## Enemies in the sky ... but

# friends on the ground

### By Roger Moroney Staff reporter

North, and Hans Joachim Jabs, also retired and living in Ludenscheid, West

Theirs is a unique combat in Europe. friendship forged from a the skies over Holland on a "mixed" squadron. nearly 45 years ago.

It was April 1944, and (pronounced Jahs "Varies"

Messerschmit 110 pilot with the German Luftwaffe - tried to kill Caulton in a one-on-one air battle.

Caulton too had the same fate in mind for Jahs as he aimed his near-new Spitfire Mark 9 fighter at the distant out- ing Spitfires. line of the approaching

meeting in the dull, lazy in a friendship that now has left the wartime cir- bers. cumstances that led to their deadly meeting as

friends meet every three scious that around him

or four years. Their conversations inevitably return to the there" would take his days that set up their ren- without a second thought. dezvous over farmland near Arnhem when as death too often. There young men they piloted was danger, yes, but for

aircraft built to destroy. young men in their 20s

as the man who owned and operated Rush Munro's ice cream parlour for 38 years, was born and John Caulton, retired grew up in Hastings and, and living in Havelock like many young men, looked to serve in Europe as the war escalated.

At 21 he joined the Germany, are the best of RNZAF and in 1941 was being trained to fly for

Unlike many Kiwi pidesperate few seconds in lots. Caulton set his sights



He was posted to 132 Squadron and realised a dream, he would be fly-

His squadron was made up of Australians, Their brief and violent Poles. Canadians and Norwegians, along with

"We even had a Siaspans two decades, and mese prince," he remem-

It was a fast way to live. When the weather was nothing more than memo- good and there was action erupting all over Memories often re- he would fly several ops a called as the two old day. He was always conpeople were losing their lives and the enemy "out

He didn't think about John Caulton, known this was the greatest adto many Hastings people venture of their lives.



Luftwaffe officers go souvenir hunting. "You were young and it was a completely differ-

ent world," he says. "You thought about copping it sometimes but you thought it was some- hedge height or "zero" to the other guy."

Before he taxied out on network. Saturday, April 29, 1944, countered a few scrapes and "came close" a few cess of 580 km/h. times as he clocked up 200 operations.

be his last sortie for the war would be a fairly standard one.

He and five other Spitfires were to beat up Spitfire he narrowed his their bases after a huge wre racing head-on toallied bombing raid on

scrambled to meet the alfied attack would be scattered, their formations broken, and just the target for six Spitfires on the

And they found their straggler, but it was no

ordinary straggler. Luftwaffe pilot Hans garded by his countrymen as an air ace. He was an exceptional pilot who would go on to be credited with a least 60 "kills". and a legend in his coun-

On hindsight, Caulton simply reckons, "I picked on the wrong man."

His CO, Squadron Leader Geoffrey Page. led the six well-spread fighters into Holland at an impossibly low altitude. thing that would happen feet as Caulton put it, to avoid the German radar

Fields and scrublands for a mid-afternoon sortie disappeared under the over Holland, he had en- aircraft as they howled across the lowlands in ex-

Arnhem hase was drawn He figured what within into combat with the aphours would turn out to proaching Spitfires simply because he was returning in their flight-

And it was Caulton's stragglers returning to vision toward. The two



ward each other and, in hindsight, Caulton reck-Joachim Jabs was re- ons he should have

But it has to be remembered that theirs was an that was over in less than the time that it takes to

read this sentence. From about 500 metres had given a course for out Jabs opened up with home, his aircraft dying

cannon and machine gue. Red hot shells wer

hammering into the Spir fire as Caulton began to return the "greeting".

For just a brief few ser onds the two aircraft

an altitude no greate average suburban hom-

pleded into Caulter leading edge of one via and smashing holes in Shells also core the bo ted 400 litre long-range friel tank

He saw the fuel vapour self along the Spitfire's

As his companions went hunting the ME110.

"I'm sorry old man. Squadron Leader Page told him in his clipped RAF accent after Caulton



9 YING OFFICER John Caulton as a member of 132 Squadron in Britain.

Caulton kept the Spit- to a small group of Gerlock of a wheels-up across the paddock at 160 Caulton's seat.

I can't help you. Start landing, in a farm pad- km/h before hammering dock uncomfortably close into a small earth bank,

seat restraint wire - built . The Spitfire hit hard, to withstand a sevenferlin engine seized jolting Caulton and tonne force - and ter pumping its oil out. breaking loose on its own snapped the aircraft's He braced for the uncontrollable path body just a metre behind



MAJOR Hans Joachim Jabs, an air ace with the German Luftwaffe who would go on to become a legend in his country.

It was the last time he further into Luftwaffe would sit in a Spitfire's aerodrome air space they cramped cockpit for at least 15 months and perhaps if he'd realised that despondent over his fate.

"The Spatfire was a lovely aircraft to fly. It had no real vices," he re-

pared the Spitfire to a lady. Treat her gently,

However, on April 29, 1944. Caulton's gentle companion lay dead in a Squadron Leader Page faced with more than just nel in the neck for his a gash to his head where trouble. he jolted forward into the gunsight and a smashed right knee (which still bears the scars), to worry ing Caulton, in German

His crash alerted the nearby troops and a maapproached Caulton, who had been helped by

Caulton's reaction? "I was bloody annoved he was pointing a gun at rived.

"He knew I couldn't go anywhere with my leg at that stage was that he like it was. I told him

where to go!" taken away by troops to a and a man who would nearby hut the rest of his one day become one of wing companions were his best friends.

also getting into strife. They'd chased the ME110 and managed to hit it several times. However, as they chased it

in a ball of flames, the pilot killed, and all the other aircraft were sprayed with shrapnel.



to England though, leav-

that day," he remembers. being shot down and taken to the hut, Caulton. group of well-dressed Luftwaffe officers ar-

was about to meet a man who just a few hours earl-While Caulton was ier had tried to kill him.

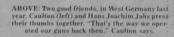
> Continued on Tuesday - How a unique friendship was forged.

As enemies they met under the

clouds of war



## 45 years on they're still mates





### Old times were relived and memories

were rekindled