

"WATER OFF"

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



February 2002 Vol 6 No1
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RFA Newsletter
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A TRIBUTE TO FDNY FIREFIGHTERS

From 1865 until 2001 FDNY lost 774 members in the line of duty. On September 11th they lost an additional 334 members

This tribute is from Pete Hamill—City Beat—NY Daily News

We would see them on summer afternoons, big and brawny or wiry and tough, standing outside the firehouses all over the city. Their denim shirts were often stained with sweat. They had the ease of men who did not need to brag about the work they did. It seemed that they were always laughing.

We would see them when the city leaves turned yellow with autumn, standing in the open doors of those firehouses. Inside, the red fire tracks and engines glistened with the pride of craftsmen who respected their tools. They seemed to love talking with small children. They were all, it seemed, fond of dogs. They sometimes paused and breathed deeply of the crisp air of October, for no men understood better the special beauty of a cleansing breeze. It seemed that they were always laughing.



We would see them inside the closed doors of the New York winter, waiting casually, almost indolently for the sounds of alarms. Upstairs, they talked with passion about food, for they cooked for themselves, and the menu was a kind of democratic choice.

Above: Amid the dust and smoke they walk to start another shift at ground zero.

Courtesy FDNY Photo Unit

In all the places that we ever visited, the job of chef seemed to fall upon the Italian-Americans among them. Lasagna, homemade, with fresh loaves of Italian bread

seemed to be the favourite food of Irish-American firemen, and Latinos, and the tough children of the Eastern European Jews, and those whose ancestors went all the way back to Africa. Too often the food went cold as they raced off to practice their dangerous craft. It seemed that they were always laughing.

(Continued on page 6)



“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 20th, 2002

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. @ \$4 per head. Drinks at bar prices.

JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Ph: 03 9431 2880

OFFICE BEARERS

President, Don Brennan
Vice President, Ian Fowler
Sec./Treasurer, John Berry

General Committee;

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

RFA 2002 Calendar

February 20: General Meeting
April 14: Reunion Day
May 15th: General Meeting
August 21st: General Meeting
November 20th: Annual General Meeting
November?: UFU Annual Luncheon

“Water Off” is edited by John Laverick, 40 Brunel Street Essendon 3040. Phone / fax 9337-9820. E Mail rfa@smartchat.net.au
 All articles accepted for publication by the editor are done so in good faith and no responsibility is accepted for any inaccuracies that may occur.
 Signed: J. Laverick.

VALE

Cyril Ammon	Aub Mather
Ron Baxter	May Richards
Keith Gray	Winifred Scriviner

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

SICK LIST

Ron Cass,	Bill Scrivener
Lionel Rose,	Jack Gallop

We wish these members a speedy recovery

Note:
 If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member. We endeavour to keep you informed, but can only do this with your help.

REUNION DAY LUNCHEON

Sunday 14th April 2002

Our annual reunion day luncheon will be held at the MFB Training College at 1100 Hours.

BYO Drinks.
 Tea and coffee will be supplied.

Cost: \$13.00 per guest, members free.

Hope to see you there.
 Acceptance form below.

REUNION DAY AT M.F.B TRAINING COLLEGE

Acceptance Form

Members Free; Guests = \$13 per head.
R.S.V.P. Friday 5th April, 2002
 Please return this slip to;

Don Brennan
 29 Lilian St.
 Bulleen 3105
 Ph. 9850 6725

Name
 (please print)

I/We will be attending the Reunion at the M.F.B. Training College
 619 Victoria Street Abbotsford
 at 1100 Hours on

Sunday 14th April 2002

Guest/ Spouse Name
 (please print)

Please find enclosed Cheque / Money order

for the sum of \$.....

CHIEF RETIRING!!!

Alan Richards (RFA Patron) will be retiring on the 18th March after a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades.

A Retirement Dinner with a live band will be held on Thursday 21st March.

Venue: The Yarra Room at Melbourne Park



CFO Alan Richards greets a patient during last year's "Once a Year Club" Christmas visit to the Royal Children's Hospital. Alan has been associated with the "OYC" for 50 years.

Some good advice!

Today's kids lead complex lives. They often have a distorted view of what is expected of them and what they expect from life. Here is some profound advice you can offer your teenage children/grandchildren and be comforted in the fact that they'll have difficulty in challenging its validity.

Here's some advice Bill Gates recently offered at a high school speech about things not taught in school. He suggests feel-good, politically-correct teaching has created a full generation of youngsters with no concept of reality and how this concept can set them up for failure in the real world.

RULE 1 Life is not fair - get used to it.

RULE 2 The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

RULE 3 You will NOT make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with a car phone, until you earn both.

RULE 4 If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

RULE 5 Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping - they called it opportunity

RULE 6 If you mess up, it's not your parent's fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

RULE 7 Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

RULE 8 Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

RULE 9 Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

RULE 10 Television is not real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

RULE 11 Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

dozen biscuits. He divided them into four equal piles of three biscuits each. Everyone agreed that was good, The chemist called his dog over and said "Measure - do your stuff." Measure got up, walked over to the fridge, took out a quart of milk, got a 1oz glass from the cupboard and poured exactly 8ozs, without spilling a drop. Everyone agreed that was good.

Then the three men turned to the union worker and said "what can your dog do? The union man called to his dog and said "Coffee Break do your stuff." Coffee Break jumped to his feet, ate the biscuits, drank the milk, shit on the computer keyboard, sexually assaulted the three other dogs, claimed he injured his back while doing so, filed a grievance report for unsafe conditions, put in a worker's compensation form and went home on sick leave.

