



CAF MESSAGE

VALE AIR VICE MARSHALL JAMES HILARY FLEMMING AO AM (RETD) (RCDS, PSC, QFI, FCI)

4 DEC 1926 - 11 FEB 2015

It is with great sadness that I inform you that after a long fight with cancer, one of the great Air Force stalwarts, AVM Jim Flemming AO, AM, has died.

Jim was always passionate about serving in the RAAF. During World War Two he twice enlisted while underage. The first attempt, using an assumed name, lasted six months before he was discovered. The second attempt, under his own name was more successful, it led to a career that started as an Aircraftman-trainee and finished as an Air Vice Marshal 39 years later.

In the intervening period Jim served as an air traffic controller in Darwin and New Guinea, before converting to Mustang fighters and serving with 77 Squadron in Japan. It was while he was in Japan as a WOFF pilot that the Korean War broke out and Jim joined fellow No 77 SQN aircrew on the first day of operations in the Korean War. Eventually flying over 100 sorties during that conflict, Jim established himself as a highly proficient pilot. He is credited with destroying the first T-34 tank of the Korean War and was awarded the US DFC for his part in the destruction of the strategically important Kum River Bridge. He was also awarded the US Air Medal, was Mentioned in Dispatches and commissioned as a Flying Officer in November 1950.

In 1955 Jim completed the RAAF's first ever Fighter Combat Instructors' Course, which he duxed convincingly. Later that same year he was posted to No 75 SQN to fly the Meteor fighter. During this posting Jim acted as the Commanding Officer and formed the RAAF's first official aerobatic team the 'Meteorites'. After a brief stint as an instructor at CFS, Jim was posted to the United States to fly F-100 Super Sabres and F-104 Starfighters with the USAF in 1958.

On return to Australia in 1960 Jim became a QFI on Sabres and Chief Instructor at 2 OCU. After attending Staff College in 1962 he completed several staff jobs before being appointed Commanding Officer of No 75 SQN on 25 April 1966. Jim was to lead the first deployment of the Mirages overseas when he took 75 SQN to Butterworth in 1967. More command postings soon followed, including command of No 78 Wing Butterworth and Officer Commanding RAAF Ubon in 1968.

After promotion to GPCAPT in 1972 and several more staff jobs, Jim was promoted to Air Commodore and posted to command RAAF Base Williamtown in April 1973. After this highly successful posting Jim was selected to attend the prestigious Royal College of Defence Studies in the United Kingdom where he gained a reputation as a highly realistic and positive thinker respected by fellow course members and staff alike. It was during this period that Jim was appointed Member of the Order of Australia, one of the first Defence members to be so appointed.

On return to Australia, Jim worked as the Director General Coordination and Organisation at Air Force Office and later Director General of the New Tactical Fighter Project in search of a Mirage replacement. In December 1977 Jim was promoted to acting Air Vice Marshal and appointed

Commander IADS in 1977. He was confirmed as an Air Vice Marshal in August 1978. In 1981 Jim became Chief of Air Force Development, a post he held until retirement on 2 July 1982, just a month after being awarded the Order of Australia for his services to the RAAF.

Not content to simply retire, Jim was to serve as the Director Australian War Memorial 1982-1987.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Jim was known as a man passionate about the RAAF, as a leader and as an outstanding fighter pilot. The RAAF has lost a true legend and icon of the service. Jim is survived by his wife Patricia and three children - Peter, Geoffrey and Terese.

Honours and Awards – AVM James Hilary Flemming

Officer of the Order of Australia

Member of the Order of Australia

Mentioned in Dispatches

War Medal 1939-45

Australia Service Medal

Korea Medal

United Nations Medal

National Medal and two clasps

United States Distinguished Flying Cross

United States Air Medal



GC Brown, AO

Air Marshal

Chief of Air Force

13 February 2015