

March 2019

SIGNAL NEWS



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Official Journal of the Royal Australian Signals Association (Tas)

SIGNAL NEWS

March 2019

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March, June, September, December, 2019

2019 "1st Friday's"Feb 1st, Mar 1st, Apr 5th, May 3rd, Jun 7th,
Jul 5th, Aug 2nd, Sep 6th, Oct 4th, Nov 1st
& Dec 6th **All start at 4.30p****Autumn Luncheon:-** Wed 6th Mar
2019 at Claremont Hotel. 12n for
12.30pm**Anzac Day:-** Thurs 25th Apr 2019
Hobart March and Cenotaph Service:
From 10.30am. Meet at "Waratah"
by 9.45^{am}.for free transport.Lunch back at Waratah Hotel at 12.30^{pm}.**Medals to be worn****Annual Luncheon:-** Wed 12th
Jun 2019 Venue/timing TBA**Annual General Meeting (73rd):-**Friday 4th October 2019.5^{pm} at RAAF Memorial Centre**Commemoration Day:** Sunday 13th Oct.**Service:** 11.45^{am} at Anglesea
Barracks Signals Memorial**Medals to be worn****Lunch:** RAAF Memorial Centre
from 12.30^{pm}.**Remembrance Day Lunch:** Nov 8th

Timing & Venue TBA.

Medals to be worn**Committee Meetings 2019:-**Meetings start at RAAF Memorial
Centre at 3.15^{pm} on 1 Mar, 7 Jun, 6 Sep,
1 Nov.**Printed by the Hon. Will Hodgman,
MP, Liberal Member for Franklin****A much appreciated Community Service****Anna
No Boxed
lines
above**

3.

From: The President.

Greetings to all for 2019. If you are reading this you have survived another Christmas and New Year and hopefully look forward to a great year.

In writing this it is hard to sometimes develop some interesting items. Dick looks after that side and I hope everyone tries to make an effort to give him interesting information for future editions of "Signal News".

Of special note, the next National Reunion of Signals personnel, past and present, is to be conducted at Townsville Qld and Bruce Long, a former 146 Sig Sqn Cadre Sergeant, is playing a leading role in organising the event. Full details are included in the Secretary's report in this edition.

Each year your Committee try to maintain and publicise a standard programme so you should not forget what is on. We are open to any suggestions in the department of social activities so if you have any ideas discuss them with your Committee members.

We have already held our first function on the first Friday in February to start the year and obviously, with good communications, we had the normal solid roll-up. The winning group from the Eastern Shore turned up to collect the normal ratio of chocolate wheel prizes. It is a good job we had a carton for their spoils.

We are normally operational on First Fridays from 1600 hrs (4 .00pm) on first Fridays

Don't forget our MOBILITY SUPPORT programme. If you have limited mobility and would like to attend an activity contact Dick, myself or Mick Farley by the day before each event and we can arrange transport pickup and/or return for you. (format problem with this sentence Anna)

The good news for the quarter is that our Northern member, Brian Watson, also known as Captain Kilowatt, has received an Australia Day Award for services to the RSL. Congratulations Brian. He has not been too well lately so to him and his wife, who also is unwell, all our best wishes.

David Harcourt also is a little down at the moment and we wish him all the best and look forward to his return.

A social item; our first lunch will be at the Claremont Hotel on the 6th of March, gathering at 1200. A pleasant activity to start the year.

ANZAC DAY will follow our normal format on the 25th April. Details will be confirmed at our first Friday in April. We will again be taking part in the Hobart March with our lunch to follow. We welcome members of your family to participate.

Well that's enough from me for this month so keep on signalling (in various ways) and I look forward to your company sometime throughout the year.

Yours in Signals

Owen

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SPECIAL INTEREST STORIES (No. 3) - SIMON PAUL KELLAND

(Continuing a series of special articles about the life and careers of former Signal Squadron and/or Association members, first published in 2018)

Born in London in 1964, Simon Kelland arrived in Tasmania with his family in 1969. He is the son of a much respected Hobart medical specialist and philanthropist.

Simon was educated at The Friends' School, Hobart and then completed a Commerce Degree at the University of Tasmania. He also completed executive programs at Stanford University Graduate School of Business in the USA and the International Institute of Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland.

When joining the Active Army Reserve at 146 Signal Squadron in 1983 Simon trained as a Radio Operator in the Light Radio Troop. He was selected for officer training the following year transferring to OCTU at 6 Training Group. On graduation and appointment as a 2Lt, Simon was posted back to 146 Signal Squadron as a Troop Commander and continued to serve in that capacity until the Unit was disbanded in late 1987. He moved to Sydney in 1988 to seek a professional career and was posted to 8 Sig Regt until 1989 before transferring to the Inactive List.

Simon was married to Kate in 1991 and they were to have five children over the next decade.

He began his professional career as a Chartered Accountant in 1991 before moving into banking, leading deals and businesses in investment banks, major banks and specialist structured financiers. He was directly involved in negotiating many high value, complex transactions as a banker in the 1990s and led the negotiation for what was, at the time, the largest information technology financing ever completed in Australia, achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for both parties. In 2005, Simon retired from the banking industry to focus his career on negotiating – joining Scotwork Australia, the local member firm of the world's leading specialist negotiation consultants where he remains, having been the Australian Managing Partner since 2010.

Before becoming a full time negotiation consultant, Simon held the positions of Associate Director at Macquarie Bank, Executive Director of Project and Structured Finance at ANZ investment bank in Sydney, General Manager of Strategy and Business Development at ANZ bank's specialist finance company subsidiary Esanda, Managing Director of Esanda Fleet Partners, Chief Executive Officer of Equigroup (then known as Computer Fleet Management) and at ANZ he was also a member of the Chief Executive's Group – a strategic decision-making body comprising the 50 most senior executives of the bank.

He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and was for many years a trustee of the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia.

In recent years as a full time negotiation specialist, Simon has helped clients in a range of industries negotiate highly satisfactory outcomes, often within a high stakes and time-pressured environment. He specialises in the defence contracting, banking and finance, and professional services industries. In fact he spends a lot of his time acting as Lead Negotiator on behalf of the Commonwealth, negotiating large defence materiel acquisition and sustainment contracts, sitting across the table from major defence contractors.