TOP DOG!

Four men were bragging about how smart their dogs are. The first man an engineer, the second an accountant, third a chemist and the fourth a union worker.

To show off, the engineer called his dog. "PC, do your stuff." PC trotted over to the desk top PC, grabbed the mouse with his mouth and promptly drew a circle, a square and a triangle. Everyone agreed that was pretty smart.

The accountant said his dog could do better. He called his dog and said "Tax Break, do your stuff." Tax Break went into the kitchen and returned with a

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Another year has come and gone and unfortunately some of our members have past on. We are all getting older and quite a few are suffering from long term illness.

It is important you let us know of members who are not enjoying the best of health so we can print it in the Water Off. This allows former work mates to telephone or visit and perhaps cheer their mates up.

Our Annual Spit Roast is this year on Sunday

14th April. It will be held at the training college. As usual members are free with partners paying \$13.00. This price is comparable to last year and has the GST component included.

This has always been a great day so bring your partner and enjoy yourselves.

Don Brennan
President

Secretary/Treasurers Report



The Committee and members of the R.F.A, offer the highest accolades to the entire gamut of emergency service personnel, both non-career and career. Who freely gave of their time for the protection of life and property in the course of their great effort to curb the devastating bush fires in N.S.W.

Well done to everyone involved!

Whilst on the subject of accolades we cannot forget the **Military personnel** that we as a community (we elect the Government) have sent to many parts of the world. We wish them all a safe and speedy return home to their loved ones.

Interim Operational Management Arrangements M.F.E.S.B.

The CEO Peter Akers identified in the 20th December edition of Firecall, with the pending retirement, on the 18th March, of their present Chief Fire Officer Alan Richards as an interim measure the board has approved a transitional management structure which effectively splits the role of Director Emergency Response into two parts. Acting Director Operations and Acting Director Operations/ Strategy and Planning. These roles were developed after several workshops involving senior operations staff and the executive staff committee to review the strengths and weaknesses of the existing management structure. Applications closing on the 7th of January 2002. It is anticipated that the new Acting Directors will commence duties from the 4th of February 2002 and will remain in these positions until agreement is reached about the ongoing structure. [Information courtesy of Firecall.]

Note (Interesting that the C.F.A have recently appointed a new Chief Officer).

Rather than hypothesise as to the possible future

structure of the service, the R.F.A committee hope that we may be able to entice the C.E.O Peter Akers to be our guest at one of the quarterly meetings. This would of course be at a time that is convenient to him. The R.F.A members are ratepayers, insurance policy holders, state tax payees and many are past members of the service and are extremely interested in the aims, objectives and how one will quantify the changes intended will improve the end product the community will receive with the aforementioned changes. The R.F.A committee have no doubt an impact statement would have already been delivered to the Responsible Minister and Fire Commissioner.

The Official publication of the C.F.A, **Brigade** has a new format, which makes it, we believe, of a very high standard; the Editor is to be commended for its quality.

One article, which we found of interest, was the talk to the new **Chief Officer Russell Rees**. We cannot reproduce all of it but we felt the heading "**The Herald boy becomes the Chief**" and the Chief's opening remarks gave great insight into his makeup, especially where he doubts if there exists a standard model of fire brigade and would like to see the organisation "**cut the cloth to suit the brigade.**" He is also eager to "**put my feet under as many fire station tables as possible.**" [Information courtesy of Brigade]

The R.F.A would like to congratulate Russell on his appointment.

M.F.E.S.B Stalwart John Danby Reg. No. 2294 will hang up his tunic for the last time after 35 ½ years service.

The venue for his send-off night will be the **Bundoora Bowling Club**, Cameron Parade Bundoora, starting at

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

1800 hours, Saturday 23rd March 2002. Cost \$10.00 per head, finger food supplied drinks at bar prices. Contact A Platoon No 7 station [Thomastown] Many of our members would have worked with big John so lets make it a night to remember!

World Firefighters Games

The games are to be held in Christchurch New Zealand in late October 2002. The Victorian Committee are working very hard on behalf of the people going and from all the paperwork the R.F.A have received they need as much assistance as possible.

Future fundraising dates [Sausage sizzles]

Year	Day	Date	Location	
2002	Saturday	March 30 th	Bunnings	Epping
2002	Sunday	May 5 th	Bunnings	Altona
2002	Sunday	August 4 th	Bunnings	Northland
2002	Saturday	Sept. 14 th	Bunnings	Croydon
2002	Saturday	Dec. 7 th	Bunnings	Taylor's Lakes

If you are interested in going to the Games contact Linley Bell [Secretary] 97273179. If not going please assist with raffles and do not forget to spend a couple of dollars or more at their sausage sizzles.

Report on Annual General Meeting 21/11/01

Item 1. President welcomed members and their partners and gave his opening remarks.

Item 2. Apologies: C.Brown, B.Conway, T.Driscoll, J.Holmes, J.Gallup, C.Guthrie, G.Payne, P.Lang, E.Paddon, E.Tamme, T.Reed, B.Wells, J.Nevins. Sick C.Selby, C.Hart, B.Scrivenor.

Item 3. President called for 1 minutes silence in remembrance of deceased members of the Emergency Services including the brotherhood of firefighters who lost their lives In New York.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA RFA Calendar:

March 29th Annual General Meeting, June 28th General Reunion Meeting, September 27th Half-Yearly Reunion Meeting, December 8th Christmas Luncheon.

