



"The Messenger"



(Of The Gods.)

Official Newsletter of the Royal Australian Signals Association (SA) Inc.

March 2008.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles in the "Messenger" are those of the writers/contributors and not necessarily those of the "Committee" or "General Membership" of the Royal Australian Signal Association (SA) Inc.

Presidents Report.

Dear Members,

I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas break and Father Christmas delivered as promised. We have started the year with our AGM at 144 Sig, Sqn. Keswick Barracks and it was a very good turnout. The Committee is still made up of most of the group from last year and we are all looking forward to a great year for the Association.

The Committee have organised a BBQ lunch for 1230pm Sunday the 13th of April at my farm at One Tree Hill. I hope you will make the trip, only 10 minutes from the Munno Para Shopping Centre. We have Alpacas, sheep, birds, chooks and plenty of good country air, please try to make an effort to attend and support the Association, I'm sure you will enjoy the day. The Association is supplying the meal and limited drinks. Please confirm your intentions with regard to the above event by E-mail or telephone. **(See the invitation overleaf)**

We have our Anzac Day celebrations coming up and it is hoped that many of you are able to get out on the day. In the issue of the "Messenger" Godfrey has supplied a timetable for the events occurring during the day. We will finish the day in Waymouth Street at the Union Hotel where most RA Sigs. now meet. If any of you feel up to it please come along.

The Association through its Committee have continued preparation for the RA Sigs Diamond Anniversary Reunion in November this year. Registrations are picking up and all our venues are now booked. The reunion is looking fantastic, I hope that you are all going to support the event and our Association by attending when possible. You can either register on our website www.rasigs.com, or ring me on **08 83423012** to request a registration form or use the form supplied with this issue of the "Messenger".

The Committee have started to set up the area given to us by 144 Sig Sqn with memorabilia and the unit have committed radio and antenna equipment to the room. It is really going to look great when completed, definitely a place to come and go over all this memorabilia and equipment that spans over 100 years. We will advise you of the opening date ASAP. Remember to check out our website above and I hope to see you all soon.

Bruce Long President RASigs Assn. (SA)

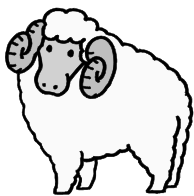


An Invitation



Dear Members and family.

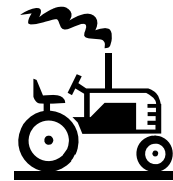
The Committee and I would like to invite you to our first Signals Event for 2008.



You are invited to “The Presidents” BBQ Lunch.

Date/time: 1230 Hrs Sunday 13th April.

Location: Lot 1 Miles Road, One Tree Hill.

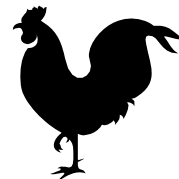


Features: Country Farm-Alpacas, Sheep, Chooks, Birds and plenty of country air.

Food/Drinks:



Food supplied together with limited drinks.



RSVP. No later than the 1st April 2008 by contacting Bruce Long either on **08 8342 3012** or email to bruce@adelaide5star.com.au

Lot 1, Miles road is easy to find, it is off Uley Road (Which intersects with The Main North Road) just 6.5 Km’s up from the Munno Para Shopping Centre or 1.3 Km’s down from the Gawler One Tree hill Road. **(Map 85 Ref. H4 of the Gregory’s 2006 Street Directory)** If you are coming from the direction of the Munno Para Shopping Centre keep on Uley Road then after 6.5 Km’s turn right into Miles Road or after 1.3 Km’s turn left if you are coming from the Gawler One Tree Hill Road. Miles road is not bitumen but very well graded, just travel right to the very end, go through the gate and drive the short distance up to the farmhouse.

Anzac Day 2008.

Arrangements for this year are similar to preceding years. Commencing at 0700hrs. Association members are invited to a “Gunfire Breakfast” held in the OR’s Mess Keswick Barracks. From there it is only a short stroll to our memorial to join the Commando and AATTV Associations for a brief remembrance service commencing at 0830 Hrs Sharp! Experience has shown that afterwards members will have plenty of time for travelling to and parking in the city before forming up.

