

# Department of Hawaii “Yanks Down Under” Post AU01 Sydney, Australia May 2015



**JOSEPH DUFFY**  
1935-2015  
US AIR FORCE-VIETNAM

**PHILLIP O’HEARN**  
1927-2015  
US ARMY-WW2

**JOHN (JACK) SAVAGE, OAM**  
1917-2015  
US ARMY SMALL SHIPS-WW2

Joe, originally from Philadelphia, PA, was a Post member for 24 years. He served for 21 years with the Air Force retiring in 1976. Following his Air Force service he joined the US Department of State serving in high level posts such as Moscow, Beijing, Berlin and Sydney where he was assigned as Communications Officer at the US Consulate and we signed him up for the Legion. He served with the State Department with distinction until his second retirement in 1997 and made his home in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 2010 he was honored by being inducted into the Air Force Cyberspace Operations Hall of Fame (formerly called the Air Force Communications/Information Hall of Fame) an honor usually bestowed upon General Officers and Field Grade officers. Only a few of former NCO’s have had this honor, Joe was one of them and one of the best.

Phil was our Post Vice-Commander and his sudden passing was a shock to all of us in the Post. He was from Chicago and one of the “original” Post members joining in 1946 after his discharge from the Army. He served with the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during WW2 in the invasion of Okinawa and following the surrender of the Japanese the 7<sup>th</sup> Div.(and Phil) was assigned to Korea as Occupation Troops. He loved to tell one and all that he was a Stable Sgt. even though he was a Corporal. His posting was where a former Japanese Army Cavalry Regiment was quartered. The Japanese soldiers of course became POW’s leaving behind a large herd of excellent horses. The 7<sup>th</sup> Army Command decided to have an Officers Riding Club and asked if anyone had experience with horses. Well, Phil knew what a horse was and not much else but “volunteered” as all the troops were doing at that early phase of the occupation was guard duty, so as a Corporal he was appointed Stable Sgt.. He did eventually receive a promotion but shortly after was posted to Sydney where he met his future wife, Cathy. After he received his discharge he worked for a construction company building much needed houses for the returning Australian service personnel who also were raising families. The US forces left behind tons of material, machinery and vehicles which they sold for extremely low prices rather than ship them back to the USA. Phil bought some materials, vehicles and machinery and went into business as a builder, a VERY successful builder too. Much later he and Cathy returned to Chicago. Returning to Sydney in 1961 he “re-enlisted” in our Legion Post. When he passed away he had 54 continuous years membership with the Legion. Unfortunately I was not notified of his funeral until late the night before but I managed to notify Past Vice-Commander Peter Dashwood, he and I did the funeral honors for Phil at the funeral and subsequent burial.

Jack was an Australian and passed away only 10 days before what would have been his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday. When “Mission X” was formed in 1942 in an office in Melbourne Jack was the first Australian recruited. As a Marine Surveyor he played an important part in the “requisitioning” of small ships from around the

Australian coast, an organization which eventually became the US Army Small Ships. He served in New Guinea and also served as Second Mate on the KOORAKA in New Guinea waters in 1943. After the war Jack designed yachts and commercial craft and was a long-term Member of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects (M.R.I.N.A.). In 2002 he was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to boating. He made his home for many years in Narrabeen, New South Wales, close to the ocean but in 2010 moved to Orange in the country. Jack was a member of our Legion Post for 16 years and was awarded Honorary Life Membership in 2007 on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Sadly I have to report the passing of RON FIEDLER, a former Post member and Finance Officer (1981-1989) who had moved to the USA 26 years ago. His wife Pat telephoned me from Phoenix about his passing and said it was due cancer of the pancreas caused by Agent Orange diagnosed only 9 weeks prior to his passing.



**OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY GOES TO THE FAMILIES OF OUR DEPARTED  
COMRADES.**

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

**LEST WE FORGET**

The annual Merchant Navy Memorial Commemoration at Rookwood Necropolis in Sydney on April 12<sup>th</sup> was restructured this year and held at the Merchant Navy Memorial Garden adjacent to the chapel in which it has been held for several years. The program featured a photo of Post member Bernie O'Brien and the SS Fingal upon which Bernie was a crewman. On May 5, 1943 the Fingal was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine and two surviving crewmen, Bernie O'Brien and John Bird. They were plucked from the sea by the destroyer the USS Patterson. BOTH are members of our Post. Bernie lives in Tuggerawong near Sydney and John in Cooktown, Queensland who incidentally survived the latest cyclones in that area. Bernie served with the US Army Small Ships and John with the US Army Transport Service. Attending the ceremony were the Post Commander, Post Historian Don Kennedy, who is also the President of the Merchant Navy RSL Sub-branch and Ern Flint who is also the President of the US Army Small Ships Association.

