



CENTRAL BUREAU INTELLIGENCE CORPS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 3 1991 September

C.B. RETURNS TO HENRY STREET.

Members travelled from afar; from Western Australia, from Victoria, from New South Wales and Northern Queensland and not so far from Brisbane suburbs to converge on 21 Henry Street ----- and there it was ----- that stately old 19th. century mansion dominating the scene on a bright sunlit winter Saturday looking brighter and better preserved than it had been almost fifty years ago. The same cannot be said of those of us who passed that way between 1942 and 1945. Perhaps the blue iron lace was not a colour planned by the architect who designed the building and the green lawn was only a symbol of the pastures which had once surrounded it. That green lawn and shady trees with Nyramba as a backdrop nevertheless was a near perfect setting for our third combined reunion.

According to "The Sunday Mail" we were former spooks in high spirits. There was a picture of former spies Jim Williams and Allan Osborne peering through a doorway to prove it. Although we travelled many kilometres back to Henry Street travelling back through the years seemed a bit more difficult. We tried and spoke many, many words about those bygone days but those were insecure and uncertain times for all of us. The future was quite unknown and unpredictable from week to week or even day to day. Now we all know what that future held for us and our 1991 recollections are coloured accordingly; the realities of the war years such as Brisbane Streets clogged with unsightly air-raid shelters, the hazards of South Brisbane, the battles between black and white Americans which were hushed up, the beer queues and the queues to other mysterious places and tram crews with funny white caps have all long gone.

C.B.I.C.A. President Jim Williams welcomed our visitors and thanked Doug Goebel, President of the Wireless Unit Association in Queensland, Mac Jamieson and Al Jenkin whose co-operation had made the reunion in Brisbane possible. Jim also conveyed thanks to André and Joe Look, our gracious hosts. Special mention was made of the apology received on behalf of Bob Bevan who is bravely battling long term illness.

As he has done in past years Joe Look repeated that very warm welcome to his home and indeed renewed the invitation to visit on future occasions. Number 21 was built for the Bank of N.S.W. in 1884 on fifteen acres of land at a cost of 4000 pounds. In the 1920's André's family acquired the property and except for its war service as a conscripted home for C.B. it has remained in the family. Treasurer Norma Keeling presented André with flowers as a token of our appreciation of Joe and André's goodwill towards C.B.I.C.A.

The eloquent Mr. Clarrie Millar now freed from the ties of representing National Party voters in the State Parliament gave us a demonstration of speech making skills. Doug Goebel and Mac Jamieson responded to Jim Williams. W.A.A.A.F Kana operators are rare people although there were four present to hear one of their number, Joy Linnane, speak briefly of bygone days. Ex W.A.A.A.F. Eve Scott and one time A.W.A.S. Noni McNaught also shared with us some of their wartime experiences. Noni reminded us that she and former colleague Joy Noland who had travelled from Perth to Brisbane were once eighteen. Were n't we all!

Reunions such as the August 10 event are economically viable because of the people who roll up their sleeves to do hard physical work on the day. Thanks are due to Daisy Bobin, Madeline Chidgey, Irene Jamieson, Eunice Jenkin, Peggy Moore, Eve Scott, Mac Jamieson and Al Jenkin who were noticed doing just that.

Roll Call - Members and Guests.

Elma and Jack Bennett Flora and Alf Davis Jim Williams Shiela Gregory Doug Goebel Mac and Irene Jamieson Alan, Margaret and David Marsland Ron and Madeline Chidgey John and Nancy Vasey Hugh Dunn Eddie and Gwen Collins Dorothy Anderson Norma Keeling Helen Kenny Joy Noland Joyce Grace Lachie and Noni McNaught Jean and Gordon Robertson Clarrie Millar Les McLean Tom and Betty Chessell Rona Hodsdon Dorothy and Gordon Chapman Marcia and Gordon Wilson Meg and Allan Osborne Lisa and Stephen Hewlett John Laird Albert and Jean Aarons Geof Charlesworth Ian Buchingham John Stumm Joan and John Warmington Daisy and Phillip Bobin Eve and Janice Scott Erica Harvey Hazel and Charles Stephens Bruce and Freda Cooper Harry and Myra Kroger Jackie Scott Norma Wilkinson Jeanette de Souza Betty Walsh Dennis and Joy Linnane Stella Saunders Dot Blundell Phyllis Brownson Ern and Marie Davie Betty Lording Francis Cureton Harold and Florence Jones Gordon Gibson Betty Murray Peggy and Dennis Moore Al and Eunice Jenkin Frank Hughes.

