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QUEENSLAND 4021

HONOUR THE DEAD BUT FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING

SITREP

Incorporated 31 Aug 2000

Oct 2016

ABN 34-392-447-046

Mission Statement

To assist all veterans, dependants and their descendants in all matters relating to health, welfare and wellbeing.

PRESIDENTS PONDERINGS

It is hard to believe that we are three quarters of the way through the 2016 committee year and what a year it has been. I can assure you that your committee has been working very hard in the background doing what all good committees do for their members and their sub-branch.

Those of you on the internet have been receiving emails from me over the course of the year. No doubt when you arrive home after an extended holiday you are calling me a few very choice words because your inbox is full of my emails. So, could you please let me know when you leave and when you come home so I won't send you any emails during that period.

On Wednesday 21 September thirteen members, partners and friends travelled to the Chung Tian Buddhist Temple at Priestdale for a most enjoyable outing. The temple is part of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist monastic order. Construction of the temple began in January 1991 and it opened in June 1993. Whilst it may have been a wet day it didn't detract from a very educational and emotional journey to one's inner spirit. Unfortunately, one of the ladies discovered that to be a true Buddhist, the killing of spiders was a no no. Afterwards, we all adjourned to the Springwood Tavern for a smorgasbord lunch. It soon became evident that National Serviceman Lance Corporals, who served in RAAOC, failed their Forward Scout course. However, after wandering around the Tavern for several minutes we found the front door.

Our next ceremonial parade is Remembrance Day which falls on a Friday this year. Our next major get-together is our Christmas party. I will let Rod pass on all the details via his report.

It was great to have our old mate John and his blushing young bride Kathy joins us on Thursday night after several months away in America. We all enjoyed some old fashion frivolity, with Graham being the number one stirrer.

I will see you all at our next General Meeting
Take care one and all

Charles Parsons LM
Ich Dien



YADA YADA'S

Well, the end is nigh the end of year that is.

Rod is busy organising the Christmas Party. A few other things are going on.

We are organising for a new Vietnam Veterans emblem for our plinth at ANZAC Place.

We are following through on trying to get a BBQ day at Bunnings to beef up our coffers and we are initiating more involvement with the Thursday night raffles.

In relation to the raffles, you all know that it is our primary source of income. You also know perhaps that Bill Stowers and Neville Cullen the Secretary of the RSL and the President respectively have religiously run the raffles since JC was a boy. They are happy to do so, but should have backup of at least two other vets in addition to the ever present President. More of us need to know how to conduct the raffles so this week David Dowling (Assist. Secretary) and yours truly Gomer (Secretary) will be taking a lesson or two on how it is done. We will seek other volunteers going forward and discuss a roster of helpers or company keepers or beer drinkers or generally all three.

Anyway between raffles and bbqs we should be able to better fund our various activities. We will discuss them again at this months meeting

Another thing people, remember REMEMBRANCE DAY 11th November at 10.15am ANZAC Place.

Cheers and see you soon

Gomer

SOCIAL REPORT

Welcome to the Social Report for October. We had our last bus trip for the year to the Chung Tien Buddhist temple at Rochdale. There were 13 people who attended, which was disappointing after 5 withdrawals the day before and 3 no shows on the day. However, those who were there enjoyed the very informative tour with our guide Terry explaining the history of Buddhism & how the temple came to being. The buildings & surrounds were delightful. After the tour, we adjourned to the Springwood Tavern for a wonderful buffet lunch. Our next big event is our Xmas party to be held in the Kakoda room, Redcliffe RSL at 6.30 pm on Saturday 26th November. Bookings are now open, so get your names in early. The Sub Branch is again fully subsidising the buffet meal & the entertainment, all you do is pay for your own drinks. There will be no bottled wine supplied to tables (as per last year). Come and join in what is a fun night with good food, great entertainment & of course, great company. I will be taking names at the meeting or send your response to email rapnjap@bigpond.com or mobile 0438111728.

I get to keep my job for another month, we had a win in lotto \$12.30!!!.

Till next time, take care & lookout for each other.