ANZAC Day. The torrential rains finally took a rest and the march, in Sydney, was well attended by all units. We had about 25 marching, even Dean Lewis joined in with us up from Culburra Beach down somewhere on the southern coast and 4 others "loaned" to the Marines. WHAT??? Who are these defectors I hear you say! First of all there is no truth in the rumor that we "loaned out" these gallant men to show the Marines how to march after all they represented the US Navy, US Air Force, US Army (good food, clean living) and one civilian who was representing his grandfather who was a Marine (more on this later). You may have noticed these four "loanees" were all in step together and the Marines unfortunately (being away from the Corps a number of years) were in an entirely different step.....need I say more. Now who were these 4 coordinated souls? The former sailor was one of our new members, Bernie O'Neill. A Purple Heart Vietnam veteran and a Corpsman with the Marines (that's a Combat Medic for those who served with the Army and Air Force) ....another was an Air Force retiree who was marching with the OORAHs!! in honor of his son who will shortly retire from the Marine Corps after 20 years of service (20 years, that's a lot of barbershop time isn't it). The US Army veteran (unknown at this time) was there to give the other three moral support, they being in a strange environment that day. The civilian? Some of you may remember the late Billy Crim, a charter member of our Legion Post and a WW2 Marine (2 Silver Stars, 2 Purple Hearts—Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima -and member of the Marine Raiders) that was his grandson. That clears that up, I'm sure. The Marines said they would welcome them back again next year and even referred to them as "ditty boppers". Hmmm, must be a Marine term but I'm sure it's good. After all this, a hearty THANK YOU to Marine Paul Fedeles (a Post member) for organizing the Cadets from Barker College each year to carry the flags. Ditty boppers?

As April 25<sup>th</sup> was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli many of our Post members may not know that we had a Post member who was in the first wave of the landing. Remember Vic Miller? Vic was an American from Rochester, New York. He arrived in Australia with his parents in 1907 then

enlisted in the Australian Army in 1914 .His first action was Gallipoli on April 25, 1915 with subsequent service in France where he was wounded and awarded the Military Medal for bravery at the Battle of Bullecourt (equal to Silver Star in our services). While in hospital he met an American Army Nurse who he eventually married. He returned to the US after the war where he played professional baseball as a pitcher with the Washington Senators. He pitched in the 1924 World Series. He would have been the winning pitcher except Babe Ruth hit a home run from one of his pitches and was relieved. He was proud of the fact however that Babe Ruth got a home run while he was pitching. Returning to Australia shortly before the outbreak of WW2 he re-enlisted in the Australian Army (he was still an American citizen) and served in the Middle East and then New Guinea where he was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for bravery. His only son, serving with the US Army Air Corps, was killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Vic passed away after a short illness in 1984 at 89 years of age. His funeral at Rookwood Cemetery here in Sydney was attended by over 150 friends and family, he had a brother living in Wollongong and a niece in Sydney. Not many American Legion Posts can boast they had an original ANZAC as a member.



As mentioned in the last newsletter, Post member Ed Dickey now residing in Thailand would not be marching with us this year but will spend ANZAC Day visiting Hellfire Pass on the infamous Burma Railway where so many Allied POW's of the Japanese Army died during its construction in WW2. The accompanying photo is Ed complete with his Legion cap on ANZAC Day in Hellfire Pass. GOODONYA ED!!

As your Post Commander can no longer jump over tall building in a single bound and is no longer faster than a speeding bullet (even when sober) he joined the other three weary veterans in the Australian Army Land Rover. I'm sure that all who did march were aware of a fresh face (not a kid though) leading our contingent. It was Bill Earls our new Vice-Commander who replaced the late Vice-Commander, Phil O'Hearn. Bill has been a Post member for 29 years and is a Vietnam veteran and a retired NCO from the US Air Force since 1974. He is also our Sgt-at-Arms and had served in that capacity with a Post in California prior to moving to Australia.

Thanks again for all who participated in the ANZAC Day march in Sydney and to those Post members who marched in other areas of Australia, representing the American Legion, such as Port Macquarie, Melbourne, Doylston and several others.



