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“WATER OFF!”

*NEWSLETTER OF THE
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS’ ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.
February 2001 Vol 5 No1*

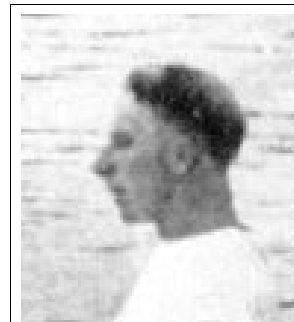
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65 YEAR TRADITION LIVES ON

Nothing could be worse for a young child than to be ill and away from home on Christmas day, missing the joy of opening gifts under the tree surrounded by family. We would like to pay tribute to the group of people who, traditionally, sacrifice Christmas day with their own families to entertain children who have the

misfortune to be ill and hospitalised at Melbourne’s Royal Children’s Hospital. Ian Fowler, who has been a member of the group for 45 years, gives us a brief insight into the changes that have occurred over the years. He tells of the characters who have come and gone but left their mark on the organisation that calls itself the “Once a Year Club.”

(Continued page 8)



IS THIS FACE FAMILIAR?

What was his claim to fame? Occasionally, you meet someone who may look like just another face in the crowd, their completely unassuming nature belie their true character and achievements. This face belonged to one of those people.... and to see if you guessed right, turn to page 10

Above: *The Leyland warms up, the band tunes up and the clowns ham it up, for another Christmas day at the Royal Children’s Hospital*
This photo was taken on Christmas day 1985. Sadly, the Gym Team clowns and many of the musicians are gone!

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the North Melbourne Football Club Social Club, Fogarty Street North Melbourne (Melway 43 B4) 1030 Hours, Wednesday February 21, 2001

AGENDA ITEMS.

- **Minutes of last General meeting.**
- **President’s Report.**
- **Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.**
- **General Business.**

Please come along, bring your partner and have your say in the running of the Association. Join in the fellowship of your old friends and make new ones.

Lunch and beverages will be provided as usual. @ \$3 per head.
Drinks at bar prices.

JOHN BERRY
ACTING SECRETARY/TREASURER
Ph: 03 9431 2880

OFFICE BEARERS

President, Don Brennan
Vice President, Ian Fowler
Acting Sec./Treasurer, John Berry
(The position of Secretary/Treasurer vacant)

General Committee;
John Laverick
Bob McNeil
Ross Medwin
John Schintler
John Wallace
Auditor; Theo Teklenburg

RFA 2001 Calendar

February 21: General Meeting
April ? Reunion MFESB T/Coll.
May 16: General Meeting
July ?: Queensland Reunion (Southport Y/C)
August 15: General Meeting
November 21: Annual General Meeting
November 24: UFU Annual Luncheon (ST Kilda T/

VALE

Denis Lynch
Nell Hitchcock
Evelyn Ammon

We offer our condolences to the families of these

SICK LIST

Margaret Medwin	Harry Plant,
Ron Cass,	Peter Driscoll,
Lionel Rose,	Don Brennan
Claude Selby,	We wish these members
Graeme Simpson,	a speedy recovery.
Jim Nevins,	
Cyril Ammon,	

Note:
Please keep information regarding sickies, etc, flowing. We endeavour to keep you informed, but can only do this with your help.

LETTERS

SPECTRES, SPIRITS AND SILENCE

An interesting article in the last issue regarding the ghost at 44stn. I was stationed at 44 from 1960 to 1972.

When I arrived I heard stories about the ghost, but during my stay I neither saw nor heard from him (or her).

However, I knew of members who perpetuated this myth by arranging ghostly events such as helmets falling to the floor, the flushing of the downstairs toilet while unattended and mysterious tapping on windows.

Most of these practical jokers have been retired for years however, the last of them retired only recently.

One firefighter from another station in “F” district was so alarmed by these events that he volunteered to do all other stand-by’s if someone else did the stand-by to 44stn.

From time to time various “spirits” were manifested. This resulted in some members suffering from shock and becoming uncoordinated. This condition was only temporary. But on one occasion a new recruit arrived home in poor condition after his first night shift, prompting his wife to remark, “what sort of a job is this?”

Over the years at 44stn the solid old walls and the ghost have been witness to events and happenings that were not recorded in the occurrence book. Walls are known to be impassive, but the reactions of the ghost to these events are unknown. However, it is reasonable to assume that he (or she) is now leading a more mundane existence since the station has been converted to a funeral parlour.

During the conversion some internal walls were eliminated and despite all the violence and torture inflicted during demolition, these walls maintained the tradition of their kind and remained silent. The ghost has always been silent. Silence is golden!

LOOKING UP OLD FRIENDS

Some time ago, I drove to Buxton near Marysville, to look at an old CFA front mounted Austin pumper which was for sale at a nominal price. Unfortunately the Austin had been sold a few weeks earlier. Remembering that “Rinso” (Harry Purcell) lived in the area, I made a phone call to see if he was home.

Harry and Mary live at Taggart, 114 Klm from Melbourne in a truly magnificent area of Victoria. Their farm consists of over 100 acres and they have been there over 20 years. It nestles between two mountain ranges, has 360o panoramic views with the Cathedral Range in the background. They run beef cattle, and until recently, had milkers for domestic supply only.

Their lovely old cottage, approximately 100 years young, is very comfortable with metal ceilings and cornices and beautiful verandahs. Mary and Harry have four children, the eldest two living and working in Melbourne. All of the kids were born and raised on the farm.

With his background, it was not surprising that Harry, soon after moving to Taggart, was instrumental in forming the State Emergency Service in Alexandra. We paid a visit to their new HQ. which they share with the CFA. A magnificent building with both CFA and SES having a comprehensive range of appliances and equipment. A radio room with a range of frequencies that other organisations could only dream about.

Mary is involved with the local council and is kept busy with her community work, caring and sharing with the elderly.

