

May 2021



# VicRoads Association

## Newsletter No. 224



Tin sheds, Exhibition Building

Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members, and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Cost of membership is a once only fee of \$50. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary, VicRoads Association, PO Box 80, Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below. Visit our website at [vicroadsassociation.org](http://vicroadsassociation.org)

### Dear Members,

I have had an overwhelming response of appreciation regarding the last newsletter honouring those CRB/RCA and VicRoads staff members who served during the wars. Many of you were over-generous in your praise and I would be embarrassed to print them but, humble and all as I am, I got quite thrill to receive them. Thank you.

Of more importance, many of you were able to provide me with additional information which means that I can update and expand the history. I propose to include a new heading in future newsletters – Lest We Forget – under which I will include these new data and change the website version accordingly. This will commence with this newsletter.

On an entirely different tack, I thought I would provide a potted Annual Report. Our last AGM was held on 16 March 2020. You will also realise that a lot of the formality of running the Association in accordance with the Rules of Association, has flown out the window because of the limitations imposed by COVID. The Committee had not met for over 12 month and we had none of our usual activities in 2020, and we have not convened an Annual General Meeting for this year. On the credit side, we spent little money. Ken Vickery, our Treasurer, has reported that we have a balance of \$3,951.18 in our bank account.

We kept in touch with our members via the newsletters and the website. In 2020 we issued seven newsletters – one

more than usual – and so far, in 2021, we have issued four newsletters in the first five months of the year. You will also see in the next item below, that we are commencing a few social activities this year, and perhaps a few site visits. I expect that we will be able to arrange a more extensive program for 2022. We are optimistic that we will be able to have a Christmas lunch this year

Our membership numbers are still healthy. We have over three hundred members. New members during the last period include Mal Kersting, Eddie Schubert, Lynton Peterson and Phil West.

We were very saddened by the death of our committee member, Jeff Briggs. (I have written a tribute to Jeff later in this newsletter). He and Lyn were both committee members, but Lyn has decided that she will not offer herself for re-election. Furthermore Annette Willis has also retired and so we had three vacancies on our committee. However, Iris Whittaker and Jill Earnshaw have agreed to join us meaning that we now have only one vacancy. If anyone would like to volunteer, please contact our secretary, Jim Webber.

On behalf of the Association I would like to thank Lyn and Annette for their constant and loyal service and I am sure we will still see them at our functions in the future.

**David Jellie**  
*President*

## What's coming up

### Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel, 12 noon.

*Monday 21 June*

*Monday 9 August*

*Monday 11 October*

*Monday 8 November*

*Monday 7 February 2022*

Please let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you propose to attend.

### Dinners at Glen Waverley RSL, 6.00 pm

*Thursday 13 May*

*Thursday 7 October*

Ken Vickery is our contact for these functions. Please book with him on [kenvickery@tpg.com.au](mailto:kenvickery@tpg.com.au) or call him on 0409 561618.

### Regional Visit to Warrnambool and the Western District, October 2021

This will be a three day trip involving two night's accommodation. A number of people have indicated that they would like to participate. I will make up an itinerary and include it in a future newsletter. If you are interested in such a trip, please let me know on [pdjellie@hotmail.com](mailto:pdjellie@hotmail.com). Those of you who have already expressed interest need not reply.

### Royal Australian Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne, November 2021

We propose a visit in November 2021 – date to be determined. We can arrange a conducted tour and have lunch afterwards at the venue.

## New members

I extend a warm welcome to the following four new members – Mal Kersting, Phil West, Linton Peterson and Eddie Schubert. Between these four new members we have added 130 years of experience to our Association.

Mal had a career spanning 47 years which is described in more detail later in this newsletter. Phil worked in Environmental Services from 1985 to 2006 – a period of 21 years, Linton worked at Head Office and the Bendigo office for 20 years between 1964 and 1984, and Eddie's career extended from 1978 to 2020 (42 years).

Eddie commenced in Engineering Survey in December 1978, when he was 19. He worked all around Victoria for 12 years. Some of the projects that he worked on were the Hume Freeway Bypass of Benalla and Wangaratta and the duplication of the Tynong to Drouin section of the Princes Highway East. He later worked on the duplication of Punt Road and the Western Ring Road prior to commencing in the VicRoad's library in 1991 where he was under the tutelage of Iris Whittaker and Diana Logan. The library closed in December 2014.

In 2015 he worked in Registration and Licensing as the Safe Driving Program Coordinator which mainly consisted of looking after the "hoon" schools and ensuring they followed VicRoads procedures. This was followed by three years in the Land Acquisition section as a Property Officer, where his major task was converting former Crown Land into VicRoads property. At the same time Eddie was the VicRoads Heritage Officer working with external groups and representing VicRoads in assemblies and community projects such as the Carlo Catani commemorative project. Another highlight of his career was as a Heritage Officer for the VicRoads Centenary.

## VALE

### Jeff Briggs

It is my sad duty to inform you of the recent death of our esteemed committee member, Jeff Briggs.

