

Amichai was born on 4 November 1919 in Perth, Western Australia to Mordechai Honig and Channah née Nissenzhon of Hadera, Palestine. Mordechai and Channah who were both born in Israel emigrated to Australia and were married in Perth on 5 October 1918. Mordechai wrote the Hebrew songs, 'Enchantment on the Sea of Galilee', and 'Hora Hadera'.

The family moved from Perth to Melbourne where Amichai grew up and from his childhood he had a longing for Zion. He was among the best pupils in his class and skipped grades three times.

At the age of 12, he immigrated to Israel with his family and lived in the city of Hadera. Amichai attended Kadoorie High School on Mt. Tabor's Galilean slopes. He studied alongside future leaders of Israel such as Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Alon.

At the age of 14, he participated in a course for sports instructors under the auspices of the Maccabi. In the middle of the course, a ship of Ma'apilim (a blockade running ship of illegal Jewish immigrants) arrived on the shores of Tel-Aviv. During the night, Amichai and his friends engaged in swimming to and from the ship until they finished transferring the Ma'apilim to safe harbour.

Amichai fulfilled his high-school years at the Kaduri Agricultural School. During the events of "Tartsav-Tartsach", the Arab revolt of 1936-1939, he participated in the defence of the school and warded off Arab attacks. At the completion of his studies, he worked for a while in the British Mandate's Agriculture and Fishery Department.

At the outset of World War 2, Amichai volunteered into the Royal Air Force and as he had Australian nationality he was accepted. He chose to join the RAF because he was interested in aviation and the RAF was considered prestigious. But above all, he felt that he needed to take part in the war against the Nazis.

On the day of his enlistment he boarded a train to Egypt, and from there he went to the Flight Academy at RAF Habbaniya in Iraq". Amichai successfully graduated from the Flight Course before being sent to the Western Desert front, where he joined 14 Squadron as a sergeant.

Amichai participated in many combat fights, and in one operation he was tasked to bomb Tobruk airport in Libya where Italian armoured forces were based. The area was foggy, and a violent windstorm was blowing making it impossible to find the exact location. The squadron commander ordered the pilots to return to base and having no alternative, the planes turned around and flew back to their base, all apart from Amichai, who stayed in the area, found the enemy base and emptied his entire bomb load on it. That bombing softened the German positions and made it possible to capture them. For this operation Amichai was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. Jewish and English newspapers, from America to Australia, were replete with the pictures and the feats of 'the bearded hero'.

Following a ten-day leave, Amichai was dispatched, as the most able pilot in his unit, to the flight school in Kenya to become an instructor. A year later, he insisted on returning to the front and joined 603 Squadron which operated Beaufighter aircraft and their operations were attacking targets on the shores of Greece and Crete.

On 30 August 1943, at 07:27 hours, four RAAF airplanes under the command of Amichai took off from Berka Airfield in Libya for a flight of reconnaissance and attack along the western coast of Greece. At 09:44 hours, they flew towards the western coast of Lefkada Island and at 10:26 hours, the cruiser ship *Andrea Contarini* was spotted leaving the Lefkas Canal area. The planes immediately attacked the ship with Amichai the first to attack and he activated the guns. Traces from his shells were clearly visible on the ship's deck, but the bombs he dropped did not explode. As the second

plane entered the attack, the pilot saw Amichai's plane going up in flames and crashing into the water. As the fourth plane entered the attack, the pilot believed he caught sight of an inflatable rubber dinghy and two bodies floating ten yards away from it among the fragments of Amichai's aircraft.

<http://www.ww2wrecks.com/portfolio/shot-down-but-not-forgotten-the-raaf-beaufighter-pilot-amichai-honig-story/>

Obtaining information about the fates of Amichai and his navigator Sergeant Robert Gilchrist Finlay, 1060985, RAFVR was not made possible. For seven years Amichai was considered missing and no one knew whether he was alive or dead, if he sank into the sea or was buried in Greece. His parents wanted to go to Greece to obtain information about their son, but the Greek Government refused to grant them an entry visa. Eventually, they did manage to get the visa and for four weeks they travelled from place to place, talked with villagers, fishermen and questioned members of the Greek underground. The day before they were due to return to Israel they were contacted by a Greek boy who had been present when Amichai's body was washed ashore and he witnessed the Italians remove his uniform and bury him in a field near Lefkes village. Finally, his parents had found his grave and identified their son's body. They collected his bones and took him home. Amichai was buried with full military honours on 31 May 1950 at Hadera Cemetery, Haifa, Israel.

Grateful thanks to Amichai's relative Naomi and:

<https://www.iaf.org.il/9074-50964-en/IAF.aspx>

<https://highgate-rsl.org.au/afcraaf-roll/honig-amichai-120334/>

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<https://billiongraves.com/grave/%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%92/20128824>

<https://www.sky-high.co.il/134771/%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%92-%D7%96-%D7%9C>

NB

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have stated that according to their records, the Commission was fully aware of the situation in 1950. A representative of the Commission met the parents when they were in Greece looking for their son's body and offered to help them. Regrettably, Honig's parents decided to conduct their own investigations and eventually they advised us that they had taken a body back to Israel from Lefkas. However, as the neither the Commission or the RAF had been given any access to the body that had been provided, they were in no position to validate this identification. The general consensus was that the parents had unfortunately been the victims of opportunists. Therefore, it was decided that we could not accept that the remains removed by F/O Honig's parents were definitely F/O Honig's and as result, we cannot recognise the 'grave' in Hadera as his.

