

SNAFU

THE VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH INC



VOLUME 14

ISSUE 3.

MAY

JUNE

2016

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Printed by Cove Print—182 Brighton Rd, Somerton Park, phone 08 8376 6676

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 Warradale SA 5046

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 Port Lincoln RSL

Yorke Peninsula
 Chris Soar (Bublacowie) W

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 Acting Vice President: Bob Ellis OAM
 Secretary: George Craig
 Treasurer: Robin Carbins

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 Peter Haran
 Ron List

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 Kim Brumfield JP Chris Norman
 Butch Daly Dee O'Brien
 Bill Denny AM BM Evelyn Pitt
 Fay Ellis Peter Rogers

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 Phil Lambert South and country

Padre

Malcolm Thomas OAM

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 Tuesday: Ziggy Przedworski
 Wednesday: Phil Lambert, Mal Thiele JP
 Thursday: Keith Tainsh, Karl Schwung

Pension Officers and Advocates

John Gillman PO/A/W/MRCA
 Jim Leslie PO/W/MRCA
 Rick Wylie PO/W
 Alan Hook PO/W/MRCA/AAT
 war widow
 Craig Mitchell A

Committee meetings

Held on the Wednesday before the BBQ.
BBQ: Second Friday of each month

SNAFU Editor

James Woite

Email all correspondence to

editorofsnafu@gmail.com

Key-

PO = Pension Officer (VEA)
 W = Welfare
 A = Advocate
 MRCA = Military Rehab Compensation Act
 AAT = Administration Appeals Tribunal

Broken Hill

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CONTENTS

From The President	5
From The VP	5
Important Notice: VVF-AGM At The Clubrooms	6
VVFSA 21st Birthday Celebration	7
Defence Honours & wards	8
Indigenous Veteran To Be Reunited With Vietnam War Armoured Personnel Carrier	10
Vietnam Veterans Day: 18 August 2016	11
Extra News Bits And Pieces	12
Introduction to Myths & Legends	17
It Was Safer In Vietnam Than In Australia For The Nashos	18
Only The Ones Dumb Enough Not To Get Out Of It Were Sent	18
Naval Ships Collide: Voyagers Sunk	19
Social Groups	24
Vorg Report	24
Leadlight Group	25
WACAS ~ Coming Soon	25
Stone Cold: Book Review	26
Enemy: Book Review	27

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a meeting on the 16th of March, but nobody came, except the regular volunteers. I was extremely disappointed at the lack of support from the membership to the Federation, but that is the way that it is. The end result is that we will have to seriously consider a rise to annual membership fees or an increase to the monthly barbeque fee, or both. Things are not getting any cheaper and we have to meet the rising costs of foodstuffs, goods and services, as well as necessary repairs and maintenance of furniture and equipment not covered by BEST Grants (which, with a change to the way BEST Grants are now assessed, the allocation of monies to South Australian ESO's is much less than it has been previously).

Upcoming events of importance are:

- The 48th anniversary of the Battle for Coral/Balmoral in May
- The 21st anniversary of the formation of the VVFS in July
- The 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan (Vietnam Veterans Day) in August

I am hopeful that all these events will be well attended by our members.

To our band of volunteers, thanks to whom this Federation is in a fairly good state. Who are they, you might wonder? They are your Committee/Public Officer, Pension Officers and Advocates, Office Managers, fund raisers, Vets on Air radio anchors, outdoor barbeque workers, monthly barbeque and kitchen workers, Quiz Night organisers, raffle organisers and prize donators, bar persons and cleaners, ground maintenance, and can/bottle recyclers. This is all done by about 28 people, nearly always the same people, who have volunteered their time almost since the formation of the Federation 21 years ago. They receive little acknowledgement or thanks, so I think that this is a very appropriate time to say:

Thank you to all those who have, or still, volunteer for the Federation and its members, for the many jobs you undertake that are bloody well done. We do not show our appreciation enough, nor give you the thanks that you are so deserving of. I hope this goes some way to rectifying that.

As some of you know, I am keeping the medical profession supported with yet another trip to the hospital for surgery. This again will be followed by a lengthy recovery period. This has forced me into much thought as to what I have to do in the future with the best interests of the Federation at the forefront. I have come to the conclusion that I have no option than to, with a great deal of regret, step down from the position of President of the Federation with effect from the 11th of April. Mal Thiele will become the Acting President until the 2017 Annual general

Meeting, when the position would normally become vacant. By doing this, it allows time for me to spend with Mal to offer him support and some guidance (if necessary) before I go, and I know that the Federation will be in very good hands. All I ask is that you extend the same support and goodwill to him as you did to me.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure having served the Federation as President, and I thank the Committee for their support and guidance, as well as the members for their support. I step down with much reluctance, but I believe that I cannot be an effective and representative President with so many prolonged absences from the required duties of office.

Grumpy

FROM THE VP

In the last SNAFU there was an insert to all members asking for written comments about two upcoming motions at the National Executive meeting held on 31st March, 2016. I received two responses which was very disappointing.

These two motions were about a name change and a new definition of Ordinary Member for the Federation. After discussion and input from all States it was decided not to change the name but States were open to groups becoming known as Veterans Support Centres. The definition of "Ordinary Member" was discussed and is to remain as shown in the latest revision of the National Constitution on 26th May, 2015.

By now you will know that our President, John "Grumpy" Hough has stood down due to ill health. We all wish "Grumpy" a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him around the Federation in the near future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank "Grumpy" for all his hard work, wisdom and advice since I have been involved in the Committee. He has had to work through some difficult situations and has handled them all in his own inimitable style with compassion and aplomb. He has represented us very well at many meetings with other ESO's, DVA, and Government both at the local and National level. How many of you realised that he was Vice President of our National body?

"Grumpy" you have left a large hole to fill. I am sure that I speak for all members when I wish you all the very best with your treatment and that we see you around the Federation sooner rather than later.

Mal Thiele, Vice President

IMPORTANT NOTICE

VVF – AGM

at the clubrooms

11am

18th September 2016

Positions becoming vacant,

NOMINATIONS CLOSE 8th August 2016

VICE PRESIDENT (two years)

SECRETARY (two year)

10 COMMITTEE MEMBERS (one year)

Other positions to be filled

Fundraising (Outside BBQ) Co-ordinator

Grants Officer

WILL YOU VOLUNTEER TO HELP KEEP THE FEDERATION STRONG.

It's over to you, our members.

Notices of Motion to be with the Secretary by the 8th August

VVFSA 21ST Birthday Celebration

Saturday 29th October 2016

At 7.30pm

Silly Night

Let's look ridiculous

Prizes for Best Costumes

Door Prize

Entry Fee "A Ridiculous price of \$5.00 pp"

Tickets available from: The office as of

13th May 2016

Max 100 tickets



Who can advise you of your medal entitlements?



It has been brought to the attention of the Directorate of Honours and Awards that some medal mounters have been adding unauthorised medals to their clients' medal sets. The claim by the medal mounters is that the person is entitled to the additional awards, and they then charge their client for the extra medal or medals.

Please note that the only agency which has the authority to determine eligibility for Defence medals is the Department of Defence. Further, wearing medals that you are not entitled to is an offence under the Defence Act 1903.

SECT 80B Improper use of service decorations

(4) A person shall not falsely represent himself as being the person upon whom a service decoration has been conferred.

Penalty: 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 6 months, or both.

A similar issue is the Burma Star for World War II service. Replicas of this medal have recently been advertised for sale.



These advertisements may lead people to incorrectly believe that they are entitled to this award, especially prisoners of war who worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway.