Jeff's career at the Country Roads Board, the Road Construction Authority and VicRoads spanned more than four decades and he made life-long friendships along the way. At the time he retired, Jeff was Business Support Manager on the 3rd Floor at Kew. When Jeff and his wife, Lyn, retired in 2006, they were the first married couple to retire on the same day. Jeff had clocked up 40 years of service and Lyn 38.

Jeff was born in East Melbourne. His father was in the navy and the family first lived in Moonee Ponds but when he was 11 the family moved to a new house in Coleman Parade, Mt Waverley. After completing high school Jeff commenced work with AMP as a clerk and then he moved to the Social Welfare Department. He started work at the CRB in 1966 in the Pay Office.

He played hockey as a goalkeeper with the Waverley Hockey Club and at the age of 40 he took up running and participated in 12 marathons including the New York Marathon in 1989. In one year, he competed in three marathons. Wonky knees eventually put an end to his running career.



Jeff and Lyn

Jeff started the CRB Wine Club in 1973 which is still going today. He was also passionate about music – all types of music but especially classical music – and was a keen philatelist and collector of vintage post cards. He loved Stephen Sondheim musicals.

Jeff was a serious wine buff. On Saturday mornings he worked at the Templestowe Cellars and he conducted tastings and discussions on wines. He and Lyn travelled extensively to Europe and Asia but mainly to New Zealand and he became rather an expert on New Zealand.



Jeff developed Non-Hodgkinson Lymphoma and he underwent various programs of treatment and was about to start a new one but, by this stage, the cancer was too advanced and he died on 10 March 2021.

Jeff (and Lyn) were very loyal and respected members of our committee. They had a huge knowledge of the organizations and the people who worked within them. Jeff also supplied me with a constant stream of jokes for the newsletter but I am pleased to say that Lyn is continuing on in the same vein.

He is sadly missed and we extend our sincere condolences to Lyn.

### Lois Hodgson

Lois, Stan's wife, passed away on March 31, 2020. Graeme Stone has very kindly provided the following obituary.

A fitting celebration of Lois' life of 88 years was held at Burwood Uniting Church on April 8th. Attendance was limited to invitation given Covid restrictions. Lovely memories of Lois' life with Stan over their 65 years of marriage were shared with reflections on her generous contributions to the life of the Burwood Church and its members. Lois was very active in organising speakers for Ladies Fellowship and a Community Centre for 40 years and organized around 1,000 speakers and entertainers over that time.

Stan met Lois in Geelong at the local Methodist Church where they were married in 1955. They moved to Bairnsdale where they lived in a CRB house in Rupert Street. Stan worked on the Sale aerodrome and then in the Bairnsdale Division on bridge maintenance. Lois was a devoted wife and mother. She and Stan had two children, Craig and Julie, and have two granddaughters who were often cared for by Lois and Stan. They were both as very active members of the Burwood Methodist and Uniting Church since 1957.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Stan.

## News from our members

### Noel Anderson

Noel wrote to me regarding some of the characters and antics in the Tin Shed in the 1950s. This is what he wrote:

The Plans and Survey Division, which was in the main Exhibition Building, had expanded and twelve of the draftsmen were relocated to the Tin Shed. To accommodate us, the Plan Printing Section and some of the bridge engineers, were placed in the Tin Shed. This, and a few other sheds, were placed on the old Exhibition bike track.

Two of them were typical Army huts with corrugated iron walls and corrugated asbestos roofs. There was a centrally placed door on the north side which opened out to the rough roadway. The door at the west end opened into the plan printing section which you walked through to get to the Plans and Survey design area, and to the Bridge Design section which was under the control of John Pittard. Mac Wilkinson was in charge of the Road Design area. Mac had done a lot of design, survey, and construction work on the North-South road in Central Australia during the war. And here we were with our big drafting tables and chairs, ready

to design our Victorian roads under these war-time working conditions with an amazing variety of chaps.

Our shed was lined with blue painted Masonite and brown linoleum on the floor. For light and ventilation there were double windows hinged on the vertical sides so that they opened outwards. Being a basic wartime structure there was no provision for heating or cooling to give any comfort in Melbourne's extreme weather conditions.

There was no way we could keep the shed cool during the hot summer days except to open the windows. To satisfy our insatiable thirst, the Board approved of us having a very large Hessian water bag which we hung outside one of the windows where it was in a draught to keep it cool. For the winter, the Board approved of us having a small kerosene heater for the whole of our portion of the Tin Shed. This heater was not only a fire hazard, but it was quite inadequate for its task.



The tin sheds at the back of the Exhibition Building

Immediately outside and on the other side of the rough roadway there was a large caravan which was the canteen, operated by two vibrant ladies who made sandwiches, and sold cakes, drinks and ice cream, and called everybody "love" or "ducks".

