

"WATER OFF!"

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

FEBRUARY 97



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we welcome in 1997, I hope we can look forward to a happy and prosperous New Year for yourselves and your loved ones.

At our A.G.M., in November last year, election of office bearers took place with committee remaining the same except for Ian Fowler replacing Keith Warfe.

The Union Christmas Party was held at the St. Kilda Town Hall at the end of November. A large crowd attended and all reports have been favourable. I would like to pass on my congratulations to Bruce Smith and his committee as well as the Union Executive for continuing this traditional event.

Since the last edition of "Water Off", three of our members have passed away, Colin Campbell, Kevin Gibson and Lionel Jones. Our condolences go to their families.

On the sick list are Bill Webber and Jack Smith. We wish them all the best and a speedy recovery.

As mentioned in our last newsletter the Arthritis Foundation is providing a Guest Speaker for our next meeting on the 19th February at the Fitzroy Bowling Club. Members are cordially invited to bring their partners to this meeting. For catering purposes we need to know the numbers attending. Please ring the President on 9850-6725 for your booking.

Hope to see you at the meeting.

DON BRENNAN

“ GENERAL MEETING ”

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

This is a mixed meeting, bring your partner along to hear our guest speaker from the Arthritis Foundation

AGENDA ITEMS.

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

Please come along and have your say in the running of the Association and join in the fellowship of your old friends and make new ones.

Lunch and beverages will be provided as usual. @ \$2 per head.
Drinks at bar prices.

**JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER**

NOTE;

Any member who has not been financial for 3 years, will be crossed off the mailing list. If you have not paid your current subscription for 1997, please fill in the form on the back page of this edition and return to the Secretary.

Presidents Report

from Annual General Meeting. 1996

Firstly, I would like to thank the Committee and in particular our Secretary / Treasurer John Berry for all the work he has put in during the last year. The members who regularly attend the general meetings, thank you for your continued support, it is you who give direction to the Association in all the paths we follow. With the help of our active members we have managed to increase the membership significantly in the latter half of the year.

My one disappointment was that no one saw fit to stand for any positions on the committee. (A last minute nomination saw Ian Fowler fill the vacant position left by Keith Warfe.)

A special vote of thanks goes to John Laverick for his fantastic work in collating our "Water Off". This takes up a fair amount of his time and

energy. Also thanks go to those members / Committee members when called upon to assist with the folding and placing the "Water Off" into envelopes.

Many thanks go to the following people for getting all the names and addresses of every member up to date on a computer data base;- John Berry's daughter Karen, my wife Nancy and daughter Angela.

Finally to the members of the Union Office and Credit Union, thanks for your support and assistance during the last year.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to wish you all the best for the festive season and a healthy and successful 1997. We look forward to seeing you in the near future at the November Union lunch and at our first mixed meeting in February.

DON BRENNAN,



SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

With the festive season behind us we must now get back to the real world, however, let's not forget that fellowship, caring and love we exhibited to one another over that period and make this year one of success for each and everyone.

Since our last newsletter, some members, unfortunately, will not be joining us, as they have been called to a higher duty, where we will all join them eventually, (what a fantastic crew the person in charge has to man the appliances up there).

I would like to express, on behalf of the Committee and members, our sincere condolences to their loved ones left behind to man the pumps, you all are an integral part of the past and future and the lines of communication between us must be kept active.

I am not sure from the discussions I have had with members of the Association and community in general, that we are handling the changes that are going on in the essential areas ie; Health, Education, Transport, Energy and Emergency Services very well. Look at my old job, the M.F.B. they now have a consultants report suggesting enormous changes to the service. I am always suspicious about changes suggesting outsourcing, bottomline and downsizing without a full impact study and that includes the social and psychological effect it has on the community. It sounds like the "Golden Rule" to me, "I Have The Gold and I Will Rule". Next we will have civilian members of the M.F.B. with their own tunics responding to calls in their own cars from home!!!!

Here is a little conundrum;-

Q. What is black and white and cannot climb ladders?

A. Collingwood Football Club!
(Silver made me put this in).

Items of interest from the last meeting.