Rod P Mike O Rod B

"Golf is the adult version of an Easter egg hunt"



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Unless otherwise notified in the 'Sitrep' newsletter, all meetings of the VVAA Redcliffe Sub Branch are held at 11:00am on the second Wednesday of each month at the Redcliffe RSL, Irene Street, Redcliffe, in the Redcliffe RSL Meeting Room. All VVAA members, members' partners, Members' guests and prospective members are welcome to attend.



Birthdays

Rex Borradale, Brian Doniger, Bill Stowers, John Mitchell

LAUGHTER PARADE

You Swindled the Wrong Guy!

After a thorough investigation, a rich gangster finds out that his bookkeeper has cheated him out of 10 million bucks. His bookkeeper is deaf and that was the reason he got the job in the first place. It was assumed that a deaf bookkeeper would not hear anything that he might have to testify about in court.

When the mobster goes to confront the bookkeeper about his missing \$10 million, he brings along his attorney, who knows sign language.

The Godfather tells the lawyer 'Ask him where the \$10 million bucks he embezzled from me is'.

The attorney, using sign language, asks the bookkeeper: "Where is the money?"

The bookkeeper signs back: 'I don't know what you are talking about'.

The attorney tells the gangster: 'He says he doesn't know what you're talking about'.

The gangster pulls out a pistol, puts it to the bookkeeper's temple and says, 'Ask him again!'

The attorney signs to the bookkeeper: 'He'll kill you if you don't tell him!'

The bookkeeper signs back: 'OK! OK! You win! The money is in a brown briefcase, buried behind the shed in my cousin Enzo's backyard in Queens!'

The Godfather asks the attorney: 'Well, what'd he say?'

'He says you don't have the guts to pull the trigger.'

Perspective

Dorothy and Edna, two "senior" widows, are talking. Dorothy: "That nice George Johnson asked me out for a date. I know you went out with him last week, and I wanted to talk with you about him before I give him my answer."

Edna: "Well, I'll tell you. He shows up at my house punctually at 7 pm, dressed like such a gentleman in a fine suit, and he brings me such beautiful flowers ! Then he takes me downstairs and what's there ; a limousine, uniformed chauffeur and all. Then he takes me out for dinner; a marvellous dinner, lobster, champagne, dessert, and after-dinner drinks. Then we go see a show. Let me tell you Dorothy, I enjoyed it so much I could have just died from pleasure ! So then we are coming back to my apartment and he turns into an ANIMAL. Completely crazy, he tears off my expensive new dress and has his way with me three times!" Dorothy: "Goodness gracious ! So you are telling me I shouldn't go?" Edna: "No, no, no, I'm just saying, wear an old dress."

POETS CORNER

The Engineer

In times of great adversity, when backed against the wall.
When soldiers' lives are on the line, there's someone you should call.
When obstacles become too great, do not give in to fear.
Get on your two way radio and call an Engineer.

They find a way to overcome all problems in their way.
Their skills of ingenuity will always save the day.
They're soldiers with ability to think outside the square.
They'll do the jobs that have the risks, which others wouldn't dare.

They have a mind of making things, that sets them from the rest.
And when it comes to breaking things, they've proved that they are the best.
In battles past they've shown their worth – they're cunning as a fox.
The way they overcome their tasks is quite unorthodox.

Their soldier skills are dinky-di – as good as any grunt.
When battle starts, they know their place – they're always at the front.
So if you need a helping hand, there's one you should implore.
The soldier from that canny place – The Engineer Corps.

And if you need a real good mate to join you for a beer.
You know the man to call upon – that's right, the Engineer.
By Ian Coates



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THE MELBOURNE VOYAGER COLLISION

By Don Nash (ex PO SBA Lab) 1986

“Wake up! Wake up!”

Vaguely I heard the voice but I was acutely aware of someone shaking me like a terrier shakes a rat.

“Wake up! Wake up!”

“God,” I thought, **“It feels as if I’ve only just got to bed and it’s not time for me to go on duty again.”**

“Get up, it’s an emergency, the *Melbourne* has sunk the *Voyager*!”

