



NEWSLETTER

VOL.2 PT 7

NOVEMBER 1981

GENERAL SECRETARY

AS REQUIRED BY THE CONSTITUTION, THE POSITION OF GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION (AUSTRALIA) IS REQUIRED TO BE DECLARED VACANT EACH YEAR AND NOMINATIONS ARE THEREFORE CALLED FOR THE VACANCY FOR 1982-83.

Nominations close February, 1982, and should be addressed to Mr. Charles Carthew, 7 Lantana Street, Clayton 3168 Vic.

The present General Secretary, Charles Carthew, has indicated his willingness to continue in office for a further twelve months.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

N.S.W. Branch of the O.T.V.A. now has a new Secretary, and for better or for worse, a new Editor/Compiler of the Newsletter. If you listen to Gordon Cupit's version, you will gather the impression that both Lou Brown and I volunteered for the respective positions, but I ask you to remember that Gordon served in the A.I.F., and the Army has its own peculiar way of obtaining volunteers.

The fact of the matter is that Lou and I were having a yakk about old times when 'Gordon the Great' skipped around the corner with the usual bag which he thrust into our hands enjoining us to "hang on to this for a bit, willyer." It became evident that the great 'QP' was not coming back so we ventured a look inside. The contents contained letters and contributions to the Newsletter, and a paper declaring Lou Brown as the new Hon. Secretary of the N.S.W. O.T.V.A. and Jim Anderson as the Editor of the Newsletter.

That's our story and we are sticking to it, aren't we Lou?

By the way, we are both still looking for Gordon.

HISTORICAL DONATIONS

Historical donations were made by Brax Horrocks, Len Vella, Chris Fox, Chas. M. Power (Ex C&W).

NEWS FROM THE GARDEN STATE - VICTORIA

The 25th Annual General Meeting held at O.T.C. House
Melbourne

29 MAY, 1981

Present were:

D. Chambers, A. Vagg, W. Shea, L. Reynolds, W. Bentley,
C.F. Green, G. Russell, V. Molineux, G. Magnus,
V. Finlay, S. Bright, W. Ferguson, E. Turner, A.W. Green,
D. Dunstall, M. Hinneberg, Audrey Bright, D. Humphries,
J.B. White, C.W. Carthew, Pearl Peat, F. Patrick,
N. Stubbs, D. Gault, D. Batten, C. Benson, R. Hall,
I. Reed, S. Silver, R.T. Roger, L. Shepherd,
Sir Albert Chadwick, J.T. Cooper, J. Hunter, Noreen Gosney,
C. Allison, A. Arndt, J. Cowans, J. Birch, L. Foley,
W. Jenvey, V. Carboon, M. Fernando, G. Carter, A. Stewart
and M. Gildea.

W. Shea, who has had 51 years service with Cable & Wireless (now retired), was elected President, and a new Committee-man, G. Russell, was elected to replace Alan Vagg, Immediate Past President, ex-officio, otherwise all other members of the Committee and the Auditors were returned unopposed.

After careful deliberation a proposed change toward having a daylight Annual General Meeting, from noon to 3.30 p.m. in the month of May met with the approval of the majority member vote, subject of course, to Management approval for the continued use of the Amenities Section of O.T.C. (A) House, Melbourne.

Regarding our Annual Reunion to be held in November, the meeting left all arrangements in the hands of the Committee.

Despite the drop in attendance, everyone spent an enjoyable time, especially with Bill Jenvey present to yarn about old times.

At the 24th Annual General Meeting of O.T.V.A. (Victoria) held on 29 November, 1981, a group photo was produced which showed those present at a luncheon to mark the successful inauguration of the first direct Beam Wireless between Australia and England on 8 April, 1927. The photo attracted quite considerable interest, for almost all of those who were present on that historic occasion have since passed on, namely:

E.T. Fisk (later Sir Ernest), J.C. Draffin, J.W. Lamb,
H.A. DeDassel, J. McLeod, W. Robinson, P.M. Farmer,
A.F. Hosking, A.H. Brown, S. Martin, M.H. Stuart,
C.F. Hillyar, J. Green, R. Simons, R.R. Freeman,
G.J. Weston, G. Apperley, J.R. Gilligan, J.H. Williams,
T.J. O' Leary, G. Morrison, T. Jessop, O.A. Jarman,
S.A. Cooper, A. Stuart, A.B. Sharland, A.F. Newman,
L.A. Hooke (later Sir Lionel).

Messenger: G.H. Gordon.

Obscured at left of the photograph were G.F. Chilton,
F. Exon and F. McGraph.

MEMORABILIA

In a letter to the General Secretary, Charles Carthew, veteran, Tom Condon (New Zealand), enclosed a group photo which was taken in 1905 and shows the old cable staff at Cable Bay, Northland, New Zealand including old timers Messrs Haines, Houston, Black, Keys, Coote, Morris, Travis, Letters, Herslett, Jenkins, Smith and Dacre of Manganui. Tom received this photo from Bob Marchant prior to his death. As a piece of cable history, the photo will be included in collected memorabilia being prepared for the Latrobe Library, Melbourne.

Pacific Veteran, Jack Turnbull (now a nonagenarian), recalls that when he was only ten years of age, he, among others, helped to haul the original cable ashore at Southport, for which he received a pat on the head, two bob and the somewhat prophetic remark that one day, he would become a cable operator.

N.S.W. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*The 25th Annual General Meeting was held in the O.T.C. Staff Cafeteria
Sydney*

29 MAY, 1981

This date coincided with the O.T.C. Managers' Conference allowing a number of our interstate members to attend.

Present were:

Bill Day, Ted O'Donnell, Charlie Raecke, Bert Waugh,
Kevin Minogue, Ron Godfrey, Alf Culloden, Keith Vincent,
Harry Stone, Margaret Dobson, Geoff Warner, Molly Condon,
Kath Morgan, Len Rourke, Fred Keen, John Toland,
Jack Burgess, Bill Luke, Philip Geeves, Trevor Thatcher,
Kerry Adams, Roy Doohan, Gray MacDonald, John Mulholland,
Marjorie Reed, Arthur Oliver, Percy Day, Eric Norris,
Gareth Thompson, Jack Orton, David Rogers, George Schulze,
Des Woods, Gordon Cupit, Nell Donoghue, Geoff Day,
Alec Griffiths, Len Vella, Jack Chant, John Lee,
Cyril Vahtrick, Stan Gray, Fred Doolette, Jack Whittaker,
Bruce Collett, Marie Casey, Bill Chant Jnr, Orm Cooper,
Trevor Hughes, Marie O'Hanlon, Claire Brophy, John Walker,
Maurie O'Connor, John Newlyn, Barry Henson, Bernie Harrison,
Peter Frost, Derek Jolly, Roy Branson, George Broadbent,
Annette Taylor, Lou Brown, Keith Wilmot, John Creswick.
Jack Creswick, Ron Beecham, Des Kinnersley, Charlie Hales,
Mick Wood, Randy Payne, Ernie Anthony, Tom Hughes, Tony Ebert,
Ron Smith, Val Dunlop, Joan Sullivan, Claude Dalley,
Ken Walker, Brian Woods, Ted Gunning, Jim Peridis,
Dick Westwood, Jim Banks, Jack Silcock, Jim O'Toole,
Ray Collins, Joe Collister, Eileen Haran, George Maltby,
Arthur Purtill, Bill Schmidt.

