was remembered in the American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila.

