

2/2 COMMANDO ASSOCIATION.

CIRCULAR NEWSLETTER No. 2.

(29) Aug 49
~~Aug 1949~~

Here comes that "on the back" merchant again with the usual monthly bagfull of grizzles, growls, belly-aches and what passes for news in these days of sin and sorrow. I'm beginning to think you chaps must open your newsletters with a resigned sigh and say "What is on his liver this time, surely to God he has forgotten about subs and suchlike this month". Well, I wont disappoint you as you will see as I go along.

To start off, a bit of news of the last Meeting which was held at Monash Club on 2nd of August. Quite a swag of correspondence was received during the month, and this was read, but more of that anon. The principal business of the evening apart from the "lageration period" was a most interesting Address by our old friend Dave Ross, ex Consul at Dilli. Dave told us of his particular doings on the Island from the day he landed until he was evacuated. This was done in Dave's inimitable, whimsical style punctuated with humorous asides, and served to fill in many gaps in our own memories. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed the talk and voted the innovation of a Guest Speaker an excellent one. Your live-wire President has already booked Dave for a return bout and next time that he addresses us it will be on a subject on which he is the proverbial 'full bottle', that of Aircraft. It has not been decided what night this will take place, but you will be advised so keep an eye on the Newsletters for future events at Meetings.

Held in conjunction with the Meeting was the Association's second effort in regard to the Blood Donors' Scheme. I'm afraid this is where my first real grizzle comes in. The roll up of only 16 was foul and we should be able to do much better than that. I wish to sincerely thank all those who took part and hand out brick-bats to those who didn't. If you have any suggestions on a better method of conducting these Blood Donations well I'll be only too pleased to receive them, but with such a poor roll-up it makes a fool of the show, and God knows we don't want that to happen.

The Ladies night takes the place of the September Meeting and a really good show is teed up for your enjoyment. The show is gratis and we want a really big muster on what will be our first Ladies night. Quite some new and novel ideas have been incorporated and I wont spoil the effect of them by telling you in advance. Come along and see for yourself and bring your Wives, Girl-friends or Mothers as the case may be, or better still show them this Newsletter and let them jog your memories for you.

With this Newsletter goes the sweep tickets for the Melbourne Cup Sweep which is to be conducted along similar lines to last years. We want you to make superhuman efforts to get rid of tickets this year as the Association is committed to quite heavy expenditure and it is by the success of the sweep that we manage to keep solvent. If you are able to sell more tickets than you have been sent, send to me for more and I will be only too glad to send a further supply. If you find that we have overdone it a bit whizz them back to me early so that I can send them to somebody who is better placed than you are in the way of selling tickets. We want all butts in my hands by 20th October, 1949, as the draw is to take place on 21st October, 1949, and we will then be able to send the results to you in plenty of time before the Cup. Don't forget my address, C/o. Department of Labour and National Service, 9 Barrack Street, Perth, when remitting butts, money, etc.

At the foot of this Letter you will see your own particular financial status as far as the Association is concerned as we thought it would be a good idea to let you know whether you were in arrears or just how far in advance you were paid. After receipt of this Letter there will not be the excuse of ignorance of your financial standing with the Association.

The hospital visitation Committee, Mr. Haire and Mr. Boyland paid a number of visits to Hollywood last month and reported that Don Hudson had been and gone, "Wing" McCaig was still an inmate but expected to be discharged anytime now, Bruss Fagg was in hospital with ulcers on the leg and having a general overhaul, and Ernie Bingham had had his tonsils out. Keith Hayes and myself will be attending Hollywood as visitors this month but we don't hope for too much custom if we can avoid it.

It is with regret that I have to chronicle the Death of Mrs. Smith, Mother of our Member, Arthur. Mrs. Smith died at Kalgoorlie last month. Our sincere condolences go out to Arthur.

Have to record a couple of births for the month. Jim Smailes is the proud parent of a Daughter, as is Ernie Dinwoodie. Our congrats to the parents.