A number of new members were welcomed by the President and Lou Brown was elected as Secretary replacing Gordon Cupit (retiring). The highlight of the evening was the presentation made by Philip Geeves to Gordon Cupit of a magnificent fishing reel as a token of appreciation of Gordon's 13 years as Secretary.

The Election of Officers was held and when the dust had cleared, Mr. Philip Geeves had been retained as our President, Lou Brown was declared Hon. Secretary and Joe Collister was our Hon. Treasurer.

Messrs Jack Whittaker, Des Woods, Trevor Thatcher and Audrey Keenan were duly elected to Committee. Mr. Keith Wilmot had indicated that he did not wish to be nominated and nominated Jim Anderson as his replacement. Being absent from the meeting and therefore unable to defend himself, Jim was duly elected to the Committee and has since signified his willingness to stand.

MESSAGE FROM GORDON CUPIT

On retirement in July, I reluctantly did not stand for re-election as Secretary of the N.S.W. Association and am pleased to advise that Lou Brown, a very worthy fellow, has taken over those duties. Jim Anderson has volunteered to assist Lou by editing and producing the Newsletter. The production of this publication in the past has been made easy because of the many contributions by colleagues and I trust that this will continue, and I am sure that the finished product will have a new look with Jim's journalistic abilities and wit.

(Cont'd)

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all members for their contributions to Newsletter and for assistance and help over the years, particularly the State Presidents and Secretaries, not forgetting the very able N.S.W. Committee.

QLD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 6th Annual General Meeting of the QLD Association was held in the O.T.C. Manager's office, Brisbane

12 MAY, 1981

Present were:

Jim Banks, Eric Cramp, Bill Jenvey, Alan Jones, Dean Laws, John Marshall, John Norris, Bob Webster, Denis Moorhouse, Harry Sutherland, John Ponsonby, Wim Elbertse and visitors from Sydney, George Maltby and Merv Gildea.

All current office bearers, President George Scott, Secretary Jim Banks, Treasurer John Norris and Editor Alan Jones were unanimously re-elected.

It was agreed that the next Annual Reunion be held at Brisbaneradio instead of Brisbane office and the members were enthusiastic with the idea.

The visitors from Sydney addressed the meeting briefly and stressed the continuing support for the Veterans' Association by the Commission. The meeting was followed by a buffet lunch and the usual good fellowship during the afternoon.

The QLD Secretary forwarded the following newsy pars on his members:

"Ponto" came to the meeting virtually from his sick bed - he's been in hospital recently with pneumonia and has to go back soon for further checks. But his illness has done nothing to dampen his enthusiasm or his stories - he belies his 85 years.

President George Scott never seems to change although he has reduced his activity on the bowling green somewhat. Wife Glory has been having her ups and down but fortunately at the moment was feeling quite well.

Bert Edwards apologised from Main Beach - he doesn't travel well these days. However, he has lost none of his old attention for detail and in his apology roundly told off the Secretary for getting his address wrong - again!

There were no takers at this A.G.M. from Brisbane Radio - new Acting Manager, Ted Bastow, Kev Hiscock, Laz Elion and Alan Rees all said they were working - things must be bustling at V.I.B. However, we're all looking forward to checking up on them at the next reunion.

Old V.I.B.-ites included Harry Sutherland, looking as dapper as ever and much more relaxed since he gave away rearing avocados and moved to a life of leisure on Bribie. Also on Bribie is Eric Cramp who acted as oversight host to Bill Jenvey who broke his journey from Noosa Heads. Bill is still recovering from hospitalisation but is picking up well and doesn't miss too many skeds on his C.W. rig.

One of Bill's regular contacts is Dean Laws, who still plods up and down between Weipa and Gladstone for six months of the year. Dean looks as though the sea-going life really suits him.

Also looking well was Bob Webster who reckons that looking after his property at Mudgeeraba makes him wonder how he ever found time to work. (Your old colleagues in M.O.R. and B.O.R. might wonder sometimes, too, Bob!)

Amongst the apologies - Vince Sim, for some reason, decided not to break his Barrier Reef cruise for the occasion, whilst Les Doubleday had guests staying with him at Rockhampton and Hilda refused to let him abandon them. Les claims he's getting a bit old and creaky these days but his right elbow hasn't suffered yet.

Wilf Atkin couldn't make it unfortunately, nor could Armour McCollum who celebrated his 78th birthday recently and who finds his time pretty well occupied looking after his property at Kingscliffe (we don't mind a few N.S.W. residents joining the QLD Vets!) Hopefully, 'Mac' can make the next reunion and see the changes at V.I.B. since his days in charge.

Jock Kellie was coming until the last moment when a funeral put first call on his time. He tells us that instead of brewing the state's strongest beer, he now drinks it!

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REPORT

News has reached the East Coast that our man in the West, Brian Morrell has been off on sick leave. It appears that he must be well again as he makes the remark that it is interesting to see that it took two men to replace Gordon Cupit as the Hon. Secretary of the O.T.V.A. N.S.W. Branch. Knowing the temperament of the two men concerned, that remark will cost you two "middles" next time you are in Sydney, Brian.

W.A.'s LOSS IS QLD's GAIN

Pat Gray and Norm Odgers, both retired, have uprooted themselves from "The State of Excitement" and are heading for the Sunshine State hoping that the Queensland weather may be better than that of W.A. A small informal gathering bid them farewell on 13 May, and it goes without saying that they will be sorely missed from our already extremely thin ranks of Western Australia.

Arthur and Mrs Black have moved into the Salvation Army complex of home units in Hollywood; not the film star one - the one in the Nedlands district.

Frank McCay continues to espouse his dry sense of humour whilst convalescing at Mon Repos Rest Home in Mosman Park. Frank claims to be a completely reformed character. His main hobby is eating "Freckles" a little chocolate confection about the size of a ten cent peice and covered in "hundreds and thousands".

Of course, he still follows Claremont's footie team which is top of the wazzer at the moment and with a bit of luck may crack a "flag" in 1981.

Fred James must have "something on the go" overseas. Once again he has gone AWL from his Presidential duties and shot off on a jaunt around Europe.

No weather report forthcoming from the European sector, but it couldn't be worse than what we have experienced in the past two months in W.A.

On a sadder note, many of the Wagga veterans will long remember the name of Lou Sherburn from Melbourne and it grieves us to report that his widow, Doris, suffered a severe heart attack and passed away on Monday 13 July, 1981. Always a great worker within the community, she continued with the OVER 60 CLUB at Mosman Park which was initiated by Lou in the early sixties.

Dick Hickinbotham has reached that point for which he planned ever since the art of planning was invented. He pops into work on an odd day a week spending the rest of this time on his "block" in the hills. Dick never did go along with the edict that one should toil for six days and rest on the seventh - he reckoned that work days were only included in the calendar to keep the week-ends apart, and maybe add a little variety to life. After all, you have to visit the "big smoke" sometime, so it might just as well be on a work day as a special shopping trip.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN O.T.V.A. WINTER MEETING 1981

The Adelaide Branch of the O.T.V.A. held its winter meeting at the Wakefield Hotel on May 28. It is unfortunate that we no longer have the use of the Public Service Club rooms because of a change in their policy, so it is likely that our winter meetings will be held at the Wakefield Hotel, with our Christmas meetings being held at the home of Brax Horrocks.

