SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

RAAF Medical Evacuation Airlifts: A WWII Nurse's Memoir

from Jennifer Ballard, Patron of the Boy Soldiers (the WWII Sixteens)
Edited from a speech given by her mother, Mrs Joan Patterson, formerly Sister Joan Loutit, 2nd Medical Air Evacuation Unit (MAETU) RAAF, to a gathering of nurses in the late 1990s.

Joan wrote: This talk came about originally one August the 15th. Friends were talking about VJ Day and what we were doing when the Japanese surrendered in World War II. Some were at school, some went to a ball - I said I was in the Pacific Islands, nursing and flying battle casualties back to Australia! Someone said that would make an interesting talk...

Sister Joan Loutit with some of her charges on board an evacuation aircraft

I did my nursing training at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne from early 1940 to 1943. I can remember saying to my mother in 1942, half way through my training, *"I hope the war lasts long enough for me to join the RAAF Nursing Service"*. It was at that time that the Japanese bombed Darwin. This was the first of 64 raids over Darwin and district over the next two years. My father was in Darwin all that time. He was an engineer, the CO of the Darwin Overland Maintenance (DOM) Force, with 10,000 troops who built the road from Alice Springs to Darwin at the rate of three miles per day.

I well remember the day in early 1943 when my friend and I went for an interview with Miss Lang, *Matron in Chief* of RAAFNS. We had just finished our training and were very keen to join up. (After graduating in Australia you had two weeks to find a job, or *"The Manpower"* [Directorate] would find one for you. It probably would have been in a country hospital which would be under-staffed and under-equipped). So, after looking at our references and letters of introduction, Miss Lang asked how

old we were and what experience we had had. We replied that we were 21 years old and had graduated the day before. *"Oh!"* she said, *"with such a great age and vast experience I will need you straight away - BUT do some useful work while you are waiting."*

I went to the Freemasons' Private Hospital, my friend went to an Anglican one. I had nine months at the Freemasons' Hospital. When I was eventually called up we had a medical examination and typhoid, tetanus, TB and smallpox injections, and did a two week course with 14 sisters and 14 doctors at Ascot Vale in Melbourne. Lectures were given by Senior Medical Officers on RAAF administration and tropical medicine. We were issued uniforms and we visited rehabilitation centres and an artificial limbs factory.

Arundel, Vic, 1944-05: Women members of RAAF No. 1 Medical Air Evacuation Unit lined up in uniform

It was most interesting meeting Sisters from all the other Australian states and discuss different methods, broadening our horizons and realising that the actual procedures we were taught at the Alfred Hospital were not necessarily the only way to do things. We also had drill from a very strict, retired Welsh Guards Sergeant. Most of us grasped the art of marching, but one sister was hopeless the drill sergeant would shout at her. Eventually, in full uniform, we were having a practice for the pass-out parade when one girls hat blew off and she broke ranks and chased it. The sergeant was screaming at her and she was crying out; *"But it's new, it's new,"* and we were all laughing. We didn't have the pass-out parade after that. Instead we sat in a hall while the Director of Medical Services spoke to us on Air Force etiquette etc, which appealed much more. I don't think nurses make very good marching teams. Miss Lang (Matron in Chief) also gave us a pep talk. She was a great one for discipline, high standards and strict rules. For example, the RAAFNS were allowed *one* sherry at a party (two if pressed)! We commented on the narrow uniform skirt; Miss Lang said she would *make ladies out of us, even if she had to hobble us*. So we could never run for a tram or train - you had to walk - and get there on time!

When we finished our course we were posted to different stations and hospitals all over Australia. I was posted to Sydney, to a large military hospital with 1,000 beds (500 Army, 300 Air Force and 200 Navy). I was in three wards: a *Skin Ward*, full of patients with tropical ulcers, malaria, scrub typhus and other tropical diseases; a *Psychiatric Ward*, which was called 'Battle Fatigue' - very sad, all young lads who couldn't cope with service life; and an *Officers' Ward*, with several aircraft accident cases, badly burned and crippled. In the operating theatre we had a medical orderly who in civilian life had worked as a Theatrical Scout. He said one of the first things he noticed was how important the Theatre Sister was, because it seemed to him that every now and then the surgeon would stop what he was doing, turn to the Sister and say *"Suit you?"* For some time he thought she was being asked to give her blessing on the standard of the surgeon's work. It took him a while to realise that what he was really saying was *'suture'*.

I had several months in Sydney. Then the RAAFNS called for volunteers to form an Air Evacuation Unit after the Japanese had sunk two hospital ships. One hundred Sisters volunteered and 25 were accepted. The RAAF Board then formed MAETU (Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit). In the Pacific the fighting in the islands and New Guinea was very heavy, with casualties going to Port Moresby every day. So 25 Sisters and 25 medical orderlies were posted to a Medical Training Centre in Melbourne. There we had three weeks intensive training, including physical training, lectures on

jungle and ocean survival, aviation and tropical medicine. There were pressure chamber tests too, to check the ability to maintain stable when required to fly at high altitudes during evacuation of patients. Then there was an examination at the end of the course.
One question: **What do you do if your plane ditches in the sea?**
The answer: **The dingy is lowered and Sister steps out to organise where the patients are to sit.**
One of the Orderlies wrote: *The dingy is thrown out, closely followed by the Sister.*

A variety of aircraft were used for evacuations - Liberators and Catalinas, but the most reliable were the wonderful C-47s. The aircraft were fitted with metal brackets, holding 12 stretchers on each side in stacks, plus one or two walking wounded, one Sister, one Orderly and three aircrew. Sisters were responsible for the loading the aircraft from the ambulances, organizing each patient according to his condition. Serious cases on the lower levels; fractures on the second layer (to tie limbs up to upper bunks); those not-so-serious were on the upper bunks. Battle fatigue boys on the lower stretchers as well - they were all fairly heavily sedated.

A typical working day for an Air Evacuation Sister began at 3am, breakfast at 3:00am, as flights over New Guinea had to be before the heat of the day. Conditions over New Guinea were quite difficult because of the terrain and the quick build-up of clouds, so we flew over the sea whenever possible. It was four or five hours to Biak, on the north coast of New Guinea or to Merauke on south coast of New Guinea. Overnight in Biak if the clouds came down early, or on to Merauke. Then on to Townsville, Australia where *No.3 Air Evac*. continued on to other capital cities.
We had a medical box with drugs and dressings and an oxygen cylinder; a 2 gallon thermos of tea. The first aid box doubled as a table for sandwich-making. Some of the girls of *No.1 Air Evac* were based in New Guinea; all of us bringing out battle casualties. The boys were all tired, ill and weary and most of the trips were uneventful. On one trip that I did from Morotai to Ambon and on to Darwin, I had a very ill lad on board. I asked another Sister on Ambon if she had any spare oxygen; Yes, she only had walking wounded and was not using her oxygen so we swapped cylinders. I had little left in mine.

A nursing Sister administering oxygen to a casualty in flight. [AWM OG3344]

Air Evacuation continued on to Borneo as the Japanese were pushed back. On August 15th 'The Bomb' was dropped and there was a sudden end to the war. For the Flying Sisters the priorities suddenly changed; the evacuation of POWs. Fourteen thousand, three hundred Australians were taken prisoner; half were already dead. For the others, every aircraft that was capable of carrying passengers was made available for evacuation. Liberators, Catalinas, Dakotas and even the Duke of Gloucester's (he was the Governor General) own Avro York was offered and accepted for POW evacuation.

Several Flying Sisters were based in Singapore and flew POWs to Borneo and then on to Morotai to the Army Base Hospital, and later to Darwin (8 hours and 40 minutes). We flew non-stop for 28 days. 250,000 POWs, servicemen and civilians were evacuated. The Flying Sisters in Borneo flew 1,000 stretcher cases from west coast Borneo, Kuching, two hours to Labuan. Several short trips included one when they evacuated 20 English and Dutch nuns who were in a bad way. On my first trip I had 48 patients. I said we usually only carried 27. Some POWs were only four stone (approx 25kg). They

were walking skeletons. It was also a great thrill when they found 27 Army Nurses who had been POWs for three and a half years.

Singapore, 1945-09-25: Former POW Australian 'leggies' (amputated legs) arrive at Kalang civil airport from Bangkok, Thailand. In the doorway of the aircraft can be seen the RAAF Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit (MAETU) sister who accompanied the men on the flight

Another trip was with 40 West Australian POWs. I flew them to Perth on my 23rd birthday. Darwin to Perth was 10 hours. I was making sandwiches with some asparagus, which the Red Cross used to give us. I opened the tin and poured the asparagus water down a small hole near the door. Somebody landed on my back and I thought he was going to push me out. He said, *"Don't waste that!"* I don't know which was worse, the embarrassment or the fright. Even now when I open a tin of asparagus I can't tip it out - I drink it. It was wonderful seeing all the friends and relations of the 40 Western Australian POWs and the welcome they received. It was a great birthday.

We were still flying six months after the war was over. I remember after returning to Morotai, it was Christmas Eve 1945 and the war was well and truly over. Three or four RAAF Sisters had been invited to a party at a nearby naval station. On arrival we discovered there were several officers whom we knew. They told us their ship carried POWs but they were unfortunately delayed and would not make it home for Christmas. The Captain said,*"I am sailing a very sad ship."* I was sad too and looked out into the bay. The ship was in darkness. My friend Audrey Gilbert and I asked permission from the CO to go with a Scotch Lieutenant out in the crash boat to the ship. As we approached, the Lieutenant hailed the ship, *"I have a couple of Flying Sisters here to wish you a Happy Christmas."* Gradually a few lights came on and a few people appeared on the deck. We began to sing Christmas carols and hymns. The Scot had a beautiful voice. It was a clear, moonlit tropical night and the sound carried easily over the calm water. Gradually lights came on all over the ship and the decks were full of people. Soon, hesitantly, they started to join in, and after a short time we were all singing beautiful carols. It was a Christmas I shall never forget.

The only casualties that MAETU Sisters suffered happened after the war, in 1946. Two Sisters crashed between Morotai and New Guinea; Chick Sheah and Marie Craig. Marie had a premonition that we were not all going to get home. *"Of course we will,"* I said. Three weeks later she was gone, and she and the plane were found 23 years later by two American missionaries on a mountain in New Guinea. The Army Sisters had a much harder time than us. They lost 56 nurses; they died in POW camps; they were shot at on boats; drowned; and 22 were massacred on a beach. Eleven died on a hospital ship off the coast of Australia. When we were brought back to the mainland, Miss Lang said our career had been one of *adventure, daring, endeavour and hard work, but no glamour*. We were all proud to be members of the RAAF Nursing Service, Flying Sisters Unit.

