

INFORMATION REQUIRED!

Fire Museum request for Gym Team Historical Information

- Photographs
- Stories
- Names of the original team members
- Names of subsequent team members
- Dates, Places, Events, Memorabilia
- Copies of original photos and articles would be appreciated.

Contact:
 Harry Purcell 5774 7254,
 Or send to H. Purcell c/o Fire Services Museum
 39 Gisborne St. East Melbourne 3002.

Note:
 Any piece of information no matter how small can help build a better picture.
 All original items will be copied and returned.
Thanks to the those who have responded to our appeal so far, but there are still many gaps to fill.

The information required is to set up a web site containing Fire Brigade history and the gym team is part of our historical past.

PRINT POST No. PP333964/0020

RFA Newsletter
 If undelivered return to;
 The Secretary
 6 Wingara Ave.
 East Keilor 3033

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"WATER OFF"

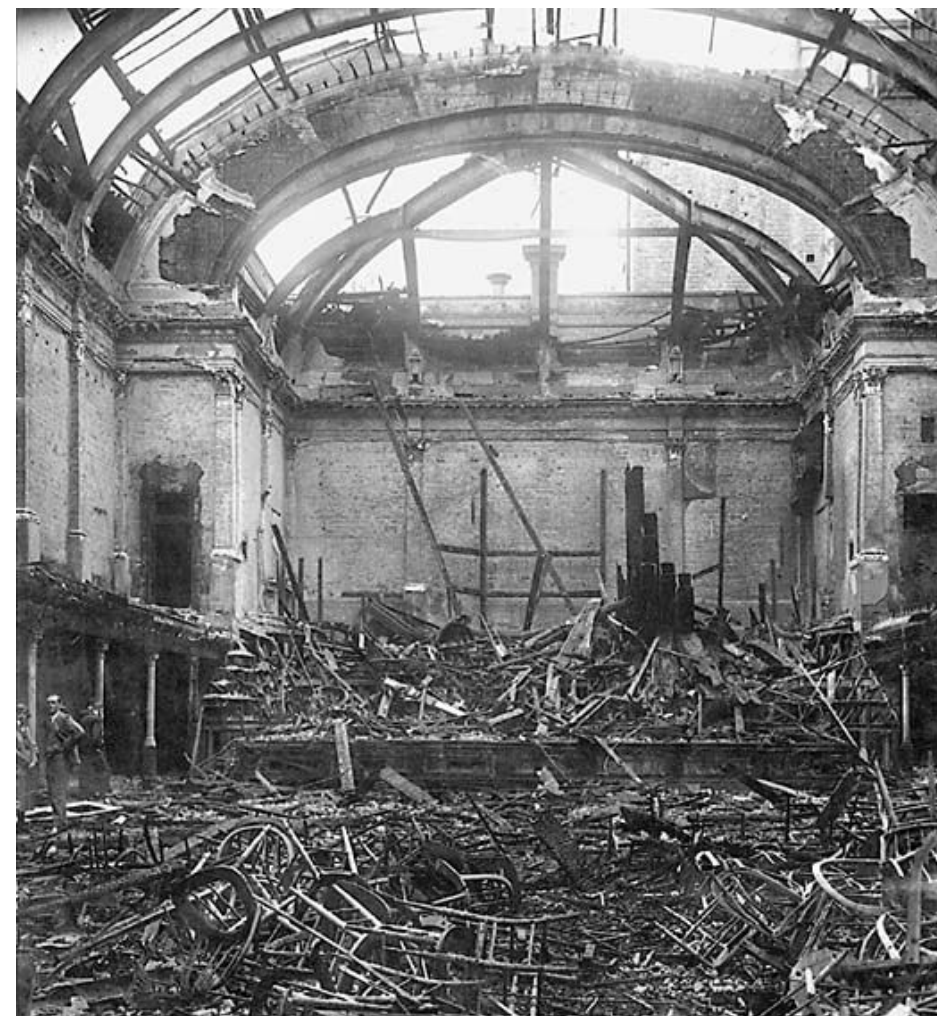
*NEWSLETTER OF THE
 RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS'
 ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
 (VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.*

May 2004 Vol 8 No 2
 Inc/No: A16839F

Barbara McCumisky continues her historical series of significant fires and incidents that occurred during the formative years of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

MELBOURNE TOWN HALL BURNS

From the Argus newspaper report of February 2, 1925.



With surprising rapidity the main section of the Melbourne Town Hall was destroyed by fire which occurred at a quarter past 1 o'clock on the morning of February 1, 1925. Although the cause of the outbreak was yet to be determined, it was believed to have originated near the organ, which with other furnishings, was completely destroyed.

It has not been possible to arrive at a correct estimate of damage, but it is stated to be approximately £10,000 for the building. The organ, which originally cost more than £20,000, could not be replaced for less than £30,000.

By the strenuous efforts of the Fire Brigade, the flames were prevented from spreading to the Victoria Coffee Palace. During the fire, all the lodgers

fled into the street carrying their belongings

The fire was seen almost simultaneously by a boy in the street, a taxi cab driver, the night watchman at the Town Hall, a senior police constable and the firefighter on duty in the watchtower at Eastern Hill fire station.

Above:
The devastation in the main hall. with the organ, at the rear, totally destroyed. The fire had a good hold before it was noticed and the alarm raised.