Just to catch up with a few items that your author neglected to acknowledge in previous newsletters. One of our members up yonder in the colonies, Arizona, represented the Post at the local Pearl Harbor Day ceremony as he always does. Normally he attends the one in Tempe, Arizona (near Phoenix) but this past December he attended the ceremony at Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix as the key speaker. He's the fellow who spends the Arizona summers (up to 116 deg F or 47 C but as the locals up there like to say "it's a dry heat", but then so is an oven) in the cooler area of Show Low, Arizona. Remember that story? More members in Arizona? Yes, as I'm sure you all remember, the Post Commanders cousin Ted Raymond, US Army Retired with 4 tours in Vietnam. The other item I neglected to put into print was member John Mifflin and wife visited their son in Japan at Iwakuni Marine Air Station and soon will be off to Camp Pendelton, California to attend their son's retirement ceremony.

Not too many travelling this time of year.....yet..... as you already know George and Cathy Foster are on their way to Europe for a tour of WW1 and WW2 battlefields. The Post Commander (again volunteering as official baggage carrier) and Auxiliary Unit President Sonja are off to Baltimore, or what's left of it, in August for the 97<sup>th</sup> National Convention from August 28<sup>th</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup> then a couple of side trips to Arizona (in August ???) topped off with a little R&R in Hawaii.



Coming up?? The annual Independence Day luncheon will be held this year on MONDAY JULY 6<sup>th</sup> due to the venue not open on Saturday .More about this in a June flyer which will be sent to New South Wales members only. If you are from out of state and wish the information please notify the Post Commander.



## AUXILIARY UNIT NEWS

**RUBY FERBER....1925-2015**

Sadly we have lost a dear friend, an Honorary Life Member and Charter Member of our Auxiliary Unit. She passed away peacefully late in April in Queensland. She and husband Past Sgt-at-Arms Ralph had been married for 71 years. I extended condolences to husband Ralph, their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren on behalf of all her friends here at "Yanks Down Under".



On a brighter note, one of our Auxiliary members living in the USA, Elke Haggan, has been honored by American Legion National Commander Michael Helm and National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler with as CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION for her participation in the training, field work and meeting portions of the New Castle District Revitalization Program.

Now before you all get excited and think we cannot spell Newcastle correctly let me dispel any criticism etc. This" New Castle" is not the one 100 miles north of Sydney but is in the State of Delaware, USA.

Elke is the wife of Douglas Haggan (USAF retired) the American Legion National Vice-Commander for the North Eastern United States, 2014-2015 and Secretary of FODPAL (Foreign & Outlying Departments and Posts of the American Legion). She wrote that she accompanied Doug on a Revitalization trip to New York City and the State of Delaware and made sure that everyone knew she was a member of the Auxiliary in Australia and specifically our Unit in Sydney. Elke & Doug will be in Germany for a well deserved holiday for 4 weeks in June and upon their return she has been invited to accompany National Vice-Commander Doug to the Department or State Conventions in Massachusetts, New York State and Delaware and of course will make sure to mention she is a member of our Auxiliary Unit in Sydney.

Remember the old comedy routine of Abbott & Costello, who's on first? Her husband National Vice-Commander Doug is a Past Department Commander of the Department of France and a member of Legion Post 5 in Walldorf, Germany which is under Dept. of France. Elke, originally from Germany, is a member of our Auxiliary Unit 1 in Sydney, Dept. of Australia but our American Legion Post is under the Dept. of Hawaii. She and Doug live in...France? no, Germany? no, Australia? no.....wait for it.....Indianapolis, Indiana!!! Doug's mother, Helen, is also a member of our Sydney Unit.....so where does she live? Why South Carolina of course. So now you know" who's on first". As we have done for the past 12 or 13 years we will meet up with all three of these fine folks at the National Convention in Baltimore

### CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS ELKE.

Member Anne Shean who lives at Woy Woy, New South Wales (no this isn't a typo, it is Woy Woy. It's so nice there they named it twice) is a volunteer with the State Emergency Services (SES). With over



400mm of rain late in April for over a week she was called out on April 24<sup>th</sup> and ANZAC Day to the towns of Terrigal and Wyong. Even though she had some damage at her area in Woy Woy, trees down and loss of power for 24 hours others were worse than she. Some had been without power for 7 days and many areas flooded and trees down over the roads. Thanks to SES and volunteers like Anne, life in these circumstances can be eased a lot. We're proud to have you as a member of our Auxiliary Unit Anne.

Thank You for your Support!!

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