Nurse's white cotton veil embroidered with many coloured signatures of Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit (MAETU) nurses, pilots and AIF personnel

Sydney NSW 1946: Four RAAFNS Sisters L-R: Alex Taylor; Colleen Ryan; Molly Gobbard; Joan Loutit

I have two nice souvenirs. One is a watch; our leather bands knotted, so the pilots made us stainless steel ones (from crashed planes). I did have a Sister's Veil; I got the pilots and doctors to sign the veil and then I embroidered the signatures in colours: all the RAAF squadrons in different colours (34, 35, 36 and 38); AIF in brown and Sisters in blue. (Joan donated her veil to the *National Memorial for Nurses* in 1999 when it was dedicated in Canberra).

Then, when we were demobilized, after years of having all accommodation, meals and clothes provided and *do-as-you-are-told*, it was quite a shock to be told, *"You can go now!"*. I think it was harder on the men than the women. I was lucky, for the Government of the day formed TAA [Trans Australia Airlines], a new civilian airline and they wanted air crew and hostesses. So some of us just changed uniforms! What a lovely job. Newly-painted planes, a seat for everyone, safety belts, only 10 passengers on any flight. Three hours between states, overnight [rest] and back next day. We gave out tea, biscuits, barley sugar and magazines and chatted. There was also the private company ANA. (TAA and would give out sandwiches, tea and biscuits and ANA would put on *cakes*, sandwiches tea and biscuits; everything they did, we did one better!) I was 10 months as an air hostess.

I went to New Zealand for a holiday and met Kelvin Patterson, who was a carpenter in his father's commercial building business. We married and had four children, three of whom now live in Australia. He had already bought a block of land and started immediately to build a house for his new Aussie bride, acid-etching a gumtree into the glass in their front door, and planting a large gum tree in the centre of the back yard. I have had 51 happy years in Wanganui, with lots of friends.

Joan died, aged 97 years, on 11 September 2018.

Warbirds Downunder Airshow

from Richard (Dick) Elliott, HARS Branch

Attached photos of HARS Caribou A4-234 performing a routine at the "Warbirds Downunder" airshow on the 13th Oct 18.

A (short) take-off

Climbing turn, a 5 minute hold overhead, followed by a low pass and reversal

"Bad vis" config orbit

Landing and back-up

A Monday Giddy-up

BREAKING NEWS CANBERRA: An RAAF pilot narrowly escaped serious injury recently when he attempted horseback riding with no prior experience. After mounting his horse unassisted, the horse immediately began moving. As it galloped along at a steady and rhythmic pace, the pilot, who has not been named, began to slip sideways from the saddle.

Although attempting to grab for the horse's mane the pilot could not get a firm grip. He then threw his arms around the horse's neck but continued to slide down the side of the horse. The horse galloped along, seemingly oblivious to its slipping rider.

Finally, losing his grip, the rider attempted to leap away from the horse and throw himself to safety...however, his foot became entangled in the stirrup, leaving him at the mercy of the horse's pounding hooves as his head and upper body repeatedly struck the ground.

Moments away from unconsciousness and possible death, to his great fortune a Royal Australian Navy Chief Petty Officer, shopping at K-Mart, saw him and quickly unplugged the horse!

They Also Served

from George Mansford

I clearly recall a time in 1956 when on an operation at the Thai-Malay border, I waved to a mate as we left by separate helicopters heading for different locations and were soon deep in the green clad mountainous jungle. Two days later our patrol radio crackled with the news of a contact with the enemy and there had been casualties; my mate had been one of those killed. A young bloke once full of life and the father of a recently born son.

Twenty odd years later when joining some young soldiers who were celebrating completion of their infantry training, one approached me and asked if I had known his father who had been killed in Malaya. I recognized the name immediately and how the time machine whirred. His mother was also

there and we exchanged much news. It was a story I was so familiar with in regards military families; how war had impacted on her and changed her life forever. She had been widowed at a very young age, never remarried and had raised her son alone. Now this brave widow was back in the waiting game and would be living by herself.

I knew many like her, who in happier days had been the wives of close comrades, and I had often shared the hospitality of their homes. I attended some of their weddings, and on two occasions had been the best man. They were the women who during war became both mother and father; waited and waited, then had lost. Their loved ones were not coming home. In the main, their profiles were similar; early twenties with one or two infants. Many never married again. All of them had become and remain hidden casualties of war. Sadly, there's seems to be on this troubled planet no end to greed, lust for power, megalomania, questionable borders and much more. No matter the war, always with the same consequences including yet another generation of war widows with the same courage, loyalty, determination, challenges, and with similar profiles as those before them.

For all women who waited for loved ones absent on service, (and certainly not forgetting today's generation of wives and partners who wear this mantle), our nation owes all of you more respect and gratitude than is demonstrated. Despite your stoicism, I am well aware of the despair, the grief and cruel loneliness you have endured. All I can say is that you will forever have my total respect and admiration.

Forgotten Casualties of War

For the unsung heroes; the Next of Kin of our Fallen

Were you there to watch as the wreaths were laid?
Listen to the oration for our glorious dead and the sacrifice made?
Did you read the names of the fallen etched on sacred stone?
Reflect as bugle calls reached up to the sky with such emotive tone?

Did you watch the young woman and child, hand in hand?
Did you see her fighting back tears at the sad sounds of the band?
Such a brave grieving widow with a confused but proud son
As both laid floral tributes for their dearest loved one

Always will be her sweet memories of laughter and love
Pretending that soon would be seen the welcome white dove
Dreams of running to greet a beloved smiling face
Reliving that final farewell with its loving and strong embrace

The parade had ended, and the people went home
No secret police and so free to choose wherever they roam
To enjoy a way of life that is taken as the norm
A freedom protected with blood and tears since our nation's morn

Often a still and silent house with that special vacant chair
Gone the bathroom singing, mid scattered wet towels here and there
A cold, lonely, half empty bed where restless sleep will always be
Such a hidden and terrible price they pay for you and me

Always will be her sweet memories of laughter and love
Pretending that soon would be seen the welcome white dove
Dreams of running to the front gate to greet a beloved smiling face
Reliving that final farewell with its loving and strong embrace

George Mansford ©November 2018

Mateship Across the Tasman

from Jack Lynch MBE, WGCDR (Ret'd)


In May 2015 the No 9 Squadron RAAF Association held a reunion in Auckland, New Zealand. The three-day gathering comprised primarily former RAAF and RNZAF pilots, technical and other support personnel, who served with No 9 Squadron during the Vietnam War. Because of the close working relationships with No 9 Squadron there were also former Australian and New Zealand Army Special Air Service soldiers and officers. Many attendees were also accompanied by wives, girlfriends and other family members. A total of over 150 people attended. The main function was a dinner held at the Auckland War Museum Memorial, with the keynote address given by Sir Angus Houston.

Despite the passing of 42 years since the end of No 9 Squadron's presence in Vietnam, the enduring aspect of the entire period of the reunion was the trust, respect, admiration, camaraderie, and sheer love shared by the former comrades in arms. Some way of capturing the experience of attending this wonderful reunion was essential. The overall atmosphere inspired the following poem:

Mateship Across the Tasman
The Vietnam War was a microcosm
Of the ANZAC missions of yore
You all answered your nations' call
As so many did before

Regardless of the politics
There were dangerous jobs to be done
Regardless of which uniform
You did them, every one

Whether shoulder to shoulder in jungle
Or above in gunships or slicks
On an SAS hot extraction
With a Kiwi patrol in a fix

During SAS insertions
Of those fearsome painted men
Their presence awe inspiring
Beyond the aircrews' ken

Between patrols those awesome souls
Joined us for a bunker party
Trans-Tasman cheer, perhaps a beer!
And singing loud and hearty

While we are here and sharing
And jointly reminiscing
We remember with great caring
Our Comrades who are missing

Even now our forces
Are overseas once more
In Middle Eastern theatres
In a world-significant war

Godspeed their contributions
So we get them safely back
We know that they will do their jobs
In the spirit we know - ANZAC!

Meanwhile, love this great reunion
And friendships in renewal
'MATESHIP ACROSS THE TASMAN'
Our eternal ANZAC jewel

© Jack Lynch MBE, WGCDR (Ret'd) 16 May 2015 Auckland NZ

Preso's Prattle December 2018

from Ron Glew

With a nod to our Herc squadrons who have achieved 60 years of Hercules operations with the RAAF.

Congratulations 36 and 37 Squadrons!

On behalf of your State Council members and myself, may I extend to all our members and their families, all the very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year!

One of the highlights of this year, on the 15th November, was the presentation of the Legion d'Honneur to Life Member, Ron Rhode at the ANZAC MEMORIAL Hyde Park on the occasion of the visit to Sydney of French Army General Benoit Puga, Grand Chancellor of the Legion d'Honneur and the National Order of Merit. By way of history, Ron joined the Army Cadets whilst still at school but didn't like crawling around on the ground with the spiders and snakes and changed to the initial ATC uptake upon its formation, along with other notaries including retired Prime Minister John Howard. As part of his duties as an ATC Cadet, he was on duty in Sydney Harbour the night the Japanese midget submarines attacked shipping in the Harbour, and was somewhat surprised to say the least, with his first brush with war and history on that night.

Nine days after he turned 18 eighteen, he took the Air Training Corps flash off the side of his cap and put the RAAF badge on and he was, in his own words, fully booted and spurred, and off he went to England and to war. He served as a Wireless Operator/Gunner with No 158 Squadron in Bomber Command, Royal Air Force flying in Wellington and Halifax bombers but didn't get to achieve his childhood dream of flying a Spitfire for, as Ron tells it, **"all the smart and clever aircrew were made wireless operators or gunners and the not so smart ones became pilots."**

After the war he returned to Sydney and continued to serve in the ATC until he retired from the Corp around 1980 - 81. The Air Training Corp was renamed the Australian Air Cadets in 2001 so all his service was with the ATC. He then joined the ATC/AAFC Branch of the NSW Air Force Association and gave many years of service, and is now in an aged care facility at Huntley Park. WELL DONE SIR, and rightly deserved.

Well, what a year this year has been with much progress at both State and National levels of your organisations. Progress in making our association more relevant and supporting of our retired and serving members has taken giant steps this year and I look forward to further major decisions and rapid progression in the coming year. National Council has accepted RAAFA NSW Publications for the production of WINGS with the Flight Publishing agreement ending in March and the first copy of WINGS under their stewardship will be issued in June 2019. If you can contribute time or submit memoirs or literary contributions or even suggestions for additions or changes, Neil Smith will be very, very pleased to hear from you.

