



NASHO



An Official Journal
of the
NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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Summer 2023-24 Edition



NSAA National President Ron Brandy laying the official National Servicemen's Association of Australia wreath at the 50th anniversary commemoration of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Ron was an official Government guest.

(photo ABC TV via DVA website)

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This is the first edition of “Nasho”, the newsletter for Nashos who were previously members of NSAA states and territories which have closed along the way. It will achieve the best readership if readers make comments and suggestions for subsequent editions. Otherwise, I will do my best. Editor



SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.ONLYDARWIN.COM.AU/](https://www.onlydarwin.com.au/)

“NASHO” NEWSLETTER - TARGET AUDIENCE EXPLAINED:

“Nasho” is the newsletter for Nashos who were previously members of NSAA states and territories branches which have closed along the way. Only one has closed so far, Northern Territory, with possibly more to follow as age wearies us all.

Many such disenfranchised members may wish to remain with the NSAA, so a special category was set up in late 2023. These members are referred to as “Unattached National Members”.

The Unattached National Members will receive a copy of “Nasho” three or four times per year. Courtesy copies are also sent to states and territories secretaries, and to the Officer Training Unit (Scheyville) Association.

If there is anything published in any edition of “Nasho” which needs clarification, a letter to the editor is appropriate.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT’S BULLETIN: JUNE – NOVEMBER 2023

Greetings to all National Servicemen, families, and friends.

Sadly, we have lost three significant members and contributors to the NSAA over the last year. Past NSAA National President, SA State President, NSAA National Public Officer, Barry Presgrave AM, NSAA Mornington President, NSAA Victorian Branch Vice President, Bernie Connelly, and past NSAA National, NSAA Victoria, Monash, and Mornington Treasurer, and Barry Vicary Award recipient, Carl Adams.

All three men have been stalwart members of the association at all levels, members of the National Council, and or National Executive, their respective State Councils and Sub-Branch members, fine Australians, and proud National Servicemen. Lest we Forget.

Again, to all addresses and recipients of this bulletin, please pass this document down the line to your Branches, Sub-Branches, and members in order that they can be aware of what is occurring at the National Level on their behalf.

Feel free to copy the document into your newsletters.

Sustaining a NSAA National Presence

You will be aware that collectively, the National Executive and the National Council, have been actively involved in the subject of our future as an association for some time. Without dwelling on the obvious and well documented reasons, the association is collectively doing its best to support NSAA State/Territory Branches who are struggling to maintain active and viable management committees that can maintain the administrative governance requirements necessary for the sound and accountable management of their respective branches.

Regrettably, there are Branches struggling with these constitutionally driven administrative requirements and have made the difficult but practical decision to cease operations and revert to a social group or unincorporated entity.

It was put to council as a simple a scenario, as a concerned member put the case - *'What or who will represent us (Nashos) once general contraction has occurred within the Association on or around the date of 31 December 2026. Will members be set adrift? We really want to have someone/something in place to keep us informed and connected as Nasho and a loose social grouping will not give us the structure to remain connected. Many of us crave for the continued camaraderie afforded through membership of the NSAA and be recognised and have representation Nationally'*.

Acknowledging the reality of change and concern outlined above, the eventual contraction of some, and eventually all elements of the association, the NSAA National Council debated the merits of offering members of who have become 'unattached' as a result of the contraction and formal registered association status, the opportunity to transfer their membership to the NSAA National Body.

This situation came into sharp focus with advice from the NSAA Northern Territory Branch confirming that it would cease formal operations as an incorporated entity by 31 December 2022, with a transitional period up to 31 December 2023.

The council considered all aspects of the circumstances and, without the formality of a Motion for action, tasked the NSAA National Executive to formulate a formal

solution for the management and possible retention of disenfranchised members that have become 'unattached', in order that they be able to, at their request and or approval, to formally transfer to the NSAA National body.

As this proposed change has constitutional implications (Rules and By-Laws), the NSAA National Executive was tasked to prepare recommended changes to the NSAA Rules and By-Laws that will facilitate the necessary changes.

This work is progressing well with the proposed changes to the Rules and By-Laws being presented to the NSAA National Council delegates for local consideration prior to the March 2024 General Meeting. Once council has approved the changes, our NSAA Public Officer, South Australian State President John Thorne, will process the documented changes through the South Australian Consumer Affairs Department.

Importantly, by achieving the proposed outcome we will ensure that, for the foreseeable future, NSAA members who become 'unattached' will not be lost to the Association. That they can maintain the camaraderie of the association, remain connected, and receive ongoing communications and information provided to them, thus retaining a positive membership with Nashos across Australia.

In the near future you will see a first run example of the communications publication, prepared by NSAA National Secretary Peter Norman which is proposed to connect with and inform 'unattached' members who have chosen to transfer to the NSAA National body.

Archives Project

As planned, National Vice Noel Moulder and I have met at the NSAA NSW joint storage facility in August, September, and November 2023 to cull and collate the NSAA National Records in preparation for they are deposited at the National Library of Australia (NLA).

Progress is good, the work laborious, but we are satisfied that the effort is justified.

An application to the NLA for a seed funding grant to fund travel and accommodation, collection, storage, sorting, culling, and cataloguing costs, and related administrative

expenditure, was rejected as NLA guidelines require the NSAA to carry out this first stage within our Budget. Accordingly, the treasurer has, with council approval, added an additional line item into the NSAA National Budget to address these actual and planned costs.

Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Service

It was my privilege to have laid a wreath in memory of those National Servicemen who lost their lives in the Vietnam conflict and to commemorate the withdrawal of all troops from the war zone in 1973. I was also privileged to have contributed to the planning of the commemorative service as a member of the DVA consultative committee. I was ably supported by NSAA National President Noel Moulder in my absence.

Supporting The Military Shop and Corporate Roses Enterprises.

The National body is very grateful to both these organisations for their ongoing support and generous donations. In order to show our collective thanks, I would encourage all Branches, Sub-Branches, and individual members to utilise these businesses whenever possible when looking to purchase NSAA or general Military memorabilia and considering planting or gifting an NSAA National Rose.

NSAA National Executive Research Capability.

The NSAA National Executives capacity to undertake research for the purposes of seeking to address members issues and make representation to Government is limited in time available and skills set available.

With the passing of the late Allan Callaghan the executive, and the Association, has lost a giant intellect that served us so well in the pursuit of in depth knowledge and material necessary to support submissions to Government and other bodies.

Should we reform as alluded to above, the National body in whatever form, will need to seek out and engage with a person or persons with the level of skills and knowledge that Allan possessed.

Season's Greetings Christmas 2023 and 2024 New Year.

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL (RVCM)

This matter has been the subject of much debate and endeavour by advocate Richard Barry OAM to have the RVCM awarded to veterans who had less than the requisite 181 days of service during the Vietnam War. On 29/11/2023 Mr. Barry wrote to Vice President Noel Moulder and myself to disappointedly advise the following:

“On the 18 October 2023 the Minister for Defence Personnel the Hon Matt Keogh MP claimed it was unlawful of him to make a decision regarding the award of the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal to these men. This is most disappointing to say the least.

I wrote to the Minister pointing out that I have been bombarded by very distressed NS Vietnam veterans and families of the deceased. Their conscripted service in support of the South Vietnamese Government was equally as ‘meritorious’ as that of others who might have served there a little longer period.

These same men have never been ‘thanked’ by the South Vietnamese Government for being prepared to die on foreign soil alongside local forces fighting against oppression at the behest of the Australian Government. They completed their lawful service and were sent home for civilian reinstatement under the Act. It was not their fault they could not serve the mandatory 181 days and they were under no obligation to extend their service. Such extension would have negated specific benefits under the National Service Act 1964 as amended.

The Minister still has the mandate to fix this as per the original Vietnamese Directive.

Over recent months I have successfully assisted several NS to appeal the RVCM to Defence Honours and Awards. It seems they are taking a more conciliatory approach in this bipartisan matter. Mr. Ron Brandy has been a brilliant ongoing supporter for this campaign.

Obviously, I do not have the contact details for the 916 so I was wondering if space permits, could you insert the following in the next issue of NSW Nasho News please:

"The Minister for Defence Personnel has declined to make a decision for some 2,500 National Servicemen from across the nation, who served less than 181 days in South Vietnam, to be awarded the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM).