(The possibility of missing names exists and apologies are extended if you are missed.)

11 AUGUST 1991.

What a great day when CBICA participated in the Queensland RAAF Wireless Units Association Annual Reunion at the Caledonian Club! Shared recollections ignited by former colleagues who trod similar paths in the war years were the order of the day. Memories emerged which in some instances would have lain dormant unless cued or prompted by someone else who was at the same place at the same time.

* The trucks taking AWAS from Chermside Barracks to 21 Henry Street changed their route every day to confuse any followers. One can ponder over the reasons for that little charade.

* Official advice to young AWAS before they were exposed to Brisbane in wartime 'It is better to be an honourable old maid than the ruined relic of a bird of passage'. So preached the padre at Indooroopilly to a flock which still remembers.

* 'What are you doing here?' said the provost to the young service women in one of those infamous Brisbane queues. 'Oh! we thought the chocolates might be on.'

* When twenty year olds left nice homes in Melbourne and Sydney for the war they were proper and wore corsets ----- until the straps snapped when they struggled in full dress into rail carriage luggage racks seeking

sleep. So now we know; veteran AWAS didn't wear corsets.

* And then there is the story about the older AWAS who promised her younger friend's Mum that she would look after that young and innocent daughter during her first venture away from a secure Melbourne fireside. They were confused and bewildered by the khaki throng at Sydney's Central Station, missed the troop train connection to Brisbane and in less than 24 hours after leaving Melbourne both finished up in the Military Police detention compound. Its obvious, is it not, that the Newsletter reporter shared a table with some happy and relaxed ex AWAS.

Doug Goebel, President of the W.U. Association, welcomed C.B. members to the reunion. Together we remembered Connie Carpenter who was a member of both Associations. Mac Jamieson described the physical deterioration which is an inevitable consequence of being old enough to be a World War II veteran. We laughed but didn't want to be reminded. That tireless behind the scenes worker in the broad brimmed felt hat, Al "Meldrum" Jenkin should feel some sense of pride that his enthusiasm for a third combined reunion in Brisbane produced such a good result.

EXECUTIVE VIEWS.

From the President's desk.

Our Queensland visitation to the RAAF Wireless Unit's Re-union in Brisbane, was to say the least, most satisfactory for me as your President.

Magnificent weather on both days made life worth living. Saturday at 21 Henry St. Ascot saw 85 members and guests and Sunday at the Caledonian Club brought along probably 100 or more.

My heartfelt thanks to all the helpers from C.B. and Qld. W.U. Association. What a great job they did! No one appreciates these hard workers more than me.

I was pleased to see representatives of the press and ABC present, although the reporting from these quite youthful journalists left much to be desired.

However a most successful sojourn to our northern neighbours. I will leave the intimate details to our astute

Publicity Officer, Dennis Moore, who will, I am sure include details of our 'spying activities' in his report.

I trust we can arrange a Victoria visit for 1992. God willing, we'll all be there to enjoy meeting once more with our southern friends.

Jim Williams..

HON. SECRETARY'S PAR.

Did you ever pause to wonder who first dreamed up the name Central Bureau? Not exactly a charismatic term! I mean you can hardly expect reactions of wild enthusiasm from Anzac Day crowds when the announcer says "and here come the boys and girls of Central Bureau". To me the name connotes a band of top brass bureaucratic base wollers. And it probably has similar overtones for members of the ASWG and the WU's who are proud of their skills in signals and of their reputations as field units. We all know that Central Bureau also had its field units, known as ASIPS (Australian Special Intelligence Personnel Section). But who else knows it? In this connection, a very interesting suggestion was put forward at the Combined Reunion in Brisbane by Bruce Cooper of the Queensland Ex RAAF Wireless Units Association. Bruce suggested that a name like Australian Special Signals Intelligence Section might go some way towards bringing us all under the one umbrella. Don't forget that the present name of our organisation is the Defence Signals Directorate, which at least gives some hint of the type of 'spying' activity it engages in. Spies are far more exciting people than bureaucrats any day! Could we give this idea some further thought?

A gratifying spin off from the highly successful Combined Reunion in Brisbane was a crop of prospective new members: Bob Davidson, Doug Triggar, Ray Dolling, Melva O'Gorman, Dave Paton, David Berry, Hugh Dunn, Frank Ward are all in process of joining the Association. A warm welcome to them and also to Keith Gaggin, Norma Smith (nee Andrews) and Erica Harvey (nee Small) who have joined in the last few months.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to Mac Jamieson, Secretary of the Ex RAAF Wireless Units Association and to Al and Eunice Jenkin, CB Association members in Brisbane, without whose co-operation, good-will and sheer hard work the Combined Reunion

could not have been the great success it was. Next year we will be exploring the possibilities of Adelaide as the venue with Melbourne as a back-up.