Quite a strong list of achievements by a former popular junior officer, posted to our Squadron 34 years ago, to balance such a successful career with the responsibilities of bringing up a young family!



Simon in more recent times



Simon (on left) with Capt Mike Mitchelmore, Trg Offr, Maj Wal Buchanan OC & Lt Katrina Cooper, Tp Offr at the final parade on the disbandment of 146 Sig Sqn in 1987

CENTENARY OF THE ARMISTICE 1914-18 GREAT WAR – A SWANSEA PERSPECTIVE

On the 9th of November 1918 Frederick Mace, the Warden of Spring Bay Council noted in his diary that he had received a 'long wire' from the Premier informing him that all Council Wardens would be informed immediately when Peace was declared. Newspapers of the day had been speculating that peace was imminent. Mace noted that the telegram had cost 8 shillings and 9 pence and was too longwinded, and declared that it was only right and proper that the Council Wardens be informed; but not told how to celebrate.

Telegrams were received in Hobart at 8:30 pm advising that the Armistice Agreement had been signed and posted outside the Hobart "Mercury" offices, sparking jubilation and celebration in the streets. In Swansea, Howard Amos reported in his diary that Monday the 11th was "a cool day with wind from the East".

Uneventful: Peaceful

It was nine o'clock in the evening and Swansea village in the Municipality of Glamorgan was quiet, people had been hopeful of an impending peace announcement. Despite newspaper reports, that many Senior Officers in the military believed that the war could drag on for at least another year into well into 1919. After almost one thousand six hundred days of brutal warfare, lasting 4 years and spanning several continents at 11 am European time on the 11th of November, a century ago, the Armistice agreement ending the First World War was finally signed.

The guns after 4 long years finally fell silent! It is not known how the news reached Swansea, probably a telegram to the

Warden; sent to the post office. The School bell rang continuously for an hour and a half and was later joined by the ringing of All Saints Church bell for an hour, drawing all citizens from their homes to the Glamorgan Council Chambers, where patriotic songs were sung and many speeches were made long into the night.

Howard Amos noted in his diary on the morning of the 12th of November with some surprise that the "Germans really surrendered, and Armistice arranged" and stated that the family attended a Bonfire on Craigie Hill. He also noted that plenty of flags were flying in Swansea on the 13th of November, when he visited.

A thanksgiving service was held at All Saints Church on the morning of Wednesday the 13th and a municipal celebration took place the same afternoon and a bonfire attended by 300 people that evening.

The newspapers reports of the 11th and 12th of November 1918 conveyed the feeling and sounds on the streets of London and other cities and towns. The Manchester Guardian reported "That the church bells that we have never dared to ring but once on any great day of war, burst into a confident ringing. Big Ben over all, letting themselves go, like all London below them ... Motor-cars in a steady stream came along, with people sticking to every inch of them like flies on treacle". The same report recorded ecstatic crowds converging on Downing Street where the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, appeared and announced: "I am glad to tell you that the war will be over at 11 o'clock today." He waved, then disappeared inside, but the crowds bayed for more, until he reappeared at the first floor window of Number 10, along with the Chancellor, and Winston Churchill, the minister of munitions. All this, the paper said, as "the housemaids of Downing Street waved their dusters and feather mops overhead".

When news broke that the war was finally over, the sense of elation was almost uncontrollable, in cities and towns throughout the British Empire and countries allied in the fight, joyous and jubilant celebrations occurred for several days. It seemed that the farther away from the horror of the front lines on the Western front in Europe, the arid sand of the Middle East and the trauma of Turkey; the more the sense of celebration increased.

Closer to the front line. The war weary breathed barely a sigh of relief. On the Western front, Charles Bean the noted Australian war historian reported an eerie sense of quiet, a disturbing pall of smoke, and the remains of so many fallen soldiers with the remnants of their daily lives strewn across the mud and blood-soaked battlefields of France and Belgium. For many families, especially those who had officially received the most terrible of news, about their loved ones, or worse, no news at all, to behold the joy and celebration all around them must have been incredibly difficult. The flow of information was neither fast or efficient 100 years ago, such was the scale of carnage and loss that often many months passed before next of kin received the official news that their husband, father, son, brother or sister had paid the ultimate sacrifice.

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(Remembrance Day Address at Swansea 2018, cont.,)

Often the cessation of mail and the sudden lack of any letters or cards was the only warning of bad news to come, and long after the Armistice many continued to seek information of their loved ones often frustratingly to no avail 1 in 3 of the 62,000 who died in action were listed as missing, the location of their death unknown, the identification process is ongoing and due to advances in DNA testing many their remains of the fallen are being identified and are reinterred.

In Swansea, as in many small country towns official war telegrams were sent to the local Ministers; the Rev Scott in 1914 and Rev Finter for the remainder of the war, for it was their grim task to deliver the official news that a loved one had perished in the service of King and Country. Particularly poignant for the Post Master and Postmistress to receive a telegram for the Reverend Finter about the death of their own son, Garnet killed in action on 25th October 1917.

The Statistics for the Great War are no less horrifying nor are they diminished by the century that has past. Of a population just under 5 million, 4 hundred and 16 thousand Australians enlisted; 1 in every 12, 1 hundred and 56 thousand were wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner, and 62 thousand paid the ultimate sacrifice; 1 of every 7 of those who enlisted.

Glamorgan was not as lucky as some, nor did it fare worse than any other municipality. Of the 67 who enlisted for the Great War on the honour board we show 17 as killed in action, although we now have a list of 22, many others went on to die of their wounds, injuries and personal traumas after the war ended. Mere numbers and statistics, as horrifying and staggering in their size and social impact as they remain today are still only numbers.

What endures are their names. In many cases that is all that survives. Their names; are our names; your names and some of us still carry those names as a badge of honour and whether it is in this town or another part of Australia or indeed the world on this 100th anniversary, there being no one with a living memory of the fallen. We should honour them all.