We had a marvellous mix of personalities in the tin shed. As it was the immediate post-war period there were some who were classified as "displaced persons"(DPS). One was from Hungary and he had walked hundreds of miles across Europe to escape his communist controlled homeland. Another was a Latvian whose family was forced to move to Germany and his father forced to serve in the German army. Both these chaps were in their mid-twenties. Another one came from Hungary in 1956. He was a member of the Hungarian Olympic kayak team who managed to defect and remain in Australia. He came to the Tin Shed. Naturally he could speak no English, so the first thing we taught him to say when he entered the Tin Shed first thing every morning was "Good morning you bloody \$%\*&^\$@s". Zoli went on to have a long career in our Syndal store yard.

In addition to the DPS, we had some Colombo Plan students who were here to study engineering at the University of Melbourne and who came to the CRB to get practical work experience. Among us Australians we had a Singaporean, a Malaysian and a high caste Indian. There was also an Italian, Tino Aureli. He was a licensed surveyor in Italy but he had to undergo further exams to be accepted here. There was a bloke of Dutch origin who had been expelled from Indonesia who came to Australia to settle here. He told us he was a surveyor, but his knowledge was a little lacking, so we had a problem there.

Among the Australians two of us had served in the RAAF – Max Doig a test pilot, and myself as a wireless air gunner in Bomber Command in England. We had two ex-navy personnel – Harold Gray and Jack Ross. And there was the adventurer, Peter McFarlane, a qualified civil engineer who could not resist a challenge, one of which was to canoe across the English Channel, and another took place in the Tin Shed, which I will describe later.

As we were working in survey and design there was a reasonable amount of maths involved and one of the Australians, Gordon Gunn, was a qualified civil engineer who was a wizard with calculus and the solutions to problems involving it. He could solve them mentally. Later he was appointed to Warrnambool Divisional office.

The Singaporean, Peng Wong Choon, a man of slight build with a bright, happy intelligent personality always arrived early at the Tin Shed. He often arrived with a cantaloupe – cut it in half – then went over to Love and Ducks to put ice cream in it and came back to his desk to enjoy it. Another one of his delights was to walk up and down the centre aisle and tell us how wrong the White Australia Policy was. That was his big mistake because if we wanted to "wind him up" we Australians would tell him how good the policy was

and the benefits we had derived from it. But it was all done in a good spirit and there was never any nastiness in it.

In short, we were a good "League of Nations". Peng said he would never marry an Australian girl. He eventually married Shirley, an Australian-born Chinese woman who lived in the Torres Strait Islands. Peng left the CRB and worked with the Department of Main Roads in Sydney, but we kept in touch with him until his death.

To return to Peter McFarlane who loved a challenge. He was tall with unkempt fair hair, of athletic build, with a cheerful but determined facial expression. He could not resist an argument. One day, a rather pleasant but loquacious chap came through the Tin Shed on accounts business and was baited by us as to how much beer you could drink. He reckoned he could drink thirty glasses. We challenged him on this and took him to the Lemon Tree Hotel one lunchtime and made him sign his name after each beer. His signature got worse and worse until he collapsed on his twenty sixth beer, and he was taken home. Then a point was raised as to why we can't drink that much water. We discussed it with Peter and he agreed that if we kept the water bag filled, he would drink the water. He started after lunch and as we were working overtime that night we all went for a counter tea and Peter had two beers. Back in the Tin Shed Peter kept drinking water until 9 pm when we knocked off. He had a few toilet stops on the way to the station, and on his journey to Camberwell he had to go to the toilet at each station which made him late home. The next morning he came into the Tin Shed, a rather distraught figure of a man. "How are you?" we asked. "I had a ^\$&%# of a night. I had to explain to my wife why I had to keep going to the toilet. She was not amused."

Sitting across the aisle from Peter was the Dutchman, Jon. He disclosed that he was told to leave Indonesia in the late 1940s. It was before Indonesia achieved independence from the Dutch, and I suppose the Indonesians were making it uncomfortable for their erstwhile colonists. He proved to be rather arrogant. He alleged he had done a lot of survey work but his work performance proved otherwise. He commandeered the small kerosene heater allocated to us and placed it right beside his chair. He was constantly grizzling about aspects of Australian life. If it wasn't politics, it was our food, the unfriendliness of our people, the difficulty of getting suitable accommodation, and the fact that people did not understand him.

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***A rather pleasant chap came through the Tin Shed on business and was baited by us as to how much beer you could drink. He reckoned he could drink thirty glasses.***

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Each day he came into the Tin Shed with a large suitcase and each morning tea time he would disappear with his suit case for half an hour. This intrigued us. On his return, he would boil water on the kerosene heater and add black currant juice and Epsom salts which made it fizz. He'd then drink this concoction through the afternoon. He knew nothing about road design so he had to be given straightforward jobs like plotting cross sections.

When he was required to plot from field notes he was found wanting and instead of asking us for help, he approached the Senior Engineering surveyor and asked that the surveyors come to him for instruction. We had excellent surveyors and John Turnbull hit the roof. Surveyor Bill Butcher took Jon out on survey and found him to be so impractical that he told him to leave the theodolite and sit in the van. Jon was such a know-all pest that it made him the target for practical jokes. We used to keep the windows near him open a small amount so that he got the full extent of the draughts, especially the cold ones in winter. Jon once told us he was waiting for a telegram. So we arranged with the janitor at the front door to place a piece of wire in an envelope and to ring Jon and tell him there was a wire waiting for him. Jon collected the wire, and on his way back to the Tin Shed he reported our behaviour to the Assistant Engineer for Plans and Surveys. There were no repercussions.