If you are unsure of your correct entitlements please contact the Directorate of Honours and Awards on 1800 111 321 or see the website: www.defence.gov.au/medals



Medal statistics



Federation Star



Honours & Awards tribunal



World War I medals



Campaign medals



Lost medals



Reissuing medals



NATO Medal



Foreign medals



Mothers' & Widows' Badge

Wearing of Non-Official Medals

A relatively recent phenomenon in the medal world is the appearance of a wide variety of non-official medals, generally referred to as 'private commemoratives' but also called 'tinnies'. A non-official medal is any medal that is not listed in the Order of Wearing of Australian Honours and Awards, which was published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette Special No. S.101 of 4 April 2002.

Medals not listed in the order of wear may be worn officially, on an unrestricted basis, only with the express permission of the Governor-General. As a general rule, such permission is extended only to official awards of foreign governments. It has never been extended to private commemorative medals. Those medals should not be worn at all, and certainly never on the left-hand side and mounted with officially issued medals.

While private commemorative medals are not recognised for wear in the Order of Wearing of Australian Honours and Awards, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) recognises a small number of awards of some organisations for wear. These are the awards of various bodies which are under royal patronage, or awards which have traditionally been recognised for wear, or both.

These include the Order of St John Life Saving Medal and the Red Cross' Florence Nightingale Medal, as well as the awards of the Royal Humane Society, the Royal Humane Society of Australasia, the Royal Humane Society of New South Wales and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.



The Front Line Service Medal is an example of a non-official medal.



The Australian Defence Force has recognised a small number of awards ... for wear such as the Red Cross' Florence Nightingale Medal.

Various medals of these organisations, plus the St John Life Saving Medal and the Florence Nightingale Medal, are authorised by the ADF for unrestricted wear on the right-hand side at all times when medals or ribbons are worn. By extension, this means that these medals may also be worn on the right with civilian dress on all occasions when medals are worn. Authority for wear of these medals by members of the ADF is contained in the Service dress instructions.

As a general rule, official awards of the various states and territories – such as the medals of the various police forces – are not authorised for wear on ADF uniforms under any circumstances. Exceptions to this rule may be decided on a case by case basis.

Currently, the only exception is the Australian Capital Territory Emergency Medal (ACTEM), which was issued to a number of ADF members following the January 2003 bushfires in the ACT. In February 2005 the Chief of the Defence Force advised that restricted permission for wear of the ACTEM had been given to serving members of the ADF. The authority permits the wearing of the ACTEM on ADF uniform, on the right-hand side, when the recipient is attending an official function of the ACT Government.

List of Non-Official, Private Commemorative Medals

The following are examples of non-official medals which are available for purchase.

None of these medals is authorised for wear.

Active Service Medal
 Allied Ex-POW Medal
 Arctic Campaign Medal
 Army Service Medal
 Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Medal
 Australian Logistic Support Forces Vietnam Medal
 Australian Merchant Navy Commendation
 Australian Merchant Navy Meritorious Medal
 Australian Merchant Navy Service Cross
 Australian Nuclear Veterans Association Medal
 Australian Security Medal
 Aviation Service Medal

 Battle for Malta Medal
 BCOF Medal
 Bomber Command Medal
 British Forces Germany Medal
 CMF/Reserve Forces Medal
 Combatant Service Medal
 Compulsory Military Training Medal
 Conscripted Service Medal

 Eastern Service Medal
 Far East and Asiatic Service Medal
 Foreign Service Medal
 Front Line Service Medal
 Hors de Combat Medal
 International Submariners Medal
 Korean War 40th Anniversary Medal

 Merchant Navy Service Cross
 Merchant Navy Service Medal
 National Defence Medal
 National Service Medal
 Normandy Campaign Medal
 Prisoner of War Medal
 Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee Medal
 Regular Forces Medals
 Restoration of Peace Medal

 Sea Service Medal
 Siege of Tobruk Medal
 Simpson Medal
 Suez Canal Zone Medal
 Vietnam Veteran's Medal
 Volunteer Service Medal
 Vietnam 25th Anniversary Medal

INDIGENOUS VETERAN TO BE REUNITED WITH VIETNAM WAR ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIER

ABC Far North

By Kirsty Nancarrow, Kier Shorey and Tony Cattermole

Posted Tue at 4:17pm



PHOTO: [The journey to bring the APC to far north Queensland will take three days.](#) (ABC News: Tony Cattermole)

RELATED STORY: [Yarrabah RSL organises truck-driving relay to secure armoured vehicle](#)

MAP: [Yarrabah 4871](#)

Australia's first Indigenous Returned Services League (RSL) Club will soon be able to honour one of its former soldiers with a piece of war history.

During his two tours of Vietnam, Yarrabah resident and a founding member of the community's RSL, James Canuto, drove an M113-A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) as part of the Australian Army's commitment to the conflict.

He reached the rank of Squadron Sergeant Major and led a troop of 200 soldiers, including entertainer Normie Rowe.

Mr Canuto's APC was the second last one to leave Vietnam.

About eight months ago, president of the fledgling Yarrabah RSL Tim White found the APC was being stored at the Gaza Ridge Barracks at Bandiana near the Victoria-New South Wales border.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) agreed to bequeath it, with the stipulation the club organised and paid for transport of the vehicle.

Yarrabah RSL has since raised \$7,500, largely from the far north Queensland business community and on Tuesday, it was loaded onto a truck to begin its three-day journey north.

Ex-servicewoman Linda Fennell from the volunteer organisation, Defence Shed, was there to see the APC safely on its way.

INDIGENOUS VETERAN TO BE REUNITED WITH VIETNAM WAR ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIER

"The community are extremely excited and can't wait for this APC to get up there so Uncle James Canuto can actually physically show them what an APC looks like and that will then put a picture to the stories that he's been telling the community in Yarrabah," Ms Fennell said.

A second APC on board the truck will find a permanent home in Cooktown.

This is a fantastic step forward in acknowledging our Aboriginal brothers and sisters that have served this great country of ours and are still serving.

Linda Fennell from Defence Shed

Stephen Fennell said the journey would help raise awareness about Defence Shed, established at Osborne in South Australia but which hopes to expand to places including Yarrabah.

"It's to help guys who've just come back from Afghanistan: army, navy, air force," Mr Fennell said.

"We still have navy in the Gulf of Arabia, so if any of those have psychological issues or medical issues, Defence Shed is there for them."

Far north Queensland-based truck driver Roger Tuxworth said the APC was one of the more unusual items he had been asked to transport.

"We cart a lot of freight all around the place but it's not every day you get a decommissioned army piece to take on up for display," Mr Tuxworth said.

The precious cargo will travel up through Gilgandra, Lightning Ridge, Roma and Townsville before it is delivered to Yarrabah, east of Cairns on Friday, where it will be part of a permanent monument honouring the service of Sergeant Canuto.

"This is a fantastic step forward in acknowledging our Aboriginal brothers and sisters that have served this great country of ours and are still serving," Ms Fennell said.

The monument will be officially unveiled at a community celebration in Yarrabah on September 12.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY: 18 AUGUST 2016

The Battle of Long Tan occurred on 18th August 1966. The Federal Government has declared this day as Vietnam Veterans Day. The Federation in South Australia has for some years conducted a memorial service for this battle at the Vietnam Memorial on Torrens Parade Ground. It was decided to hold the reflection service in the afternoon of the 18th August the reflection starts at 1500hrs and takes about 30 minutes. 1500 was selected as D Company were within an hour of the first shots being fired.

There are no **formally invited** guests and everyone is welcome to attend. During the reflection random members from those attending are asked to place a red or yellow rose with the names of all the Australians killed that day. (The roses are supplied by Tynte Street Florist at a very special price.) During this activity all we ask is reflection for the fallen there is no need for other wreaths or tributes to be laid. This activity cost nothing but your time, there is free parking on the Parade Ground and we will be pleased to have your presence. See you there.