My generation, and the one preceding, was truly fortunate to have known the survivors of the Great War and they also should not be forgotten and I urge you to review the honour board in the war room of our Museum and read their names. It is difficult to single out just one serviceman or woman for this centenary of the Armistice, as all of their stories are worthy of our attention. In small country towns often a family's grief was intensified by the loss of more than one member of the family, quite often close relatives perished as well.

To illustrate the agony of loss and suffering of just one local family coming to terms with the death of a loved one, I would mention Arthur Robert Hill who perished in a gruesome death on the 7th of June 1917 at Ploegsteert Wood in Flanders. His family heard of his death a month later and details of his passing and burial did not come for many, many, long months later. In these circumstances it would be hard for any family to celebrate the end of the war. For many years his parents placed a memorial notice in the Hobart "Mercury" on each anniversary of his death and whilst I have chosen to read one that is specific to Robert or Nobby Hill. The sentiments it expresses hold for each and every family each and every soldier, sailor, airmen and nurse who served.

*Sadly a Mother is thinking of her dear Nobby so brave,
Who died a Swansea hero and sleeps in a soldier's grave. (Had some format problem here too!)
The face we loved is now laid low the fond true heart is still,
The hands that always helped us so lie now in deaths cold chill
His King and Country called him the call was not in vain,
On Australia's Roll of Honour you will find our dear Brother's Name.*

LEST WE FORGET

(Our thanks to Noel Stanley from "Meredith House", Swansea and "Great Oyster Bay News" for permission to print his address. It was delivered to those attending the Remembrance Day service at Swansea on 11th November 2018)

AN IRISH MOTHER'S LETTER TO HER SON.

Dear Seamus,

Just a few lines to let you know I'm still alive. I'm writing this letter slowly because I know you can't read fast. We are all doing very well.

You won't recognise the house when you get home - we have moved. Your dad read in the newspaper that most accidents happen within 20 miles from your home, so we moved 30 miles away.

I won't be able to send you the address because the last Irish family that lived here took the house numbers when they moved so that they wouldn't have to change their address.

This place is really nice. It even has a washing machine. I'm not sure it works so well though: last week I put a load in, pulled the chain and haven't seen it since.

Your father's got a really good job now. He's got 500 men under him - he's cutting the grass and doing general handyman work at the cemetery.

Your sister Mary had a baby this morning but I haven't found out if it's a boy or a girl, so I don't know whether you are an auntie or an uncle.

Your brother Tom is still in the army and is doing rather well. He's only been there a short while and they've already made him a court martial!

Your Uncle Patrick drowned last week in a vat of whisky in the Dublin Brewery. Some of his workmates tried to save him but he fought them off bravely. They cremated him and it took three days to put out the fire.

I'm sorry to say that your cousin Jonny was arrested while riding his bicycle last week. They are charging him with dope peddling.

I went to the doctor on Thursday and your father went with me. The doctor put a small tube in my mouth and told me not to talk for ten minutes. Your father offered to buy it from him.

The weather isn't bad here. It only rained twice this week, first for three days and then for four days. Monday was so windy one of the chickens laid the same egg four times.

About that coat you wanted me to send you. Your Uncle Stanley said it would be too heavy to send in the mail with the buttons on, so we cut them off and put them in one of the pockets.

Johnny locked his keys in the car yesterday. We were really worried because it took him two hours to get me and your father out.

There isn't much more news at this time. Nothing much has happened. You're loving Mum.

P.S. I was going to send you some money but I had already sealed the envelope.

CUNNING BRICKIE!

Jack the brickie applied for a job at a construction site and to his surprise got it. "Be here at 8am sharp in the morning ready to start immediately." said the Foreman. Jack turned up next day on time and the stepped out of a chauffeur driven Rolls Royce. The stunned Forman pointed to a pile of bricks and said, "You can start building a wall over there according to these plans."

But by 10 o'clock his curiosity got the better of him and he called Jack over and asked him if the Rolls Royce was his. "Yes," said Jack, "It's mine all right." "But where did you get the money for that?" asked the Forman. "Well, yer see, I'm a professional gambler. I gamble on anything, anytime. For instance, right now I'll bet you ten dollars you

have a wart on your bum." "You're on," said the Forman and proceeded to pull his trousers down. But Jack complained about the light inside the building and asked him to move to the door so the light would shine on his bum. He saw there was no wart in sight so paid up the ten dollars.

"You lost," laughed the Forman, folding his money, "I thought you were supposed to be a professional gambler." "I am," said Jack, "See the 25 construction workers standing out there with horrified looks on their faces? I bet them fifty bucks each I'd have your bare arse sticking out the door before lunch!" (*Geeves*)

DIFFERENT RESULTS FROM A KICK

A man went into a pub with his dog. Both he and the dog were in Geelong colours. They both watched the match on the TV with avid interest. When Geelong scored, the dog sat up on his back legs and yapped excitedly. The new barman watched in awe the performance of the dog and finally had to comment on the intelligence of the dog to the owner. He asked, "What happens if the Swans kick a goal?" "He does somersaults," the owner replied. "How many?" asked the barman. "That depends on how hard I kick him up the bum." (*Geeves*)

CONFESSIONS OF A SAD & SORRY SIGNALMAN – MY LESS THAN MERITORIOUS MEMOIRS

INTRODUCTION TO 124 SIG SQN AT BATTERY POINT

My first awareness of a thing called the CMF and 124 Signal Squadron came in 1968 when Basil Apted, one of my Dad's mates, suggested that young 'Den' ought to join 124 soon after I started work with the then PMG in the Costing Section; Wages and Salaries, on 15 January 1968. Basil pointed out that many (*if not all, in his version*) of the PMG were in Signals!! AND he boasted about the many benefits such as tax free money from the Army while still getting a PMG salary, at least one Camp and one Course per year, (*plus a paid Recruit Camp/Course*), attendance each Tuesday evening, learn all about radios and signals. Fun and games with a bunch of rollicking good blokes, and (*which he forgot to mention*) serving your country in time of war (*Vietnam*) – that last bit frightened me!

It all seemed such a great idea for a young bloke fresh from school and keen on a few dollars. But in my naïve and youthful way I didn't know the first thing about life or radios or whatever. I genuinely thought learning about radios would be good because I would then be able to fix the family's hi-fi, fix Mums new transistor radio, get rid of the bloody static from Dad's car radio and maybe even fix to old crystal set that still sat in my bedroom replaced by a modern bedside radio? Whoopee!

