

CIRCULAR



THE EDITOR.

Box 5289, G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

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PICNICS, ASSEMBLIES, GAMES and DANCES. N.S.W. Notes from Cy. Irwin, 17, Vincent Street,  
Canterbury, N.S.W.

Firstly, the Annual Assembly of the Air Force Association was held in Sydney on the 11th and 12th June. The 458 Squadron branch was represented by its delegates, John (Curly) Hosking, Stuart Ricketts, Kemp Beach, and Cy. Irwin. Peter Alexander and Dick Healey attended as delegates from Headquarters. The Parramatta branch were hosts for the Assembly Dinner, on the Saturday night, where John Hosking and Cy. Irwin were the Squadron representatives.

While on Association business, a noteworthy decision was made recently by the Board of Charity Referees concerning the R.A.A.F. Memorial Centre Appeal Fund which has been administered by Trustees for about 20 years. There were legal difficulties about the form of the Trust Deed and lack of agreement about how the funds should be spent. Some of the Trustees wanted to erect Memorial Steps or a Fountain in Hyde Park. The A.F.A. wanted an Air Force Memorial Centre. The Board decided that there should, in effect, be an Air Force Memorial Centre. The A.F.A. Building in Clarence Street will be cleared of debt, a Memorial Room built, and a Benevolent Fund for the benefit of needy ex-Airmen and their kin set up.

Peter Alexander was well to the fore in support of the Association in its claim for the funds to be used as an Air Force Centre as against the stone memorial type. We congratulate the Association (and Peter for his part) and add that 458 Association members are grateful for and happy with the result.

#### The Picnic.

The Squadron Picnic was held at Warwick Farm Racecourse on Sunday 31st July. Weather was good for this cold time of the year—it was in fact typical 458 Picnic weather. There were a few of the Regulars missing but those who attended, particularly the children, had a very good day thanks to the workhorses for the day—Kemp Beach (race arrangements, prizes and sweets), Tom Moore (ice-cream King), and Fred Strom (Drinks organisation). It was pleasing to see Frank Ward and his family present, recently returned from Fiji. Other Squadron members there with families were Bill McBride, Stuart Ricketts, Sam Barlow, Peter Alexander, Kemp Beach, Les Piggott, Cec. Nation, Bob Bruce, Eric Munkman, and Graeme Coombes (to whom thanks for arranging the site.)

#### Games Evenings.

Games Evenings have been held in the Air Force Club. Sorry to report an all-time low in form and the fact that we were defeated by the W.A.A.A.F. on 2nd July. We say 'We let them win'. We have one more fixture to complete the Competition, versus the Polish Airmen on 24th September.

N.S.W. Flight Notes (cont.)The Presidents' Cup.

The Annual Presidents' Cup Day for golf will be held on Sunday 18th. September at Parklea Golf Course near Blacktown. This is fair warning to our golfing members to get cracking and practice. We have secured a very good hit off time (11-15 a.m.) for those who enjoy a Sunday morning sleep-in. Will N.S.W. Flight members please refer to the insert in this News, re this day.

Air Force Ball—458 Debs.

We shall have a substantial Squadron party at this year's Air Force Ball. September 16th is the day, the Trocadero the place. Members are most welcome. It is a good night, and this year we have two 458 Squadron debutantes to be presented, Beryl Munkman and Patricia Crompton.

Alf's Illness.

Sorry to report to members that Alf Hammond is ill again. He is in Ward A1 of the Prince Alfred Hospital with a second Coronary attack. He will be laid low for some weeks and members might like to write or visit Slappy. We sincerely hope he will be up and about soon.

Also, Jack Aitken's Mother passed away recently in New Zealand. Our sympathy to Jack and his family.

Until next News report, our regards to 458 members in other States.

CROWEATER NEWS

from Lofty Trewartha, 60 California Street,  
Nailsworth, South Australia.

Brian Woodhead.

Brian has a new position with H.C. Sleigh and is often observed these days rushing about the wharves at Port Adelaide with an impressive bundle of papers in his hand. The sea air must be agreeing with him because he is looking like a two-year old.

Keith Foreman.

Keith is one of our stalwart Flight supporters and he has issued an invitation to members to organise a barbecue-cum-swimming evening at his lovely home in the near future, so ladies get your bikinis out.

Lofty Perturbed.

I noticed in the May issue that Ian Showell went to England with a lass named Fee when everyone knows his wife's name is Fay. Wonder what he did with Meg? Also surprised to see that Bill Taylor and Enid supplied a keg recently when everybody knows Bill's wife's name is Madge. Get with it, Ed., I'm too young to die. A big hello to my old cobber Jack Parkin, recently in the W.A. Repat. Hospital. Hope you are sparking on all six again, Jack.