I had been promising Mary and Harry for the last ten years that I would visit that spectacular part of Victoria. They send their best wishes to all their friends in Melbourne with the reminder not to be strangers and give them a ring to arrange a visit, (5774 7254), they will make you very welcome.

F.C. Kerr

THANKS FROM No. 4 STN.

Can you please pass on our thanks to all the retired fireies who showed up to No 4 station on 16/12 00 for a Christmas BBQ and reminisce. All up, there were about 27 past members, and we all worked together to make it a memorable day. I hope all your members got something out of it, and please remind

them that this is a standing invitation.....if they'd like to drop in for a cuppa, then they're more than welcome. Thank you for advertising it in your newsletter; it's the reason we got such a terrific response.

All the best for the New Year,
SF/F Matt Morgan,
4 "D"

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day.
Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day!

ASIC'S GULL AWARDS

Welcome to the Gull Awards, brought to you by the **Australian Securities & Investments Commission**. Every day people lose lots of money to scams and swindlers. By drawing attention to the gullibility and the unfortunate fate of those people who were the victims of fraud and dishonesty, we hope to make people more aware of the dangers lurking out there.

Gull in flight

Looking to break into the "high-tech." market? Here's an offer for you - why not swap four of your shares in an established industrial company for 1.5 shares in a new internet company. Sounds good? Well, perhaps you'd better read the prospectus first. Normally, we give the Gull of the Month to an outrageous scheme run by an apparent scamster. This Month's Gull is for those investors who might rush into an investment without really understanding the details.

It's all about prospectuses - those (often) thick, glossy documents which can be long and difficult to read, but which contain important information about an investment. People who took the time to wade through the details of this offer's prospectus would have come across some warning signals about the value of the shares being offered:

- * first, this company isn't listed on any stock exchange
- * second, the company's prospectus admits that

losses will probably increase for the foreseeable future and profits may never occur

* and on page 73 - a long way in - the prospectus says people taking up the offer will suffer "immediate and substantial dilution in net tangible book value per share". (in plain English, this means an immediate loss in the value of their shares.)

The net outcome for investors? They end up swapping their "old economy" shares worth approximately US \$8 for "new economy" shares that the directors of the internet company got for just one US cent.

ASIC has grounded this offer - not because it was a "good" or "bad" investment, but because the prospectus failed to spell out the risks and returns in enough detail for shareholders to reasonably assess the company's prospects. Avoid this common mistake - make sure you read and understand all the information - or turn to a licensed adviser for help.



It's hard to concentrate on things that matter when you're having to deal with life's little challenges.

Our man has been helping out a close relative after a big gum tree fell over and cleaned up the backyard dunny. "I suppose it could have been worse" he said. "He might have been meditating, with the tranny and form guide, oblivious to the raging storm and finished up with more than a splinter of porcelain in his backside."

Being an old Capricornian (an old goat), he reckons he was born lucky. Having the same birth-date as Mal Gibson (the plumber, not the actor), he says "he was lucky he wasn't sitting on the "throne" when the tree fell and Mal was lucky because he got the job to fix it up."

Having dealt with that disaster, let's move on to another and sift through our Samaritan's selections. Hopefully, we'll win enough to pay for the Christmas turkey our man got on tick from "Louie the Fly" before he sends the heavies around to take it back with

RACING TIPS

From My Mate's Cousin

interest.

The first two are nautically named neddies from Sydney, which seems appropriate..... being a watery city.

Seaford: Trained by Sydneysider Paul Perry, who, we presume, was related to the famous Perry's Circus family. When in Victoria they would often set up the tent near the ti-trees along the beach at Seaford. Paul, who was the sanitary engineer in the elephant enclosure, had a thing for the girl who did the high wire act. They both loved the nature walks in the ti-tree.

Yacht: This one is owned by a seafaring syndicate that couldn't raise the funds for an expensive boat to cruise the harbour, so, they settled for a horse and called it Yacht which now cruises around Randwick.

Trained by that old sailor John Hawkes!

Paint: Don't give this one the brush, as it rolls on well with never a dull finish after being well prepared by trainer Matt Ellerton. From colourful Melbourne!

Stattice: Why they would name a horse after a species of flower that makes a dried arrangement beats me. There's nothing flowery about the way it runs so keep an eye out for it. Trainer, Stuart Podman keeps it well watered!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

May I welcome you to the Year 2001 and hope that you have a happy, healthy and prosperous year. Unfortunately we may have had some trouble with the post again, as we received no applications for office bearers, especially to replace John Berry, I would like to welcome John Schintler on to the committee to replace Ern Tamme, On behalf of all Members I would like to thank Ern for all the work he put in over the years. Ern was on the original committee of the RFA, and a life member. Special thanks to all committee members especially our Secretary John Berry for all the, work throughout the year and finally to the UFU Social Committee for another great luncheon day at St Kilda.

See you at the next meeting

Don Brennan
PRESIDENT



ACTING SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

In this year of 2001 as we celebrate a hundred years of Federation, I would like to take you back and reflect on what our forebears did. Here we had six colonies asserting their separate independence from Britain and from each other when some voices suggested a need for some form of concerted action between the Colonies and even a measure of formal union, under one legislative and executive government. [A nation for a continent and a continent for a nation.] The various states and/or colonies voted on a bill for Federation, the enabling Act demanded that 50,000 votes must be polled in favor to carry the bill.

Following the success of the vote, a proclamation was declared that on and after the first day of January 1901, the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia should be united in a Federal Commonwealth under the name of the Commonwealth of Australia.

I wonder if the most prominent champion of Federation Sir Henry Parks (1815-96) would be pleased with the progress we have made on the things he advocated e.g. uniform railway gauge, bridge over Sydney Harbour, improved education facilities and immigration.

