



Leslie Davies

1924-2013

US MERCHANT MARINE- WORLD WAR

Les was a Post member for 20 years and passed away after a short illness at his home in home in Ringwood, Victoria. He served aboard several US ships in the Pacific War Zone during the war sailing out from California from 1945 to 1949. I sent condolences to his family on behalf of all our Post members.

**WE WILL REMEMBER HIM
LEST WE FORGET**



Now to more cheerful news. The British Government decided to hold ceremonies throughout England in May 2013 to commemorate, 70 years on, the "Battle of the Atlantic" during World War 2. It was the longest continuous battle of WW2 resulting in the loss of 36,000 merchant seamen and over 3500 ships. German losses were 783 U-Boats and 30,000 crew $\frac{3}{4}$ of Germanys submariners.



Battle of the Atlantic Commemorative Mission United Kingdom 2013

The Australian Dept. of Veterans Affairs (DVA) decided to send up to 8 Australian WW2 veterans to participate in the “Battle of the Atlantic Commemorative Mission, United Kingdom 2013”. The essential selection process required that each veteran had been issued with the Atlantic Star campaign medal issued by the British Government for service in the Atlantic during WW2 and of course a reasonable standard of health. The veterans were a serving officer of the Australian Army, a medical officer of the Royal Australian Navy and two registered nurses and a media officer. The party, led by a retired Major General of the Australian Army, took part in a number of ceremonies and services in London, Liverpool and Portsmouth. Probably the highlight were the services in the City of Liverpool which had been a major port and headquarters for the defense activities by the British forces during the long sea battle. This included a wreath laying at a Merchant Navy memorial and a church service at the massive city Cathedral where about 2500 people were seated. At a march by hundreds of British, Australian (8) and allied veterans through the city streets following the service, The Princess Royal, Anne, (that’s the Queens daughter for you folks up there in the colonies)wearing the uniform of an Admiral of the Royal Navy attended the service and took the salute from the march past. . While the emphasis was on all three services who were involved in the battle of the Atlantic, it was clear that it was the Merchant Navy which suffered the majority of casualties at sea. **Don (86)** the “baby” of the group had nothing but praise for the Australian Government department (DVA) and the staff who accompanied them on the mission. All costs involved were met by the department and all veterans in the party were in total agreement that they were treated like celebrities, which they were.



Image caption: Back to front: Merchant Navy veteran, Don Kennedy and Navy veteran, Doug Gilling lay a wreath on the sea.

Battle of the Atlantic Commemorative Mission United Kingdom 2013



Don served aboard the **MT Seirstad** as a Deck Boy, he was 16 years old at the time and was required to be a member of the 20mm anti-aircraft crew until he was 17 when he became the Kannon Kommander. No, he wasn't in a U-Boat but on a Norwegian ship, the Seirstad.

Now, how does an Australian who served on a Norwegian ship become a member of The American Legion? In 1945 he served joined the US Army Transport Service and sailed in the Pacific War Zone aboard the **USAT Point San Pedro** again a member of the gun crew.

The Japs probably heard that a former Kannon Kommander was heading their way so they put up the white flag and surrendered. After the war he was given an Honorable Discharge from the US Army, hence his eligibility to join the Legion. Yes, **Don**, an Honorable Discharge not an Honourable one.

He is not only a Post member these past 11 years and our **Post Historian**, he is also the **President of the Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch**. Not bad, from Kannon Kommander to President.

Thanks for your service **Don** and the government couldn't have selected a better person as one of the 8 to represent them at the UK ceremony. You may have seen the short story on our TV news, he was easy to spot in the group shown, he was the young one, 86.