Looking back I was either naïve, dumb or unworldly at 17 going on 18. Remember 21 was the drinking age, I didn't smoke or party and I lived until married in 1971 with Mum and Dad.

FIRST NIGHT - A TUESDAY 1968

So, Basil collected me from Charles St, Moonah one Tuesday evening and off we went to Beaumaris for my first sign-on night parade. I quickly learn't that yes, many were PMG technicians or tradies or manually skilful, competent and confident members of 124 Signal Squadron – none of those talents did I have!

I was shown to a small stable type door (*top and/or bottom halves which opened*). And a fellow popped out demanded "*what are you here for*" and "*why*"? I was stumped and told him I was "new". Quick as a flash he sized me up, disappeared, came back and slapped a whole load of clothes, boots etc., into my surprised arms at the door space. Oh yeah, I thought, those other blokes are wearing uniforms, how did I not notice?

The rest of the night is a blur! At the end of the night Basil took me home and I was quite chuffed with all this free clothing and boots. I was told to wear them and attend next Tuesday in uniform for parade.

SECOND NIGHT PARADE

I wanted to show that I was now A *MAN* so I drove myself to Beaumaris in full outfit in my \$112 Hillman Minx...maybe *minx* wasn't a good start in a gruffly heterosexual Army unit of 1968? Boy I thought I looked great....a man, a soldier, a signalman!! Women would swoon?

Someone greeted me with a smirk as Sig Keats – I thought "*whoops they must think my first name is Sigfried Keats*"?.

I only partially noticed the snickering and stares of all the other fellows. Oh they must be impressed with the new recruit (*I thought*) and they seem to be a happy bunch. Then we lined up for parade! Until then I didn't even know what "*parade*" was and wondered why everyone was jostling and pushing to get shoulder to shoulder? Although not a Collingwood supporter I had heard their slogan of "shoulder to shoulder we stick together". That must be a good sign, these fellows like football and I like football too. I was told the OC/CO (*whatever and whoever that was*) was going to "*inspect*" us? That was a worry because the last time I was inspected was by the school nurse at Cosgrove High and she had cold hands!

When he got to me I nodded and smiled to show I was pleased to be there, was friendly and I was a good bloke. That didn't seem to go down well at all, with the OC/CO (*which one was it?*). He did not return my salutations, he circled me in the line, came up close, stared me in the eyes and in a gruff voice commenced to outline my shortcomings. On only my second night! I didn't even know this bloke and he didn't know me. I hoped he wasn't expecting to get his hand down my trousers like the nurse in schooldays. "*SIG KEATS*" he shouted in my face. Clearly he was mistaken that my first name was Sigfried. I started to explain that I was Dennis, but he shut me up.

(Keatsy's story cont.,)

“SIG KEATS, we DO NOT wear our slouch hat like a 10 gallon Hopalong Cassidy, we bash and slope out slouch hat, we DO black and shine our gaiters our webbing and our boots, we DO shine and buff our brass and we DO NOT have dirt up the back of our accelerator boot from driving here! And we wear a uniform that FITS!”

Well, thought I, that's no way to start a relationship which I thought was based on friendship and kindness to one's fellow soldier. Besides, other than shining the boots I didn't even know what bashing was, what gaiters actually were and what webbing actually was, and the brass seemed to have a nice tinge of green. Why would that bloke in the stable give me an outfit that was not A1? So, back to him for something better fitting. He actually let me try them on this time.

I thought I had done a fairly good job getting all this gear on and looking something like the other blokes. Before I went home someone roughly explained what it all meant. Not only did I go home in a sulk but I not only *“bashed my hat”* I kicked it and roundly abused it with every foul word I knew. You could call it assault.

By the next Tuesday I was somewhat improved, but never seemed to gain the approval of the OC/CO. I already had learnt that I didn't like the Army and the Army didn't seem to like me!

From there it was a journey of incidents and mishaps.....too many....but here goes with my confessions and seeking of absolution.

MEDICAL MESS-UP

While waiting in the medical room at Anglesea Barracks and having given my urine sample (it looked like a 10 oz beer - even with froth) I heard others discussing and say that bedwetting, travel sickness, surfers knee bumps and flat feet excluded one from military service. The only one I did legitimately suffer from was travel sickness, having eased off the bed wetting by the time I was 17 – Y.O. !

So, when I went in to the Doctor I said I had the lot! After checking me thoroughly he said *“You know it's strange today, everyone before you had the same medical problems, but I've passed youse all fit and healthy”*. *“Oh great”* I said *“Pass the urine and I'll celebrate with a pint”*, *“Get outa here you cheeky young bastard”* he said.

INDUCTION (READ RECRUIT) 2 WEEK CAMP

I think most of Induction was at Brighton. I distinctly recall Sergeant David Manson scaring the bejeezus out of us all when he dropped a hand grenade during his lecture and instruction on technique. As a mass of about 20 sitting on the grass listening intently we suddenly arms and legs back scrambled like crabs without gaining our feet. David Manson then courageously threw himself on the grenade, arose and let us know it was only a training grenade. *I remember because it proved to me that khaki underpants do stain and badly!!* And I later encountered David Manson working with PMG/Telecom and still run into him at the supermarket OR better yet try to run over him at the supermarket.

PONTVILLE RIFLE RANGE – THE LOST GUN

I had trouble with my “gun“ from the start – *“it's a rifle, and SLR Sig and your best friend”?? A pretty cold and unresponsive friend I found!*

When we first used our rifles at Pontville Rifle Range, four of us (probably the most cowardly) were sent to load the magazines – *no, not read magazines!! Load magazines*. So I rested my rifle next to a landrover and sat down for 20-30 minutes of enjoyable sunshine, good talks and loading magazines.

Next a loud holler (nothing was ever in a reasonable voice) *“Youse blokes over here on the double with your rifles! Your turn to fire”*. “So I reached back for my rifle. No bloody rifle?!! And no landrover!!?”