Instantly I was wide awake. There stood the duty gangway AB and the duty sick berth petty officer. The words tumbled out in his haste as he spoke, **“The *Melbourne*’s sunk the *Voyager* – we’re expecting a hell of a lot of casualties, the first’s due at 0630 hours. There’s a clear lower deck of all medical staff!**

Everyone’s to muster at the hospital and all departments are to be manned and functioning at 0600 hours. The operating theatres are to be ready and pathology and X-ray departments are to be on instant standby. All staff are needed to clear patients from the hospital so we can receive casualties.”

By this time I was wide awake. as mess deck kellick I was now responsible to ensure that all sick berth staff reported immediately to the hospital. I ran and switched on the main mess-deck lights. Men were climbing out of their bunks; some dressing rapidly, some shouting and many just looking bewildered.

Even the old “lay-a-beds” were wearily putting their feet on the floor. In a few minutes the mess deck was deserted and the white uniformed staff could be seen running in the cold dawn light towards the hospital. No-one said very much – everyone just went to their allotted posts and started work. In the main surgical wards patients were being woken, gear stuffed into bags and patients wheeled down to the waiting ambulances to be taken away to civilian hospitals. As soon as each patient left his bed it was stripped of the bed linen. In 15 minutes what had been two main wards full of convalescing sailors were empty and waiting with all beds made up for crash emergencies.

Dead on 0630 hours the drone of the first helicopter could be heard put-putting over the hospital. I grabbed my pathology box, jumped into an ambulance and was driven down to the cricket ground near the main gate where the first helicopters were circling in.

I remember the feeling a moment of vague uneasiness as I had forgotten to grab my sailor’s cap and hoped no-one would notice this in all the confusion.

As I got to the first helicopter, two stretchers were being unloaded. I looked down at them – two oilwashed men were laying there. Automatically I applied a tourniquet cuff to the first man’s arm and began withdrawing a syringe full of blood, ready for blood grouping and cross-matching should be the patient require a blood transfusion. This procedure was repeated with monotonous regularity over the next few hours as I had to meet every incoming helicopter. My immaculately white uniform quickly became dusty, then splattered with blood, fuel oil and vomit as the casualties kept coming in.

I couldn’t help but think that in peace time the Navy was one vast bureaucratic machine but here, in an emergency, everything flowed swiftly and calmly.

It was true that formality had gone but not that inbred sense of discipline. No-one was saluting anyone, just everyone getting on with their job of caring for the sick and injured. The injured sailors arrived in all shapes and sizes: some cracking jokes and laughing, some silent and watchful, some screaming and some quietly sobbing./cont. over

The feeling of mateship was everywhere – injured men comforting other men, holding their hands, cuddling them, some listening, some continually talking and some who grabbed your hand and wouldn't, or couldn't, let it go.

Amid all the confusion I kept looking out for the faces of friends who I knew had been on *Voyager*. Where was Paddy? Married only six weeks before – was he safe? Later I heard that he had gone down with the ship. Where was the sick berth attendant who had been on board? He arrived later, when the *Melbourne* steamed back into Sydney Harbour and discharged the rest of the casualties. He arrived by ambulance looking pale, tired and in great pain. He had been at this 'action station' when the ship had been struck and later the guard rail had snapped and had pinned him to the deck. When he struggled free he had calmly gone on with this work, descending into the dark, oily bowels of the stricken ship to render medical attention. The severed section of the ship had then rolled and he had been flung about within the ship's hull, shattering his left shoulder joint. When this section rolled again he had been trapped inside the hull and the pressure had burst his ear drums.

'Tug' Wilson had continued giving medical treatment to the sailors trapped under the shifting machinery until he had to return to the upper deck to get more medical supplies. When the ship rolled again he had been flung overboard – one of the last to leave the severed hull before it rolled again and sank. Later this naval sick berth attendant was awarded the British Empire Medal for his work in caring for the sick and dying, although badly injured himself at the time.

