

# Half Circle



Number 92 - August 2014



## AT THE RAP:

**Peter Molloy** – a left knee reconstruction and further right leg surgery to prepare for new prosthesis. This will be the first time an Australian veteran has undergone this type of surgery, and the new leg will be state-of-the-art technology. Peter is also undergoing extensive rehabilitation. This man has endured 45 years of pain and suffering, but still doesn't complain.

**Barrie Taylor** - ongoing oncology treatment. Twelve more months of treatment (5 hours each 3 weeks), but Barrie is beating the odds!

**Wally Magalas** – ongoing oncology treatment.

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**TRAVELLING ABOUT:** Bluey Austin has just been to Hervey Bay Qld, and spent a bit of time with Barry Baker and the notorious Jack Bradd. Bluey reports that Jack is focussed on his work making and painting of scale model aircraft and military equipment. Jack still orders Barry around, holds court, tells his visitors to piss off when he's had enough of them, and chuckles to himself

when he treads on toes. He's still got that bad "Jack Bradd" attitude, and holds his reputation as one of the best bush soldiers the Army has seen as his greatest attribute. Bluey also caught up with Pat and Ben Oram whilst in the area. *Your editor fondly remembers many sessions with Jack at Holsworthy in 1970. On one occasion, we had a thief in our midst. Jack waited and waited until the time was right, got the bloke up to the Maxwell VC Club (the boozier) got him full and then back to the barracks. Jack then supervised a "Burial at Sea", where the bloke was placed on a bed, draped with the Australian flag, then farewelled with the appropriate words as one end of the bed was raised and he slid out of the second floor window into space. The bloke immediately gave up his life of crime! Justice – Jack Bradd's way.*



**Bluey** also added that at the start of September he is taking his boat “Tiger 5” to Weipa in north Queensland, and then slowly heading back down the coast to his home north of Newcastle, by sometime in November. Bluey said that if any old C Coy tigers catch up with him, they would be most welcome to have a yarn or perhaps go out with him and drop a line.

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**CHRISTMAS IN JULY:** We have been advised that Terry Major, Alan McNulty DCM (the 5RAR Assn WA Rep and C Coy 1<sup>st</sup> tour) and many others behind the scenes have organised to get Kim (Hippie) Locke to a function for disabled veterans at Baldvis (near Mandurah, WA). Kim’s carers at his nursing home are very supportive of him, and a special day out for Kim and those like him, has been planned. Thanks to you all. More in the next issue!

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**In Sydney and want to hit the little white ball?** Then head for the Georges River Golf Course, Henry Lawson Drive Georges Hall. Geoff Grimish and his team will make you most welcome. Geoff is a Vietnam vet (RAA), and is a great supporter of this newsletter. Phone (02) 9724 1615.

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Peter (Fred) McCarthy (8PL) relates his individual way of honouring HMAS Sydney – the Vung Tau Ferry – and how he said his farewell to her – almost at the expense of his pilot’s licence. Here’s Fred’s story.....

I have just finished reading the latest edition of Tiger Tales and, as most of us harbour some fond memories of her, I thought I might add a humorous anecdote to the snippet on the HMAS Sydney.

In the mid-seventies, Mary and I moved from Brisbane to the Gold Coast where I commenced in practice as an Accountant at Tweed Heads. At the time, I became a member of the South Queensland Aero Club and took light aircraft (Cessna) flying lessons out of Coolangatta airport.

Weather permitting, I used to fly between my office at Tweed Heads and another office we operated at Noosa Heads and the flight path took me directly over Moreton Bay. I can't now recall in which direction I was flying (north or south over Moreton Bay) nor do I recall the date or year of this incident but it must have been in January or February as the tug towing the

HMAS Sydney experienced cyclonic weather just off Brisbane and so steamed into Moreton Bay to secure safe anchorage.

On this particular occasion, I was flying at approximately 1,500/2,000 feet above Moreton Bay: I looked down and there she was in all of her magnificent, skeletal splendour. Though reduced to the state of a skeleton for her final voyage (and an ignominious one at that - a tow), she retained every vestige of the majesty which all who sailed in her had revered as she traversed her thirty years of service. Memories of my own experience as one of her troop passengers instantly flooded my mind. A huge grin spread across my face as I recalled her as being the location on which I had pulled the biggest scam of my life; a scam which was so good that it has not, to this day, been equalled, let alone surpassed in excellence. As he reads this, Yabs will burst into fits of uncontrollable laughter for not only is he privy to the scam, but he was an active participant.

However, recounting scams is not why I pen this missive.

