

JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL G P O Box 5289, SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA 2001

Year 50, No. 198

458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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EDITORIAL

As the Squadron News continues publication towards its completion of fifty years of continued, uninterrupted. quarterly publication (in November 1999), and we plan for a special issue then, the Squadron has continued its accustomed successful course around the world. Our correspondents are describing events in the various Flight reports. For our editorial self who marched in Sydney we noticed excellent attendances both of marchers and spectators. We were particularly pleased with the substantial number of uniformed, Air Force personnel who marched, many wearing parents' medals on the right side of their uniforms. Individually the Editor was very happy to be accompanied on the march by one of his grandsons (Lachlan). Pete Pettit marched with his son AND grandson. If, in future years, the march continues annually - and it is most important for Australia that it does - children and grandchildren, as well as serving personnel will be required to do it. They must be encouraged, not treated as second class marchers, and they can't be turned on suddenly five years hence.

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THE CORNSTALK COMMUNICATION from Jock McGowen

At the outset all of us must join together to give to Peter Alexander our hearty congratulations on a fantastic job of 50 years of the Squadron News, nobody but Peter could have had the drive to keep it going so long. I think it the longest continuous publication of any Australian wartime news; again Peter our thanks for keeping the gang together for so long.

I, along with other Flight correspondents, received a letter of thanks from our President in Western Australia, Jim Palmer, for the work we have done in the past and will continue to do in future while we hang on in there, thank you Jim it was nice to have the letter.

Our Anzac Day has passed once more; we had the usual number and we again were happy to have the venue at the Masonic Centre, thanks to Eric and Noel, those attending were Marshal Allan, Peter Alexander, David Baker, Jack Baker, Sam Barlow, Harry Baines, Don Bitmead, Bob Bruce, Keith Cousins, Laurie Crowley, Bill Clough (Joining Member)), Merv Hargreaves, Bob Low, Bob Lyndon, Jock McGowen, Bob Millar, Eric Munkman, Norm Peasley, Pete Pettit, Tom Ridgway, Bob Smith, Bill Turier, George Unitt, Noel Walter, Frank Ward, Jim Whittem with his Canadian Air Force Wife Dorothy. We were honoured this year to have our dear old Middle East Padre attending our re-union. We do not see a lot of Fred McKay these days, he like most of us is getting older, but he seemed to enjoy a drop or two of Red.

Fred is an Hon. Member of 458 and he is so welcome to join us whenever he can, he assures us that Meg is well and we give them both our best wishes and our love.

There will be a wreath laying at our Cenotaph on May 7, for Bomber Command Squadrons, with a lunch at Parliament to follow. 458 will be well represented.

The Air Force Association will be running another tour from the 20th to the 25th of September next. The tour takes in Eden and the surrounding districts, the cost is \$415 twin share including travel costs, accommodation, meals, etc. Good value, book through the Air Force Association.

We heard from Fred James after he read of the passing of Jack Aitken, he claims to be the oldest remaining 458er, at 87 years; do we hear any advance on 87? Let's hear from you.

Laurie Crowley was in Cairns recently and called on Earl Hetherington, who proudly showed Laurie his new Jaguar, what a pity Earl ever got rid of the Zindapp motor bike with Side Car, probably worth more than the Jaguar now.

Pete Pettit is battling on with the Anecdote Booklet and will need input from the Squadron members out there. I have read the draft of what has been done so far and Pete deserves a medal for his efforts. Come on you Guys, help is needed. There are only about 10 or 12 who have made contributions so far, and it is hard to believe that only 12 can offer help. **Come on now** – pen to paper, Peter will censor anything that may offend.

On April 16, there was another well attended TAFE Lunch at the Ryde College; always popular, the food is so good, no complaints and that is important.

It was good to see Jim Whittem at the Anzac Day meeting after his four way by-pass, he drove down from Port Macquarie and has gone on to Canberra, good going Jim.

There are three questions that could be answered by those out there:

- 1. Can somebody supply a list of the cars and motor bikes that made up 458's car park at Protville?
- 2. Can anyone supply a photo of the two Wimpys that landed in the water on the beach at Alghero so crews got out without wetting their feet, or nearly so?

We have received a donation to Squadron Funds from Elaine Irwin, Cy's widow, in his memory – most gratefully received Elaine, we all thank you so much.

We can all remember the day we first saw a Wimpy, we all said isn't it BIG, my first sight was at Binbrook. Yes, we all thought it was big; reading a magazine the other day I came across an aeroplane that is BIG, made by the Russian company that made the Antinov AN-124, many of us were lucky enough to see it when it visited us a year or so ago.