As I've previously intimated, changes are coming into our Association and the way forward into the future is being progressed at a rate that has surprised even me and I welcome the support of the National President and the manner in which he is keeping the issues up front and actioned. My sincere thanks to our State councillors, particularly Peter Ring and Philip Speet, Admin Asst. Carol Moreau and our great Events and Commemorations Organiser, Geoff Usher. My job is so much easier thanks to you and your dedication.

RAAF 461 Squadron, Pembroke Dock

from Anne Pike-Flaherty

There is something incredibly special about walking in one's parents' footsteps – especially when those footsteps take you back to Pembroke Dock, West Wales, where my father was stationed during World War II with RAAF 461 Squadron – and which was also their first marital home.

My father was 21 when World War II broke out and like all other 21 year olds, he was immediately conscripted into the Army. There he met his lifelong pal as they were assigned to Nissen huts alphabetically – Dad, P for Pike and Uncle Bill, P for Perkins. However, their dream was to join the Airforce and their dreams were realised 18 months later. Dad's first flight was in a Tiger Moth at Mascot, after completing four months ground training at Somers in Victoria. He was then posted to Benalla to learn to fly single engine aircraft and on to Mallala in South Australia, where he learned to fly twin engine aircraft and then proudly received his Wings and was made an officer off-course. When asked where he would prefer to be sent, Dad nominated the areas of conflict north of Australia, closer to home. And so it was that he set sail with a large contingent of other young men on the '*Miss America*', bound for the United Kingdom!

Sunderland Flying Boat of Pembroke Dock

As Dad put it, 'the powers that be' then also decided that he would be flying a four engine aircraft and he was sent to Alness in Scotland to learn to fly in his words "the wonderful Sunderland" Flying Boat. However, while waiting for his posting to Alness, Dad decided to do a General Reconnaisance Course at RAF Bridgnorth in the Midlands.
On their first weekend leave, Dad and a fellow Australian pilot decided to go into the nearest town for R&R. This was Wolverhampton – strangely, my mother came from Wolverhampton! Yes, they met that weekend and it was obviously love at first sight!

It wasn't long after meeting my mother that Dad was sent to Alness where he joined Derry Syme's crew as First Pilot and they were posted to Pembroke Dock. Milford Haven was the biggest Flying Boat station in operation during the war. At one time there were more than 22 Flying Boats moored on the Haven. Their operational duties took them far out into the Atlantic searching for U-boats, and down the coast of France to the Bay of Biscay. Sir Winston Churchill famously said, "The only thing that really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril", and so crews took off daily from Pembroke Dock in the Battle of the Atlantic to thwart Hitler's plan to cut off Britain's food supply.

Flight Lieutenant Merv Pike and his wife Barbara in Wellington St, Pembroke Dock

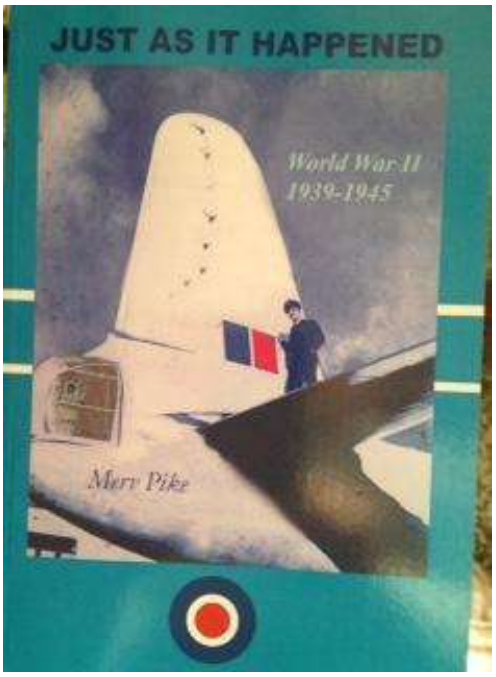
After my parents married in July 1944, Pembroke Dock became my mother's home too. Dad had to find a home for his new wife – they couldn't stay together in the Officers' Mess! They were able to find lodgings in a Victorian terrace in Wellington Street, a short walk from the Flying Boat Base. On a recent trip overseas, I felt so privileged to spend a week in Pembroke Dock. I had visited P.D. twice before, but this time I stayed right on Milford Haven in The Ship Inn, the oldest pub in town. I walked every day to the Sunderland Trust Heritage Centre now situated in the Garrison Church, housing a brilliant must-see display of the Flying Boat history of Pembroke Dock as well as its Naval and Military history. During the War, ANZAC Day services were held in this Dockyard Chapel and it was also the venue for wartime revues. Many buildings which were used during the war are still there – sadly not the Officers' Mess – but the gates through which the servicemen had to pass to come and go from the base are there, as is Sunderland House which was the hub of operational duties in wartime.

Entrance Gates Pembroke Dock

I also walked into town along Dimond Street and stood outside 'their terrace' in Wellington Street. It was empty at the time. I stood on the front step and imagined my mother running down the stairs when she heard Dad coming in from a night flight. I imagined her leaving home and running down to Milford Haven when my father, who now had his own crew after a second trip to Alness, (this time with my mother), was coming back from an operational flight during daylight hours – apparently she rock-hopped out as far as she could to watch Dad land! I was very fortunate to be taken onto Milford Haven by one of the volunteers at the Heritage Centre. To have the experience of being on the water and going up the Haven as Dad would have done on so many occasions to take-

off was an incredibly moving experience. There is still a wartime buoy used by the Sunderland crews on the waters there.

My parents were married more than 60 years. They provided my sister and me with the most secure of upbringings and will always continue to be loved and remembered proudly by their children and grandchildren. Before he passed away on D Day 2006, my father wrote a book about his war service. He called it '*Just As It Happened*' because as he said, it was just as it had happened to him, a 21 year old when war was declared. Because of his book and publicity in the media, I have been privileged to meet other RAAF 461 Squadron members and the wife and sister of two other servicemen – such incredibly special friendships. As for 'second generation' Sunderlanders, we see each other on ANZAC Day and hold the torch – or the flag – high for 'our men'. In fact every ANZAC Day, my son walks proudly for his grandfather, no matter where he is at the time.



Should you wish to buy a copy of '*Just As It Happened*' please email me at flahertys51@bigpond.com. The cost is $20 and all proceeds go to the Sunderland Trust Heritage Centre in Pembroke Dock – where it all began.

From the National President's Desk

from Carl Schiller, OAM CSM

Thank God for Christmas! It causes us to take a break and enjoy time with our family and friends, not forgetting to mention to give the body and mind a rest. I'd like to take the opportunity to wish all our members and their family and friends a safe and happy Christmas. I very much am looking forward to 2019 working with the National Board on progressing the Association.

The Centenary of Armistice has dominated commemorations during November.

I helped organise a twilight service at the Australian Flying Corps Memorial at Point Cook on Sunday November 4th. This is also an important commemorative date leading up to the Armistice when the last Australian battlefield deaths occurred on the Western Front; three sappers from the 1st Australian Tunnelling Division, and three pilots from No 4 Squadron, AFC.

I also had the privilege of representing the Association by laying a wreath at the Australian War Memorial on Armistice Day.

The 75th anniversary of the completion of the Thai/Burma Railway was remembered in October at the Ex-POW Memorial, Ballarat. I laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. Several veterans of the Thai/Burma Railway were present and spoke about their experiences. It was a very emotional service.

I attended a presentation in November on the redevelopment of the Australian War Memorial by Dr Brendan Nelson, AO. There was much emphasis on the need to provide space to display exhibits on the ADF's operations post Timor Crisis. The presentation focused on peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, and our involvement in recent conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The $498M budget over nine years will not be at the expense of any veteran support budget. The project is supported by Government and the Opposition.

I attended WA Division's AGM early in November and presented the Geoff Michael and O'Connor Awards to the Division and Ms Judy Bland for their commitment and achievements. It was also a great opportunity to discuss the Division's offer to provide infrastructure support to the Association's National Advocacy Service that we will work to get underway in 2019.

November also contained a scheduled Ex-Service Organisation Roundtable (ESORT) Meeting in Canberra. Secretary Department of Veterans' Affairs provided drafts of the Veterans' Military Covenant, the Veterans' Pin, and the Veterans' Identify Card. ESORT members sought to have the title of the Covenant amended to 'Veterans' Covenant' and the text to include 'families'. Preferences for the Veterans' Pin and Identify Card were also discussed. Copies of the draft Covenant, Veterans' Pin, and Veterans' Identity Card were provided to State/Territory Division Presidents at the November Air Force Association National Board Meeting.

ACT Division had a record turnout for its Christmas luncheon and Long Membership Certificate presentations. It was a great opportunity for me to meet up with several former colleagues who I had not seen for almost 40 years. I also took the opportunity to spend about 90 minutes with Group Captain Lara Gunn, our conduit to Air Force Headquarters, to brief her on Association activities. She is very supportive of the Association.

The engineers amongst us would no doubt remember Air Commodore Edward 'Ted' Bushell, AM (Retd). Ted donated to the Victoria Division an original oil painting by famous aviation artist Norman Clifford of an AFC Bristol Boxkite at Point Cook. It is a beautiful piece of artistry. I was pleased to witness the presentation at the Division's recent Christmas Party that also featured the Division's centenarian Jack Bell as its Guest Speaker. Jack spoke of his WW2 experience as a POW following being shot down by German panzers in Libya in January 1942. Jack is one of less than two dozen surviving Victorian WW2 ex-POWs.

The Air Force Association Board had its end-of-year face-to-face meeting in Melbourne following the Point Cook Armistice Commemoration. Among several strategic issues discussed, the Board unanimously agreed to seek professional assistance with the development of the policy and processes needed to manage the Association's National Advocacy Service. I am very pleased to see the Board members united in the need to identify better ways to progress the Association to ensure its longevity and deliver veteran and family support programs. I am in the process of identifying professional organisations interested in providing guidance to the Board on this issue.

It's a personal pleasure for me to be in the Association with the opportunity to enjoy friendship with many of my former Air Force colleagues.