Eventually we found out why Jon disappeared at morning tea time. He went to the post office to post gluten free bread - which he said he invented - to his customers around Victoria. Each afternoon about 4:45 pm Jon took his empty case to a van in which he got a ride home to Prahran where he lived. One afternoon we asked the lab assistant with whom he travelled to put some used concrete test cylinders in the case, and when Jon got to Prahran, to slide the case to him when he got out. They did, and Jon dropped the heavy case to the ground. Instead of emptying it, he carried it to his flat. The next morning he was not very pleased with us. He never brought the case to work again.

We don't know what became of him.

Yours historically,  
**Noel Anderson.**

## Tom Glazebrook

I had been in touch with Tom regarding military knowledge I needed for the last newsletter when he happened to mention that his father, Frank, had been awarded a Bronze medal from the Royal Humane Society.

This is Frank's story.

Newton Barton, Edward 'Jack' Horton and Frank Glazebrook set off on a fishing trip on Monday 30th July 1928. They left Yeppoon (Queensland) between nine and ten o'clock that night in Barton's yacht, the Nellie. They had rations for about a week, and intended to go as far as Percy Island, near Mackay.

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***A whale suddenly rose vertically out of the water, about 12 feet from the yacht, and then crashed across the mast.***

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After lunch on Tuesday 31st July, they were about a mile from Quoin Island and sailing along at their leisure. Jack was sitting on an ice-chest just below the mast of the yacht, and Newton and Frank were sitting in the stern. A whale suddenly rose vertically out of the water, about 12 feet from the yacht, and then crashed across the mast. The whale appeared to be about 8 to 10 feet thick and 40 to 50 feet long.

The Nellie was smashed to pieces. The three men were thrown into the sea, which was infested with sharks. Jack Horton was seriously injured and completely disabled. Newton Barton received a severe gash on his shin, possibly from being brushed with the tail of the whale. Frank Glazebrook was uninjured.

A dinghy, which had been lashed to the yacht, floated free. Newton retrieved the dinghy while Frank supported Jack on the ice chest in the water. Frank and Newton 'floated' Jack into the dinghy then bailed it from the outside before getting in themselves. The three men spent about an hour in the water before they were all in the dinghy. The dinghy swamped, but was righted again through Newton's seamanship.

The men had a difficult time with the dinghy. One of the rowlocks had broken away, and Newton made an improvised one with his belt. The dinghy was half submerged due to the weight of the three men. While Newton rowed, Frank feverishly bailed out water. Jack was lying in the centre of the dinghy, in terrible pain due to his injuries. Newton and Frank were unable to change positions in the dinghy for fear of swamping it.

Newton had rowed about five miles in about two hours, and they were within about half a mile of Port Clinton, when they spotted the launch, the Viking. Frank attracted their attention by waving his shirt attached to an oar.



The citation for Frank Glazebrook's Bronze Medal.



Frank Glazebrook and his medal.

The crew of the Viking rescued the three men, making Jack as comfortable as possible. The Viking took them back to Yeppoon, arriving shortly before midnight. They were fortunate to find the Viking, which had been delayed from its own departure while getting supplies of bait for a fishing trip.

Jack Horton was admitted to Yeppoon Hospital. He died from his injuries early on Thursday morning, 2nd August 1928. Newton Barton took many weeks to recover from his injuries and shock. Frank Glazebrook was not injured physically but suffered shock from the accident.

In 1929, Newton Barton and Frank Glazebrook were awarded Bronze medals from the Royal Humane Society of Australasia for their rescue of Jack Horton.

## Nick Szwed

In response to Doug Mathew's letter in Newsletter 222, Nick was moved to write as follows:

Dear Doug, I agree with you that "the world's resources are finite" and the population can't go on growing forever. But I am surprised that you didn't also suggest that the economy can't grow forever. When you wrote about the economy, you extolled the virtues of "growth with profit". Isn't that a contradiction with your earlier point?

My personal view is that we in the wealthier countries, already have enough wealth to survive comfortably. How many devices do we need and how often do we really need to update them for what benefit?

I believe that we should re-assess our economic approach and redirect our efforts to a sustainable model which is not just based on growth and profit alone. That's why I think there is a strong lesson to be learnt from the people who lived on this continent in a sustainable fashion for 60,000 years.

You are proposing more of the same, but I'm looking for change to survive into the future.

On the subject of press bias, I have to disagree with you entirely. I believe you are showing your own bias when you claim the Canberra Press Gallery, ABC, SBS and The Age are left leaning. I believe there have been studies that have shown them to be very balanced in their reporting. They may be to the left of the Murdoch press but that is because the middle is by definition to the left of right.

