

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



## ERNEST FLINT, OAM 1927 -2015 US ARMY SMALL SHIPS-WWII

**Ernie**, a Post member for 20 years, passed away peacefully at his home in Coomba Park, New South Wales on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. He will be remembered for his tireless and passionate work for the rights of the members of the US Army Small Ships. Only with the work done by **Ernie** and the late **Bill Lunney** was recognition within the Australian community and the US Government for the Australians who served in the US Army Small Ships during World War 2 accomplished.

**Ernie** was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day Honours List (that's Jan.26 for our members in the colonies) for his service to the Small Ships. He was the founding member and President of the Small Ships Association.

His first task was to have a plaque made and placed in the foyer of the Grace Building (now the Grace Hotel) in Sydney the site of the Small Ships Headquarters from May 1942 to January 1947 commemorating over 3,000 Australian men and boys who were recruited to man the Small Ships which supplied American and Australian servicemen who were fighting the Japanese in New Guinea.

Eventually the Small Ships serviced the Allies during other campaigns in the Southwest Pacific culminating in the Philippines in 1945.

**WE WILL REMEMBER HIM**



**LEST WE FORGET**

WELCOME to our newest member **Ron McDonough** a former Californian who served in the US Navy and is a veteran of Operation Desert Shield/Storm in the Persian Gulf. He served in Japan and of course aboard several ships one of which was the US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet Command ship the USS Blue Ridge which was in Sydney for a few days over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend and July 17<sup>th</sup> in Brisbane. Some of our members I'm sure would remember the Blue Ridge when she (yes, ships are female) berthed at Garden Island in Sydney for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet in 1944 when a monument was dedicated at Garden Island Navy Base for the anniversary. It was attended by about 50 members of the Post and their families. **Ron** attended our Independence Day luncheon so many of us got to meet him...**WELCOME ABOARD RON!!!**

In reference to an article in the May newsletter mentioning the sinking of the SS Fingal in 1943 by a Japanese submarine and the two surviving crewmen, Post members **Bernie O'Brian & John Bird**, well **John** sent a letter to the Post Commander saying in 2011 a book was published, "Beneath Cold Waves" by Kevin Gumm. On page 90 he states "the Captain and John Bird, a 15 year old deckhand, were killed". **John** wrote the author to inform him that although the Captain was tragically killed **John Bird** was alive and well as an 88 year old could

be anyway. The author apologized and told him future reprints would correct the error and sent him a free copy of the book. **John** wrote

“it was the first time he had seen a report of his death in print, rather frightening”.

I can happily report both survivors are still surviving.

Now, here is another survivor!! It seems I omitted birthday greetings to our ELDEST Post member, **Honorary Life Member Emilio Nacua Sr.** who celebrated the tender age of **99** on May 25<sup>th</sup>. We did send him a card but neglected to share this great moment with you all in the May newsletter.

**Maligayang Kaarawan Emilio!!!**

Yes it's winter down here now and a cold one too this year (so much for global warming). Daytime temperatures got down to the mid-50's, yes I can almost hear our member in Minnesota laughing...(mid-50's to him is a heat wave). So like politicians around the world in winter a few of our members are off to warmer climes up yonder in the Northern Hemisphere. **Vice-Commander Bill Earls** is off to the land of the big PX. He's not saying where but I bet it will be somewhere in Tennessee. **Bill & Kathy Skane** are off again, first to Maryland then to Denver. No around the world cruise like last year but a 15 day bus trip to see the parks and canyons in six states of the west.

Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and Arizona (Arizona in August?). He is like the Raymond family, loves hot weather (he'd better) but don't worry **Bill** it's a dry heat (so is an oven). Places they intend to visit are Mt. Rushmore, Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon and the Little Big Horn. By the way **Bill** that's in Montana, even Custer & Crazy Horse knew that but then they weren't on a bus tour. If that isn't enough, in Oct & Nov (springtime) they are off to New Zealand.....ahhhh retirement!!