Know Your Ockerisms

Anon

You know you are Australian when:

- You believe stubbies can be either worn or drunk
- You pronounce Melbourne as 'Melbin'
- You think Woolloomooloo is a perfectly reasonable name for a place
- You're secretly proud of our killer wildlife
- You reckon the letter 'l' in Australia is optional and it's perfectly OK to call it 'Straya'
- You believe it makes sense to have a $1 coin that is twice as big as a $2 coin
- You understand that 'Wagga Wagga' can be abbreviated to 'Wagga' but 'Woy Woy' cannot be shortened to 'Woy'
- You enjoy going to Bunnings for the sausage sizzle
- Having beetroot on your hamburger is normal
- You understand that 'chuck a u-ey' is actually a carefully executed driving manoeuvre
- You're relieved to see that the daily fire danger warning is 'only' high
- You think that the more you shorten someone's name the more you like them
- You understand that 'Excuse me' can sound rude but 's'cuse me' is always polite
- You know what it's like to swallow a fly, sometimes via your nose
- You can go on holidays to another country in less time than it takes to fly to the other side of your own
- You understand 'having a barbie' involves catching up with mates and not playing with a doll
- You know it's not summer until the steering wheel gets too hot to hold and the seat belt buckle becomes a pretty good branding iron
- In summer, hot water comes out of both taps.
- You know how to abbreviate every word, all of which usually end in 'o': ambo, arvo, garbo, metho, milko, muso, speedo, righto (from the editor: Gibbo, Ringo)
- You know that there is a universal place called 'Woop Woop' located in the middle of nowhere, no matter where you currently are
- You can understand all the above.

Commemoration Sunday at Ballina: 9th September 2018

from Ballina Branch

On the 9th September 2018, the Ballina Branch organised Commemoration Sunday at the RSL Memorial Park in Ballina, Far North Coast of New South Wales.

The service commemorates the anniversary of the Battle for Australia and the Battle of Britain; this particular service is traditionally held on the Sunday between the two proclaimed days. This was the eleventh combined commemoration service organised by the branch since the Battle for Australia Day was proclaimed by the Governor General in 2008. Cadets from 326 (City of Lismore) Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets, and Training Ship Lismore, Australian Navy Cadets formed the Catafalque Party, flag bearers and guard.

Ballina Branch Patron, Associate Professor Group Captain David Scott, delivered the service prologue and Wing Commander Stephen Mallett CSM, from Headquarters Combat Support Group, gave the commemoration address. In his address, particular mention was made of 75 Squadron and the Battle for Port Moresby in 1942.

L to R: GPCAPT David Scott, Ms Tamara Smith MP and WGCDR Stephen Mallett CSM

Ms Tamara Smith, member for the electorate of Ballina wrote on her Facebook page:
"Yesterday I attended the Royal Airforce Battle of Australia and Battle of Britain Commemoration and Wreath Laying Service at the Ballina RSL Memorial. As the patron of the Ballina RSL Sub-Branch (and an Air Force brat myself) I proudly recognise the sacrifice and service of our current and ex-serving men and women. Well done to all of the 326 cadets and the TS Lismore Australian Navy Cadets and President Richard Wills BEM and all of the members of Air Force Association Ballina Branch for such a poignant service."

Reverend Dr Graham Whelan OAM, Padre and member of the Coffs harbour and District Branch of the Air Force Association, closed the service with the Lords Prayer, Benediction and Blessing. Air Force Association members from Coffs harbour and District Branch and the Queensland Division Gold Coast Branch attended the service and lunch.

Figure I326 Squadron AAFC Cadets, Staff and Family group after the service

The Ballina Branch funds a 326 Squadron Cadet Scholarship Scheme, the scholarships are awarded annually at the Commemoration Sunday Lunch together with donations to:
RSL LifeCare Ballina Kokoda Village residents, 326 (City of Lismore) Squadron AAFC, Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Heritage Aviation Association, Legacy and Salvation Army. The scholarship is aimed to assist the recipient towards their chosen future or career.

WGCDR Stephen Mallett CSM (left) and Associate Professor GPCAPT David Scott (right) with the 2018 recipients. L to R: CDT Noah Oosterbeek, LCDT Harrison Moore, LCDT Megan Moore, CCPL Lee Pagatto, CWOFF Levi Wilmoth

Mental Attributes of Pilots

from WGCDR I.B. Gibson (not the editor of SITREP!!)

From the Guide for Selection Panels, March 1941

A combination of alertness with steadiness - dependability, promptness in decision, imagination, sense of humour, punctuality. Attention to detail, power of observation, good education, all-round interests, with a mechanical bent, a leaning towards swift forms of locomotion and a love of flying- strong personality - popular type. Inspiring liking and respect in his fellows, and a gift for leadership.'

Life Before OH&S

from Steve Keddie

I have always had a keen interest in aviation from early childhood, being an avid reader of the "Battler Britton" RAF war comics in the 60's. In January 1970, I joined the RAAF as a Radio Apprentice assigned to No 24 RAAF Radio Apprentice Course based at Laverton. As apprentices, we did not receive much in the way of pay - something like $10/week in the hand in the first year. We lived on base, so food, clothing and accommodation were taken care of. But $10 per week didn't leave much scope for anything outlandish. Fortunately for me, RAAF Laverton had an on base gliding club consisting of a single-seat Grunau Baby IV, a two-seat Slingsby T-35, and later on a two-seat Blanik. As the club was sponsored by the RAAF, flying the gliders was relatively cheap. (I think the T35 cost two cents a minute) Given that 1st year apprentices were confined to base a lot of the time on weekends, the club provided the perfect opportunity for me to fulfil my life-long ambition of being able to fly an aircraft (even if it didn't have an engine).

One of the methods used by the club to launch the gliders was by winch. The first winch vehicle was a converted 1920's something V8 vehicle which I dreaded having to start. It didn't have a starter motor, so you had to hand crank the engine, usually by yourself – no mean task for a skinny 16 year-old. However, a year or two later we obtained a new winch. This was a converted International flat-tray truck. The front half of the truck was left intact so that it could be driven around the airfield, but the rear of the truck was modified to mount a relatively new V8 engine (with a self starter "*Yaayyyy!!*") which drove two winch drums – one on either side. The operator's position faced aft and was covered in a cage to protect the operator from flying cables in the event of a cable break during launch etc.

The author strapped in to the Granau Baby awaiting launch

But now to the main point of the story. One weekend, when we tried to drive the new winch truck out of the hanger and take it to the end of the required runway on the other side of the airfield, we couldn't get the truck's engine to keep running. It would start, but would then die within a few seconds. The fault was diagnosed as being a lack of fuel getting to the carby and we suspected that the fuel pump was stuffed. Not to be outdone, we came up with a solution. We would disconnect the flexible rubber fuel line near that glass bubble where you can see the petrol flowing to the engine. The up-stream end of the hose would be fitted to the end of the spout of one of those "thumb-pump" oil cans. The oil can would be filled with petrol and a volunteer (subsequently me) would lie across the front mudguard of the truck, lean into the engine bay and 'squirt' like mad to deliver fuel to the carby. Given the distance from the hanger to the required runway end, the oil can would need to be refilled en-route. So as not to

have to stop the truck in transit, a second volunteer would assist with 'in-flight refuelling' of the oil can by lying across the other front mudguard and topping up the oil can as required by pouring petrol from a one gallon petrol tin. (The first volunteer would then be free to continue squirting like mad.)

One other issue had to be taken care of; we couldn't find a way to remove the bonnet from the truck to allow the two volunteers access to the engine bay while it was being driven across the airfield. So a third volunteer was used to lie on top of the truck's cab and hold the bonnet in the fully open/upright position as we drove along. The truck driver would have to drive with his head out the window to see past the raised bonnet. Sounds like a good plan!

So off we went across the airfield. The person on the cab roof was hanging on to the bonnet and the truck for dear life lest he slid off. I was lying across one mudguard, head down in the engine bay and squirting away with the oil can. When the can was about empty, I yelled to the person leaning across the other mudguard to top up the oil can. Given the bumpy airfield surface, and the airflow blown by the engine fan and truck's movement, most of the fuel went all over the place. However, we did get sufficient petrol into the oil can to reach the desired location. Fortunately, the person holding the bonnet open didn't let go as we bumped across the airfield. Otherwise, the 'refueller' and I would have ended up being only half the people we are now.

Mission accomplished, and we had a great days gliding, but I can't remember how we got the truck back into the hanger at the end of the day. Maybe we had a plan B.

75th Anniversary Of Thai–Burma Railway Completion

16 October 2018

The sacrifice of Australian Prisoners of War (POWs) who worked on the Thai–Burma railway, including the notorious Hellfire Pass, almost 75 years ago, was remembered today at a national service at the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat, Victoria. Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester joined four veterans who were POWs, and encouraged all Australians to pause and reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of 12,500 allied POWs who died while working on the railway.

"It is my honour to be here today, especially in the presence of four remarkable Australians who served in some of the most brutal conditions of the Second World War," Mr Chester said. "I cannot begin to imagine the circumstances these brave men endured while labouring on the 420 km long railway through a harsh terrain of jungles and mountains."

Construction of the Thai–Burma railway began in October 1942, as the Japanese sought to maintain their armies in Burma. A workforce was assembled and by the time it was completed an estimated 270,000 Asian labourers and some 60,000 Allied POWs, including Australian, British, Dutch and American troops had worked on the line. One of the most infamous sites along the Thai–Burma railway is Hellfire Pass, which was named for both the brutal conditions under which prisoners worked, and the eerie light thrown by bamboo fires as skeletal figures laboured by night, reminiscent to some of Dante's *Inferno*. Tragically, more than 700 Australians died here.

"The POWs who worked on the Thai–Burma railway, including Hellfire Pass, suffered greatly, with shifts lasting for up to 18 hours a day during the most intense period," Mr Chester said. "Work at Hellfire Pass required drilling, blasting and digging through solid limestone and quartz rock, with prisoners expected to move one square metre of earth per day. After a week, this increased to three square metres per day.

"The railway was completed on 16th October 1943, but at an enormous human cost and today we remember the some 75,000 Asian labourers who died alongside the Allied prisoners while working on the railway and we honour the service and sacrifice of some 12,500 allied POWs who died, including more than 2,800 Australians."

7 Nov 41: RAAF Assumed Responsibility for Ground-Based Early Warning Radar Stations

from John King RADAR Branch

On this day, in accordance with Defence Committee Minute 159/41, the RAAF was given responsibility for ground-based early warning radar operations. When hostilities ceased in the Pacific theatre on 15th August 1945, a total of 142 ground radar units had been established. In addition, some 500 Air to Surface Vessel (ASV) radars were installed in bomber and reconnaissance aircraft such as Hudsons, Beauforts and Catalinas. Of the 142 ground-based radars, approximately 56 were known as Light Weight Air Warning (LWAW) radars which were designed and built in Australia based on British electronic technology. Six LWAW systems were allocated to radar units formed in Canberra in 1943 and the remainder distributed to radar units that had been formed in Townsville and Mascot and Richmond in NSW. All these radars gave outstanding performance in remote areas of North Western outback Australia, around the coastline of Australia, New Guinea, the Pacific Islands and Borneo. WWII radars and their associated Fighter Control Units (FCU) formed a large part of the 'secret war' of communications and electronic technology and involved more than 6,000 RAAF and Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) personnel. Their contribution to victory was invaluable.