Photo courtesy B. McCumisky

(Continued on page 6)

“GENERAL MEETING”

**Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the Carlton Football Club Social Club,
(Melway 29 G12)
1030 Hours, Wednesday May 19th, 2004**

AGENDA ITEMS.

**Minutes of last General meeting.
President's Report.
Secretary/Treasurer's Report.
Guest Speaker
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 available.

**JOHN BROWN
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Ph: 03 9336 2492**

OFFICE BEARERS

President, Mike McCumisky
Vice President, Ian Fowler
Sec./Treasurer, John Brown

General Committee;

John Laverick
Ken McGillivray
Bob McNeil
John Schintler
John Wallace
Auditor; Theo Teklenburg

Diary dates 2004

May 19th: General Meeting
August 18th: General Meeting
November 17th: Annual General Meeting
November 20th: Luncheon St Kilda Town Hall
November 28th: Firefighters Picnic Moonee Valley Racecourse

VALE

Ron Andrews (MFB) Geoff Jones (UFU Solicitor)
Jim Fleming (MFB) Geoff Jones (MFB)
Arthur Graham (MFB,CFA) Bill Webber (MFB, UFU)

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

SICK LIST

Neil Allen	Alan Roberts
Jim Casley	Kevin Roderick
Clarrie Hart	Jack Sexton
Ian Heath	Graeme Simpson
Peter Heslop	Frank Stubberfield
Peter Hornsey	Kevin Sullivan
Ron Kennedy	George White
Bob McLoon	
John McLoon	

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.

Firefighter's Picnic & Christmas BBQ

**10.00 till 4.00, Sunday November 28th, 2004
Moonee Valley Racecourse**

Retirees bring the Grandkids

**Santa for the kids
(and the big kids)**

**Rides, Games,
Prizes.**

Lots of fun for all.

**BBQ sausages, hamburgers and
drinks for the kids supplied.
BYO salads, plates etc.**

FIREFIGHTER'S BALL

Saturday 9th October 2004

**San Remo Ballroom Nicholson St.
Carlton**

**\$70 / head all inclusive.
Door prizes and a great band.**

**Retired Firefighters are encouraged to
attend.
Get up a table and relive the old times.**

**Contact the Union Office for
information and tickets.**

Queensland Reunion

Thursday 29th July, 2004

Southport Yacht Club

If you're wintering in the Sunshine State come along and meet your old expatriate mates.

Extraction Substraction

Jock Campbell went to the dentist and asked how much it was for a tooth extraction. "\$85 for an extraction sir" was the dentist's reply. "Och huv yer no got anythin' cheaper" replies Jock getting agitated.

"But that's the normal charge for an extraction sir" said the dentist. "What about if yer din't use any anaesthetic?" asked Jock hopefully.

"Well it's highly unusual sir, but if that's what you want, I suppose I can do it for \$70" said the dentist. "Hmmm, what about if yer used one of your dentist trainees and still without anaesthetic" said Jock.

"Well it's possible but they are only training and I can't guarantee their level of professionalism and it'll be a lot more painful. I suppose in that case we can bring the price down to say \$40" said the dentist. "Och that's still a bit much, how about if yer make it a trainin' session and have yer student do the extraction and the other students watchin' and learnin'" said Jock hopefully.

"Hmmmm, well OK it'll be good for the students I suppose, I'll charge you only \$5 in that case" said the dentist.

"Och now yer talkin' laddie! It's a deal" said Jock "Can ye confirm an appointment for the wife next Tuesday?"

John Berry

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry, two days that should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of them is **YESTERDAY** with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. Yesterday has passed forever and beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back Yesterday, we cannot undo a single act we performed, we cannot erase a single word, Yesterday is gone.

The other day we should not worry about is **TOMORROW** with its possible adversities, its unknown, its large promises. Tomorrow is also beyond our control Tomorrow's sun will rise either in splendour or behind a mask of clouds, but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in tomorrow, for it is yet unborn.

This leaves **TODAY**. Any man can handle the concerns of just one day, it is only when you and I add the cares of those other eternities. **YESTERDAY and TOMORROW** that we break down.

Let us enjoy the experience of **TODAY**, utilize the wisdom we can take from **YESTERDAY** and hold fast to the dreams of **TOMORROW**.

Let us live one day at a time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome again to the RFA. To those on the sick list, we wish you a speedy recovery.

The February meeting at the Carlton Football Social Club, our new home for the RFA meetings, was very well attended. Our thanks to the Social Club management in making sure that we were well looked after.

There is a good selection of sandwiches or a number of choices in the hot section on the lunch menu.

Prices range from \$3.00 for sandwiches to \$10.00 for hot meals.

Thanks to Peter Marshal, Secretary of the UFU, for an interesting insight to some of the workings of both sides of the Brigade management and work force.

The UFU Picnic was held on Sunday 22nd March. I thank the current and previous Committee members for assisting with the cooking for our present day UFU members and their families. Apart from some minor delays the day went well.

Monday 23rd March, saw a good turn up of past and present firies and RFA members attending the funeral for Jim Fleming, at the morning service at St Johns Church in Sorrento. He was then later

transported by the 8 Pump to the Springvale Necropolis for an afternoon service.

The annual RFA Spit Roast luncheon was held at the MFB Training College on Sunday 28th March in the engine room. It was very well attended with our thanks to Peter Gibson, of the Training College staff, who opened up for us and the on shift firefighters, who brought the appliances out for the members to look over. Thanks to the Fire Museum for supplying the tables and chairs and an older appliance to check out. There was keen interest taken with the photo display set up by Fred Kerr.