Bob Ellis OAM and Eric Ciracovitch OAM



Vets on Air brings you news within our veteran community and current events along with music requests. The program is broadcast via the world wide web to all including our serving overseas forces as well as nationally and internationally i.e. Germany and England. It is well received with many positive comments and requests from the forces and other veterans emailed to the program.

Messages to our overseas forces can be emailed to :
info@coastfm.com.au (Subject line: Vets On Air).

These messages will be inserted into our broadcast and we are sure, will be a great moral boost for our service men and women serving overseas. If you can't pick up 88.7 Coast FM on your radio, fire up the computer and bring up the website, www.coastfm.com.au and activate radio reception, 6pm - 8pm (Adelaide time) every Tuesday.

EXTRA NEWS BITS AND PIECES

The April BBQ was well attended approximately 80 which was good. Monthly membership draw was not won and will be \$120 at the May BBQ. Robbie won the meat pack (door prize). A big thank you to all of our helpers, far too many to mention.

We were very sad when our President "Grumps" announced his retirement from the Presidency due to on going health matters. It would have been nice if he could have been afforded full attention whilst he made his speech, he didn't take a lot of time. Our love and good wishes are with him always. Ladies, apart from quilting and lead lighting etc there are other group activities you can attend as often or as little as you wish. They are WACAS (We All Care And Support) and another group is Health and Harmony. WACAS have several things in the pipeline like a bus trip to the Barossa 16th August (Ladies only) more on that in the next issue of the SNAFU.

The Health and Harmony group meets every 4th Thursday of the month at Legacy House in Franklin St. It is a good fun group of ladies and

each month we have a different activity to entertain us, our very own Marg Culley came and gave us a very interesting outlook on her jewellery making. It's only a gold coin donation and we bring a plate to share for lunch. We do have a lot of fun. April is a Dressed for Success clothing show where our own ladies do the modeling. May is to be decided, June is a Koala Wildlife Tour, we intend having an early lunch before the tour. The ladies who attend are a very friendly bunch of Veterans Wives or spouses or widows. What I have written is a small part of what is offered and if you would like further information please phone AM Howell (coordinator) on 82623974.

To all those lucky people travelling north for the winter I wish you a happy, healthy and safe trip (and yes I am jealous). Happy birthday to all having birthdays in April, May and June
 XoXoXo

Cheers for now,
 Fay



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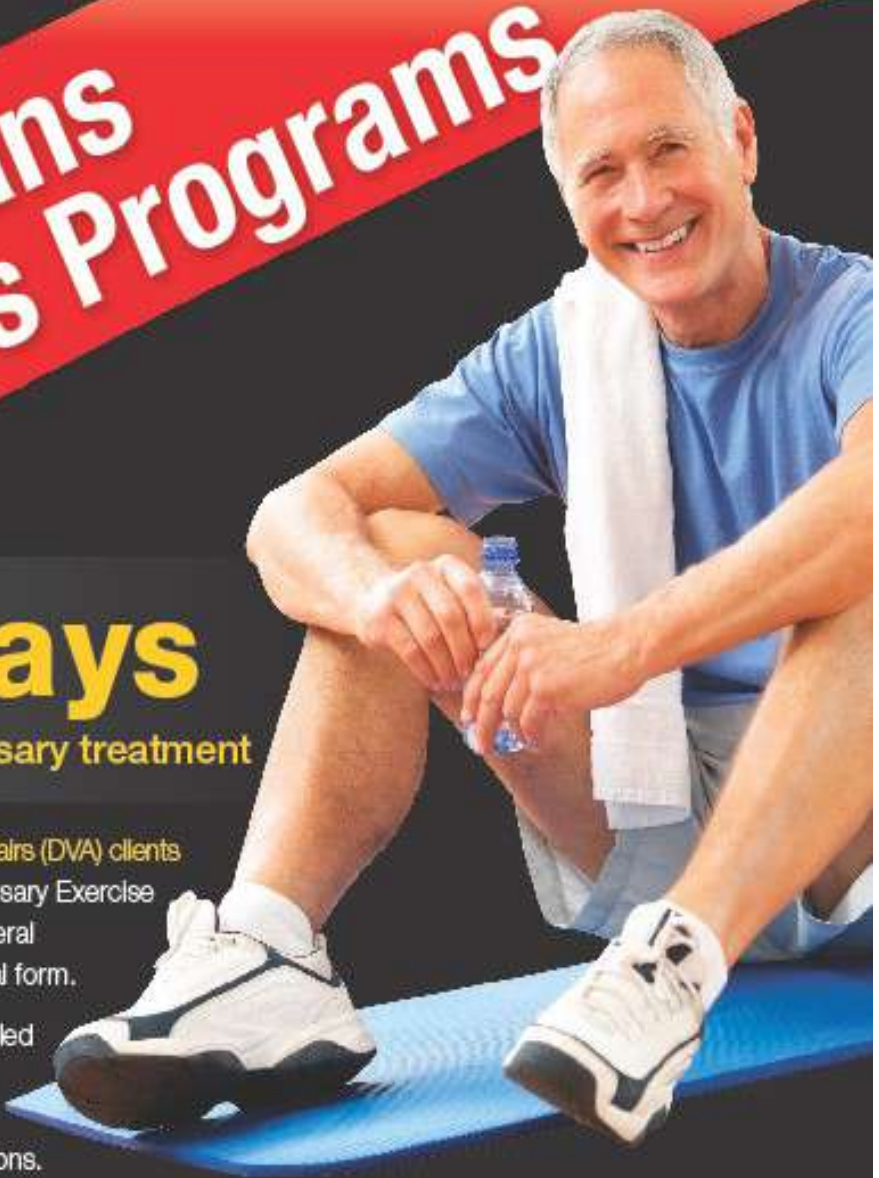
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- ▲ **Ridgehaven** 1017 North East Road
- ▲ **St Marys** 1187 South Road
- ▲ **Woodville Park** 699 Port Road

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INTRODUCTION TO MYTHS & LEGENDS

Dr Brian O'Toole from Sydney University's Brain & Mind Research Institute is an epidemiologist with a long interest in the health of Vietnam veterans and the health consequences of war service. He has worked on the Australian 'agent orange' scientific studies, was a member for 18 years of the National Advisory Council to the Minister for Vets affairs on the Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service, and conducted the first cohort health study of any returned service group in Australia, the Vietnam Veterans Health Study.



Vietnam tracker dogs by Bryan Campbell

He has conducted this longitudinal study over two waves of assessments, 14 years apart, of a random sample of Vietnam veterans, making the study unique in Australia and one of only a few such studies worldwide. He has also conducted a companion study of veterans' wives, and is currently conducting a study of veterans' sons and daughters. He is one of the few people in Australia with an expert knowledge of the long term effects of war service on veterans and their families. In this article he addresses some of the myths and legends that abound about Vietnam veterans.

"Research can only report what is found; I can't make it up and can only report what I'm told by the diggers and the data that they give me. But there is some false knowledge out there which frequently prevails and pervades, such as claims of "20,000 veterans commit suicide" which are clearly nonsense and call into question the motives of the perpetrator, be it the editor or the journalist.

What I'd like to do today is to address some of the more common myths and legends that surround Vietnam veterans and let you know what my research is showing. Here are 10 myths that I have encountered over the years that I would like to shed some light on, using the data from my research studies.

*"Reprinted with the kind permission of
Dr Brian O'Toole
Director
Vietnam Veterans Family Health Study"*

1. “IT WAS SAFER IN VIETNAM THAN IN AUSTRALIA FOR THE NASHOS”

Only 1-in-16 young men who were called up actually got enlisted in the Army. From the 63,745 National Service Men (NSM) who were enlisted in the eligible time period, 19,450 were sent to Vietnam. That's 30.5%, less than a third. So even if you were called up, there was actually only a 1.9% chance that you would be sent to Vietnam.