Item 1-

The last meeting was the Annual General Meeting for the Association, see Financial Statement of Income and Expenditure for year

ended 30th June 1996, on page 10.

Item 2-

All positions were declared vacant and the new committee is as follows;

President - Don Brennan,

Vice President - Ern Tamme

Secretary / Treasurer - John Berry,

Committee - Ian Fowler, Peter Holton,

John Laverick, Bob McNeil, Ross Medwin.

Theo Teklenburg was reappointed Auditor. The position of Secretary / Treasurer has been enacted and reported to the Office of Fair Trading & Business Affairs.

Item 3-

The meeting closed and a motion was moved that a general meeting follow to discuss a foreshadowed motion. The motion was moved that \$6000 of the R.F.A. assets be donated to the U.F.U. After three extensions of time and a lot of lively debate the motion was put and lost.

The mover of the motion stated in his closing discussion that, even if the motion was defeated, it certainly created lively debate and had the grey matter working, which, I believe, is a very healthy sign for the Association, it is the members taking a very active role in the running of the R.F.A. The meeting then closed.

Item 4-

The elected member for the R.F.A. Peter Lang and myself attended our inaugural meeting of the Combined Council of Associations of State Retirees.

Item 5-

This Council had previously voted and agreed to forward to the Wallis inquiry a submission identifying in particular their concern about "superannuation" being swept up and becoming part of some mega-regulatory process and will become more vulnerable, as we could be seen as being no longer productive members of society and the contributions made to society during your working life as of lesser relevance.

Item 6-

The U.F.U. Retired Firefighters Dinner at the St.Kilda Town Hall was a great success and all those involved are to be commended for their effort.
(Over)

(Cont. from page 3)

Special Note; The U.F.U. Social Club Secretary would like it known the Dinner will continue, that was not the last one.

Item 7-

The R.F.A. has a new banner which was exhibited at the Dinner and will be on display at

all our meetings.

Hoping that this newsletter finds you all fit and well and looking forward to seeing you and your partner at the February 19th meeting 10.30am. Fitzroy Bowling Club.

John Berry

Retired Firefighters Association Of Australia Victorian Branch

Statement of Income and Expenditure year ended 30th June 1996

INCOME	\$
Members subscriptions	2,250.00
Socials	505.00
Badge sales	23.00
Joining fees	65.00
Interest received	555.14
	3,399.14
Opening balance Credit Union 1st July 1995	8,945.29
	12,344.43
EXPENDITURE	
Postage	696.65
Catering	841.25
Donation	1000.00
Telephone	000.00
AGM and meetings	919.50
Water Off Mag.	120.00
Sundries / Office of Bus. & Fair Trading	308.00
Government charges	6.31
	3,891.71
Closing balance Credit Union 30th June 1996	8,452.72
	12,344.43
Credit Union reconciliation;	
Main account	598.31
Term account	7,854.41
	8,452.72

Statement prepared and figures correct from information supplied.

Signed-

J.A. Berry/ Treasurer

T. Teklenburg/ Auditor.

SPECTRE OF THE WILLIAM BOOTH FIRE

During 1996, I appealed for information on the William Booth fire, and in the October edition I said I would say something more about it. As the information came in and individual stories unfolded it became apparent with my limited journalistic skills that I would not be able to do justice to what is a very sad and poignant story. Not only for those who died on that dreadful night, but for the members of the responding crews, many of whom suffered nightmares and flashbacks, their feelings bottled up inside, not able to express their true feelings to their colleagues for fear of ridicule, (no debriefing or trauma counselling in those days). Many of these members have since passed on.

One journalist wrote of his reflections of that night 23 years later and I would like to pass on portions of that story to you.

The Salvation Army's William Booth Hostel for Men, on August 13, 1966, was the scene of Australia's worst building fire, a terrible record that still stands. Thirty destitute men living there were killed, burned or, mostly asphyxiated, while a dozen others were injured, when choking smoke rolled through a rabbit warren of 272 tiny bed-cubicles jammed into its upper floors. These, incredibly to modern conceptions of welfare, numbered 70 to a floor in the smallish building. Each measured just 2.3 metres square.