Tuesday 6th April saw the attendance at Cobram for Arthur Graham's funeral by both RFA and FSMV members and a very good turn up by the Cobram CFA. It was held at St Margaret's Church complete with a piper.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting. In the meantime, take care and safe touring.

**Regards,
Mike McCumisky**

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT



The R.F.A. is a Non-Political Organization. We do not take sides with any Political Party or discuss Politics at our Meetings. We, as individuals, have our own thoughts on this, but we should not discuss them at our Meetings.

Nor do we take sides in Industrial Situations. The majority of our membership have been employees of the M.F.B. or C.F.A. and were members of the Union. At some time a number have attained top positions in the M.F.B. and C.F.A. and as such, their obligations changed due to this.

At various times, both the Management of the M.F.B. and the Union have asked or have been invited to address the Meetings. We listen and acknowledge what they tell us, but as a Retired Association we make no comment. Unfortunately in the M.F.B., a somewhat similar situation to what occurred in the early 50's is happening. **The R.F.A. remains neutral.**

Both the U.F.U. and M.F.B. Management has been very good to the R.F.A. helping us out at every request and we appreciate this. I should also include the U.F.U. Credit Union whose Management and Staff are also helpful.

On a happier note, our Auditor, Theo. Teklenburg has been made a Life Member of the R.F.A. Anyone who has been a Member of the Credit Union will know Theo for his cheerful attitude. When we got into a little bit of bother with the books, it was Theo who offered to help us out and be voluntary Auditor. As far as I can ascertain he has done the job since 1993. John Berry told me the great job Theo has done over the years and I can vouch for this, as he has helped me out as well. After glowing endorsements from Don Brennan and Frank Churchill, he was elected a Life Member. He has joined Ern Tamme, Don Brennan, John Berry and John Laverick as Life Members - **Congratulations Theo** -

The Union Picnic held at Moonee Valley Racecourse on Sunday, 22nd February 2004 was a resounding success. Once again Retired Firies and their grandchildren were invited to attend. The Committee of the R.F.A. Mike McCumisky, Bob McNeil, Ken McGillivray, John Laverick, Don and Nancy Brennan and myself assisted the Social Committee of the Union to set-up and cook on the BBQ. A monster crowd kept us busy with the cooking, from 1100 - 1400 hours. A BBQ borrowed from the C.F.A. was not large enough to cope with the crowd and long queues were the order of the day. Then, those stalwarts of the R.F.A., the Brennan's produced an electric frypan and Doug

DIDN'T PAY OFF!

It has been said "If you live by the Sword, you die by the Sword" or if you keep secrets from the little woman, you are bound to be found out. This happened to a D.O. at a certain District Station in the early sixties. Just after the Officers went on the one day on two day off system.

Now it appears that the D.O.'s wife never saw his pay slip and had no idea how much he earned. I don't know how much he told her he got, but every time she asked for an increase to buy things, he told her he could not afford it, being partial to an ale, the rest of the money went into his pocket.

Recently promoted Sub-Station Officers (that's what they were called then - now they are S.O's).. went into quarters at the station, and one day the wives happened to be talking to the D.O.'s wife (we will call

her Mrs Garnie). In the course of the conversation, it was said what a good job the M.F.B. was. Mrs Garnie said "The pay was lousy".

To the young wives it was great, when promoted from S/F.M. to S.S.O. the pay jumped from 21 Pounds to 33 Pounds per week, so they disagreed with Mrs Garnie. She told them how much Garnie was earning a week. The girls told her that Garnie had to be earning more than that as he was two ranks higher. So to prove the point, one of the wives produced her husband's pay-slip.

I believe Mrs Garnie hit the roof and went to confront Garnie. I don't know what transpired after the confrontation, but Garnie gave the S.S.O.'s a hard time after that.

How to Tell the Sex of a Fly

A woman walked into the kitchen to find her husband stalking around with a fly swatter. "What are you doing?" She asked. "Hunting flies" He responded, "Oh, killing any?" She asked. "Yep, 3 males, 2 females" he replied. Intrigued, she asked. "How can you tell?" He responded, "3 were on a beer can, 2 were on the phone."

Knight and others cooked inside to try and cope with the crowd. The Social Committee are designing their own large BBQ for the next Union Picnic.

The President's Re-Union Day at the Training College went very well with 64 people attending. Unfortunately, being a Total Fire Ban Day, appliances were confined to base, so we missed out on seeing new equipment. This was Mike McCumisky's first Re-Union Day and he carried it out as though he'd been doing it for years - well done Mike and Barbara.

U.F.U. Secretary - Peter Marshall - addressed the February meeting. He gave a detailed account of all that had gone on between the Union and M.F.B. between years 1992 to now and how the Union would continue to fight the cause of their members.

Four New Members have signed up, (all MFB). Ron Blair (Western) Ray Holt (Northern) Kevin Weir (Electrical) Roy Tucknott (Central) Ron Turner (Central).

If you know any ex-employees of the

firefighting organizations who are not members of the R.F.A., try and get them to join by contacting the Secretary

Now surely, all you retired C.F.A. members weren't angels, **SO SEND IN SOME STORIES.** You don't have to mention names and can be anonymous, this goes for retired MFB members too.

