

Old Boy Fighter Pilot helped launch the Jet Era

Warren Edward Schrader, Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar, Wing Commander, Jet Pilot, born Wellington 27 March 1921, died 6 February 2009 Whangaparoa, aged 87.

Warren Schrader attended Scots College 1927 – 1938 under the leadership of Headmasters JH Murdoch, TD Pearce (Acting), and JR Sutcliffe.

His older brother Gordon, attended Scots for part of the time with him from 1924 – 1932. Sadly Gordon was to die in WWII. He is remembered each Anzac Day when the 25 names of Old Boys lost, are read out during the Service. Warren, a day boy, came from Rongotai Road near the then Wellington

Aerodrome. During his time at College he obtained his University Entrance, became Captain of Fergusson Club (now House), was a Prefect and played for 1st XI Cricket team until he broke his arm in 1938, which prevented him from participating in further matches.

Some years earlier at age 13, Warren suffered peritonitis from a burst appendix. He almost died but his indomitable spirit and strong physical condition won through.

When he left Scots in Form VI in August



Warren Schrader, schoolboy 1937 . . .

1938, Headmaster Sutcliffe reported in a testimonial letter, *'During his 12 years at the College, Schrader seems to have damaged as many portions of his body as appears possible without being completely written off.'*

Warren was appointed an Accounts Clerk with the Dutch company Philips based in Wellington. He then applied to join the RNZAF and achieved this a few days before his 20th birthday. He learned to fly at Wigram followed by further training in Canada. By the summer of 1942 he was flying Spitfires with 165 Squadron.

During the WWII years Warren served in Malta, Italy, Egypt, Holland and Germany, carrying out vital missions in Spitfire, Hawker Tempest and Gloucester Meteor Fighters, attacking ground targets and intercepting enemy aircraft. He returned from one mission with smoke trailing copiously from the aircraft. Warren was immediately nicknamed 'Smokey', a name which stuck with him throughout the war and during his later career as a commercial pilot with NAC.

In January 1944 he came close to death for a second time in his young



. . . seven and a half years later as Wing Commander DFC and Bar

life. A German cannon round split the armour plate behind his seat in his Spitfire but thankfully failed to carry through his body and his instrument panel.

In the last months of the war Warren shot down 9 enemy fighters and destroyed numerous ground targets. By the end of the conflict he was promoted to Wing Commander and was honoured for the second time with the Distinguished Flying Cross. He had previously won this prestigious bravery award for the first time in Italy in 1943.

At 24 years of age he was one of WWII's select group of 'Air Aces' with 12 confirmed victories. Warren returned to New Zealand in August 1946 where he rejoined his old company, Philips. He met his future wife Valerie who was also working there and they married in 1950.

Over the next 28 years Warren flew with NAC. He went from flying Douglas DC3s to Boeing 737s – a quantum leap in aviation technology. During the 1970 Royal Tour he was selected to pilot the British Royal Family around New Zealand. He was appointed Chief Pilot for NAC in 1966 and retired from flying in 1977, but not before he became Safety Audit Manager for Air New Zealand until 1979.

Aviation conferences and seminars around New Zealand and the USA were fortunate to often hear him as guest speaker recount his experiences as a WWII fighter pilot and commercial pilot. His two sons Gordon (1960 – 1962 and 1967 – 1969) and Neil (1960 – 1962 and 1967 – 1970) both attended Scots College.

The family of Scots College offers deepest sympathy to Valerie Schrader and sons Gordon and Neil and their families in their loss. We thank them for the photograph of Warren and the information they provided.

Paddianne W Neely

College Archivist

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