If in WA during any of the of the above dates contact Secretary Dick Prendergast 08 93528393, President John Casley, 08 93494517.

All visiting retired firefighters are welcome to be our guest at any of our meetings.

Item 4. Minutes of previous Annual General meeting 15/11/00 were read and confirmed. Moved K.Clarke Seconded A.Stirling; that the minutes were a true and factual account - carried.

Item 5. Secretary/Treasurers Report – see financial report. F.Churchill moved that the report be accepted, seconded B.Jackson – carried.

Item 6. F.Churchill moved that at this meeting of the R.F.A the Acting Secretary/Treasurer be reimbursed the \$100 normally paid towards the Secretary's phone rental. Seconded B.Jackson – carried.

Item 7. President's report was read J.Wallace moved that it be accepted, seconded J.Schintler – carried.

Item 8. Don Brennan moved that this meeting of the R.F.A bestow on committee member John Laverick Life Membership for his outstanding work on the Newsletter Seconded J.Berry – carried unanimously.

Item 9. Election of Office Bearers
President: Don Brennan
Vice President: Ian Fowler
Secretary/Treasurer John Berry
Committee Members: Bob McNeil, Ross Medwin, John Laverick, John Schintler.
Public Officer: John Wallace.
Auditor: Theo Teklenburg.

Guest Speakers: Jeff Kendall and Christian Schween from Asset Builder Financial Services. Meeting closed 1205 hours

Note: Quarterly Meeting lunch has increased to \$4.00 per head!

J. Berry, Sec/Treasurer

GEELONG REUNION
Monday May 6th, 2002
11.30 onwards
Shell Club
Bacchus Marsh Rd.
Corio
Drinks at bar prices



Contact: Bill Icke 5244 1822
John Wallace 5278 4734

FIREDOG KITT 2 DIES

Touched thousands of people through his fire safety demonstrations and helped change the lives of hundreds of troubled children, Firechaser Dennis, or Firedog Kitt 2, was the busiest fire safety educator in the MFB.

Kitt 1's son, Firechaser Dennis, was born in November 1992. He was named after the MFB's 'No. 8' Dennis Pump appliance, now in the Melbourne Fire Museum.

Dennis started his training at eight weeks of age getting accustomed to the firefighters, their appliances and the general noise and activity around the fire stations. He also began learning the fire safety routines, but only as a game at that stage. Being a lively young dog he learnt quickly, and by six months of age was getting reasonably proficient at these routines. Up to the time of Kitt 1's sudden retirement in February 1994, Dennis had only had very limited experience in the working environment

DENNIS GRADUATES AS FIRE DOG KITT 2.

The launch of John Laverick's book was a highlight of the 1994 Fire Awareness Week and it was intended that Kitt 1 should attend. However a few weeks before the event it was obvious that his failing health would not allow for such excitement.

As Dennis had proven himself, it was decided that he was ready to graduate and be officially renamed MFB Fire Dog Kitt 2. The graduation was held at Scienceworks in Spotswood. At an impressive ceremony in the presence of the Deputy Premier of Victoria, Mr. P. McNamara, the MFB Board President and all the executive officers, Kitt 1's book was launched and Chief Fire Officer Jeff Godfredson presented Kitt 2 with his own badge, turnout coat and a miniature helmet.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

A week after his graduation, he experienced one of the highlights of his career. Dr. Harry Cooper held the first of his "Talk to the Animals" Expos at Caulfield Racecourse. He was invited to demonstrate his routines on all three days of the expo. With his co-trainer Ff. Shane Howard providing the commentary and supported by the firefighters from the local station, he put in flawless performances. On the final day, the Sunday, the racecourse was packed, and the crowd watching his demonstration on the main stage in prime time was estimated at **45,000.**



ONGOING WORK.

Kitt 2 continued to work on a regular basis. His 'job' included the Fire Ed Program (the MFB's own fire safety education program) and the Juvenile Fire Awareness Intervention Program, Zone Displays and of course, public events. In 1997 Ret. SO. John Laverick decided to try using him at selected venues when presenting the Retire Ed Program, a fire safety program for senior citizens. He proved to be a big hit with the older people.

500 FIRE SAFETY DEMONSTRATIONS.

On May 25, 2001, Kitt 2 presented his 500th. fire safety demonstration at the "Friday" Display at Eastern Hill. The MFB organised a very large media contingent to attend on the day. During the display, the Chief Fire Officer, Alan Richards presented Kitt 2 with a handsome, etched crystal plaque in recognition of his achievement. The publicity that was generated from that single event was quite phenomenal with him featuring on the TV News on two channels, in a national daily newspaper, and several dog magazines. The MFB's own "Firevision" made a video and also

took numerous still photos.

RETIREMENT

A couple of months after his 500th, he was starting to show a lack of interest in his demonstrations. It was suspected that after the intense activity of the previous couple of months, he was just tired, so he took a month off, but on his return to work his condition clearly had not improved. Several visits to the vet and numerous tests failed to reveal the cause of his problem. His deterioration continued and the decision was made to retire him. He did his final and very limited demonstration on October 14, 2001.

During the course of an illustrious career, Kitt 2 completed an incredible total of 524 fire safety demonstrations, a record that is likely to stand for some considerable time. His potentially life saving routines were witnessed by in excess of 280,000 people.