(We assure Lofty he is in no danger: only the good die young. We shall leave Ian to comment on the first question! For the future we shall play safe and refer guardedly to Madame X. However, for our collective sins, we no doubt merit either a censure or a censor!—Ed.)

MINI-NEWS from Q. FLIGHT.

by Jim Holliday, 43, Stella Street,  
Holland Park, Queensland.

Our June Social though a financial success, failed to draw the usual big crowds. Still, a good time was had by all and quality made up for quantity. Unfortunately, the prevailing and virulent wog had laid cash customers and their loved ones low and perhaps the sharp winds crippled a few of the old and bold.

Most important news of the quarter—or at least an event that was well celebrated through the land—was the birth of a son, Peter Cormack, to Helen and Bernie McLoughlin—a brother to their daughter. Peter Cormack is named after his late uncle Cormack, a foundation member of 458 at Holme-on-Spalding Moor, who lost his life in the Middle East. Heartiest congratulations to Peter Cormack's proud parents.

NEW VICTORIAN FLIGHT SECRETARY.

We advise 458ers that the Victorian Secretaryship has been taken over again by Bill Carr who held it with great distinction for several years in the Flight's early time. He will have the responsibility for

Victorian organisation of the 1967 All-States Reunion to be held somewhere in Victoria. The Squadron will wish Bill well.

### SAILOR OFF VUNG TAU.

Capt. Basil Wheatley,  
M.V. El Nabeel  
Singapore.

Having completed my first year in South Vietnam I thought 458ers might be interested in some of the capers in this country of paradoxes. I recommend, to recapture the youthful vigor and outlook of our Western Desert days, a few months on the fringe of the current war. Now, instead of a portly placid 55 I feel an active 25, having shaken off the boredom and monotony of so-called middle age. The past year has been a mixed bag of incidents, some unpleasant none of them boring.

My wife is also a Vietnam Veteran, having been with me since last September and she has become very blasé about the whole thing, in fact she finds Singapore too quiet without the bombing and aeroplanes. We have had our moments like the time we got stuck on a riverbank in VC territory. The VC had taken to shelling the merchant ships navigating the Saigon River. I saw the Lorinda in Saigon, a Panamanian passenger ship that had come up the river the day before me, his bridge was a shambles and he had a dozen 12" holes in his hull, where he had been hit by 85 mm mortar and recoilless rifle fire. This induced me to get sandbags fitted round the wheelhouse, for the psychological effect only as that stuff would go through them like a hot knife through butter. The river is a tortuous affair with narrow winding and right-hand turns just suitable for ambushing defenceless merchantmen going about their lawful occasions. The banks are covered with mangrove and scrub and there are hundreds of backwaters creeks, and blind offshoots, and for about ten miles this winds through VC country.

We were approaching the worst part of the river and I had sent my wife below with instructions as to where to lie down if she heard shooting. At this moment I was warned the steering gear was faulty, and within one minute it packed in and we started to sheer into the bank. I went full astern, and let go the port anchor, but it was too late, she climbed up on the mud and sat there out in the middle of nowhere. There was a small VN naval launch ahead of and when he saw what happened he opened up with small arms fire on the scrub to flush out any VC. This was enough for Mum; she ignored all my instructions and helped herself to a large slug of gin—a true Wheatley! I sent for the Chief Engineer, a non-English-speaking Chinese and asked him how long for repairs. He replied through his interpreter, "Maybe 2/3 hours, Captain; very hot steering engine." My reply was terse and he did the job in one hour flat. For a non-English-speaking Chinese he got the message. Meanwhile the pilot is bleating "Very dangerous, very dangerous!". I got a message away to Securitie and within a quarter of an hour out came two choppers with a GI riding shotgun in each doorway and they circled us at 50' looking like the Avenging Angel and his big brother. Then an Army spotter plane came up and circled at about 1,000'; then a VN gunboat got into the act and stood by us until repairs were effected. Then I gave the "Full Astern" and off the mud and to Hell out of it. The following day the US Marines landed in the area and cleaned it out within a week. The South Yarra boy beat them to it by 24 hours, but unwittingly and unwillingly.