Had quite a swag of mail during the past month and a most interesting collection too. A long letter from Jim Smailes telling of doings at Kalgoorlie. Jim is apparently doing very well with his course in Mine Surveying at the School of Mines, and has hopes of completing by the end of 1950. He says Jack Sheehan is still following the immortal pennies and doing very well. Jack Fowler writes from Wongan Hills where he says that the season is progressing well after a bad opening. Jack has hopes of being down for the Ladies night in September. Jim Ritchie who is with Gosden's Shearing Team writes to say that he is doing very well with the Learners Pen and getting over the hundred a day which is extra good in his first season. Jim hopes to be in the City later in the year. Johnny Moore who is at Dwellingup with the Forestry Department tells me that he is doing well with his job. He reckons that we should be doing quite well for wood in the City as they sent 1,500 tons which was cut during the war by German P.O.W's. down to the City. Johnny refuses to vouch for the quality of it though.

Stan King who drives a truck for the local Road Board at Boddington writes to say that things are a bit dull down his way and that he hasn't seen any of the boys for an age. I haven't forgotten the photos Stan, still battling to arrange supply. Doc Wheatley who is a vegetable Rancher at Byford and doing quite well says that he enjoys the Newsletters. Doc says the rain position is terrific up his way it never stops, reckons he'll soon have to get a Helicopter to get around. Bruss Fagg who has just gone into Hollywood, writes, giving news of the Geraldton area. Bruss says he and Bill Drage ran in with Ted Loud at Geraldton one Sunday and promptly did a Pub over in a big way. Ted was on his way to Carnarvon to spend a holiday.

Some interstate news from Jack Hartley's latest circular. Jack says the Anzac Day March went off well in New South Wales but that the grog position afterwards was not as good. Micky Mannix was unlucky to lose his wife after a brief illness (our very sincere condolences Mick, in your sad misfortune). The birth rate has increased considerably among New South Wales Members with Wal Bray, Jack Stafford, Blue Reed and Tom Yates all attending to the Plumbing correctly. Jack says all Fathers were doing finely. Ted Cholerton was a visitor

to Sydney and looking a veritable colossus. Ted is a Station Type from one of those unpronounceable places in Western New South Wales. Les Isenhood brought news of the "Bull" who marched as 2 i/c. of 2nd Battalion on Anzac Day at Newcastle. Bob Smith appears to be among Jack Hartley's best correspondents and usually manages to give him a quantity of news from the Lighthouse business. Bob Smith's Wife had a nasty accident when she spilled a kettle of boiling water over herself and had to be driven post haste 32 miles in the early hours of the morning over what sounds more like a bridle track than a road. Jim Barnes was Cox of the winning Kings Cup Crew at Murray Bridge this year. Rumour has it that Neil Hooper was in Sydney a couple of months ago. Jack Hartley himself is Secretary of the Hand-Sewn Bootmakers Union of Sydney. Gee, Jack, how do you fall for these jobs.

I will be dispensing with the personalities section this month as I wish to reprint a selection from Jack Hartley's Newsletter which I will present without any comments from myself, the comments are Jack's:-

If any of you originals from Timor are still laboring under the impression that we ever did much on Timor, then the following story should completely dispel any such illusions. Printed in Colliers American magazine in March, 1945, the story is entitled "The Heroes", by Lt. Col. W.L.W. Van Straten. (The Flying Dutchman).

"The Heroes".

What happened on the wild East Indies isle of Timor in the spring of 1942 should have taught Hirohito that his dream of conquest was doomed to end in defeat and disaster. For a whole year a Dutch officer, commanding several hundred native soldiers and civilians, held out against 30,000 Japanese, matching naked courage against an overwhelming superiority in numbers and equipment. Poorly armed, racked by disease, and always on the edge of starvation, only a handful of survivors were alive when rescue came, but they left behind this gay message: "Out to lunch. Back soon".

No question that the Japs struck swiftly and shrewdly. Surprise attacks captured Amboina, Timor, Bali and southern Sumatra and with these strategic islands in their possession, Java fell like a rich plum. Most of the small garrisons, caught off guard, were butchered outright, but in Timor, stout Lieut-Colonel Van Straten managed to gain the fastnesses of the interior.

