

"WATER OFF!"

NEWSLETTER OF THE
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.

NOVEMBER 97 VOL. 1 No. 4

THE MUTUAL STORE FIRE *January 1, 1891*

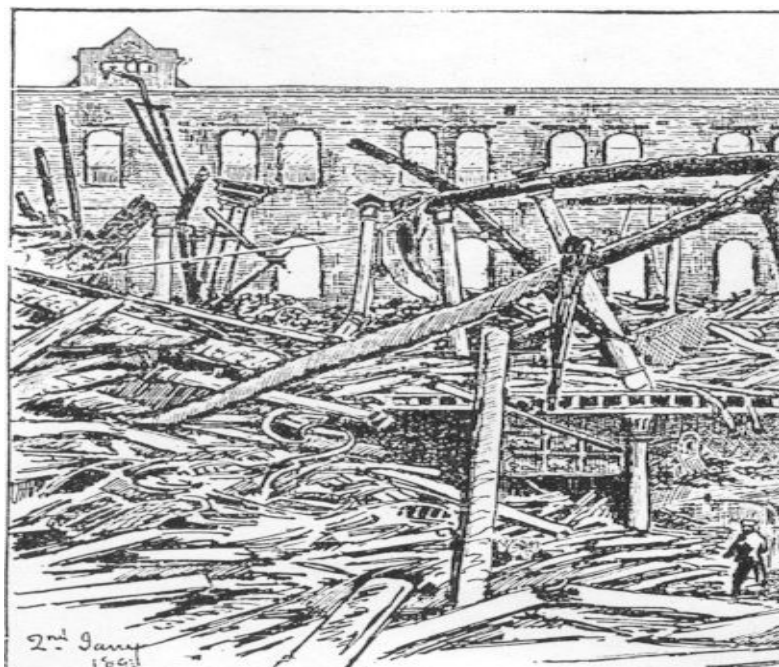
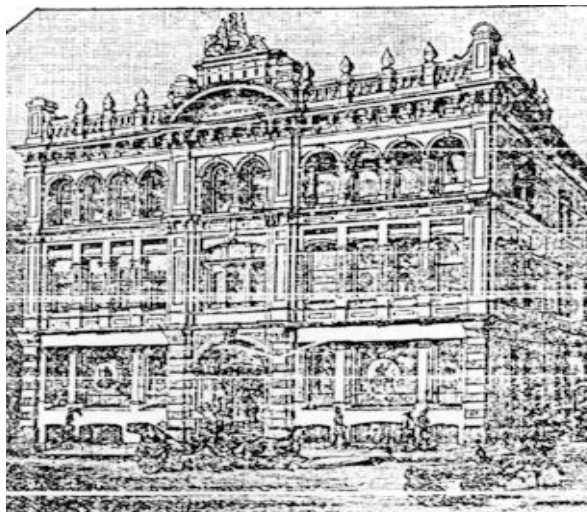
The year 1891 was most significant in the history of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. After the Fire Brigades Act was passed at the end of 1890, things moved quickly towards amalgamating all Melbourne's fire fighting forces. The Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board first met on March 6, 1891, then on April 30, all 55 brigades in the Melbourne metropolitan area were disbanded. On May 1, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade came into existence. Supt. David Stein, previously in charge of the Insurance Companies Brigade, was appointed the first Chief Officer of the M.F. B.

However for the first few months of 1891, the Insurance Co.'s. Brigade and all the volunteer brigades still shared the responsibility of protecting the city and suburbs. They were to battle one last big city fire before their demise. This fire was to have major

repercussions which were again to surface some six years later when the "Great Fire of Melbourne" was to devastate almost an entire city block.

The majority of the readers of this newsletter will well remember the Mutual Store, a Melbourne landmark situated on Flinders Street, midway between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets, opposite the Flinders Street Railway Station. In 1891, it was one of Melbourne's leading department stores with a staff of approximately 350 people.

On New Year's Eve 1890, the last person to leave the store locked all the doors, having first made sure everything inside was secure. He then took the keys to the City Watch House where they were kept in case of emergency. Just before 4a.m. on New Year's morning 1891, a man walking down Flinders Street noticed smoke issuing from a window in the east wall of the Mutual Store, facing a right-



Above, before the fire
Right, after the fire. (The interior sketched from a window in the west

“ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ”

Notice is hereby given of our next Annual General Meeting to be held at the Fitzroy Bowling Club, 1030 Hours, Wednesday November 19, 1997

AGENDA ITEMS.

- **Minutes of last Annual General meeting.**
- **President’s Report.**
- **Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.**
- **Election of Office Bearers and General Committee.**
- **General Business.**

Please come along 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. @ \$2 per head.
Drinks at bar prices.

JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Members are advised that all positions for Officers of the Association are declared vacant at each A.G.M. Nominations for for all positions are required, in writing, to be received by the Secretary/Treasurer by the close of business Friday November 7, 1997.

Nomination form on page 11 of this issue.

The present Committee is as follows;

President, Don Brennan
Vice President, Ern Tamme
Sec./Treasurer, John Berry

General Committee;

Ian Fowler
John Laverick
Bob McNeil
Ross Medwin

Auditor; Theo Teklenburg

VALE

John Ahern, MFB
Arthur Cowban, MFB
Keith Comerford MFB Workshops
Peter Holton MFB
Ian Rawlings, MFB

We offer our condolences to the families of these men who have gone on to a higher duty.