The Signals Contingent will be lead by Brig. Max Lemon AM. Rtd. The forming up point is within group 10 the location being in Grenfell St. just East of Hindmarsh Square. The release point is in Sir Edwin Smith Avenue. The route takes us right into Pulteney Street and then left into North Terrace and right into King William Road. Forming up for group 10 commences at 0930 Hrs. Generally it’s an hour before our group begins marching thus making an excellent opportunity for a “Pre March” reunion. Units/groups salute at the State National War Memorial, The South African War Memorial and at the Official Dais. Units/groups are asked to disperse quickly at the release point.

Experience in the last few years has shown that the after march reunion has split two or three ways. A few will go direct to the Torrens Parade Ground others will go to Waymouth Street in the vicinity of the Union Hotel. This area has increased in popularity of late the street being closed to traffic, food being available for purchase. The third and perhaps more traditional venue is the Gilles Plains & Hampstead RSL Bennett Street, Manningham where bar facilities are available and a meal can be purchased. Some marchers will attempt to attend two or all three venues during the afternoon.

Anzac Day arrangements: “IN A NUTSHELL”

Commencing at 0700 Hrs: “Gunfire” breakfast at the OR’s mess Keswick Barracks.

At 0830 Hrs “Sharp”: Remembrance service at our Association’s memorial in Keswick Barracks.

At 0930 Hrs: Forming up in Grenfell Street. (Group 10 just East of Hindmarsh Square)

At 1130 Hrs: From the release point travel to the various reunion venues.

Vale:

Heather Snewin. Became deceased on 6th February last. Heather was a WRAAC Officer and served with 12 Aust. Sigs. Unit. No other details are available at this time.

Signals Reunion November 2008.

The organization of this national event is virtually finalized the dates and venues appearing below.

- Friday November 7th Registration day at Keswick Barracks. (Between 1000 and 1400 Hrs) in the 144 Sig Sqn lines, other activities are being planned on this day.
- Saturday: 8th: Family day and barbeque at Bonython Park.
- Sunday Morning 9th: Corps Day Parade at Keswick Barracks. The Princess Anne Banner will be present and a meal will be provided afterwards.
- Monday Evening 10th : Reunion Dinner at the Entertainment Centre.
- Tuesday 11th: 1030 Hrs Remembrance Day at our memorial in Keswick Barracks.

Go to the Association's website: www.rasigs.com for further information and to register and or pay. **On page thirteen of this issue is a registration form for those who prefer to register and pay by post.**

The Rumsby Report. (Continued from the October issue)

All in all, Jagbir had a solid signals background and knew the nature and aim of the task. Strangely, despite his long service and recent advanced wireless course, he was not a particularly quick operator, he got by at about 15 to 17 groups per minute. But it didn't greatly matter, for although everyone had to be a capable operator, his duties lay in the supervisory and administrative fields.

I was in some awe of him, because he was not only an older and experienced soldier, but had picked up the DCM and the Indian Meritorious Service Medal during campaigns against the Pathan on the North West Frontier. He was a very loyal and competent NCO and had all of the personal dealings with the Gurkha Sigs on administration and discipline left to him.

The most cunning move that I had made was to recommend his appointment to the rank of Colour Havilder. When putting the finishing touches to the troop establishment, I had pumped for the senior NCO to be Havilder Major or Colour Havilder in part to remove any confusion about seniority, but mainly because he would have to stand in for me during my frequent absences from the troop and from Group HQ and needed to carry a little more weight than Havilder. In addition he required the authority to delegate.

There were two Havilders to choose from, but Jagbir had seniority of service and until recently, the platoon Havilder Of 2/5th Sig Platoon, from which most of the Sigs came, he picked himself. The Colour Havilder was the Indian Army approximation to the rank of Colour Sergeant. It was instituted during the Napoleonic Wars and bestowed on the Senior Sergeant of each company. A company in those days, and indeed until the Boer War, consisted of two platoons. It was commanded by a Captain with a Lieutenant and an Ensign (After 1880, 2nd Lieutenant) as OC of each platoon. During the first decade of this century,

Great Britain followed the continental practice and formed 'double companies' of four platoons. The OC was a Major with 2nd I/C a Captain together with four Subalterns. The two Colour Sergeants became the Company Sergeant-Major and the Company Quartermaster Sergeant respectively.

Although India followed Britain in army organization, they retained the old rank. The badge was the Imperial Crown over crossed flags above the three Havilders stripes. In most regiments one flag was the Union Jack and the other the regiment's colour. All rifle badges were black and as they didn't carry colours, the flags were simply black banners.