In recent months Defence Honours & Awards has revealed an amended interpretation regarding the eligibility criteria for the RVCM.

If you have been refused the RVCM (or not yet applied) and have been officially diagnosed with war caused PTSD it might be worthwhile if you submit an application attaching any previous documentation including all medical reports. Without guarantee, cases will be considered individually on their merits."

By extension, I am also bringing these matters to the attention of NSAA states/territories/affiliated entities, for information and dissemination to NSAA members Australia-wide. I also advise that I have written to Minister Keogh to suggest perhaps a more conciliatory approach that affords these men a more personal level of compassion, genuinely crafted and communicated. Such empathy will be received with a reciprocal appreciation of the position which the Minister and the government finds itself in, having been compelled by extant legal, regulation, and geopolitical circumstance which has caused against the award of the RVCM for veterans with less than 181 days of service during the Vietnam War

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This year's festive season and the 2024 New Year fast approaches. On behalf of the NSAA National Executive members, I offer you and yours a happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy and enjoyable New Year.

Best wishes and kind regards,



Ron Brandy, National President, National Servicemen's Association of Australia

FEATURE ARTICLE: MIKE LANE

THE SAGA OF THE PAVERS - HOW 8 OLD NASHOS OUT-MANOEUVRED THE SYSTEM BLOCKERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Yes, it had gone so smoothly when we completed our plinth, time capsule and memorial plaque project along ANZAC Walk on the Darwin Esplanade in 2018. Hired tents, hired seats, cold drinks - all at public expense; speeches from dignitaries, and smoko in the Council Chambers hosted by the delegate of the Lord Mayor of Darwin. Recognition and our place in the sun at last, our experience etched into Darwin's finest walking path, and smiled upon by the City Council.

That same year, 2018, one of our dear old cobbers, Ron Strachan, initiated and delivered a grand idea for the purchase of some pavers to be engraved with the name and serial number of former Nashos from all states and territories. Ultimately, we had 63 former Nashos subscribe for a paver, and the pallet of pavers was transported up from Adelaide to Darwin. The goal of the plan was to have the pavers laid around the plinth on the Esplanade to finish off the project.

All good so far, so we thought. What could go wrong? All we had to do was to liaise with some very helpful officers of the Darwin City Council, who met with us, offered design options and kept the pavers warm and dry down at the Council depot, and it would happen with efficiency, despatch and nil cost to us.

Well, sitting above these helpful fellows who gave much of their time to us, there had grown a tentacled monster picking up worries, issues and obstacles of a Heritage, Historical, and Environmental nature, on behalf of bodies we call stakeholders, in any sod of earth to be turned on the Darwin Esplanade. "Stakeholders"? System blockers more like it! So, we beat a strategic retreat, regrouped and, never to surrender, gathered some intelligence on the East Point Military Museum of Darwin. The clock was ticking, it was now mid-2023, 5 years since Ron's endeavours had delivered the pavers, and here we were, confronted by evermore reasons not to proceed.

The Military Museum had for some time, been in the back of our minds as a most suitable possible location, and now it was time to do a recce. A meeting of remaining members was convened, a letter drafted and despatched (UNCLAS) off to Dr Norm Cramp

ASM, MA, MIM, PhD; the Director of the Museum and, within 48 hours, Norm had tabled it at the scheduled meeting of the Museum Board. Quick to follow was written advice from Norm that the pavers would now rest at the Museum, laid at the Museum's expense.

By October 2023, the task was complete, and will be formally celebrated over smoko one morning in January 2024 at the Museum. You are all invited, and we will not be inviting the system blockers. As we walk along a short, shaded pathway, the hull of an AMTRAC on our right, thence a 40mm Bristol Bofors Gun (Missing graticule sight subject, presumably, to an L&D Report), we encounter the pavers and new tropical roof over the slab featuring the names and regimental numbers of 63 Nashos.

Thank you, Dr Norm Cramp and Museum Board, for enabling us to steer around the system blockers and find a most fitting resting place for our final endeavour.

Lest we Forget

NT Nashos

THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAYS TO WEAR YOUR MEDALS:

The Australian states and territories have instituted a range of awards to recognise service and achievement of members of state and territory organisations. These include long service and bravery awards for police, ambulance, emergency service and corrective service personnel. An example is the ACT Emergency Medal instituted by the ACT to recognise those who were involved in fighting the 2003 bushfires. These awards are not included in the Australian system and are not to be worn on the left breast at NSAA events.

CMF MEMBERS: 1965-1972

This does not apply to first era Nashos from 1951-59. All 1951-59 Nashos are already eligible for the White Card.

For second era Nashos, if you elected to fulfill your 1965-72 National Service obligation by serving in the CMF rather than the full-time army, you may not qualify for the White

Card. If you were in the CMF, please come back to me Peter Norman 0458 594 646 or email pdnorman1945@gmail.com so that I am aware of your status and circumstances, while the NSAA seeks to continue to redress this anomaly.

DARWIN VETERANS' AND FAMILIES HUB OPENS:

The Veterans' and Families Hubs network has expanded with Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh officially opening the Mates4Mates Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre in Darwin.

This is the second location to be opened by Mates4Mates in the Northern Territory under the Veterans' and Families' Hubs program, with support being provided from its Palmerston site since May 2021. Services will now be provided at both Palmerston and Stuart Park, helping veterans and families across the Top End to access essential services from two locations.

Minister Keogh was provided with a tour of the new hub, which includes mental health and physical recovery clinical services, a gym, a veterans' lounge, as well as space for Mates4Mates social connection activities, including a BBQ area.

'It was my great privilege to officially open the Mates4Mates Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre, part of our national Veterans' and Families' Hubs network,' Minister Keogh said.

'This purpose-designed hub will add to the services already available to veterans in Darwin. This is all about providing a safe space that is culturally appropriate for serving and ex-serving members and their families to come to access services and referrals, exercise, learn something new, or just have a brew and make connections.

Mates4Mates is working closely with a range of service providers and partners, including Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling, Soldier On and Kookaburra Kids Foundation, to provide services such as assistance with transition, employment, family, advocacy services and mental health support.

Mates4Mates General Manager Emma Whitehead said the centre wouldn't have been possible without the Australian Government's \$5 million contribution. 'Mates4Mates, is committed to creating centres where veterans and families can come together safely, receive the support they need, and access a range of programs and services that are designed to help them navigate the challenges they might be facing,' Emma said.

Mates4Mates has served almost 10,000 veterans and family members in the last 10 years and works in partnership with other organisations to provide those impacted by service access to more support services, more often, and in the easiest way possible.'

For more details visit dva.gov.au/vfhubs.

NATIONAL SERVICE –1949 RETROSPECTIVE:

This feature tells us what the media and the public were thing in 1949. WW2 was over, and Korea was just around the corner, but Australians were worried about the threat of communism.

The Labour Party's position on National Service was eventually clarified at the A.L.P Conference in March 1951 when the party's defence policy was changed to allow the National Service Bill to pass through the Senate. The margin was narrow, with nineteen delegates in favour and seventeen opposed. Ben Chifley himself had misgivings, on the grounds that compulsory military training at that stage was "*economically unsound*". Back in Canberra, the bill was returned forthwith to the Senate, where it was passed, and immediate steps were taken to Implement its provisions.

At the same A.L.P. conference which agreed to pass the National Service Bill, Ben Chifley had clarified his attitude to a range of issues which are often linked to defence, and for which he had been subjected to a good deal of criticism. In a speech to delegates on 2 March 1951 he referred to the question of communism in the following terms.

"What the democracies have to do in Europe is to win people away from communism... Communism - with its police state - is not the solution to the world's problems."

Chifley also addressed the conference on the need to build links with Asia and about his preference for defence spending to be concentrated on Air Force and Navy requirements, rather than on expanding the Army:

"With a nation of eight million people, the future of this country ten, twenty or fifty years ahead will depend not on its fighting forces, but whether it can people it in time so that it will not be a temptation to other countries. Remember that Australia could not be defended anyway against the masses of Asia, our real protection lies in peopling our country and fully utilizing our resources."