The William Booth had no fewer than 225 residents on that winter night when an alcoholic chemist knocked over a forbidden radiator in No.1 cubicle on the third floor. He then fell into what would be, for him, a last, tormented sleep. The lights went out as several men rushed to the spot and opened his door to an explosion of flames that cut off the twisting main stairway exit from the third and fourth floors. Some groped their way back through the dark to the rear of the building but then took a wrong left turn into the shower block. Eight men suffocated there. Others piled up at the head of the front stairs.

The journalist went on to say, "At the time, I wrote that I would never forget what followed. But looking at old clippings now I find I can recall hardly any of the closer details of what I reported. All that remains is a series of

mnemonic snapshots; the dark at the head of the stairway-yes, the stairs, always the stairs, and heavy limp weights; a line of men sprawled on the linoleum of the central groundfloor hallway, with young firemen bent over them trying to breath life, through handkerchiefs, back into gaping, derelict mouths; I particularly remember the handkerchiefs, and the memory that I didn't want to do that. Then there was the cafeteria on the right side, doing service as a makeshift mortuary for rows of bodies; more in the TV-sitting room on the other side. Clearest, and most poignant of all, is the image of the 200-odd survivors in a closed-off side laneway, shocked and shuffling back and forth, back and forth, muttering quietly to themselves. Once they got out they had wanted nothing more to do with what was happening inside".

The journalist wrote his story at the time developers were preparing to pull the building down, and concluded with these words;-

"What happened there was real and unremittingly sad, and a place built to good intentions cannot recover from that. On the whole, the city will be a more cheerful place when it is gone and the William Booth's memories are finally exorcized".

Acknowledgments:

I would like to again thank all the people who phoned and wrote in response to my appeal, in particular, Jim and Olive Fleming, who loaned their comprehensive scrap book during my research;

M.F.B. Library;

Jeff Penberthy, Journalist, Time Magazine October 30, 1989 edition.

John Laverick

DISPATCH FROM THE COLONEL'S QUARTERS

Who was the member who came to the U.F.U Christmas luncheon with not a cent in his pocket to buy a raffle ticket, (forgot to go to the bank!). Last heard asking wife if she would part with her last \$1.

And what about the other member who gets his

OVER THE STY

Being an occasional column from an unknown contributor.



The occupants are in deep mourning, due to the barbaric Xmas festivities resulting in the mass destruction of relatives who were turned into HAMS.

Enough said!

On a less serious note, let us take you back to the golden years of No.27 Stn. (now No.35).

You have probably heard the song "THE NIGHT THEY BURNED OLD DIXIE DOWN", well you are about to hear another tale of epic proportions, only names have been changed to protect the guilty, as I don't know if there were any innocents there.

THE SCENE!

It was just before 3am., a relief had just been sent to No.28 Stn. (the old Sth. Yarra Stn. on the site of what is now the Jam Factory). Some of us were in the billiard room at the back of the station, we were just quietly hanging around the floor looking up at the ceiling and because it was a trifle cold we were covered in blankets. Not that, I hasten to add, we were asleep, as sleeping was illegal on shift in those days.

Suddenly, the Sarge appeared and in his dulcet tones he announced, "you bastards had better get out of bed as half of f.....g Chapel St. was on fire". We staggered to the engine room and on the way we had difficulty in both breathing and seeing as the engine room appeared to be filled with smoke. Upon entering the watchroom I observed the "Old Geezer" talking on the phone and his conversation was I believe, the understatement of the century and I quote, "you think there is a fire in Chapel St. do you?" Now it would appear that the caller might be right, what with the evidence of smoke in the engine room and also the fact that the sun appeared to be rising some three hours early and due to some massive cosmic upheaval, it was rising in the north, a very strange phenomenon!