The First Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton (1849-1920) another champion of Federation and a great orator unfortunately resigned the position of Prime Minister after only two years to become a Senior Puisne Judge on the High Court. (I can't imagine this happening today)

I do know how very fortunate we were to have people with such foresight; so lets celebrate their endeavours and ensure the centenary of nationhood and the constitution created for every Australian is not forgotten.

When I look at our R.F.A members I realise how fortunate I am to be associated with so many people who have and give of their time to ensure the community becomes a better place. Examples of this can be seen in support of the following. Returned Service Personnel, Retire-Ed, Fire Museum, Once a year club, Counseling, Shrine duties, Legacy, Special Children support, River Murray swim, Lions club, Rotary, Freemasons Homes, Hospital visits, Physically impaired, C.F.A, S.E.S, Heart Support Australia, Salvation Army, Church, Melbourne Ambassador and Support of Members in need. These are only some of the unpaid duties our members and their partners do that helps enrich the very fabric of society, they are the type of unsung people in our society that are carrying on the work our forebears started and ensures our nation will grow stronger.

REPORT ON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 15/11/2000.

Item.1. President's opening remarks.

Item.2. Apologies.

Item.3. Sickness.

Item.4. Minutes of last Annual General Meeting 19/11/99 read and accepted as a true report of the meeting, Moved and Accepted.

Item.5. Presidents "1" Minutes Silence.

Item.6. Secretary/Treasurers Report (see financial report page 5) as read Main Account \$ 2,723.97, Term Deposit \$ 4,340.03. Moved and Carried.

Item.7. Presidents Report. Accepted and Carried.

Item.8. Election of Officers for the Association (see page 2).

Item.9. Guest Speakers, Don Cameron, Peter Akers C. E.O, M.F.B.

Meeting closed 1154 Hours.

(Over) great achievement.
Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Service Board Recognition Award
 The M.F.B have been identified again for the third year as the most effective fire service in the Commonwealth. Congratulations to every member of the service on this

John Berry

**RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
 VICTORIAN BRANCH
 Reg.No. A16839F**

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2000

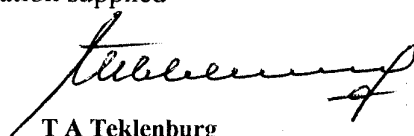
	1999	1999
<u>Income</u>	\$	\$
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 1999	5,746.53	4,682.78
Members' subscriptions	3,268.50	3,591.50
Badge sales	24.00	81.00
Socials	1,404.00	1,370.00
Joining fees	50.00	115.00
Interest received	<u>217.74</u>	<u>228.17</u>
	10,710.77	10,068.45
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Postages and telephone	733.50	822.00
Reunion Day catering	916.70	2,284.00
Magazine expenses	126.50	53.45
Computer upgrades	1,055.00	-
Donation	-	-
Printing cards Name tags and accessories	-	-
AGM and meeting expenses	591.00	941.00
Sundries	216.65	213.00
Government charges	<u>7.42</u>	<u>8.47</u>
	3,646.77	4,321.92
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2000	<u>7,064.00</u>	<u>5,746.53</u>
	10,710.77	10,068.45

Bank Reconciliation

Main account	2,723.97
Term deposit	<u>4,340.03</u>
	<u>7,064.00</u>

Statement prepared and figures correct from information supplied


J A Berry
 Treasurer


T A Teklenburg
 Auditor

Gwen Hynes, a freelance journalist, tells a poignant story relating to a personal experience. "Malcolm" is all too familiar to firefighters. An elderly person, poor housekeeping, radiators for heating and alcohol - a lethal combination. It reminds us to take a hard look at ourselves. Is the old family home really fire safe? Are those smoke alarms in working order? The story concludes with a question - is there an answer?

"MALCOLM"

Mollie peered cautiously through the window, half expecting the pane of glass to fly in at any moment. The noise of the sudden storm was horrific. The night was wretched, but Mollie could vividly see the towels hanging on the rope line strung between three fruit trees. Pink and white towels, dancing, dancing. The wind was blowing them this way, that way. They were almost laughing like children on a magic show ride. This sight needed to be captured with a camera. If only Mollie had a film. Closing the curtains and leaving the storm outside, Mollie made herself some coffee, and went back to her possible sadness. Had Malcolm gone?

She had heard on the news that a man in his late seventies had been burnt to death in Elm St Footscray. Malcolm was nearing his 80th birthday and lived in Elm. Mollie had tried to phone her father who also lived in that street. His phone was engaged. Mollie didn't know Malcolm's phone number, in fact she was not sure of his surname. She knew he left his home each morning in a taxi and spent the day with his friends at the local hotel. Malcolm had never married, lived alone and always appeared happy and carefree. His house was a few doors from her father's home.

Lingering over her coffee, Mollie's thoughts went back to the time she had been helping her father do some gardening. They became aware of a commotion outside Malcolm's house. On investigation, it became clear that he was calling out for help, but his door was locked. Mollie stepped onto the veranda and called, "Malcolm, can you get to the door?" "No," he cried out, "but the front window is open, could you please climb through and help me!" Mollie looked at the window, looked at everyone standing around, pushed her hands through the rotting wire screen, hoisted herself into the opening and found herself amongst piles of old newspapers, clothing and furniture in disarray.

Moving through the musty house while brushing herself down, it was evident to Mollie that housework had been neglected for a long time. His mother had died many years ago. Mollie had found Malcolm in the breakfast room. He said he had fallen the previous night as he had bent down to pick up his walking stick. He had been able to reach his bottle of whisky, so had been content to see the night through before he began yelling for help. An ambulance was called. Malcolm had broken his hip. He assured Mollie he would, 'Be home again, quick smart.'

A crack of thunder brought Mollie back to the

present. A chill came over her. She tried her father's phone again. Still engaged! The news flash was repeated. Surely it could not be Malcolm. Why would it be him? It was a long street. Perhaps it was no-one at all. An obvious mistake. The burnt house was probably not occupied at the time. There was nothing to worry about. Mollie now decided to go over. Driving cautiously through the storm, she became uneasy again. Her heart was pounding.