We left the job too early it seems. The M.F.B. now after 15 years service, are giving a choice of gifts. I saw a beautiful Citizen Watch with an M.F.B. logo face and inscribed, "**For 30-years Service**" on the back. For my thirty-five years service all I got was the pleasure of being a Firefighter.

TREASURER'S REPORT

As of March, 2004
Access Account \$1195.55
Term Deposit \$4117.38

JOHN BROWN, SEC/TREASURER

Firefighters Credit Co-operative Ltd & Bridges Financial Services Pty Ltd

assisting you in retirement

When you retire, keep your *money* working

For many years the conventional wisdom was to put your money into *growth* investments when saving for retirement, and transfer to *income* investments after retirement.

However, this is how widely acknowledged as a risky approach to investment.

The risk is that, over time (and retirement is typically 20+ years these days) the purchasing power of your investment income will fall, together with your standard of living.

So you really need a mixture of *growth and income* to stave off this slide and maintain the real value of your retirement income.

Keeping your balance

This means investing across a range of investments such as company shares, property trusts, term deposits and cash accounts, either investing directly or in a managed investment. The "balance" of your investment portfolio - the proportion you put into each type of investment - will depend on your particular needs, also taking the state of investment markets fully into account.

From shares, for example, you may receive dividends twice a year and also capital growth as the share price increases. The dividends represent the company profits that are distributed to shareholders and the growth reflects the increase in value of the company - and your share in that company! And if the dividends are "franked" you may pay little or no additional tax on the dividends received, or even receive a tax refund.

Carefully selected share investments, in combination with other investments, can make a major contribution towards preserving a comfortable lifestyle throughout your retirement.

To find out how to keep your retirement investments hard at work after you yourself stop, call Firefighters Credit Co-operative on 1300 366 350 to arrange a free, no-obligation meeting with a Bridges Financial Planner.

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Arthur Graham Reg. No. 598

Arthur joined the MFB 1st August 1950, spending some time with the usual in-house training at Eastern Hill Fire Station. He soon became part of the team with the knowledge being passed on by the experienced Senior Firefighters.

He was stationed at different times at Hawthorn (18), Box Hill (20), Ringwood (22), Nunawading (27), Carlton (3) where he became familiar with the rescue gear, and finally finishing at Surrey Hills (21) where he turned out on both the Hose Carriage and Rescue Unit.

His other main interest was the Victorian Highland Pipe Band Association with which he was involved for many years, assisting at the numerous competitions around the state.

In the seventies Arthur joined the Melbourne Fire Brigade Historical Society, now the Fire Services Museum of Victoria. He spent much time participating with other members in displays and public events and adding items to the collection of memorabilia.

On his retirement on 1st December 1983 after some thirty-three years service in the MFB, Arthur continued his involvement with the Melbourne Fire Museum working on the vehicles at the temporary storage in the old Millers Rope Works in Dawson Street, Brunswick.

In 1986 Arthur and Phyllis decided to move from Melbourne to Cobram by the river to catch up on some fishing and enjoy a quieter community life style. Once settled in, he became involved with the local CFA brigade watching and learning their way of doing



Arthur, with his brass helmet and one of the carers from the hostel, after a spin in the Finley Tanker.

things. He was soon turning out again and added another fifteen years fire service to a previous thirty-three.

Never idle, Arthur was also involved with the local community groups such as the Senior Citizens, Neighbourhood Watch and later visiting the nursing home, always with a kind word, a smile and a joke with the residents.

Arthur's final move was into the Ulupna Lodge in Finley. In January the local brigade called in to see Arthur and took him for a run round town in their tanker. He was still concerned that they may get called away to some "major fire".

Our community has lost a true friend when Arthur, aged 75 years, died at the Cobram Hospital on 2nd April 2004.

Mike McCumisky

Vale Jim Fleming

Monday 23rd March, saw a good turn up of past and present firies and RFA members attending the funeral for Jim Fleming, at the morning service at St Johns Church in Sorrento. He was then later transported by the 8 Pump to the Springvale Necropolis for an afternoon service.

Photo courtesy Don Brennan



THE ANNUAL REUNION LUNCHEON

The annual reunion held at the MFESB's Training College on Sunday 28th March was a success. This can be attributed to the efforts of our President Mike McCumisky and his wife Barbara, our Secretary John Brown and wife Jean.

Again we were accommodated in the engine room down in the lower yard because of the closure of the main building due to asbestos problems.

But, the best was made of the situation with the help of the Fire Services Museum volunteers who loaned tables and chairs for the day.

There is currently a proposal to build a new training facility in the not too distant future so it's a possibility that this may be the last function we have at this historic site.



Many old friends to catch up with while waiting for the food (above) and when it hit the table "Sailor" Davies (left) was the first in line.



Pictured left are the group from Geelong, among those being John and Ola Wallace along with John and Olive Cotter who haven't missed a spit roast luncheon for many years. It is with support like this that makes this function so successful.

Clearly, Mike was pleased with his first official social function, it's now hoped that the membership continues to support these initiatives.

Did you know?

It was necessary to keep a good supply of cannon balls near the cannon on war ships. But how to prevent them from rolling about the deck was the problem. The best storage method devised was to stack them as a square based pyramid, with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon. There was only one problem - how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others.

The solution was a metal plate with 16

round indentations, called a Monkey. But if the plate was made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it.