The speech emphasised two of the main shibboleths of the A.L.P. during the first half of the century namely - "populate or perish" and the threat posed by imaginary hordes of

Asians to the north, waiting for the chance to invade. However, Chifley went on to propose that Australians should foster friendship with Asian people and criticised the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Spender for "always talking about war." He then attacked the proposed compulsory military training scheme as economically unsound and proposed:

"that Australia should build up its forces, particularly the Royal Australian Air Force, and In the Navy, submarines and anti-submarine vessels, having regard to the present trend of atom warfare by submarines. Expenditure on the Royal Australian Air Force is justified, particularly because of the lower drain on our resources and because of the flexibility of airborne strength "

In his final political speech before his death, Chifley again opposed the government's defence policies, primarily on economic grounds when he told the New South Wales Branch of the A.L.P

"The government tells a nation of eight million people that it has to make a portion of its physical resources available to build up armies. The Labour Party supports a strong air force as it is mobile and a navy is also mobile. But in this country, where we need every effort for physical production, the Menzies government is taking and putting into camp thousands of young men. Thousands are employed building the camps. The Labour Party has never been opposed to compulsory training. The Labour Government did not remove it from the statute book. But it is not desirable now for a nation of eight million people who should be exploiting their resources".

Despite the reservations of Chifley and others, the bill became law In March 1951 and required all eighteen-year-old young men to register and undertake a medical to ascertain their fitness levels. Army trainees were required to train for 176 days, although this was reduced to 140 days in 1953. When parliament resumed In June, a month or so prior to the first Intake, the debate over the previous government's supposed Inadequacies continued. Senator Wordworth was alarmed that the Labour Party was not supporting the ongoing campaign launched by the government to encourage voluntary enlistment in both the Australian Regular Army and the Citizen Military Forces. At the same time, he urged the government to make training more attractive to young men by reducing the number of repetitive tasks and drill routines. He also commented on public attitudes to military service:

"I think the people of Australia prefer conscription in wartime and compulsory military training in peace on the grounds that it is necessary for every man to play his part in defending the country".

Earlier in that week, Mr. Hughes, had asserted his belief in "*compulsory military training for home defence*" and compared the availability of 89,000 trained men in 1914 compared with the 1951 figure of 19,000. Mr. McColm, Bowman, replied to criticisms of the proposed national service scheme, especially concerns expressed by A.L.P. members about lost production in industry if large numbers of workers were diverted into the Army. He suggested that Australians might be encouraged to give up two days of their annual fortnight's holiday to make up the difference in production caused by young men leaving their jobs for three months to do basic training. The Opposition reacted to this suggestion with disbelieving interjections.

On 29 June 1951, responding to repeated requests from members, a ministerial statement was presented by the Minister for Labour and National Service, Mr. H. Holt. The major concern expressed by members in calling for the minister's explanation, was the large number of young men allegedly evading registration, before the first intake had even begun training. Mr. Holt's reply stated that all British subjects who turned eighteen between 1/11/1950 and 31/7/1951 had been required to register between 1/5/1951 and 15/5/1951. The minister indicated that final figures on the numbers involved were unavailable at that stage, but estimates were between 40,000 and 41,000. In all, ninety-five per cent of those eligible had registered; and an unexpected three thousand who were not the required age group had registered in error. One third of all registrants chose the Royal Australian Navy or Royal Australian Air Force as the preferred service. However, these preferences were greater than either of these services could accommodate, and so those not needed by the Air Force or Navy would be assigned to the Army National Service intake.

The Minister went on to give details of conditions for exemption from service. Exemptions were granted for physical and/or mental disabilities, for conscientious objectors, ministers of religion, theology students or members of religious orders. In the first registration period there had been 135 conscientious objectors. Deferment on account of hardship was determined by the courts and could be granted for periods not exceeding twelve months, although an unsuccessful applicant could re-apply, while the Department of Labour and National Service was attempting to avoid calling up rural residents at times of seasonal peaks, to avoid affecting production, this was not always possible because seasonal peaks sometimes exceeded the period of basic training. The Minister pointed out that apprentices and students were also eligible for deferment.

The ministerial statement concluded by saying that a total of eleven thousand young men were scheduled to commence basic training in the last week of July and the first

week of August 1951. Five hundred had been assigned to the R.A.N., fifteen hundred to the R.A.A.F and nine thousand to the Army. Medical examinations had already taken place and eighty per cent of all candidates were declared medically fit.

Sourced from "National Service Training at Puckapunyal 1951-1958" by Jane Tibby 1996

END OF KOREAN WAR TRIBUTE:

A speech by THE HON MATT KEOGH MP, MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS, MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL SERVICE, UNITED NATIONS CEMETERY, KOREA: THURSDAY, 27 JULY 2023

As we commemorate 70 years since the signing of the Armistice that brought fighting on the Korean peninsula to an end, I wish to acknowledge those who served from all nations who join us today, and acknowledge your families. Today we stand in the tranquillity of Busan, a modern harbour-side city of skyscrapers, glass and light. It's a huge leap from one of the last free strongholds of South Korean resistance in 1950.

In mere months, an invasion from the north had rained down, threatening to engulf the south. The world, watching on, could not stand idle while a violent autocratic regime sought to impose its will upon a free people. The United Nations condemned the act and called for forces to repel the invasion and restore peace to South Korea.

After the United States, Australia was the first nation to answer that call.

Over the coming years, some 18,000 Australians would serve on this peninsular in both conflict and peacekeeping. More than 1,200 would be wounded; more than 350 never returned home. The remains of 281 Australian sons are interred here, alongside thousands of their allies. And more than 40 Australians are still listed as missing in action.

The Korean War was one of lightning advances and gruelling stalemates. Of Monsoonal rain, sweltering heat, and winter blizzards that brought temperatures as low as minus 16 degrees. For many who served on the frontline, the war was a barrage of shell explosions and rifle fire. Of chilling nights broken by ordnance flame and flares, and the acrid smell of smoke.

Today, I wish to pay special tribute to the Australian veterans and their families who join us as part of the re-visit program. We have Ernie Holden who served on the front lines, and was just 20 when he deployed to Korea. There's Michael Littleton who played his part in one of the key turning points in the war – the amphibious Inchon landing.

Ronald Walker, Rex McCall, Bernard Hughes and Michael Jeffries who served in the Battle of the Hook, which took place during the last days of the warfighting, where the Australians held their position in the trenches protecting their strategically important position. It was a battle that led to the signing of the Armistice 70 years ago today. We also have Matthew Rennie, a frequent visitor to South Korea, who served on the front lines and has been a steadfast supporter of his fellow veterans ever since. And John Taylor whose efforts helped maintain the peace in the post armistice phase from 1953 to 1955. I acknowledge each of your families as well, for the support you have provided and the sacrifices you have made.

It has often been said that this is the forgotten war. There were no parades as there had been after the Second World War. Less than a decade after the devastation of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Holocaust, a war-weary public wanted only to look away, to forget. Some RSLs were not as welcoming of those whose only service had been in Korea. There were no protests as there had been for Vietnam. But for those who were touched by this war, its impact has never been forgotten.

For the people of South Korea, this was the conflict that defined your nation. For many Australians who served in the rugged hills and shell-shattered cities, who saw the impact on the people of South Korea, the memory of this war remained imprinted on their mind.

And for those who never came home, their absence left a void in the lives of their loved one's – a constant reminder of the heavy cost of war. And that is why today we remember. We remember and honour the sacrifices that were made. We remember and honour the hardships that were endured. And as we remember we acknowledge what was achieved: a land liberated.

Korean veteran, Arthur Pembroke once said soldiers don't start wars, soldiers try to end them – soldiers work to bring peace. In Korea, Australia stood up to restore peace. Our soldiers, sailors and aviators fought alongside their South Korean partners. Our nurses and medics supported the Korean, Australian and other UN Sending State forces. In doing so our two countries forged a bond that can never be forgotten.

Today, South Korea is a prosperous democratic nation that has taken its place on the world stage. It is an extraordinary example of how a nation can rebuild, and indeed thrive post war. The success of the development of South Korea post-conflict can be a beacon for others concerned about the ongoing social and economic costs of conflict once they are over, such as Ukraine.