Please God! don't let it be Malcolm." She was thinking, had he fallen again as a result of drinking too much, had he left another pot on the stove while he had been away, or maybe his two bar heater had been pushed too close to some papers. 'Please God, if it isn't Malcolm, Mollie silently vowed to ring the Council Home Help, to see if they could do something about clearing the house out, putting in smoke detectors, making his place liveable and hazard free and provide him with regular help. Malcolm was a happy contented person, and that would no doubt make him happier!

So, if it wasn't Malcolm, who was it? Her father lived alone and was in his seventies. "My God!". Mollie drove faster. The rest of the evening was a blur: Firemen, Police, rain, smouldering fire, and confusion. There were people everywhere. The top of the street had been blocked off. She parked her car in a side street and ran through the crowds of people, still not knowing whose house it was.

The next day Mollie drove over to Elm street. Sickly smoke lingered in the air as she placed flowers on Malcolm's veranda.

Malcolm was gone! Arriving home in the taxi the night before he had stumbled into his house, bent down, turned on the heater and fell. His clothing had caught fire and he was unable to help himself. He had been drinking for many hours that day. The firemen contained the fire to the lounge and breakfast rooms, but could do nothing for Malcolm.

Taking the soft pink and white towels off her line later that day, Mollie was thankful there had been no film. She wouldn't need extra reminders of that dreadful evening. Mollie folded the towels, made herself a coffee and pondered over her thoughts. Sadly she wondered if Malcolm would have been happier in a tidier house! If this did not interest him, how could it have been achieved? Would a clean, orderly house prevent such a dreadful accident?

Gwen Hynes

TRAVELLING WITH JIM & DOT

Recently we did a trip with "Microflight" from Moorabbin Airport. Leaving at 0715 hrs we had morning tea at 0930 in Mildura (a fuel stop). Then on to Wilpena Pound for the afternoon and night. The next morning we left for Marree and Lake Eyre, which contained a lot of water. We flew low over the lake to see the seabirds (did not see any fish) then flew on to Coober Pedy for the night. In the morning after a tour of the town, we left for Birdsville via another flight over the lake. On arrival, we were taken for a tour of the town. The highlights of the town was the water supply, boiling water from a thermal bore, cooled in channels and a pond. We then visited a museum dedicated to working models (a lot of us used them), a great show. Next morning we did a short trip to the Simpson

Desert. Unfortunately we got bogged on a sand dune called "Big Red", the biggest of 1100 dunes running north and south across the desert. The driver was showing off to us city slickers (six of us). On arrival back at the Birdsville pub, we boarded the Piper Chieftan for Innamincka for lunch. After lunch, we flew over Cameron Corner and Broken Hill, then on to Mildura for afternoon tea (refuel) then on to Moorabbin.

The people who say we should have a population of 50 million should visit Marree. The only thing that comes up after rain is salt.

The four day trip was an experience and educational.....we all enjoyed it.

Jim Holmes

APOLOGY TO OUR QUEENSLAND MEMBERS

Our Queensland members may have cause to feel a bit left out. A report on the July 2000 reunion held at the Southport Yacht Club was sent to us for inclusion in the August edition of "Water Off" but arrived too late. So, it was filed for inclusion in the November edition. But your aging, myopic editor put it in a folder of old copy and was not found until we had a New Year clean-up. My humble apology to both Peter and June Coulson who go to a lot of trouble to organise the reunion and compile the report. Well folks, here it is!

QUEENSLAND REUNION

Once again the Melbourne Fire Brigade reunion was held at the Southport Yacht Club with a good turn-up of members and their partners (40 in all). There was sadness to learn of the passing of old mates during the past year. Also good to see men such as Brian McMillan and Kevin Kennedy looking fit and well after having been thru very bad patches of ill health.

Ian Heath sent an apology for non attendance as they had house guests. Both Ian and Terry love coming down from Cleveland each year.

The usual fires were fought and seem to get bigger and brighter as the years pass.

The weather was a bit disappointing after four weeks of lovely sunny days we woke up to a rainy morning and a big drop in temperature. It didn't seem to dampen the spirits and was fine by the afternoon.

It will be on again next year (last Thursday in July). There are plans afoot for a new yacht club to be built next year, the present one to be bulldozed. There will be a temporary building and we will keep you informed about that in future "Water Off" issues.

Many thanks to all of you who travelled long distances to make it a great day, and commiserations to the ones who couldn't be there.

Peter Coulson

ROADSIDE HAZARD?

Some of our members will do anything to get their name in the paper...even if it means doing a double take at one of those sexy advertising billboards that seem to be popping up everywhere.

Rumor has it, a survey by a Melbourne newspaper inviting public comment on this advertising gimmick found our member in the casualty section of local hospital suffering from eye strain and whiplash after passing one of those billboards.



BOB BURROWS
57, Inverloch

THEY don't offend me. In fact, I would probably have a second look at them.

Photograph courtesy Melbourne Herald Sun

NO CREDIT FOR OLDER CONSUMERS

Your options are very limited if you're an 'asset-rich' but 'cash-poor' retiree or aged pensioner who needs to borrow money to cover expenses like home maintenance. According to the National Information Centre on Retirement Investments (NICRI), currently no commercial lenders offer loans to older people using their home equity as security.

St George Bank confirms that it's stopped offering its 'Money for living' loan that worked like a mortgage over the borrower's home. Instead of repaying the interest, it compounded over time and was eventually paid out of your estate. And Sellstay, another operator that used to offer home equity conversion loans to older people, is no longer operating.

While loans like these have their disadvantages (you could live so long the money runs out, or compound interest could overtake the property's value, leaving nothing for your estate), their disappearance means older people have even fewer options if they need to borrow money.

