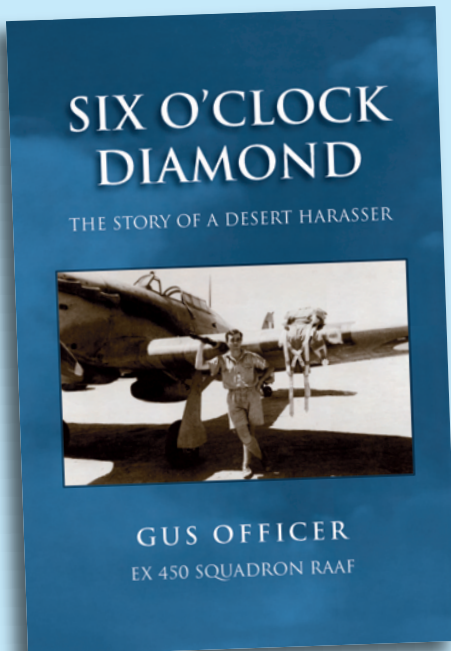


SIX O'CLOCK DIAMOND

THE STORY OF A DESERT HARASSER



Six O' Clock Diamond is the personal account of a young man from Warrnambool in Western Victoria who joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1941. After training on Tiger Moths and Wirraways in Australia, he was sent to the Middle East where he flew Hurricanes on Operational Training Units. Eventually he was posted to 450 Squadron RAAF 'the Desert Harassers' flying Kittyhawks against the Messerschmidt 109s of the Luftwaffe and the Macchi 202s of the Italian Air Force. Shot down on Melbourne Cup Day 1942 by Leutnant Fritz Geisshardt and narrowly escaping with his life from a burning Kittyhawk by parachute,

Gus was captured by the enemy and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner in Italy and Germany until his liberation by the Russians in April 1945. Written nearly fifty years after the war ended, Gus's recall of detail is astonishing and reveals a truly independent Australian spirit, particularly when dealing with authority. His story contains humour, frustration, sorrow at the inevitable loss of life and – above all – the exhilaration and pride of being a member of 450 Squadron. Gus's descriptions of living conditions in a prisoner of war camp leave nothing to the imagination and the story of his liberation and trek westwards from the Elbe River to the Americans is a fascinating eyewitness account of the state of the Third Reich in April and May of 1945. Filled with many anecdotes, this is the story of a young Australian who, as one of many of his generation, survived the experience of being a front line fighter pilot and a prisoner of war. With a foreword by Air Vice Marshall Peter Scully (Retd) AO together with a brief account of the career of Friedrich Geisshardt, the German ace who shot him down, this is a highly recommended read for those interested in personal histories of World War Two.

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George John 'Gus' Officer was born in Warrnambool on 2nd September 1920. After his father died when he was fourteen, he left school and got a job with the Bank of Australasia. When war broke out in 1939, he volunteered for the Air Force and was posted to the Middle East, taking part in the Alamein campaign against Rommel and his Afrika Korps in 1942. After the war he became an accountant, setting up his own practice in Horsham in 1952. He died in Melbourne on his eighty-sixth birthday.

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