During the conflict there were 215 deaths of NSM in Vietnam; the mortality rate of NSM veterans in Vietnam was about 1.1%, very similar to the Regular mortality rate and very similar to the overall American mortality rate. Australia's contribution was exactly proportional. But during the war years there were 188 deaths of NSM in Australia, where most of the deaths occurred on the roads. This is a mortality rate of less than 0.3%.

So the relative risk of death, if you were a Nasho and were sent to Vietnam, was 4 times higher than the risk if you were a Nasho who stayed at home. So it wasn't safer in Vietnam at all, and there was no-one actually trying to kill you in Australia.

2. “ONLY THE ONES DUMB ENOUGH NOT TO GET OUT OF IT WERE SENT”

The Army had a screening Psych test administered on enlistment called the AGC that basically measured intelligence. It was scaled, or “normed” on a general Regular population to have an average of 10.5 on a scale of 1-20. Several Army Officers have told me they “lifted the whole standard of the Army”. Indeed, the average AGC score of the Nasho veterans was 13.5, much higher than the background Regular Army population of 10.5.

But, when compared with the Nasho veterans, the Regulars were not different; this means that the Regs who went to Vietnam were significantly brighter than the ones who stayed at home. Australia sent its best, fittest and brightest of both Regulars and Nasho's to Vietnam and it's more likely that the dumb ones stayed home.



This article will be continued in future issues

NAVAL SHIPS COLLIDE: VOYAGERS SUNK

The Melbourne/Voyager Collision: The Untold Story by Kerry Stephen

On 10th February 1964 the Search and Rescue (SAR) crews arrived at the Marine Section at the usual time, 0750, to have their coffee and prepare for another day's work. Twenty four hours later two of those crews had saved the lives of seventy men from HMAS Voyager. Their experiences that night have never been publicly documented.

This is the story of Air Nymph, one of the boats involved in the rescue operations that fateful night.

The Marine Section, HMAS Creswell was a rather unique organisation, because although it was located in, and administered by, Creswell, it was under the operational control of the Naval Air Station HMAS Albatross. As such, it worked the same hours as Albatross. When flying operations were being carried out in the Jervis Bay area by Albatross or HMAS Melbourne, it remained operationally ready until Albatross reported that fixed wing air operations had ceased for the day. Only then would the duty SAR crew stand down until the following day. This meant that, during squadron workup periods prior to embarkation in Melbourne, or during major naval exercises, the duty crew were often on duty in the Marine Section from 0600, until approximately midnight.

A 'hot line', which was directly connected to the Air Traffic Control tower (ATC) in Albatross, was located in the Marine Section Officers' office. This 'hot line' was tested at 0900 every morning between the two stations to ensure that instant communications were available between the ATC and the Marine Section. Alongside the 'hot line' was an Emergency button. When pushed it activated an Air Raid siren which sounded throughout the whole of Creswell to recall off duty SAR crew members and also warn Creswell staff of an emergency taking place. It was an operational requirement that the duty SAR crew left within 10 minutes of any emergency being sounded.

Although the Marine Section operated four SARs, the complement allowed for three crews to man the boats as one SAR was usually undergoing refit in Garden Island Dockyard. Three of the vessels, Air Nymph, Air Faith and Air Chief were all wooden hulled American built ex World War II air sea rescue craft. The fourth, Air Sprite, was built to the same design, in the 1950s, by Halvorsen's Shipyard. They were powered by two Hall Scott Defender 630 HP V12 engines, with two fuel tanks holding 1200 gallons of super petrol, and during World War II operated at 33.5 knots. However, because of their high fuel consumption they were governed down to a maximum speed of 28 knots. A searchlight was fitted outboard each side of the bridge for communications or search purposes.

Although only two officers were borne in the Marine Section complement, Sub Lieutenant Tony Vodic and myself, each crew consisted of an officer (Lieutenant/Sub Lieutenant) in command, a seaman Petty Officer, a radio operator, a Leading Seaman (LS)/Able Seaman (AB) electrical sailor, three AB Seamen branch, an LME (leading mechanical engineer), and two MEs (MTPs).

On 10th February 1964 only two SARs were based in Creswell, Air Sprite and Air Nymph. Both Air Chief and Air Faith were undergoing maintenance or refit in Garden Island Dockyard. The two boats were taken out for their usual morning run in Jervis Bay to ensure that they were fully operational. It was likely to be a busy day. Melbourne was carrying out flying operations with Voyager, the consort and rescue destroyer. Three minesweepers (MCMVs) were also due in Jervis Bay to carry out mine countermeasure (MCM) exercises.

The two SARs returned to the Marine Section wharf where they were refueled, and the crews then carried on with their normal ship husbandry and maintenance routines. At 1600 the standby crews departed at the end of the day's work, leaving the duty crew led by Petty Officer Ron Budd in the Marine Section. Air Nymph was the duty boat and I was the Duty Officer for that night. The routine was as normal, the duty crew having dinner in the Marine Section galley while they waited for the cessation of flying operations.

It was anticipated it would be a quiet night so everyone relaxed in the mess facilities. About 2000 that evening noise was heard in the vicinity of the Creswell swimming pool on the waterfront. Several of the duty crew went out to the Marine Section wharf to see what was going on. It turned out to be an initiation ceremony for new entry Cadet Midshipmen so they returned to the mess, advising me accordingly.

The 'hot line'

But it was not to be a quiet night! At 2057 the 'hot line' suddenly rang. I immediately answered the phone to hear the Albatross duty ATC officer say 'Melbourne and Voyager have collided in a position 20 miles from Point Perpendicular, on a bearing of 120 degrees, scramble the SARs'. I instantly hit the Emergency button, sounding the siren, and rushed downstairs to the crew mess where I told the duty crew that Melbourne and Voyager had collided and to prepare the duty boat, Air Nymph, to get underway immediately. The crew quickly responded, boarded the boat, started the engines and made preparations to sail. Fortunately, a Surgeon Lieutenant was in the vicinity of the Marine Section at that time, so I requested he board Air Nymph to provide medical assistance if required.

Survivors of HMAS Voyager mingle with the crew from HMAS Melbourne



VVFQJd Branch "Incoming", September, 2015. Page 16

I took command of *Air Nymph* and departed the Marine Section wharf within two minutes of the alarm being sounded. *Air Nymph* headed to the position given for the collision, at maximum speed of 28 knots. The conditions were favourable for high speed as the wind was about Force 1 and there was a low swell of less than 1 metre. The crew prepared for the situation ahead, but as no other details had been provided about the collision, it was assumed that *Melbourne* and *Voyager* had side-swiped each other and that *Air Nymph* would be recalled in due course.

Shortly after the boat was underway the on-board Radio Operator, RO Les Thurgood, was directed to contact *Melbourne* by w/t to advise that *Air Nymph* was underway, with a Medical Officer on board, and ETA at the collision site was expected to be at about 2200.

RO Thurgood later advised that he was unable to contact *Melbourne* because of the known communication atmospheric problems in the Jervis Bay area.

However, he was able to contact HMAS *Parramatta* who would relay the message onto *Melbourne*. It was later reported that *Parramatta* was actually in the Sunda Strait area, on deployment to the Far East, but this was never confirmed.

The damage to HMAS *Melbourne* was extensive



Similar vessel to *Air Nymph*



The second SAR, *Air Sprite*, was under the command of SBLT Tony Vodic and manned by the off-duty standby crew. It left the Marine Section, heading to the collision site about 10 minutes after *Air Nymph*.