Suddenly I was roundly abused for losing *my best friend*, my rifle and then admonished for the rest of the session before going onto the mound with another rifle.

“I suppose you've lost the bolt too because you forgot to take it out like you were trained?” Ah ha....my one moment of success was upon me.

“No Sir it's here in my marble bag securely tied to the inside of the top button of my fly”. SO THERE, I must have been listening! Because I had made a decision to keep the bolt in a place no one would guess, no one could steal, not even a cunning Vietnamese. And what's closer to a man's heart than the area around and including his bollocks. SEE I wasn't totally dumb, or at least I didn't think so.

(Keatsy's story cont.,)

But it was all for nothing. At twilight, when we arrived back at Brighton Barracks looking forward to a shower, a meal and a good sleep.....he who must be obeyed (*whoever that friend of humanity was*) said “*No shower, no tea and parade out on the road for the night – all of ‘youse’ till your dumb mate learns*”. Little did he know I had no mates and even less after that little mistake on my part.

And very late at night (*well after my mother would have expected me to be in bed*) the rifle was returned to me! I had been setup. I was told to “*take the rifle to bed and keep it safe and warm like my best friend should be*”.

STONY HEAD

Looking to always improve as a soldier I looked forward to Stony Head, BUT on leaving Fort Direction my truthfulness to the Doctor came back to haunt me. I was car sick between Fort Direction and Lauderdale and at regular intervals all the way – great fun for my travelling companions and a clean set of pipes top and bottom for me. It got worse....at Stony Head we were going to finally learn the full drill with grenades and actually throw them!! Yes I listened to the instruction, yes I read the paperwork and yes I went through the simulations with reasonable confidence and competence.

Some might recall that you wiggled your way around some ditches carrying a grenade, you came to a little alcove, someone with more courage than I sat there and inserted a detonator and told me to move on. *Oh boy. Remember Den....stay low so you don't get your head shot off, at a count, pop up and over arm throw the grenade, releasing the pin and by the time it hits land and goes bang you should be back down for cover. Well, that's the way it was supposed to happen.*

Waddling along like a duck, arse and head down below the parapet I got to the “*throw instructor's*” position and awaited my turn. It came.

I got nervous, popped up to see what was going on, was told in no uncertain terms to get down and in the process dropped the grenade activating it. A scream of “*pick the **** up and throw it quickly*” rang in my ears; I noticed the “*throw instructor*” deserting his post....and me.

In panic and with speed I grabbed it and threw it over the top and then bobbed up to see where it went. *Not a good idea.* Noise, dust, rubbish and abuse. Not a single “*Are you all right Sig*”....by now I didn't care if they called me Sigfried, Dennis or Shithead.

FINAL DISGRACE (and many have been overlooked) - THE MIENA FIASCO

In about February/March 1969 (*after having played for North Hobart as a callow youth in a losing 1968 TFL Grand Final loss against New Norfolk*), I was in a 124 Signal Squadron Camp operating from Fort Direction.

Four of us were assigned to a landrover, trailer and equipment and told to leave that night for the bush near Miena. Corporal Tony Friswell in charge, someone named Jackson driving, Sig Keats in the back and also Walter Abetz (*older brother of Eric*) in the back.

Because of my car sickness I attempted and succeeded in sleeping most of the way to avoid the big spit. I think Abetz was similar. *Why were we sent to the bush near Miena?* To monitor, count and record details of any traffic!!? And report via radio back to someone.

Well the trip up seemed to go fairly uneventfully, although a little fast, but I slept through most of it. Setting up a huge canvas tent, camp and radio in the rocky bush, to be obscured from enemy eyes was a challenge, but let's leave that.

After some days we received a radio communication in the very wee hours to break camp and be back at Fort Direction by breakfast. So everything was done in reverse in the dark and cold early hours of the morning. *I was learning that war wasn't fun.*

This return journey became the precursor to my being kicked out of 124 Signal Squadron. Once we left the bush near Miena I again settled in the back to sleep so that I wouldn't be car sick and I think Walter Abetz did the same. Sometime later (*and I subsequently found it must have only been 30-40 minutes*) I was awoken with an enormous noise of skidding, crashing and things fling around. And flying and twisting and hitting things or them hitting me. We were near the Steppes.

I was either knocked out or shocked, but definitely confused and when I gathered my sight and faculties it was clear we had rolled over and the Landrover and trailer was hissing, cracking and moaning.

Parts of our equipment, radios, tents, snapped tent posts, clothing and us were spread about, but at least we were still in the Landrover – in those days no seatbelts I think.

Beside me in the back Walter Abetz was in a terrible state with clearly visible injuries, structural mis-shapes and groaning in a semi-conscious state. I had an injured leg (wouldn't bend and painful at and above the knee), but other than minor abrasions no major cuts to myself. I think the two in the front were ok.

(Keatsy's story concludes)

With considerable difficulty we got a radio to function and reported in. The army said to not leave or do anything until an investigating team came?! *Oh great we thought as we could visibly see Walter Abetz deteriorating.* At that hour of morning the Lakes Highway had little to no traffic, but eventually a Hydro crew arrived and couldn't go through because we were spread across the road. They radioed for an ambulance and with limited medical knowledge we all did what we could to try and keep Walter Abetz conscious and alive. It had become apparent *(although we were not experienced)* that his conditions and his sounds might lead to death. He subsequently went to Austin Hospital and needed major surgery and rehabilitation over years.

I'll short cut from that debacle, which became worse when the army "took control" and skip on to my slide and demise as a Signalmán partly as a consequence of this Miena accident.

Sometime in that year I received a letter which said "*Son your lucky number came up in the conscription draft 29/10/1949 – and your ass is now ours!! BUT if you stay in the CMF 124 Signal Squadron you will be considered to have met your conscription obligations*".

For the next year or so the Army paid for medical treatment, physio etc., for me and I trundled from the PMG/GPO to Anglesea Barracks for treatment, interviews etc. Recovery was slow, but progressive.