Being a rather cultured type of person and having a good 6th grade education at WestHAM State School, I asked the "Old Geezer" to "put the f.....g bells on", an action I perceived, when said by the DO., to have all sorts of magic effects. But alas, no reaction, so in as gentle a manner as was possible to the circumstances I pushed the S.O.B. aside and

he fell to the floor because of his usual state of being permanently three parts p....d!

THE FIRE!

When we appear before "Old Nick" at the ultimate fire it will hold no terrors to those who attended, "THE NIGHT WE BURNT CHAPEL ST, DOWN". This fire contained all the ingredients of a Shakespearian 20 Act play!

Upon arrival, the DO., who was a real top bloke, ordered the carriage crew of 4, (including himself) and the Com. Ladder crew of 2, to run a line and sent word back, "Fire in Chapel St. and under control". By this time 28 Stn. and a crew of 3 arrived and a F/F. made a quick recon. of the rear of the premises and established that all of the premises were involved including the upper storey of this 2 storey supermarket, which although was nowhere near the size of a current supermarkets, it covered about 5 normal shop-fronts. We made no effect on the fire and after about 5 minutes the fire had got into another separate shop on the south side. Another line was run on that building and so on until in a space of a further 10 minutes or so an additional 4 separate shops were involved and indeed burnt out. While on the roof, F/Fs were heard to report that it had got into another shop on all 4 occasions. At one stage there were 10 lines on the fire, 1 more than there were F/Fs. attending. This was brought about by the good graces of the local police who manned a line.

At the height of the fire, the D.O. was assailed by the proprietor of one of the shops pleading to get more help to put out the fire. This plea received a rather unusual reply as the D.O. who, by this time, was feeling rather frustrated and a mite keyed up, turned to the gentleman who was of Asian appearance and appeared not to have a good command of the English language, replied, as near as I can remember it, as follows. "If you can do any better, take these and run the whole show" and having said that, the D.O. removed his brass helmet and tunic and placed them on the shopkeeper who gratefully declined his kind offer.

Records show that approximately 2 hours after the initial turnout, Head Station was still receiving calls for this fire. At about this time, a car turned up driven by a large man with a silver helmet on his head and upon his shoulders about an acre of silver epaulettes.

His nickname was "The Bull" and I hadn't quite known why he was called that until that morning when all those attending heard his roaring. Shortly after, a hoard of district cars arrived disgorging a large number of F/Fs. to assist. **At no time was any request made for assistance.**

THE AFTERMATH!

Upon return to the station where an extension ladder and the S.O. who was manning it, had sat champing at the bit waiting to be sent on, but, as no request was made, he stayed home. One of the tasks he undertook at the station during the fire was to remove a car or two from the station yard as they were being covered with ash from the fire. Another S.O. who lived at the station gave consideration to leaving the station as he thought it might be in the path of the fire if it continued and was stopped only at Portsea on it's arrival at Bass Strait. I consider

that it probably would not have crossed Bass Strait, although I am convinced the chicken shopkeeper who refused the offer of the helmet and tunic and thus missed his chance at glory believed it could go that far.

ANOTHER GREAT YEAR FOR RETIRE ED

The end of 1996 marked the third full year of the Brigade's RETIRE ED program and is going from strength to strength. The retired officers in the program, Eric Daffy, Albert Fawkner, Ian Fowler, John Howe, John Laverick, Godfrey Payne, Barry Puddy and Basil Smith, delivered an amazing 129 lectures during the year to close to 5000 people. This brings the total number of lectures over the 3 1/2 year existence of the program to 446 and the number of people who have attended these lectures to 18,528.

In addition to these statistics, the year held other highlights. The retired officers represented the Brigade at the annual Seniors Expo held during Senior Citizens Week in March for the second year in a row and have received an invitation to return

Later that morning, the D.O. spent a pleasant 15 minutes in the Chief's office partaking of a social chat and refreshments.

That afternoon, the proprietor of the supermarket had trestle tables set up outside the remains of his store and was selling blackened and unidentifiable cans at cut prices of 2 cents per tin. The Council Health Department stopped the practice shortly after it started. Afterall, who likes eating cooked sardines, pineapple juice etc. even if it's cheap. Ho Hum, just another night at No. 27 Station in the fabulous fifties.