One is not promoted to the rank of Colour Havilder but appointed. There are two such other appointments, that of Lance Naik or Lance Corporal and of 2nd Lieutenant. Each is a higher duty appointment, a private doing a corporals duty, a Havilder doing a Warrant Officer's duty and a non-commissioned officer doing a Lieutenants duty. Each is a bridging rank and to a degree probationary. Jagbir had not expected an elevation so soon and although he didn't go down on his knees about it, he knew where it came from.

The other Havildar was Jurriman Rai O.M. He was the only outsider coming from the 3/2nd King Edward VII Gurkhas. He had been with Wingate's first expedition as a wireless operator and came to us to bring his experience. Jurriman had won the Order of Merit (The Indian Army's V.C.) in Burma having killed five Japs with his Kukri to gain it. Apart from his jungle experience he was a top-flight wireless man and shared with Naik Lochiman Gurung a unique feeling for and competence in wireless signalling. Jurriman had recently been promoted from Naik and had a few months seniority. His Battalion, the 3/2nd, had been badly cut about during the first Wingate expedition and the rump of the battalion was withdrawn to depot to recuperate, retrain and reinforce. I doubt that it got into action again in Burma. Still that's the price you pay to add lustre to Wingate's reputation, what after all are a few hundred Gurkha lives.

I've often wondered what would have happened to Wingate had he not been killed. There were several tales about concerning corporal punishment metered out, including flogging and of officers and NCO's reduced to the ranks without trial. It was all hushed up at the time and things put quietly right, but the British Newspapers got hold of some of it after the war. They were asked to soft pedal the matter and did so. How times have changed!

I had picked up the members who would form the troop from the Signal School at Bareilly, a hill station, in November 1943 and spent a long cold winter until February extending their training. We moved to central India for unit jungle training in time to catch the hot season. I had two hurdles to jump, an enormous disadvantage in settling in. Gurkhas took a long time to sum up a white officer, a situation which imposed a good deal of strain on the fellow. The second count against me was that the troop was Corps of Signals to which they were temporarily seconded and they didn't like it one bit.

The regulars demanded certain things of their British Officers which, in essence, were the same things that all troops wished to see. These were competence, common sense, fairness and even-handedness, approachable on all matters, official or personal, and a sense of humour. Because they enlisted as allies, they had something of a lever in this and because at one time there had been a spirited attempt to convert at least some Gurkha Rifles into fashionable regiments and the repository for well connected socialite and sporting officers, the Gurkhas became rather particular about who was sent to them. Gurkhas were frequently in action and while they adopted a fatalistic and composed attitude to death in battle, they were not prepared to be used by bloody fools, who devoted themselves to pursuits other than mastering their martial trade.

While I served out my apprenticeship with them, I lived as though walking on eggshells. It is difficult to explain, for there was no disobedience, no insolence, not the slightest hint of nastiness, just a blank wall sort of reception. Yet a few days before payday, the Colour Halvidar would borrow money from me for the troop to tide them over until payday. That, or have me underwrite their credit with the canteen Niak.

Once I mentioned my problems to Captain Jack Murray. "We all go through it my boy! Ignore it and keep your temper and don't try and buy their good opinion. That won't work either, you'll just have to ride it out. They are borrowing money from you, which is an excellent sign, you have one quality that few British Officers have, for as a trained Signal bloke, you know more about this game than they do. That doesn't happen often and they respect that. So use your attributes and be patient!"

It was extremely hot and when not in the field, people wore the bush jacket. It was worn outside of one's shorts and allowed a flow of air. They were made of cellular cotton and starched to keep the fabric away from the body and touched one on the shoulders from which they hung, and the back of the neck, which they rubbed. To prevent soreness, everybody wore a handkerchief around the neck. I used a pale blue handkerchief of which a relative had been given me six when I enlisted, in the mistaken belief that I was in the Airforce. They were of good quality mercerised cotton and soft on the neck.

My Gurks asked why, as most wore khaki or green hanks, I persisted with blue. Light blue it was explained, was a Signals colour, white over blue signposted Sig facilities, it was the Tac (Tactical) Sign and on Australian Colour patches (which I still wore on the puggaree of my hat) and the British and Indian Arm of service flashes. It was a little 'side' on my part, a display of pride in my Corps.