This one has 6 jet engines, 48 main landing wheels plus 4 nose wheels, and a wingspan of 290 feet (Wimpy 85 feet) load capacity Wimpy about 2 tons, the AN-225 "Cossak" load capacity 250 tons, take off weight about 600 tons. Only one has been built. They built 11000 odd Wimpys.

SANDGROPERS SAY from Ted Jewell

ANZAC DAY: There was only a small roll up for the March in Perth this year, but with extra Odds and Bods we were able to muster 12 marching behind the banner, led by our Flight President Bill Clues. Squadron members were Bill Clues, Ted Jewell, Henry Etherton, Gordon Jones, Jim Palmer and Jack Cobb. After the Service we had lunch at Miss Maud's Restaurant in Perth, where we were joined by Joan Clues, Vera Etherton, Margaret Gannaway, Lucy Palmer, Ethel Cobb and Poss Dale, plus friends who made up the number to twenty. Everyone had a very enjoyable afternoon. Our Squadron President, Jim Palmer, presented a Life Membership Badge and Certificate to Henry Etherton for his service to the Squadron; we also include his wife Vera, who makes the wreath every Anzac Day which our President places on the War Memorial in Kings Park at the Dawn Service.

Nobby Nobbs has been in Hollywood Hospital for a major operation, having a growth removed which he said was cancerous, but was totally removed, and he is now recuperating at home. I have been to see him and he looked pretty good, still the same Nobby.

Members came down to my home in Mandurah in March for a BBQ lunch and had a great day - as usual the weather was perfect, it is a long drive from Perth but we still had about 15 who turned up - members, wives and friends.

Jack Cobb has put his name down for an Air Force home in Mandurah, so if he comes here to live I should see more of him. Nobby Nobbs, Len Stewart, Ben Cormack are also living here. Although it is only a small town we don't see each other very often.

I had another call from the Hospital about Curly O'Connor, Veterans Affairs are trying to settle him down in a suitable Nursing Home. Peter McCarthy is in a Nursing Home. John Lilly is not in the best of health. Charlie McCarthy is now 86. I am told.

Charlie Davis is in a wheelchair with his bad leg.

Associate members Phyl and Shirley Hicks are having a casserole lunch at their home on Sunday 4th July, so we want members to come along and enjoy themselves. All the best,

Ted Jewell, Secretary.

VICTORIAN NEWS from Rupert Pearce

SOCIAL NOTES: BBQ at Harry and Neil Ashworth's.

Despite the inclement weather, 13 members and a friend braved the elements: Jack and Margaret Ellis and friend Charlie, Ken and Joanne Hinton, Roy and Barbara Pearce, Rupert Pearce, Norma Pollard, June Schoppe, Mick and Mavis Singe. Apologies were received from Neil and June Dean, Yank and Cath Martin, Beatrice Morkham and Christine Smith. We enjoyed each others company, Harry's tomatoes and Jack Ellis's pears.

ANZAC DAY: Anzac Day morning was cold but the day was lovely. Members and friends who assembled in Flinders Street were; Jim Anderson, John Bilney, Shorty Bradshaw, Stan Cartledge and granddaughter Sharon, Neil Dean, Ken Fleming, Peter, Sue and Michelle Jackson (relatives of our late member Gordon Nash), Roy Pearce, Murray Weaver and Mick Singe. Ian and Beryl Giles (Beryl had already marched with her Army Nurses) and Rupert Pearce were there to see their comrades set off. Tom Primrose (in the kilt) joined near the Shrine. Bill Fordyce had a vehicle from the RACV pick him up from his residence, take him to the Shrine and home again after the ceremony. He said they could not have treated him better. At the Melbourne Bowling Club, June Dean, Jack and Margaret Ellis and friend June McIntyre, Don and Shirley Granger, Ken and Joanne Hinton, Yank Martin, Barbara Pearce, Rupert Pearce, Tom Primrose's daughter, Eleanor and Mavis Singe were waiting. Thanks to our ladies for the cakes, altogether a pleasant day.

ALL STATES REUNION

As an alternative to the Reunion being based in Melbourne, consideration is being given to country towns and to holding it in the Autumn or Spring of year 2000.

PERSONAL

Rita Primrose had her 90th Birthday; Mick and Mavis Singe celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Mavis had her 80th Birthday.

Neil Dean had a hip replacement in February, and after some serious complications is now on the way to recovery.

Helen Laming is doing fine at Viewbank House.

John Bilney was again involved in the Ferny Creek Flower Show which received praise for its presentation from National Radio Station 3LO.