Kitt 2 was destined never to enjoy his retirement. By late November the vets had diagnosed a brain tumour. On December 28, 2001 Kitt 2 was put to sleep, a sad end to a very talented fire dog.

Barbara McCumisky

THE BRAZILIAN TRIP CONTINUED

Fred Kerr reflects on his recent trip to Brazil and continues on from the November edition of "Water Off"

On Sunday we were picked up by car and taken to Eduardo's (Marcel's friend) Situ (sit-you) approximately 50 minutes from Belo-Horizonte. Lots of well to do families have these as a weekend retreat. This one consists of 5 acres of lush farmland with manicured trees and gardens. It is maintained by a husband and wife who live in one of the 3 houses in the grounds and they prepare the house for the owners and then clean up the mess when they leave. One of the other houses is for the owner and very comfortable and the other is for his son and daughter to use at their will with snooker room, steam room, in ground pool etc. Eduardo's father is General Manager for Fiat Motors in Brazil so he would be well able to afford this little ranch. This Situ is among dozens in the area ringed by a huge stone fence, electric and barbed wire on top and security guards at the entrance.

Tuesday evening we were invited to a soccer game at 9.30pm between Marcel's team Gruzero Esporte Club and another team from Argentina. Seat belts on for a very fast car ride to the soccer ground called Mineiro, second largest in Brazil and holds 150,000. Ten dollars (AUS) to get in but the ladies were free and as we wended our way through the throng of peddlers, pickpockets and prostitutes we were stopped by the police and given an extremely close search for weapons. The ground seemed smaller than the MCG and it is surrounded by mostly concrete terraces, small section of brightly painted seats and some corporate boxes. Just before the start about 15 police/militia some with revolvers, other with shotguns, led the players onto the ground, they then leashed the German Shepherds and positioned themselves around the arena to the standby beat of drums at each end of the oval. There were only about 8,000 fans there and after the first goal they jumped to their feet and became very excited.

It seemed that after a minor collision between players a lot of play-acting took place and the better

performer received the free kick. During the game three players were hurt and removed by a mobile electric stretcher. As we left the ground after a very poor game I could not help but notice that every internal wall of this large monolith was covered by graffiti.

On Thursday evening I was invited to a black mambo club by a friend of Marcel, an American university professor who had lived in Brazil for the past 25 years. He spoke the language, was single and it seemed had a different girl friend for each night of the week. I met Thomas at the Zei Club at 9.30pm and was greeted at the gate by four very large Brazilians, stopped and searched and then allowed to enter. The hall was about the same size as the mess room at the Training College and hundreds of black and whites were dancing to a 6-piece band. I had a couple of dances but communication was not possible so Thomas and I talked until we left at 1.30am.

Friday 11/8/00. Departure day, time to say goodbye for some time. We all wondered when we would see them again.

We had decided to travel by coach from Belo-Horizonte to Rio to see some of the country. The coach was a new Volvo, driver in a sealed compartment, air conditioned but no TV. The airport side of Belo is very poor and run down, rubbish and old cars litter the streets and the shacks are little better than hovels. The highway was excellent, two lanes each way and after a 3-hour ride we stopped for a break. On our way again and there they were, in the middle of nowhere, miles from anywhere, two huge new factories, one for Mercedes Benz, the other for Scania on the only piece of flat ground for miles.

Suddenly, there was a bang and the coach slowed, stopped, flat tyre and no tools to fix it. Replacement bus came after an hour, not nearly as grand as the coach but we were mobile. Not for long, the bus broke down after 60 mins. but this time there was one waiting for us. We finally arrived at

Rio airport at 1630 hours. At the booking in gate they stopped us from entering and asked for 260 real (A\$260) departure tax. We tried to explain that all of this was paid in Australia but they could not or would not understand. Pay up or stay seemed to be the options. Very luckily I had 260 real in my wallet ready to change to Aussie dollars at the airport but some people behind us were very angry, they did not have and could not get the money. All of you seasoned travellers know that these problems come in triples so what next? We landed at Buenos Airies at 0100 hours and were directed to gate 8, the other side of the terminal. So with all of our hand luggage in tow we struggled to gate 8, no action here, we thought, back to our starting point, 15 minutes brisk walk. After more hand speak, yes, you've guessed it, back to the other side again and by this time we had used up all of the spare time. Finally we were on board the Flying Kangaroo at 0100 hrs but due to a security c-check, catering mix-up, electrical fault in cockpit we departed at 0340 hours.

The captain apologised for the delay but it happens in Argentina all too often. We stopped in Auckland for 45 minutes then to Sydney, then Melbourne.

Geez, its bloody good to be home mate. Summing up, Brazil is a country I probably would never have visited without Susie's wedding. If there is a next time I would like to see the Amazon River and rainforests etc, who knows? In the meantime the Kerr family have 185 new relations to host if and when they visit Aussie. Something to look forward to?

"It's the way we have in the Fire Brigade."

F. C. Kerr

Thought For The Day

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak out and remove all doubt.