Shortly after *Air Nymph* left Jervis Bay on a course of 120 degrees, a merchant ship was sighted on the Port bow at a range of about 10 miles, heading south. It was readily apparent that both ships were on a collision course, so the ship was called by Aldis light to establish its identity. No response was ever received from the bridge of the merchant ship despite the range closing rapidly and the ship's bridge being continually flashed. The searchlight was then used but still to no avail. Notwithstanding that *Air Nymph* had right of way, when both vessels were about 1000 metres apart course was altered to pass close astern of the merchant ship as I seriously doubted that the merchant ship would alter course for a small vessel. The searchlight was shone on the merchant ship as *Air Nymph* went around the stern, and the ship's name was seen to be *Boranga*.

It was of note that at the subsequent Royal Commission into the collision, the Master of the *Boranga* claimed he was never contacted to assist in the rescue and felt he could have been of assistance. He claimed that the only ship he had seen that night was a destroyer heading out from Jervis Bay which had passed about one mile astern of him. This was obviously *Air Nymph*!

The course out to the collision site was easily identified because of the number of helicopters flying overhead to assist in the rescue operations. At approximately 2155 a large number of lights were seen in the water ahead. They could not be readily identified as to what they were, so *Air Nymph* reduced speed to about 4 knots. When the searchlight was shone on the lights, we could see that they were from sailors in the water, some wearing lifejackets and from several life rafts. Ahead of *Air Nymph* a helicopter, with a searchlight underneath it, flew over the stern of the *Voyager*.

It then became apparent that a major catastrophe had occurred. Only the stern remained visible, with the after funnel on the waterline, and both propellers above the water. There was no sign of the forward section of the *Voyager* and I incorrectly assumed that it was underwater. I had not realised that *Voyager* had been cut in two. At this time I had not seen *Melbourne* as it was stopped, some 600 metres away from the stern of *Voyager* and where the survivors were in the water.

Many of the sailors swimming in the water were not wearing life jackets. Others wearing life jackets, could be seen close ahead of *Air Nymph*. Many of them could obviously see us as we approached and calls were heard from groups of those in the water saying 'over here, over here'. *Air Nymph* proceeded to the nearest group of sailors in the water, and crew members then hauled them inboard over the port quarter, where the port engine had been stopped for safety reasons.

Several were injured, covered in oil and obviously in shock when they were recovered, but they were extremely grateful to be in SAR. *Air Nymph* moved from group to group and to individuals, recovering them over the port side. During this time it was reported to me that an *Air Nymph* crew member jumped into the water to assist some sailors without life jackets who were in difficulties, but I was unable to establish the identity of the person concerned.

Unidentified body

At one stage as survivors were being pulled up over the port side, I saw the body of an officer about 25 metres away on the starboard side, with his head underwater. It was not possible to recover this body whilst survivors were being lifted inboard, but as soon as they were all inboard the boat was turned to starboard and a search was made for the body, but without success. It was not known who the officer was, as the rank on his shoulder boards was not visible.

Flashing lights

By this time *Air Nymph* was about 50 metres from the stern of *Voyager*. Lights could be seen flashing on the stern section in the gentle swell and I decided to go alongside the stern to carry out a search for anyone still on board. However, a Chief Ordnance Artificer from the *Voyager*, who had been recovered from the water, said he was the last to leave the stern section and assured me there was no-one else on board. He said the flashing lights were from the emergency lanterns which were still on, and the gentle swell made it appear as if they were being moved. At the same time huge bubbles of air were breaking on the surface by the funnel and it was feared that the boilers were in danger of exploding. In view of the information given by the Chief OA, I considered that to put *Air Nymph* alongside the stern section of *Voyager* would have unnecessarily endangered the lives of both the recovered *Voyager* survivors and the crew of *Air Nymph*, if the boilers were to explode, or the stern suddenly sank. I therefore reluctantly decided that it was a higher priority to recover other survivors who could be seen in nearby life rafts and who would also be at risk if the stern of *Voyager* sank.

When *Air Nymph* came alongside one life raft, we saw it contained a critically injured Petty Officer. Two of the crew of *Air Nymph* jumped into the life raft and were passed a stretcher to lift the Petty Officer into the SAR. This was extremely difficult as he had a crushed chest and severely lacerated head and his chest injuries made it impossible to secure him into the stretcher. With the movement of the life raft in the swell, transferring him into *Air Nymph* was fraught with danger as he could slip off the stretcher into the sea. Fortunately he was successfully lifted on board, although it was considered extremely unlikely that he would survive his shocking injuries. *Voyager* survivors were taken out from several other life rafts and it was noted that some of the rafts were only partially inflated. It was not known whether this was a result of damage or failure to properly inflate. Many of the survivors were suffering shock, severe lacerations and broken limbs and required medical treatment by the Surgeon Lieutenant. Most were covered in oil from their immersion in water and traumatised from the collision.

Helicopter search

A nearby helicopter was seen shining its searchlight into the water below, but nothing could be seen because of the spray thrown up. So *Air Nymph*, with Petty Officer Budd on the bow, made her way into the spray under the searchlight, searching for anyone in the water below the helicopter. Unfortunately nothing could be seen and shortly afterwards the helicopter switched off its light and moved away. By this time, as over 30 survivors were crowded on board *Air Nymph*, and no others could be seen in the water, I decided to go alongside Melbourne, which was still about 500 metres away, and transfer them. We proceeded to the starboard side of Melbourne, where a cargo net had been put over the side to allow survivors to climb to the deck. This was again fraught with danger as the low swell caused *Air Nymph* to rise up under the flight deck sponsons, bending the main whip aerial like a bow and snapping off one of the radio aerials on the top of the mast. Since many of the rescued survivors were injured and traumatised, and in no condition to climb up a cargo net, I advised Melbourne that it was too risky to disembark them. Instead I would proceed at maximum speed back to Creswell to disembark them there, and then return to the collision scene. This was agreed and we cast off and immediately headed for Creswell.

On the passage to Jervis Bay at 28 knots *Air Nymph* passed the three MCMVs that had been at anchor as they headed out to the area of the collision. Communications were established with the Marine Section Wireless office and a message was passed to Creswell advising that *Air Nymph* was returning to the Marine Section with survivors from the *Voyager* on board, ETA at approximately 0025. I also requested that medical personnel, ambulances and transport be available on the wharf when we berthed. At this stage Creswell was not aware of the situation at sea.

During the passage to Jervis Bay, the Ordnance Engineer from *Voyager*, Lieutenant Chris Nisbet, came up to the bridge. I advised him that *Air Nymph* was proceeding at full speed to Creswell to offload the survivors as it was too dangerous to transfer them to Melbourne. It was then that he told me he had been in the Wardroom with most of the off duty officers when the collision occurred. He said that when the Melbourne hit the *Voyager*, the whole of the forward section rolled upside down and he heard the two 4.5" gun turrets fall out from their mountings, which then allowed the forward section to roll upright again. When it did that, the Wardroom bulkhead split open and he was sucked out the side into the sea, injuring his hand and arm as he went through the ship's side. He was one of only two who escaped from the wardroom, the other being LCDR Peter Coombs.

Transfer of survivors

Air Nymph arrived at the Marine Section wharf at approximately 0030 and it was pleasing to see the ambulances, transport and personnel waiting as requested. It was a great shock for the personnel ashore to see all the *Voyager* survivors sitting or lying on the upper deck of the boat. However, they very efficiently assisted the survivors ashore, treating those who were injured or in shock, before transferring them to the Creswell facilities. It was ascertained at that time that there were 34 sailors recovered from the water and landed at Creswell.

I then went into the Marine Section building where I found the Captain of the RAN College, Captain Dacre Smyth, on the phone to Fleet Headquarters in Sydney. It was apparent at that time that Fleet Headquarters was not aware of the seriousness of the collision. I was able to confirm that only the stern of *Voyager* remained above water and there were likely to be many casualties. Shortly afterwards, the second SAR, *Air Sprite* arrived back at the Marine Section with another 36 survivors on board, making a total of 70 rescued by the two SARs.