"Q" FLIGHT NEWS from Jack Lewis

<u>Anzac Day</u>. The March went off very well with a large crowd including lots of children cheering the parade with great enthusiasm. 'Q' Flight managed a contingent of about 18 making up this number a few odd bods who generally march with us. As usual we adjourned to the Irish Club after the March for refreshments. Outcome of the AGM – Eric Kelly was re-elected President, myself Secretary/Treasurer. All 'Q' Flight Members Committee. Eric was presented with a Certificate of Life Membership of 458 Squadron Association. Eric wishes to thank the Association and everyone for putting his name forward, as he considers Life Membership of 458 Squadron Association to be a great honour.

<u>'Q' Flight Luncheon</u> A luncheon was held on March 31 at the Sheraton Hotel and was attended by twentyone members and wives, some apologies received because of illness. Plans have been made to hold our Christmas get together at the same place.

<u>Personal Pars.</u> Jack and Sheila Hobbs are planning a New Zealand holiday during May. Fred O'Brien from Beaudesert has a great fondness for horse racing but has stopped riding them; he says "I got sick of trying to turn cow horses into winning gallopers". Don Brandon and Mary Wallace expect to leave for a trip to Alaska during June and then on to Vancouver and Alberta. Don hopes to contact Bryan Quinlan while in Vancouver. Fred Kleckham was down from Seaforth, near Mackay for Anzac Day, he is well and does not look his 80 odd years. Fred had his grandson along for the march, he is a Helicopter pilot and is interested in crop dusting, and hopes to qualify soon. Gordon Dalrymple has personal problems so is unable to attend street marches and functions, sends his best wishes; Eric Lloyd is progressing after prostate cancer and hopes to be allowed to play golf again very soon. Peter and Jean Bailie have both been in hospital, are now well and it was good to see them at the luncheon.

<u>Sick Parade</u>. Harry Dorge has been having a bad trot, was again in intensive care and allergic to all antibiotics. He is still very ill at home and confined to bed. Bob Coles also has been very sick, home from hospital and taking it easy. Bob Helyar is now confined to a nursing home. Bob's wife Jess takes him up the news and hopes he may register what she reads to him. Jack Baxter fell and broke his hip, whilst convalescing he had another fall and is back in hospital for further surgery as of this date. Kitty is ill with a virus and could not get to see him.

<u>Miniature Medals.</u> No response as yet for claiming these medals handed to me at the Caloundra Reunion. Someone must have mislaid them?

Regards to all, Jack Lewis

CROWEATERS CHIT CHAT from Ted Creighton

Vale 'SISTER HANNAH', On April 4, we lost our one time Secretary and long time Banner Bearer Geoff Esau. Funeral arrangements were private and few of the Flight aware of any details. When Geoff realised the enormity of his problem he cut himself off from contact with most of the Flight. He even refused the Newsletter. We will always remember him with affection. No roster needed for Geoff: usually in full uniform he was either striding along on fine, calm days or staggering and battling the elements in foul weather – but always in front of his beloved 458-ers. Geoff – we salute you.

ANZAC DAY Sunday April 25 saw Adelaide bathed in the serenity of an Indian Summer. The March was down the new route past the War Memorial. Having just seen the light of day after escaping from over a

fortnight's stay in the Repat. Hospital, I watched the TV and the coverage I saw came across as an unimpressive shambles. I understand there will be further changes to the format again next year. Thanks to the help of associates, relatives and young ones, 458 muster approached 20 behind Bert Ravenscroft. Rick Michell was in front in charge of the banner. One new face that I know of was Cheryl Buchan – Pat Cribb's daughter. Because of the alleged lack of time to reach the March start, there was no Service at the Airport. Some of the Flight attended the Memorial a week previously. This is unsatisfactory. The tree planting and memorial service was started by 458 to enable tribute to the Fallen and those gone before. That a Memorial should present a scene of complete desolation at a busy airport on April 25, is an insult to the efforts of blokes like Ron Badger and Bill Taylor. Fortunately there was a service at the Airport Memorial on APRIL 25. Freda and I, assisted by our daughter and son-in-law, Terry McEnter, drove across to the Airport and held our own little service in front of the 458 tree and also patrolled the general area. Freda laid a floral tribute. When we left, it did show that at least someone cared. Respecting everyone's right to March there has to be some answer to this problem. It may mean another roster, although further radical changes to the march format proposed for next year could bring a result.

<u>Reunion and Lunch</u>. After the gathering at the Talbot, 38 members and friends moved into the Gouger Café for lunch. Here, assisted by Ted Creighton, Bert Oliver on behalf of the Squadron Council presented Bert Ravenscroft with his Squadron Life Membership Certificate suitable framed and handed over his new Badge. Bert Ravenscroft made suitable acknowledgement and asked that his thanks be passed on to Council. On the day several old 458er's renewed their subscriptions after a long, long lapse. They will be recorded on the mailing list when the next opportunity arises. Generally it was a pretty good day.