But today, we pause. We pause to remember those who served, and the lives that were lost, those whose loved ones never learnt their fate. We will pause to reaffirm the bonds

of friendship that exists between our two nations - forged from our commitment to respect for sovereignty, a rules based global order, and a desire for peace and stability across our region and the globe. And we will seal that bond with a prayer for the promise of peace on this peninsular. **Lest we forget.**

END OF VIETNAM WAR TRIBUTE:

On 18th August 2023, the Australian Government marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War with a national service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra. The service and other supporting activities were developed in conjunction with a national stakeholder consultative group, including Vietnam veterans and representatives of the wider veteran community. Throughout the year, Australians were encouraged to honour and remember the service of some 60,000 Australian men and women who served in the Vietnam War, and their families.

Tragically, 523 Australians lost their lives in the war, and over 3,000 were wounded. National and Victorian President Ron Brandy represented the NSAA.



SOME OBSERVATIONS BY THE NATIONAL SECRETARY:

The 50th Anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War held in Canberra on 17th August 2023 was the most significant Australian Government commemoration conducted since the war ended. It is worth emphasising that Australia was very late in properly recognising Vietnam veterans, and there is still a way to go, to recognise all veterans of all conflicts. National Service conscripts are particularly inadequately recognised, because of conscription, unlike their services colleagues who entered service voluntarily. However, this is not the time nor the place to dwell on it.

The commemoration was marked by several impassioned speeches. The most significant for me was "sorry" from RSL NSW for the appalling refusal, from the late 1960s

and 1970s, to even acknowledge the veterans who fought for Australia. This was particularly insulting for the Nashos, conscripts, who had no choice.

It was not just the RSL which should have known better, but a large proportion of the Australian public were caught up in the early 1970s anger, much of it being driven by outspoken activist cowards and politicians seeking electoral advantage.

One of the official speakers at the Canberra event last Friday was a junior sailor who had been on HMAS Sydney III, colloquially “The Vung Tau Ferry”, when it was bring the last group of troops home. He had noted one day that the main deck was occupied with masses of diggers cleaning their gear. One man in particular stood out. He was paying careful attention to the sharpness of his baronet. He suddenly stood up, then plunged the bayonet into his newspaper, opened at a page where a photo of an Australian protestor was displayed. Not a word was said, nor needed to be, but the message was writ large. *Peter Norman*



National Executive members Peter Norman, Noel Moulder and Richard Tregar at the Australian Army Memorial – ANZAC Parade, Canberra 18/9/2023. (Photo Linda Moulder)



Our view of the Vietnam War Memorial on ANZAC Parade. Undercover seating was provided for 6,000 Veterans, their families and guests. Most of the dignitaries were out in the rain.



TRACKS ACROSS AUSTRALIA - Des Smith:

44 YEARS IN RAILWAY ENGINEERING ON THE EAST-WEST & NORTH-SOUTH TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAYS:

This is a personal account of life in Darwin circa 1953 when Des Smith arrived to take up an engineering position. This is some of his story which NT Nashos may find of interest.

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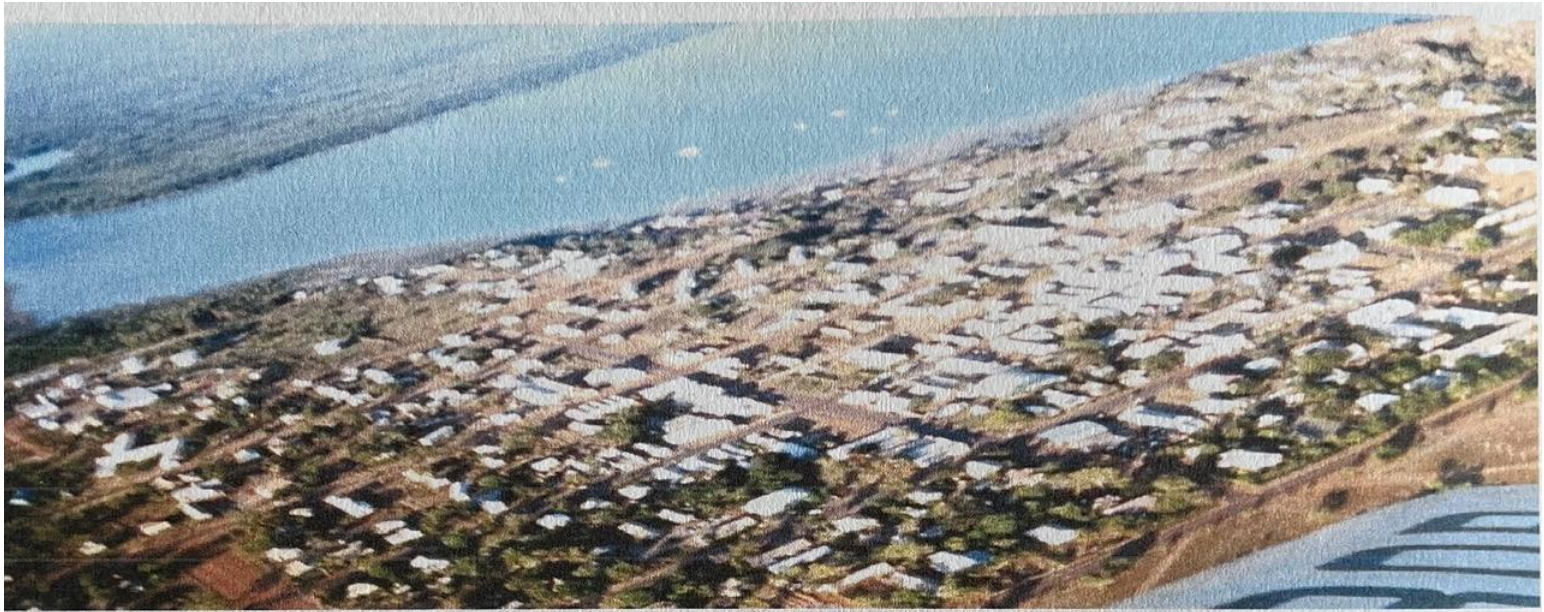
A child of the Great Depression, I was born in Wangaratta in 1930 and grew up a farmer's son in the "Kelly Country" of northeastern Victoria. I finished primary school at the one-teacher, one-room school at Tatong, secondary school at Benalla High School, and graduated in civil engineering from The University of Melbourne in 1952. Meanwhile Betty was born in Wodonga and grew up at old Tallangatta and Wodonga. We first met in 1949 when her parents took over the Tatong Hotel

I spent my working lifetime far away from Victoria, mostly in the more remote parts of Australia, in the outback areas traversed by the East-West and North-South transcontinental railways, rising to the top of my profession through an eventful period in railway development, and retiring as Chief Civil Engineer of Australian National Railways. Along the way I left my own tracks across Australia - footprints and wheeltracks over a big part of the outback, on the thousands of kilometres of those railway routes.

First, a few years in Darwin: As a country boy who had more than enough of the big city in a few years at Uni, I wanted a job nowhere near Melbourne or Sydney or the like. Being also penniless, I looked for one offering above average in pay. The result was a job in Darwin with the Commonwealth Department of Works at an annual salary of £908 (\$1816) plus £150 (\$300) District Allowance. Betty and I were married on 7th February 1953, and went to Darwin 3 days later. Our son Stephen was born in Darwin late in that year.

We travelled to Darwin by air, on a DC3 taking 15 hours from Adelaide, departing from Parafield, landing at Leigh Creek, Oodnadatta, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Daly Waters and Katherine, and never getting above the heat bumps through the South and Centre or the tropical storms in the North. Our fare was paid by the Department of Works, deducted from my first year's fortnightly pay, and then repaid after we had stayed in Darwin for a year. I could not take leave until after two years, when it would be with return fares paid and an extra week for travelling time There were some who had their permanent home in Darwin, but many of the population were there on the same conditions as we were.

Darwin was then a town of only 7,000 or so and covered little more than the present CBD area, on the southeast end of the peninsula between Fannie Bay and Francis Bay. The tallest buildings had only two floors (and there were few of those) and there was lots of empty space. Many buildings were either bomb-damaged or temporary. It was not generally known down south that there had been more than 60 air raids on Darwin, and there was plenty of evidence to be seen. Many buildings showed damage; some were reduced to skeletons or heaps of rubble, others to bare concrete floor slabs. And a lot of buildings in use were obviously ex-service, with light steel frames clad with corrugated iron. Some former Army camps remained, used as single men's quarters and temporary accommodation.



