

26 Battalion Association
Victorian Branch

26 AUST. INF. BN. (AIF) "NEVER UNPREPARED"

NEWSLETTER

May 2008

ISSUE 12



Cpl Dennis Ryan (indicated)

*26 Inf. Battalion receiving the Keys to the City in a march through
Townsville in 1939*

WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER No. 12

WELCOME to the latest issue of 26 Battalion Reunion Association, Victorian Branch newsletter.

This newsletter is written, edited, printed and posted out by Norman Turrell and the layout designed by Colin Block.

Your contribution to it would be most appreciated.

ANZAC DAY '08 REPORT

By COLIN BLOCK

With pride in his step **Bert Barker** led the 26 Battalion in the 2008 ANZAC Day Parade in Melbourne. At times he even outpaced the ageing veterans following, but towards the end it was a bit demanding up the hill to the Shrine of Remembrance. However in Bert's quiet and determined way he soldiered on, leading

his Battalion past the dignitaries and on to the Eternal Flame. He and his fellow ex-servicemen rose to the occasion putting in an outstanding effort of proudly marching to remember the sacrifice of those 45 soldiers from 26 Battalion who gave their lives. Marching with Bert Barker were **Norm Donaldson, Norman Turrell, Ken MacKellin and Len Dawson** and

they were followed by **Vin Frawley** and **Bob Gaudion** in vintage cars.

Banner bearers this year were **Peter Barker** and **Jenny Schwinghammer**. Other families represented under the 26 Battalion banner were **Babore, Block, Cherry** and **Collings**.

During a pause in the parade, a policeman recognised the 26 Battalion colours that his father, **Gordon Hardy**, had fought under. He was originally from NSW and is now living in Victoria. Gordon is now the newest member of 26 Battalion Association, thanks to his son exchanging details on the spot.

Once again the reunion lunch was held at Bells Hotel. After apologies and a salute to fallen comrades, President Bob Gaudion thanked the 43 people who attended the reunion lunch and reminded the younger generation that they will be responsible for organising future Battalion reunions. He particularly thanked

Jeff Collings and **Colin Block**, both descendants of servicemen, for their contributions to the 26 Battalion Association.

Jeff Collings, Vice President (Victoria), successfully organised this year's reunion, from invitations to arranging vintage cars and table reservations. Jeff recalled from years ago, unaware that the Queensland unit had representation in Melbourne, marching behind his own unauthorised home-made banner. At the time, this caused some confusion to

the organisers and ABC commentators when two 26 Battalions went by. A couple of years later the 26 Battalion Association was able to locate Jeff and embrace his enthusiasm.

Ted Mackinnon's widow, **Anne** joined the group for lunch, thanks to her daughter **Elizabeth Davies** and **Trevor** accompanied his dad, **Ken Flakemore**. The Dawson family also had a large contingent of relatives at the lunch.

Ken Flakemore recalled how he joined the Army when he was just sixteen. When asked whether it was necessary to provide a birth certificate, he replied that if you could not supply one you required a signature from your parents. Ken went down the recruitment line and said to someone "Will you sign here as my Mum?" and to someone else, "Will you be my Dad?" The recruiting officer was surprised by his quick return to which Ken replied "I just live around the corner."



On the Spot exchange of details.



Vice President, Jeff Collins proposes a toast of remembrance during 2008 ANZAC Day reunion of 26 Battalion.



Ken Flakemore

PRESIDENT'S REPORT A TRIBUTE TO BILL JOHNSON

By BOB GAUDION

ALL the members of 26 Battalion Reunion Association were saddened to learn of the passing away of the form President of our Association, in Queensland, **Bill Johnson**.

During the dark days of World War 2 Bill served for a number of years as a corporal in the Transport platoon in Head Quart Company, 26 Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF). Essentially his job was to keep the trucks and jeeps of the Battalion in tiptop condition for use whenever needed to shift troops and equipment from one location to another. I was privileged to be the recipient of service from the Transport Platoon on a number of official occasions also on a few 'Off the record' trips.

Some of our members from Victoria, met up with Bill in 1991, in Rockhampton, Queensland at the resumption of Reunion get-togethers and again in 1992 and 1997. Bill was always very friendly and quite entertaining with the stories of his life with his wife, Lola. We were pleased to have Lola and Bill visit Melbourne for the activities on one of the Anzac Days in the 1990's.

About the middle of the 1990's Bill was elected President of 26 Battalion Reunion Association and was always very helpful towards solving the needs of our Victorian Branch such as providing the

unit plaque at the Shrine, Melbourne and the unit banner to march behind on Anzac Day. He was also editor of the Association, Queensland Newsletter for a number of years

Personally, I always got along very well with Bill and one thing which did impress me very much was his very keen sense of humour which was still part of his makeup even in his recent years of ill health.

In the future, we shall all miss our contact with Bill very much indeed and send our very sincere best wishes to his wife Lola, his family and friends.

And so we say a fond 'Farewell' to one of 'Nature's Gentlemen' and friend to just about everyone.

VALE, BILL JOHNSON.



Lola and Bill Johnson



*Left: Tallest and shortest
in 26 Battalion*



CORRECTION

PREVIOUS reports that the organisation known as the 26 Reunion Association located in Queensland has been terminated is incorrect.

