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The official newsletter of the Highgate (WA) Sub-Branch of the Returned & Services League of Australia

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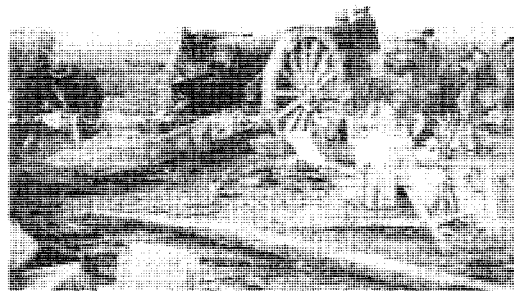
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President's Report

GUNFIRE BREAKFAST BIG SUCCESS



The 54th Commemorative Gunfire Breakfast was enjoyed by ninety members and their guests at the Western Australia Club on ANZAC morning.

Apart from the usual corn-flakes, bacon, eggs and sausage washed down with rum and coffee a different format this year had four of our members relating stories as to what they did on a selected ANZAC Day.

Each presentation was to last no more than five minutes.

Peter Hummerston spoke of New Guinea and the DC3 aircraft he loved so well, having spent his war-time years in one, whilst Phillip Skelton reminisced as to what it was like as a three and a half year old in Woolongong in 1942 with a target priority steel works in the town.

Our Treasurer, Richard Adams, put on a music hall act based on how he was volunteered for Vietnam by the RSM and arrived in country on ANZAC day.

Roger Tingley, our Junior Vice President, a Vietnam Military Cross recipient, reflected on what ANZAC day meant to him.

In all they were well received by the members attending and it is anticipated



AT DAWN—Robin McClellan and Ian Mulholland



(Continued from page 1)

that we will find four more volunteers for next year.

There was also a melancholy task to carry out, that of farewelling the US Consul General in Western Australia, Robin McClellan, who has been appointed to India.

A long time friend of the RSL and a person who has enjoyed her post here, the Branch presented Robin with the Australian National flag and a poppy, to remind her of the Australian men and women who died alongside American servicemen and women in the cause of freedom.



AT BREAKFAST—Tom Horton and Pauline and Roger Tingley.

We were all very pleased to be able to welcome Ron Stone, who joined us for breakfast, together with the Heads of Service and the Greek Consul.

Norm Manners

Highgate News via Email

Would you like to save the Sub Branch a few dollars. Receiving the newsletter by email will do that. If you are on email and are happy to receive your newsletter electronically please let me have your email address. An added advantage in receiving the newsletter by email is that from time to time we will be able to include additional copy as we are not limited to four pages.

Editor.

PRESENTATION BY HONOUR AVENUES GROUP



Norm Manners, Bret Eales and Jasmine Angelev, School Prefects and Paul Ganderton, Principal of Carine SHS

This striking framed poster of the words of "And the band played Waltzing Matilda", by Eric Bogle was presented to the Carine Senior High School in recognition of the 23rd year in which the school, on the day preceding ANZAC Day, has placed flowers on the 1273 plaques in Kings Park. The awarding of the poster was witnessed by the school's 900 plus students and many of the teaching staff all of whom were assembled on the school oval.

On the 24th of April despite the inclement weather nearly 100 students assembled at the Lookout Site on Frazer Avenue, together with President Norm Manners and some ten members of the Honour Avenues Group where they were addressed by a retired Army Officer, Major Mervyn Flanders, to a very attentive and obviously interested audience. Following the address the students, together with teachers and Honour Avenues personnel moved off to cover the three avenues and lay posies at the plaque sites.

The sincerity and solemnity which the young people displayed as they placed the posies augers well for the continuing community respect for the Honour Avenues. And, re-confirms that which many of us already believe, i.e. that in the years ahead the reverence and observance of the ANZAC tradition by our youth, is assured.

They shall grow not old, As we that are left
grow old. Age shall not weary them. Nor the
years condemn. At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning, We will remember them.

LEST WE FORGET



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If you think one job can be one too many on a bad day, try working the three that 72-year-old Hasmig juggled until she retired recently from Hollywood Private Hospital.

Hasmig Aghnoghian – or ‘Mama’ as she is affectionately known as by her colleagues at Hollywood – has packed almost as many different lives as she has jobs into her 72 years so far.

How Hasmig ended up working at Hollywood is an amazing story of strength, survival and persistence. It goes way back to 1914 when the Turks massacred Hasmig’s grandparents, along with 1.5 million other Armenians, in their homeland. At the ages of just six and seven, Hasmig’s parents were sent to Ethiopia as refugee orphans. They married in Addis Ababa and had five children. Hasmig, the fourth child, was born in 1935. She married her husband who was an electrical engineer, had two children and continued to live a life of comfort with many servants in the capitol city until 1975 under the reign of Emperor Haile Selasse – until the horrors of the communist revolution began.

The communists took over the army and murdered thousands of Ethiopians – especially young students fighting for democracy. Houses were searched and people were shot on sight without trial.

Hasmig herself was unable to leave on her Ethiopian passport but she was so fearful for the safety her 17 year-old son and seven year-old daughter, that she decided to separate the family and send the children with her parents to live in Lebanon with her sister and her husband’s parents. Only six months later, civil war broke out in Lebanon. Once again, the family found themselves in life-threatening danger in a war zone. Hasmig had no way of knowing if the children were even alive as no contact was possible between Ethiopia and Lebanon.

So she applied for both children to immigrate to Australia with their grandparents where they would all be safe. Three years later, the papers finally came through.

Witnessing her neighbour’s brutal loss of both sons was the final catalyst for Hasmig. She decided she must use a great deal of their money to buy forged passports and escape Ethiopia – an extremely risky venture as the communists were controlling all money flow in the country. Eventually she and her husband immigrated to Nairobi and eventually moved to Australia.

In December 1976 at the age of 41, Hasmig arrived in Perth and was reunited with her son and her daughter after four years of separation.

This marked the start of another long, hard struggle for everyone to learn the language and become established in yet another new life – but at least now the family, including Hasmig’s parents, was safe and together. Neither her husband’s engineering, nor Hasmig’s accountancy qualifications, were recognised in Australia so both took low-paying, unskilled jobs and began several years of working hard all day, catching numerous buses, and attending

night school in the evening. Hasmig became fluent in English and wanted to return to university to study for an Australian accountancy qualification – but fate had other ideas. In the late 80’s, Hasmig’s father had a severe stroke and required full nursing care at home. Her mother had also been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

Hasmig was adamant that she would not put her parents into nursing homes as they had raised her children. She asked to be transferred to a night shift from 10pm to 6am in the sterilisation department of Hollywood so she could care for her husband and parents during the day.

Her children, meanwhile, overcame the cultural and language barriers that immigrants face and excelled in their respective professions.

Both children have helped their parents financially and, in Hasmig’s words, ‘have never asked for anything’. She is effusive in her praise for Hollywood Private Hospital and the opportunities it has provided. In particular, she speaks highly of John Grimshaw who is the catering manager at the hospital.

“He always has an open door and has the ability to blend different cultures and personalities into one big family – which is why everyone calls me Mama,” she laughs.

Hasmig misses ‘her Hollywood’ a great deal since retiring two months ago – mostly at the request of her husband who thought they should spend more time together.

“Work doesn’t kill people,” she says. “I’ve had a hard life but I’m happy.”

(With thanks to Ashley Hatcher)