RETIRE FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Reg.No. A16839F

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2001

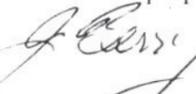
	2000	2000
	\$	\$
Income		
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2000	7,064.00	5,746.53
Members' subscriptions	3,913.00	3,268.50
Badge sales	15.00	24.00
Socials	750.00	1,404.00
Joining fees	40.00	50.00
Interest received	275.69	217.74
	<u>12,057.69</u>	<u>10,710.77</u>
Expenditure		
Postages and telephone	865.20	733.50
Reunion Day and meetings catering	2,327.50	916.70
Magazine expenses	143.85	126.50
Computer upgrades	727.00	1,055.00
Donation	310.00	-
Stationary	162.25	-
AGM and meeting expenses	315.00	591.00
Sundries	72.20	216.65
Government charges	41.40	7.42
	<u>4,964.40</u>	<u>3,646.77</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2001	<u>7,093.29</u>	<u>7,064.00</u>
	<u>12,057.69</u>	<u>10,710.77</u>

Bank Reconciliation

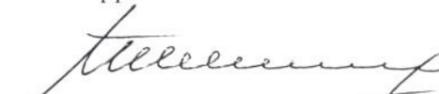
Bank balance as at 30 June 2001

Main account	2,499.66
Term deposit	<u>4,593.63</u>
	<u>7,093.29</u>

Statement prepared and figures correct from information supplied



J A Berry
Treasurer



T A Teklenburg
Auditor

LIVING IN THE PAST.

I read in one of the service newsletters the comment that some people are living in the past, this unfortunately is a misnomer, the only people I know who may live in the past are people very ill mentally. Normal people are aware, that without a past you have no future, and the past is the only yardstick society has to judge if the proposal is a improvement or not.

Ancient cultures and/or religions that practice old rites etc are aware that neither heritage nor traditional values need to be sacrificed for future vision. Organisations, business and Governments who no longer exist because of their failure to disseminate their proposals or concepts adequately or have acted in an autocratic way are testament to this.

John Berry

(Continued from page 1)

We would see them in the springtime, the overcoats of winter gone, ballgames playing now on radios, as young women walked by the firehouses to the subways, objects of their admiring collective gaze. They made no rude noises, no crude remarks. Their admiration was always aesthetic, like visitors to museums shocked into silence by the sight of beauty. And after all, most of them were young themselves, their lives filled with the infinite possibilities of youth. They celebrated the multiple beauties of this world because their craft so often took them into horror. And always, always, it seemed that they were laughing.

Now 343 of those firemen are gone. Sept. 11, 2001, was a calamity for thousands of New Yorkers, for its citizens, police, EMS workers. We have all suffered unacceptable losses. But it was also the single worst day in the long history of the New York Fire Department. No other day has even come close.



A silent prayer for lost brothers

The firemen were organized as a single unit in 1865 at the command of Albany and became in 1870, at the urgings of an old fireman named Boss Tweed, the Fire Department of New York. That is why the caps and insignias say FDNY, not NYFD. They began when 86th St. was a distant suburb. They began before the five boroughs were joined into one city in 1898. They have been fighting fires and saving lives ever since, day after day, night after night, in all seasons. They have summoned their Celtic pipe band to bury too many of their comrades.

Until Sept. 11, the worst single day for the FDNY took place in October 1966, when a floor collapsed in a burning building on

23d St. That day 12 firemen were killed. That week, New York was shocked and numbed. None of us then alive could have imagined a day when almost 30 times that number would perish in smoke, fire and exploded steel. No firemen could have been prepared to deal with such murderous ferocity.

It seems to be no accident. in a city of such widespread valor, that in the numbered shorthand of our most terrible day the first three numbers were 911.

Entire fire companies have now disappeared from the landscape of New York. Every living fireman

men became young forever.

Many were married, with wives and children now scattered all over the metropolitan area, orphaned by the heartless storm of fanaticism. Many were single, in the first sweet stages of maturity. Some were veterans, gnarled but not hardened by repeated exposure to human suffering, bearers of the department's memory, teachers of their dangerous craft. Many were the children of firemen, or had their own children assigned to our firehouses. Not one of them woke up that morning thinking it might be their last.

An old reporter visiting the site on the night of the disaster said to a middle-aged policeman: "Thank you. You guys are real heroes."

"No, no, we're not," he said, heavy with exhaustion and sorrow. "We're here, two blocks away. The cops on the scene, they're heroes. The ambulance guys, heroes." Then he shook his head and smothered a sob. "But those firemen, those crazy goddamned firemen..."

Those crazy goddamned firemen were all part of the same band of brothers, transcending the petty differences of race or religion. Such differences were most often dissolved in jokes and laughter. The fraternity itself, like that of combat soldiers, was forged in shared adversity.

Some could trace their FDNY lineage back through the generations. Sons honoured fathers and grandfathers by taking their own places in the fire companies of New York. Some, of course, were the lust in their families to lug hose into burning buildings. But Irishness was there from the beginning, when the children of the

has lost friends or relatives. Even now, the bodies of hundreds of firemen remain entombed under the smoking rubble of Ground Zero. Much of the top brass vanished while serving at the front.

But the heaviest casualties were among the infantry of the FDNY, those who would never pause when asked to take that hill or that town. Men just like them died at Anzio and Omaha Beach, in the Hurtgen Forest and Monte Cassino, on Tarawa, Iwo Jima and Okinawa and too many other godforsaken places from the Yalu Reservoir to Anh Khe. In all those places, and in the towers of lower Manhattan, decent

BROWN'S BITS

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

After venting my spleen on a couple of the Top Brass, I feel I must give credit where it's due. The majority of these people had my utmost respect. They were dedicated men who virtually gave their all to the Fire Brigade.