The solution to the rusting problem was to make brass Monkeys. Few landlubbers realize that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped to far, the brass indentations would shrink so much the iron cannon balls would come right off the Monkey. Thus, it was, quite literally, cold enough to freeze the balls of a brass Monkey.

And all this time, you thought that was a vulgar expression, didn't you?

Credit Card Scam

This is a new scam and sounds very plausible to the unwary, heed the advice in the second last paragraph of this story.

Victim No. 1 was called on Wednesday from "VISA" and Victim No. 2 (his wife) was called on Thursday from "MasterCard". It worked like this:

Person calling says, "This is Joe Smith (any name) and I'm calling from the Security and Fraud department at Visa. My Badge number is 12460. Your card has been flagged for an unusual purchase pattern, and I'm calling to verify. This would be on your Visa Card issued by the bank. Did you purchase an Anti-Telemarketing Device for \$497.99 from a marketing company based in Arizona?"

When you say "No". The caller continues with, "Then we will be issuing a credit to your account. This is a company we have been watching and the charges range from \$297 to \$497, just under the \$500 purchase pattern that flags most cards. Before your next statement, the credit will be sent to (gives you your address), is that correct?" You say, "Yes".

The caller continues ... "I will be starting a fraud investigation. If you have any questions, you should call the 800 number listed on your card 1-800-VISA and ask for Security. You will need to refer to this Control number". Then gives he you a 6-digit number. "Do you need me to read it again?" Caller then says he "needs to verify you are in possession of your card. Turn the card over. There are 7 numbers; first 4 are 1234 whatever, the next 3 are the security numbers that verify you are in possession of the card. These are the numbers you use to make Internet purchases to prove you have the card. Read me the 3 numbers."

Then he says, "That is correct. I just needed to verify that the card has not been lost or stolen, and that you still have your card. Do you have any other questions? Don't hesitate to call back if you do."

You actually say very little, and he never asks for or tells you the card number. But after Victim No.1 was called on Wednesday, he called back within 20 minutes to ask a question. Is he glad he did! The REAL VISA Security Dept. told him it was a scam and in the last 15 minutes a new purchase of \$497.99 WAS put on his card.

Long story made short. Victim No.1 made a real fraud report and closed the Visa card and Visa issued a new number. What the scam wants is the 3-digit number and that once the charge goes through, they keep charging every few days. By the time you get your statement, you think the credit is coming, and then it's harder to actually file a fraud report. REMEMBER: THE REAL VISA REINFORCED THAT THEY WILL NEVER ASK FOR ANYTHING ON THE CARD (THEY ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU)!!!

What makes this more remarkable is that on Thursday, Victim No. 2 (wife of Victim No.1) got a call from "Jim Bloggs of MasterCard" with a word for word repeat of the VISA Scam. This time she didn't let him finish and hung up. She filed a police report (as instructed by Visa), and the police said they are taking several of these reports daily and to tell friends, relatives and co-workers.

Working for the CIA???

The CIA had an opening for an assassin. After all of the background checks, interviews, and testing were done there were three finalists - two men and one woman. For the final test, the CIA agents took one of the men to a large metal door and handed him a gun.

"We must know that you will follow your instructions, no matter what the circumstances. Inside this room you will find your wife sitting in a chair. You have to kill her." The first man said. "You can't be serious. I could never shoot my wife." The agent replies, "Then you're not the right man for this job."

The second man was given the same instructions. He took the gun and went into the room. All was quiet for about five minutes. Then the agent came out with tears in his eyes. "I tried, but I can't kill my wife." The agent replies, "You don't have what it takes. Take your wife and go home."

Finally, it was the woman's turn. Only she was told to kill her husband. She took the gun and went into the room. Shots were heard, one shot after another. They heard screaming, crashing, banging on the walls. After a few minutes, all was quiet. The door opened slowly and there stood the woman. She wiped the sweat from her brow and said, "You guys didn't tell me the gun was loaded with blanks..... I had to beat him to death with the chair!!!!"

MELBOURNE TOWN HALL BURNS

(Continued from page 1)

When detachments of firefighters under the direction of Chief Officer Harrie B Lee and Deputy John Wilkins arrived, the interior of the hall was burning from end to end and from floor to ceiling. When an entrance was gained, a terrific draught was caused. Section after section of the glass roof collapsed, and the flames reaching the open air, rose to an alarming height.

The reflection in the sky and the presence of fire appliances in the streets attracted hundreds of late visitors to the city. Shortly after the Brigade arrived a rumour was circulated among the crowd that the Victoria Coffee Palace, which adjoined the Town Hall in Collins Street and was separated only by a wall from the main hall, had become ignited. Excitement reached a high pitch, and ways and means of releasing those supposed to be entrapped in the building were freely discussed. The tension was relieved to some extent when it was seen that the firefighters were playing water on the walls of the Coffee Palace, and it was realised that an effort, which proved successful, was being made to prevent the fire from spreading.

Hoses and ladders were placed in position with the minimum of delay by the firefighters, who by then, were aware that they were fighting one of the most sensational fires that Melbourne had experienced, and one which, if not carefully watched and skillfully attacked, might have resulted - if the Coffee Palace had become involved - in an appalling loss of life. From extension ladders in Collins Street, intrepid firefighters reached out over the blazing building aiming their hoses at the centre of the fire, upon which for some time, the water had no effect.