Another time we got tangled up with the impending civil war in Da Nang. The town was under a 24 hour curfew and there were pro and anti government troops snarling across the barricades at one another, Buddhist demonstrations, the RCs parading with banners "We love Americans except Cabot Lodge", the moderate Buddhists' theme was "We hate the Government and the Americans.", while the extreme Buddhists under Thich Tri Quang said "We hate everybody." The favourite sport of the mob was burning American Geeps and killing policemen, this was in Saigon; and their best advertising medium was self-immolation. Buddhist nuns were setting fire to themselves all over the country, though there is no truth in the rumour that in the Cholon area there were roads signs "Detour. Nun Burning." Anyway the whole country was seething with unrest and civil war was pending. The trouble started in Da Nang and Hue with the relief of the Commander of the 1st Corps who was suspected of preparing a coup. He was relieved of his command, and then the Buddhist monks (Bonzes) took over the act.

We were caught in Da Nang when these frolics were in full swing, all Europeans were evacuated across the river into the care of the US Marines. We were anchored in the river—fortunately head downstream—and I had a 7 lb. hammer

Sailor Off Vung Tau (cont.)

forward, ready to slip the cable and a fire axe aft to cut the buoywire, floodlights rigged on the bridge for a night getaway and at the first burst of sustained gunfire I was going to beat it to Hell out of it with any evacuees who could scramble aboard and head for the protection of the 7th Fleet. If I had been intercepted by any sampans with suspicious intentions, such as lobbing grenades aboard, I had the Schermuly Rocket pistol to discourage them; not a very accurate weapon but making a big bang and very good for morale and discouraging to intruders.

However there came a lull and we got rid of our cargo and went down to Singapore for a cargo of building equipment for the American Army. On our return we spent 5 weeks in Nha Trang, the Riviera of the Orient, a beautiful place and quite safe because of the number of generals living there. We were anchored off a point where there was a cliff-top Chateau complete with private palm-fringed beach which used to be the playground of the rulers of Vietnam including Madame Nhu. Here they held a caper or two in which Bacchanalia, Saturnalia and general whacko were rife. We weathered the next crisis in comparative comfort there, then had a fortnight in Qui Nhon where the natives were very unfriendly and there was sporadic gunfire, shelling and mortar fire going on most of the time. During all this my Chief Engineer went berserk with a dagger. I went to his quarters to see what was the trouble and he was sitting hunched up in his chair. He answered me civilly enough but when I stood right in front of him he jumped up and grabbed this weapon off his desk. It was a brass tube 18" long with a triangular 7" blade sweated in each end and useful for stabbing or throwing. He menaced me with this and when I put out a hand to sooth him gave me a maniacal glare and I thought of a lot of places I would have liked to be in...e.g. the back bar at Young and Jacksons. I realised I had left my run too late and with all the dignity I could muster I turned around; he was shouting "I will kill you" so I took the five paces to his door with a very itchy feeling between the shoulder blades. I then sent for the police and we kicked his door down and found him unconscious. He was lifted into a sampan by crane, lashed up in a stretcher. Poor old cow, he had been a heavy opium smoker and had run out, and with the 24 hour curfews had not been able to get any stock. In the hospital he put on a few turns, alternately charging around in the nude and smashing windows.

A couple of days later whilst I was lying peacefully at anchor a German tanker ran into me doing a little damage but quite a bit to himself. He was loaded with 600 tons of gasoline so I was glad he hit me with his bridge and not amidships. Well, I hope these Vietnam vignettes haven't bored you.

In the meantime my ship has been bought by the Vietnamese though still operating under the British flag. They are keen to retain my services and as the financial inducement is more than satisfactory and I like operating here with a bit of action around the place, I will remain. I still have Malay officers and sailors, Indian sparks and Vietnamese engineers and catering staff. The odd trip to Singapore makes a change, I run into the occasional Aussie. There is an Aussie ship in Vung Tau now, the "Jeparit", in fact I had to get out to let her in. The A.I.F. Transport Officer who came aboard to ask me to shift ship was an old shipping associate from Melbourne.

I am still a teetotaler and the uncrowned Coca-Kola king of the China Sea but my wife is maintaining the family tradition and even refers to me as the "Wowser".

Good luck to all 458 boys. This is the life.  
Yours, Sailor Wheatley.

FORMER 458 C.O. COMMANDS R.A.A.F. IN VIETNAM.

Air Commodore Jack Dowling, who commanded 458 Squadron in North Africa, in succession to Bruce McKenzie, has been given the distinction of being given the command of the R.A.A.F. contingent serving in Vietnam, as well as being 2 I.C. of all Australian Servicemen there.

458ers wish him and his fellow servicemen in Vietnam the very best.

CORRESPONDENCE: Letters to the Editor.

From Ted Creighton, 33, Farr Terrace, East Glenelg, South Australia.

