

George Chapple



George Chapple (1921-1988) was born on 5 March 1921 to Sid and Florence Chapple at Cowra, and had a younger sister Ida. He went to school at both Greenethorpe and Combara (near Coonamble), but spent most of his youth growing up in the Greenethorpe district. George was particularly keen on tennis and cricket.

George enlisted in the RAAF at Cootamundra on 22 April 1941 and went on to train in Calgary, McDonald and at Halifax. He was then transferred to the RAF and was a rear gunner in Wellington Bombers. George flew three bombing missions over Germany. At that time the life expectancy of a rear gunner was only three missions.

On 16 June 1943 George's crew was training with a new pilot, practice landing with one engine, when they had an accident. The tail of the Wellington Bomber clipped the control tower. All of the crew survived, but George was seriously injured. The English doctors at Oxford thought that his injuries were too severe to treat, but an American doctor offered his services. He said to George, "Squeeze my hand if you want to live." He couldn't guarantee that George would walk again, but he did his very best as George walked out of the hospital with a limp nine months later. In the nine months that George spent in hospital in England, he learnt to walk, talk, eat and write with his left hand, as he had been paralysed down the left side of his body.

George left England on 8 March 1944 and had a five week journey on a hospital ship, then spent time in Concord Hospital in Sydney. He was carrying a letter from Ron Neal to give to Ron's mother at Greenethorpe. While on the hospital ship he learnt that Ron had been killed over Germany. George was discharged from the RAAF on 26 October 1944 with the rank of Flying Officer, totally and permanently incapacitated.

Permanently paralysed on the right side of his body, George was told that he wouldn't work again. He settled back on the farm, Wilton Park, and Les Fleurs, working with his father until his father died in 1967. They used horses until 1949 when they bought their first Case tractor. George met Mary Dickson, a Tech teacher at Greenethorpe. They married and had four children -- Liz, Colin, Steve and Peter. As well as the farm, George did contract crop spraying, share farming, and ran a delivery business from 1960 to 1981. He died on 6 November 1988. George was a very courageous man, loved and highly respected.