SICK LIST

Clarrie Guthrie
Jim Nevins
Jack Smith
Frank Shevlin

We wish them a speedy recovery from their

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

If you do, let’s hear about it. We don;t want your life story, but if you have an anecdote, be it serious, amusing, or just something you want to share with us. If you think it would be of interest to our members, send it in.

Don’t worry about your spelling or grammar, none of us are Rhodes Scholars, we can tidy it up on the computer. If you have a photograph to go with the story, we can scan it and send it

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with regret that I advise the untimely passing of our Committee Member and friend, Peter Holton, on Sunday the 19th October. Peter was our inaugural Secretary and the driving force behind getting the RFA up and running. Peter had a heart attack followed by surgery a couple of years ago and resigned as Secretary, but continued on as a committee member.

He will be greatly missed as a worker and also for his contribution to the "Water Off", with his writing of "Over The Sty". Peter's latest input is published with the permission of his widow Barbara, to whom, I, on behalf of all our members pass on our condolences to her and her family on his untimely passing.

I would like to remind all widows that you can still receive the "Water Off" at no membership cost. If you don't require it please contact the Secretary to have your name removed from the mailing list.

The Annual General Meeting is upon us again and all positions of office bearers and general committee become vacant. Please consider nominating for one of the positions available. The present committee are listed on page 2 and are standing for nomination again.

As this is the last issue before the festive season, I wish you and your families all the best for Christmas and a happy new year.



SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

The President's (Don Brennan) kind words about our late committee member and foundation Secretary, "Peter Holton", I fully endorse and to Barbara and family I offer my sincerest sympathy. I, similar to others, will miss his help and advice now that he has been called to a higher duty.

This is the last report of the current year and in reflection of the achievements by the current committee let us analyse the results to see if it did meet the aims of the RFA.

Aims:

1. To act as a medium for the promotion of communications between fellow firefighters, kindred members and spouses;

Outcome;

Reviewed membership data and upgraded same, reunion days, membership of U.f.U. Social Committee, assisted at Firefighters Picnic, Chief Fire Officer's address to quarterly meeting, invitation to member's spouses/partners to submit articles for printing, first meeting outside metro area with CFA members and first quarterly meeting where spouses/partners attended.

2. To provide a regular newsletter;

Outcome;

With the aid of the Editor (John Laverick) we have gone through a total revamp of the newsletter to produce a more user friendly publication, purchased hardware and software

for better graphics etc, independence and obtained print post rates.

3. To encourage dialogue between relevant community groups which are of assistance to members and their dependants;

Outcome;

We have become an active member of the Combined Council of Associations of State Retirees of Victoria Inc. Involved in information transfer with numerous associations, both verbally and by exchange of newsletters, regular reports by Peter Lang to the Committee on CFA, R.S.E.A. and various other organisations, contact with Retired Police Association's Secretary for advice and guidance in points that directly assist members.

4. To give support and fellowship to each other and stimulate participation in activities that assist members development;

Outcome;

Quarterly meetings, reunion days, Power of Attorney packages etc, lecture from Arthritis Foundation, Governmental changes and information sheets advice and regular upgrades on Fire Ed and safety information, involvement in workshops/lectures etc.

5. To foster social participation amongst it's members;

Outcome;

Advice on Travel, Bowls, Melbourne Fire Museum, Injured Firefighters Support Group, Queensland reunion etc. Cost saving advice

and various other social activities. (cont. over)

(cont. from p.3)

This overview should show the membership the committee has been very active on your behalf, as Secretary, I greatly appreciate their assistance and advice.

Items of interest from the last meeting of the RFA.

The meeting was brief to ensure the Guest Speaker would have ample time for presentation and questions.

Item 1;

Report on correspondence, whilst reading to the members the mail received and forwarded, one letter from Shirley Moran, the members present wanted their appreciation for the kind words expressed by Shirley "recorded".

Item 2;

Finances: S.1 = \$ 582.06
I. 1 = \$ 4745.36

Item 3;

General Business;

After considerable discussion on the conflict and the adverse reports appearing in papers

and on radio etc. regarding the States Fire Services, a motion was moved and carried that a letter be forwarded to the Government identifying our concern about the effects it creates on the public perception regarding the service as well as the members morale.

Item 4;

Meeting closed and the Chief Fire Officer, J. Godfredson, gave a very interesting lecture on the new innovations that have occurred in his time as Chief of the MFB, including the changes to the Act, and addressed questions from the floor at the end of the presentation.

The members present were very appreciative of the occasion. (Letter acknowledging same forwarded).

Hoping this newsletter finds you all fit and well and looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

I also invite members to consider nominating for the forthcoming elections of the RFA.

Reminder;

The U.F.U. Social Committee's Annual Christmas Reunion is on November 29th 1997,

Do you know about ??

UNDEDUCTED PURCHASE PRICE OF ANNUITY

This might mean money in your pocket !!

From 1968 to 1983, \$1,200:00 was the maximum deduction a taxpayer could claim in respect to *Superannuation Contributions and Life Insurance Premiums*, paid during the financial year.

During these years many contributors paid much more than this Tax Deductible Amount.

The extra, non deductible sum they paid is called the **"UNDEDUCTED PURCHASE PRICE OF ANNUITY"** of their Superannuation and/or Life Insurance premiums.

The Taxpayer can prepare a list of Superannuation and Insurance Premiums paid for the years up to 30th June 1983

If your old Taxation returns have not been retained you will need to rely on information held at the Tax Office on your behalf. .

