



# The Territory Remembers

## Japanese war widow finds peace off Darwin

By Dr Tom Lewis

**A Japanese war widow finally found peace in a simple ceremony off the coast of Darwin 72 years after her husband was shot down offshore of the city.**

Flight Chief Petty Officer Shinji Kawahara was lost at sea with his fellow officer Tomihiko Tanaka in 1943 but it took another 72 years for his wife Miyoko to join him.

Shinji's story begins in August 1943 off Darwin when his reconnaissance aircraft meet up with an ace of the Royal Australian Air Force, Wing Commander Clive Caldwell.

A Dinah twin-engine aircraft from Koepang had been sent to carry out the mission. The aircraft was intercepted west of Bathurst Island north of Darwin at around 4.30pm. Caldwell and his wingman Flight Sergeant PR Padula spotted the Dinah at considerable height ahead of anti-aircraft fire over Charles Point.

An initial attack by Caldwell hit the Japanese machine while Padula's attack was made at too great a range. The Dinah had its own machine-gun defence but this was no match for the agile Spitfires and their formidable guns and cannon. Caldwell made two further attacks. The Australian pilot reported the enemy aircraft began to lose height: "First gradually and then steeply until I was obliged to dive in order to retain my position abreast."

The Japanese aircraft continued a steep descent until it appeared to attempt to level out momentarily, but then it hit the water at high speed. Neither of the crew members were recovered.

Kawahara's widow Miyoko lived on through the rest of the war in Japan, bringing up the couple's two children. She led a long and happy life, but before she died in 2004 expressed a wish for her ashes to join her husband's body off the Northern Territory coast.

In 2015, with the aid of the Northern Territory and Australian Governments along with the City of Darwin, the Kawahara family was able to carry out the request.

In a simple ceremony led by naval chaplain Richard Quadrio and Dr Tom Lewis, Miyoko's ashes were given to the sea by five family members led by Noriyo, the daughter of Shinji and Miyoko.