Gordon Gibson.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

What a great time we all had in Brisbane, both Henry Street and the Caledonian Club, together with good weather, and didn't 21 look terrific with its new paint made a great background for photos and Andre and Joe made us so welcome and of course the unexpected, the ABC being there and being on television that night, what a bonus that was also the article in the Sunday paper -- at last we are becoming known and rightfully so. Congratulations to Joy Linnane, Eve Scott and Noni for their speeches, it was great to see Joy with us looking so well. To those members who couldn't join us due to ill health we send our good wishes.

Hope you're settling down Dale after your three and a half months overseas, would like to hear of your trip experiences.

Congratulations to Geoff Patience for his latest award and to Geoff. Ballard for his "On Ultra Active Service" ----terrific.

In answer to Betty's enquiry-- no Betty unfortunately there are no C.B. tumblers because of the high re-order required.

Many thanks to members who enquired about my fall, am O.K. now.

An interesting little snippet--Alan Marsland in his letter to me noticed that Tony Carson marched on Anzac Day and he hoped he may be at our re-union as he hadn't seen Tony since Tony carried his kit for him to the boat when they left Labuan.

Before ending my report must welcome all new members, we are certainly growing in numbers and here is my usual 'bit'

A perfectionist is one who takes great pains and gives them to other people.

Norma Keeling.

RECOLLECTIONS

The Van Swoll Cruise.

About 3 p.m. on 13th March, 1945, twenty or so "C-Bers" (Army and RAAF) with BERT RUSHEN in charge boarded the M.V. *Van Swoll* at a Brisbane River wharf just below Eagle Street bound for a northern destination.

The *Van Swoll* of about 2,000 tons gross had been a Dutch island trader pre-war with a Dutch and Indonesian crew and did not seem much bigger than a Sydney Manly ferry. In all, she carried about 350 servicemen, mostly Americans.

We Australians were placed in the top section of the rear hold, fortunately near the ladder stairway, although when possible we slept on deck unless driven below by rain squalls.

After leaving the Brisbane River and heading into Moreton Bay we experienced a rather heavy swell and our first experience of ship life was to hear we were not having an evening meal, but I think we had a "cuppa".

First morning out with the ship rolling we lined up for breakfast of powdered egg and bacon which many had trouble keeping down and lined the rail feeding the fish. The seas were gradually getting rougher and in fact when in the trough of a wave the crest was above the deck. After a day or so with swell increasing we headed for a sheltered bay somewhere in the Whitsundays where we anchored for several days awaiting the movement of the cyclone from the area.

At first heavy rain fell but then cleared and we had sunny warm days although we could hear wind howling above the hills surrounding our shelter.

Eventually we left the shelter and headed north inside the Barrier Reef at the ship's top speed of roughly eight knots. The weather was now perfect and we spent most of the time laying on the deck taking in the scenery, playing card games or watching flying fish in the ship's wake. We had two meals a day (American cooks) and washed under portable showers on deck with water pumped directly from the sea.

The *Van Swoll* was 'armed' with a four-inch gun as well as an anti-aircraft battery mounted on a platform near the

stern. I recall the crew had target practice somewhere off the north Queensland coast and when this happened the vibration just about lifted the ship out of the water.

As mentioned earlier we were in the top section of the rear hold with four levels below. One day we did venture to the bottom level where the coloured U.S. Servicemen slept, but due to the heat and 'b.o.' we soon headed up to the fresh air.

After sailing as far north as she could inside the Barrier Reef we then crossed the Torres Sea to New Guinea rounded the tip and headed west up the New Guinea coast. One day we spent anchored off the coast near Buna. No sooner anchored when natives paddled out in their canoes laden with various tropical fruits which we traded for items such as razor blades, and this fruit paw-paw etc. was delicious.

I recall the natives diving into the sea to retrieve the bartered items until a shark appeared and we warned them of its presence. They tried to spear it but without success.

Other times the ship was fog bound for hours and we eventually docked at Finschafen where it was as hot as 'hades'.

After a day at Finschafen we headed up the New Guinea coast at a slower speed (about four knots) past Aitape and eventually arrived at our destination Hollandia. The cruise had taken about four weeks and we were not sorry to see the last of the *Van Swoll*.

Some time later I heard it was rumoured the ship had sunk in the cyclone but in fact a sister ship the *Van der Lin*, which was returning to Brisbane in ballast, had capsized and sunk with all hands lost.