Present at the May meeting were Charles Smith, Graham Little, Ken Springbett, Norman MacKay, George Rowe, Ron Ward, Ken Collett, Cliff Birks, Hugh Taylor Keith Parker and Bert Dudley.

Unfortunately, our Present, Brax Horrocks, was in hospital at the time of the meeting, having a new ball and socket inserted in his hip. Apologies were received from him and from Rocky Gordon, Geoff Cox, Keith Cox, Max Lang, Fred Reeves, Claud Whitford, Harold Oates, Jerrold Shaw, Ralph Matthews and Eric Symes.

It was sad to hear of the passing of "Longun" Evans only a few days before the meeting. He and Harold Oates came from the Post Office as morse operators to the Adelaide branch of the Eastern Extension Company just after WWI.

Members of the Adelaide branch of the O.T.V.A. are pleased to endorse the nomination of Charles Carthew as Honorary Secretary of the association and express appreciation of his services.

Our next meeting will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 26 November, 1981, at the home of Brax Horrocks, Unley Park.

ADVICE TO BOWLERS

George Rowe, retired from the Eastern Extension, is a keen bowler and apparently one of no mean skill, as he won his Club championship 31/28. George has done this before, so it could develop into a habit.

For those veterans who are involved in bowls (and we know that there are many), George sends along this little item which is all too familiar to bowlers.

A HAPPY FAMILY

We held the yearly meeting of our club on the other day,
And unitedly decided that dissension didn't pay,
We'd had so many factions, feuds, rumpuses and cliques
That the club had grown too lively with the passing of the weeks.
So that we got together, like a happy family,
And agreed to an agreement that we'd never disagree.

(Cont'd)

Correspondence, minutes, other business, we romped through;
We tinkered up the rules; reports, finance, no comment drew.
It was grand to see that fine display of unanimity,
That noble band of brothers was as happy as could be.

Unopposed election was the order of the day,
'til we came to the Selectors - then there was hell to pay.
Each faction got magnetic, and named its fancy man,
And harmony departed, pandemonium began.

They argued, bawled and wrangled 'til the Chairman took a hand,
But when it came to voting, not a candidate would stand.
The Chairman closed the meeting, which adjourned without regret.
Some day they'll find selectors - but they haven't done it yet.

So I ponder by the fireside, and wonder in my dreams
What they'll say when the elected, pick and post the Pennant teams.

When reading the signatures of veterans at the Xmas 1980 meeting of O.T.V.A.(S.A.) it was most interesting to look back on the attendance sheet of twenty or so years ago which was published then in "Zodiac" with a comment on the clear and distinct penmanship of everyone present - namely:

H.H. Muhlhan, J.W. Wilkin, D. Mitchell, Harold M. Lea,
W.E. Hardy, Alan McPhee, Keith Goode, R.O. Wilson,
C.H. Oates, C.A. Cleland, E.E. Story, Albert E. Edwards,
A.H.H. Evans, Lorna Ellershaw, Ellis Golsworthy, P. Pearse,
W.A. Caldwell, S.S. Ringwood, H. Teague, H.A. Colliver,
H.W. Chinner, T.R. Findlayson, W.B. Lemon, S.M. Richardson,
S.W. Stretton, H.A. Halifax, C.E. Shortt, H.S. Brawley,
Ross Anderson, J.R. Duncan, J. Millikon, J.G. Laurie,
A.C. Birks

The late A.H. (Dick) Evans' and the handwriting of 'Long-Un', as he was affectionately known, remained firm and legible throughout the years.

Gwen, widow of our late colleague Fred Griffiths, wrote from Labrador in Queensland enclosing newspaper articles on the public outcry and protest against the proposed demolition of the 1901 historical landmark so well remembered by Pacific Cable veterans as the Southport Cable Station and Training Centre.

Regarding the cost of modern day telegrams in contrast to the cablegram referred to in our previous Newsletter, prompts reference to page 22 of "Girdle Round the Earth" - a story built round extensive research - of Cable and Wireless and its predecessors to mark the group's jubilee 1929-79 - quote:

"In 1866, the Great Eastern successfully laid a new cable, lighter but stronger, from Valentia to Hearts Content-New Foundland. The Anglo-American Company had full control and charged twenty pounds a message. In reply to protests, this charge was reduced but not the transmission time. In December, the U.S. Government sent a 4000 word message from Washington to Paris at seven words a minute taking ten hours to transmit and cost more than two thousand pounds."

unquote.

Incidentally, this book (413 pages) was kindly presented to General Secretary, Charles Carthew, by Chris E. Fox, ex Marconi's Wireless Telegram Co/Cable & Wireless 1924-1965 and Charles M. Dower ex Spanish Telegraph CO/Cable & Wireless 1912-1947 both now retired and resident Rustington, Sussex, England.

VALE

RUSS WEST

Russ joined the Coastal Radio Service in 1929 and resigned in 1932. During that time, he served at Port Moresby and Townsville. He was re-employed early 1934 and from then until his retirement in 1964 served at Townsville, Cooktown, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Darwin and La Perouse. He was one of those characters who just carried on his job with the greatest of efficiency and as a result, was not widely known.

DICK EVANS

Dick, affectionately known as "Longun" came to the Eastern Extension from the Adelaide Post Office near the end of WWI. During his career, he was stationed at Fanning Island, Sydney, Adelaide, Darwin and Wellington N.Z. Commencing as a morse operator, he became a Supervisor, at one stage occupying the position of Manager (Sydney) just after the Commission took over. He was a good sport, played cricket, tennis, Aussie Rules football and was a keen boxer.

BILL JENVEY

Like his father before him, our late highly esteemed colleague, the late Bill Jenvey left an indelible imprint in the realm of telegraphy. We remember Bill as a first-class morse man, technician and chief engineer, always ready and willing to lend a helping hand, a good mixer and truly a credit to his professional status.

(Cont'd)

In later years during retirement, Bill suffered ill health but maintained contact "on the air" as an amateur "Ham" operator and will be missed by his many friends with whom he kept a daily morning schedule.

Bill Jenvey came to O.T.C.'s Engineering Division in 1946 from A.W.A.'s Beam Radio Service. He had been with A.W.A. since 1938, when he joined the Braybrook radio transmitting centre in Victoria. A year later, he was moved to the Ashfield Laboratories, N.S.W., as Development Engineer.

After joining O.T.C., Bill Jenvey became Traffic Plant Engineer at the new Head Office, Sydney in 1948, and assisted with the engineering surveys in 1954 for the Melbourne Olympics. In 1955, he went with the then General Manager, Mr. Mulholland, to London to attend a meeting of the C.T.B. Technical and Traffic committee. In 1958 he became Supervising Engineer (Operations) and Chief Engineer in 1960.

GEORGE MORRISON

The late pioneer veteran, George Morrison, an original Beam Supervisor selected for training in England, served in the Post Office 1911-20 - the Beam Service A.W.A. 1920-46 - O.T.C. (A) 1946-50 when transferred to Sydney 1950-52 as Training Officer but returned to Melbourne as Supervisor at his own request - retired 1962.

In retirement, George moved around Australia from time to time and then finally decided to settle in Sydney. George became totally deaf and lead a lonely life and will be remembered as a kindly gentleman highly respected by all who knew him. George was 84 at the time of his sad passing in the fire that destroyed The Rembrandt Apartment House, Kings Cross, in which he was a resident for many years.