The list of the extra payments made, should be

submitted to the Tax Office with an application for a *Tax Deduction*.

The Tax Office needs to know the date of birth of the claimant and also of the spouse.

It will then calculate the allowable Tax Deduction by dividing the undeducted or extra payments made by the life expectancy of the claimant or spouse, which ever is the greater.

The result is an annual deduction from taxable income which is permanent.

One member recently found an accumulated undeducted or extra payment of \$19,000:00 to be claimed, this resulted in a permanent annual deduction of \$600:00 to be claimed on each , Years taxable income.

Peter Lang

DID YOU KNOW?

Further to other cost saving ideas

1. The Australian Stock Exchange, (A.S.X.), have a number of Australian company shares listed that when you purchase the shares required, they not only give you a chance of a dividend, but also give discounts if you purchase goods from them, an example of one of these companies is Coles Myer. Check with your Stock Broker or A.S.X.

2. The Greensborough Plaza in Victoria have a 55 Plus Seniors Card giving a variety of discounts, up to 25% at some shops, to people over 55 years. Apply at Centre Management for application form.

This is a Lend Lease shopping centre, if you have one of these near you in your state,

FIRE AWARENESS WEEK 1997

Fire Awareness Week (FAW) will be held from October 26-November 1, 1997. The theme for FAW is "Fire - Are You Prepared?"

FAW is celebrated nationally and has a history dating back over thirty years. In Victoria, FAW is a joint initiative of the state's three firefighting agencies, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, CFA and Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Fire Protection Association Australia and other related agencies. The aim of the state FAW committee is "to reduce the incidence and impact of fire through public education."

There are a number of activities organised during FAW to raise community awareness of the importance of fire prevention. In addition to extensive media coverage, there will be numerous local activities throughout the state

such as fire station open days, shopping centre displays and school and library programs to educate the community about fire safety. Key messages for the week include the raising of community awareness in areas related to fire safety, emphasis on fire safety at home, school and in the workplace, and fire prevention in the outdoors.

A highlight of the week is the conferring of Fire Awareness Week Community Service Awards to individuals, groups and organisations who have made a contribution to the reduction of the incidence and impact of fire in the community.

For further information about Fire Awareness Week activities and the Community Service Awards, people can contact this year's host organisation, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade on



CALLING FOR RECRUITS

Blessed with the gift of the gab? Interested in keeping your hand in fire prevention and fire safety issues? Got a bit of time to take on a new

challenge?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then RETIRE ED just may be for you.

The Fire Prevention Department is looking for "new recruits" to join the RETIRE ED Program.

RETIRE ED is a fire safety program for senior citizens in the MFB District. We currently have eight retired fire officers who deliver fire safety information to a range of senior citizens groups such as Probus, RSL clubs, church groups, Masonic lodges.

We provide you with a resource kit, handout materials and training and organise the lectures for you. We reimburse you for your travelling expenses.

Interested? If so, please ring Sharon Landers, Public Education Officer, at Fire Prevention on 9665-4464 for more information. She will also be happy to put you in touch with another Retired Officer to check it out first hand.

of-way. He immediately set off to raise the alarm.

(continued page 6)
(from page 1)

THE MUTUAL STORE FIRE

By the time the first appliance arrived on scene, the flames were bursting out of the rear ground floor windows. The first attempt by the firemen to gain entry was thwarted due to the heavy burglar proof doors fitted to the building. As the keys were still at the City Watch House, the firemen proceeded to break in using tomahawks and brute force. Once entry was gained, the firemen were again hampered by the smoke logged ground floor. Windows were broken on the second floor in an effort to vent the smoke.

All this delay sealed the fate of the building, as by now it was fully involved in fire, so Supt. Stein turned his attention to halting the fire before it spread to the lofty surrounding buildings. To enable the firemen to attack the fire from above, the "Italian Ladder" was erected. It measured 70 ft. in height, but was an antiquated piece of apparatus, and 15 minutes were to elapse before it was in position and could be used. The firemen then discovered that they could only work from about half way up the ladder due to the fierce flames and radiant heat.

At about 5 a.m., at the height of the fire, the Mutual Store's roof fell in with a mighty crash, taking with it, the top floor. From that point on the danger of the fire spreading ceased to exist, so Supt. Stein ordered the firemen to direct their hoses onto the burning mass, and some time later all that remained was smoking cinders. The great building with its splendid facade was almost entirely gutted.

Several firemen were injured and one was trapped under debris, when the floor above collapsed. Fortunately he was rescued without much delay, suffering little more than a strained back. All were taken to the Melbourne Hospital where they were treated for minor injuries.

The numerous fire brigades on scene complained that this was one of the most difficult they had encountered, due to the problems gaining access to the burning building and the lack of modern equipment. Supt. Stein had been urging the City Council to purchase a new extension ladder for some time, but the project had continually been postponed.

Damage to the building and stock was almost complete, with the loss estimated at 82,200 pounds which was a lot of money in those days.

About twelve months prior to the fire, Supt. Stein had occasion to inspect the building with regard to the installation of electric lighting, and after examining the premises he reported to the insurance companies:

"The Mutual Store building could not have been better constructed for the purpose of a fire, if the object was, that once it caught alight, it should spread through the building, without a possibility of a check. There are lifts and staircases all in the usual style, ready to act as flues and create a strong draught, which will carry the flames from the bottom to the top of the building and spread them round in such a way, that no brigade could cope with them. Then of course there is the nature of the business and display of goods which give the flames every chance. In fact there is no place in the city better adapted for burning."

