

## Obituary – Frits Adriaan van Hulssen - 1924-2016

Frits van Hulssen was an Antarctic Veteran of the LAW years (1947-66). He served with ANARE as a radio supervisor at Mawson in both 1955 and 1959.

Frits was born in the Dutch East Indies (Java) on the 28th of October 1924 where he grew up and was educated. As a child he had a profound interest in the natural world of beetles, butterflies, snakes and birds. In 1941 during the second world war, his homeland came under threat from a Japanese invasion. At the age of 17 years he enlisted in the Royal Dutch Air Force and was sent to America for training as a radio operator. In 1942, he was involved in the evacuation of local women and children from their home in the Dutch East Indies to safety in Australia.

Frits was the radio operator on board a Catalina Y-59 a flying boat, which in company of a Dornier X-1 flying boat piloted by Henk Hasselo, left from Java and landed on Roebuck Bay in Broome in W.A. They were preparing to take their passengers ashore to safety, when their flying boats were attacked by Japanese planes. There were many deaths and casualties among the evacuees as they were struggling for survival in the water, and as a result of this attack Frits was seriously wounded by the strafing cannon fire, resulting in a spinal injury which he suffered for the rest of his life.

At the end of WW2, Frits repatriated to Australia and subsequently married Elisabeth, from their marriage they had two daughters. Frits was interviewed at the Antarctic Division at 187 Collins Street in August 1954 by the Director Phillip Law and Ken Dalziel the ANARE Divisions Radio Superintendent, and was appointed to the role of Radio Supervisor for Mawson Station 1955.

During his time in at Mawson he participated in an April field trip travelling with a Weasel investigating sea ice conditions in the region of Brygge Holmen to the west of Mawson. He returned to the Antarctic in 1959 as Technical Officer ( Ionospherics) to Mawson Station.

He was awarded the Polar Medal by Queen Elizabeth II, which was presented to Frits by Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh on the 3rd December 1956 at the Royal Society – Melbourne.

Frits was also honoured in having a nunatak named for him, the van Hulssen Nunatak in the Framnes Mountain Range, also an island named van Hulssen Island in the Robertson Group.

Frits died peacefully in hospital on the 26th of April 2016. His memorial service was held in the Joyce Chapel at Fawkner Crematorium with a group of his Antarctic colleagues in attendance to farewell him, his coffin was draped with the ANARE pennant.

This tribute is from his Antarctic Veteran Colleagues with whom Frits had been a regular attendee at their monthly reunion lunches, and penned by the "Gaffer" Ray McMahon on their behalf.