Darwin town 1955 looking east from The Esplanade towards Francis Bay – no tall buildings, lots of empty space

Up along the western shore there was nothing past Myilly Point except the ruins of Vestey's meatworks, the Fanny Bay Gaol and the East Point Battery site.



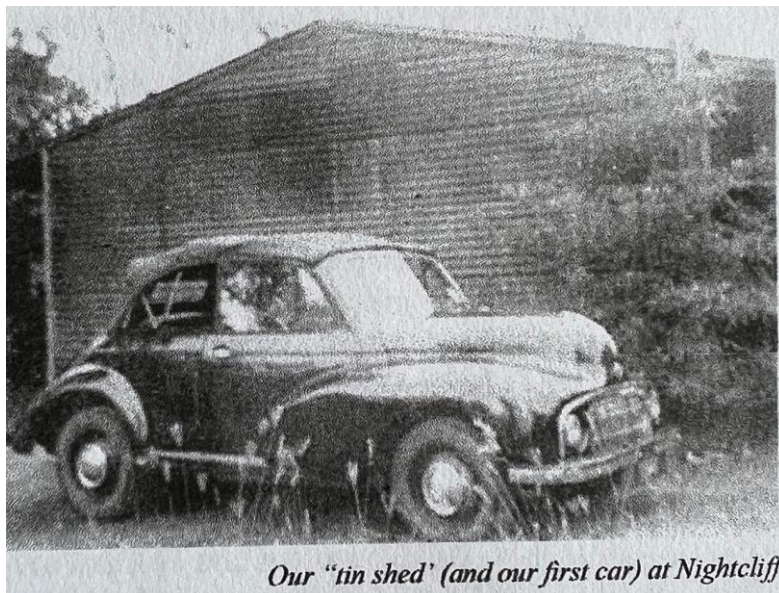
Bombed ruins of Telegraph building on the Esplanade

*Vestey's meatworks ruin at Bullocky Point – not a pretty sight in 1954
The Darwin High School is now on this site.*

There were no houses at Fannie Bay; the old airstrip (now part of Ross Smith Ave) was all alone there in the long grass. Out along the Stuart Highway there was hardly anything

beyond the Parap Hotel and the 2 1/2 Mile Workshops except some buildings at Winnellie, the Qantas hostel on Berrimah Road, and the RAAF and Navy establishments. The signs of the recent wartime activities were all around: - roads, airstrips and the remains of camps etc. in the bush. Scattered around the harbour were the sunken ships, including the "Neptuna" lying on its side near the Stokes Hill wharf.

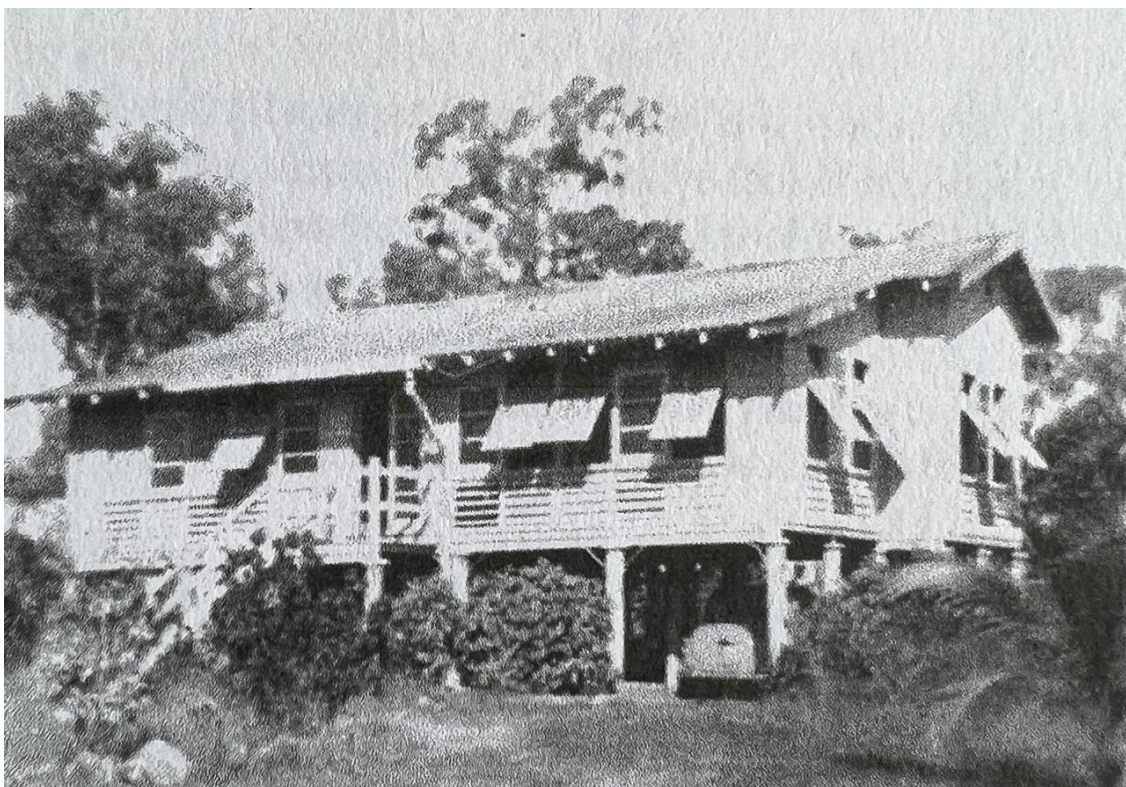
There was no local or State government then in the Northern Territory; it was entirely administered by branches of Commonwealth Government Departments. NTA (Northern Territory Administration) was the biggest, and among its functions controlled all of the public housing. That was our first problem finding somewhere to live. There were not enough rental houses to go around, and many were in the same predicament as us, on a very long waiting list. There was a system of "caretaker tenancies" under which you could arrange to go into somebody's house while they were away on leave, and have the rent deducted from your pay instead of theirs. Rent was 10% of your pay. Your first problem was finding someone willing to let you occupy their furnished house, and the second was continuity — finding another place to move into when those tenants came back from leave. It took us some time to get into the system and we spent about 4 months living in a hut (little more than a rusty tin shed) in the remains of an old wartime hospital camp in the bush at Nightcliff. We bought two ex-Army "Cyclone" single beds, a rough wardrobe and a chair from Bill Osborne's disposal and junk establishment in Stuart Park, a new double mosquito net, and I made a second chair. Our kitchen table was a packing case. We only kept the mozzie net and the chairs, and abandoned the rest, when we moved out. Then we moved 10 times in 16 months of caretaker tenancies, and were taken in by friends for a week or more on two occasions when we had nowhere to go. I spent six weeks in hospital with a damaged eye in April/May 1954, and Betty had to move house twice during that time — with Stephen about 6 months old.



Our "tin shed" (and our first car) at Nightcliff

We finally were given a house to rent just before the end of our second year in Darwin, not long before we went on leave in December 1954. I had been promoted to Engineer Class 2 but, out of frustration, had applied for a job that was advertised in Katherine, at the same level and with a house supplied. The Principal Engineer, Jack King, asked me why I wanted to go to Katherine. I said "Because I want a bloody house." He evidently wanted me to stay in Darwin and we got our house near the Botanic Gardens, near the top of what is now called Melville Street.

There was no air-conditioning and no flywire in any buildings in Darwin then. The outside walls of our house were nearly all windows, shutters and louvres that could all be opened for ventilation. The house was pre-war, and was located near the "Victualling Yards" stores depot, so it had a few shrapnel holes as well. Inside, only the kitchen and bathroom had walls; the bedrooms just had screening partitions and no doors. Everybody perspired freely, scratched and swatted at insects. Of course we slept under a mosquito net, and Stephen's cot was a home-made flywire box like a big meat safe on legs. We often debated whether it was better to eat with inside lights on and pick the insects out of our food, or to have outside lights on and eat in the dark hoping the insects didn't come in. It was not unusual to find a few "lavender bugs" in the bread when Eddie Quong's bakery lost the battle to keep them out. The fogging machines used to go around the low-lying areas at night filling the air with DDT which didn't seem to have much effect on the mosquito population — and also, fortunately, didn't poison us all.