During an interview following the Mutual Store fire, Supt. Stein had this to say:

..... the whole of that block (bounded by Swanston, Flinders, Elizabeth Streets and Flinders Lane) is one the insurance companies are very careful about because the stocks are so enormous and valuable and the risk of fire so great. There is scarcely what we call a proper fire break in the whole block, that is a wall built up and finished in a parapet without any windows or openings in it. A fire breaking out at Craig, Williamson & Thomas's in Elizabeth Street, might, if a strong westerly wind was blowing, sweep the whole block right through to Swanston Street

Asked about what improvements could be made to the Mutual Store if it was rebuilt, Supt. Stein answered:

"The lifts should all be enclosed in brickwork and they should be carried right through the roofs, so that they could act as a flue and carry the flame right out if it reached them. The walls on either side should be carried up into a parapet. The store displays should be arranged so that there is one clear

passage for the firemen to get through the building. The floors should be fireproof and should be closed with fireproof doors between each like the hatch of a ship. Above all there should be no well-hole such is found in many business places running from the bottom to the top. Finally every new building

should be provided with what are known as "sprinklers". These are apparatus with plugs which melt at a certain temperature and deluge the vicinity with water. The cost is not great and they are very effective."

The Mutual Store was rebuilt and

FIRES OF INTEREST

The two fires detailed below were lifted from MFB press releases. They were not large by any stretch of the imagination, but unfortunately resulted in the deaths of two elderly women. but they do serve as a reminder of the importance of a properly installed and well maintained smoke alarm.

Have you installed your smoke alarm yet? If so, is it working? When did you last test it?

Remember, recent legislation makes it mandatory for all existing homes to be fitted with at least

DATE. 26-7-97 **TIME** 0632 HRS

ADDRESS Maidstone
Flat fire.

DETAILS:

The fire was contained to the bedroom of a flat on the second floor of a block of Housing Ministry Flats.

Firefighters located a deceased elderly female in the bathroom of the smoke logged premises.

Bedroom and contents have been severely damaged by fire while a portion of the remainder of the flat has been damaged by heat and smoke.

Under control in 5 minutes.
Breathing apparatus in operation,
Fire duty in place.

Fire Investigation Unit and Arson Squad in attendance to establish a cause.

DATE.: August 28, 1997 **TIME** 18:51 Hours

ADDRESS: Glen Huntly.

DETAILS:

A woman has died following a fire in her unit last night, The fire was reported to the Brigade shortly before 7pm when neighbours thought they could smell smoke, Fire crews broke into the flat and found the woman, aged in her 60's unconscious in one of the bedrooms, They immediately took her outside and performed emergency C.P.R. but to no avail.

It appears that the fire may have started hours earlier and had burnt itself out some time before the Brigade had even been called. A smoke alarm which was fitted to the unit was not working and will be taken away for testing.

Fire investigators were at the scene for several hours probing the cause and it has been revealed that the woman who died in this fire was aged 76 years and the cause was found to be a heater positioned too close to the bed - the radiated heat igniting the bed linen.

OUR GENERATION

Are we really keeping up?

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, videos, frisbees and the pill..... We were born before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ball-point pens,. before dishwashers, tumble dryers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip-dry clothes and before man walked on the moon.

We got married first and then lived together, how quaint can you be? We thought "fast food" was what you ate in Lent, a 'big mac' was an oversized raincoat and crumpet was what we had for tea. We existed before 'house husbands' computer dating, dual careers and when a 'meaningful relationship' meant getting along with cousins and 'sheltered accommodation' where you waited for a bus.

We were before day care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us 'time sharing' meant togetherness a 'chip' was a piece of fried potato, 'hardware' was nuts and bolts and 'software' was not a word.

Before 1940 'Made in Japan' meant junk, making out" referred to how you did in your exams, 'stud" was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and 'going all the way' meant staying on the bus to the depot. Pizzas McDonalds and instant coffee were unheard of. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mown. coke was kept in the coal house a joint was a piece of meat you had on Sundays and pot was something you cooked in. Rock music was a Grandmothers lullaby, Eldorado was an ice cream, a gay person was the life and soul of the party and nothing more, while aids just meant a beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are so confused and there is a generation gap today.

Author unknown

Fire Museum News

POPULAR PUMPER PULLS PUBLIC



No.9 Hale pump, a very useful appliance, (a mongrel to drive,

On the 16th & 17th August, Fred Kerr, John Veitch, Ted Osland and Grandson Edward, took the ever young 9 Hale pump to Heyfield for the annual Small Engine, Vintage Truck/car, Tractor Pull and Woodwork Exhibition at the football oval. The pump always attracts interest from the locals who plied us with free tucker,

coffee etc.

Over night stop at Wallaby Rise at Glenmaggie in the caravan park is worth a visit. The proprietor has built a huge indoor/outdoor area with damper, roast beef etc. cooked on the huge open fire.

Fred Kerr, as one of the leading movers in the Fire Museum, wishes to advise any interested persons, singly or in groups, to visit him at the Newport

Workshops to see the huge array of finished, semi finished and not yet started fire engines.

Fred can be contacted on 9662-2907 at the Fire Museum, Eastern Hill and would be pleased to greet any would be viewers.