Further search

At 0045, as soon as all survivors had been landed and the boat refuelled, *Air Nymph* with the duty crew sailed again to return to the collision area to continue the search. It took approximately an hour and a half to reach the area where debris was located and the search continued again throughout the remainder of the night. A loud hailer was used to call out to any person who could hear it and the searchlights were used to spotlight the areas where debris was clearly visible. A splash target and a stretcher were recovered from the water, but there was no sign of any further survivors.

Two incidents of note occurred during the search that night. The first was when a sunken life raft floating just below the surface was caught in the port propeller. One of the AB seamen volunteered to jump overboard with a knife and cut the life raft free. This action took about 20 minutes in the pitch dark, but was successful allowing the search to continue. The second was about 30 minutes later when a massive bubble suddenly broke on the surface about 50 metres ahead of *Air Nymph*. The searchlights were trained on the spot and it was ascertained that the wooden whaler or motor cutter from *Voyager* had apparently broken free from the davits, and the buoyancy tanks had allowed it to broach on the surface. It was assumed that the remains of the hull of *Voyager* were somewhere below where the search was being conducted at that time.

At 0815 on 11 February, having searched all night and the first few hours of daylight, I decided that it was unlikely any further survivors or bodies would be found from the *Voyager*. Visibility was good for the search, although the swell had risen slightly, all debris in the area had been thoroughly checked and nothing further could be seen in the surrounding sea. *Creswell* was advised that we were returning to Jervis Bay and *Air Nymph* then adjusted course to return to the Marine Section.

Air Nymph arrived at the Marine Section at about 1030 on Tuesday 11 February and, as it rounded the breakwater heading to the wharf, many civilians were seen running to the Marine Section when they saw the boat approaching. It was realised these personnel were press reporters and photographers who were clamouring for details of what had happened. It was obvious that several of the photographers were more interested in the dried blood stains on the deck and cabin superstructure, where injured sailors had been lying the previous night, as they were keen on photographing the stark reminders of the previous night's activities.

The Acting Executive Officer of *Creswell*, Commander Ian Richards, kept all the press and photographers at bay until I had a chance to tell him we had not recovered any further survivors or bodies. I was then bombarded with questions by the press until it was obvious I had nothing new for them. It was interesting that one newspaper report described me as 'bleary-eyed and covered in salt spray', which was not surprising as we had been at sea without any rest since 2100 the previous night. Shortly afterwards *Air Sprite* also returned alongside the Marine Section wharf, but they too had not recovered any more survivors or bodies.

The debris we had recovered from the sea was removed from *Air Nymph*, which was then refueled and sailed once more to the search area, this time under the command of Lieutenant Eric Mentz and a crew comprising personnel from *Creswell* ship's company. They returned later that evening, again without locating any more survivors.

The crew from *Air Nymph* performed magnificently throughout that night and the following morning, undertaking roles that none could have envisaged when they joined the Navy. They did everything they could to rescue those survivors in the water and look after them when they were safely in the boat. They saw many horrific things but did what they had to do, without question or hesitation. They all showed initiative under extremely traumatic conditions and performed their duties above and beyond what would have been expected of sailors of their age and experience. It obviously concerned them later when they heard that 82 sailors had lost their lives that night and, in the following days, many of them came to see me and asked if there was anything more that they could have done, and whether we missed people in the water. When it became obvious that nearly all those missing were from the forward part of *Voyager*, it perhaps eased their concerns.

A report was submitted to the authorities detailing the events that occurred that night but nothing was ever heard back from Navy Office. It was disappointing that no acknowledgement, praise or thanks was ever received for what the SAR crews did that night during the rescue operations; nor was the exceptional service the crew rendered under the most traumatic conditions recognised. It seemed that as far the Navy was concerned it was a PR disaster and they wanted closure as soon as possible.

Recognition

The only form of recognition received was much later when *Air Nymph* and the crew were at Garden Island dockyard and Mr Justice Spicer, who was conducting the Royal Commission into the collision, requested to see *Air Nymph* as part of the inquiry into the rescue operations. After his visit he told the crew that, in his opinion, there would have been a greater loss of life had the SARs not been out there that night.

There are three footnotes to this account. It is of interest that to the best of my knowledge, not one single sailor from the two SAR crews has ever lodged a claim for compensation for what he saw or had to do that night, yet they were in the thick of the rescue operations under the most traumatic conditions. To them it was a job that had to be done, no matter how difficult or horrendous it was for them. Afterwards they carried on with their careers in the Navy.

The seriously injured Petty Officer who was rescued from the life raft actually recovered from his horrendous injuries, and continued to serve in the RAN. There is no doubt that had he not been taken ashore where he received specialist treatment, it is highly likely he would not have survived. I have since been in contact with him but he recalls little of that fateful night.



Memory 'a blur'

I also recently established contact with a further two sailors who were rescued by *Air Nymph*, Petty Officer Sick Bay Attendant (POSBA) 'Tug' Wilson and Leading Seaman Photographer (LSPhot) Rick Reynolds. It was of interest that both of them said their most vivid memory of the rescue effort was *Air Nymph* going alongside Melbourne and the radio aerial on top of the tripod mast being snapped off by the sponson. To them the rest of the rescue operation was a blur, apart from the fact they remembered their life raft was only partially inflated. They were very relieved when the decision was made to go back to Creswell; particularly for POSBA 'Tug' Wilson who had a broken shoulder and said there was no way he could have climbed up the cargo net.

Rick Reynolds joined *Voyager* on 6 February, four days before the collision. We finally met for lunch in October 2008 and were able to discuss and compare our experiences that night. He told me that he was in the ship's cafeteria playing bridge 10 minutes before the collision. At that time he decided to go back to his bunk in the after mess deck accommodation as it was piped that they were going to play 'tombola' in the cafeteria. Had he not done so, there is no doubt he would not be among the survivors.

After the collision he made his way out to the upper deck of *Voyager*'s stern, but prior to departing the ship checked the after section with another sailor, Chief Petty Officer Cameron, to ensure there was no-one left there. He assured me at our lunch that there was no-one else left on board the stern section, which finally put to rest my long held concern that I should in fact have gone alongside the stern to check for survivors.

It is hoped by both of us that, sometime in the future, it might be possible for the crew members of *Air Nymph* to get together with those survivors of *Voyager* they picked up, for a belated reunion.

It has taken some 44 years for me to write the story of the part that *Air Nymph* played in the Melbourne/*Voyager* tragedy, and only after much persuasion by former naval colleagues. My only regret nowadays is that the passage of time has not allowed me to remember the names of all the crew members of *Air Nymph* that night so that they could receive the public recognition that they truly deserve. It is my hope that if those who are still alive read this article, they can be assured that the exceptional manner in which they all performed their duties will never be forgotten.



Note: At the request of D.D. McNicoll of *The Australian* the following line should be inserted at the end of the story in any magazine that publishes this article: 'An edited version of this article appeared in *The Australian* on Wednesday 11 February 2009.'

Disaster in the Words of Sailors

"The forward section of the ship split and turned turtle" - Lieutenant C.J. Nisbet (*Voyager*)

"I was under water - and then I saw the stars." - Lieutenant-Commander P.W. Coombs (Chief Engineer, *Voyager*).

"Without the helicopters few lives would have been saved." - Sub-Lieutenant A.D. Vodic (Search-Rescue boat).

"We were upside down and under the water in 10 minutes." Petty Officer Norman Swinnerton (*Voyager*).

The following comment Kerry Stephen told the reporters that the stern of *Voyager* was afloat. A female reporter asked what was a 'stern', and he said the rear end of the ship! It was reported as below, much to his embarrassment.