HARRY STEWART

Harry began his career in 1914 as an operator aboard Naval Transports before joining the Coast Radio Service in 1916, when he served at Melbourne, Townsville and Port Moresby. During the war years, he served with the New Guinea Force Signals and the Allied Defence Organisation. After the war, he served at Manus Island, Rabaul, Rockhampton, S.O.R. Island Room and Sydney Radio and as a marine operator with the Union Steamship before his retirement in 1970.

TO PASTURE

KEN STONE

Ken joined the Coast Radio Service in 1939 and served at La Perouse, Darwin, Rabaul, Townsville and York Street Island Room. He was promoted to Station Manager (La Perouse) in 1967 and held that post until he retired.

(Cont'd)

Ken was in Rabaul in June, 1942 when the Japanese invaded. The majority of staff were able to escape, the Station Manager, Harry Holland, and the office boy were captured and subsequently lost their lives when an allied submarine torpedoed the transport in which they were being taken to P.O.W. camp. Ken went bush with a small army unit and equipment, and became one of those valuable and famous coast watchers. Their task was to report size, quantity and types of aircraft passing overhead. It was from these reports that Port Moresby in particular was able to have fore-warning of air-raids. It was a most dangerous occupation as the Japanese never let up in seeking their whereabouts which resulted in constant moving around. He was evacuated in April, 1943.

JACK McGRORY

Jack joined Cable & Wireless Limited in Melbourne in 1934 and held a number of clerical positions in that organisation and with O.T.C. He was promoted to Officer-in-Charge (Clients Accounts) in 1960, Traffic Accountant in 1971 and Administrative Superintendent in 1976. Unfortunately, Jack has not had good health over the last couple of years and has retired on the grounds of invalidity.

RON GODFREY

Ron joined A.W.A. as a Messenger in 1933 and after approximately one year wearing his legs down, he was promoted to a clerical position in the Beam Accounts Section. Ron served in the R.A.A.F. Bomber Command during the war and was a leader of a Lancaster Squadron. For many years after the war, Ron was O.T.C.'s Paymaster and just over a decade ago, was chosen for training in ADP programme.

For the last few years, he has been supervising O.T.C.'s Data Centre.

Ron served for a number of years as Secretary of the Social and Sports Club from its infancy and also elected to various staff committees.

GORDON CUPIT

Gordon started as a Beam Messenger on the same day as Ron Godfrey but was allocated to the Beam Operating Room on completion of his messenger service. From then to the commencement of the war, he trained and worked in most clerical areas of the Operating Room including despatch and counter. Gordon served in armoured units in the AIF and finished the war in the Eastern Command Records Office. On returning to the Beam, he took up telegraphist duties until 1952 where his army records experience won him an appeal becoming the first of the Operating Room staff to break into clerical ranks. Since that time, Gordon has worked in most of the personnel areas and for the last five years as Manager (Recruitment).

JIM ANDERSON

Jim joined the Commission's service on 8 December 1946. Prior to that, he served in the R.A.A.F. from October 1940 until discharged in February 1946 holding the rank of Sergeant Wireless Operator Mechanic. He immediately

(Cont'd)

enrolled in the High Speed Beam Wireless Course run by the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme with the idea of becoming an A.W.A. employee, but the Beam Service was taken over by the O.T.C.(A) in November, 1946 so in effect he became one of the first of the Commission's employees. He elected to join the International Telex section upon its inception and reached the position of Intlx Controller, a position he still held on his retirement in August this year.

During his 35 years with the Commission, Jim has been the Officers' Representative on the O.T.C. Promotions Appeal Board, a member of the Staff Relations Committee, and the Intlx Representative on the Telegraphic Staff Consultative Committee.

BITS AND PIECES - HERE AND THERE - ROUND AND ABOUT

SICKIES

It is regretted that reports have been received that many of our Veterans have succumbed to the dreaded lurgi, or some other malady. We sincerely trust that they are well and back on deck again.

Len Rourke, John Ponsonby, Charlie Watson, George Wheeler, Norm Alderson and Elsie Thornley.

Tom Land has been hospitalised but is now convalescing at home down McCrae way.

Al Boord has been off colour and misses his annual escape to the Gold Coast away from the Melbourne winter.

DEEPEST SYMPATHY

Our sympathy to Ellis Smellie on the recent passing of his son.

Sympathy also to Joan Miller who recently lost her mother.

ITCHY FEET SECTION

Arthur Stewart recently left on a trip to England. Also headed in the same direction are Guye and Jean Russell, but all hope to be back by November for the Annual Reunion:

Merle Short recently returned from a holiday trip to Canada, and Jean Edwards had a well-earned rest in Cudgen, N.S.W.

CONGRATULATIONS

Alex Stewart had cause for celebration when he reached his 40th year with A.W.A.(A) Limited.

So too did Noreen Gosney when she became a grandmother for the first time - a bonnie granddaughter.

VALE

Those of you who remember our highly esteemed colleague, Lou Sherburn, will be saddened to know that his widow, Doris, has recently passed away. Our sympathy goes to the family.

WIDOWS

There are many widows of our late colleagues who you may wish to contact and who, I am sure, would like to hear from the workmates of their late husbands. In N.S.W., Christmas cards are sent each year, and anybody wishing a list of names and addresses to the widows should contact Lou Brown.

LOST

Newsletters sent to Glen Searle and Harry Groom have been returned delivered. The Secretary would appreciate any info on their whereabouts, particularly their addresses.

Ethel, widow of our late colleague Harry Rowe, recently hospitalised as a result of a heavy fall. She is now restricted to the use of a walking stick.

Popular and very keen President of O.T.V.A. (S.A.), Brax Horrocks, underwent surgery on the hip and now convalescing in readiness for the November "get together".

A letter from Harold White who is kept more busy in retirement than the job hopes to attend Veterans' functions in the near future. Harold spends practically everyday in the city on some committee or community organisation.

Mrs M.D. Ross, Alexander Headland, QLD, a colleague of Mrs Jean Edwards in the very early days of A.W.A., kindly sent a donation in appreciation for regular receipt of our Newsletter.

VETERANS' RECORDS OF SERVICE - URGENT

Too often we find on the retirement or demise of one of our colleagues we know little or nothing of his or her background. This means that our Secretary has to try and get a thumbnail sketch of the Veteran concerned from his immediate family of acquaintances and friends.

You must all agree that this is not the most satisfactory arrangement.

(Cont'd)

A "Record of Service" sheet is available from your Secretary, and I strongly urge those veterans who have not already done so to obtain a copy, fill it in and return to the Secretary soonest.

The information is required for historical purposes only.

ACCIDENTS

Our commiserations go to Charlie Swinney whose car suddenly turned into a boat and aqua-planed into a truck. Charlie only suffered a few bruises and minor injuries, but the car was a complete write-off.

Mary Ebert also escaped with cuts and bruises when her car was shunted into a passing tree. Tony, no doubt, suffered a severe shock to his hip-pocket nerve.

A WIN FOR THE CONSERVATIONISTS

Gwen Griffiths sent down the final press cutting re the saving of the Southport Cable Station and Staff Quarters, so completing a great story and chalking another win for the conservationists.

Gwen keeps in touch with Lil Chalkley, Connie Waite, Thelma Uwins and Josie Connelly.

HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL FUNDS

Members should consider transferring from their present medical coverage to the Government Employees' Medical and Hospital Fund, 85-87 Smith Street, Wollongong, 2500, postal adress P.O. Box 1730, Wollongong.

This Club has cheaper rates than most hospital and medical funds, and in most cases gives much better benefits. For those Veterans still in harness, it should be pointed out that the Club provides up to a 50% reduction on retirement, providing that the contributor has been a member of the Club for at least two years prior to retirement.

Veterans already retired could enquire as to eligibility, pointing out that they are retired Government employees and belonged to a Union during employment.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL

We are always in the market for articles, memoirs, anecdotes and reminiscences from veterans, so send along any you may have. I would particularly like to get enough material to commence a "Characters I Have Met" section. Once we have a starter, it should not take long before one incident triggers off the memory of some other veteran in similar vein.

To those who have contributed, and like "Ponto" are still contributing, our thanks.

Don't worry if it does not appear straight away, as this may not be possible because of the amount of material received, but we assure you that nothing of interest is thrown away.

"GIRDLE ROUND THE EARTH"

As reported earlier, this is a story of Cable & Wireless and its predecessors to mark the group's Jubilee 1929-1979 and makes interesting reading.

For instance, take this quote from page 342:

"Shortly after the COMPAC Cable was opened, all telegraph traffic was diverted through it and the sixty year old Pacific cable, which was built despite strong opposition from Electra House, was switched off and put into retirement. It was never worth trying to recover it and it has been for many years used by the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne for a scientific project concerning the changes which take place in the Earth's magnetism. This is carried out by measuring the earth current flowing in the cable which still remains intact over a long distance. The station on Fanning Island, the scene of so much drama, was closed."

(end of quote)

Again, referring to pages 119/120, quote:

"Rises in salary depended on the ability to operators to transmit without error. One application referred to the operators' record for one quarter ending June 1900 listing sixty errors was endorsed with a memo stating 'Cannot be granted. Error average sixty. Matter referred to Head Office.'

(end of quote)

Obviously the book has been carefully researched and would have a nostalgic appeal to the "old timers".

MEN OR MYSTERY GROUP PHOTO

In the March, 1981, issue of "MERCURY" (Cable & Wireless Group Staff Newspaper) referred to the "Men of Mystery Group Photo" which appeared in the previous issue and most of the names of the then 1927 "bachelor staff" at Buenos Aires and one name unidentified proved to be the late "Tufty" Baker who later became Executive Director and retired from the Board of Directors in 1963, spending his retirement in Australia where he died in 1979.

Sydney veterans will remember "Tufty" Baker who regularly attended O.T.V.A. meetings and was held in very high esteem.

LA PEROUSE CABLE STATION - URGENTLY NEEDED

All veterans who may have some knowledge of the old La Perouse Cable Station particularly photographs of the buildings and/or staff are asked to contact the Secretary, Lou Brown. Not only are these records needed by our own archivist, but the Randwick Historical Society will appreciate copies for their records.

All we know is that the Cable Station was located not far from Bare Island and terminated at Cable Bay near Nelson N.Z. where it was officially opened in 1872.

Though we would prefer to keep the originals for our own archives, if those in possession wish to hang on to the originals, there is no problem - we will have copies made and return the originals.

THE WAR YEARS

Melbourne Beam Wireless veterans will remember their colleague, Jim Jacobs, who relates a remarkable and almost incredible coincidence.

When a prisoner of war in the Singapore Changi Gaol camp, there was a dire shortage of paper, especially toilet paper. The Japanese were told about it and responded by sending along a parcel of books, magazines, and other oddments.

One day, a friend of Jim's went to the latrines where he found three separate sheets of paper torn from a Members and Visitors Book of a lodge in Kuala Lumpur, previously visited by Australian soldiers. Imagine his amazement when discovering his own signature along with Jim Jacob's on the first page, General Gordon Bennett on the second, and another pal of Jim's on the third.

Years later Jim was given a photocopy of these three pages by a fellow prisoner of war at Changi, and on checking found that their Army service numbers followed in sequence - Vx40982 - Vx40983.

(Cont'd)

Recently when contacted, Jim mentioned having met Arthur Stewart, an early Beam Wireless colleague, also an ex-P.O.W. from Changi. Asked if he would like to attend our Melbourne 25th Annual Reunion, Jim readily agreed and looked forward to seeing old mates again on such a memorable occasion.

TELEGRAPH DELIVERIES

A recent copy of the Canadian Teleglobe Magazine "SPARGO" advised the termination of Teleglobe's messenger delivery service. They have also closed down one of their accepting offices which is typical of the decline in telegraph services over the last few years.

It is interesting to note that O.T.C. closed their messenger service down in 1948 but were fortunate to be able to use the services of the PMG messenger service for delivery of telegrams.

NORTH TO ALASKA

Jock Cowie sent us the following information after his recent trip to Alaska.

"We visited the township of Nome, just close to the Arctic Circle and whilst there saw one of the sled teams which take part in the annual dog sled race from Anchorage to Nome - a distance of approximately 1,000 miles over very treacherous country; treacherous because it is covered with heavy snow, and temperatures plummet down to 70 below ...

Another amazing thing we saw was the pipe line from Prudhoe, near the North Pole, down to Valdez, a distance of 800 miles. Oddly enough, Valdez is an all-year-round port. It doesn't freeze, and is a deep water spot so that super tankers can get in and collect the oil. Actually, the oil comes out of the ground at a temperature ranging between 140 and 160 degrees Fahrenheit, and is still at that temperature when it arrives at Valdez.

I can only describe the oil pipeline as an engineering masterpiece. When considering that more than half of the country that the pipeline passes over is termed "permafrost" that is ground frozen up to say 2000 feet, the temperature of the oil must be maintained otherwise it would become solid and defy pumping. Obviously, the pipeline is insulated - but what an achievement.

"HAM" ERS

As a helpful guide to "HAM" veterans, Bill Jenvey kindly made out this latest list of colleagues, both active and retired, now on the air.

DAILY SCHEDULE 10.15 a.m. - 14.130 MHZ SSB

VK2BT	R.J. BATY	(Ray)
VK2CP	O.E. COOPER	(Orme)
VK2HJ	G.A. WARNER	(Geoff)
VK2SH	HARRY STONE	(Bringelly)
VK2TT	T.W. THATCHER	(Trevor)
VK2VX	H.S. BURGESS	(Jack)
VK2XA	KEN	
VK2ZP	A.G. YATES	(Arthur)
VK2ADR	D.W. REED	(Don)
VK2ANP	J.A. COLLISTER	(Joe)
VK2AZI	B.D. WOODS	(Brian)
VK2AWU	W.A.P. LUKE	(Bill)
VK2BDQ	BILL DAY	(Bringelly)
VK2BEB	B.E. BOLLER	(Bruce)
VK2DPF	PARSONS	(Bill)
VK3APM	R.D. MORRIS	(Ron)
VK3AZC	C.M. ALLISON	(Cliff)
VK3BAV	I.A. PERRY	(Bill)
VK3BMO	L.F. OSBORNE	(Fred)
VK3BBA	STAN SILVER	
VK4LD	LES DOUBLEDAY	
VK4JU	J.M. JOUGHIN	(Jack)
VK4ACR	E.V. CRAMP	(Eric)
VK4ADQ	KEN NUTT	
VK4AKG	FRANK BOND	(Vir)
VK4AKU	H.J. CHAMPION	(Harold)
VK4LN/MM	DEAN LAWS	(S.S. Curtis-Oceanic)
VK5SO	K.C. PARKER	(Keith)
VK6NE	N.F. ODGERS	(Norm)
VK7HB	HARRY BANKS	(Ex VIH)
VK8RR	BOB HOOPER	(VID)

NOTE: "HAM" operator anecdotes most welcome contributions to Newsletter.