ANZAC DAY 2013

ANZAC Day: The weather was perfect for starters. One of the best things for us on ANZAC Day is meeting up with Post members many of whom we see maybe only once a year. Our visitors from Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickham really enjoyed the day. They consisted of a USN Commander, two female USAF members, a M/Sgt and a Lt., two retired USAF personnel a Major and a M/Sgt. They even joined us at the Combined Services Club after the march for “refreshments”. We had about 30 plus marching this year. It was good to see **Past Vice-Commander Chuck Kizis** who just that morning, about 0600, returned from a flight from the USA. Rather than heading to the deep north (Queensland) he chose to march with us before catching his next flight. Among the missing (temporarily) were **Ted Lange** who led the contingent of Australian Air League Cadets in Toukley on the NSW Central Coast. In a photo he sent he looked very smart in his Air League uniform.

Jim Richardson was recovering from a recent knee replacement and **Bill Skane** is temporarily (hopefully) out of action with some health problems. He and **Sue** are off to New Zealand for a nurse’s convention (she’s the nurse) and later off to Seattle then taking in that great Alaskan Cruise followed by some R&R in Honolulu on the way home in September. Sonja & I met up with them last year in Honolulu and hope to once again in September (aka happy hour) while we are there. **Roger & Pam Ryan** were there and regaled us with tales of their river cruise, Budapest to Amsterdam with a side trip to Vienna where it greeted them with snow..ahhh, this retired life is good.



Photo: Ted Lange is the tall officer on the left. ANZAC Day, Toukley, NSW

ANZAC DAY 2013

If I only knew it was this good I would have gotten old sooner. Last but not least we were blessed with a visit from our member living in Thailand, **Ed Dickey**. He was hard to spot as he had a disguise this year, he shaved off his Santa Claus beard. He was accompanied by his son and daughter who live in the Sydney area. He is still battling the Pentagon bureaucracy to be awarded the Silver Star Medal he was recommended for during the Vietnam War. Seems the paper work "was lost", then found, then lost again. He has contacted all who wrote the original citation such as his Company Commander etc but those Chairborne Commandos in the Pentagon give him a different excuse each time he contacts them. One wanted to know if he had any new evidence, sure after 45 years it should be easy.



I'm sure you all saw the news of the terrible wild fires in Colorado Springs, Colorado but you may not know we have a Post member living there, **Joe Duffy**. He emailed saying he again escaped the fires although his home is only a few miles north from where the fires first started. They are now headed towards Denver and so far 400 homes have been completely lost and 1300 more with slight damage. You'll hear more from **Joe** after September when as the women's magazines like to say he'll have the "wedding of the century" will occur (about time **Joe**).

Did any of you serve in Korea (South of course) or adjacent waters for 30 consecutive days from July 28, 1954 to the present date? If so you are entitled to the new Korean Defense Service Medal which was provided for in 2003 by the Dept, of Defense. This is NOT for service in the Korean War (June 1950-July 1953).

MEMBERSHIP

Here is some news from **Dan Tyler**, yes he's still alive and probably caught in a whirlwind somewhere in Nebraska. He recently invested in a group that made a film "Flight to the Wall" where they restored 2 old Army Huey's (one C model and one H-model) and an old OH-58. Crewed and maintained by Vietnam veterans. They flew those old machines from California to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC-and then flew back again. Along the way they stopped a small towns and communities across the US meeting Vietnam veterans and their families. The film included clips from various participants telling their own stories as well as shots showing the cathartic effect that sitting in a Vietnam-era Huey again had on some of the veterans they saw along the way. One of the veterans who flew across the country was a flight school classmate of **Dan**, his stick buddy on UH-1 transition, **Lou Rochat**. **Lou** was assigned to the 1st Air Cav and flew in the same area of Vietnam **Dan** flew in piloting Scouts and Cobra gunships. **Lou** was badly wounded 9 months in country and lost a leg due to his wounds. He passed away in 2010, 39 years after he was shot down. If any of you "old" Chopper jockeys would like to see some clips from the film, which is on DVD contact **Dan Tyler** on dan@tylerdigital.com

Putting a claim into DVA (USA)? They now have an Electronic Claims System (ECS) which is supposed to boost VA efficiency. Since its implementation efficiency has improved 10%, with 600,000 claims in the "system" they think the backlog will be eliminated by 2015. Want more info? Contact the Post Commander austraymond@bigpond.com and he will download the 304kb info to you.