OINK OINK.

PS. Silver was not there no matter what he says.

again in 1997. Here they spoke to close to 2000 people who visited the Expo looking for information, entertainment and opportunities for those over 50. Golden Days Radio, a radio station for the over 50's, also won a Fire Awareness Week Award, thanks in part to the partnership formed with John Howe who for the last three years has hosted a regular segment on the station about Retire Ed and the Fire Brigade.

Thanks goes to those officers who have contributed so willingly of their time and expertise to the program to make it the success it continues to be. The program provides an invaluable community service and potentially life saving education for this high risk group in fires.

QUOTE

Most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted.
(Aldous Huxley.)



REUNION DAY LUNCHEON

Our annual reunion day luncheon will be held on Sunday 13th April 1997 at the MFB Training College at 1100 Hours.

BYO Drinks.
Tea and coffee will be supplied.

Cost: \$10.00 per guest, members free.

Hope to see you there.
Acceptance form below.

John Berry
Secretary

If you would like to become part of the RETIRE ED program or like further information about the program, please feel free to ring Sharon Landers, Fire Prevention Department, on 9665-4464. If you belong to a group which could benefit from a lecture from one of retired officers, please pass on the phone number to the appropriate person.

REUNION DAY AT M.F.B TRAINING COLLEGE

Sunday 13th April 1997 at 1100 Hours

Acceptance Form

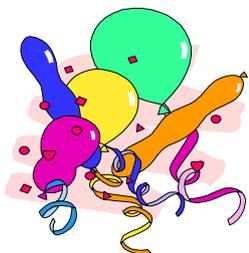
Members Free; Guests = \$10 per head.
Please return this slip to;

John Berry
24 Lincoln Drive
Lower Plenty 3093

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 13th April 1997

Guest/ Spouse Name
(please print)



“WERE YOU THERE?”

Did you go to the “Annual Reunion Xmas Luncheon for the Retired Firefighters” on the 23rd of November.

Once again the Firefighters Union provided a wonderful day for the “Retiree’s” and their wives. Judging by the noise of the conversation, the laughter, the many handshakes and kisses on the cheek, (ladies only we believe), a good time was being had by all and nobody wanted to go home.

The venue this year was the St.Kilda Town Hall which had been one of the great saves of the decade when fire swept through the building a few years ago, so it was very fitting that the luncheon be held there for the “retired fire’s”.

We, who have always been Melbourne residents, would have felt many nostalgic memories, as the St.Kilda Town Hall was always looked upon as “the place” in Melbourne for a special ball and Saturday night dancing. You could almost hear the music and feel yourself drifting into the Pride Of Erin, the Barn Dance, Foxtrot or perhaps for some of the younger Retiree’s, the sounds of “Jitterbugging”.

The Union Luncheon is a great day and it gives you the opportunity of meeting up with old friends, swapping news about various people you have seen, talking of places you have been to and what you have been doing over the year. There is a very sincere feeling as well, which shows when a minute’s silence is asked for in memory of those who have passed on and this minute’s silence is observed most reverently and totally with everyone standing for it.

To all the retiree’s who made an extra effort to come from the country for the Union luncheon it was great to see you and we hope to see you at other functions in 1997.

If you attended and thoroughly enjoyed the day and meeting up with old mates, maybe you know another ex fire who would like to join the Retired Firefighters Association for a small cost of \$10 per year. This entitles you to receive the quarterly newsletter “Water Off”, there is also a

great BBQ. day held at the Training College in February and General Meetings at the Fitzroy Bowling Club 4 times a year. At all these functions the Association subsidise the cost of the lunches so there is only a small cost to you. At our last meeting in Fitzroy, Ross Medwin brought Lindsay “Tiger” Lyons along. Tiger has not been in the best of health but he enjoyed catching up with everyone. Maybe you know an “ex fire” who is not in the best of health but would thoroughly enjoy meeting other ex fire’s for a chat and lunch, bring them along. Give it a thought!