It's that time of year again and the Post Commander has once again won the lottery to see who humps the baggage for the Auxiliary Unit President. In August they are off to Baltimore, Maryland for the 97<sup>th</sup> American Legion National Convention. The Post Commander was stationed near Baltimore at Aberdeen Proving Ground and left in Jan. 1964 for Germany. Hmmm, wonder if there has been any changes in Baltimore (or what's left of it) in the past 51 years. Following the convention the Commander and El Presidente are off to Arizona, (yes, in August) to visit relatives NOT re-hab. Then of course a 2 week stopover in Hawaii only because it's on the way back to Sydney of course.



**COMING UP: Saturday August 15<sup>th</sup>, VP or VJ Day the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the surrender of Imperial Japan and the end of World War 2. The ceremony at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney will begin at 11:00 am. The Post Commander will be laying a wreath for The American Legion and hopes we get a good roll up for this most important event. If enough attend I will bring our banner. If you plan to attend please let the Commander know. Following the ceremony the Combined Services RSL Club, nearby, will be open for “refreshments”.**

The next item is one we have been working on for over a year. We were contacted by the Medal of Honor Society in the USA regarding a US Navy veteran who was the recipient of the Medal of Honor (MOH) and is buried in an unmarked grave in Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney.

He was born in Australia but served in the US Navy and was awarded the MOH in 1884. His gravesite was eventually located and along with the Medal of Honor Society submitted paperwork to have a headstone from the VA. Sounds simple? The present administration passed a law that forbid someone ordering a headstone for a deceased US veteran unless the request is submitted by a descendant. Almost a year later we found a great granddaughter living in Western Australia and the request was submitted by her. Sounds simple? Now, somehow the US State Department became involved and as a result there is a delay (reason unknown) but it will come to fruition in 2016. When it is finally placed the Post and the US Consulate in Sydney will be involved in a ceremony. All has been approved so now we wait.....watch this space. Next year is an election year but I'm sure that has nothing to do with it.

## 2016 American Legion & Auxiliary membership

The 2016 cards have arrived and already over 50% have paid their dues, THANK YOU. Many have taken advantage of EFT (electronic funds transfer) from their bank to the Post & Auxiliary bank account. You are all aware that the Australian dollar has lost over 25% value against the US dollar and is still falling. This in itself isn't too bad for the Post as our expenses are low. The big problem is that we must pay per capita dues of \$23.50 USD for each member to the Department and National Headquarters except Paid-up-for-Life members of which we have 12. All Legion Posts must pay this per capita dues money, we are one of the very few Posts that collect the bulk of their dues in a non-American currency (didn't want to say foreign and upset anyone). By now I'm sure some are mumbling "here he comes with a dues raise" .SURPRISE...no raise in dues. We have initiated Plan C to take care of this, Plan B of course was a raise. We HOPE by 2017 the Australian dollar won't be referred to as the Aussie Peso or Drachma. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know what \$23.50 USD does to your \$27 AUD. If you have a US check account we would appreciate it if you would/could pay your \$27 with a USD check. Yes, the dues are still \$27 US or Aussie dollars.



## AUXILIARY UNIT NEWS

You remember in the last newsletter we wrote about our member **Elke Haggan** receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from the American Legion National Commander. Those that receive The American Legion magazine look at the picture at the bottom right of page 54..that's our member **Elke** sewing handmade quilts for wounded service members for the Quilts of Valor program. **GOODONYA ELKE.**

We had 28 turn out for our Independence Day luncheon at the 99 on York Club, 35 had booked but as this is the flu season now and took its toll on 7 members who I am pleased to say have fully recovered. Thank you for all who attended and as always was a joy to see you and especially those who brought guests and also to meet some of the new members of the Legion Post.

Yes like the Post it is also dues time again. The 2016 Auxiliary cards have arrived and already many had paid up for next year. The dues are still the same, \$15 either AUD or USD. If paying by check please make it out to The American Legion Auxiliary.

Congratulations to four members who will be receiving Continuous Membership Certificates; **30 years, Norma Benner & Sonja Raymond, 40 years Elke Haggan & Elizabeth Hanington.**

We have two new **Honorary Life Members..Betty Wood & Phyllis Kytic** who join that select group of six others; **Norma Benner, Helen Edwards, Gwen Fiddock, Kathleen Tomlinson, Esme Trainor and Sonja Raymond.**

Thank You for your Support!!

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