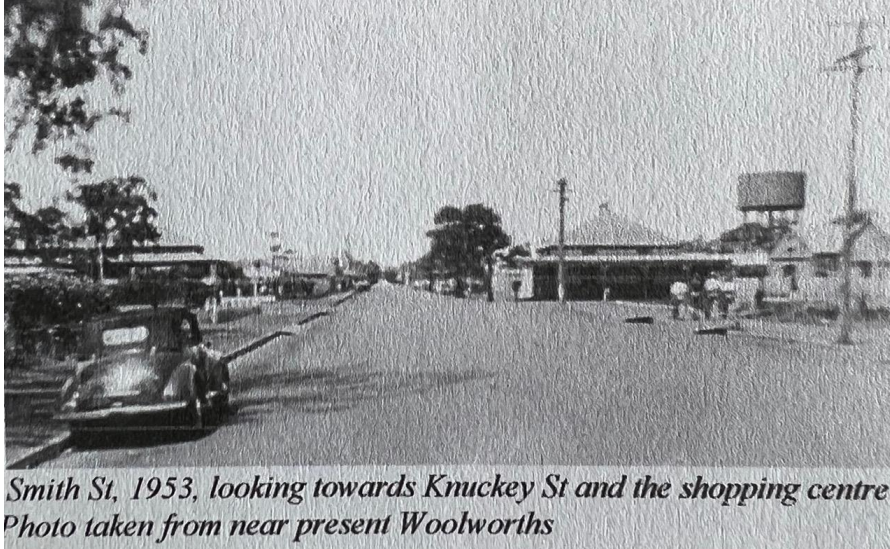


Darwin was regarded as a remote outpost in those days. We had a feeling of being isolated, but at the same time fairly well informed. We got the news from all parts of Australia, not just the parochial bulletins that you got in each capital city "down south". The mainland capital cities were all roughly the same distance away, but only Adelaide and Brisbane seemed to be accessible. Adelaide was the closer, but could only be reached by the weekly 12 to 15 hour flight on a 20-passenger low-flying DC3, or a two or three-day drive to Alice Springs followed by a two-day (or sometimes longer) trip on the old narrow gauge railway and then onto the gravel road at Quorn. Very few were willing to take on the very rough dirt road between Alice Springs and Port Augusta.

There were practically no local industries, no tourists coming to the Top End, and very little agriculture apart from some experimental farming and an attempt to grow irrigated rice at Humpty Doo. The main activity was the post-war rebuilding and growth, and most people worked for the Public Service. In some ways Darwin was like a country town down south; most people knew each other, lived together, worked together and played together. But there were differences. There was a high proportion of people of Chinese descent and of mixed race. And there was a high proportion of young adults, and many single men. It was a frontier town where things were different; not rip-roaring but very free and easy. The men's NT Basketball Association raised a very big sum of money in 1953/54 running a highly illegal Chinese gambling game called "pi qu", organised by Ted Egan. It was a quite open 'secret', the local newspaper recorded that the money was raised with the help of a generous Chinese gentleman, Mr Pi Qu. (Ted Egan later became a well-known folk-singer/songwriter, and in his late middle age became quite respectable as Administrator of the N.T.). And there was the story that one night the Customs raided the Police barracks and made a sizeable haul of contraband American cigarettes from the young coppers and cadets. The NT Police still had some of the old troopers who had served in the bush outposts like Timber Creek, Borroloola and Roper Bar. They forcibly disarmed the Russian guards and took Mrs Petrov off the plane in 1954. Sergeant Greg Ryall was an old-timer who starred in that action with a fierce forearm choke-hold on a big Russian. I was in hospital at the time, and Betty was in a caretaker tenancy in an area called the Police Paddock, down towards Frances Bay, with the Ryalls as her neighbours. We bought our first washing machine secondhand from the Ryalls about a year later. It was a Simpson of the original skinless type, and stays in our memory because it was carried upsidedown when we moved from Darwin to Leigh Creek, and the bowl was fouled with its gearbox oil.

Shopping in Darwin was very limited, especially for food. The shops were nearly all in one block on Smith St between Knuckey and Bennett Streets, which is now the mall. There was only powdered milk, no fresh. Betty had to queue for what fruit and vegetables were

available. The local meat was of very poor quality; after about a year we began to get all our meat sent up from 'Cowboy' Collins' butcher shop in Katherine. We, and quite a few others, had a standing weekly order sent up on the train arriving in Darwin every Friday night, usually late at night. It was not refrigerated, just a paper-wrapped parcel in a heap with others on the floor in the brakevan.



*Smith St, 1953, looking towards Knuckey St and the shopping centre
Photo taken from near present Woolworths*

Most of the supplies came by ship from Melbourne and east coast ports, and some (less often) from Fremantle; by the 'Koolinda' on the west coast run, and the 'Dulverton' on the east. They berthed at the old Fort Hill wharf. The beer was usually Melbourne Bitter, sometimes Swan Lager, depending on which ship had last arrived. A local story had it that the wharfies used to unload the beer and then stop work, and the shipowners then loaded the beer at the bottom of the cargo so that it came off last.

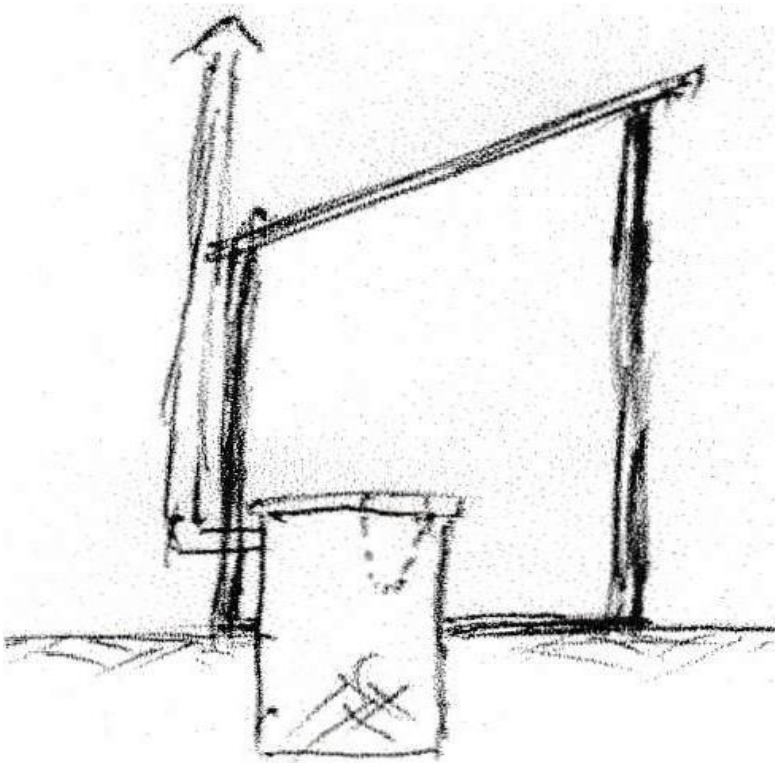


Smith St shops, looking back towards Knuckey St

The Department of Works was responsible for all of the municipal and public works throughout the Northern Territory plus the similar work at the Defence establishments. Our main office was on Mitchell St between Bennett and Knuckey Streets, beside the

overhead water tank. It was a large, low, rambling wartime building, non-airconditioned of course, housing civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, architects, surveyors plus clerical and administrative staff. Keith Rodda, Senior Civil Engineer, was my immediate boss, and was good to work for. He and his wife Roslyn took us into their house for a week in one of our homeless periods, when Stephen was only a few weeks old. Keith was the left-footed full forward in our football team; I played at centre half forward. Keith went on to eventually become head of the Department of Works in Canberra.