56 Radar Unit, Grassy Hill, Cooktown c 1943

114 Fighter Control Unit, Momote plantation, Los Negros, Apr 44

Saturday Night at the Movies

from Ian Muldoon

When I was at RAAF Base Wagga 1955-1957, this place was packed every Saturday night with three hundred apprentices, and with the odd Nasho if they could squeeze in.

Audie Murphy, Randolph Scott, Joel McRea, John Wayne, Garry Cooper, Glenn Ford, reigned. Yeeehaaa I say!

No TV, Xbox, not even a radio in our huts.

The War On Our Soldiers

from Geoff Hourn

Winston Churchill and George Orwell have both been attributed with saying "People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us". Rudyard Kipling in 1890, in his poem Tommy, condemned people "making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep". Both themes are truisms that still apply in 2018. We can only be highly civilised while other men and women are there to guard us. We can only be civilised when others do disagreeable things so that ordinary people, here and elsewhere, can sleep safely in their beds at night.

Civilised societies abjure violence. However, the simple fact is that those who abjure violence can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf. The simplicity of that eludes the pacifist and the politically correct. Sadly however, in 2018 we now live in a culture that suffers from 'western civilisation anxiety'. It is the culture of political correctness. This culture of repudiation tries to tear down tradition, institutions and tall poppies. There are many examples but none better than the current 'media trial' of our most famous and most decorated living soldier, Ben Roberts Smith.

Like many other men and women, Ben went to war so that civilised people can sleep safely in their beds at night. According to the Australian Defence Force, the war in Afghanistan has been the most sustained and intense combat faced by the Army since the Second World War. The battlefield achievements, skill and courage of our Defence Force personnel in Afghanistan can't be denied and senior military and government leaders awarded Ben's battlefield honours only after intense scrutiny.

The war against terrorism is an asymmetric war, and in Afghanistan there is no front line and, often, no clear distinction between civilian and combatant. Although the Australian Army has all the rules, the enemy has none and unintended civilian casualties are inevitable. When civilian casualties are inflicted in the chaos of combat, they are subject to clinical official inquiries. Those inquiries are conducted well after events occur and well away from the battlefield. One inquiry from Afghanistan led to charges against two Army Reserve Commandos. Those men faced serious charges, including manslaughter, over the deaths of six civilians in 2009. Although they eventually walked out of court as innocent men after the Judge Advocate General dismissed charges against them, it was a devastating and unnecessary experience for them.

Defence lawyers launched a scathing attack on the 'ad hoc' prosecution case, saying the Director of Military Prosecutions had failed to define a case against the soldiers. They said that if the men had not protected their mates then diggers would have died. The decision by the then Director of Military Prosecutions, Brigadier Lyn McDade, to pursue the soldiers over the deaths was also condemned by serving and former soldiers. Brigadier McDade had pursued the matter from the exquisite safety and fastidiousness of her Canberra office, well away from the battlefield, and without any personal combat experience. She appeared ignorant of the fact that battle is a complete and utter mess.

Where was the national interest in prosecuting men for doing their duty and why didn't the generals stand with their men? The answer seems to lie in the culture of political correctness that appears to infect our recent and current Defence hierarchy. This political correctness may have begun with Lieutenant General David Morrison when he was Chief of Army but probably pre-dates him. Rather than concentrating on war-fighting, Morrison committed to making the Army an inclusive force. You may recall that in 2013 Morrison authorised the combining of a rainbow flag with the Rising Sun badge. In that year, he also permitted Army personnel to march in uniform in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Although he was widely hailed by Australian media, his views were not universally accepted within the ranks. I was told by a serving Major General that there was considerable disagreement at the time, among the SNCOs, Warrant Officers and middle-ranking officers, about the direction that Army was heading. It was amazing to learn from this Major General that the views of the backbone of the Army were being ignored. My two-star source, however, said that the generals knew best.

Under Lieutenant General Morrison's control, Army investigated individuals involved in the "Jedi Council scandal". The investigation failed to find any evidence to support allegations and cleared those involved of any wrongdoing. Despite this, Morrison recommended that a commanding officer be dismissed and destroyed his career. After he left the Army, Morrison campaigned against the use of gender-neutral terms such as 'guys' in case it caused offence. He also equated the legacy of domestic violence victims with fallen servicemen and women, proposing an Anzac Day-like memorial for women who have been killed by their partners. The Morrison inclination for political-correctness-at-any cost seems to have been inherited by the current Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force. The Inspector-General recently took the astonishing step of placing notices in Afghani newspapers publishing in Australia. The notices asked to hear from anyone about "possible breaches of the laws of armed conflict by Australian forces" in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016, or "rumours of them".

As far as I am aware, the League did not comment on this at the time. Last month, however, RSLWA publicly stated that it is vital that good people of the Australian Defence Force, who have served their country with courage and pride, are supported when unable to protect themselves from media innuendo, rumours and accusations. RSLWA added that the way Ben Roberts-Smith is being treated is unacceptable. The League backed his call for the Australian Federal Police to investigate how details of the current military inquiry have been leaked. RSLWA went on to state: "Ben has said he has done nothing wrong and wants a fair go. We believe him and we support him." This was a pleasing statement to read and fundamental for a veterans' organization to issue. A former Defence minister went further; Brendan Nelson stated that unless there have been the most egregious breaches of laws of armed conflict, we should leave it all alone.

Regrettably, the politically correct generals had a divergent view from their former Minister and the investigation is underway. It is ponderous and long-drawn-out. In the meantime, as is so often the case, the media sways the court of public opinion so that reputations are destroyed in the guise of selling 'news'. Brendan Nelson's advice was prudent and he might have added that generals should still listen to the SNCOs, Warrant Officers and middle-ranking officers, and they should stand by the men. They should stand with the SAS and the Commandos and they should stand with their families, their widows and their children.

Geoff Hourne is a former officer in the Special Air Service Regiment, former WA state vice president of the Returned and Services League and current president of Highgate RSL Sub Branch.

Local Ubon Wildlife

I can tell a quick story of 79 Squadron where they got their unofficial tail motif of a Cobra. We were mortared about six o'clock in the morning, it was the first time we were mortared and they had right

inside the guard gate, near the accommodation, a big sort of a bunker. It was a bit of a joke. Anyway they got us out of bed and we were cursing and swearing because we'd most probably been drinking all night. And six or seven of us went in the bunker. There was no light, no nothing and we sat down and someone yelled to us. We'll tell you when it's all clear, you'll hear the all clear. And we were sitting there for it seemed like ages, but may be five or ten minutes and somebody said. Has anybody got a cigarette? I said yeah. Have you got a light? I said yeah. And so I lit a cigarette lighter and there was a king cobra three foot away sitting up and saying, "What is going on?" We were out of there, bang!!!"

No 79 Squadron – Ubon Thailand, Office of Air Force History Oral History Program, Snippets No 12

Meteors Still Flying

from James Oglethorpe

Martin-Baker uses a Gloster Meteor for testing ejection seats, according to their website. While it's a stylish plane, and a true delight that there are still airworthy fuselages of this plane left, it seems strange to use such an old aircraft as a testbed.

The Gloster Meteor was one of the very first turbine engine planes, made during the Second World War. In terms of electronics and structure it's a far cry from a modern fighter. How does this make sense? Wouldn't it be better to test ejection seats in the aircraft they will be used in, with the correct structure and canopy? The pilot doesn't eject. In the photo you can see the pilot under the canopy at the front and behind him is an open section with the ejector seat in it. They only eject the seat and a very high tech 'crash test dummy' so the pilot just flies the aircraft home again.

"In spite of its considerable vintage, the sturdy British attack aircraft has all the attributes required for a stable, high-speed test platform" says Andy Gent, Martin-Baker's head of flying and chief pilot. "From a test perspective the Meteor is ideal. The tail boom is fairly long and the fin is not very high. The engines are also spaced out a fair way out along the wing, so the efflux from the ejection test and exhaust from the gun and rocket motor isn't potentially going down the engine intakes," he says. Based at Martin-Baker's Chalgrove, England, test facility, the fleet is made up of two Meteors, WA638 and WL419, both of which have been with the company since the 1960s. "They are doing the job so why would you ever go through the heartache of getting another aircraft?" says Gent. In short, it does not fly all too much, it gets the job done and its well built. Similar reason most older aircraft are still flying these days.

Marketing Director Andrew Martin notes the company is one of only a handful that performs airborne ejection tests, and that the Meteor will continue to be used for the foreseeable future. "It is a tough thing to evaluate, and right now while we have these phenomenal assets we are not going to really think about a replacement in great detail," he says. With the final retirement of the last Royal Air Force (RAF)-operated aircraft in the target towing role in the early 1980s, Martin-Baker acquired a large stock of spares and Rolls-Royce Derwent 8 turbojets. Because of that and the ample remaining airframe life, the company is no rush to find a successor.

Aircraft designed in the pre-computer era tended to be overbuilt, as they didn't have the computational power to calculate stress loads to the level of detail that can be achieved today. Since ejection does put some unusual stress on the airframe, not normally a concern as ejection is almost always followed by a crash, it makes sense to use an older, stronger airframe that is less likely to suffer from the stress of multiple ejections. Another advantage of using the same aircraft is that the aerodynamics are constant so you eliminate one variable in the test. When testing a new model, you can compare its performance with the test of the previous model in the same airframe and you don't have to worry about any differences in the airflow around the fuselage and cockpit as they are the same. Also the seat will fall through the wake of the aircraft and this can vary greatly from aircraft to aircraft.

MB also uses a high speed sled for testing at their Langford Lodge, Ireland facility. This allows ground testing of the seats at flight speeds. They also test static scenarios in what appears to be cockpit mock ups as generally speaking seats are certified for Zero-Zero use. Varying governing bodies may require different testing and live demonstrations as per their certification process leading to different testing procedures. Also the sled can't be used for unusual attitude tests—the seats need to be tested also in bank and inverted flight as they are supposed to right themselves before opening the parachute.