When I joined in January 52, there were only four executive officers— Chief Officer Whitehead, Deputy C. O. L. Paterson, Third Officer W. Aldridge and Fourth Officer J. Paterson (I think nephew of Deputy).

The Chief ran the whole of the Brigade, all departments were under his control. When the Deputy retired shortly after, there was great speculation between District Officers as to who would get the Fourth Officer's position as the others moved up. "Big Fred" and "Friendly" were both declaring they would be, but the position went to a respected D. O. Ted Weaver.

At that time all officers worked the 120 hour roster, one 24 hour day, one 12 hour day and one 6 hour day off. When Ted Weaver was told that was only to have one 1/2 day off I was told that his wife objected and he declined the position—"Friendly" got it.

Later on they dropped the Third and Fourth Officer rank and renamed the positions as 1st and 2nd Assistant Chief Officer. As time went on 3rd and 4th

A.C.O's and they haven't stopped renaming ranks since.

In the early days you could contact any of these people direct, there were no secretaries then. Chief J. Paterson boasted you could contact him direct any day between 0700 Hrs to 2300 Hrs except Saturday between 1300 to 1700 Hrs. when he went to watch Fitzroy play.

Incidentally, Jack Paterson was the last C.O., Frank Tueno was the first Chief Fire Officer while Ern Symes was the first full time and paid Board President, taking over the running of all departments, leaving the firefighting under the C.F.O.

In the long hours even the D.O's had it hard. They had to notified each time a station turned out and told what the word back was irrespective of what the hour was and if "in the station", turn out on the hose carriage as well as turning out to fires and incidents not yet under control. How the situation has changed now. In those days, the 3rd Officer turned out on the H/C at No1 Stn. and the 4th Officer the H/C at No2 if in the station.

You can't please everyone, so at one time or another someone is going to be offended, but in my 35 years service the majority of these senior officers were very competent and dedicated people that only instilled confidence in those following.

DARWIN AWARDS

Named in honor of Charles Darwin, the father of evolution. Darwin Awards commemorate those who improve our gene pool by removing themselves from it.

ramp before it set the fuel dock ablaze.

It turned out that the man spotted flying

The location: a small boat harbor in Santa Cruz. The victims: a cruise boat and its owner. The opening scene: employees sprinting away from the dock's fuel pumps -- a vision guaranteed to evoke dread in the souls of innocent bystanders. If those around you are fleeing from danger, it's a sure bet that you should follow in their footsteps. Within seconds, the entire deck of a cabin cruiser blasted five feet out of the water, propelled by enough force to fell an elephant. A bystander outside a nearby restaurant reported seeing a man fly from the airborne deck and land in the water near the flaming vessel.

through the air had just purchased the boat, and was filling its tanks before he set sail to San Francisco. As he prepared to motor away from the fuel dock, a dock attendant noticed that he had pumped the fuel into a fishing pole holder instead of his tanks. The alarmed employee instructed him to turn on his bilge pump and blowers, but the man stated that he was in too much of a hurry to wait for the fumes to clear.

The Harbor Patrol was on the scene within seconds. They fished the unconscious man from the water, and then quickly hauled the burning wreck over to a boat

As the attendant ran for his life, sparks from the engine's starter motor ignited the accumulated fumes.

The boat was dragged from the water with a bulldozer, and hauled to the junkyard as scrap. The owner was alive when he was carted off by the ambulance, but one way or another, his odds of surviving long in this world seem poor.

APOLOGY

To all members who have sent articles for publication and missed out. The events of September 11 have taken precedence in recent editions. Please don't feel we have forgotten you, keep the articles coming.

There is life after the Fire Brigade...it's called "UTOPIA" Or... "Relax and run a caravan park"!!!!

Things are getting quite busy again and we are gearing up for the Xmas rush which is unbelievable on boxing day.

That is when everyone decides to arrive at once for cabins, vans, tent sites etc. Someone arrives with a boat, a trailer and a couple of cars to park in one cabin car park. Or you might get a line up of fourteen cars for eight camp sites and they can't see what the problem is. After the arrivals things settle down for a couple of hours then all hell breaks loose when the children decide to get lollies every ten minutes. Over the next few weeks things progress. A washing machine might break down or power goes off to a site or a van. "I hung a good T-shirt on the line and now it's gone." Someone's car might be overlapping someone else's site or someone forgot to bring enough tent pegs or a hammer. A cabin is missing a can opener or the toaster or kettle has decided not to work. "We thought the cabin has all the bedding in it. We need sheets blankets and pillows for ten people in two cabins. Oh we forgot to bring towels as well."

"The bins down the other end of the park haven't been emptied yet, when will that be done?"

The kid's money they put in the pin ball machine has got jammed and they can't get it out. We check the machine and it has had icy pole sticks jammed in it so

it will continue to play.

"What video are we going to play tonight? Ohhh we have seen that already."

Someone reports that the toilet paper has run out in the second toilet and some ladies have been washing their feet in the hand basins. I put a sign up in the toilet "PLEASE DO NOT WASH FEET IN HAND BASINS USE THE SHOWER HALF BATH AT THE END" They are Lebanese ladies who wash their feet every time they pray.

Then you hear that the boom gate is stuck up in the air again and hasn't gone back down. You go out and find that all the children have worked out that if you ride your scooters over the sensor it lifts the gate.

Night patrol reveals children running amok still at 11pm because that is what caravan parks are for. The next day the toilet block is missing a shower rose and a toilet roll holder off the back of the door. There appears to be foot prints on the toilet lids, maybe that is why they are broken.