FATHER SHAW

Following the story on Father Shaw in the last Newsletter, Alan Tulip, Historian, Telecom, Hobart has forwarded the following information obtained from various sources for one of his research projects.

From "The Mercury", October 3, 1911:

"Wireless on King Island - Our King Island correspondent writes:

'The masts of the Rev. Father Shaw's wireless telegraph installation are now almost completed, and show up well, both from seaward and many parts of the island. But for one of the masts breaking a week or two ago, the whole of the work of this experimental station would have been completed very much earlier. During the experiments with the Randwick station, many of the local residents have been cordially welcomed by the reverend father to witness the transmission and receipt of messages. One of the masts has yet to be raised a considerable height, and during the present week, a strong easterly wind has impeded the work. The installation is certainly one the residents naturally feel proud of possessing, and everyone is hopeful that the day is not far distant when the station will appear among the Commonwealth's list of telegraph stations. It is stated that already the erection of this station has enhanced the value of King Island land fully 10s an acre."

This is yet another of those interesting fragments of history which are occasionally unearthed when searching old newspapers, and as this was the first occasion I had encountered of a reverend gentleman concerning himself with telecommunications developments, I decided to investigate further when circumstances permitted. It has been a lengthy search with most intriguing results.

Archibald John Shaw was born at Adelong, N.S.W., on December 16, 1872. During his earlier years, he was a telegraphist with the P.M.G. department - exactly where I have not yet established - but when aged about 20, he left the department to commence studies for the priesthood and was ordained in 1900. He apparently retained his enthusiasm for electrical communication and became an early electronics wizard. This expertise was soon applied in the business field, and by the year 1911, he had built a wireless station in the Sydney suburb of Randwick where production of wireless equipment was begun. The station was purely of an experimental nature but a local newspaper claimed it to be "the biggest in Australia". This may have been quite true as the antenna was described as "a gigantic steel tower with a total height of 250 feet. The tower has on each side a mast 150 feet high, the overall height being 400 feet." Father Shaw stated his station's range to be 500 miles but the press suggested that a much greater range was possible. The newspaper reported that the company had completed wireless sets for an installation in New Britain with a range of 2000 miles. Other sets had been made for the Dutch Islands and wireless equipment for merchant ships was in course of construction.

(Cont'd)

Because of other commitments I had at that stage, to defer further enquiries into the radio work of Father Shaw, but many months later, more of the story came from an entirely unexpected source. When visiting Jim Davis of Latrobe - who shows great interest in our Museum and Telecom history - I was shown a letter he had received from The Rev. Dr. Leslie Rumble in 1974. The following part of the letter concerned Father Shaw:

"He got his experimental licence in 1910 and gradually built up the most efficient plant at Randwick for the manufacture of wireless equipment. To do this, he had to borrow a lot of money and was always in financial difficulties.

When war broke out in 1914, wireless equipment became unobtainable from overseas, and the Government Wireless Workshop at Williamstown, Vic., established in 1912, couldn't cope with needs. Father Shaw's Randwick plant was more efficient. His achievements were remarkable and his radio communications saved many ships and lives. In May, 1916 (at the suggestion of a Senator Long of Tasmania) he wrote to the then Minister of the Navy offering to sell his whole plant to the Government for £57,000. The government bought it at that price on August 18, 1916.

Father Shaw, who had borrowed money, right, left and centre, naturally had many creditors making claims on the £57,000 paid by the government. He went to Melbourne to negotiate with some of them there, and was found dead in his hotel room on August 26, 1916. He was only 44. His death has never been explained. Rumours were rife that he had been murdered. The whole thing was hushed up because there had been a public outcry over the government's decision to buy the Randwick workshops. A Royal Commission of Enquiry was set up and found that "the Minister of the Navy had incurred expenditure without due reference to the Navy Board, with costly results to the government."

"The Minister of the Navy resigned. The war being on, tight security prevailed and no information was leaked to the press concerning the circumstances of Father Shaw's death."

These disclosures of The Rev. Dr. Rumble certainly seemed to indicate the need for further research, and I therefore sought the findings of the Commission of Enquiry into "The purchase of the Shaw Wireless Works at Randwick, New South Wales." No further light is thrown on the death of Father Shaw; we are simply informed that he "took seriously ill on the Monday following, and died on 26 August, 1916." The remainder of the report is, to put it mildly, highly intriguing, and is certainly worthy of study.

MORSE AND ART

(by A.D. Gregory)

70 w.p.m. is confirmed as a minimum. In the early 1920's, Eastern Extension had their terminal in O'Connell Street - a small building. Prior to that, the Sydney Office was originally in Moore Street, (now Martin Place). We handled all the traffic except from New Zealand, by morse, and no more than six men in the office to do the shifts each 24 hours. From memory, Long-un Evans, Lovell, Kirk Patrick, Johnson and Gregory - plus one to work the fastest light of line in Australia from Adelaide to Sydney. All traffic taken by sound on a typewriter (with carbon copy for office copy) from an automatic transmitter with a few inches of blank type between messages. In the blank time, we have to put in the received time, see that the number of words agreed with the check, answer the next form by, our time the morse had progressed well into the preamble of the following message.

Press messages, also typed, seemed to be a sign that the speed had increased towards 100 w.p.m. by the Adelaide operator, increasing the speed of the transmitter a bit. Kirk Patrick was a wizard, typing on to ten carbons always four or five words behind the sound. If we managed to keep going for half an hour or so without interruption, it would encourage the bloke at the other end (Adelaide) to knudge and speed up a bit more. Code was more difficult those days to receive by sound as every word was ten letters - modern codes were reduced to five-letter words; with all codes, your typewriter had to be fixed to carry five words to the line, so when each message was finished you could tell at a glance if the correct number of words had been received. Six hours of receiving by sound needed terrific concentration, especially if there is a lot of code. Night duty was 11.30 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. with, if you were lucky, five minutes tea break.

Another point comes into it - if there is not enough tape prepared for automatic transmission, messages were sent by key operated by the operator. Some were good "hand senders", as we called them; but some were not so good, especially if they tried to send faster than they really could. "Copper plate" senders were rare and easy to read by sound; but others would clip and a dash was almost a dot. Very trying for the receiving operator. Sound reading was an art which not too many really became expert, but the old wireless boys liked it and many still keep going in retirement and have their own call signs etc. on the amateur band.