Less than a hundred of his force were trained fighting men; the rest were made up of a motley collection of clerks, teachers and merchants, many of them accompanied by their wives and children. Cortes, burning his ships at Vera Cruz before marching against the hosts of Montezuma, was not more the great Captain than the rock-jawed Dutchman as he faced his band in a mountain thicket.

"None of us is likely to come out of this alive," he said, "but there is this comfort for our hearts and souls We die for God and country".

The shout that answered him was the pledge, even the little ones joining in. Proceeding with the skill of an old jungle fighter Colonel van Straten disposed of his force, well aware that the Japanese were following like hounds. The soldiers were put on guard at every trail, the civilians laid traps and made pit-falls, the women scoured the woods for roots, herbs and fruits, and the children, perched on peaks or in high trees, served as lookouts.

The first attack was beaten off without large loss, for the Japs were not expecting resistance, but the second was a bloody affair. All through the day the Japs charged, wave after wave, but the Dutch and Indonesians, fighting from cover, never wasted a bullet. Retreating when darkness fell, the Japanese left behind them rich booty in the shape of rifles, ammunition and rice, among a litter of dead.

Now the Japs, vastly angered, brought tanks and armored cars up from the coast, but van Straten's scouts gave him ample warning. Ditches were dug, crude but effective land mines were planted at strategic points, great trees were cut down for barriers; and back of these defenses crouched the riflemen and the clerks and teachers with homemade hand grenades. Day after day the attack kept up, but in the end, the Japs retreated, a victory indeed, but costly, for half of van Straten's force lay dead or wounded. The size of enemy losses soon stood proved, for on the morning after the battle's finish, a Jap messenger delivered this message under a flag of truce.;

"Honorable Leut-Kolonel: Now as you all know, the war of Nederland East Indies finished. You must be short of food now, you have to sleep in the fields or among the mountains. All of Dutch men except you think for the Dutch to surrender is better than to hide in the mountains. Do you think it is able for you to resist longer till the hopeless help comes?. The soldiers lives are not only of officers own, but must also be of their families, who are very anxious for them. If you and your men surrender, all can see family again. If not, we must fight and destroy, it is our army's work advanced here, nothing else. Hoping to get you get answer soon. Junzt Kinoshita, Head of Japanese Army."

Stung by van Straten's jeering refusal, Kinoshita employed his whole force in a series of encircling movements, but always the indomitable Dutchman found a way to break through the iron ring. Even more fortunately, his retreat to the northeast put him in contact with two hundred Australians who had been fighting in the Portuguese half of Timor, a heartening addition to his strength. Worse than the Japanese however, were the ravages of malaria and dysentery, and the horror of wounds for which there were no dressings.

Facing extermination, van Straten staged desperate raids that captured radio equipment, and with it he managed to contact Australia.

Back at once came the promise of aid, but disappointment followed disappointment. First, a destroyer went to pieces on Timor's reefs, and then the medicines and ammunition dropped by paratroopers were gleefully destroyed by the Japanese, while wretched, despairing men looked on helplessly from the hills. Warned by these attempts, Kinoshita redoubled the fury of his attacks, but for another six months, van Straten and his dwindling band staved off defeat, fighting with rocks and clubs when there was no more ammunition.

Not until the spring of 1943 did a Dutch destroyer manage to reach Timor under cover of storm and darkness, and take off the survivors in rubber boats. And have they had enough of it?, Not at all. Today these men are the nucleus of a Dutch army that is being recruited for the liberation of the Netherlands East Indies. And at the head of that Army

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is none other than van Straten, now a Major General, still gaunt and still limping, but counting the minutes until he can come to grips again with Junzt Kinoshita.....

So there you have it fellers, the inside GG on how van Straten won his Dutch V.C. Funny thing though, I always thought Our side had something to do with "Winnie the War Winner".

Well enough for now and the usual few reminders to keep your memories going. Don't forget the Ladies night on 6th September. Cast your eyes to the bottom of this screed to see your Subscription position. Hop the Skill on those sweep tickets as soon as you can and make this the greatest result ever.

Cheerio for now,

C.D. DOIG.

Honorary Editor.

Your Subscription is paid to :-

31 MAY 1950