## John Liddell on news of Lance Midgely

John wrote to me as follows:

Jenny and I visited Lance at Whittlesea Lodge the other day. He was very engaged and while he has limited mobility below the waist he was up for a big hug with Jenny both coming and going. He has a large motorised wheel chair and we motored and walked about three short blocks to a bakery for lunch. He has a stalk for his mobile phone which he seems to manage quite well. He is having an operation on his hand soon which should improve his use of his fingers.

His wife Judy has a separate room at the same facility. She requires a high level of care and they usually have lunch together. They have family in Whittlesea so the current arrangements work pretty well. He recently caught a bus and trains to Ballarat and was able to catch up with mates at the Golf Club. He is now planning to fly to Mildura to visit family. He said he gets regular phone calls and some visits from his past VicRoads colleagues.

## Mal Kersting

Mal has just joined the Association after a stellar career at CRB/RCA/VicRoads and Regional Roads Victoria. In fact, he is possibly our first member who has transitioned those four organizations. I asked him to provide some of the highlights of his career and this is what he wrote.

'My career with the CRB commenced back in 1972, when I was appointed by Bruce Addis to one of four Engineering Assistant roles in Bridge Division. Being from Geelong, a 'Cats' supporter and former Gordon Institute student seemed to help with the prequals for the job, and my role was to assist Ervin Matzner's group with design and engineering activities. I remember being amazed that there were five floors of the Princess Street building almost entirely devoted to bridge engineers and technical staff. One of my first jobs was the design for the plaza entrance at the Footscray football oval – a curved sculpted concourse with green concrete – very 'different' for the day.

I had initially thought it a good idea to be in construction and was penciled in to join the Hume Freeway project, however this was interrupted by my appointment to one of the Bridge Drafting teams, and ultimately led to assisting with designs for many dozens of structures on urban and rural arterial roads, including the Hume Freeway sections. One of the first jobs that I recall was for the controversial F2 freeway connection which was later abandoned owing to community feedback ... a sign of times to come.

I then led a team over several years assisting with designs for the elevated West Gate Freeway through South Melbourne – refining the complex reinforcement details for the precast segments which were cast on ground with internal drainage, electrical and fire service systems, parapet and expansion joint designs. I was also involved in the (very elementary) translation of French drawings for the elevated gantries that were designed for lifting the precast segments into position.

Over the course of my time in Bridge Division, I was appointed to lead several bridge drafting teams. Subsequently I was seconded to the Road Design group, arranged by Kerry Burke but I returned to Bridge Division as Manager Bridge Drafting, responsible for some 40 – 50 drafting staff that worked in the Princess Street building at that time.

In 1989, the Roads Corporation (trading as VicRoads) came into being and I was invited by Bruce Phillips to join a new Northern regional team comprising Gary Liddle, Lance Midgley, Greg Mariager, and David Francis (R&L) at the existing CRB Office in Queen Street Bendigo. My role was Manager Technical Services, being responsible for design, survey, environmental and materials services for Northern Region, which at that time covered 34 municipalities, including Mildura. Being new to the role, I was greatly appreciative of the many staff that had extensive skills,

local knowledge and experience and the respect of many communities within the broader region.

Apart from road management activities, the development of a new Regional Office in Bendigo via sale/leaseback arrangement, support to Council amalgamation and handover of the Mildura office to Western Region were also part of my portfolio. Through various VicRoads structural reviews, I also had the opportunity to be appointed to Manager Business Support, Manager Program Development and Operations Manager (Mildura) roles.

In 1999 I was given the opportunity to be Acting Regional Manager Eastern Region, thanks to David Anderson and Norm Butler (who was seconded to Head Office to manage VicRoads programs). I recall that I was a bit nervous (filling in for Norm), but had great support from the ER staff, particularly with a number of key projects including North Arm Bridge, Swing Bridge, Cox's Bridge and the repainting of McKillops Bridge (the locals didn't like Gum Leaf Green).

In 2000 I was appointed Regional Manager North East Region based in Benalla (the region colloquially referred to as 'God's Own Country'). Key issues were the increasing demands on maintenance funds, a spate of truck crashes on the Hume, and my first real foray with managing regional politics and an increasingly curious media.

In 2002, I was appointed Regional Manager Northern Region. The ensuing years to 2017 provided a focus on managing regional growth and road improvement projects, notably, oversight of completion of the Calder Freeway (Woodend to Bendigo), an innovative \$86m Ravenswood interchange, Comini rest area, upgrade of Bendigo urban arterials including duplication of Bendigo inner box, Napier Street and Kangaroo Flat entrances, Strathfieldsaye township, Black Forest Drive Woodend, Dann's Bridge, Heathcote Township project (Engineering Excellence Award) and coordination with RTA/RMS for maintenance and upgrades of the Murray River crossings.

Planning studies were undertaken for a Kilmore – Wallan bypass (EES), Hume Freeway strategy, and various urban planning strategies for Bendigo city.

I also recall in 2000 being advised of a \$36m Federation project budget for the construction of the second Murray River crossing at Echuca-Moama, however approvals could not be gained to commence works on the project. The project became a point of skepticism by the local community and it took another seventeen years of persistence by dedicated staff and support via a long-standing relationship with the Yorta Yorta elders and Campaspe Shire to gain the necessary planning approvals (EES/EIS) and \$287m funding to enable the bridge to be commenced.