Dear Peter,

...May I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere appreciation of the tremendous job done over the years. When I think of the pleasure I

Correspondence (cont.)

have received with the regular arrival of the Squadron News and the gap there would have been in life without it I hang my head in shame at my general lack of support. I do hope your recovery from your recent illness has been complete.....

After all these years perhaps a little news from the home front may be of some interest. I have now logged over 31 years with the old firm of Specialty Printers, and still going strong. Skinny as ever although the old Squadron nickname of "Ghandi" has been superseded by that of "Soup Bones" or "That Grey-headed old B.....". In the matter of grey hair my wife Freda is keeping me company and we are both maturing gracefully--we hope! Our family finished with a pigeon pair--John, a pre-war model now 24 and roaming the countryside as a wool-classer, and Julia, who caused us a lot of anxiety in her early years is now a healthy 15, third year High School, and interested in competitive ballroom dancing--with a degree of success in the junior field.

Was in Sydney for a couple of days over the Christmas holiday period and took the opportunity to go "over the high road" and drop in on Junior Hawke at Orange. This is something I have promised myself for many a year. Hope to catch up with the rest of the crew one of these days!

Still fit enough to enjoy an occasional game of cricket when I lead the boys from work in an annual grudge match. This annual sojourn brings back vivid memories of many Squadron matches.

My best wishes to all, regards,

Ted Creighton.

(Ed. It is delightful to hear from Ted. We wish many other 458ers would let us know how they are doing.)

From Arthur Jollow, 40 Nicholson Street, Chatswood, N.S.W. to Cyril Irwin.

Dear Cy,

Have just returned from a visit to Perth and thought you might like some news.

Met Len (Binghi) Stewart who took my wife and me to lunch and drove us all around Perth and its lovely environs. Had a beautiful lunch at Cottesloe and ended up at the top of the new Government Building, commanding a view of all Perth, including Kings Park and right down to Fremantle.

Our opinion is Perth is a lovely city with wonderful people. Binghi was a grand host and the time we spent with him was a highlight of our visit. Many thanks, Binghi, for your kindness. We shall try to reciprocate.

Tried hard to see Butch Power but he was working day and night on a project at Royal Perth Hospital. However we had a long yarn on the telephone and he was able to give me the gen on all my old Sandgroper mates. Would like to have seen them all but time was too short and we had to spend time with a 96 year old uncle of my wife. He is a colossal old man and still plays a good game of chess.

This year I have seen three old 458 bods for the first time since 1944. First, Geoff Hyles, now a prosperous grazier at Bungendore near Canberra. Then, Charlie (Unc.) McCarthy travelling with his wife to Port Moresby where he is a Marine Officer with the Department of Civil Aviation. Then Lock Simpson, whom all old hands will remember as a pilot in North Africa. We had a good laugh about the beat up he and Bill Maxwell gave the drome at Bone, the day they left the Squadron. They almost collected the windsock. Lock is a very successful business man in Perth and looks very well.

Binghi sends all the best to everyone here as does Butch, and, of course, so do I.

yours sincerely, Arthur Jollow.

From Leonard Teale, c/o Crawped Productions, 475, Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic.

Dear Peter,

Would you please pass the enclosed cheque to the Treasurer.

As you may have gathered, I have been in Melbourne for a year or so now working on the TV series "Homicide". It's been fairly solid work but at least we've had the satisfaction of seeing it become the No. 1 show in Australia (according to the 'Ratings'); the first time a local drama series has achieved this. Kindest regards to everyone,

Best wishes,

Len.

Jack Riseley in Sydney.

Jack Riseley, who as 458 members know had a serious illness some time ago, recently passed through Sydney on his way to Mackay in Queensland on holiday. He rang the News while in Sydney to pass on his remembrances to all old friends. He hopes to see some of them on the return trip. He tells us his health is now very good. His wife, Verna, he also tells us, is as beautiful as ever.

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Curly in the North.

John (Curly) Hosking, President of N.S.W. Flight, tells us that, having visited Toukley recently on holiday he was returning via Tuggerah when he had a truck breakdown with major distributor trouble. He was towed to Wyong, feeling blue, and the vehicle was taken into Wyong Motors. Here he was amazed and delighted to encounter John (Snowy) Fennell, who, having disposed of his Garage is now Foreman in charge of the Repair Shop of Wyong Motors. He gave Curly splendid help.  
He asks to be remembered to 458ers all.

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No Reformation of 458 Squadron.

Following a rumour that 458 was to be the number given to a Maintenance Squadron being formed in the presentday R.A.A.F., the 458 Squadron Council asked Department of Air what the score was. Air have replied 'No unit has been formed or renumbered No.458 Squadron nor is there any proposal to do so at this time.'

So that, at this time, is that.

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