I genuinely cannot recall the date of when I was medically discharged, but I can remember the circumstances. After extensive physio etc., I was sent/called to Anglesea Barracks and to *(I think)* old Doctor Parker the CMO at the time. Doctor Parker said words to the effect "*son, the Army is not intending paying further rehabilitation for you and on the basis of x-rays and my professional opinion I am going to medically discharge you!*". "*And from reports, you are not cut out for the Army*"

This was a bit of a surprise, but not altogether sad news as you might guess from my litany of disasters. Being medically discharged meant I was not therefore eligible to be called up for Vietnam.

I think it was a week or two before 124 Signals made it official. I was marched in to the OC/CO room and read a farewell statement which I think I agreed to and signed. The farewell included "*And bring all and every bit of your uniform and equipment back next Tuesday to say good bye*"

That was the finish of my short and un-illustrious career as a Signalmán – and I never did find out if they still thought my first name was Siegfried, BUT I have asked Dick Goodwin to track down all my details if he can??

Sig (Rtd) Dennis Keats

(Dennis recovered well from his injuries and "starred" in many of North Hobart's greatest victories, including TFL premierships. Ed.)

Problem with format below too Anna >>

YOUR SECRETARY SAYS:

NATIONAL SIGNALS REUNION - 2020

We have received a request from former 146 Sig Sqn Cadre Sgt (*more recently, President of the South Australia RA Sigs Association*), **Bruce Long**.

Bruce is playing a leading role in organizing the next **National Signals Reunion to be held at Townsville, Qld, between 17-23 June 2020.**

The itinerary for the Reunion is posted on the National Signals website www.rasigs.com (*click on the Red Reunion sign, at top Right of the home page to gain access*). Please check the Attendance List on the site and if any amendment is required to your entry, email Bruce at info@rasigs.com to advise of any changes. A deposit of \$50 is required for the formal dinner at the Townsville Casino, by 30th June 2019 (*balance of \$75 by 1st April 2020*). The dinner fee includes all drinks for a 5 hour period.

Further details about, accommodation, the availability of reunion memorabilia and other information will be posted to the website as it become available.

THE GREEN THING

Checking-out at the store, the young cashier suggested to the much older lady that she should bring her own grocery bags, because plastic bags are not good for the environment. The woman apologized to the young girl and explained, "We didn't have this 'green thing' back in my earlier days."

The young clerk responded, "That's our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations." The older lady said that she was right -- our generation didn't have the "green thing" in its day. The older lady went on to explain.

Back then, we returned milk bottles, soda bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. But we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Grocery stores bagged our groceries in brown paper bags that we reused for numerous things. Most memorable besides household garbage bags was the use of brown paper bags as book covers for our school books. This was to ensure that public property (the books provided for our use by the school) was not defaced by our scribblings. Then we were able to personalize our books on the brown paper bags. But, too bad we didn't do the "green thing" back then.

We walked up stairs because we didn't have an escalator in every store and office building. We walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks.

But she was right. We didn't have the "green thing" in our day. Back then we washed the baby's diapers because we didn't have the throw away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 220 volts. Wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back in our early days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

But that young lady is right; we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Back then we had one TV, or radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of the state of Montana. In the kitchen we blended and stirred by hand because we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the mail, we used wadded up old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

But she's right; we didn't have the "green thing" back then. We drank from a fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blade in a shaver instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. But we didn't have the "green thing" back then.

Back then, people took the streetcar or a bus and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their moms into a 24-hour taxi service in the family's \$45,000 SUV or van, which cost what a whole house did before the "green thing." We had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 23,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest burger joint.

But isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the "green thing" back then?

Please forward this on to another selfish old person who needs a lesson in conservation from a smart ass young person. We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to piss us off... Especially from a tattooed, multiple pierced smartass who can't make change without the cash register telling them how much.

(Bob Gray)

13.

AN ACTUAL 'PERSONALS' PRESS ADVERTISEMENT

To the guy who tried to mug me last night in Savannah

I was the guy wearing the black Burberry jacket that you demanded that I hand over, shortly after you pulled the knife on me and my girlfriend, threatening our lives. You also asked for my girlfriend's purse and earrings. I can only hope that you somehow come across this rather important message.

First, I'd like to apologise for your embarrassment; I didn't expect you to actually crap in your pants when I drew my pistol after you took my jacket. The evening was not that cold, and I was wearing the jacket for a reason. My girlfriend was happy that I just returned safely from my 2nd tour as a Combat Marine in Afghanistan. She had just bought me that Kimber Custom Model 1911 .45 pistol for my birthday and we had picked up a shoulder holster for it that very evening. Obviously you agree that it is a very intimidating weapon when pointed at your head, isn't it?

I know it probably wasn't fun walking back to wherever you'd come from with crap in your pants. I'm sure it was even worse walking bare-footed since I made you leave your shoes, cell phone, and wallet with me. (*That prevented you from calling or running to your buddies to come help mug us again.*)

After I called your mother or "Momma" as you had her listed in your phone, I explained the entire episode of what you'd done. Then I went and filled up my tank as well as those of four other people in the gas station, on your credit card. The guy with the big motor home took 153 gallons and was extremely grateful! I gave your shoes to a homeless guy outside Vinnie Van Go Go's, along with all the cash in your wallet. [*That made his day!*]

I then threw your wallet into the big pink "pimp mobile" that was parked at the curb, after I broke the windshield and side window and keyed the entire driver's side of the car. Earlier, I managed to get in two threatening phone calls to the DA's office and one to the FBI, while mentioning our President as my possible target. The FBI guy seemed really intense and we had a nice long chat (*I guess while he traced your number, etc.*). In a way, perhaps I should apologise for not killing you but I feel this type of retribution is a far more appropriate punishment for your threatened crime. I wish you well as you try to sort through some of these rather immediate pressing issues, and can only hope that you have the opportunity to reflect upon, and perhaps reconsider, the career path you've chosen to pursue in life.

Remember, next time you might not be so lucky. Have a good day!

Thoughtfully yours, Alex.

(Source Anon. 'Laying low' right now I'll bet. Ed.!)

GOODNIGHT KISS

After taking his girlfriend home from a date a guy starts feeling a little amorous, So with an air of confidence he leans with his hand against the wall & smiling, he says to her 'Honey, would you have sex with me?'