To all our Melbourne retiree’s, if you don’t want to drive your car to Fitzroy, the Collins Street tram (No.10 & 11) stops at the door of the Fitzroy Bowling Club, so lets make the next function a great day.

ROSS MEDWIN.

DISPATCH FROM THE COLONEL’S QUARTERS

One of our eminent colleagues who has been building a grand edifice in Paradise Park (or is it Eden?), recently had some building materials delivered to the side of the road, (driver could not gain access to Paradise). Along comes a friendly neighbourhood Policeman with his trailer in tow; “They’ll walk if left out overnight, I’ll take them back to the Station”. “Thanks, but don’t bother say’s our eminent colleagues wife. Next morning, you’ve guessed it, no building materials. Panic! Notifies all the “born fatherless” people he can think of. Later in the morning, truck laden with the missing goods ambles up the drive. A neighbour had taken them home overnight for safe-keeping. Rumour has it that local police and neighbours just ~~trying to start out on the good side of our~~ “SILVER haired” eminent colleague.

Remember the days when you used to get a passer-by call? Well Don Gordon passed this one on to us recently that occurred at No7 Stn. (Thomastown). A car pulled up out the front of the station with an unconcious passenger. The on shift crew checked him out and found that the person had OD’d on drugs, had a weak pulse and irregular breathing. The prognosis didn’t look good but the crew worked on him, after calling for an ambulance, until the patient was able to stand up, walk back to the car and



The Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal

The annual Good Friday can shake at the St Kilda junction is almost upon us again. Hopefully it will be as successful as it has been in years past, thanks to the efforts of the volunteers who give their time for this very worthy cause.

Firefighters, in association with the Uncle Bobs Club, have traditionally manned the St. Kilda junction for years and have raised many thousands of dollars and many lasting friendships have been made.

But now this great group of people need your help to maintain the strength at the Junction. Last year our President and his wife went down to lend a hand for a few hours and reports that they were busy and needed people to relieve them for a while.

If you could give some time on Good Friday 28th March, 9A.M. start, it will be greatly appreciated.

For further information contact Don Brennan on PH. 9850-6725

"BROWN'S BITS"

Our roving correspondent from the North-West of our fair city has, on his travels chasing that elusive little white ball, gathered snippets on some of our former colleagues and has agreed to drip feed us on the odd occasion and the first odd one is as follows:

The golf course at Deadtown Gulch (formerly Corowa), is a dangerous place. Just ask Nurse Ken Bouchaud who, while trying to hit the ball out of sight, did a cartilage. And what of Bob Undy who survived a heart attack at a fire 20 odd years ago, nearly got killed by a wayward golf ball. Bob has the lump on his forehead to prove it.

Whilst having his golf buggy treated at the vet's the other day, our correspondent overheard the following conversation;

A little old lady had taken her old dog to the vet and after checking the dog the vet declared him dead. The old lady would not accept this and kept insisting the dog was asleep. Finally the exasperated vet had a brain-wave. He asked her, "did the dog like cats?" "He hates them", she replied. "So if I put a cat on him, what would he do" the vet asked. "He'd chase it" she replied. So the vet went to a cage, took out a cat and moved it all over the dog. The dog never moved. Finally the old lady was convinced. "How much do I owe you" she asked. The vet tallied the bill and said, "\$35 for the examination and \$40 for the Cat scan".

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

Members who have not renewed their membership are reminded that subscription for 1997 are now due and payable.

The Secretary
Retired Firefighters Association of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated.

24 Lincoln Drive
Lower Plenty 3093

Please find enclosed Cheque/Money Order for \$10 being for subscription for 1997.

Name: _____

Spouses Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Post Code** _____

Phone: _____

NOTE: Our subscription year is from;- February 1st 1997 to January 31st 1998.



PRINT POST No. PP1234567

RFA Newsletter

If undelivered return to;

Secretary

24 Lincoln Drive

Lower Plenty 3039

SURFACE
MAIL

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