After war's end the *Van Swoll* spent several months tied up at a berth in Sydney near Blues Point just west of the Harbour Bridge, until eventually sold for scrap.

Bruce Bentwich.
August, 1991.

P.S. After 46 years I cannot guarantee the accuracy of all details of the voyage but hope it will revive memories for others who were on the "cruise".

C.B.I.C.A.

Page Layout: Kamil Gorgen

PEOPLE.

Mayor of Caulfield Cr. Geoff Patience BEM, J P has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. At least one of the Melbourne press reports included in his curriculum vitae his service with 'the AIF and with Central Bureau Intelligence Corps engaged on special duties'

Frank Hughes, after formal hostilities ceased served with an Australian War Crimes Commission and was involved with war crimes trials in Singapore.

Hugh Dunn, one time Professor at Griffith University reached a career peak when he served with the Australian Diplomatic corps in Japan. He is joining C.B.I.C.A.

THE INSIDE STORY.

Do you know that?

* a U.S. Naval Intercept Unit with 61 personnel was operational in Manila when Pearl Harbour was surprised? Their training commenced in 1928. It is difficult to understand how no warning of the impending Japanese attack reached Pearl Harbour. Perhaps the Japanese maintained radio silence, which is unlikely.

*the Australian Army pioneered our entry into wartime radio intercept activity in the Middle East and in Australia ----- the RAAF was a late comer but in the later stages of the war seemed to replace army intercept units. Within the ambit of Central Bureau operations however, neither the Army nor the RAAF were at the forefront. The four U.S. Signal Radio Intelligence Companies had an intercept capacity which "exceeded that of the Australian Army Wireless Sections and RAAF Wireless Units combined".

* we not only spied upon our enemies. ASWG had several "C" sections which intercepted and reported upon Australian military communications.

* from C.B. sigint we learnt something about what the Japanese were discovering about Allied military operations as a result of Japanese interceptions of radio communications on our side.

* AWAS and WAAAFs working for C.B. were denied a trip to San Miguel only because the Director of WAAAF had a bad reaction to her pre-tropics injections. These assertions are but a minuscule sample of the intriguing information to be found in between the covers of "ON ULTRA ACTIVE SERVICE".

BUT Newsletter is not the place to find an unbiased, objective and dispassionate review of GEOFFREY BALLARD'S labour of love. Members of C.B.I.C.A. are too close to this story. We may be even a bit proprietary about it. After all some at least of the sigint story is our story. Few of us were knowledgeable enough to have an intimate overview of the operations of C.B. but we do indeed remember well that small segment with which we were each involved.

This is a book which members might just happen to leave on a coffee table or some other place where it will be noticed by friends and relatives. It is beautifully produced, has an impressive foreward by a Government Minister, a comprehensive contents list and index, many photographs and maps and a hint of disclosure of secrets --but not all of them. A likely emotional response is to be proud to be associated in some way with this book and this is where objectivity is threatened. If we see our own personal wartime activities well covered in the contents list we feel good. One doesn't pick up the book and start to read the story at page one. More likely there is a quick flick to the photographs. If they are of colleagues the feeling is good. Flick to the list of contributors or to the index-----recognise some names of people and units and places--- a friends name your unit or even your own name and feel very positive about the book. On the other hand your unit may only get four lines or even one line----too bad---- so you didn't respond to Geoff's early invitations to contribute to this major work. Having dispensed with the initial reaction now let's read from page one.

On Ultra Active Service is not a work of history but it does have much material of historical significance ----- it is not a novel but does have action, suspense, violence and humour -----it is not a travelogue but does have graphic descriptions of journeys and exotic places and people from other cultures. It is indeed autobiographical; although there are many story tellers apart from Geoff. There are pretty word pictures. Consider a moment of travel on a troop ship "sailing on a glassy sea of intense blue and along the horizon there were great mountains of cloud piled one upon the other as if they had been squeezed out of a giant ice cream gun." There are also some graphic but not so pretty word pictures: "I

staggered to the medical post where I began to shake uncontrollably and have violent bowel actions. Looking at the mess of excreta and blood I noticed what looked like wood shavings floating about on the surface. 'Bad luck, mate' said the orderly, 'that's the lining of your intestines'."