Ted Osland

“BROWN’S BITS”

From the roving correspondent of the North West of our fair city.

Elton Wilfred Plummer, better known as “Duffy”, was a legend in his own lifetime. He was better known than the Town Hall clock.

There are so many stories about “Duffy”, you could fill a book. Once you said you were in the Brigade, the stock reply was, “do you know Duffy Plummer”?

I first met Duffy mid 1952, when he and Jack Owens were the two officers at 52 Stn. Duffy had quarters on the Woodland St. side and it was not uncommon to see his car parked about 2 car widths from the gutter, the motor still going and Duffy inside his quarters. We would park the car and return the keys to his wife Myrtle.

One night, Duffy and I turned out to a fire at the Inverness Hotel Tullamarine, (now swallowed up by the Melbourne Airport). The proprietor of the pub was former Fitzroy footballer Ken Sier, also in the pub was Bill Twomey of Collingwood fame. After putting out the small mattress fire in a bedroom, Duffy told me to take it outside and drown it, while he went in to have a drink with Ken and Bill. Two hours later, with V.K.N.8 still asking each half hour, how much longer we will be did Duffy finally decide to return to station, (I think the barrel ran dry).

“Jackie Pat” asked Duffy to take on the Works Officer’s job, 9-5 at No1 Stn. to clean the place up, (you remember, that’s the place where the helmets were always green). So, Duffy become known as “The Enforcer”. As Duffy said, You could not put it over him as he had done it all himself and knew all the lurks.

The 3-11 shift came on and when they lined up to muster, Duffy noticed “Gus” was having trouble standing up. Now as anyone who knew Gus, he was rather round at the front and with his swaying, he stood out like a sore toe. I can’t remember the two standing either side of him, possibly “Wacky and Porky”, but both were trying to hold him up.

Just then, Jacky walked past with his head on the side as usual. As he passed Gus, he looked up, then continued on to his office. Duffy thought s,,t, now I’m for it. Sure enough, over the P.A., “S.O. Plummer, Chief’s Office”. Duffy gave Gus a short blast on the way to the Chief’s Office. When he knocked on the door Jacky said, “come in Duffy” and burst out laughing, “did you see Gus” he said, “they are hard men those boys, but when the bells go on, they are good firemen”. A few more laughs and an exchange of pleasantries he dismissed



RACING TIPS

From “My Mate’s Cousin”

Our intrepid racing columnist has been laid up with the gout, so he claims. But I have it on good authority that what really happened is that he was in a bit of a hurry to get to the TAB before closing time and whilst wearing his thongs, his foot slipped off the pedal of his push-bike and caught his big toe in the chain. As a result, our man is now on a diet of boiled potatoes until he well enough to put petrol in his bookies Rolls Royce again.

But our man has certainly been well enough to keep an eye on what’s hot to trot and here are his tips for the Cup and hay-burners to watch.

SENATOR, for the Melbourne Cup. A top New

Zealand bred horse with great ability and staying power.

DEROBE, 4y/o local and trained by the Freedmans.

OCEAN RANCH, watch this one closely. Trained by M.D. Moroney. I don’t know what the M.D. stands for but if he’s a “Doctor” he might just have something in his bag to spur him on.

BLUE TURNS TO GREY, a local horse that has been wintering in Queensland and due to return home soon. Our man was picking up empty champagne bottles at the owner’s back gate recently and got to speak to him about his unusually named horse. He said that the horse is trained by Hope and is “hopeful” of a win in his first start in Melbourne. Watch for it’s return!

“May the horse be with you”

Special Testimonial Honouring Bill Webber.

Recently, I had what I believe is a privilege to be one of a small number of friends to attend a Testimonial for Bill Webber. The Testimonial took the form of an afternoon tea and unveiling a glorious photo of Bill with some very special words said by Geoff Jones (former UFU secretary), Ern Tamme (former A/Sec), Rod Knowles (former A/sec) and Peter Marshall (present Secretary.)

All speakers talked about the respect that Bill engendered to all those who had worked with him, his accomplishments for the UFU and its members and their fond memories and all the things that made Bill a very special person. A guest said to me that it is not often a living person hears the type of things that were said about them whilst they were alive. Such

things were generally said after death. and I can inform you that Bill is very much alive.

Although due to Bills ill health, he has some difficulty in speaking clearly at times, but be in no doubt that his mind is in no way affected and he can communicate to you exactly what he hears, sees and feels. Bill was supported by wife Mert, who gives him great support during his illness as She has provided all through their married life.

On looking around the room it was hard to find a dry eye and was indeed a memorable occasion for a very memorable person. Bravo Bill and Bravo to the members of BCOM who never worked with Bill but are still enjoying conditions which were mainly won by him.

Peter Holton



“OVER THE STY”

Being an occasional column by a previously unknown



Just to show that the occupant is a real live person below is a photo of the occupant and his better half in the garden of their Gold Coast Sty, he of course is dressed in holiday attire.

Due to pressure of time (spent the last 2 weeks at Melbourne Royal Show)This column is of short duration this issue.

Following on with the true storey of Y... y, (R.. s M....n knows who I am talking about, just ask him). The late Y...Y attended a fire duty at a Bond Store in South Melbourne and whilst working on the 1st floor of the premises the floor collapsed and he fell through the floor onto a pile of bottled whisky on the ground floor. After the fall he examined himself for injuries and found to his amazement that the only injury sustained was a cut to a finger. Being a teetotaller he knocked the top of a bottle of said whisky and cleansed the cut with its contents. This I believe is gospel truth.