It is a joy to see everybody having such a good time in our Park.

And this is my retirement job.

Graham Hepburn



RACING TIPS

From My Mate's Cousin

A change of pace was the order of the day when our man took a lady friend to the Kilmore races recently. The lady wasn't a regular race-goer and this was highlighted when she returned from the betting ring and proudly told him she had backed four horses in the first. The first happened to be a six horse race.

Our man was taken aback and said "I suppose you backed the Clerk of the Course as well", she said, "no, what race is he in?"

Going on to pick five winners for the day he is now running hot and offers the following selection to watch in the coming racing season.

Dane Force: Trained by Lee Freedman out of Flemington. Freedman, whose ancestry goes back

to the Netherlands, has a way with Danes and expects to Force the issue over this season. Worth an each way bet next start.

Racers Success: The owner was pre-empting a string of successes when he bought this nedly, and brimming with confidence he gave Colin Alderson the job of putting it together.

Heritiere: I can't pronounce the name and neither can the big punters so they will back something else. Has a big future and trained by a lady with a big hat Gail Waterhouse from Sydney.

Spice Doll: The owner was keen on that British all female pop group, an unimpressive name for such a talented filly. Trained in Adelaide by L. McDonald.

Irish devastated by the famine climbed upon horse-drawn trucks to race to the rescue. In some old FDNY families, where Mavo and Galway were the countries of origin, one son was a cop, one was a fireman, and the third was a priest. In firehouses, there were jokes about the new recruits, whose names were transformed into O'Morales or McLevin. Nobody at Ground Zero on Sept. 11 can ever forget that black fireman weeping for "my brothers" who were, of course, the bearers of Irish, Italian, Hispanic and Jewish names.

Nor should anybody ever forget the multiple images of firemen in helmets and rubbery raincoats, carrying equipment into the towers while frantic civilians moved past them in the direction of open streets, cobalt skies and breathable air. At an improvised firehouse altar on Lafayette St., one sign, hand-lettered by a citizen, said: "You ran in when we ran out. We are grateful forever." That firehouse lost 14 men.

Everyone in the city seemed to understand that the primary mission of those firemen was to save human life. That is the job. Life first, property second. Firemen don't pack guns. They are-not asked to face criminals or madmen. They don't ever confront fellow citizens the way police officers sometimes must: to impose order on chaos. They don't make arrests. They don't need to make split-second judgments about innocence or guilt. They are simply there to save human life.

In the pages that follow, we give you their faces. In the days and years to come, their lives will be memorialised by historians. We hope they will emerge as complete individuals, who lived dense, rounded lives. We hope they will flower as human beings full of hopes, ambitions, desires, and the usual human imperfections. But look at these faces. Note the obvious pride. Note individuality of style. Note, in many of them, the twinkle in the eyes. And

remember: these men ennobled our race, which is, of course, the human race.

Remember, too, that these men "the firemen of Sept. 11" were extraordinary human beings. They went where most human beings never go. They kept climbing and climbing and climbing, into the smoke-fouled air, looking for living human beings. They went toward the fire, which so terrified the trapped people of the upper floors that they preferred leaping to their deaths. These firemen died while climbing toward the fearful sky.

Now, and in all the days to come, for all of us who remain among the living, we must honour them each time we pass a firehouse. With a tip of a hat. A nod. A word of thanks. We must honour what they did, and what their brothers keep on doing. They will, of course, honour as in the coming days with their courage, their tenacity, and their laughter!

"BUD" Actor, Aviator

In my other life as a taxi driver I recently had the privilege of having Bud Tingwell as a passenger. I drove him from his home in Doncaster to the airport. I knew the night before who my passenger was, so I was primed up to question him on what it was like to fly a Spitfire in WW2.

To the uninformed, Bud Tingwell is a well known actor on stage, screen, radio and TV. He has recently appeared on the series "Changi".

At the age of 18 in 1941, Bud was selected to train at Narramine in N.S.W. as part of the "Empire Training Scheme" on Tiger Moths. After 60 Hrs on Tigeers he was then to be transferred to Montreal Canada for advanced training on Harvards.

The sea journey to Canada was a nightmare voyage on an overcrowded ship. Three weeks into the trip they ran out of food and for the remainder of the voyage they lived on bread and jam.

The much "pissed off" aircrew eventually arrived at Montreal where they attained their wings on the Harvards.

Bud was promoted to Pilot Officer and was then bundled off to North Africa to do conversion on the

Supermarine Spitfire. His role on the Spit was as a reconnaissance pilot taking photos behind enemy lines. Bud has the highest admiration for the German pilots who were trying to kill him. His greatest fear was the enemy's radar controlled ack-ack. He has many photos of exploding 105mm shells so close to his aircraft. Upon landing he often found holes in the Spit.

In the limited time I had Bud captive in my taxi, we didn't have much time to discuss what it was like to fly a fighter. Bud said, "the Spitfire was a bastard of a thing to land", because of it's high nose attitude, a straight in approach was almost impossible. He much preferred the Hurricane or the Mosquito, but conceded the Spitfire was a magnificent plane.

Bud's brother flew Lancaster bombers and after the war flew for Qantas.

Finally, Bud has quietly gone about his life and yet it's people like him and my father that we owe so much and saved us from foreign invasion (my father was a "Rat of Tubruk").

Sir Clip

PS. What would you give to fly a Spitfire?