A trade test had been arranged to elevate them to group 2. They had passed Group 3, but I had a vested interest in advancing them. They received about one shilling per day, plus the small allowance for the language and literacy badge. Indian specialists pay was in three groupings at that time and while one can't be accurate to exact amounts, it went something like this. Group 3 represented one sixth of a privates pay or about twopence or an anna. Group 2 was one third or four pence or two annas and group 1 was half a privates pay or sixpence or about three annas. Something like that anyhow.

A rupee was 1/8, 20 pence, there are 16 annas to the rupee and 4 piers to the anna, you work it out! (a penny farthing).

We got a trade testing officer down to put them through the hoop. They all passed Group 2 trade test with a little bit of help from our commanding officer. They had gone through every facet of the test, which included practical field work and had taken in aerials, battery charging, map reading, Sig clerking, operator maintenance, procedure, the passing of traffic and one set of the morse speed test. The whole had taken two full days and was, as it should be, very thorough. I was worried about the morse speed of a couple of them, including the Colour Havildar and the Naik R.M. our Foreman of Signals. In practice neither needed morse speed, as others did, for their abilities were directed in other channels. Now Indian Army N.C.O's received specialist pay and it seemed grossly unfair that two important members of the troop could be kept at Group 3 when one was mainly involved in Command and Administration and the other in first line equipment repair and battery charging.

The test was to take place in the morning and the testing officer to leave by rail in the early afternoon. Major Sloan was aware of my fears, not only in the matter of pay but loss of face for those involved, so he took a hand. He got the man drunk the night before and doctored, at least one drink to be sure. In the morning he told the officer that he was far too sick to conduct the tests, which was true. He squashed any protests by stating that he would personally supervise the morse tests. Sloan would on no account

condone inefficiency in anyone, but saw the point on my plea to him and knew that what was in contention was three or four words of speed. Both the Colour Havilder and the Foreman of Signals could receive and send at 17 G.P.M. but couldn't quite bridge the 23 G.P.M. required to pass the test.

Sloan called me before him, "You assure me that the rest can do the required speed?"

"Yes Sir!" I said

"Good! Here's what we will do. There will be a dry run at 22 G.P.M. and if they get through it, you will then start the official test. It will be conducted at the authorized speeds as laid down in the paper. The tests will be complete by 1045 hours, as I'm sending the testing officer over to the Indian General Hospital and he will be returning by about then". Major Sloan looked at me very hard and turning to the Subadar said, "You know, Thunudah, Sahib, I've no idea of morse speeds, so we'll just have to take his word for it. Pity that the testing officer is sick".

The testing officer signed the authorization before leaving. He looked much better but for some reason declined to have a drink with us. The entries went into the pay books and the thing promulgated in routine orders Part II.

The Staff Captain, Lt Jock Mc Naughton, called me aside. " You having trouble with your Sigs Laddie?"

"Not that I know of! Why? I asked".

"Well your Colour Havilder borrowed some money off me this morning.

"Strange", I said "He got me to establish credit, in the canteen, for the troop last night he also got use of a vehicle".

What's going on?" Jock asked.

"No idea, old boy, no idea at all!" was my reply.

The morning administration parade had fallen in under the thin shade of the half bare trees. The whole group in perfect formation, all ranks were sized and dressed, boots and weapons gleaming, hats at regulation angle, brims flat and stiff, having been damped in sugared water and ironed. Shorts were creased under the blankets of sleeping soldiers and jackets starched. They were fit to mount the palace guard. Small neat brown men in neat khaki.

Signals by precedence, where on the right of the parade next to HQ and the survey section, looking very chipper. Gee! I looked again, each man of them wearing a light blue handkerchief, neatly folded and under the collar protecting the neck.

The Sight shook me, I was aware that all the other officers, the VCO's and the Kings Commissioned and our CO had riveted their eyes on my Sigs. It was not possible, at that moment, to glean their response.

As the Havilder-Major read out routine orders II, the troop seemed to grow in height and swell their chest size. It was a very satisfying and emotional moment for me.

But make no mistake, this was not entirely a mark of respect or confidence in me, but an acceptance of their role. It was far more than that, the troop realized that the many months of sheer hard work, of having wireless and morse 'bashed' into them, of hours and days, even weeks and months of repetitive hard grind, had welded them into a team and had given them a certain quality of technical advantage that they would not normally acquire. Out of all this, the damned hard work and training, suddenly brought home the value of their accomplishments and that they were a very vital part of the fighting ability of the LRPG.