If you need a lump sum, your options are now limited to one of the following:

- Use the Commonwealth Government's Pensions Loan Scheme (See right column)
- Ask for an advance on your Commonwealth pension.
- Use your credit card, but beware high interest rates if you can't pay it off within the interest-free period.
- If you still have a mortgage with a redraw facility or line of credit, you may be able to negotiate with your lender to continue to use the credit/redraw facility when you've paid off your loan. Check ongoing fees and conditions with your lender.
- There are loan schemes for seniors in Victoria and SA but they're for specific purposes. (See right column)
- Sell your home. Move to a cheaper property or rent and use the capital you get from the sale of your house to invest and generate income.
- Borrow from family members. Ask your children to lend you the money, bearing in mind they'll be paid back out of your estate. Ask family members to buy your home and allow you to continue living there rent-free.

Even if you make an arrangement with family members, get legal advice from your own lawyer - not the same lawyer as them - to ensure your interests are protected. Most community legal centres can provide legal guidance - you'll find your local centre's

contact details in the phone book. it's also important for all parties to get tax advice.

The Pensions Loan Scheme

The Pensions Loan Scheme provides income support in the form of a loan, for a short time or for an indefinite period, secured against your home or other real estate you own in Australia.

Loan applications and payments are organised through Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs, depending on what type of pension you receive. It's paid in regular fortnightly payments in addition to your pension, and you can use it for anything you like. To qualify for it you must:

Be a man aged 65 or over, or a woman at the current pension age or over, or the partner of either.

Be receiving or could receive a part pension under the income or the assets test (or your partner must be in this position). If you or your partner already receive the full pension, you don't qualify.

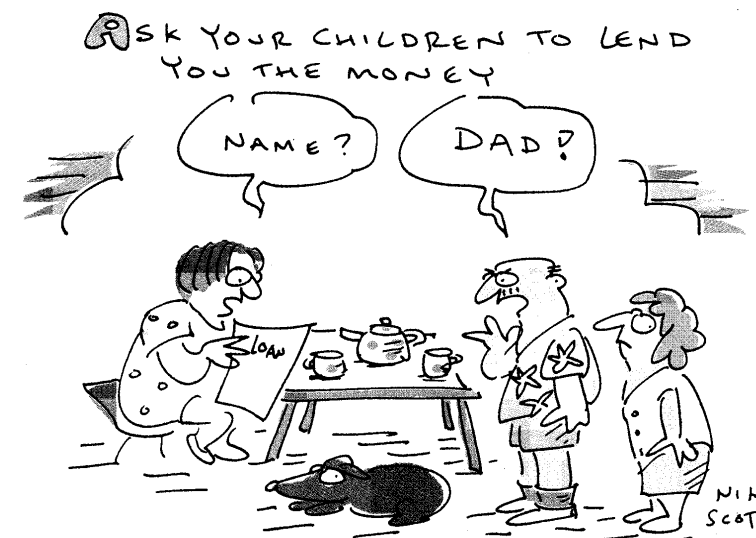
Have real estate in Australia (including your principal home) to offer as security for the loan.

The maximum amount you can borrow is the difference between your current or potential part pension and the maximum pension. Compound interest (currently 5.25%) is charged, calculated on a fortnightly basis.

You can repay the money in full or in part at any time. It can also be repaid from your estate after your death - you don't have to make any repayments of interest or capital during your lifetime while you still own the property, though the loan would usually be repaid if the property's sold.

(Continued over)

(From prev. page)



A pension advance?

The Commonwealth Government offers pensioners a pension advance of between \$250 and \$500. Only one advance is available in any 12-month period.

It's repaid by deductions from pension payments over the following six months. It can be used for any purpose, but you must show you're able to repay the money without financial hardship.

Specific loans

- The Victorian Department of Human Services offers older people with disabilities (or their carers) Home Renovation Loans for health and

safety modifications. For more information call 1800 134 872.

- In SA HomeStart, in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner for the Ageing, offers the Seniors Loan to help you stay at home. in safety and comfort. Call (08) 8210 0500 or 1800 018 788.

Source:
ACA Choice, January/February 2001 edition

ACTION'S CHARACTER COLUMN

I have decided to call this edition "Deeds and Comments." Many of them may have been slightly embellished over time, but to my knowledge, most are correct.

Clarrie Hart driving, with the late J. P. in the front seat, proceeding down Burwood Road into Power Street, round the wrong side of the tram, whoops one coming the other way, up onto the footpath, misses poles, behind seat and crashes back onto road, crew breathes again. "Well done Clarrie" says J. P. "But what did you slow down for?"

Factory fire in narrow South Melbourne street. Further down the street was new pump, first with doors fitted, but unfortunately left open. Around the corner comes Don Densley in the old No. 2 Salvage Van - bang - bang, now no doors. F. T. heard from one end of South Melbourne to the other commenting on Don's driving ability. Don's reply, "Well, what do you expect for a *%#@! shilling a day - Stirling Moss."

Two am. in July and about 4 degrees. Standing in a service station beside the canteen is Ray Jackson after his first fire and freezing cold after falling through the floor and disappearing in the foam, teeth chattering, foam in his coffee and trying to light a wet cigarette. "Well Ray" says Gordon G. "What did you think of your first fire." "Sure beats working for the friggin council" said Ray with his well known stutter.

Five am. in the alley of No. 1 station flats. Milkman, as always, rattling empties from one end of the alley to the other disturbing residents. Up flies the window of one of the flats and the booming voice of Ronald M. and screams throughout No 1, "I'm going to buy you a *%#@! drum."

One "Jim F," well known for his forays at

various times, decided one very late night to take a couple of friends in similar condition home to continue. On arrival at his flat found that his wife, a lovely and very sensible lady, had locked the door. "No worries" said a determined Jim. Most flats had a cover built into the bench top to allow rubbish through to the bin for easy disposal. Jim crawled into thee cavity and then pushed his head through the bench top. "Surprise - Surprise," there waiting was an equally determined wife with metal frying pan - "Wham" - friends thought it was now time to leave.