Whilst stationed at No 27/35 station Windsor I was detailed to drive the Com Ladder and my crew was a newly joined Firefighter named Billy Yap Yap.

After dark the station H/Car turned out and shortly after Billy and I turned out on the C/ Ladder to a car fire in Alexandra Ave. South Yarra.

The car was going pretty well and Billy was requested to run a line whilst I went for a hydrant. To my amazement Billy just stood there and gazed at the fire. Upon enquiring what theing hell he was doing, he replied that he was just looking, as he felt like Moses and the burning bush! I make no further comment other than to say;-



An exclusive picture of the author of this column (on right) along with his sty manager.

TRAVELLING WITH THE BRENNAN'S

As part of our recent trip around the world, we did a three week tour of the Old Eastern Countries and Scandinavia. We returned to Berlin for 2 days, where we saw many of the buildings that were damaged by the fighting at the end of World War 2. Also visited Check Point Charlie, Hitler's Bunker, the Brandenburg Gate and many of the old buildings in the former East Berlin where our Hotel was.

Leaving Berlin we headed off to Poland for a 2 day stop in Warsaw.

Here we went on a city tour that took in the old city and the Warsaw Ghetto, where about 400,000 Jews were herded into an area of about 1 square mile. Only about 10,000 survived the war and only 300 remain to this day. There is a monument dedicated to this, which includes a small cover over a sewer outlet where the people went



The sewer entrance the Jews used to move from the Ghetto to the city to obtain food and essentials for survival

down into the sewers to get into the city areas for food etc.

Leaving Poland we head for Bella Russia. It takes us 2 hours to get through the border. There are no fences on the land as in Australia. It was here we saw our first young girls hitch hiking. Later to be told they were prostitutes. If business was slow the odd one would lift their dress up over their head to advertise their wares. The road was wide, but no mountains as well as no rest rooms. So it was gents to the left and ladies to the right in the forest area. Our first overnight stop was at Minsk. The meals were ok, but some of the tourists got the itches from the beds. Next day we were on the road for 12 hours to reach Moscow, and our Hotel Cosmos (2,500 rooms), and its own prostitute service. The meals were fair, either chicken, pork or fish. We visited Red Square, which has St Basil's Church at one end, the Gumm Shopping Centre on one side and the Kremlin and Lennin's Tomb on the other. We

went inside the Kremlin which means "walled city" to see the crown jewels and elaborate coaches all decked out with gold and diamonds and lined with mink and ermine on the inside. There was also displays of clothing worn by the Czars and their families.

We visited many churches and palaces. Gold leaf is every where. We attended the Moscow Circus as well as an evening riding on the Metro Underground. The stations are all decorated and have high cathedral ceilings.

After three nights we head to St Petersburg, having an overnight stop at Norgrade, where we had our best hotel, which was owned and operated by the Mafia.

At St Petersburg we visited more palaces and churches, once more plenty of gold.

In one of the churches the caskets of all bar the last Czar are kept.

We also visited the

Hermitage, a world famous museum. Here they have some of the most famous paintings in the world. We attended the Kirroff Ballet, where we saw Sleeping Beauty. The show went for 4 hours. The most famous people from early Russia were Peter the Great, who was a builder, architect, lawyer, doctor, surgeon and what ever else. The other was Katherine the Great, who was reported to have had 450 lovers. Anyone that really pleased her was given a palace. Most people in the cities live in apartments and some are lucky to have a small one room cottage in the country, where they spend their weekends and holidays growing vegetables etc. The average salary is \$120.00 US per month. Milk is 50 cents bread 45 cents. Staple diet is potato, dried fish, pork, chicken, cabbage and beetroot and of course Vodka. We did not see any graffiti or beggars. It got dark at about 11.30 at night and day light at 3am. Leaving St Petersburg we headed North to Finland and Helsinki.

The Scandinavian part of the trip will follow in

For those contemplating a trip to Africa, this story from Graham Brewer is well worth reading. The travel brochures from some African countries do not tell of the problems that still exist in spite of social and political changes, particularly South Africa where the abolition of apartheid has not solved all of their problems. It can make a dream holiday a nightmare if you are not aware of the-

AFRICAN PITFALLS!

There appears to be a lot of travel being done by the members of the Retired Fighters Association. I am looking forward to hearing about the trip done by the RFA president when he visited the old U.S. S.R, it has always been a place that I keep on my agenda when I think of going somewhere. Anyway I thought I might share part of a trip I did last year when I did an around the world trip with my family and Tony Scott.

We left Melbourne at eight in the morning and flew to Sydney where we boarded our plane to Africa, four hours later we arrived at Perth and after a short break and a red light that would not go out on the pilots instrument panel we were off to Africa. We all kept looking back at Australia until it disappeared over the horizon behind us and we hoped that we would see it again a few months later. The flight in total took about eighteen hours and to pass the time we watched movies and looked at the screen that showed our progress over the Indian ocean. I watched the motors and the wings as they flexed from the thrust, it is incredible how something so large can fly

We landed at Haree in Zimbabwe, by African time it was about eight at night when we walked down the steps from the aircraft to be greeted by soldiers who pointed guns to the direction we were to walk. A lot of time was spent by all inside the terminal building with barely enough room to move and toilets with broken pipes and water running over the floor. It was hot inside the building and every time I moved to the door for fresh air I was quickly ushered back by a soldier.