*For those who wonder why they don't eject real people when they test ejection seats: ejection is **brutal**. About 30% of them will cause permanent injuries, and there is about a 10% chance of not surviving it at all. And that's with ejection seats in active service; with experimental and untested ones it might be even worse.*

Saving Boxer 22

By Don Hollway
October 2018 Vietnam Magazine

In December 1969 the effort to recover two downed airmen snowballed into the biggest rescue mission of the Vietnam War. The mission went wrong almost from the start. Two US Air Force F-4C Phantoms of the 558th Tactical Fighter Squadron, call sign 'Boxer,' found their primary target weathered over. They diverted north to the village of Ban Phanop Laos, near a chokepoint where the Ho Chi Minh Trail crossed the Nam Ngo River, to sow the ford with Mk-36 mines - 500-pound Mk-82 low-drag bombs with fuses in their tails. In the trailing aircraft, 'Boxer 22', pilot Capt. Benjamin Danielson and weapons systems officer 1st Lt. Woodrow J. 'Woodie' Bergeron Jr. were on their first

sortie together. Just after dropping their ordnance, the Phantom suddenly pitched up, then down. Their flight leader called over the radio: “Boxer 22, you’re hit! Eject! Eject! Eject!”
It was Friday morning, Dec. 5, 1969, and Boxer 22 was about to become the objective of the biggest rescue mission of the Vietnam War.

Ejecting, Danielson and Bergeron - Boxer 22 Alpha and Bravo - came down on opposite sides of a dogleg in the Nam Ngo, in a valley a mile across and a thousand feet deep, walled with karst, limestone cliffs. They were just 10 miles from the North Vietnam border, but only about 65 miles east of NKP - Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, the main base for U.S. Air Force special operations squadrons specializing in search and rescue. A-1 Skyraider fighter-bombers scrambled, and a summons went out for HH-3E Jolly Green Giant rescue choppers, fast jets and forward air controllers (spotter planes to direct the attack aircraft). Standard procedure was to find and extract downed airmen before enemy forces concentrated on their position. Unfortunately, the enemy was already concentrated around Ban Phanop.

“Sandy 1, this is Boxer 22 Alpha,” Danielson radioed the first Skyraiders to arrive. “I need help now! I’ve got bad guys only 15 yards away, and they are going to get me soon.”

1st Lt. James G. George, the Skyraider leader, answered the call: “22 Alpha, this is Sandy 1. Keep your head down. We’re in hot with 20 Mike Mike.” Four Skyraiders raked the enemy troops with 20 mm cannon fire.

It was as if the entire valley answered back. From his position Bergeron saw the enemy open up with 23, 37 and 57 mm anti-aircraft artillery and heavy machine gun fire from positions in the karst paralleling the river. Evading the fountain of tracer rounds, George informed King 1, the HC-130 Hercules airborne command post orbiting 24,000 feet above Laos, “We are going to need everything you can get a hold of.” Word of the Boxer 22 shoot-down had already been passed up the chain of command to 7th Air Force headquarters at Tan Son Nhut air base near Saigon and from there to “Pentagon East,” U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. From all over Indochina, American air power converged on Ban Phanop: F-100 Super Sabres, F-105 Thunderchiefs, Navy A-6 Intruders, more Phantoms and more Skyraiders - guns and bombs, rockets and napalm to pound those enemy guns into submission.

George assured Bergeron and Danielson, “We’re going to lay CBU [cluster bomb units] all around you, and then we are going to bring in the choppers in to scarf you up and we’ll all go home for a beer.” But he urged two Jolly Greens standing by 5 miles to the west to move fast: “Let’s get this done. I don’t think we can waste any time.”

At 12:40 p.m. Capt. Charles Hoilman took JG-37 in for the rescue. His crew reported an increasing trail of flak following the chopper as it approached the pickup point. The moment they slowed to a hover over Danielson’s position, the Jolly Green became a big, stationary target, and the enemy

brought every gun to bear. With the fuselage riddled and the turbines overheating, Hoilman climbed out to the northeast. “I’ve got to go home,” he radioed. “I’ve burned the shit out of these engines.”

In retaliation, Skyraiders saturated the cliffs with napalm and the valley with tear gas. But when JG-09 arrived, the enemy fired small arms and two 23mm cannons from the karst caves, driving it off with a transmission leak, hot temps and malfunctioning controls. Less than two hours in, the rescue had turned into a pitched battle. The Americans called in new HH-53E Super Jolly Greens—bigger, more powerful, better armed and armored. The Skyraiders dropped cluster bombs and fired 20mm shells to within 100 feet of JG-76, remembered pilot Capt. Holly G. Bell: “It sounded like we were caught in a popcorn machine.”

As Bell’s chopper swung in over Danielson, tail gunner Airman 1st Class David Davison hosed half the valley with a red stream of tracer fire at 4,000 rounds per minute, but he was outgunned. The helicopter received multiple shots to the fuselage and rotor system and began to vibrate hard. “I knew if we took more hits, my Jolly would be shot down,” Bell later reported. “During egress from the valley, I received notification that Davison had been badly hit.” Struck in the head, the airman would be posthumously awarded the Silver Star. (Two months later, Bell and his entire crew would be shot down and killed during another search and rescue operation.)

The crew of Boxer 22. Weapons systems officer Woody Bergeron, at left, and pilot Benjamin Danielson immediately became hunted prey of enemy troops. (Courtesy Don Hollway)

By now the enemy game plan was obvious: Hole up while the Skyraiders and jets did their worst and then, when the rescue choppers came in, emerge from cover and let them have it. A burst of fire cut a hydraulic line in JG-69, piloted by Capt. Jerald Brown. The spraying fluid caught a spark, and the helicopter climbed away gushing flames.

An enemy 37mm shell blew a 2-by-4-foot hole in the belly of Maj. Jerry Crupper’s JG-79. Hovering in JG-68, Maj. Hubert Berthold remembered seeing “the entire area lit up with tracers from both sides, from both the karst and the ground.” His chopper took fire a full 5 miles west of the crash site. The crews were lucky to survive.

Skyraider pilot Col. Daryle Tripp, deputy commander of operations of the 56th Special Operations Wing, told everyone: “We have at least 45 minutes to sunset. We will make at least one other attempt. But it’s fairly apparent from the gunfire out here that I just saw that there is still more work to be done.” Capt. Donald Carty got his JG-72 to within 30 feet of Danielson before being driven off. “We were so low and it was so dark on the egress that we almost hit the karst,” he said. “I advised against making another attempt because it was too dark and our miniguns were either jammed or out of ammo.”

Ninety aircraft had dropped almost 350 bombs and rockets on the Nam Ngo valley, but as night fell the enemy was still there and its tracers rounds streamed up for the Americans. “The AAA was firing above us across the entire valley, with the tracers ricocheting off the side of the karst on the opposite side,” recalled a low-flying Skyraider pilot. “It was like being in the bottom of a tunnel of fire.” Five of seven helicopters that had taken serious hits were unlikely to be repaired by morning, and it was unclear if the remaining two would ever fly again. Commander Tripp broke the news to the Boxer 22 crew: “We have run out of helicopters, and I want you to bed down. Try to get yourself dug in, and we will be out here first thing in the morning.” “Good night, see you in the morning,” Bergeron replied. He decided to stay where he was and “just dug deeper in the foliage and debris I was hiding in.” Bergeron and Danielson kept in touch with their survival radios. “Neither of us slept that night.”

At Nakhon Phanom air base, ground crews worked into the morning to have their birds ready by dawn. The 7th Air Force commander, Gen. George S. Brown, informed the Pacific Air Forces command and the top military commanders in Saigon that all aircraft in theater, except those supporting troops in direct enemy contact, would be used in the rescue effort. As of sunup, virtually the entire air war above Southeast Asia was to be fought over Boxer 22.

An HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter, similar to the ones used in the Boxer 22 rescue, awaits the crew of its next mission. (U.S. Air Force)

Meanwhile, Bergeron had a front-seat view of the enemy supply convoys crossing the Nam Ngo a quarter-mile to the north. “I’d sit and count the trucks, and I learned how they got the trucks across the ford. They’d hold up flashlights one way to start the winch, another way to pull the truck across, and another way to stop it.”

But the North Vietnamese knew he and Danielson were still out there. “I could hear the enemy looking for Ben,” Bergeron said. “They would go to a clump of trees or other spots where he might be hiding and fire off a few AK-47 rounds. No one came looking for me.” On Saturday, Tripp resumed command over Ban Phanop at 6 am. They were still organizing the aircraft for a rescue attempt when Bergeron reported that the North Vietnamese had just killed Danielson. “They were talking in a fairly

normal tone, and then all of a sudden they started yelling, like they found him. They shot a very long burst of AK-47 bullets. I heard Ben scream. It was definitely him. I knew that he had been killed."

There was no time to mourn. Enemy troops were already wading the river toward Bergeron's position. "I decided they weren't taking prisoners. If they came over to where I was hiding, I was going to try to fight it out with my pistol." He called in Skyraiders and Phantoms to strafe the river with 20mm fire, and the soldiers "physically disappeared." Aircraft streamed down one after another through the narrow valley. On cross routes, Phantoms targeted the gun caves with AGM-12c Bullpup air-to-ground missiles, AGM-62 Walleye glide bombs and 2,000-pound laser-guided Paveway smart bombs. "Watch out for midair collisions with the Skyraiders raking the valley floor underneath you," Tripp warned, "and check the big AAA guns on the tops of the east karsts as you pull off."

The big 2,000-pounders homed in right over Bergeron's head. He remembered, "When the Paveways would hit, it would physically throw me in the air about two inches - a beautiful feeling." As the valley filled with smoke, gas and dust, the guided weapons had trouble locking onto their targets, but they only had to get close. When Bergeron saw a Paveway hit halfway up the cliff wall above a gun site, "the explosion literally just dumped the mountain down on top of them," he said.
For five hours the valley was cluster-bombed, napalmed, rocketed and shot up, with ordnance hitting dangerously near Bergeron's position. "The closest they came to me with 20mm cannon fire was about 1 foot," he recalled. A tear gas bomblet actually bounced off his chest; one whiff was enough to make him "urinate and retch all at the same time," he said. "Physically and mentally you can't control yourself." (In 1993 an international treaty banned the use of tear gas in warfare.)

The Skyraiders' smoke corridor - two banks of gas and white phosphorus - was so massive it was visible from space, as recorded by a Nimbus III weather satellite shortly before noon. Pilots could see the smoke from Nakhon Phanom, 65 miles away. "At 5,000 feet, it looked like a Texas sandstorm," a Skyraider pilot remembered. The airstrikes were so heavy that the 7th Air Force began running low on smoke bombs. Down in the acrid haze, visibility dropped to near zero. Jolly Greens made six rescue attempts, but whenever the air over the Nam Ngo valley wasn't thick with smoke, it was full of bullets. As soon as the choppers came to a hover over Bergeron—one so low that its rotors clipped the trees—their wash swept everything clear, and the enemy gunners found them.