FROM THE DIARY

Right from the start, O.T.C.(A)'s General Manager, the late Trevor Housley, showed keen and active interest in O.T.V.A. activity and regularly attending meetings in both Sydney and Melbourne. When appointed Post-Master General of the Australian Post and Telegraph Department, Trevor kept in touch right up to the time of his sudden and very sad passing. Harold White succeeded Trevor as the Commission General Manager and immediately associated himself with the veterans and when O.T.V.A. went National and asked the General Secretary, Charles Carthew if any thing could be done to help. It was respectfully suggested that assistance be given to enable the publication of 'Newsletters' in April and October of each year. Without hesitation, Harold gave authority for this to be done. Gordon Cupit became Editor and before long, over 500 copies of our popular 'Newsletter' not only served Australia but included requests from kindred veteran bodies in America,

(Cont'd)

Canada, England and New Zealand to be placed on the mailing list which left no doubt as to the success of the project. Yet another innovation brought forward by Harold White was the granting of permission for the General Secretary to visit Sydney each year and all four State Branches in rotation. On the retirement of Harold White, his successor, Bill Schmidt, continued to maintain the now traditional rapport with O.T.V.A. (Australia) and like the Commission Chairman, Bob Somervaille, enjoy the fellowship of veteran "get together" functions.

"SAGO" AND HIS TEA

(Story by W.A. Easterling)

I never had the privilege of meeting A.T. Sage. Saw some of his correspondence when I was in Head Office in 1957 and gained the impression of a very likeable man. Those who knew him all spoke highly of him. They said that he was a superb telegraphist. Also that he lived on a steady diet of black tea and tobacco - the tea as black and thick as tar.

In 1970, I did a stint of relief in Darwin; Pat Gray gave me the best briefing on station management and this is how I came to meet Jim Blyth. Mr. Blyth worked for the contractor who cut the grass at the Parap station.

He was a well spoken and educated gentleman from Oenpelli. Married to an aboriginal lady, he had a tremendous knowledge of aboriginal customs, tribal law, bush lore and the sacred beliefs. He had been initiated into the local tribe. His young son came in with him occasionally; a quite, good-looking lad as well spoken and courteous as his father.

We exchanged the usual pleasantries; a few names were mentioned and we yarned about the A.W.A. old-timers. Mr. Blyth knew them all. Eventually Sago's name cropped up, and this tale followed:

Just after the war, about 1946, Jim came into Darwin from Oenpelli. He made his way down to the old station in the Gardens area to see if there were any messages for him. Walked around the bombed building looking for the door. A voice came from within "Jump in through the window" (glassless), which he did and thus met Sago.

Hospitably, Sago offered his guest a cup of tea. Jim took his cup of murderous brew and recalled, "The Aboriginal people like their tea strong and I was used to it, but I'd never struck anything like this. Politeness demanded that I drink it. I made my way out of Darwin with a heaving stomach and back to Oenpelli. It was eighteen months before I could look a cup of tea in the face again."

Well, it matched up with some of the other stories about Sago's tea ...

TRANSIT

It has come to notice that some of the Veterans are not receiving Transit or Contact. Those in this category should contact Charles Carthew, Melbourne (03) 544 2514 or Lou Brown, Sydney (02) 230 5287.

OVERSEAS TRIPPING

Gerald Tracey, who works for the Micky Mouse Airlines in Perth has been on holiday to the U.K. One of the fringe benefits of airline employment is cheap overseas fares.

The Western Australian Association farewelled Pat Gray and Norm Hodges who have just moved out from the dry conditions from Perth to sunny Queensland.

CANADIAN VETERANS

Bob Scott has advised that the following ex-Australian P.C.B. members belong to the Canadian Teleglobe Quarter Century Club.

WESTERN: P.H. Bailey, L.P. Crakanthorp, B.C.J. Fisk, R.B. Fletcher,
R.G. Gordon, J. Knight, H.H. LeQuesne, D.L. Schutz, R.B. Scott,
K.L. Spark, H.F.S. St.Julian.

EASTERN: W.D. Fowlie, A.W. Quirk, E.Q. Wilkinson, E.F.J. Woodall,
C.W. Woods.

TACT

(Story by "Recorder")

In the Pacific Cable Board, one of the essential conditions of service was freedom from debt and, of course, no infringement of law and order. After passing through the training school, either in Australia or New Zealand, it was quite usual for a youthful operator to be sent to Suva as a "breaking in" station. His first time away from home, and with a newfound freedom, there were many temptations and pitfalls for the youngster. All the stores, all the hotels and even the taxi firms worked on the credit system and sent in monthly accounts. Thus it was a

(Cont'd)

great temptation for a young operator to run up bills for his new tropical clothes, for taxi rides and for liquor at the hotels. It was sometimes too hot to walk and the heat generated a thirst. Many a lad was astounded when the monthly bills came in and indeed, many were hard-put to meet their commitments. After a few months of "riotous" living, it usually meant a long period of stringent economy until the creditors were satisfied.

In Suva, the best dances and parties were held at the Grand Pacific Hotel and indeed, when Royalty visited Fiji, receptions were held there also. The bar was well stocked with every brand of spirits, wine and liquers as well as beer from England, Australia and New Zealand. The hotel even had its own brand of pewter pint pots, tastefully engraved with the name of the hotel. Compared with the older Suva hotels, the G.P.H. was the acme of comfort and opulence and as it was so handy to the cricket and rugby grounds as well as the tennis courts, it soon became the mecca of all the sports in the town. Every encouragement was given to members of the public to sit at the verandah tables and sign chits for rounds of drinks. Service was by efficient Indian waiters, who being polite and understanding, gave the novice a pleasant and comfortable feeling. As there were no cruise ships visiting Suva in those days, and as the Pacific Mail steamers were in port only for a few hours, the waiters soon got to know the local boys and no doubt were also able to size up their capabilities and resources.

At the end of every month, an envelope containing all the signed chits, together with a summary, would be posted to each customer and usually there were gasps of amazement at the size of the bills. But all the signatures were there and so the amount couldn't be queried. The G.P.H. office girl was very efficient and a great favourite with all the members of our bachelor quarters. It was her duty to sort out the chits and decipher the signatures and she was never known to make a mistake. In fact, she kept a watchful eye on everything and was of great assistance to the manager.

One afternoon as I returned to my room in the staff quarters, I noticed two of the lads enjoying a quiet drink at a side table in our billiard room. There was nothing unusual in that, but what did attract my attention was the fact that they were both drinking out of G.P.H. pewter pots.

"Look fellows," I said, "How about dropping those pots back to the hotel."

"Like hell". said one of them. Moving away, I thought no more about it.

On the day when the monthly chits arrived from the various hotels, there were two shamefaced lads in the mess, for not only was there a substantial total of chits from the G.P.H. but also there was an added item on each account which read:

TO ONE PINT PEWTER POT

2.20

An observant Indian waiter had seen the youths taking the pots and reported the fact to the manager. The manager used his discretion and acted accordingly.

NEWSY LETTER FROM PONTO

The following letter has been received from Ponto who has been a regular contributor to Transit and Newsletter for many years. It is thought that this letter will bring memories to some of the other Veterans who it is hoped might put pen to paper and come up with similar historical material.