The Post ended the 2013 membership year with 102 equal to our 2012 membership. **CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT.** The 2014 membership cards should arrive about July 1st and we already have 20 paid for the new year. No need to mortgage the house just yet but the dues will be the same as the past few years \$27 Aust\$ or \$27 US\$. For those members living in the states I'll be emailing you an address in the states where you can send your cheques saving you that international postage. It will be a tough climb to attain 102 for 2014 as we have had six members pass away this year and some have returned to the USA and may or may not retain their membership with our Post. **Jeff Frey** has returned to the states due to the fact he could not attain permanent employment in the medical profession here.

TIME TO VOTE

POST ELECTIONS for Commander and Vice-Commanders

Nominations are 1 Commander and 2 Vice-Commanders; The Returning Officer is **Don Kennedy**. Nominations can **only** be made to him via email or post. His email address is: donandwynne@bigpond.com and postal address 2 Willunga Cres., Forestville NSW 2087. Last date for nominations is July 15th with the election on August 7, 2013. Present Officers are: Post Commander **David Raymond**, 1st Vice-Commander **Phillip O'Hearn**, and 2nd Vice-Commander – position presently vacant.

Business meetings for both Post and Auxiliary Unit: The next meeting will be on Wednesday August 7th at 11am in the 2nd floor meeting rooms of the Combined Services RSL Club, Sydney.

A motion has been made to have quarterly meetings, February, May, August and October due to the fact most of what transpires at the meetings is or can be covered in the periodic newsletters. This past year several meetings have been cancelled due to extreme weather conditions which unfortunately seemed to occur on the meeting dates but did not hinder the operations of the Post and Unit and again all main topics which would have been covered at the meetings were covered in a subsequent newsletter. If any member has an objection to this proposal or another solution please do not hesitate to express your views to either the Post Commander or Auxiliary President.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS.....

COMING UP: July 4th (American Independence Day) luncheon:
Thursday July 4th

Yes it will be the 237th birthday of our United States of America and what better way to celebrate when one is away from the colonies than our annual **Legion Family** luncheon. As in past years it will be at the **99 on York Street Club** (NSW Bowlers Club) starting at noon sharp. Yes it is located at 99 York Street a half block from the northern end of the Queen Victoria Building. This is an all you can eat buffet with a selection of soups, salads, prawns, Australian & Asian dishes and a good selection of desserts with coffee and tea. Alcoholic and soft drinks are available at the bar but not included in the entry price which will be **\$22 per person but you must tell the person at the door that you are with The American Legion**. All our Legion Family members are welcome of course and your friends also. We have booked the "stage area" which can accommodate a maximum of 35 only, any over that will have to be seated in the general restaurant area.



AUXILIARY UNIT NEWS

You pay when you enter the room but **YOU MUST BOOK IN ADVANCE, last day for booking is July 2nd**. Please contact David or Sonja Raymond at (02)9644-6854 or email austraymond@bigpond.com

The dining room is located on the 1st floor, either take the stairway next to the reception or the lift just past the stairway to the left of the slot machines.

68th Anniversary of VJ Day (or VP Day as it's called in Australia) : Thursday August 15th, details will be in the next newsletter.

AUXILIARY UNIT NEWS

We equaled our 2012 membership of 41 members, thank you for your support.

National headquarters has raised the per capita dues so for the first time in about seven years we must raise the dues by \$5 to \$15 per member. I should have the cards by the end of June. As per the Legion Post I will send an address to those members who reside in the United States where to send their checks. **PLEASE** make them out to **American Legion Auxiliary** not Sonja Raymond. For those members I normally see at the National Convention you can pay when I see you in Houston in August.

Congratulations to Auxiliary member Nicole Raymond who recently raised \$750 (mainly thanks to 1 major corporate donor) for the RSPCA in the recent Million Paws Walk in NSW, which a cause close to her heart. Her little dog was seen walking between 2 Great Danes on the morning and evening news segments. Well Done.



Thank You for your Support!!

Have you got something you would like to add to our next newsletter? Email to austraymond@bigpond.com