Having been confined to hospital or home I have little other news to report. Peter Thom and Monica, Kevin Tait and Ivy Smart, in fact just about all the oldies have their health problems.

We express our thanks to the young brigade for their growing interest and support. Keep it up and the Flight too will continue to stay young.

KIWI CALL from Kevin George

The NZ Flight has suffered casualties. I was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of George Whatnall in mid-February. George wrote at Christmas time. He was then suffering from the side effects of the old Sulpha drugs, being administered to treat an infection, following a cataract operation in September, but there was no cause for alarm. It may be the treatment undermined his health as an unsuspected internal problem surfaced in January and he went rapidly downhill. A year ago when George marched with us in the Anzac Day Parade in Sydney he looked fit enough to live to a hundred.

Irene Green has made little progress in recovery from the stroke she suffered in 1997 and Ivan battles on alone. Mary Pryde was fit and well when with us at Caloundra but has since had two operations. However, she has recovered well and the progress is good.

Arch Fell and Ron Verity and their wives were well when last contacted in January. It was great to be with old Squadron friends in Sydney on Anzac Day, and I am now visiting some of my numerous cousins scattered around Southern New South Wales.

Yours, with Kind Regards

- Kevin George

FROM CANADA

Squadron Council has received from Bryan Quinlan (Canadian Squadron Vice-President) and Canadian 458ers, an excellent series of individual flying and social records for Squadron Archives and/or Peter Pettit's stories of social activities. These are extremely helpful. We would welcome many more from many others.

BELATED TRIBUTE

A number of 458ers, after a tour in UK with 458, served on other Air Force Units. One of these was a former 458 pilot - Bill McFadden. After his 458 tour Bill served with 69 Squadron RAF where he had an active and successful tour including a successful attack on a ship. Bill who ended the war with the rank of Wing Commander has our continuing congratulations.

AIR FORCE AND REPATRIATION HAPPENINGS

Some of the current happenings in the ex-service world (some very long drawn out!) are the following: <u>Bomber Command Memorial</u> As previously reported, for about four years now RAAFA has been striving, with keen support of relevant Squadron Associations, to obtain in Canberra an acceptable memorial to the achievements of the tens of thousands who served in Bomber Command, and particularly the 3,500 young Australians who died with Bomber Command. After two years arguing if and where, with the National Capital Authority, and another two years arguing the format of the Memorial with the Australian War Memorial, we are inching forward. The operative word is acceptable: the Bomber Command Squadrons want a Memorial that means something; the Australian War Memorial has wanted what it calls "good contemporary sculpture". This seems to have meant odd bits of metal floating in the air, allegedly representing bomb doors or ailerons. To this Bomber Command has said no. Now new designs are being called for, one or two of which might be acceptable. The struggle proceeds.

Bomber Command Squadrons have recently held an annual lunch at Parliament House in Sydney, after a wreath laying at the Cenotaph. It was well attended and was addressed by a serving Air Commodore.

<u>Repatriation Items</u> - <u>Radiation</u>: Many Australian and British ex-Servicemen were exposed, quite recklessly in our opinion, by Service Command at Woomera and/or Monte Bello to radiation from atomic/nuclear experiments. In our observation they have been suffering/dying in excessive numbers from various cancers, etc. The Australian Government, after a long resistance, has agreed to an epidemiological review. There have been long and ungenerous delays, obviously. <u>Korea and Vietnam</u> The Federal Government is at various stages of inquiries into the morbidity/mortality of Korean and Vietnam theatre veterans – and in some cases their children and grandchildren. Lasting have been the effects of chemical sprays/radiation and other things declared at the time to be harmless.

<u>Military Compensation</u> This means the equivalent of repatriation for peacetime servicemen. There has been (another) inquiry into what is certainly an unsatisfactory system. In ex-service association views this report is also unsatisfactory. We have recommended its rejection.

<u>Commemorations</u> A party of veterans, widows and others recently visited Sandarkan for the opening of a Museum. Sandarkan was the scene of Japanese brutality of a kind and degree that even the Japanese Army exceeded nowhere in World War II. The commemorations there were very moving. A commemoration pending in October 1999 will mark the 100th Anniversary of Australian participation in the Boer War. This will include a ride by 100 riders in Light Horse uniforms in Canberra, with ceremonies at Parliament House and the War Memorial. AVADSC is sponsoring this event.

Your Editor is maintaining activity in the ex-service world as National Secretary of RAAFA and AVADSC, but has retired after 20 years as Convener of the Celtic Council of Australia – as well as the Chair of sundry Scottish Organisations.

AT SHALLUFA - Christmas 1943



L to R Quinlan, Unitt. MacGibbon, Tomlinson Thompson, Tracey. + +

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