Horrified, she replies, 'are you mad? My parents will see us!' 'Oh come on! Who's gonna see us at this hour?' he asks, grinning at her.

No, please. Can you imagine if we get caught? Oh come on! There's nobody around, they're all sleeping!" "No way. It's just too risky!"

Oh please, please, I love you so much!" "No, no, & no. I love you too, but I just can't, it's too big of a risk to take." "Oh yes you can, please?" "No, no. I just can't". "I'm begging you!"

Out of the blue, the light on the stairs goes on, & the girl's older sister shows up in her pyjamas, hair dishevelled, & in a sleepy voice, she says: "Dad says to go ahead & have sex with him, or I can do it, or if need be, Mum says she can come down herself & do it, but for God's sake, tell him to take his hand off the intercom!"

(Geeves)

ADVENTURES AT BUCKLAND

In the following tale, the exact date, names of the participants and location are not mentioned in order to protect the innocent (guilty?). Sometime between 1965 and 1969 when I was a Lieutenant, I led a team of faithful signals personnel on an odyssey to Buckland to support 1Bn RTR (or whatever their title was then) at their Annual Camp. Our job was to provide any comms that were asked of us when that unit conducted whatever infantry people conduct when they are in the bush.

We were fully equipped with FWRs, generators, chargers and fuel and self-sufficient in rations and shelter. On night 1, I took a walk around the base area where the whole unit was camped and found the cooks trying to clean up with kerosene lanterns - well they were actually using the lanterns for light, not to clean up with. Further on, the Int people were struggling in their CP to draw what Int people draw, also using kerosene lanterns. From a discrete distance, I could see the CO and his RSM in his donga also using a similar light source. The rest of the base was in total blackness, the way the grunts do things.

But I must go back a little first. At our preparation discussions prior to the camp, I was asked what the Colonel's attitude would be if we also made ourselves self-sufficient in, shall we say 'liquid refreshment'. I professed complete ignorance on that but said that as far as I was concerned, they could take what they could fit in, on three conditions. Firstly, that I knew nothing about it (what a coward!!), secondly, that all supplies were to be handed in and stored in our Q tent (yes, we even had tentage with us) and only consumed when cleared with me and thirdly, that military stores were not to be ejected and left behind in favour of such supplies. When we arrived, I was amazed to find that about one third of our tent was stacked high with cartons of cans – how they fitted it all in the vehicles I still do not know, but the resourcefulness of the soldier knows no limits. Now back to my story.

Next morning, I approached the CO and told him what I had discovered the previous night and offered to provide proper lighting in the base area should he want it. My offer was a bit sneaky in a way, because what we wanted was our own lighting over our charging area and in our Q tent as well. I also wanted some little protection for myself I admit, should he jump on us from a great height about our precious and at that moment, secret cache. To my relief he said something like "excellent idea, Pronto (very correct he was) go ahead". So we went ahead with gusto. The first light we put in, was the CO's donga (no flies on us) followed by the kitchen, the CP and an area light. Lastly, we did our own lighting. Funny thing about those lights. The previous night, people went crook about our battery chargers making too much noise - but we never had any complaints from night two onwards. We did of course, bury the exhaust outlets in rocky pits to help deaden the noise.

Ah, bliss is the contented soldier. Night two arrived and we were all 'relaxing' in our Q tent when there came a knock on the vertical tent pole. Sticking my head out as I was closest, who should be there but the RSM. Boy, now I am for it I thought. With a straight face I asked what I could do for him, all the time thinking of a crew of wild signalmen behind me each with can in hand. He said "CO's compliments, Sir. But he was wondering if you had any beer to spare for him?" Phew, looks like we might be ok and I said, looking at our great stack "Certainly RSM. Would two cartons be sufficient?" "That would do very nicely, Sir" and away he went. No money ever changed hands nor was any asked for. He was a wonderful CO and even today, I just wonder how long he had known about it all (lighting and grog) and this was his way of letting me know that as a junior officer, I was not so smart after all. I should also mention here that their training was in two phases and that between phases, all troops came back to the headquarters for 24 hours make and mend. As each and every one of those troops filed into the area, they were handed a can of beer and the whole lot was paid for by the CO. What a man!

Being a cunning and resourceful officer (my description only) I again approached the CO and said that I could not have my men sitting around doing nothing for a day and requested permission to leave the base area and conduct a mobile radio exercise, including an undertaking to be back on site at dawn the next day. Once again, he readily told me to carry on. Well I have never seen troops move so fast - within half an hour we were on the road back to Beaumaris where we arrived in the early hours. On arrival, all vehicles were secured and everybody was on their way home under threat of death if they were not back at 0300 hrs next day. Each man took with him all his dirty greens etc., so that WAGS could do the right thing for them at home. I am pleased to report, that not one person was late and we were on the road back to Buckland in no time flat. I think the CO and RSM would have twigged what we had done because amongst all the smelly grunts, there was a group of sweet smelling happy faced signalmen.

Phase two of the camp went by quickly and before we knew it we were again on the road back to Beaumaris.
Another successful operation, doctor!

Capt Ben Digo

When your ruminating is rudely interrupted by the roar of a motor cycle starting think before you abuse the rider. He may take what appears to be an interminable time to shut up and clear off. Set your teeth, and think of the usefulness of motor cycle dispatch riders. These, the "Don R's," have at times given greater service to the Allied cause than wireless and telegraphy. When it is too dangerous to use wireless because the enemy is tuning in and listening, or when he is flooding your receiving sets with bogus reports, and when the telegraph lines are down, it is these riders who get the messages through. When things were toughest in Greece, the Don R had still to keep going-forward.

Along bullet-swept roads-roads that were covered with slimy mud and snow-these lads rode with as much speed as their machines would give without cracking. Dodging between trucks moving in the opposite direction, they kept plugging away, oblivious to all that was happening around them except the task that lay ahead.

To some of them, the work is still just a sport with a spice of danger. In Australia, these Don R's used to ride up steep hillsides, in country scrambles, compete in trials or on speed tracks-with many a buster and many a laceration or bruise. That was real sport. They have been doing the same thing over here-with-the difference that they are also playing a game of hide and seek with enemy aircraft, artillery and mortar shells. Don't be surprised if the lads tell you that they've the best job in the Army. Wouldn't swap it for a couple of crowns. Some of the older Don R's used to make their living by convincing others that motor cycling is the best sport in the world. The novices have come to take more than a passing interest in motor bikes. Their exploits in Greece and on other fronts have been just as praiseworthy as those of the veterans.