To reach the north end of the hall, the firefighters entered the courtyard between the old and the new buildings, and also took hoses into a lane off Lt. Collins Street. From these positions, as in Collins Street, the water seemed powerless against the mass of flame. Hastily given orders from Brigade officers resulted in a group of firefighters entering the Town Hall and mounting the clock tower. From there, fresh streams of water were played into the burning building.

It seemed then that as if nothing could quell the flames until they had consumed the whole interior of the hall. The delicate woodwork of the organ and the wooden fittings of the balcony and its furnishings provided fuel for the flames, which had gained a strong hold before the fire was observed.

Constable's story.

"I had just returned to the Town Hall police depot in the basement at 1 o'clock" said Snr. Const. A. Kohn, "and was eating my supper with other constables when, 10 minutes later, we heard the sound of a dull explosion. At first it was thought that a door had been left open in the building and it had been slammed by a draught of air. Almost immediately there was a sound of falling glass and a strong smell of smoke.

We rushed into Swanston Street, and we were told by another constable that there was a fire in Collins Street, opposite the Block Arcade. Const. O'Halloran ran to a fire alarm at the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets and summoned the Fire Brigade. Almost immediately after that we saw a spurt of flame issue from the roof of the Town Hall.

Within a few minutes, it appeared that the whole top of the building was on fire. A detachment of firefighters from Eastern Hill - apparently having received a call to the supposed outbreak further down Collins Street - was on the scene almost immediately."

Realising that serious consequences might result from the outbreak, Snr. Const. Kohn detailed all constables available for night duty in the city to 'stand by' and so co-operating with the officers of the Fire Brigade, placed cordons at strategic intersections, thereby ensuring that no traffic entered the block, in the centre of which the fire had occurred.

When it was known that the outbreak was in the Town Hall, Consts. Sloan, Salisbury and Jackson, who were also having supper in the basement, were among the first to hurry to the scene. When they arrived at the entrance to the main hall, flames were seen in the north eastern corner near the organ gallery.

Knowing that no time could be wasted, and they might be able to quell the outbreak if it did not get a strong hold, Consts. Sloan and Salisbury rushed towards an emergency fire hydrant in the corridor. Unwinding the hose, they immediately directed a stream of water towards the flames, but at that time the Fire Brigade arrived and took charge of operations.

To be continued.

Murphy's Law

If mathematically you end up with the incorrect answer, try multiplying by the page number.

WHO, WHAT & WHERE?

This is something new and if it proves popular, it could become a permanent feature in 'Water Off'. In each issue we will print three photos. We won't tell you who, where or what they are until the next issue of 'Water Off'. We are asking you.

What you can send us is something about the history of the subject; a different photo of the same subject; or a story (humorous or serious) about the subject. It is up to you.

We will print the best replies that we receive in the next issue, assuming of course, that the photos are identified correctly.



Where is this fire station?



Who is this Firefighter?

If you think you can identify any of the photos, you can either write to:

The 'Water Off' Editorial Committee
40 Brunel St.
Essendon VIC 3040

or send an email to: firechaser@optusnet.com.au



What is this apparatus?

A Stairway to Heaven?

It happened one day in the 50's

George Tanner was on shift at No.10 Station (Hoddle Street). The Fireman's strike was not long finished and George was becoming accustomed to the new shift hours after years of seemingly continuous duty. With the increase in days off duty many firemen were looking for "Cas jobs" to supplement their still very modest income.

"Who wants a job at Kings Funeral Parlor in Collingwood?" came the cry from the watchroom. "Put me down" said George. "What are they paying?" After some negotiation, terms were agreed upon and the job was to start at 7.30am the following day.

After a full day sweeping rooms, washing cars and general cleaning jobs it was time to knock off. "Listen mate", said the foreman to George, "I know it's getting dark and past your finishing time but could you jump in the ute with me to pick up a body in Clifton Hill?" "Will you pay me extra and give me a pie for tea?" were the only demands.

They subsequently arrived at a single fronted 2 storey dwelling. A knock on the door. Gaining entry, they were directed to an upstairs bedroom to pick up the deceased. After some preparation the body was laid out on the stretcher and they were ready to leave with George leading and the foreman following.

With some difficulty the stretcher exited the bedroom into the passage. Coming down the stairs was easy until they got to the U turn at the landing halfway down.

No matter how hard they tried, they could not, with the limited space, get the body on the stretcher around the corner. The foreman was not really foreman material as he was getting quite angry. "We'll take the old bastard off the stretcher and carry him down" came the order.

This proved to be a problem because, as it was discovered later, the old gent had been dead for some time and rigor mortis had exerted some influence. "We'll have to bend him to get around this bloody corner" said the foreman, and this they did.

With George carrying the legs and the angry one at the other end they had just left the landing when with the bending, twisting and turning the gas pressure became too great and the deceased farted one end and belched in our hero's face at the other. That was too much so he yelled "Let the feet go George, if the old bastard can fart he can bloody walk". The body thumped, thumped down the stairs and came to rest at the bottom.

The door to the living room on the ground floor opened and a small face appeared. With a long hard look at the deceased he cried out "Mum, Dad, come quick, Grandad's fallen down the stairs again".

This story was told to me many years ago by Station Officer George Tanner at No. 35 Stn. He swears it was true.