The Secretary/Treasurer is Lola Johnson and the Vice Presidents (Qld) are Bill Gardner and Bill Mitchell.

A GOOD SAMARITAN

Reprint from Flinders local paper

FLINDERS resident **Christie Johnstone** remembers his late friend and neighbour **Jim Ebzery** as a "good man who would do anything for anyone".

Mr Ebzery, 82, died after a car accident at the intersection of Nepean Highway and White Hill Rd, Dromana, in November.

Mr Johnstone said the Flinders community had lost a tireless worker, and he had lost a dear friend.

"Anyone who was in trouble mattered to Jim," Mr Johnstone said.

"I will remember all the jobs we did together in the community and the good deeds we did."

Mr Ebzery moved in next door to Mr Johnstone almost 20 years ago, after moving from Black Rock.

A neighbour **Angela Walker** said Mr Johnstone and Mr Ebzery had

visited her house each Sunday for a cup of tea and to deliver the newspaper.

"He (Mr Ebzery) was a lovely man - the kind of guy who liked to do things for other people," she said.

A World War II veteran who served in New Guinea, Mr Ebzery became a passionate supporter of the Flinders RSL for the past 13 years.

He was serving as vice-president and welfare officer at the time of the accident. "He would look after all the sick, visit them in hospital," Mr Johnstone said.

"He was the same for anyone in the community.

"He'd never say 'no' to a job if something needed to be done.

Friends and family gathered at Bunurong Cemetery on Monday



Above: Jim Ebzery

last week to farewell Mr Ebzery. Mr Ebzery is survived by daughter **Annie** and son **Michael**.

V LE

Jim Ebzery
Con Bogiatzis
David Sauer
Bill Kennedy
Bill Johnson
Les Grant
Vern Bowler



Above: Jim Ebzery with his hand on his hip



*Left:
Con Bogiatzis, former Signaller from 26 Bn.
1922 Ingham, NQ - 2007 Canberra*

BLUE 'N PURPLE

By Tony Murray, Bundaberg,
May 1992

*This verse is but a narrative,
abridged history if you like
Of a gallant young Battalion
which the Japanese did strike.
Raised in Western Queensland
when Hitlerism spawned.
Then consigned to dusty archives
soon after peace had dawned.*

*And like every other regiment it
had it's ups and downs,
With many soldiers through it's
ranks from the outback to the
towns.
Some went on to other glories,
others joined us through the war
And heroic were some sagas, yes
real esprit de corps!*

*Led by illustrious commanders,
though in total but a few.
Firstly Colonel Harry Murray, real
Australian legend true,
With Victoria Cross preceding, his
awards invoke sheer awe
To Colonel Bernie Callinan, who
bravely led us into war.*

*Early muster first at Townsville,
some time at Sellheim camp
On the Barron at Kuranda. then
on Horne Island we did tramp.
Some of us to Tanah Merah, our
first taste of foreign soil
When Jap bombers did their
utmost, our then lifestyle to
bespoil.*

*More training now at Strathpine
with Bougainville our goal,
Where the Japanese would test
us as we probed with each patrol.
But we fought him and pursued
him o'er swamp and jungle trail
From Numa down to Soraken -,
Ruri Bay to then assail.*

*Some journalist about that time
dubbed us 'Bougainville Black
Cats'
Though the weapon pits we lived
in weren't quite feline habitats.
Still we didn't seek much glory,
no applause for each foray,
Just did our bit and played our
part in slouch hat and green
beret.*

*Though we really won the battles,
nothing's gained without a cost
For some 'twas total sacrifice
- yes, some real good men were
lost.
So while we think of fallen mates,
'mid memory's fond recall,
We pay tribute to their courage,
for they sacrificed their all.*

*This war now called
'unnecessary', or as the ill
informed proclaim
We only did some 'mopping up',
'twould seem 'twas just a game.
But if those armchair 'experts'
take a trip up Moresby way
Neat white crosses at Bomaga
silence critics such as they.*

*But if you've never scaled a
summit, despite the ache and
pain,
Then you've not soaked in full
measure a panoramic plain.
And one thing I'm cognisant of,
it's been true since time begun
That no shadow ever falls at all,
where there never shines a sun!*

*And when the war was over they
shipped us to Rabaul
To round up our erstwhile enemy,
our last overseas locale
And more than two score years
would pass 'ere Keith Miles took
a stand
To set up our first re-union, with
Joe Sellen his right hand.*

*But time moves on more swiftly
now as those left of us grow old,
When we can but recall the days,
when we were young and bold.
And as I look around this room,
at the heads now turning white,
A colour patch of diamond shape
binds us each re-union night.*

*Flannel shades of Blue 'n Purple,
rampant on it's corner square.
Adorned our faded puggarees, on
slouch hats so proud to wear.
It still symbolises mateship in a
bond extraordinaire,
That the years can't diminish,
though our ranks are thinned and
spare.*

*So while the Twenty Sixth
Battalion on history's page must
wane,
And there's just each year's
re-union for us all who still
remain,
I'm sure the assembly here
understands the point I take,
If I could have my time again and
the choice was mine to make
I'd be real proud and grateful too,
to embrace the self same team
'Neath those Blue On Purple
colours, which we hold in such
esteem!*



www.26bn.org

*This verse can also be seen on the
26 Battalion Association website:
www.26bn.org*