In that they gained pride and a sense of unity, and were displaying it for all to see.

My part was coincidental, the gaining of group 2 trade groupings may, just may, have been the catalyst, but suddenly we were a troop. They had embraced the transition from Signaller to Signaller.

The proof of every pudding is in the eating, I therefore have no sense of guilt for cooking the trade test results.

The third advantage, canvassed earlier, lay in my Commanding Officer. Sloan, the Demon Major, was the hardest, most demanding and most exacting Commanding Officer under whom I or anybody else, served. He was also the kindest and nicest man that I had ever known. Sloan was a Soldier, a fighting soldier and a man. He knew his trade, he knew his command and its purpose. Sloan was determined that the LRPG would fulfil its role to best of its ability to the highest point of efficiency. To attain his aim, Sloan was prepared to be ruthless, quite ruthless without pity, but he was not unbalanced. Sloan had his feet on the ground. He knew that his real assets were his men, just as a recruit is exhorted to care for his weapon, to keep it clean, shining, lightly oiled and ready for use.

Sloan's men were his weapons. He turned good fighting men into an excellent weapon, by intelligent training, by psychology, by having every officer, NCO and man efficient to the ninth degree, by having them informed and enthusiastic. He looked after his men and demanded things of his officers.

The secret to Sloan lay in knowing two things. Once, he addressed us openly, in order to obtain a particular result. "When I was a private in the Buffs we knew less than half our officers because they were always away doing other things. They were at Ascot, Epsom, at garden parties or riding to the hunt in season. When in August 1914 we met the flower of the Imperial German Army in Flanders, they got themselves killed, stupidly! This was better than killing off the rest of the battalion. Sergeants ran the platoons. 'Carry on Sergeant!' they would say! I will not tolerate incompetence, I will not tolerate indifference and any officer who places his own well-being and welfare above that on his men has no place in my unit."

When I was appointed OC Sig troop, he said "Don't think of yourself as being 'in charge' and lord of all you survey, rather that you have the responsibility of the troop and the well-being of every man, mule and foot of cable!" Sloan went on a bit, then "Remember, don't think of being in command of these men, but of them being in your care."

Some CO's spit out orders, quite un-researched, without thought and expect that the order given will, by some wave of the wand, be accomplished. At times people must be put on the spot to achieve the impossible, to exercise their intellects and to innovate. Unfortunately, most CO's did it this way because they knew no better, that they were incompetent. I realize that a lot of thought and probing goes into the selection of CO's and I don't impugn them on any flimsy basis, just that the most minute search can miss the most important factor, that is, some thrive and blossom at the task and its challenge and some are hollow shells. The unfortunate and bitter thing is that the lives and welfare of hundreds of their fellow men hinge upon them making the right decisions and believing that they are capable of doing so.

Our good fortune, and my own in particular, was that we had a gem! Sloan had a saying "Mistakes are made for us to learn from, however, if I find anyone making the same mistake twice, I'll skin him".

Sloan led by example, he led from the front. He was the hardest, toughest, most unreasonable man that I knew, totally ruthless in pursuit of his aim. He was the kindest, most understanding and tender man to ever command a military force, whose concern for his troops was no pretence, but real and individually

personal. Should it prove necessary, every man jack would willingly lay down his life for the old 'Demon Major'. Our task was to see and report and not be seen. When the time came, as it inevitably did, Sloan was first into battle, the blooded kukri flashing. He was Beau Sabreur, the flashing blade! Thus my entrance into the Indian Army, my support and my friends.

Now it is a strange thing that, at the time and once a few years later, my thoughts went backward, digging into the foundations of my past and basis of my presence, that dear old Ack section came to mind. Although I had spent the period of my AIF service in the 2/3 Battalion, the transfer to Signals on 17.2.42 marked the beginning of something profound. Everything that I learned, or existing knowledge turned into practical use, was founded in the nine or ten months served in Ack section. Certainly these things were enhanced and enlarged upon through service, through schools and courses, such as the Marconi School of Wireless, but the basis, the understanding came through the training and active service within the Ack section. Here lay the Iron rations of knowledge.

