

VENTURA — ONE OF THE FAMILY

by David Wilson

On 23 February, 1934, the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation rolled out the first of a family of twin engined monoplanes which were to bring the company into the forefront of the United States aircraft industry. This was the Lockheed Model 10 Electra, which was followed by the Model 12 Electra Junior, Model 14 Super Electra and Model 18 Lodestar.

Where Lockheed developed the Super Electra into the successful Hudson series, its subsidiary, Vega Aircraft Corporation, modified the Lodestar in a similar manner. First flown on 31 July 1941, the Ventura, although larger and faster, never achieved the reputation of the Hudson, possibly because the type was initially misused. Daylight operations in Western Europe disclosed the types weakness. Sir Basil Embry, AOC 2 Group, Second Tactical Air Force summed the aircraft up as "being slow, heavy, un-maneuverable and lacking in good defensive armament." However, when transferred to the maritime reconnaissance role, the aircraft proved effective.

The RAAF operated 17 Ventura Mk 1 (A59-1 to -9 and A59-11 to -18), 3 Mk 2 (A59-19 and -20) and 55 GR 5 (A59-50 to -105) aircraft. The first of these lease lend aircraft were received on 18 May 1943, with the last delivery being made on 2 July 1944. The type served with 4 and 11 Communications Units and, operationally, with 13 Squadron.

13 Squadron received its first Venturas (A59-51, -52 and -53) in July 1943. By the end of September, intensive night, local and cross country flights and training patrols were being undertaken.

During November, two aircraft suffered damage which resulted in their being issued to 3 Aircraft Depot, Amberley, for repair. A59-51, whilst taxiing from a refuelling dump at Bundaberg, sank in a subterranean hole at the northern end of the airstrip on the 4th, whilst -54's brakes failed on the wet Archer surface on the 29th, forcing it to overshoot into a revetment. The first fatality occurred when A59-55 crashed on 7 December, without survivors, near Canberra.

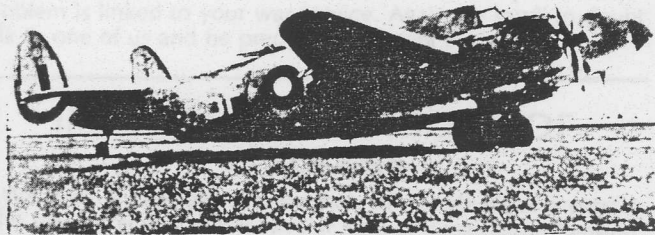
A detachment of the unit undertook anti-submarine patrols from Camden, NSW, without success, contending with bad weather and damaging two aircraft in landing accidents. On 29 December, A59-56 rolled off the Camden airstrip and hit a fence due to the loss of brakes; A59-58 suffered a similar fate when it overshoot the flare path whilst landing in a rain storm on 21 January, 1944.

Coffs Harbour was the home of another detachment from 13 February 1944, before the squadron deployed to Gove, Northern Territory, after a period at Cooktown, North Queensland. "B" flight arrived at Gove on 26 August, 1944.

Prior to the squadrons' arrival at Gove, it undertook its only strike in numbers against the enemy. On 10 August 1944, attacked shipping and barges at Merauke. The opposition was negligible, consisting of one light machine gun, which was no answer to the seven 500 pound and twenty eight 250 pound bombs which were delivered.

The squadron now settled into a routine of convey escorts and anti shipping patrols, which ranged in duration from four to over eight hours. These operations did not result in casualties in themselves, although accidents did occur. On 2 October, after jettisoning off excess fuel and jettisoning its bombs, A59-75 crashed on land at Gove after its undercarriage failed to lower. Seventeen days later A59-83 ditched at sea after having the misfortune of losing power in both engines. The aircraft sank in sixty seconds. However, the uninjured crew reached Banks Island, from where a rescue launch affected their rescue.

17 November 1944 marked the initiation of a more aggressive posture for the squadron, when alternate targets were visited if



A Lockheed Ventura of No. 13 Squadron

anti shipping patrols proved unproductive. On this day, A59-79, captained by S/Ldr Moore, with a crew consisting of F/O Spencer, W.O 's Sharpe and Hirst and F/Sgt Kelly took off from Gove at 2224Z for the Aroe Islands on an anti shipping search. In fairly good weather, with a visibility of 3 to 10 miles, the aircraft sought enemy shipping, to no avail. 100 miles from Aroe Island, the aircraft let down to between 200 and 300 feet, before flying along the north coast to Wamar Island. Turning up the east coast of that island, it strafed a sawmill area opposite Dobo, without observing results. From here, the Ventura turned on track for Kaitanimbar, which was approached from the north west. The village was attacked with three 500 pound and one 250 pound bombs each with an eleven second delay fuse, and strafed during the approach and retirement. The bomb bursts were photographed before the aircraft set course for Gove, where it landed at 0604Z.

Another typical patrol occurred on 21 March 1945, when A59-68 was tasked to search the track Waworada Bay, Cape Kessi and thence in a clockwise direction around the coast to Sape Strait and return to Truscott. Loaded with two 250 pound GP and one 100 pound demolition bomb load, the Ventura left Truscott at 0700. Completing track to the Bahahai Strait, the Ventura crew spotted a dark coloured enemy aircraft 2,000 yards astern and flying at 4000 feet, heading for the sun. 100 feet above the sea, the Ventura turned almost 180 degrees to port, to keep the enemy in sight. The latter closed the range, so the bomb load was dropped into Salek Bay and full military power for two minutes, then rated power for a minute, was applied, leaving the interceptor falling astern, before giving up the chase and heading toward the north west. The patrol continued on and altered track to the south east tip of Soemba Island, where the Melola airfield was photographed from low level before the aircraft landed at Truscott.