Other events that dominated were the floods of 2011/12, the Black Saturday fires, the Kerang rail disaster and several high-profile multi-fatal crashes at Donald and Castlemaine.



Community engagement, a substantial uplift in road safety programs, and challenges with road maintenance were given greater emphasis during that time. Strangely perhaps, I enjoyed the dynamics of working with the political challenges that often framed many of our community sensitive projects, and valued the relationships that were formed with the many key stakeholders. I was also appreciative of the long-term relationship with ABC radio presenters for the monthly talk-back sessions over many years.

A point of some pride for the region was the development of local initiatives and programs to support local undergraduates, a partnership with Latrobe University engineering faculty, a scholarship for indigenous secondary students, a diversity program for the disadvantaged, support for the corporate graduate recruitment program, as well as sponsorship for the L2P program, Maryborough Energy Breakthrough and Rotary interschool engineering competitions.

In 2010, I joined the VicRoads International Projects' team as Advisor to the Lao Government, as Strategic Planning Specialist with LPWD to develop 5-year plans for maintenance and development of arterial roads in Laos. I was also a delegate at the PIARC centennial in Paris in 2007.

In 2017, I was invited to assist Western Region (as Acting RD), which was transitioning to Regional Roads Victoria (RRV). Again, with the support of an experienced and skilled team, my role included the establishment of RRV headquarters in Ballarat, delivery of historical 'biggest maintenance budget' to address previous maintenance deficits (\$150m Regional program), initiate delivery for a \$68m Ballarat Growth package and cycling projects, and among other activities, work with Councils and DELWP to progress planning for Western Highway bypass projects for Beaufort, Ararat, Horsham. A new \$100m Fixing Country Roads grants program was also fast-tracked to assist rural and regional councils with local road infrastructure.

In summary, some 47 years seem to have flown by and so much happened along the way. I have had an amazing career, and was fortunate to have met and worked with so many interesting and talented people, especially work colleagues, and the many individuals and members of communities, including business and in political circles. I greatly enjoyed being part of the regions that make a difference in regional Victoria, and am indebted to those leaders at CRB/VicRoads/RRV that gave me the opportunity to be part of a great organization.

## LEST WE FORGET



These are the first stories I have received from members and there are plenty more to come in future editions. I will add the new ones to the website copy and make appropriate adjustments to the existing entries. Thank you everyone for your interest.

### Jim Webber

Jim sent me this story about his uncle, Robert (Bob) Mace Webber, who worked for the CRB and served in the Australian Army Service during the Second World War.

### Robert Mace Webber vx28662

My uncle Bob worked in the Transport Section at 25 Church St, Hawthorn for about 10 years in the 1970s when he worked for John Gibney, a man Bob greatly admired.

Bob, who was born in 1909 at Castlemaine, was the sixth of nine children born to Benjamin and Jessie Webber. The Webber family owned Webber's Hotel (now the Northern Arts Hotel) for 40 years from 1882 to 1922.

Bob began his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner with Thompsons Engineering & Pipe Co. in Castlemaine in 1923. He worked at Thompsons until 1928 after which he moved

to the family's home in Kew. In 1936 he was the first of the Webber children to marry. Two years later he was offered a position as a fitter and turner in the Australian Military Forces at the Ordnance Workshops, Victoria Barracks, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne.

Following the start of the Second World War in September 1939, the Australian Army Services were shipping manpower and equipment to Egypt by June 1940. Bob left from Melbourne in August 1940, arriving in Palestine in October. Bob was made a Lieutenant in January 1941. He spent several months training in Palestine before he embarked for Greece on 1 April 1941, a few days before the German invasion of Greece on 6 April. On 12 April, the 2nd Anzac Corps of Australian and New Zealand troops was formed to assist the Greek Army. During the Greek Campaign the Anzac Corps was rapidly pushed southwards. The main Anzac Corps reached the coast at Argos, Nafplio and Tolo, Bob being captured at Tolo on 28 April. Bob's unit had waited at Tolo for two days to be evacuated, but no rescue ships turned up. About 11,000 Allied troops were evacuated to Crete and Alexandria while about 2,000 others were captured by the time the Germans were victorious on 30 April. A total of 2,065 Australians were captured in Greece.



## LEST WE FORGET



Bob was kept in a prison in Corinth before being taken to Germany on 16 June. The POWs were generally transported to Germany by rail in closed wagons on a journey in appalling conditions of up to a week. Bob's wife and two young daughters initially heard that Bob was missing in June 1941. The Argus on 31 July 1941 under the heading 'Missing Officers Located' listed Bob as one of 59 officers located in German prison camps by the International Red Cross Committee. He spent nearly four years as a POW in Germany in three prisons for officers - Oflag 5B (at Biberach), Oflag 6B (at Warburg) and Oflag 7A (at Murnau).