The things that I knew were things that other men had taught me! Certainly, this came from the research, thinking and discovery of other unnamed, unknown men who, whether humble or famous, but it became knowledge. This knowledge was passed to me by fellows like Norm Bull, John McEwen, Jack Higgs, Nobby Clark, Tony Bruce, Dick White, Bill Gregg, Brian Trott. Who were these people? Ordinary Australians who applied their skills and knowledge to the best use that it could be put to in defence of Australia and although none will or can admit it, even to themselves, for a better sort of world. These blokes, friends of the old days, made me what I was, what I am and I am not worthy to lick their boots.

We began our series of reconnaissances in July, in the middle of the monsoon, shocking conditions, bogged down, mosquito bitten, constantly wet, always miserable, but we did it! When the 14th Army began its offensive in December 1944, Slim knew the strengths and placements of the Japs. His army advanced over terrain where they knew that the roads followed on the hells and that mule pack supply trains could advance with the certainty that they could get through.

That was the justification of the LRGP's. Signals could never let the army down. Speaking of Lurg's Sigs, Slim said "I was no longer blind or deaf to what was happening beyond my forward piquets!".

We went in, all of us, before the general assault, to hang around the enemy flanks, across his L of C reporting, reporting, still supplied by air-drops. The last piece of our orders read, "- and harry the enemy on all occasions". We resisted that. One good 'Harry' would have meant the end of us. However, we had our moments, yep, we had our moments!

One day there was a hell of a clatter and peeping out of the shrub we saw and heard the tanks of the Mahratta Lancers clanking along the road. Our war was almost over. We had two special jobs, one to pull out some Indian POW's and to cut off some Japs on the Thai border. It cost my orderly his life and I begrudge that. On the 22nd of June 1945, we were out.

Almost at once we began parachute training for Operation Zipper, the reconquest of Malaya. Suddenly in July, everyone was given leave and I was actually back in Australia when the news of the 'Bomb' came.

Return to India found the LRGP's still more or less intact, now stationed in North India, on guard duty protecting a bridge or two and a tunnel against Nationalist attacks. Actually nothing was happening at all and we were a holding unit, the reason being that India was demobilising its 5 million men Army and there was a scheme afoot to protect people who wished to serve on from being discharged. Therefore anything looking useful and employing troops, was used. There were a number of regulars who had passed the upper age limit and several who could be discharged on medical grounds. This natural wastage

of six years of war, which up to now had been suppressed by the emergency of war, would make places for 'War Only' enlistments who wished to serve on.

Time was the thing! The great pressure brought to bear upon Army Administration by the clamour for discharge from second line war enlistments, slowed any swift moves toward our (5th Gurkha) 'War Only' people. Certainly the requirement for additional troops to garrison and/or pacify some 'Liberated' areas and to provide internal security at home, as the demand for Independence hotted up, postponed the quick return from four to two battalions of Gurkhas.

On my birthday, 14.1.46, my troops and I were recalled from a mobile signal training wing, which we had been conducting with the state forced Corps of Signals, in a nearby Princely State. I was invited to a small birthday dinner as the guest of Major and Mrs. Sloan. The Sloan's gave me three birthday presents, two cold bottles of 'Pale Indian Ale', which we shared, a beautiful re-dressed Sam Brown belt and strap which Sloan had bought of an officer 'going home', and a trip to Japan.

Sloan sat me down after dinner with a cigar and a large brandy. "Now, I believe that you wish to take up your option on a regular commission in the Indian Army?". I told him that I probably did, but was a little disturbed and confused, as most men were at the time. "Well" said Sloan, "The 2/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles have been chosen to form part of B.C.O.F. in Japan. You are going with them! It is a two year stint and will give you time to settle things in your mind. Things are going to be rough here for a bit, this demand for independence won't go away. As long as Wavell is Viceroy, unless firm orders come to act otherwise, a very unpleasant situation is going to arise". Sloan was very serious. "Now British officers serving here might find themselves in some awkward situations. I want you to be a 'clean skin' without a stain on your character, that is why I'm sending you to Japan for this time. 'ON ICE' and ready for me when I need you, OK? I've arranged several courses and schools for you. Take 'em and learn all that you can. I have about a years leave coming and will be going to England shortly to keep my nose clean also".

Japan was a congenial tour of duty. A swiftly changing situation resulted in 15 or 16 months instead of the expected two years. Two-thirds of my service there was spent in various schools and courses, much of it with B.C.O.F. Signals to come abreast with the advanced equipment and to keep my eye in. The balance was spent in regimental duties and leave.