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

Have you ever been across the sea to Ireland?

Well, this may make you want to go or it may stop you from going. For a shot of something different there is nothing like it anywhere else.

Arrive in Dublin, a busy and very old city, by the time you get there you have usually been to London, Bath and other old cities, so hire a car and head west, straight across mid Ireland to Connemara in County Galway above Galway Bay.

Now, for you who follow the Gee Gees, like Merv Thatcher, you would remember a really good horse of the same name, "Connemara that is". (Merv prefers to fight than run).

It's a beautiful summers day in Connemara, the clouds are dark and at ground level and the rain is coming in on the North West wind. The rock strewn landscape divided by rock walls make the cemetery in the background look attractive. As the years go by and the older we get I don't usually find cemeteries attractive, (for God's sake, where's the pub).

The red faced, tight lipped Gaels, as the locals call themselves, are really a warm and quietly welcoming people with a passion for the sea, a harsh land, strong drink and traditional music. In the south near Galway, they all speak that language "the strangers do not know".

Drive West on the R336, along the northern rim of Galway Bay you will pass through the township of Claddagh over which Bing Crosby used to croon, "You can sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh". They all used to sing about the place but none of them lived there.

Past the seaside resort of Salt Hill, the road changes to narrow and the language to Gaelic. It didn't matter to me because I couldn't understand them anyway.

Across the brilliant green farmland a hooker

heaves into view off shore, (no, Jack Neville, not that sort).

The Atlantic Ocean never seems to be still, it's a pretty lonely place for me, it hasn't changed from the 18th century.

But despite the emptiness, the gloom and some of the dirtiest weather the North Atlantic can throw up, this little patch of Galway with it's misty mountains and tiny wild beaches, is still worth seeing.

During the winter months you would sometimes feel you were the only person within a ten mile radius and you probably would be.

Back to Dublin and some of the best old pubs with the music and lively company are great. The local treacle is terrible, but just so somebody doesn't try to put a head on it with a hand-grenade it's bearable.

Happy Traveling Silver

P.S.

Remember, if you think nobody cares if you're alive,



Above: A small village near Connemara in the County Galway, a friendly local who bears a striking resemblance to our President waits with picnic lunch for Mr. And Mrs. Silver to turn up.

"What....no shortbread?"

At the official opening of Christmas presents in the Silver household, mainly for grandchildren etc, Silver received from Mrs Silver what appeared to be an empty gift wrapped shortbread box. On investigation (in our household one must be ever suspicious and on guard), it proved to be holding a return ticket to New York.

What a lovely surprise and just goes to show she still loves him after all the things he does to her. Then again, a return ticket..... that's two chances of getting "hijacked."

I fly out on the 15th March, now where did I leave that old chastity belt?

Silver

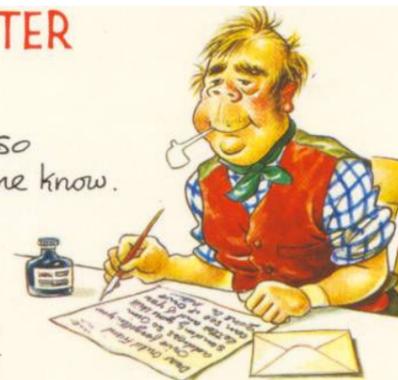
THE IRISHMAN'S LETTER

Dear Ould Friend,

Oive forgotten your address, so if ye don't recave this letter let me know.

If ye don't let me know I'll know ye've got it. Oi'll see ye in the ould place on Sunday

If oim there first oill put a chalk mark on the wall, if ye're there first rub it out. It's so long since oi saw yer oive forgotten what ye're like but ye're face is iver before me. I very time oi feed the pigs oi think of ye an the last bite we had together. Excuse spellin this is a divel of a pen
Yours to the bone. Patrick.



World travelers, like Silver and our President Don Brennan, meet many people from all walks of life and lasting friendships are made. Silver, with his old friends in New York has always kept in close contact through regular trips and letter writing.

Don Brennan, being of Irish descent, naturally keeps in touch with the many locals he has befriended during his tours of the Emerald Isle. Don would like to share with the RFA members a letter he received recently from an old Irish friend which we have included at right..

Retribution is Nigh

Or.... "you'll get yours mate"!!!!

You may remember in the last issue an item regarding Don Cameron accompanied with a photo of Lester and Keith Ellis with some very derogatory remarks by Frank Churchill. Well, in talking to Don he said he was extremely hurt but would not get upset but would get even.

The original of the photo is on the den wall, so Don immediately blamed Mrs. Cameron the Third for providing Frank with the photo. She denied this even under the threat of turning her over to the Taliban and so did daughter Sue.

Don said son Steve and son in-law Mal Owen would know better than to mess with him, so further investigation led to the unofficial photographer at the Past and Present Boxer's Christmas function.

Under pressure he denied any knowledge but looked a little guilty. He suggested a former neighbour of Don's may know something. The investigation is on-going.

Silver.

Just remember, don't squat with your spurs on!



Photo left: Reg Carey baits up as he prepares to tackle some of the big fish he claims inhabit the waters around Tuncurry on the central NSW coast.

Reg retired to Tuncurry and has since kept in contact with us with regular mail and snippets of information for inclusion in "Water Off". He seems to living an idyllic lay back lifestyle with his fishing and access to to all the delights of that beautiful part of our country. Reg.....we are envious, we don't get fish like that out of the Yarra!!!!