At 6 p.m. the day's last rescue attempt failed. Night fell, the American planes drew off, and the North Vietnamese closed in. "I knew that the enemy was aware I was hiding somewhere on the bank of the river," Bergeron said, "and it was just a matter of time until they found me." About 15 minutes after dark, three enemy soldiers emerged from cover, tossed a tear gas bomblet into his bamboo thicket and sprayed it with AK-47 rifle fire. All they found was his survival gear. Bergeron had moved 40 feet to the north and was hiding under exposed tree roots. In the scramble, though, he had lost his .38-caliber revolver. "If those guys had a flashlight," he realized, "they could have found me."

Before the last Skyraider departed, its pilot had advised, "If the river is deep enough, get in it and go downstream." When no enemy troops were in sight, Bergeron waded in, but was too worn out to swim. He dragged himself to a bush overhanging the bank and got under it. Lying there in the darkness, exhausted and hungry, listening to enemy trucks rolling past on both sides of the river, he drifted in and out: "During the night I began to hallucinate. I envisioned two members of my squadron were with me, discussing my plans of action."

At Nakhon Phanom, nobody was giving up. The ramps and taxiways were jammed with aircraft being repaired, refueled and reloaded, as all hands worked to get them patched up and ready for another go in the morning.

After nearly 48 hours in enemy territory, Bergeron was on his last legs: "I was drinking water out of the river and had only a little food." Finally, at 5:15 a.m., the lead Skyraider picked him up on radio and asked him to authenticate. "What's your best friend's name?"

He replied, “Weisdorfer.”

The Skyraider pilot had to laugh. “I don’t even have time to check it, but it’s gotta be you.” By 6:30am, the valley was under renewed attack. American aircraft forced the enemy gunners to take cover and laid a fresh smoke corridor. Lt. Col. Clifton Shipman took HH-53 JG-77 down for the pickup and was immediately submerged in smoke. “When we got down on the river,” he reported, “we could see absolutely nothing.” But the enemy could see them. The helicopter took fire from a camouflaged truck, and Shipman spotted an estimated 500 to 1,000 troops to the northwest, massing for an attack.

During the past two days Skyraider leader Maj. Tom Dayton of the 22nd Special Operations Squadron had flown four separate helicopter escort missions, only to see 15 rescue attempts fail. Now he ordered the Skyraiders into two rotating “daisy chain” formations on either side of Bergeron’s position, 10 to the west and 12 to the east, circling like a pair of gears to grind the enemy with smoke, gas and cannon fire. The truck gun was quickly silenced. The valley was sanitized and saturated with smoke. Shipman refueled JG-77 in midair, and his gunners topped off their miniguns. Everybody was ready for another try. Dayton gave the go-ahead at 11:40am

Coming from the east, Shipman’s crew couldn’t spot Bergeron. Dayton, flying overhead, talked them in. “They flew over me,” Bergeron remembered, “did a 360-degree turn” and then lowered the penetrator, a bullet-shaped, anchorlike rescue hoist with spring-loaded flip-out seats. After days of popping smoke and flares, the only thing left that Bergeron could signal with was his vinyl escape chart, a scale map of enemy territory. He bolted from his hole waving the chart’s white side. “The penetrator landed about 4 feet away from me in the water,” Bergeron said. “I put the strap on first and then flung the penetrator beneath me.”

Meanwhile, Shipman’s tail gunner was hosing his minigun at 20 to 30 enemy soldiers just 50 feet away; the left-side gunner was spraying troops across the river. The crew dragged Bergeron aboard and the Jolly Green powered upward. “We’ve got him,” Shipman announced, “and we’re coming out!” Every radio over Ban Phanop promptly jammed with cheers. Dayton (who was awarded the Air Force Cross, just below the Medal of Honor in valor awards) ordered everybody home. Over Nakhon Phanom the Jolly Greens streamed red smoke from their tail ramps in victory. Every ground crewman, air crewman and the entire command staff crowded around Shipman’s aircraft, and Bergeron emerged to roaring applause. Bergeron was awarded the Silver Star for his intelligence of enemy operations at the Nam Ngo ford and after the war flew A-10 Thunderbolt II attack jets, retiring in 1987 as a lieutenant colonel.

The rescue of Boxer 22 was the largest search and rescue mission of the Vietnam War. A total of 336 sorties were flown by aircraft that expended 1,463 smart bombs, high-explosive bombs, cluster bombs, smoke bombs, napalm bombs and rocket pods over the course of three days. Skyraiders alone flew 242 sorties; the HH-3 and HH-53 helicopters, over 40. Five Skyraiders were damaged, but the Jolly Greens got the worst of it. Five of the 10 involved never flew again.

In 2003 a Laotian fisherman discovered human remains, a partial survival vest, a survival knife and Danielson’s dog tags along the banks of the Nam Ngo. On June 15, 2007, Lt. Cmdr. Brian Danielson of U.S. Navy Electronic Attack Squadron 129—18 months old when his father was shot down—laid his father to rest in his hometown, Kenyon, Minnesota. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Danielson and JG-76 tail gunner Dave Davison are remembered next to each other on panel 15W, lines 26 and 27.

Don Hollway thanks Woodie Bergeron and retired Maj. Gen. Daryle Tripp for their help in telling this story. For more information, photos and audio, visit donhollway.com/boxer22.

The Simple English Language

from Peter Larard

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always called men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

Then one may be that, and there would be those,
Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
But though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
But imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!

Let's face it - English is a crazy language.
There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England.

We take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes,
We find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square,
And a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.
And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing,
Grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend?
If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them,
What do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English
Should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.
In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

We ship by truck but send cargo by ship...
We have noses that run and feet that smell.
We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same,
While a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language
In which your house can burn up as it burns down,
In which you fill in a form by filling it out,
And in which an alarm goes off by going on.
And in closing...

If Father is Pop, how come Mother's not Mop???

But Wait, there's more!

No English dictionary has been able to explain adequately the difference between these two words. In a recent linguistic competition held in London and attended by, supposedly, the best in the world, Samdar Balgobin, a Guyanese man, was the clear winner with a standing ovation which lasted over five minutes.
The final question was: “How do you explain the difference between COMPLETE and FINISHED in a way that is easy to understand? Some people say there is no difference between COMPLETE and FINISHED.
Here is his astute answer: "When you marry the right woman, you are COMPLETE. When you marry the wrong woman, you are FINISHED. And when the right one catches you with the wrong one, you are COMPLETELY FINISHED!"
He won a trip around the world and a case of 25 year old Scotch!

Scientists Successfully Fly Aeroplane Using the Power of Ionic Wind

Edited from ABC News Report

Ever since the Wright brothers flew their machine over the fields of Kitty Hawk more than 100 years ago, aircraft have been propelled using moving surfaces such as propellers and turbines. Now, for the first time, a team of US-based engineers has designed and successfully test flown a small aircraft using technology that isn't propelled by moving parts or fossil fuels. The team, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, say the innovation could pave the way for quieter, cleaner, fixed-wing drones and aeroplanes in the future.

Despite some early hiccups - their first flight crashed into a wall - the plane successfully completed 10 test flights of 60 metres, with an average altitude of 0.47 metres. That's comparable in distance to the first Wright flight of 36.6 metres in 12 seconds in 1903. "But [ours was] hugely easier in the sense we only had to carry a control unit and not a pilot," said Steven Barrett, who has been working on the project for the past nine years. And while it's a huge step forward, it will take a lot more work for this technology to fly from the lab to the real world. In traditional aircraft, thrust is created by propellers or turbines which push fast moving air backwards, and in turn pushes the aircraft forward.

Weighing just 2.45 kilograms with a wing span of 5 metres, the prototype plane uses a technology called ionic wind, an electronic gradient from positive to negative charge, to push the craft forward.
The technology was first proposed in the 1960s, but it was thought that it would be impossible to produce ionic winds that would be efficient enough to fly an aeroplane, Professor Barrett said.
"This is the first time we've achieved level flight with an aeroplane — which is a heavier-than-air flying vehicle," he said. The new prototype uses positively charged wires under the wings to strip electrons from nitrogen atoms in the air leaving behind

positively charged ions. These ionised particles flow to the back of the plane, which is negatively charged. "As they flow they collide with air molecules transferring momentum to them. This is how the thrust is generated," Professor Barrett explained.

The rate of energy consumption (provided by the 500W battery) required to generate the thrust - known as the power to thrust ratio - was comparable to commercial aircraft. But those efficiencies may well be lost as the small craft is scaled up to commercial sizes and payload capacities. Professor Barrett said it was unclear how much the technology could be scaled up - or down - but it could have applications for aircraft where stealth is an advantage. "The nearest term application would be for fixed-wing drones that have wing spans of a few metres to perhaps 20 metres," Professor Barrett said.

Aeronautics expert Andrew Neely, of UNSW Canberra, said the work was a "nice first step". "They've achieved something that people have talked about but no-one else seems to have achieved before," Professor Neely, who was not involved in the research, said.

The Wright Flyer was one of the original flying machines

He said the main advantage such a craft would be noise reduction. "If you get away with moving air slowly, that helps to reduce noise and of course they've also removed any noise from any moving parts," he said. But while there may be some niche applications for the technology, Professor Neely said it still has a long way to go to be competitive with existing traditional and electrically powered aircraft. "It's not clear whether this would be any more efficient than some of the other ways we propel an aircraft. "And they admit themselves that it will be a struggle to scale to be able to carry significant payloads." Like all electrically propelled devices, it will be a slave to limitations in batteries, he adds. "The less efficient the propulsion system, the more battery power you have to carry," Professor Neely said. Professor Barrett and his team will continue to tweak the craft to make it more efficient and quieter. But there's bad news if you are hoping for an end to the noisy multirotor drones. "It's less clear if [this technology] could be used for vertical lift," Professor Barrett said.

Friends of the Mirage Reunion

from Alan Muldoon

The first Friends of The Mirage (FOTM) reunion, organised under the leadership of Barry 'Bones' Einam, with Tim 'Clapper' McLean and Al Vincent was held on 30th June 2018 at Stockton RSL.