In late May 1947 I was sent out to the airstrip to pick up a VIP who turned out to be Sloan. He had flown up to see me and once clear of the airfield, had me park the jeep on the verge of the road, while we put a dent in a bottle of McCallums which he had in his baggage. We overlooked some paddy down to the Inland Sea. Here long lines of white head-clothed, black Pyjama-d Japanese women laboured in the brown paddy water, weeding! It was a sparkling Summers day and while admiring the placid rustic scene, he put a proposition to me. The timing, today, would be preposterous, but in those times, the mood of the era, quite normal, and I hears him out as though it were a common daily thing, certainly nothing to raise an eyebrow.

I must point out that I spent some thought whether I should relate this at all. Because that which follows is now no longer subject to the Secrets Act and much of it is in the Secrets Act and much of it is in the history books, the bare bones are set out. It was not the legality in relation to the Secrets Act, but the moral burden which prompted hesitation. That disturbed part of the world has hidden its problems which are ongoing and unresolved. To further contribute to their misfortunes, to publicly stir the pot would be wicked. You are a responsible person, or you were, and I see no reason to change my mind on that issue and as you have spent time in India and know something of the background, I think its safe to proceed.

When Sloan returned to India about the turn of the year 1946-47, the situation was all that he feared. He was now in his late forties over old for a Major and facing retirement. Although being the best hated officer in the Indian Army by a certain section of the British Cadre, he had some powerful friends and was sent to a section of Defence Planning which had the particular brief for the North-West Sector.

Sloan was privy to reports from intelligence and from the Political Department. These with general gossip and loose talk from places of power, indicated that events were almost out of hand and something had to be done and done quickly. In March Mountbatten replaced Wavell and the curtain was up on the last act of the British Raj. It was not the final scene, mind, but the last act moving at a bewildering pace.

Three factors emerged. One, independence would have to be brought forward from the mid-1948 date. Two, the Empire would have to be divided to stop the terrible communal bloodshed which had been evident since mid-1946. Mr Jinnah's dream of Pakistan was a goer and against all odds, there would be a partition. Three, as half the land area and one third of the population was under the rule of the Princes, some form of integration with one or the other of the new dominions had to be worked out. The legal opinion was that the ruling sovereign, Nawab or Maharajah, would have to decide. The directions of the decisions would have to be firmly guided by the Viceroy.

Although knowledge of these things preceded official pronouncements, they formed the bases of forward planning and guided the actions of civil and military officialdom. Arrangements were being made for British Officers who wished to 'Serve On' with either the new army to establish the new framework of staff and organization for independent India and Pakistan.

Interested British Officers were being moved to Karachi (The temporary Pakistani capital) and those of Indian persuasion continued to work in New Delhi. Much of the preliminary work was well in progress before the actual decision was public knowledge.

Sloan had announced that he would remain in India, retired or not, and offered his services to the incoming Indian Government. He had accrued a great store of goodwill over the years, by his encouragement and kindness to King's Commissioned Indian Officers. They were not always accepted with universal joy by the more class conscious British Officers, unless of course, the Indian Officer was the son of a Mararajah or someone similar who could add kudos and material benefit to the said British Officer.

These Indian Officers, now of high or middle rank, would quickly become the controlling element within the Indian Army. Sloan's distinctive record as a top class professional was recognised and along with the affection and sympathy readily accepted by these 'Tomorrow Men'. Sloan was approached by someone representing these people and who also spoke for the highest echelons of the Congress Party who would form the incoming Independent Indian Government, to formulate a series of contingency plans for the Kingdom of Kashmir. It represented a challenge to the abilities and ingenuity of the master and galvanised him into producing a daring, practical plan which changed the map of India and its political future.

Kashmir is a mountain kingdom, 84000 square miles in area or almost the same size as Victoria. 77% of its 4 million population was Muslim by faith, but the kingdom was ruled by a Hindu Maharajah, Sir Hari Singh, a Rajput Dogra with the support of a Hindu aristocracy. Although the British had forced certain reforms including religious freedom and an elected assembly in the 1930's the Maharajah ruled as

an autocrat. On the high proportion of a Muslim population, it would seem reasonable, at first glance, that Kashmir be incorporated in Pakistan.