Once again, my grateful thanks for sending me a copy of 'Newsletter'. I found something of interest on every page and I am quite certain everyone else would feel the same. I would like to comment on various items you have dredged up from past history. With reference to Father Shaw, he also built a station on the beach at East Devonport, Tasmania. When I visited it, it was abandoned but the shack was unlocked and I found the motor generator and transmitting gear still there. I understand he communicated with King Island and Randwick. You also refer to Jack Doggett and the late Lou Curnock, two of the nicest blokes who ever worked for A.W.A. and O.T.C.. Jack could tell some hair raising stories if he could prevailed upon to let the "letter" know. On a trip either to or from Darwin, he looked out the window and saw one of the engines was on fire. The pilot turned it into the wind and they managed to land safely. On another occasion leaving Darwin for Sydney on a DC2 grossly overloaded with troops, the pilot roared down the tarmac but couldn't get it airborne, a second attempt again proved futile. The pilot then instructed Jack and the troops to huddle up as near as possible to the cockpit and if he got it airborne, they could then slowly make their way back to the bucket seats installed for the inconvenience of troops! On another occasion, Jack was at Darwin doing maintenance work and boarding at the Parap hotel where Laurie Luscombe the station OIC was also boarding. On passing Laurie's door, Jack opened it and said "The tea gong has gone" Laurie was lying on his bed on his back with an opened book lying on his face. Getting no response, Jack went over and patted him on the chest. To his horror, he found Laurie was dead. He had passed away peacefully from a heart attack. Lou Gurnock was OIC at Darwin during the worst of the blitz. The catholic mission on Bathurst Island called VID and told them there was a large fleet of aircraft passing over headed for Darwin. The VID man on duty immediately phoned the RAAF base, the Navy headquarters and the Army. He got the incredible reply, "Oh they must be some of ours". Troops and air staff were told to disperse and hide in the nearby scrub - some dispersed as far as Melbourne! The stupidity was so glaring that a Commission was held and Lou attended as A.W.A. representative, and produced the station logs - quoting minute by minute an account of what was happening. At the conclusion, the Commissioner remarked, "It looks as if the only efficiency was displayed by the A.W.A. staff". Later on when the heat was over, I went to Thursday Island as OIC and there was a letter in the safe, and if it is still there it should be framed and hung in the War museum in Canberra!! It read as follows:

"In the event of enemy attack in your station, one Leading Hand and one other rank, will be sent to defend your station, until such time as other arrangements can be made"!!!

If that letter is still in VII's safe, I hope the O.T.C. museum can get it! During the worst of the war, OIC "Tommy" Weeks, and four operators handled the whole situation. Five telephones to vital points, coded and decoded hundreds of weather messages.

Good old "Tommy" Weeks spent twenty hours a day at the station and was finally carried out on a stretcher, utterly exhausted.

(Cont'd)

When I took over, there was a Naval wireless corps of over 100 and an Army wireless corps 70. The mistakes in the coded messages to ships were so shocking that the late Tiny Ternes when OIC sent a report to Head Office pointing that out of just over 100 messages, 70 had to be corrected by a further message. The Naval staff on Thursday Island were full of apologies and we knew it was them making the mistakes. It was found that the weak link was from the Townsville Naval base to the station on Castle Hill where messages were phoned from one point to the other.

Thursday Island and Moresby Radio broadcast messages to ships on the same frequency at the same time, hopelessly jabbing each other. We were supposed to transmit at 16 w.p.m. but there would be such a stack of messages on hand that had to be repeated that I would find them being sent at 25 w.p.m. As it transpired it really did not matter. Ship after ship that called at Thursday Island told us the Master had to collect any messages at various ports. We found that some of the ships operators could not do more than eight words a minute and the junior six w.p.m.

When Tiny Ternes reported to H.O. that he and the four operators were housed in a substandard cottage and that the operator had to cook on his day off. Good operators make lousy cooks!! We got one small boat a month. It was always the same story - the fresh vegetables had rotted. The Navy fed the Army, the Army fed the native troops, the the dogs and finally the A.W.A. staff, if anything was left and charged us Brisbane prices! Just before the war ended, the Navy took over supplying us with victuals? at a fraction of the Army charges. The reply Tony Ternes got to his letter was - "How you live is no concern of ours".


At one period, the four operators were all living in the one house (three of them married). One woman insisted on having a blaring wireless set going all day so much so that the single man off at 7 a.m. slept under a tree on the beach.

The only natives left on the island were trochus and oyster shell fisherman. The white owner stayed ashore and halved the earnings with the natives crew. As a result, the natives had pockets bulging with money, earning five times as much as we operators.

At that time, General Stevens, our G.M., sent me the following telegram "Do your native servants live in compounds or boy houses at your homes". I was so incensed I replied, "Build the boy houses for us and we will be bloody glad to move out of the hovels we occupy". I followed up with a letter saying Head Office have no conception of just what the staff had put up with through the war years and listed a few of the trials we went through. He came back with a personally written letter saying "Forget the first letter, we certainly did not know what you are going through". Don't talk to me about the Army, the Navy and AWA's treatment through the war years.

Further to my remarks about the operator who could do 70 w.p.m. The man in question was the late Ken Franks, killed in a motor accident when returning from Charters Towers to Townsville when enroute to Sydney. Often when I was stationed at La Perouse, I would be monitoring H/O press to Ken at Moresby. They would start at 40 w.p.m. and Ken kept saying up, up, up until I would sometimes get a 'the', 'a' or 'it'. The operator in H/O would say to me "He can't possibly be taking that on the type" to which I said "No, he must be taping it and copying it later". He was typing it alright. A party of American wireless telegraphists in Moresby were told what Ken could do and scoffed at the idea. They were taken out the Moresby

(Cont'd)


and Ken demonstrated. We used to say he had a split brain because he could be typing messages at 50 w.p.m. with one hand, drinking a cup of tea with the other and talking to a bystander at the same time. He was a genius. For a cost of 30/- repeat 30/-, he made out of junk a control unit enabling Port Moresby H/O and the receiving station at Boroko to control up to ten transmitters at the five mile. Sometimes at night, someone would need a phone call to Australia. We had a fixed frequency on which we could contact Sydney and alert them, or vice versa. We could go to Boroko, select the wanted frequency and change it if unsatisfactory. It hadn't been installed very long when the Head Engineer, A.S. McDonald, spoke to Ken and said there are five crates of apparatus on the way to instal remote control of three frequencies from either H/O or Boroko. When A.S. McDonald was told what had been done at a cost of 30/-, he said "Good, send the five crates to Lae to be installed there and send us the circuit". Ken said "I am coming to Sydney in a few days and will bring the circuit, but he was killed enroute". The Yanks dumped a very large Diesel engine in the bush. They told Ken he could have it so he overhauled it and installed it at the Five Mile Transmitter Station. He was truly a genius. There are still a  alive who can substantiate every word I have written. A terrible windbag but it is a bit of past history which could be lost if not recorded!!

STOP PRESS

The following items were received after the main body of the newsletter had been prepared.

VALE

HEDLEY TYLER

Hedley obtained his first class ticket in the early days from the A.W.A. school after which he spent some years at sea before swallowing the anchor to join Beam Wireless. He was second in charge of the messages and then transferred to Coastal Radio Service, where he remained until a year before he retired.  last year was spent in Melbourne accounts area. A very sincere type of man, Hedley retired at the age of 65. After a long period of illness, Hedley passed away in his 80th year.

DONALD TIPPETT

Donald was an Eastern Extension Company cable officer who had been in retirement for a number of years, but had been dogged by ill health for quite a long time. A quiet unassuming man who was well liked by all who knew him.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to Veteran Bert Lake on the recent passing of his life partner, Alma.

Our sympathy is also extended to veteran George McDonald on the recent death of his wife, Dorrie at Wyoming, N.S.W.