Over 260 attended, including William 'Bill' Evans, the last RAAF CO of a Mirage fighter squadron. Attending were around 90 AFFITT including three AF - ATECH, one AF/NDI, one AF/WOE and one AF-SYS; about 20 ARMFITT and one ARMFITT/ADMINO; three ASF; one CLK TPO and one CLKA; one

Part of the ARMFITT contingent

DMANENG; 22 ELECFITT and one ELEC/ASYS and one ELEC/NDI; about 30 ENGFITT and one ENG/RAD A: five ENGAERO; 16 INSTFITT and one INST/ENG IN; 9 PLTS; 21 RAD A and one RAD A/PLT.

Mike Lavercombe, Muldy Muldoon, Geoff Peterkin

ARDU (Mirage), 2AD (Mirage) 2OCU, 3, 75, 76, 77, 79, 478, 481 Squadrons and 78 and 81 Wings along with Reserve Squadrons (Mirage only) 13, 25, 26 and 27 members were invited to attend. By all accounts it was a very well catered and thoroughly enjoyable gathering punctuated by many smiles and frequent laughter as acquaintances were renewed, warries recalled and new friends made.

In a tribute made by Barry, he spoke of the 14 aircrew killed in-service and the numerous ground and support staff who died whilst serving; and noted that 45 aircraft crashed or experienced other CAT5 damage. Three of these aircraft eventually became display aircraft - eight more were reduced to spares and scrap. Seven aircraft were allotted as training aids and 48 were sold to Pakistan. The gathering stood in silence in tribute. Barry concluded with Lest We Forget.

The Defence Community Dogs (DCD) PTSD Service Dog Program

The Defence Community Dogs (DCD) program provides highly trained Service Dogs to serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members. These Service Dogs provide support to veterans to help them better manage injuries and illnesses including Post-traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD).

The PTSD Service Dog program has been running since 2013 and based on the feedback received from PTSD sufferers and their families, it is evident that these dogs have been a valuable part of the veteran's rehabilitation program. Veterans who have received dogs have reported that the dogs give them purpose, reduce reliance on medication and help reduce the feelings of isolation that many PTSD sufferers experience. In addition, a recent study of PTSD Service Dogs in Military Veterans provided evidence that, "compared with usual care alone, military members and veterans with trained Service Dogs show lower PTSD symptomology, reduced depression and increased social participation."

Every dog in the program is rescued from a pound or shelter, but to be selected, the dog must pass a strict health and temperament assessment before being accepted into the program. Each dog is then trained to the level of 'Advanced Service Dog' and is specifically trained to assist veterans coping with Post-traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This level of training equips the dog with the competencies and skills required to complete a Public Access Test (PAT), although the veteran recipient is responsible for completing the PAT requirements applicable to their state of residence following graduation.

All dogs will undertake at least six months or a minimum of 200 hours of professional dog training and must pass numerous assessments to graduate. Once a dog has completed its training, it is matched with a suitable and eligible veteran through an extensive application process. The DCD program requires applicants to be serving or ex-serving Australian Defence Force members. Applicants must also have a medical endorsement that supports the veteran's application for a PTSD Service Dog. The dogs are provided at no cost to the veteran.

Successful veterans attend a comprehensive handover program where they spend at least a week working with the trainers and program staff, learning how to correctly handle, command and care for their new Service Dogs. This also affords the veterans an opportunity to gradually bond with their dog whilst under the constant supervision of a professional dog trainer.

You can find out more about the dogs by visiting the website defencebankfoundation.com.au or the Defence Community Dogs Facebook page.

Wartime Parachute Jump

from Alan Lyons

An excerpt from the history of No 22 Squadron during the war years:

The only parachute jump while at Richmond appears to have been made by a flight mechanic. He was flying with a pilot on air-to-air gunnery where the pilot had to hit a drogue (this an oversized windsock towed by another aircraft). As several pilots fired at the same drogue, each pilot's bullets were dyed a different colour so that each pilot was credited with the holes bearing his colour around them. On one run the pilot did not see his target until it was almost beneath him. He dived so steeply that the mechanic was thrown from the plane. He landed safely. When he told his mates what had happened, he said that he knew he had to pull the rip cord but not what to do when he landed. When he hit the ground a farmer did everything to help him. His hardest task was when he rang the orderly room and had to convince them that he was neither drunk nor trying to fool them. Later he was given membership of the Kangaroo Club, not the Caterpillar Club, as he had saved his life by wearing an Australian made parachute.

More Gunnery Targets

from Bill Kelly

I took this while on attachment to HMS Victorious 1965. We were dragging a splash target down the Malacca Strait for RAF Javelins out of Singapore to fire on. The target can be seen aft. When they finished, one pilot decided to do a wheels down run along the deck, much to the surprise of the guy on the deck. He didn't need to worry though, RAF Javs don't have hooks, all he needed to do was duck!

Soldiers True Blue

from George Mansford

It was 68 years ago when without warning, North Korea, crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. A desperate and bloody campaign began. Australia committed elements of all three military services as part of a United Nation Force to counter the North Korean aggression. The war was fought in the bitter, freezing cold of winters and then the extreme, searing heat of summers. It was a conventional war charged with unpredictable fury, often at close quarters with tanks, artillery and fighter aircraft in close support. (including both RAN and RAAF aircraft.) Neither side was the victor, and three year later a cease fire was finally established, thus began an uneasy truce which still exits to this very day. Historians recorded all of this, but often neglected was the spirit and courage demonstrated by our troops.

They were all volunteers, and in the beginning, there were many World War Two veterans who had re-enlisted to 'have a go'. Their presence was of immense value to the younger soldiers facing their first campaign. They benefited from the hidden, precious legacies of generations from colonial days, and younger branches of the family tree who had served in two major wars as part of a young nation. One could say they were true blue and fair-dinkum values and characteristics embracing much of Australia's way of life which included toughness, resilience, initiative and mateship. The obvious questions are:
Was this why these volunteers, weary, hungry and freezing in harsh winters or with parched tongues in scorching summer heat kept soldiering on, night and day, at risk of death or terrible injuries?
Was this why when fear struck at their hearts or hunger cramped their stomachs, or yet again a sudden change of orders which meant more physical and mental demands, they still smiled? It may well have been forced smiles yet nevertheless it signalled their determination.
Was this why they stood fast so defiantly and at times held their ground against incredible odds and what seemed certain death, by covering the withdrawal of neighbouring Allied units; or on other occasions when they attacked with such speed and daring to achieve the impossible?

I have no doubt whatsoever that the ANZAC traditions passed on to them from past generations were very much part of it, and of immense value. However, the dominating key to their success was a strong faith and confidence in each other, a sense of purpose, unit pride and the powerful weapon of unity in brotherhood. Above all was the very high standard of battle discipline generated by sound leadership at all levels. None of which came from trendy gimmicks and where, in their time, politicians did not interfere with the ethos of soldiering, which has a very strong pulse beat so essential for any unit, be it in peace or war.

If you read between the lines of the official history and search hard enough, you will see the ghosts of these warriors around their campfires in Korea as they wait for the billy to boil, and hear them singing with very strong voice, their own unofficial regimental anthem, "We're a pack of bastards", a song which with typical Aussie wry humour, signalled their independence, unity, a mock defiance of authority, and love of country.

There is much our nation can learn from the past which can also be part of its future. Our military and its past deeds are very much part of that lesson.

A Forgotten War: Korea 1950-53

You can hear the booming surf from where the memorial stands
A sacred place honouring those who made history in a distant land
Today, proud flags are raised and bugles play with soft, sad calls
It's a time when old soldiers on parade stiffen and seek to stand tall
Recalling outnumbered youth in slouch hats from a bloody past
Shoulder to shoulder and who as one, defiant to the foe, stood fast

As the bugle sobs its final cry, there are reflections of days gone by
So often fear, thirst, hunger and broken sleep wherever they did lie
Or resting in the rear around a campfire and yarning as a billy boiled
Laughing and reciting bush ballads before tomorrow's bloody toil
Neath a lonely sky without the Southern Cross, thoughts of home did fly
As they sang their Regiment's anthem which was their battle cry

As a busy space age clicks and whirrs, the last of this legion will fade
Joining beloved comrades in a Valhalla which God has made
Laughing, singing and all together once more
Gone forever is their horror and agony of war
Rest assured they will always be with us in our proud, beautiful land
Their coo-ees heard mid playful surf reaching out to our golden sands

George Mansford ©December 2017

New Recruits

from FSB

Fighter Squadrons Branch has been conducting a successful campaign to raise awareness of the Air Force Association and the benefits of joining, amongst serving Air Force members at RAAF Base Williamtown.

On 12 Nov 18, four new members were presented with letters of Welcome and their Air Force Association Badge. About 70 serving members have been recruited recently.

L-R: FLGOFF Benjamin Jones (77 SQN), Phillip Frawley (recently retired from 76 Sqn), CPL Stewart Roberts (81 Wing), LACW Linda Smith (77 SQN), Mike Lavercombe, President FSB

ANZAC Bell Brought to Life at VEEM

from Jim Hall

Perth's newest addition, a 6.5 tonne bell to be installed into the Perth Bell Tower to mark the centenary of ANZAC, has become a reality this month with VEEM (a premium manufacturer of sophisticated equipment for the marine, aerospace, defence and oil and gas industries) recently completing a successful casting pour. VEEM was heavily involved in bringing the Anzac Bell to life, from working with designers to develop 3-D printing to show the giant frieze, through to test castings of decorative elements.

Even though the final tuned weight will be approximately 6.5 tonnes, a total of ten tonnes of liquid bronze (80% copper and 20% tin) was needed to properly cast the ANZAC Memorial bell, which was undertaken on the 3rd of August.

Representatives from the Bell Tower, the Minister for Culture and the Arts and the MP for Jandakot were present at the pour as well as the RSL and the Royal Australian Navy, as the senior service of the Australian Defence Force. The Anzac Bell is the first of its sort to be cast in Australia and it will be the largest swinging bell in the southern hemisphere. It is expected to

last over 500 years and would be a lasting legacy to acknowledge the ANZAC centenary. The Perth Bell Tower is currently home to 17 bells which are made up of 12 bells from St Martin-in-the-Fields and five bells from the London diocese of the Church of England. These bells were gifted to Western Australia as part of the Australia's bicentennial celebrations in 1988.

Air Force Association Badge Lost

from Carol Moreau

A member's badge has been found in the Richmond Officers' Mess. It bears the number LT746 on the back, which indicates that it would be a long-standing member of the Association. The badge has been handed in to Association If you have lost your badge, or if you know the owner of this badge, please contact Carol on: admin@raafansw.org.au.

The SITREP team and all at NSW Division wish all our loyal readers and members a very happy, restful and healthy festive season!