However, matters were more complicated than that. Pakistan was the aim of the Muslim League which had played a very opportunist role in Indian politics. The Muslim League under the leadership of Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, wished to set up a theocratic state populated by Islamics living under the spiritual and legal system based entirely on the Koran. Jinnah laid claim to extensive areas of India, including Delhi with the whole Punjab. He called the projected state Pakistan- P for Punjab, A for the Afghan areas along the border, K for Kashmir, I was phonetic, S for the Sind, Tan for the princely states such as Baluchistan.

Jinnah was enormously successful far beyond that which he deserved. Great Britain owed him a political debt for support during the war, and despite the fact that the Muslim League failed to gain a majority on either the Sind or the North-West Frontier plebiscites for his proposal for Pakistan, ways were found to transfer these territories to Jinnah's new state.

The dominant political party in Kashmir was the National Conference, Muslim based, but in line with the Congress Party on major issues. It was bitterly opposed to Jinnah's theocratic ideas and was aligned to the secular concept of the Congress Party. Although emotions were running very high, the National Conference foresaw that Pakistan was not an economical, viable concept. In addition, the National Conference had a majority in the Kashmir Assembly and its leader, Sheik Abdullah, was the Kashmir Prime Minister, that is when he wasn't in gaol for offending the Maharajah.

Sloan's problems were compounded by geography. Although the border had not been defined at that time, certain things held true. Should partition be along the general religious lines, the Lahore must go to Pakistan and Amritsar, some 30-40 miles away, must go to India, therefore the frontier must either follow the Ravi or a border line in proximity to it, which gave the professional non-political military staff some basis for planning. Should the Ravi be the border, then all of Kashmir's communications would flow into Pakistan territory, road rail and telegraph. The long border with India was mountain fastness penetrated only by goat tracks and bridle trails.

Except for two primitive aerodromes at Srinagar and Jammu with civil airways radio facilities and some emergency strips at Udhampur and Allahabad, there was no direct communication between Kashmir and India. Upon this unpromising basis, Sloan produced some alternative plans, all with one common set of denominators – air link and wireless.

On May 10th Mr Nehru met the Viceroy, Mountbatten, in Simla to settle some points toward the progress of Independence. While in Simla he met either the Maharajah or the Maharajah's emissaries. This meeting set up the Simla treaty, a handshake arrangement in which India guaranteed Kashmir's policy of staying out of Pakistan and either joining India as a semi-integrated ally or being a Federated State in the Dominion of India.

Three points are of immediate interest to this work. A regular and frequent air service between the two, wireless communication to be established and in place of the day of independence, the provision of military support of approximately an infantry brigade to be at the disposal of the Maharajahs government to stiffen the Kashmir State forces and defend the kingdom from aggression, but not for internal security or political purposes.

(To be continued next issue)

**RASIGS 2008 Reunion
(7-10th November 2008)**



Registration form:

PLEASE PRINT NAME AND OTHER DETAILS:
Name 1:
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Name 2:
Name 3:
Name 4:

Please tick which functions you will be attending.

	Yes	No	Number	Cost per person	Total Cost
Dinner (Monday)				\$102.70	
Family Day BBQ (Sat)				\$ 20. 80	
Per Child (For the BBQ)				\$ 10.55	
Parade Day Meal (Sun)				\$ 25.90	
Per Child (Parade Day meal)				\$ 10.55	

Please tick which memorabilia you will be purchasing.

	Yes	No	Number	Cost Each	Total Cost
Stubbie Holder				\$ 5.45	
Polo Shirt				\$ 31.05	
Cap				\$ 15.70	

Total Overall Cost:	* \$
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Due to the requirement of booking venues, particularly the dinner, we are asking Attendees to register ASAP and forward full payment for the functions you will be attending.

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Association and Committee contact details.

President: Bruce Long. Mobile Tel. 0417 227 533 Email: bruce@adelaide5star.com.au

Vice President: Andrew Graves Tel. 0423 02 0234 Email: andrew.graves@dhl.com

Secretary: Ruth Rountree Email: ruthanne5@aapt.net.au

Membership Secretary: Dean Hudson Email: dean.hudson@bigpond.com

Treasurer: Sharen Letton Tel. 0417 874 108 Email: Sharen.Letton@dfc.sa.gov.au

Publisher: Godfrey Williams. Tel. 82528939 Email N/A

144th Sig. Sqn. Rep. Doc O’Connell Tel. 0419 86 6984 Email: daniel.oconnell1@defence.gov.au

Website: Michael Southern Tel. 0418 956 915 Email: msouther@internode.on.net

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