During the flight we were informed that our plane would be unable to continue on to Johannesburg and that other arrangements would be made for us. I stood next to the booking clerk for several hours until I obtained our boarding pass, others were not as lucky and would of spent the night at the airport.

Johannesburg was a lovely sight to see as I new I would finally have a rest after twenty seven hours of travel.

After four hours sleep we were off on our safari through South Africa and on our way to the Kruger National park.

When driving through Africa it is sometimes hard to realise that you are not in Australia as some of the country is very similar, however, this is where similarities finish. The speed cars travel is flat out

and there were many times I wished we would slow down from 140 kph to a relaxing speed, but to make things worse if a car wants to overtake you must move into the dirt (at 140 kph).

Over the next days we viewed Lions, Elephants, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Monkeys, Zebra and many more, it was wonderful to see them in a natural setting. When travelling in these parts of Africa you can not leave the vehicle as people have been taken by lions, this happened a few weeks before we arrived. In some parts, if you left the vehicle it would be robbed of the valuables and if you tried to prevent this you could be shot. Evening meals were served outside in a Bomba (high sticks in a circle with a small opening to prevent animals from entering, but Scotty got in). On one occasion we were given wild Wart Hog for dinner and of course many drinks after to wash the taste down,

It was truly a wonderful experience being in South Africa, nevertheless, there is another side. While we travelled we stayed in private game lodges. It was always in the evening when you were questioned as to what you thought of the blacks as they are still called, it was always easier to say you did not understand the politics of South Africa than to get involved in a discussion. Some of the staff at these lodges were ex police officers from Rhodesia and other places that had gained independence from the crown. The black Africans still work around the houses as they did in the past before apartheid finished, Really nothing has changed very much and it will take many decades before South Africa is really free. Whenever we had breakfast in a game lodge, you sat with people who had holsters with guns hanging off their hip, I was politely asked if I wanted one, just in case!

Anyway, it was now time to leave the bush and return to the city, I did not think about the evening ahead only about the great time that I had. That evening, three people were shot in the foyer of the hotel and as attempts were made to shift them other people were wounded, this is normal in the big cities of South Africa. The next morning I hired a car and travelled to Durban on the south east coast. It was a great place except we could not find our hotel due to 200,000 black Africans having a party on the beach and we were the only whites!

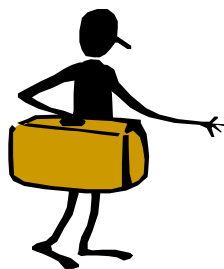
There were soldiers everywhere directing people, I got my directions when I found myself looking down the barrel of a riot shotgun. It was extremely

difficult as we had nowhere to stay but plenty of money which made us a target for robbery. I was very tired by this time but felt safe in the car while we were moving. At ten that night we found a place to stay, beers all round as we spoke about our day and really what was there to be scared of ??????

Guard dogs and armed security patrolled the grounds each night so occupants are safe. I visited Zulu Land one day, only because we were escorted by helicopter gun-ship we were almost safe. While I was taking money out of the A.T.M there were people shooting up on Heroin and at times I thought I should have taken the gun I was offered.

Africa is a wonderful adventure but extremely dangerous when you don't travel on a guided tour. Even these are now having some problems with hold-ups as people are desperate due to their lifestyle and life is cheap. There is more I could say about the beauty and the animals but we would run out of paper, however I am glad that I have been to Africa and I was glad to be on the plane to London.

I am sorry that I cannot report to Silver on the death rituals of South African's and if they are similar to Indonesia, maybe they use bamboo instead of water pipe?



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

Once upon a time, about 18 months ago, Mrs Silver said, "My ex, the father of our children is having a 60th birthday party he knows nothing about and on the invitation of his wife we should all

go, including the children, who are no longer children and grand children who are". Have you worked that all out?

The party was held at his house in Bundaberg Queensland, a little further than the usual distance one goes for a birthday party.

We decided, all 9 of us, to fly to Brisbane, stay overnight, then catch the Pineapple Express to Bundaberg.

The trip was terrific and the party lousy, but here is some news on Bundaberg if you are ever up that way.

Bundaberg was named from "Bunda", the name of an aboriginal elder and "Berg", being a variation of an old Saxon word meaning "town". Bundaberg is a modern progressive city of 42,000 people serving a district of 70,000 and was named in 1867.

With the Great Barrier Reef just off the shore-line and a host of things to see, it's a great place to visit. The main street, "Bourbong Street", in the C.B.D. has been transformed into a tropical street scape with bright tropical flowers blending in to leafy green trees and fountains at Central Pavilion provides a venue for entertainers. The Burnett River flows

through the city and divides Bundaberg into two.

A road bridge, also a rail bridge in heritage colours, cross the river from the city centre to suburban Sharon and North Bundaberg. An additional road bridge is under construction, crossing the river from Mulgrave Street to Hinkler Ave.

The river is a great place for recreation with fishing, boating, rowing, Skiing up river at Sandy Hook and sailing downstream near the port. The river also has commercial use with trawlers, dive and charter craft using Bundaberg as a base.

Bundaberg ranks with Cairns and Coffs Harbour as one of the three principal clearing ports for visiting yachts on the east coast.

