

## SERGEANT SIDNEY MARLEY.

### **SERGEANT SIDNEY MARLEY, 3967, NO. 9 SQUADRON, RAAF.**

Sidney Marley was born in the Tamworth, NSW area on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1912. He was the son of John Henry (Harry) Marley and Annie Martha (Martha Stewart) Marley. Harry Marley was teaching at a small school at Duncan's Creek, between Tamworth and Nundle.

Two years later, in 1914, Harry was transferred to Comboyne in the Manning area, where two more children Elaine and Maurice were born, then in 1921 the family moved to Laurieton where their youngest child Mavis (and writer of this narrative) was born.

Naturally Sid was a pupil under his father's care until he reached High School age. He then had to board in the nearest big town, Taree for his secondary education.

On leaving school he obtained an apprenticeship in Fitting and Turning/Machining at the Newcastle engineering firm of Morison & Bearby, attending the local Technical College at night. No time off during the day for apprentices in those days! At the conclusion of his apprenticeship he lost his job – it was the era of the Great Depression.

It was during this time that Sid joined the inter-wars Militia. My brother Maurice recalls he was a keen marksman who was chosen to represent his troop in the King's Shoot at Murrurundi. Maurice remembers he had a rifle insignia on his uniform sleeve and he was awarded a medallion for shooting. He often brought home spent cartridge shells for his younger brother.

With his father Harry's help he bought a Service Station in the Newcastle Suburb of Hamilton where he did all the mechanical work on customers cars and sold petrol – Golden Fleece for 1/11 and Parr Pull for 1/9 per gallon – translated 1/11 = 20 cents, 1/9 = 18 cents per about 4,800 litres!

He married Georgina Maud (Ena) Stobbart on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1937 and they set up home in another Newcastle suburb, Stockton. Stockton is on the opposite side of the Hunter River to Hamilton and was then connected by vehicular ferry; so it became difficult for Sid to carry on at the Service Station. He leased the business and commenced work at the BHP Steel Works.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1939 Sid enlisted in the RAAF, carrying out his basic training, servicing aircraft, at Laverton, Victoria. He was stationed at Richmond Air Base when war was declared in 1939. Richmond at that time was a grassy aerodrome surrounded by staff cottages. My parents, Harry and Martha, and I were visiting Sid and Ena during the school holidays. I remember two servicemen coming through the back gate to tell Sid to report for duty instantly and be prepared for an announcement of grave significance.

It was not long after the declaration of war that Sid was transferred to the newly commenced Rathmines Seaplane (later Catalina) Base. He and Ena rented a holiday home at nearby Toronto. There was no vehicle access so Sid would travel to the base on the RAAF Crash boat that moored near the small jetty on Lake Macquarie.

At the beginning of 1941 he was transferred to HMAS *Sydney* for a 12 months tour of duty. His job as sergeant was to be in charge of servicing the Walrus aircraft on the ship. Our father thought it was an honour as *Sydney* had distinguished itself in the Mediterranean campaign, but Sid disliked it intensely. Our mother saved most of his letters and in all of them he was counting the time when his exile would be over. In his last letter he said "only 3 more months" and it would be over. He also said "I have a feeling something is going to happen so don't be too worried if you don't hear from me for a while."