Similar visits to targets at Cape Derehi, Elat Village, Moen, Wokan, Mackoor, Naigolei and Sereran, amongst others were made. These operations did not result in casualties, even though single engine flights from the target to base were not unknown, and some battle damage resulted. However, there were non operational casualties. On 27 January, 1945 A59-84 crashed at the southern end of Gould strip whilst landing at Batchelor, with no survivors. During a gunnery exercise on 28 January A59-56 crashed into the sea 12 miles from Gove, the survivors being rescued by a 42 squadron Catalina. There was a two month break the next incident, when A59-60 crashed whilst the pilot was practising take off and landings at Gove on 23 March 1945, without injury to the crew.

On 25 July 1945, after being quarantined for a period due to a squadron member contracting meningitis, the squadron disembarked at Morotai. From that area, it moved to Labuan where, after much hard work, a camp was established. Six aircraft

arrived the day before VJ day, and were involved in leaflet raids and transport duties. A59-99 was burnt out on 6 September, when a tyre burst on take off, luckily without injury to passengers crew. The aircraft was supplementing the Dakota service between Borneo and Moratai. Venturas, in the transport role, ranged from Singapore to Tokyo.

The experience of one 13 squadron navigator is of special interest. Involved in routine anti submarine and convoy duties, he was a crew member of A59-56 which had problems at Camden, as well as taking part in the Merauke raid. In total, he flew just over 220 operational hours in the Ventura. E.G. Whitlam, some thirty years later, became Prime Minister of Australia.



F/O E.G. Whitlam

TECHNICAL DETAILS VENTURA GR5

Powerplant	2 2000hp Pratt and Whitney radials
Dimensions	Span 65 ft 6 ins Length 51 ft 9 ins Height 13 ft 2 ins
Weights	Empty 20,197 pounds Loaded 31,077 pounds
Performance	Max speed 312 mph at 13,800 ft Cruising speed 164 mph Service ceiling 26,300 ft Range 1,660 miles
Armament	2 x 0.50 MG fixed in nose, 2 x 0.50 MG in dorsal turret. 2 x 0.303 mg in ventral position 6 x 500 pound bombs or 6 x 325 pound depth charges.

PENSION INFORMATION

PENSION RIGHTS?

When one or two veterans are gathered together there is talk of Pension rights and, unless one of the group is knowledgeable confusion can arise. Mates talk about another bloke they know who got this and that, and minds start to turn over with thoughts of what each could be missing out on. Unfortunately this only promotes greed whereas the aim of Repatriation is to help those in need.

Admittedly those whose lives have been impaired by disabilities arising from their war service have every right to compensation, not only for how it affects their health but also their lifestyle and if these veterans have not already applied for and received their due reward they should not hesitate to take such action now. Your honorary pensions & welfare representatives will be only too pleased to hear from you and guide you on your way to achieve your benefits.

There are many others who believe that they have a right to be considered for benefits and it is possible that, they are correct. This can best be ascertained by a visit to our office and a chat

one of your representatives.

What we do not appreciate is having to give time to a veteran who had nothing wrong with his health during his entire war service but wants to have a go on the offchance that he might get something. To these we say - if you have now developed an ailment and you chose to believe that your war service was the cause, ask yourself the question, "Just why do I believe that it is due to my war service"? If you cannot think of an acceptable reason, you can forget it. You do not have to prove anything but you must be able to convince the Department that your medical problem is linked to your war service. Again we say if in doubt talk to one of us and be prepared to accept our advice.

IMPORTANT TO WIDOWS OF VETERANS

We have always been aware that, on the death of a veteran who was in receipt of the Special Rate of Repatriation Pension, the Department of Veterans' Affairs AUTOMATICALLY acted to provide the War Widows Pension to the surviving widow.

We also believed (erroneously) that on the death of a veteran who was in receipt of a disability pension, irrespective of the rate, and on receipt of a death certificate by the Department indicating that the veteran's death was due to the Accepted Disability, the Department would institute the necessary action which could lead to a grant of the War Widow's Pension to the surviving widow.

We recently found a case where a veteran on a pension for an accepted disability, died of that disability, and no action was taken by any party until we became aware of the circumstance some six months later. On submission to the Department her claim was successful.

The matter was brought to the attention of the Department who informed us that it is Commission policy not to actively invite claims from veterans or their dependants. They insist on a formal claim being lodged.

It is therefore probable that a number of veterans could have passed away in similar circumstances and to this end we invite those widows to get in touch with our Office and provide us with details for investigation.

The criteria is as follows:

- (1) The deceased veteran MUST have been on a pension for a disability accepted by the Department of Veterans' Affairs as due to his war service, and
- (2) the cause of his death MUST directly be/related to that Accepted Disability.

Should we find that the submission of a claim is justified the necessary forms for lodgement of a formal claim will be provided by this Office.

Relevant widows are requested NOT to contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs until such time as your representatives have had the opportunity to investigate their circumstances. Such action can only cause confusion and further disrupt an already overloaded system.

1986 ANNUAL BALL - RAFFLE PRIZES

1st Prize	Ticket No.	666	D. Maclean (Double Bay)
2nd "	"	9	W. Coghlan
3rd "	"	820	N. Bond
4th "	"	816	T. Bond
5th "	"	478	B. McEwan
6th "	"	428	E. Anderson
7th "	"	128	Lee Smith
8th "	"	38	W. Fielder-Gill
9th "	"	41	Y. Greethad
10th "	"	228	G. Simpson