Regarding the next 24-hours, my memories are sometimes crystal-clear and sometimes terribly vague. I do remember the endless blood collection, the 'leaping in' or 'give-a-hand', the holding of men in your arms as they spewed the ingested fuel oil out of their guts or coughed up those grey-black oil-soaked bits of their lungs. I don't remember eating anything or drinking any cups of coffee or even feeling tired as rest was a thing forgotten. There was always one more patient being sick; one more patient who had to tell you for the hundredth time his version of the collision and horror of it all. I shall always remember grown men weeping unashamedly as they told of hearing the screams of the trapped men in the aft section of the stricken ship just before it sank.

I don't remember feeling tired but I do remember how my eyes ached from the continual microscopic work required for blood transfusions. I also remember the line of sailors waiting patiently outside the laboratory door ready to give blood should it be required.

Looking back now, 22 years after the event, is it any use telling my friends why I can't bear to watch the helicopters arriving in the opening scenes of the TV show, 'M*A*S*H'.

About the writer: The above story was written by a Naval Sick Berth Attendant, specialising in pathology work, and was stationed at the Royal Naval Hospital HMAS *Penguin* at Balmoral NSW, when at 2052 hours on 10 February 1964 the aircraft carrier, HMAS *Melbourne* collided with her escort, HMAS *Voyager* off Jervis Bay NSW, cutting the destroyer in half and sending 82 men to their deaths at the bottom of the sea.

The LSBA on *Voyager* was John Renie (Tug) Wilson, a jockey-sized man, 7 stone (44.5kg) wringing wet.

Heroes come in all sizes. Tug Wilson had to wait 30 years for compensation from the Department of Defence.

Brian O'Leary was posted to *Penguin* two days after the collision to help and to give relief to overworked staff. That afternoon he visited Tug Wilson in the surgical ward. "Tug was black and blue from head to toe, like he had gone 15 rounds with Mohammed Ali, and was continually coughing. I am privileged and proud to have worked with such 'top' blokes in the Navy Medical Branch."

Thanks to Brian O'Leary, Brisbane Sub-Section member, for providing this article. Courtesy of Naval Assn. Brisbane.

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BRIEF ON BOOK WRITTEN BY DEREK V. SMITH

A Twist In The POGO's Tale - An Army Clerk's Passage from Childhood to War in Vietnam

POGO is an acronym for 'Posted on Garrison Operations.' POGO's are generally non-combatants; clerks, cooks, storemen, drivers and the like.

The book contains 132 pages. It has fifteen (15) chapters, three (3) appendixes and six (6) maps. It has taken about five (5) years to reach this point. Derek has 'self published'. He has pledged in the book to give all profits to the ethnic minority (Montagnard) orphanages that he and his family have been supporting since 2004. The orphanages are located in Kon Tum, Central Highlands, Vietnam. For more information on this please visit www.askatvso.com

The foreword for this book was written by LTGEN John Sanderson, AC, (retd) former Chief of Army and Governor of Western Australia.

Much detail for this book has been drawn from diaries that Derek kept, particularly in 1966/67 and 1969/70. There are numerous other references noted in the footnotes. There is a list of abbreviations in the back of the book. The book contains many photographs.

The book covers the period of Derek's early childhood including primary school, high school, cubs, scouts and Army cadets.

It then travels into his time in the Army beginning at the Army Apprentice School, Balcombe Victoria where he was in training to be an Army Clerk. Then on graduation he leads us to his posting as a clerk in the Army Small Ship Squadron where he served on board a landing ship and cargo ship from 1964 to 1967. In that time he sailed to New Guinea three times and Vietnam three times.

Derek then leaves the Ships and is posted to the Royal Australian Engineer Field Squadrons which in 1969 see him back in Vietnam. He comes home in 1970 and finds himself back in Vietnam in 1971 which is where the book finishes.

Derek has attempted to include much of the humour that is typical of the Australian digger but which is often not included in such stories. The title denotes what Derek was, a clerk, but his story or TALE does have many twists and turns including meeting the enemy which finds this POGO feeling well out of his depth. It is a good read. Derek is selling the book for \$25. He will post to anyone wishing to buy one. Cost including postage and packaging is \$31.20. Direct deposits can be made to his bank - BSB 064823, account number 00530203 - CBA. His email contact is dvsmith@ozemail.com.au and his mobile phone is 0438221114.