If you search books for insights into character note the references to Mic Sandford from the time of his arrival at a unit under final attack in Crete where he wears a claret coloured jacket to his first meal in the officer's mess to the period of his major contributions to Sigint in the Pacific war. It is to Mic Sandford and Jack Ryan that the book is dedicated. You might like to consider also the author who takes some pains to reconcile his christian beliefs with his participation in war. His experiences in pre-war Nazi Germany seemed to have had an impact. His account of political discussions in 51 Wireless Section in Darwin in 1943 reveal some one who is not "right wing" as does his reaction to the British Military establishment in Colombo when the war suddenly collapsed.

Geoff turns some flood lights on the hitherto dark and secret world of Central Bureau management. He reveals "non-understandings" between himself as CB rep at Advanced Echelon GHQ and his superiors in Brisbane. CB leaders didn't grasp the MacArthur management style and were reluctant to move up north with the General. As a consequence the lines of communication became too long and inefficient. By the time CB got to San Miguel, to use Geoff's words, "the war was virtually over". Geoff was clobbered by Mic Sandford for allowing 6 Wireless unit to be created in the field to meet American requests. While CB was playing games with the six other WU's which seemed to have mobility problems 6 WU had a quick birth, was instantly operational and was scheduled to go to Japan.

This book opens wide, for most of us for the first time, a window of understanding of Australia's entry into the Sigint world. There are, however, still some mysteries and even fifty years on the trail may not be too cold for an interested sleuth.

ON ULTRA ACTIVE SERVICE by Geoffrey Ballard is published by Spectrum Publications Pty. Ltd. It may be ordered from S.J. Mason 2/18 Kasouka Road Camberwell Vic 3124 at a cost of \$50 plus \$10 postage and packing.

FEEDBACK Sigint and Operation Rimau.

A letter from Keith Payne.

Rather belatedly I am responding to Helen Kenny and her comments about Operation Rimau in Recollections-Newsletter No 2 of June 1991. My tardiness was due to the need to go back and find and re-read the material I have on hand about Operation Rimau.

When I was in Washington between 1982- 1985 as the Defence Liaison Officer for DSD, one chore I took on was to research material on Operation Rimau at the request of Tim James, Director DSD. The background to this was that an approach had been made to DSD by a former British Army Colonel Harold Lander for declassified Sigint on the operation about which he was seeking information to enable the South Australian Film Corporation produce a film on the subject. My role was to assist Harold in getting access to the raw traffic (message translations). This meant going through the archives and trying to find amongst the millions of messages stored in Washington those relevant to the operation.

I was in touch with Harold throughout the last year or so of my tour there on a continuing basis and managed to help in finding some bits and pieces but the conclusive evidence about the success or failure of the operation always eluded us- that is whether the party of 22 men led by Lt Lyon were able to sink any ships in Singapore. as to the fate of the men it appears from piecing together the various decrypts that in fact all either died or were executed by the Japanese even though two of them got back to Dilli in Timor some four months after the raid on Singapore was attempted.

Harold did a tremendous job in getting information together from a number of sources as well as Sigint including native people in Indonesia but unfortunately after I returned from the States and resumed contact with Harold again early in 1986, he wrote saying that the SAFC had decided not to go ahead with the film project but he was at that time going ahead to produce the book on the subject. However, because of copyright complications with the SAFC, the situation became messy and Harold abandoned the book idea as he had to go about earning a living. Harold did say that he would send his research to the War Memorial.

As a Sydney resident Helen may wish to get in touch with Harold at (address). Unfortunately I never took up Harold's offer to contact him in Sydney but am now sorry that the trail has become cold as he was undoubtedly a character who would not only be interesting in his own right but also one who with his interest in Sigint and his obvious high order of research (he would have made a great traffic analyst) would make a great friend in the style of so many of our colleagues at Central Bureau.

For Helen's interest and any one else interested I will send you a copy of the summary of Harold's research, also a copy of some of the declassified messages which I still have in my folder here at home if anyone wants to take up the subject and write the book (remember that the Krait operation the year before was similar and eminently more successful). I did suggest to John Laird who has successfully written books on the war that he might take up the matter but he was tied up in other projects. It would be a pity if the story of this very epic operation was not passed on to the public at large.

If anyone wants any more info or if I can be of help to Helen (regards to Helen I remember her well) please give me a call on (03) 337 9200.

*Kind regards,
Keith Payne*

EDITORIAL.

For the information of members who enquired about the tape of the ABC coverage of the Brisbane event Treasurer Norma has paid the fee but we do not yet have a tape.

A story sourced by Alan Marsland about the welcome planned by the Japanese if Six WU had tried to land on Kyushu has been held over for the next Newsletter.

*Dennis Moore
Publicity Officer
183 Sylvania Road
MIRANDA 2228
02 524 6267*

THE WAR AS RECALLED by BRIAN LOVETT