In my early days, a man unknown to me appeared a number of times at No 1 Station with his belongings in a small case, his pockets and a dog on a string, (always a different dog). I learned that this gentleman had been associated with the band and particularly F. T.

One afternoon whilst on orderly duty, this man arrived not in peak condition and requested to see his friend F. T. Now F. T. was quite polite and allowed him into his office for a full 10 seconds then asked would I help this man off the station. Before he left he said he wished to go to the toilet and I pointed the way. As usual he was carrying all his gear with him. He was proceeding down the alley when S/F Robert McL. in Bill S's car drove into the yard. Mr.S. bid me goodnight a few seconds later and then called me from the end of the alley with a grin on his face. There standing in the yard in the rain was S/F Bob, a bottle of sherry in one hand, a trumpet mouthpiece, a sheet of music and the dog on a string in the other. Mr. S. just shook his head as he drove away.

A fire had occurred near Hosies Hotel in Flinders St. A number of appliances were in attendance and the drunks from the hotel were having fun with the firies, but one was particularly nasty and aggressive. There was a slight commotion on the footpath and Mr. Nasty

BROWN'S BITS

From the roving correspondent of the north-west of our fair city.

Listening to Silver talk on his trips overseas at the last meeting, he made reference to the experiences he'd had with some Executive Officers and the things they did that amazed him.

One I had dealings with certainly made me wonder how this man made it to the rank he did. I first met him when he was an S.O. at William St. in 1952. At that time the Fourth Officer was stationed there, a D.O. and two Sub Station Officers. Joining in January that year, I was pretty naive, but, this man opened my eyes, he was referred to as "that silly old #@%*!&".

With the Fourth Officer up at No1 Stn. the D.O. out inspecting, he was in charge of the H/Carriage when we received a call for a factory fire near the top of Collins St. As we were proceeding up Collins St. a car crossed with the lights in front of the H/Carriage causing our driver to slow down. Leaning out of the window shaking his fists this S.O. let forth with a tirade of invective that made me cringe. It must have made onlookers think firemen were a foul-mouthed lot.

About 15 years later, I was an S.S.O. at 52 Stn. and this man had made Executive Officer rank. Part of his job was to inspect stations. At that time 52 Stn had two rooms upstairs converted to the officer's kitchen and bedroom. The two toilets were downstairs and the only water tap was outside in the yard. I had spoken to

this man on each of his visits about a hand basin inside near the toilets to wash our hands, but nothing was done.

Some time later, the Board Secretary and Industrial Officer inspected the station and they asked where the officer's toilet and shower were. I informed them that all facilities were communal and that there was no hand basin near the toilets. They instructed me to submit a report requesting these facilities be installed.

So I submitted the request stating that "after visits by the Board Secretary Mr., Industrial Officer Mr..... and Executive Officer Mr., I hereby etc. etc."

About a week later I answered the phone to another tirade of invective starting with, "how dare you put those two in front of me (on the report), I take precedence to them in the Brigade". With other threats about getting even with me he slammed the phone down in my ear. From then on he gave me a hard time.

Another of the more outlandish statements to be made by this person was when a station car driver reported that the vehicle tended to pull to the right when the brakes were applied. In all seriousness the reply was that, "it would naturally pull to the right because it's the wheel closest to the brake pedal and the fluid would reach it first."

NEW NATIONAL ORGAN DONOR REGISTER

Australia's first national register of organ donors, the Australian Organ Donor Register (AODR), is up and running, and should make it easier to become an organ donor - especially if you don't have a driver's licence. Currently only 46% of Australians have chosen to be organ donors, though 90% have said they support the idea. If you register with the AODR your information can be accessed by authorised personnel anywhere in Australia. Up to now this has been a problem in some states because the states' driver's licence databases or registers aren't automatically linked.

You don't need to join the AODR if you've already ticked your driver's licence or you're on a state register - it'll operate alongside state databases. It may link up with them if there are no privacy issues, but this is still being negotiated.

You can register by:

- Filling out a form at a local Medicare office.
- Going to the AODR website (www.whic.gpv.au/organ/index.htm), printing out its form and sending it in. (Soon you'll be able to register online.)

You can choose which organs you want to donate and

you can change your decision at any time.

According to the Health Insurance Commission (HIC), which runs the AODR, parents can register children under the age of 13 by either nominating the child themselves or cosigning with the child. There's currently no place on the form where parents can cosign to confirm their child's registration, but HIC has assured CHOICE that it will change its forms early this year to make the requirement for a parent's or guardian's signature clearer. Until then, parents are advised to sign their name next to their child's (if they're under 13 and nominating themselves) in the space where the form asks for a signature.

Most importantly, if you do put your name on an organ donor register or tick your licence, remember to discuss your decision with family members to ensure they understand and accept your wishes.

For more information about the AODR and organ donation, see the August 2000 issue of CHOICE or visit our website: www.choice.com.au. You can also visit the AODR website (see left), call them on 1800 777 203, or visit your local Medicare office.

DID YOU RECOGNISE THE FACE?

R.F.A. member, Alan Boyd came across some discarded sporting magazines recently, and while thumbing through them he was surprised to see a familiar face in a 1951 edition of "The Australian Amateur." That face was none other than the late Wally Lambert. Wally was one of nature's gentlemen, a respected firefighter, a practical joker with a smile as big as the great outdoors.

Wally enjoyed his career in the Fire Brigade spending most of his time in Eastern and Central Districts, attaining the rank of Station Officer

The magazine did not list any personal details of Wally's life other than his sporting achievements. But those who had the pleasure of knowing him both at work and socially, were a great deal richer for the experience.