While in captivity in December 1941 Bob was Mentioned in Dispatches - 'in recognition of distinguished services in the Middle East, during the period February 1941 to July 1941'.



Lt. R. M. Webber Australian Prisoner of War in Germany.

This photo was taken in Oflag 5B in August 1941, 4 months after his capture.

The record of Bob's de-briefing in England after the war indicated that the conditions in all three prisons were fairly grim, with the winter cold being a major problem. It's interesting that this photo was taken while in captivity, presumably by his captors. Another interesting aspect of life as a POW was that Bob was able to receive family photos while in the

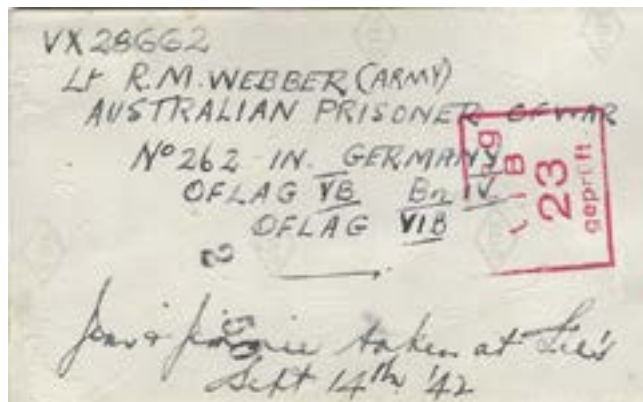
camps. I have several that Bob brought back home after the war – the one below sent to Oflag 5B featured me as a two year old. I haven't been able to find any reference to how they were dispatched in Australia. Given that they included the camp address, it's possible that the family just dropped the addressed photos in the mail box.



Jim Webber (age 2) and his father (also Jim)

Oflag 7A was liberated by the USA Army on 29 April 1945.

Australian POWs from German prisons were sent to England after being released, in Bob's case to Eastbourne in East Sussex. During his time there he completed two Statements regarding his capture, his experiences in the German camps, and his involvement in any escape attempts – one Statement for Australian POWs and the other for Australian, British



Written on the reverse of the photo

and American POWs. On the one hand, these Statements were used to identify war crimes and mistreatment, and on the other, to identify those who could be compensated for assisting escapees.

Bob arrived back in Australia four months after his release and a month later he was made a Captain.

He remained in the Australian Army after his war service. Bob and family were first posted to Canberra for seven years, where he was OC heading the Ordnance Workshops at the Royal Military College in Duntroon. Bob, by then in the Australian Electrical & Mechanical Engineers (AEME), and his family then spent more than two years in Nottingham, England and Cologne, Germany from 1952 to 1954 where he was seconded to the British Army on an exchange basis. Bob then had 3 years in Adelaide before being finally posted to the Army's Headquarters in Melbourne where he was made a Major in July 1962. On his retirement in February 1964, following 26 years in the services, he was made a Lieutenant Colonel.

Bob died at Coolangatta in June 1992 at age 83.

**Footnote:** As a result of preparing my uncle's story I have been put in contact with several descendants of other POW's who were captured with Bob and with Jim Craven historian and the author of a forthcoming book on the Greek Campaign and the Battle of Crete.

**Jim Webber**  
February 2021

### Kelvin York

Kelvin wrote to inform me of two Experimental Officers who saw active service during WW2, prior to joining the CRB. They were:

### Lloyd George Lawson 401223, RAAF

Lloyd served over Europe with the Pathfinder Force in Bomber Command. He served from January 1941 to February 1946. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal, and held the rank of Flying Officer at discharge.

## Gordon Stanley Wilson

VX15691, 2nd / 12th Field Regiment, AIF

Gordon served in the Middle East and Southwest Pacific Area. He enlisted in May 1940 and, at war's end, continued to serve in the Regular Army until 1967. During the latter period he served in Malaya at the time of the Indonesian Confrontation. He held the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 at discharge.

He also added to my knowledge regarding R E V (Ted) Donaldson, our former Chairman. There is a record of a Robert Edward Donaldson, born 28/9/1914 in Canterbury, VX 39020, 2nd/14th Field Regiment, AIF. He served from November 1940 to September 1945 and held the rank of Captain at discharge. I am sure this is him.

Kelvin has also dug up some more information about Paddy O'Donnell and Bill Dolamore. Paddy arrived in Singapore on 18th February, 1941 and was appointed CRE (Commander Royal Engineers) 8th Division on 22nd July, 1941. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 27th August, 1941. Bill Dolamore was promoted to Captain on the same day.

## Ian Goldie

Ian wrote to say that he was a member of the State Executive at Anzac House in Collins Street and a member of its Memorabilia Committee. He proposes to pass Newsletter 223 to the librarian. His wife, Lynese, is State Secretary of the Women's Council at Anzac House and she sought my permission – which I've willingly given – to use some of the items in her Victorian Newsletter.

But more importantly, he said that his brother-in-law, **Doug Watts**, worked in the engine room of the H.M.A.S. Hobart during the war and was part of the occupation forces in Japan after the dropping of the two bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He has promised to provide me with more information. Many of you will remember that Doug was in charge of the service station in the cutting at Head office in Kew.