VAN FOR VETS

Cockatoo Rise, VOLUNTEER AND NOT FOR PROFIT war veterans retreat at Bairnsdale (Gippsland Lakes Victoria) has just established a caravan at their retreat, to house a homeless war veteran in need of immediate accommodation or one that needs respite or just time away from their normal living circumstances. The facility is provided free of charge to any veteran in need .

The first vet to use the facility this week is Peter Doherty . Peter served with 110 Sigs in Vietnam during 1970-71 . He was an electronics tech on mobile communications. His tour of duty took him to many parts of South Vietnam servicing and fixing radios etc used by Australian troops in the field .Peter is seen enjoying some of the local produce from patties pies who are also donating food for these veterans .

Some background if needed, Homeless agencies and support groups for veterans are warning of a growing number of former soldiers in crisis as they struggle to adapt to civilian life after their traumatic experiences on the front line.

Entire families are being affected by this and I think if the Australian public knew that we had young soldiers with war-caused mental illness sleeping in cars with their wife and daughter, they'd be justifiably outraged. But that is what is happening .

In 2009, when the last national Homeless Veterans Survey was conducted, there were 3,000 veterans without a home.

Since then, up to 40,000 troops have been deployed to the Middle East in various capacities

Most [Vietnam] veteran cases didn't present to the Department of Veterans Affairs until they were in their late thirties and early forties, and they all went to war when they were in their early twenties.

So there can be a time lag of 15 to 20 years and that doesn't mean people aren't suffering. It just means it takes that long for them to fall over completely before they reach out for help.

Early intervention is crucial with mental health but for so many, far too many, it's already too late.

Most people in Australia know what happened to the Vietnam generation in terms of mental breakdown, mental health, alcoholism [and] suicide.

THE DVD OF AFGHANISTAN: THE AUSTRALIAN STORY

By defence reporter Andrew Green

Members of the military who fought in Australia's longest war have re-opened raw memories of bloodshed and death in an official documentary account of their service Afghanistan: The Australian Story was commissioned by the Australian War Memorial and tells the story of the men and women who served in the 12-year fight against the Taliban. The project, produced by award-winning former ABC journalist Chris Masters, features reflective and frank new interviews with Special Forces soldiers, engineers, medics and relatives who were affected by the war.

Among the harrowing stories recounted in the documentary are the reflections of a former special forces engineer who describes his fear of having to continue clearing mines after he saw his mate killed by an improvised explosive device./cont. over

"I said 'what do I do now?' You know, like I've never done this before. Who prepares for this sort of stuff?" Dan Costelloe says in the documentary.

Other stories include a young Patrol Base Commander coping with the aftermath of a "green on blue" insider attack, and a widow facing up to the dreaded knock on the door informing her of her partner's death.

"The Australian War Memorial is many things, but I've learnt it's also part of therapeutic milieu for men and women, almost 30,000 of them, after 15 years in Afghanistan returning to an Australia that has no idea what they have been doing on our behalf and in our name," memorial director Brendan Nelson explains at the end of the documentary.

"We are proud of what these Australians have done. We are proud of this Afghanistan: The Australian Story."

The DVD of Afghanistan: The Australian Story will be officially launched at the Australian War Memorial on Wednesday October 5.

The powerful interviews will also be used to help update Australian War Memorial's Afghanistan Gallery.

Australian forces completed their withdrawal from Uruzgan province at the end of 2013, after the mission which saw 41 Defence Force personnel killed and 261 seriously wounded.



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**NEXT MEETING TO BE HELD
IN THE R.S.L. MEETING ROOM
AT 1100 Hrs on the 12th October 2016**

DISCLAIMER:

None of the contents of this newsletter necessarily state the views of the Redcliffe VVAA Sub Branch or that of the Editor, or the VVAA unless otherwise stated.