These boys acquitted themselves admirably in Greece. There, it was often only a matter of "take this to 'A' Company," but rather "find 'A' Company and deliver this." In a swiftly changing situation, only vague directions could be given. Important messages had to be delivered. And so all that the Don R's had learned in their initial training plus a bit extra had to be called on. They rode along roads that were frequently being machine-gunned. They became experts at hopping off their machines while still on the move and dashing for the nearest cover. Disconsolately, they had sometimes to watch their bikes go up in a blaze in the wake of enemy planes.

One rider who ran into a bullet storm dived into the first convenient hole near the road. In the hole were four small snakes. He elected to remain in the hole and was not bitten. The versatility of another Don R earned for him high praise from his colleagues. He was sent out to take a message to a unit that was being forced to retreat. On finding the unit he discovered that at the time, it was more important to evacuate the wounded than to go back with a return message. For three quarters of an hour he drove a truck up and down a line of vehicles, conveying wounded to the nearest casualty station. Although his truck was full of shrapnel and bullet holes the Don R was not hit.

If they were absent for longer than three days, it was the practice in some areas to post the Don R's as missing. One rider away longer than a three-day span was duly posted as missing. He returned the next day, riding a different machine from the one on which he had set out with his message. His story was that the unit he was seeking had moved the night before. He had been attacked from the air and his cycle wrecked. He had been picked up, had located and repaired another machine left on this side of the road and had completed his mission.

As the number of bikes dwindled, the riders had to commandeer all types of transport. Trucks, staff cars, and even mules and push bikes were used until something a little swifter could be found. But urgent messages to the front line had always to be carried by Don R's astride motor cycles. They had more chance of getting through. Very few riders escaped crashing on the slippery roads, but luckily only a small percentage became casualties this way. Anyhow, to many it was not a new experience. They had more thought for possible damage to the bike than to bruised bones and broken skin.

Given a message that had to get through at all costs, one rider knowingly went five miles past our front line troops. He was stopped by a patrol. A few more hundred yards and he would have barged straight into the enemy's hands. A few did make this unfortunate mistake. From one tight corner two Don R's fought their way out with "tommy" guns.

Not all their training was in the art of motorcycling. A great deal had to be left to the discretion of dispatch riders. No hard and fast rules could be laid down. Fear of para-troops dressed in our uniforms made unit commanders distrustful, even of dispatch riders. Unaware of pass-words, riders had first to convince sentries of their *bona fides* and then prove their identity before commanders would accept and act upon their It was a necessary precaution, but it made the tasks of the riders more difficult. Members of the -Provost Corps were of the greatest assistance to the riders who were guided accurately through towns & to the localities of newly arrived units. The Provost traffic controllers pointed out roadblocks and shell holes. But for this excellent co-operation many more accidents would have occurred. Eye strain & insufficient sleep made the lot of the riders worse, particularly as they had to go without food for long periods. Another inevitable hardship was that, once a rider had come to know a particular area well, he was called upon whenever vital messages had to be taken..

(The Sigs "Don R's" cont.,

(Anna - more format problems etc., with this page??)

Australian Don R's paid the highest tribute to the work of British comrades, whose sterling performances when things were blackest, were carried out with tenacity. The British rider, they say, really can ride and ride fast. Whizzing bullets and whining shells did not overawe these crouched figures on motor cycles.

In Syria, dispatch riders had a gruelling time over rough, steep roads and tracks. Near Jezzine, hostile mortars would open up as soon as the Don R appeared. The rider had to travel under fire for a mile, sometimes 2 and 3 times daily.

It was remarkable that so few became casualties. Uncertain about conditions on one important road where enemy tanks were reported to be operating, a Commanding Officer ordered two riders to travel 200 yards apart. If one got hit the other was to seek cover until it was safe to proceed. The message had to *get* through. It did, and so did the two Don R's, unperturbed after a nightmare ride.

Another rider mistook enemy infantry for our own troops. Bullets whistled round him. To show his identity he sat more upright and touched his tin hat. The next volley skittled his bike. He subsequently escaped from the hut in which he was held prisoner.

Of course, when we settle down quietly again in good old Australia some of these lads may become rowdy road hogs and in greater numbers too, perhaps by then most of the Don R's will have had enough of explosions, excitement, detonators and roaring engines. (*Author, Anon*)

THE HARLEY

The inventor of the Harley-Davidson motorcycle, Arthur Davidson, died and went to heaven. At the gates, St. Peter told Arthur. 'Since you've been such a good man and your motorcycles have changed the world, your reward is, you can hang out with anyone you want to in heaven.'

Arthur thought about it for a minute and then said, "I want to hang out with God." St. Peter took Arthur to the Throne Room, and introduced him to God. God recognized Arthur and commented, 'Okay, so you were the one who invented the Harley-Davidson motorcycle? Arthur said, 'Yeah, that's me...'

God commented: 'Well, what's the big deal in inventing something that's pretty unstable, makes noise and pollution and can't run without a road?'

Arthur was a bit embarrassed, but he finally spoke, 'Excuse me, but aren't you the inventor of woman?' God said, 'Ah, yes.' 'Well,' said Arthur, 'professional to professional, you have some major design flaws in your invention.'

1. There's too much inconsistency in the front-end suspension,
2. It chatters constantly at high speeds,
3. Most rear ends are too soft and wobble about too much,
4. The intake is placed way too close to the exhaust &
5. The maintenance costs are outrageous!!!!

'Hmmm, you may have some good points there,' replied God, 'hold on.'

God went to his Celestial supercomputer, typed in a few words and waited for the results. The computer printed out a slip of paper and God read it.

'Well, it may be true that my invention is flawed,' God said to Arthur, 'but according to these numbers, more men are riding my invention than yours.'

(Bob Gray)

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Good to report - no VALE notice for this quarter

Couldnt seem to delete this page ??