The complete picture: *Wally at the peak of his sporting career and one of the few members of the MFB to reach Olympian status.*

Wally Lambert, member of Richmond Rowing Club and of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, represented Victoria in three King's Cups, for two wins, once in Olympic Test fours and Empire Games Test cox-swainless pairs, both of which he won. He represented Australia at the Olympic Games in London and at the Empire Games in Auckland.

From "The Australian Amateur" July 1951 edition.



LET'S SAVE "SAVED"

Retired MFB members who did time at the old Eastern Hill will remember "Saved."

It can be safely said we all, at some time, stood and admired it as the epitome of a firefighter doing his job. Many myths surrounded the painting and they were dispelled by Fred Kerr's article in the August 2000 edition.

Whatever the true story may be, it is part of our history and must be saved.

We are appealing to all members to get behind this campaign to complete the restoration. If you would like to make a donation, please send it to:

**"Saved Restoration"
Fire Services Museum
39 Gisborne Street
East Melbourne 3002**



FORGIVENESS:

James Burke illustrates how he learned about forgiveness at Johnson and Johnson, during his first months as head of a new-products division. One day he was summonsed to the office of chairman general Robert Wood Johnson. One of Burke's first product

ideas, a children's chest rub, had failed dismally. When Burke walked in Johnson asked, "Are you the one who just cost us all that money?" Burke nodded. The general said "Well, I just want to congratulate you. If you are making mistakes, that means you are making decisions and taking risks. And we won't grow unless you take risks."

lay down quickly. "What has happened here?" asked a policeman to the crowd. An elderly lady said, "That man was being nasty to the firemen and a nice fireman (known to us all as Bill L.) ran past him and all of a sudden that man fell down." "Oh dear" said the policeman as he walked away.

Fire in Collins St. outside the Australia Hotel. All gear being made up and directed home by one Charlie B. "And send that one over there home too" said Mr. B. peering over to the other side of the street. "He won't go" came the reply. "Why not" said Mr. B. getting agitated. "Because it's a Brockoff biscuit van."

A new recruit arrived at 25 Stn. and D.O. George S. after finding out he was a mechanic suggested it being Saturday he should carry out a compression test on the D.O's utility. This done, all cylinders tested about 150 and marked accordingly with chalk on the inside of the mudguard. George was out inspecting so I altered one cylinder from 150 to 80.

I got back after a late false alarm call and found George had already left. Sunday night shift, George arrives yelling "Bloody cars" and telling me that he and a neighbour mechanic spent all afternoon with the head off, new gasket set and four hours later still could not find the problem. He was never told till the day I left.

S/F Ray D. always slept in the hose cellar on a canvas stretcher. One night, L. Hubbard arrived, not in good condition after a fancy dress party. Our Len dressed as Lurch from the Munsters complete with make-up including bolt and nut through the throat... very effective. Sneaking quietly into the cellar he leaned over the sleeping Ray and with a booming voice said "You rang." To this day knows how Ray went through the bottom of the stretcher.

GOOD ENGLISH - BAD LANGUAGE

During the 1960's some of the new arrivals from various parts of Europe settled in St. Albans. Neighbourhood disputes among these people were aggravated by ethnic differences and a good way to get even was to report your neighbour for burning off on a day of "Total Fire Ban".

On this day when the ban was in place, we arrived at a St Albans address where the owner was burning rubbish. His English was badly fractured and as my Polish was non-existent I resorted to my usual tactics of using one of the school-aged children as an interpreter. When he realised the only reason for our attendance was that one of his neighbours had informed on him his English improved and his accent all but evaporated, "That bloody #@*^&ng German he hates me and I hate him".

I was always amazed how rapidly the migrant

Alarm had been consistently operating at a Brunswick school and No. 4 arrives at the same time as D.O. Phil M. and find three young toughs standing by the alarm. "See anyone break the glass," 'No' said the three lads. "How long have you been here" said Phil, "About twenty minutes" said one. Oops, big mistake. "Get me the principal" said D.O. Phil, and one yells "Hey Fred, you're wanted along the passage." "Do they talk to you like that all the time" asked Phil. "Yes" said the principal, and there's little I can do about it. "Back to your office" said Phil and directed four large firemen to place the youths on coat hooks in the passage. This being done they were instructed that should any call at all be received they would totally be held to blame and the consequences be so severe, survival would be impossible, so get the message out. No calls at all for such a long time.

Started the 10/14 on new shift at No. 1. Gordon G., Carey and others. New TV arrives in quarters, only problem, Gordon insists on watching certain shows. "I suppose now that I watch the TV I should also pay" said Gordon to me. "Right, how much" he said. "One dollar" said I. "But as you only watch it infrequently you only have to pay half." "Good" said Gordon. So he paid 50 cents a week and we paid one dollar a month!

Action Jackson

children mastered English. This is what allowed me to use them as interpreters. On one occasion I attended a fire in a Dutch household which had been in Australia for a number of years.

Both mother and father spoke reasonable but heavily accented English while daughter, who appeared to be in her mid teens, spoke English as well as I did. When I congratulated her on her fluency, she casually informed me she was also fluent in German and could make herself understood in Flemish and French.

All of this left me feeling a bit inadequate as I had struggled at school when trying to learn French as only a second language, and here was a teenager who was fluent in three, and could get by in another two.

I have since learned that Europeans who live close to national borders, often grow-up speaking two or three languages.

Phil Dunn

(From page 1)

I joined the Once a Year Club (O.Y.C.) in 1955 when I was member of the Kingsville / Yarraville City Band. I was invited to join the O.Y.C. by other band members Mick McKimm and the Blake brothers, John and Charles. In those days Jack Bramwell was the organiser who did a superb job as did Jack McKimm.

The clowns were members of the MFB Gym team and they were the greatest bunch of blokes you could meet and the funniest and most professional clowns you would ever see. It is unfortunate, much to my sorrow, that these fellows are no longer performing, for the things they got up to, no longer happen. I can recall a few of the names, like Charlie White (senior and junior), Peter Sullivan, Tom Draper, Alan Stirling, John Berry, brothers Ron and Bill Grant, Jock Moore, Bruce Thornton and Harry Purcell who was last to leave that particular group.