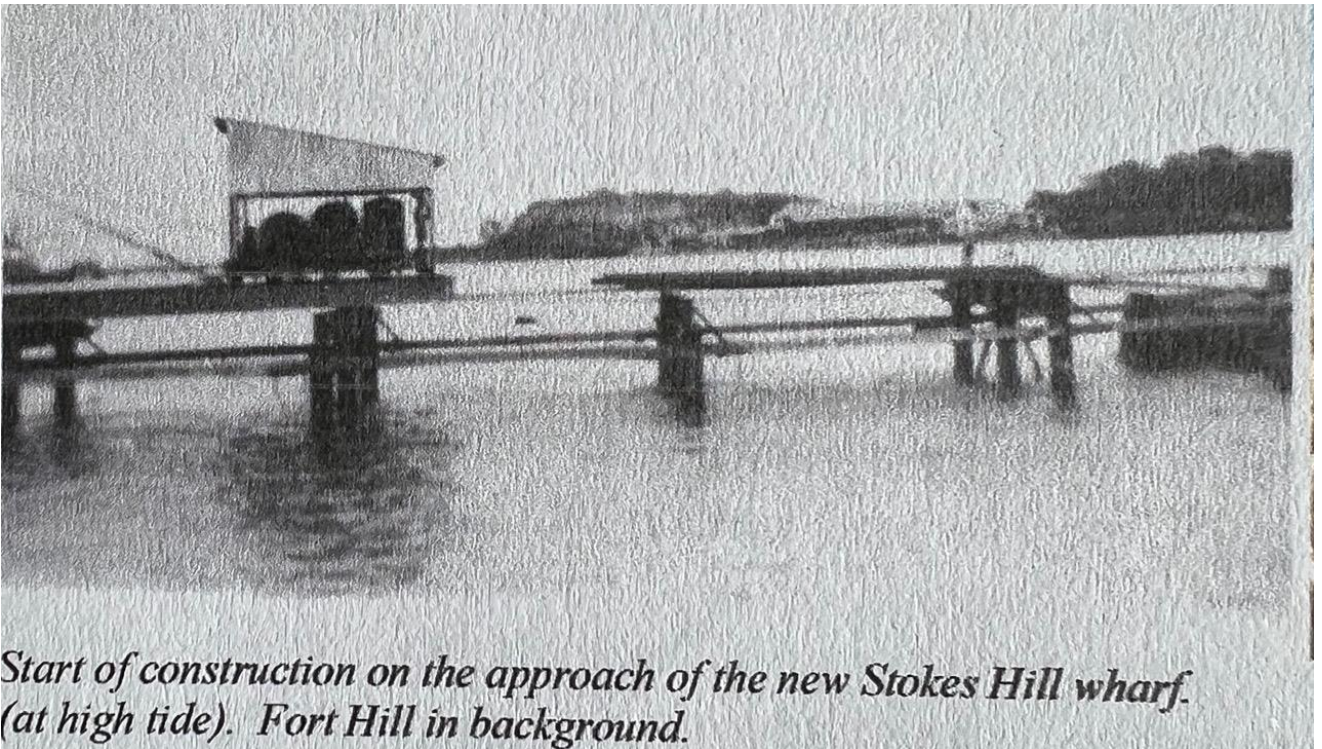
I had a wide variety of experience in Darwin. I was on design work for some time, in the section handling "Roads, Aerodromes and Structures", and later on construction work. Design work on roads was mainly concerned with Darwin streets and new subdivisions in the Stuart Park area. My structural design work was mostly on steel frames and roof trusses for buildings such as the Mile workshops, and things like the elevated tank for water supply at the leprosarium being built at East Arm near the site of the wartime Catalina base, and near where the Darwin port facilities are now located. I designed the Todd River footbridge, which still survives at Alice Springs — not a megastructure, but it was my very first bridge. I also did some design work on water supply and sewerage. Darwin had no sewerage system before then; some houses and other buildings had septic tanks but the most common setup, even for new houses, was the crude but effective "Flaming Fury"



This must have been a wartime innovation in sanitation, and was unique; I have not seen or heard of it anywhere else. It consisted of a 44gallon (200litre) drum on end sunk halfway into the ground with a wooden seat on top and a flue at the back. You started by putting a little heap of kindling and small firewood in the bottom of the drum, then used it for a week, and burned it off by taking off the wooden seat, putting a large metal funnel in the hole to create a draft, lighting the kindling with newspaper and kerosene, and then.....

.... adding doses of sump oil as necessary to keep the fire going. It put out lots of smoke, and the drum got red-hot so that you had to wait quite a while for it to cool before putting

the wooden seat back on and setting up the kindling, etc. again. Some public toilets around the town consisted of a row of "Flaming Furies" side by side in one building.

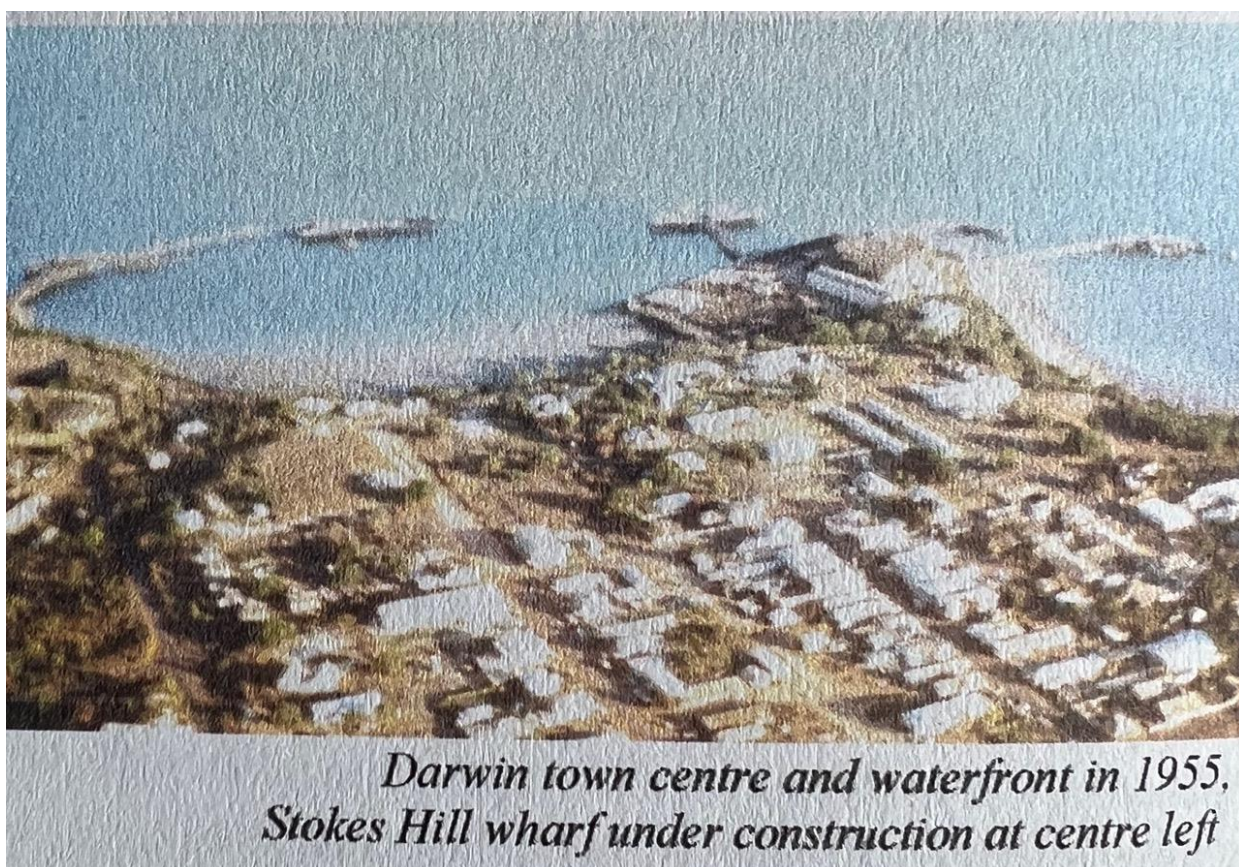


Start of construction on the approach of the new Stokes Hill wharf. (at high tide). Fort Hill in background.

One interesting construction job was the new Stokes Hill wharf, where I worked for a while. It was to be built by contract, but we started it by day labour until the contractor arrived on the site. We drove 30 metre long 450 mm diameter steel tube piles through the thick mud into rock, cleaned them out, filled them with concrete, then added the steel crossheads and girders, etc. The bracing on the piles had to be welded on at a very low tide, often in the middle of the night. We were about two-thirds of the way out along the approach, past the head of the old wharf and the 'Neptuna" wreck, when the contractor took over. Rail track was laid onto the wharf, and this was my first contact with Commonwealth Railways; Roadmaster Bill Dixon was sent to work with us, laying the rails as we were doing the timber decking. The old Stokes Hill wharf had originally been the railway jetty, built by the South Australian government in conjunction with the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway, and completed in 1886. The railway materials had been landed at the jetty, and the railway was opened in 1889.

