

# Acrobat Now Air Hero

MELBOURNE, Thursday.

Two years ago Johnny Piper's unrehearsed acrobatic feats from the seventh floor of a Queen-street building, made Melbourne gape.

Now his daring exploits as an RAAF flying officer at an advanced Allied base are earning the admiration of American airmen.

In his acrobatic days Johnny was selling carpets.

He thought nothing of hanging by his feet from the top of the building where he worked to get birds' eggs, said one of his business associates today.

The sight of Johnny eating his lunch sitting on an open window, with feet dangling 100ft. above the crowds, was common.

## Five-Mile Swim

As soon as the war commenced, Johnny Piper joined the RAAF.

He has three Zeros to his credit, and a few grim experiences, too.

One of his worst was when his engine conked out while he was on a reconnaissance flight over the sea off the Australian coast.

The machine got into a spin, and Johnny parachuted gracefully into a boiling sea more than five miles from the shore.

There was nothing else to do but swim, and he did.

He was naked and almost exhausted when he dragged himself up on a beach. Then he walked to a farmhouse, draping himself with a piece of hessian on the way.

## Mistaken For Jap

When he arrived at the house, the farm people thought he must be a Jap—he was burnt by the sun and salt and unintelligible, mainly through a thirst-swollen tongue.

They handed him over to the authorities after they had given him every care, and he was taken by ambulance to a hospital.

But next morning, when he underwent a nerve test, he was found to be normal.

Johnny is the son of a Victorian grazier, Mr. W. Piper, who is a descendant of Josiah Wedgwood, of English pottery fame.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

23.4.42