Without doubt, Bundaberg's favourite son is "Bert Hinkler". In a brief lifetime of 40 years, Bert Hinkler became one of the world's greatest pioneer aviators. He has monuments all over the city including displays of his replica glider and models of his aircraft. Hinkler House is in the Botanical Gardens with a memorial museum in his home.

The real flavour of Queensland can be found at the Bundaberg Rum Distillery, with tours operating throughout the year. Tropical Wines make their own wines from fruit, not grapes.

Incidentally, unemployment there is currently 19%.

There is much to see in town and areas within 4 to 5 hours drive.

I got the best suntan you could ask for, it was 106 deg. in the waterbag. But I won't be going back, as I said, "it was a s..t of a party".

Happy Travelling

A DOG OF A STORY

There was an old dog known to all as Snow,
A labrador retriever in the know.

With his master he would take a long, long walk,

Down by the Yarra, to hear the birds squawk.

Like all Labradors, not of habit, but, on a whim,
Loved the water in which to swim.

So, in the Yarra he did jump,

And swam till he was one, soggy, lump.

When it was time for that long journey home,

His master gave a whistle, then a groan.

For old Snow, that river with it's mud ran deep,
And the rugged bank, it was far too steep.

His master, with no time to ponder,
Jumped into that river yonder.

With a heave, the retriever he did retrieve,
And himself with more than one wet sleeve.

On the way home, he met some wowsers,
To explain how come he wet his trousers.

Their comment was to Mr. Berry,

Next time, use a jerry!

GOLD COAST REUNION SUCCESS

The 10th Annual Reunion of the Retired Melbourne Firemen was held at Southport Yacht Club, Gold Coast, on July 31st 1997. A good time was had by all.

This reunion started in 1987 when June and I first moved to the Sunshine State. It was just a casual lunch for 8 of us. Someone said: "We should do this every year when we are here escaping Melbourne's winter". Word got around and each year a few more turned up. This year there were 40 men and their wives in attendance.

The fires get fought again and the hose gets longer as these ageing fire fighters relive their "glory days" - you know "remember this" and "remember that".

This year the reunion was advertised in "The Water Off" and we also had it put over Coast FM radio. The yacht club reserved the Boardroom Cafe for us, which was much appreciated. It is not an expensive day - pay for your lunch which are Bistro prices and your drinks. No entry fee - just turn up at 12 noon on the last Thursday in July. Maybe next year there will be many more.



L to R. Tony Hynson, Ian Heath (rear), ?,
Maurie Kane, Doug Huxley, Kevin Kennedy,

Do you remember Ian Heath? Of course you do - he paid us every week! He and his wife, Terry, travel down from Redland Bay every year to be present. Two of our men have had heart bypasses, Geoff Jones and more recently, Brian MacMillan. Both were there this year, enjoying the day.

In the romance department it was revealed one ex-fireman (who shall remain nameless) was a former "old flame" of another ex-fireman's wife in their teenage years. You never know who you will meet at this reunion.

Hoping to see you all next year. Many thanks to all who turned up, making it a great day.

CANNON PUTS "MOZZ" ON PUB

The last Western District Reunion was held at the historic Plough Hotel in Footscray, two days before a devastating fire tore through it. Although the day was enjoyed by all who attended, the fire was ominously predicted by one of our members.

Whilst watching the flashy pub chef prepare the meals and hoping to pick up some pointers on cooking, (so he could learn a bit more than hard boil an egg), John Cannon said to another of our members, "I think we are going to have a fire here", therefore, immediately putting "the mozz" on the place. The rest is history now - and so is the pub.

WESTERN DISTRICT REUNION

Due to the recent fire at the Plough Hotel in Footscray (our usual reunion venue), the next reunion will be held at;

FOOTSCRAY R.S.L.

48 Geelong Road Footscray

Tuesday 28th October

12 Noon

Contact Ian Fowler Ph. 9749- 2606

**RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH INCORPORATED**

NOMINATION FORM.

For election of Office Bearers of the Association and ordinary members of the committee.

We hereby nominate;

Name: _____ **For the position of;** _____

Proposer's Name: _____

Address:
_____ **Post Code** _____

Seconder's Name: _____

Address:
_____ **Post Code** _____

I hereby accept the above nomination; Signature of Nominee; _____

Date; _____

Return by Friday November 7, 1997, to;-
The Secretary
Retired Firefighters Association of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated.

**RESPONSE TO "LARA FIRE"
ARTICLE**

Re the article on the "Lara Fires," on 8-1-69, in the August edition of "Water Off," I was on annual leave at the time. On that day the family and I set forth for Warrnambool.

We got as far as Avalon when the car boiled, at that time the fire was on the other side of the ranges, (You Yangs), as we sat (with a coldie), waiting for the car to cool. As we waited, the flats beside the highway burst into flames. I topped up the radiator with water out of the caravan tank and continued the trip as far as the approach to Mt. Moriac, when the car

boiled again. While waiting for it to cool, (another coldie), some fool did a panic and said get the kids away while filling the radiator and engine with water, but it started.

The fire was spotted about a short 1/2 mile away. After the car was going again I saw a farmhouse, sheds and garden etc. explode into flames. I could do nothing to help in spite of my training.

We stopped at Mt Moriac Fire Station and Hotel to keep informed of the situation.

We got the radiator repaired at Colac.
Jim Holmes..

QUOTES

Progress has its drawbacks; you can't warm your feet on a microwave.

If people concentrated on the really important things in life, there'd be a shortage of fishing rods.

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