"The rear of Voyager was still afloat but sinking slowly into the depths with her screws in the air." - Lieutenant Kerry Stephen (Commander, search and rescue boat)

Portrait of O1104 Lieutenant (Lt) Kerry Charles Stephen, HMAS Bass.

Lt Stephen joined the Royal Australian Navy College (RANC) in 1954, graduating in December 1955. He served on many RAN ships, including HMAS Tobruk during the Malayan Emergency and HMAS Parramatta in the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR). During his career he also commanded two ships, HMAS Bass and HMAS Parramatta. In June 1985, subsequent to completion of his posting as Commanding Officer of the RAN shore establishment HMAS Waterhen, and Commander Australian Mine warfare and Patrol Boat Forces (COMAUSMINPAB) from 1982 to 1984, Commander (Cmdr) Stephen was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). Cmdr Stephen resigned his commission in 1986 after 32 years service in the RAN.

In 1964 Lt Stephen was in command of the Search and Rescue (SAR) boat HMAS *Air Nymph* (Y257) on the night HMAS *Voyager* was sunk in a collision with HMAS Melbourne off Jervis Bay. The collision claimed the lives of 82 crew members of the *Voyager*. The *Air Nymph* had been the first of two SARs to arrive at the scene of the collision and pick up survivors from the water and from life rafts. On its first search *Air Nymph* rescued 34 survivors, taking them to the shore establishment, HMAS Creswell. On the *Air Nymph*'s second search of the collision area no more survivors were found. HMAS *Air Sprite*, the other SAR operating that night, rescued 36 men.

VVFQld Branch "Incoming", September, 2015. Page 20.

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SOCIAL GROUPS

Social groups of the Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australia Inc.

Embroidery and Sewing Group	Monday 10.00am - 3.00pm
Quilting Group	Tuesday 10.00am - 3.00pm
Gem Vets	2nd and 4th Tuesday every month 10.00am - 3.00pm
VCC&ORG	Monday after the VVF BBQ 10 am
Lead Light/Glass Fusion	Wednesday 1.00pm - 3.00pm
WACAS (We All Care and Support)	Social outings for partners - contact Wendy 0400 570016
Federation monthly BBQ	2nd Friday of each month/cost \$8.00 begins at 11.30am

OR, RING THE VVF OFFICE DURING OFFICE HOURS FOR CONTACT INFORMATION

VORG REPORT

Items of interest from our last VORG meeting held after the BBQ 8th April.

The few points that were discussed were, Snowy Chester took Moose Dunlop to Alawoona recently , and he loved it . So the Soldier on group will be looking to use the site soon , we just have to work out a form of booking the site and fees etc.

At the last meeting we talked about a fridge for the camp kitchen, I came back with a price of \$3200 approx plus freight. Bob Ellis needs 3 prices. This is for a fridge that runs on gas about the size of your fridge at home . Grant Ottewill has come up with a fridge and batteries and solar panels running thru an Inverter, sounds a bit

complicated but it works and no gas a bit cheaper at \$3000 approx , we shall discuss this at the next meeting. Bob Ellis will be looking into a grant for one of these fridges.

We are still getting numbers for the trip to Ceduna in Sept/ Oct so make sure you are booked in for that.

Not sure what is happening in May for our meeting I will keep you posted.

Cheers,
Phil
VORG Coordinator

Leadlight Group

We have been working in harmony on various projects of which some are coming to an end. As a small group we invite interested people, or friends of members to come and join us in our endeavours to produce scintillating works of glass art. These include glass foil clock making, fusion clocks, mosaic clocks and jewellery pieces, even a Noughts and Crosses board has come out of the kiln. Leadlight windows are in the planning stage and require innovative design and suggestions from interested parties.

Please contact the Office on 8296 2411 if anyone is interested in joining our group. We meet on Wednesday afternoons from 1pm to 3pm and we can supply tools and glass for your 1st project.

Including Glass Fusion

WACAS ~ COMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 22nd JUNE

CASINO LUNCH ~

Meet 10.30am at the Shrine Nth Terrace ~ walk along the Anzac Centenary Memorial Walk then to the Casino for lunch 12.00 noon ~ **LADIES ONLY**

TUESDAY 16th AUGUST

BAROSSA VALLEY BUS TRIP ~

SIGHTSEEING AND LUNCH - 9.00am to 5.00pm ~ **LADIES ONLY**

FRIDAY 19th AUGUST

GAWLER TO GOOLWA BUS TRIP TO HAVE LUNCH WITH THE SOUTH COAST VETS ~ 9.00am to 5.00pm ~ **COMBINED**

MONDAY 24th OCTOBER

BLOKES BUS TRIP ~ DESTINATION AND ACTIVITY TO BE ADVISED - 9.00am to 5.00pm

TUESDAY 25th OCTOBER

JESTERS MURRAY RIVER CRUISE AND LUNCH - BUS FROM VVF ~ **LADIES ONLY**

SATURDAY 6th NOVEMBER

KANGAROO ISLAND BUS TRIP AND FERRY TO MARKETS, LUNCH, AND VISIT TO CAPE WILLOUBY LIGHTHOUSE ~ **COMBINED**

WEDNESDAY 14TH DECEMBER

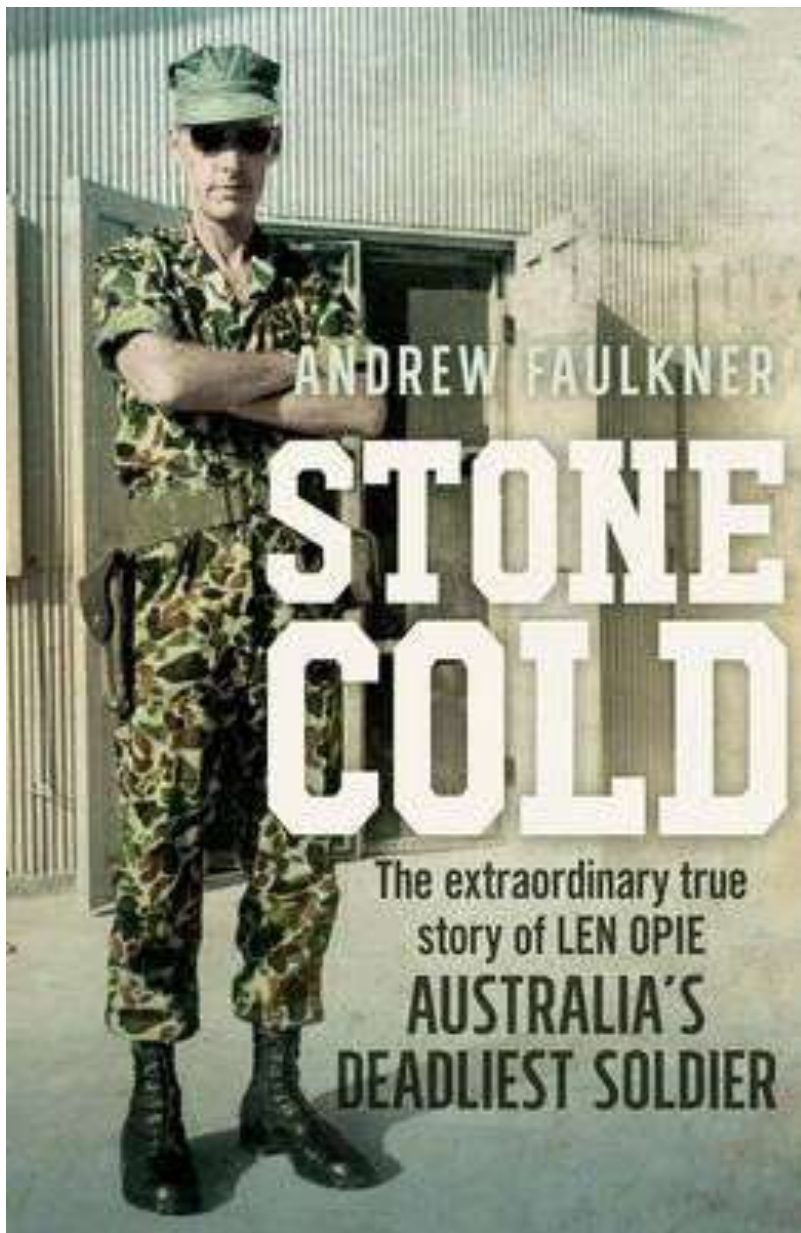
WACAS CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT GOODWOOD HOTEL ~ **LADIES ONLY**