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

F.C. Kerr

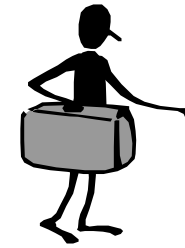
Old Wisdom

After working his farm every day, an old farmer rarely had time to enjoy the large pond in the back that he had fixed up years earlier with picnic tables, horseshoe courts, and benches. So one evening he decided to go down and see how things were holding up. Much to his surprise, he heard voices shouting and laughing with glee. As he came closer he saw it was a group of young women skinny dipping in his pond.

He made the women aware of his presence and they all went to the deep end. One of the women shouted to him, "We're not coming out until you leave."

The old farmer replied, "I didn't come down here to watch you ladies swim or make you get out of the pond naked. I only came down to feed the crocodile."

Moral: Old age and treachery will always triumph over youth and skill.



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

A Trip To Nowhere.

It's been a very uninteresting time, so uninteresting that Mrs Silver has agreed to contribute even if she is **just** over 35 years.

For myself, daughter Sue and husband Mal Owen shouted me a hot air balloon ride. After making the date and time I arose on a Sunday morning at 3.45am and proceeded to dodge the local kangaroos in Eden Park and headed off to Ferguson's Winery in the Yarra Valley.

On arrival with 20 or so others (still pitch black), went into the reception area for coffee and book in.

I noticed it was a calm morning at home but there was a stiff breeze in the Valley.

After waiting nearly an hour and trying to make conversation with a guy who had the memory retention of a sand flea, the operators announced their weather station at Kilmore reported a gale was blowing at 1000 feet.

He also said there was a fair chance of finishing in Iraq, thinking what a wonderful target we would make floating over Baghdad the flight was called off and set for another day. More to come.

**Happy Traveling
Silver**

Mrs Silver's Philosophy

People over 35 should be gone by now!

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 40's, 50's, 60's, or even maybe the early 70's probably shouldn't have survived. Our baby cribs were covered with bright coloured lead-based paint.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles doors or cabinets, ...and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. (not to mention the risks we took hitchhiking.) As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

Riding in the back of the Holden Ute on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. Horrors!

We ate cakes, bread and butter, and drank Fanta & Coke with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle, and no one actually died from this.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then rode down the hill, only to find but we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the street lights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day.

NO MOBILE PHONES!!!!!! Unthinkable!

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo 64, X-Boxes, no video games at all, no 99 channels on pay TV, video tape movies, surround sound, mobile phones, personal computers, or Internet chat rooms.

We had friends! We went outside and found them.

We played cricket in the street, and sometimes, the ball would really hurt.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. They were accidents. No one was to blame but us. Remember accidents?

We had fights and punched each other and got black and blue and learned to get over it.

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate worms, and although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes, nor did the worms live inside us forever.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's home and knocked on the door, or rang the bell or just walked in and talked to them.

Aussie Rules/Cricket had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment.

Some students weren't as smart as others, so they failed a grade and were held back to repeat the same grade.

Horrors!

Tests were not adjusted for any reason. Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected.

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law.

Imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever.

The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all. And you're one of them! **Congratulations!**

Please pass this on to others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before lawyers and government regulated our lives, for our own good?????!

People under 29 are WIMPS!

Mrs Silver

TRIBUTE TO BILL WEBBER

1915-2004

The Champion of Firefighters' Rights.

By Rod Knowles

Retired UFU Branch State and National Secretary Bill Webber passed away at the age of 88 on 2nd April, 2004.

I first met Bill Webber when I joined the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in 1963.

In 1973 I was elected to the UFU State Committee of Management (now known as the Branch Committee of Management). Not long after that I was appointed by the Committee as a full-time Industrial Officer to work alongside Bill until he retired in 1975. What a great experience for me that was.

I watched in awe at the no-nonsense way Bill handled the employer, the expert way he conducted himself in the Industrial Commission and in particular the way he looked after the Union and its Fire Brigade membership.

Bill Webber was a Mr Fixit. If ever you were in trouble, either at work or at home, ring Bill and he would fix it almost immediately.

Bill learnt the industrial profession the hard way, starting from when he joined the MFB in 1937. The 23-strong recruit

intake was the biggest MFB intake ever. At that time they were known as 'Lawler's Mob' named after the drill instructor ex Sergeant-Major Jack Lawler. They represented 10% of the Brigade's firefighting strength at the time. In Bill's words, "The winds of change were about to blow," and blow they did.

It must be remembered that in this era of the MFB it was a 'master / servant' relationship with the employer. The Chief Fire Officer and his fellow officers were the masters and the 'baggy-bum' firefighters were the servants. It was a time that you signed your Brigade reports "I have the Honour to be your most Obedient Servant."

It was a time that the officers used to throw their dirty boots and uniform with all its brass adornments, including the brass helmet, on the floor for firefighters to clean before the next call.

It was a time when the employer refused to supply toilet paper, and your first job of a day shift was to tear up newspaper or a telephone book.

Worst of all, it was a time when firefighters and their wives were on duty for 120 hours a week; wives

would staff the watchroom and answer the phones when their husbands turned out. The women were paid 2 shillings a call for this – not an hour, a call. In the busy times they could be in the watchroom all day or all night while the boys fought a big structure or chased grass fires.

By 1943 Bill was elected as Vice-President of the United Firefighters Union of Victoria. By 1944 he was President.