I was flying on a route nominated by Air Traffic Control, Brisbane. The route was supposed to take me over Moreton Island, not over Moreton Bay but, in all of the excitement, I must have done a circuit, or perhaps even two, over the vessel to entertain nostalgia, for the radio burst into life with an angry question "Delta X-ray Papa, confirm you are over Moreton Island? Over" - Brisbane tower doing what Brisbane tower was supposed to do. After recovering from the closest thing I have experienced to a heart attack, I quickly did a (right or left) turn and headed east and waited until I actually was over Moreton Island before confirming the controller's request - it's called 'momentary radio blackout' - or, in the vernacular, lying. The remainder of the flight was quite uneventful; it must have been because I can't remember it; perhaps I blacked out!

Some weeks later, I was at the aero club enjoying a shandy with other members when the conversation got around to the HMAS Sydney being moored in Moreton Bay. I recounted the fact that I had gone to SVN on the Sydney when she was a troop carrier and I related what a buzz it was for me to fly over her in the Bay and how, because I was actually 'off course', I considered myself quite fortunate not to have received a 'please explain' from the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA). They all thought that was pretty funny but suggested that my incident didn't compare with another (name withheld because I can't remember it) member's experience. He too was flying over the Bay on a flight to who knows where when he also espied the Sydney. The appeal of, what he thought was, a perfectly good runway right in the middle of Moreton Bay was, for him, sufficient a lure to suffocate rational thought. After confirming wind direction, he approached the Sydney from the south, lined the vessel up and performed a perfect 'touch and go' (aeronautical term whereby the wheels actually touch the runway but full throttle is applied to effect immediate take-off) on the deck. When he related that story back at the club, he was the toast of the aero club, and, even though his daring cost him his pilot's licence, the feat elevated him to legendary status. That status however, was not sustained: In short course, the naysayers, all except me, occupied

the moral high ground and indulged in all manner of criticisms including but not limited to - "the action was stupid as the deck plates may not have been securely bolted" and "the deck could have been rusty and a piece of rust may have been dislodged, penetrated and punctured the tyre preventing a normal landing from occurring". All in all, the criticisms were valid and, no doubt, similar criteria were employed by the DCA to ground the cavalier pilot. Nevertheless, such critique should remain within the realms of bureaucracy and should never be allowed to encroach on the nether world of gung - ho. I still consider the feat to have been terrific and quite often ponder the consequences of my having harboured and surrendered to similar temptations when I was overhead the Sydney during that brief pause in her funeral procession. The loss of a pilot's licence would have measured quite admirably against future bragging rights and stories I would have been able to tell my grandchildren; hmmm!

So there we bid 'vale' to HMAS Sydney and thank her and all who sailed her for the memories.

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Two tendering teams, one Irish and one Australian, were vying for a contract installing electricity poles. The company decided to give them both a trial. At the end of the day, the Aussie team reported that they had installed 12 poles. The Irish team, completely exhausted, reported that they had installed 3 poles. The company decided to award the contract to the Aussie team. The Irish team immediately protested, and complained bitterly about how much of each pole the Aussie team had left out of the ground.

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Dennis (Digger) Nevins in the NT outback – unshaven and unshowered after seven days. We wonder if this ever happened to him in an earlier life, except that the foliage may have been slightly more dense.

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A bloke in a country region called in to his local police station and said "I want to report the theft of my ride-on lawn mower". The Sergeant said "OK, we'll get some details. What make is it, what colour, what engine capacity and what is the width of the cut?"

The bloke replied "I am trying to tell you that someone pinched my horse".



**REMEMBER THIS?** In 1968, when we were training for Vietnam and long before the age of electronics, ID cards were issued to all personnel of the Battalion. These cards allowed soldiers to proceed out of the barracks area when not required for duty, and also recorded the accommodation status of the men, indicating whether or not the member lived “in”, thus giving them entitlement to meals and accommodation. We understand that in current times, a soldier must pay to “live in”, where previously they were paid an allowance to “live out”, *Thanks to Geoff Pearson for a copy of his old card.*

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## Barber of the year



Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - 0418 423 313, [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com), with help from Sarah Nevins, Bluey Austin, Alan McNulty, Peter McCarthy, Geoff Pearson and Gary Townsend (editor of Tiger Tales and 7PL 1<sup>st</sup> tour for his behind the scenes work for us!),

**STOP PRESS:** Planning for our C Coy (2<sup>nd</sup> tour of Vietnam) reunion is tracking well – keep 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016 free – we’re all heading for Canberra.