ALL BUS TRIPS REQUIRE A \$10 FEE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

FAY 0418 839490 or MARG 0402 844954

STONE COLD: BOOK REVIEW



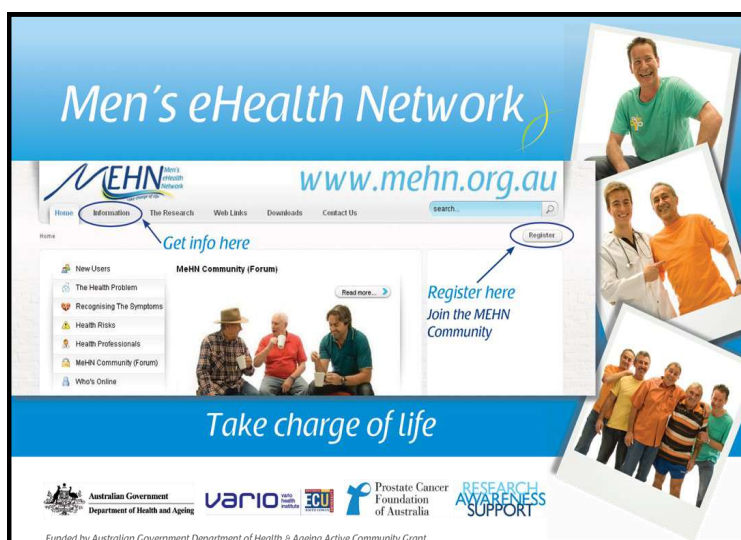
From the jungles of New Guinea to the CIA's black ops program in Vietnam, this is the extraordinary life of one of Australia's fiercest soldiers.

Through three wars across 30 years, Len Opie carved a reputation as one of the country's greatest infantrymen. A cold-eyed killer who drank nothing stronger than weak tea, he fought with his bare hands, a sharpened shovel and piano wire. He was a larrikin who went by the book, unless the book was wrong. He set his own bar high and expected others to do the same.

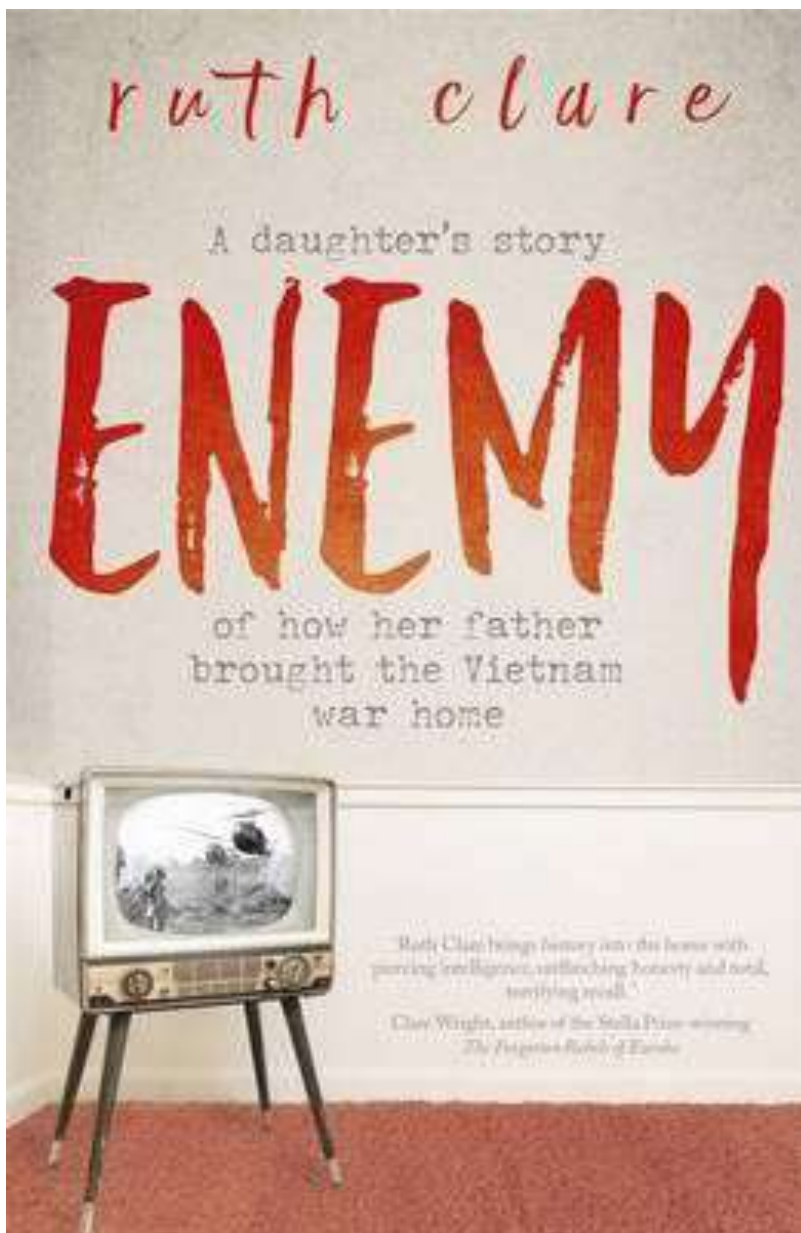
Stone Cold is the extraordinary story of one of Australia's most fearless fighters. It takes us into the jungles of New Guinea and Borneo and some of the fiercest battles of World War II. It goes to the cold heart of Korea, where Len emerged from the ranks to excel in the epic Battle of Kapyong and play a key role at the Battle of Maryang San. And it drops us into the centre of the American counterinsurgency war in Vietnam with Len's involvement in the CIA's shadowy black ops program, Phoenix.

Action-packed and surprising, *Stone Cold* gives rich life to a warrior soldier and one of Australia's greatest diggers.

<http://www.booktopia.com.au/stone-cold-andrew-faulkner/d9781742373782.html>



ENEMY: BOOK REVIEW



Ruth Clare's father came back from the Vietnam War a changed man: a violent, controlling parent and a dominating, aggressive husband. Through a childhood of being constantly on guard, with no one to protect her but herself, Ruth learned to be strong and fierce in the face of fear.

After escaping her difficult upbringing, Ruth went on to have a family of her own. Facing the challenges of parenting brought her past back to life, and she lived in fear that she was doomed to repeat her father's behaviour. Wanting to understand the experiences that had damaged her father, she met with other veterans and began listening to their stories, of war, conscription, returning to civilian life. What Ruth uncovered left her with a surprising empathy for the man who caused her so much pain and heartache.

Weaving a striking personal narrative with a revelatory exploration of the effects of war, *Enemy* is a bold, compelling and ultimately triumphant memoir from a hugely impressive new Australian writer.

<http://www.booktopia.com.au/enemy-ruth-clare/prod9780670079094.html>



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ask for Greg Pett
190 Portrush Road, Norwood

Jarvis Toyota



1300 13 77 66

ask for Gary Waters
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ask for Ryan Flavel
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ask for Anthony Male

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