We had about three Santa Clauses to cover the large area of the hospital, two of which were doctors and the other was our famous Jim Flemming. Jim drove and operated the Leyland Ladder for many years before playing Santa. Jim finished this year after 50 years of service to the O. Y.C. and I'm very disappointed that he has not received any recognition or thanks for those years of loyalty and dedication to the group.

Last but not least we have the band members. These days the band is made up of various musicians with no association with the Fire Brigade except for two or three.

I would like to mention the late Jack McKimm had 59 years service to the O.Y.C., his brother Mick 52 years as did John Blake. Many of the current "Musos" are coming up to 20 to 30 years service.

The O.Y.C. started back in the thirties when a small group of musicians from the first MFB band decided amongst themselves to go over to the Children's Hospital and play some carols to the sick kids. They would wear their uniforms and let the kids put on the brass helmets. When the Chief Officer heard of their intentions, he thought it a good idea to supply a fire truck to transport them. So, the show continued from this agreement.

Although the gym team and the musicians together was all an impromptu affair, it moulded together as a very enjoyable and most professional unit. The clowns would perform a little "William Tell" segment, one clown with an apple on his head and another with a gun with a bent barrel to shoot the apple. The band would play the "William Tell Overture" theme, when the shot missed the apple the clown had a bladder type squirter of water under his clown suit which, no doubt, someone had to get wet. This type of entertainment went over well in the nurses dining room.

Quite a few of the musicians were great entertainers themselves. An ex-firefighter of many years past, Ian Davies on piano accordion, was also the official organist at the Regent and Capitol theatres on the Wurlitzer would, every Christmas, sing "The Scotchman's Feast"... boy, what a talent this man had. The Ron Richards Dance Band members followed on with the entertainment singing, in particular, "I Am A Fine Musician." Les Fagan on alto saxophone playing Freddie Gardiner's "I'm In The Mood For Love" and "Stardust" etc.

My big disappointment is that most of these people



Year 1977: Santa (Jim Flemming) puts a smile on a young patient's face. Jim has had a 50 year involvement with the "Once a Year Club" and has seen thousands of Christmas day smiles at the R.C.H.

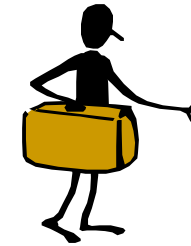
have disappeared from the O.Y.C. after 40 to 50 years service with no recognition from the Fire Brigade.

In the early days after a big morning, not only at the Children's Hospital we would visit St Vincent's, Mount St Evan's the after care hospital and the Eye and Ear Hospital with this array of entertainment. On return to Eastern Hill Fire Station the Chief Officer would have eats and drinks waiting and a few words of thanks to the troops for a job well done.

I have been most disappointed in the last few years on arriving back at Eastern Hill there hasn't been as much as a glass of water offered let alone any thanks or recognition. But, this last Christmas, the two firefighters who are organising things these days, left a few drinks. Unfortunately not many knew about it and had gone home.

I do question the management of the Fire Brigade that this has happened, for the "Once A Year Club" in the eyes of the public, has only brought glory to the Brigade.

Ian Fowler



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

This issue is similar to our talk at the last meeting, so those who attended can give it a miss, the remainder read on.

First, I will just cover this trip in sections, the rest of the sights and each individual place I will cover in later issues and believe me there were plenty of them.

Leaving Tullamarine at 11pm on a Singapore Airline flight in mid September this year turned out to be a lam departure after two trips to the runway. A light that refused to go out on the dash was the excuse.

Now, I have a friend who is a captain for Qantas and he tells me they say that even if the tail is falling off, but it did mean I was asleep before taking off.

Singapore Airline service is good except Mrs Silver noted that "Sir" was asked first what he wanted to drink and what he wanted off the menu, then "Madam" a poor second. It continued in the hotel. I explained it was the Asian way and she said, "Enjoy, it's not going to last, it's not my way." But it was good while it lasted.

Not a lot to see in Singapore, used taxis when not walking because the bus drivers are a dead loss. Showed Mrs Silver (her first visit) Raffels Hotel, well worth a visit, Tiger Balm Gardens, Pacific Plaza (a good shopping mall) and Clarke Quay (good night shopping), City tour, River cruise, all the usual stuff.

One point of interest was, I had a cab driver wait while I bought a couple of pair of Nikes. When asking him did he see the Olympic Games opening he said they did not have time for sport in Singapore as they worked six or seven days a week. He paid the government \$95 per

day to use the taxi, anything over that was his.

He said they had built a sports stadium and arranged a football game, only 60 people turned up so they pulled it down and built flats.

Zero tolerance prevails, as he said they have real melting pot of cultures but if they fight they go to jail and nobody wants to do that. There's a \$2000 fine for littering, I said "what if I spit," he said, "they have the death penalty for that." I think he was joking, but I'm not sure. Zero tolerance, good or bad, it works there. It's the cleanest city I have seen anywhere I've been.

No dole, we met elderly women around eighty years old emptying ashtrays in hotels and bars. If you don't work your family has to look after you.

As I've said, not a lot there after the city and the fort on Sentosa Island, but you can go on to Malaysia by road or train if you wish. One more thing, the Tiger Beer is equal to anything I've had and better than most, especially where we were going on to!

More next issue.

**Happy Travelling
Silver**

I must add, the Churchill's "Golden Wedding Anniversary" was really a top celebration. It was good to see a family who are so close together. The amount of work put in by the girls was really first class. Also the beer was free.

PS. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you!

Silver

Right: The Gym Team in action in the ambulance bay at St Vincent's Hospital.....The most professional team of entertainers to be seen!

Below: Clown (Harry Purcell) takes a back seat to the gift this little tot is reaching for!