In 1949 he teamed up with his great mate and senior partner in the legal firm Slater & Gordon Geoff Jones. In that year Geoff was appointed as a part time Secretary of the UFU; a position he held for 20 months until Bill took over in 1950. Bill left the MFB in that

year to become UFU Secretary, after 13 years as a fire and reaching the rank of Senior Firefighter. During that period of time he picked up the fire engineering tickets known as the IFE and the Graduate, which meant he was more qualified in firefighting than many Chief Officers.

Geoff and Bill worked side-by-side for 25 years. They were a great team:

Geoff with his very good legal skills and Bill with his tremendous leadership and advocacy skills.

During those 25 years even though elections were held every three years Bill was never once opposed, either as State Secretary or National President, to which he was elected in 1949.

Backed by a very supportive Committee of Management, Bill had some great successes. To name just a few:

- Hours reduced from 120 to 40 in both the CFA & the MFB;
- No more cleaning of officers' gear;
- No more "I have the honour to be your obedient servant";
- 500 more firefighters employed as a result of the shorter hours win;
- Access to the Industrial Commission for the first time;
- An independent disciplinary appeals tribunal with a union representative being one of the 3 person tribunal. This tribunal undid a lot of bad work carried out by the masters;



- Brass helmets ('the electrical conductors') removed to the museum and replaced by the much safer polycarbonate helmets;
 - Boots and leggings replaced with top boots;
 - As a result of a decision of the Industrial Commission of the time, the MFB was ordered to supply toilet rolls. This order was written into the Award, and it is believed that the UFU was the only union that had to get this written into their Award; and
 - The setting up of a housing co-op run by the union so members could get a housing loan at good rates.
- In the 1970's, Bill, with the support of his Committee, was successful in negotiating and winning:
- The removal of the supervisory unit, otherwise known as the 'press button' to keep fires awake of a night time;
 - The introduction of the 10/14 roster system so popular with firefighters around Australia. He won the 10/14 system for NSW fires in a court battle with him appearing in court as the union advocate against a top lawyer appearing for the Fire Board;
 - The reintroduction of full sleeping time including beds in watchrooms to what it used to be like pre 1950 on the long hours;
 - UFU won support from the Board with its complete table-top model plan for new Training College at Abbotsford, after UFU bans were placed on the Board's training proposal at No 3 station. The Table top model was built by a BCOM member with rank and file fire input;
 - In 1974 Bill headed up the UFU superannuation sub-committee hell bent on improving firefighters' superannuation, which at time was \$15 per week for spouses, plus \$10 for each child. Bill called for submissions from insurance companies to see what they could provide. Armed with that information a long campaign was started to improve super, culminating in the introduction of ESSS in 1987;
 - Bill negotiated a deal with the Officers' Association based on the premise that he could get them off their 56 hour roster and onto the 10/14, 38 hour roster without loss of money they would all join the UFU. You guessed it, that is exactly what he did. Unbelievably, even the Chief Fire Officer of the time joined the Union. That's right, the master joined forces with the servants. Such was Bill Webber's negotiating skills and standing in the Brigade that the officers and the Chief knew it was in their best interests in every way to have this man represent them in relation to their wages and conditions.

Bill was State Secretary of the UFU Victorian Branch from 1950 to 1975. Upon his retirement, he was granted a Life Membership of the Victorian Branch.

He was National President from 1949 to 1969, and National Secretary from 1969 until his retirement in 1975. He was also granted a Life membership by the

National Committee of Management.

In his role as a National Officer, alongside another great mate, NSW Secretary Jim Lambert, who was National Secretary from 1949 until his retirement in 1969, their main priority and main aim was to bring all Australian Firefighters into a Federally-registered United Firefighters' Union.

Their slogan was "**One Union, One Voice**", and the two of them fought long and hard to achieve their dream.

After a nine-year campaign in the sixties the UFU finally, at great expense, became a Federally-registered union in 1969, only to have it taken away in 1970 when the High Court ruled that firefighting was not an industry.

However, the next generation took up the Federal registration battle again and eventually won it in 1990 with Bill, then well and truly retired, present in court when the decision was handed down. He was a proud and pleased man that day. He, along with Jim, could now rest in peace.

As the National Secretary he was instrumental in establishing an Airport Firefighter Branch of the UFU, as well as the Qld Branch of the UFU. He actually drove to Qld and along with Arthur Rogers, who was to become the State Secretary of that Branch, did a slow crawl up the east coast calling into every permanently-manned fire station, meeting with the fires and convincing them to leave the Australian Workers union and join the newly registered Queensland Branch of the UFU. You could not get much more hands on than that. In the 32 years he served as an official of our union, the winds of change certainly blew hard. In Weather Bureau technology, they would have to be classified as cyclone force.

He taught firefighters how to stand up for themselves and fight for their rights.

This progressive and militant attitude has flowed onto the following generation of firefighters. He has set the benchmark, and there is no way we are going to fall below it.

His photo and plaque will always occupy pride of place in the Union Office, and will look down on us forever. The memories of his struggles and victories will not be forgotten. The great legacy he left for us will and must always be protected.

Thank you Bill Webber for your fantastic contribution to our union.

You are, and always will be, a hero of the firefighters' union and remembered as a champion of working class rights.

Australia's professional firefighters extend their deepest sympathy to Myrt, Rae, Ken and the Family.

VALE COMRADE BILL WEBBER

Rod Knowles