I did some work out of town, and travelled as far south as Elliott and out along the Murrnaji and Barkly stock routes. We (Dept of Works) were responsible for maintaining the graded road and the water supplies - bores, tanks windmills and troughs - along the stock routes. One memorable trip was in October 1954 with Don McRae, Works Supervisor at Elliott. We went out the Barkly stock route and turned north at Anthony Lagoon. There was the graded track along the stock route but only a wheel track north to Borroloola We were heading for Borroloola and from there to near the Queensland border to find a route

for a road from Calvert Hills back out to Cresswell on the Barkly Tableland But the wet season came in early with a big rain that stopped us in our tracks short of Borroloola. After drying ourselves out, it took us a week to get back to the bitumen at Elliott, including nearly 3 days waiting for the water level to fall enough for us to cross Leila Creek. We filled in one of those days walking a few miles to find a beautiful big spring-fed waterhole called "Betsy Springs" that old George Darcy at Mallapunyah had told us about. Colour photography was very new then and I'm sure ours were the first ever colour photos taken there.



When we arrived back down at Anthony Lagoon we found the station manager alone and delighted to see us. He wanted help in sampling a 5 gallon (about 24 litres) stainless steel keg of home brew that he reckoned was ready. It was horrible; we left him with most of it still in the keg. On the way home from Elliott to Darwin I had to go out to the Katherine Gorge to change vehicles with surveyor Bill Butcher and his offsider Len Graham who were camped on a sandbank a little way up inside the Gorge, putting in the first stream gauge. Hardly anyone went on the rough track to the Gorge then; it was long before tourists discovered it. I swapped them the Jeep I-tonner for a short-wheelbase Landrover. Its lights failed just north of Adelaide River, not just a fuse or globe but a wiring fault, and I drove the last 100km to Darwin with no lights, following closely behind the tail lights of Reg

Weston's Mack tipper. Reg carted river gravel from Adelaide River to Darwin, fortunately didn't travel very fast - and he lived just around the corner, so he led me right to my front door.



Drying out on the 'road' to Borroloola

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AIR FORCE COMMEMORATION AT POINT COOK ON 5TH NOVEMBER:

Dr Steve Campbell-Wright served in the Australian Defence Force for more than 40 years in a variety of roles – as an infantryman, music director, administrator, educator, staff officer and historian. He has played a leading role in Anzac Day commemorations at Gallipoli, Turkey, and he led the Australian Defence Force participation in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Sydney in 2010. In 2017, he deployed to the Middle East, where he supported Air Task Group 630 in the air campaign over Iraq and Syria. His 2014 history of Point Cook, *An Interesting Point*, rewrote the early history of military aviation in Australia. He was appointed a Governor of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne in 2016 and was appointed a member of the Heritage Council of Victoria in 2023.

Point Cook Pilgrimage Address – 5 November 2023

by Steve Campbell-Wright

You sit on the traditional lands of the Yalukit Willam people. For 10,000 years, they found this land that rolls down to the bay very fruitful. It provided sustenance from the coast in the form of seafood, and from the land in the form of small mammals and vegetation. They often camped on the rising ground to the north of the base and looked out over the grass and swamps to the bay.

This place also became significant to Australian military aviation in 1914, when the Defence Department began operating its first flying school. In fact, below your feet right now is the very place from which Australia's first military flight took off. The Bristol Boxkite aircraft, having been rolled from its temporary canvas hangar, commenced its take-off roll and became airborne right here.

As the First World War progressed, Point Cook was the start point for much of Australia's aviation contribution to the conflict. The contingent to German New Guinea was raised here, as were the Mesopotamian Half Flight, No 1 Squadron, No 3 Squadron and No 4 Squadron.

Today, I wish to share with you briefly the story of one of Australia's first young airmen. One who joined the Mesopotamian Half Flight at the age of 20 and left for the war from Point Cook in 1915. William Lord, along with his brother Hector, were the sons of Point Cook caretaker Bill Lord and his wife Delia. As remains true for many since, they were attracted to service involving aviation, because they were technically minded people. When the call up for the Half Flight came, Hector was already an air mechanic at Point Cook, and Will was a moulder in a Footscray metal foundry. Both had been part-time soldiers in the militia.

The boys had the inside running on gaining one the handful of positions available. As the caretaker's lads, they were well known to Captain Tommy White, the selection officer, who was happy to pick them out of the line-up of about 300 volunteers assembled at Broadmeadows army camp in early 1915. They soon embarked for the Middle East via India – Will saying goodbye to his pregnant wife.

Luck favoured their campaigning. The Half Flight helped achieve the operation's early objective of securing Basra and capturing Kut. Will brought his skills to the fore and helped keep the logistics of the team running. Part of the Half Flight set out on a push north towards Baghdad. However, their luck ran out part way there, and most were taken

captive after the five-month Siege of Kut. Will was one of nine air mechanics captured at Kut, while his brother Hector remained safe in Basra.

These nine mechanics were forced to march 1,500 kilometres through the desert to the Taurus Mountains. To drop out was to die. Will suffered severe privations at the hands of his captors, who 'drove them along like beasts', according to one report. Will didn't drop out and made it into Turkey.

However, he succumbed to malnutrition, exposure and malaria, dying a horrible death in a rudimentary hospital at Adana in about July 1916. He was hastily buried in a shallow grave, likely with little or no ceremony. Will's fellow air mechanic David Curran suffered a similar fate, also dying from neglect as a prisoner. His mother lamented 'he is buried in a grave we shall never see.'

Will never got to meet his son. His story is just one of many stories of suffering and sacrifice during the various conflicts endured by Australian aviators. Overwhelmingly, they chose to serve from a sense of duty, a sense of comradeship, and likely a spirit of adventure. They were so often young and in their prime. They all left Australia hoping to come home.

Importantly, this year, we acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in Korea. I was privileged to represent Australia in South Korea during the 50th anniversary of the armistice, and I'm well aware of the remarkable esteem the Koreans hold for Australians – particularly those who fought there. Forty-two Air Force members did not come home alive.

Two thousand years ago, Roman statesman Cicero said 'the lives of the dead are in the hands of the living.' And in 1938, with the Second World War looming, those who grieved the losses of the first war erected this memorial to the Australians who died in war in the service of aviation. Many had died in action, many of wounds sustained and several of illness or maltreatment as prisoners. Equally tragically, several lost their lives in training without ever having the chance to face the enemy.

This memorial was built by the RAAF and AFC Association and symbolically handed to the Air Force for safekeeping. It derives its design from an aerofoil wing and is decorated with a motif reflecting doped canvas shrunk over wire on the trailing edge of early wings. No one at its unveiling remains alive today.

They placed a list of the names of all Australians who died during the war on parchment in a sealed copper container in the heart of this memorial. This simple

memorial, designed by three architects who had served with the flying corps during the war, is built from stone – a material that lasts longer than flesh and will outlive us all.

It sits in a very deliberate location – the site of the birth of Australian military aviation. It is therefore imbued with great meaning and significance for the Air Force – it's the sanctum sanctorum of the Air Force – its most sacred place.

In this place – on this important site – we can, as Cicero suggests, hold the lives of the dead in our hands.

We can lay wreaths of flowers. Flowers cut down in full bloom, at the height of their beauty and promise, as were those who died.

We can pay homage to them with odes.

We can sound Last Post to signify their duty is done.

We can reflect in silence on their service, their sense of duty, and their suffering. They died in the Middle East, Europe, the Pacific, Korea, Vietnam and other sites of conflict. Many have no known grave.

We can be aroused from our reflection at the sounding of Reveille, which reminds us we must rise above our mourning and carry on the efforts of the fallen.

We remember people like Will Lord and all who lost their lives in the service of aviation for the nation, in war, in peacekeeping, in peacemaking, and in training. For those who never had a funeral, we can give them something fitting. Most importantly, we can continue in their tradition.

When you take part in today's pilgrimage and commemorate the lives lost, you are not performing a hollow ritual. You take part in a very human tradition that dates back thousands of years. Your remembrance keeps the sacrifices of the fallen relevant. It also connects you with those who have remembered them since their death, in an unbroken chain of hands that have held the lives of the dead.

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