## Norm Butler

Norm has provided a wealth of information on Harold P. Wood who served during World War 1. In Newsletter 222, Frank Docking described Harold, who was Divisional Engineer at Benalla, as "a man of high ethical and professional standards". Norm sent me a link to Museums Victoria website which provided the following information about the Harold P. Wood Collection detailing his remarkable career in constructing model aeroplanes. The article below was compiled by Matthew Churchward and David Crotty and Museums Victoria has kindly given its permission for me to include it in this newsletter.

I will rewrite the entry on H.P. Wood to include the relevant information relating to his war service but, in the

meantime, I found this article quite fascinating. Surely his colleagues would have been aware of his passion as described below.

Born at Hawthorn, in 1893, **Harold P. Wood's** interest in aviation was first encouraged by his father Mr Harold Archibald Wood, who worked as an engineering draughtsman with the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (M.M.B.W.) and took an active interest in the achievements of the Wright brothers and other overseas aviation pioneers. Harold first began experimenting with aerofoil designs and model aircraft in 1909 and by November 1910 had managed to produce a model monoplane of his own design with a 36-inch main wingspan, forward-mounted elevator and two counter-rotating rearward-facing propellers powered by twisted strands of square rubber. This development was achieved fully eight months before John Duigan completed the first manned flight in an Australian designed aeroplane at Mia Mia in central Victoria, in July 1910. A report in the Melbourne 'Argus' on 14 November 1910 described demonstration flights of Wood's model at Mont Albert, commenting that the model had achieved flights of up to 175 yards at altitudes of 60 feet.

The following month, Wood again demonstrated one of his models in flight at the final day of the annual Austral Wheel Race meeting, conducted by the Melbourne Bicycle Club at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where one of his models was reported to have knocked the hat off a spectator in the upper stands. Further reports in the Melbourne 'Argus', 'Herald' and the 'Scientific Australian' document subsequent improvements in Wood's model designs which by November 1911 had managed to achieve flights of up to 450 yards lasting a minute. By April 1912, Harold claimed a world record for model aircraft with a sustained flight of 118 seconds covering a distance of over half a mile in a straight line, at a speed of 25 miles per hour. In commenting on the success of Wood's latest model monoplane designs an 'Argus' reporter claimed 'The amazing thing about them is their absolute mechanical stability and the certainty with which they fly. Not for one moment, even in a gusty wind, do they show any symptom of overturning, and, when the power is used up, and the screw stops, they land as gently as butterflies after a few soaring circles - what aviators call the volte plane.' By July 1912, Harold Wood had built some 33 model aircraft and achieved flights lasting up to 9 minutes reaching heights of 2,000 ft. He had also begun building his first models to order for customers like Wesley College school boy, Harry Rigby (later a captain in the Royal Flying Corps) and the 1st Hampton Boy Scouts. Wood married Eileen Mateer on 2 December 1916 at Canterbury in Melbourne, having enlisted in the AIF on 4 November 1916. He embarked on HMAT Omrah on 17 January 1917.



## LEST WE FORGET



During the First World War, Harold served with the Australian Flying Corps with B Flight, No.4 Squadron in France first as a motorcycle dispatch rider, then later a rigger, engine mechanic and finally in the stores and equipment section. This unit was equipped with the Sopwith F1 Camel and later the Sopwith Snipe. Wood was engaged to make minute examinations of any captured enemy aircraft, taking samples of fuel and lubricants and keeping tab on any new German instruments or methods of construction, reporting on items of interest to the British Headquarters. After the Armistice No.4 Squadron were moved to Bickendorf Aerodrome, near Cologne, Germany, to take possession of German aircraft surrendered to the allies, and Harold began building models in his spare time, producing a Sopwith Camel and a German Albatros DVa, both built to a scale of 1/2 inch to 1 foot using materials salvaged from damaged aircraft. Later, when returning to Australia on the troopship 'Kaiser-I-Hind' in April-May 1919, Harold constructed further models to help break the monotony of the voyage. During the voyage he also conceived the idea of building a series of museum display models to document some of the key developments in aviation. Back in Melbourne, Mr R.H. Walcott, curator of the Industrial & Technological Museum readily agreed to the scheme and commissioned Harold to build the first of his models for the Museum, a 3/4 inch to 1 foot (1:16 scale) model of the Smith Brothers Vickers 'Vimy' biplane that achieved the first flight from England to Australia in 1919. The model was completed in 1923.



Harold Wood showing some of his model aircraft. (Courtesy Museums Victoria)

Meanwhile Harold had moved to Benalla, where he was employed as District Engineer with the Country Roads Board (C.R.B.). However he continued building model aircraft in his spare time, working two or three evenings a week. While living in Benalla he completed models of Kingsford Smith's Fokker monoplane Southern Cross and the DH88 Comet for the Museum. He wrote to Walcott that one of the Avro X airliners belonging to Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm's Australian National Airways had landed at Benalla. He quickly rushed to the airfield to take measurements of the aircraft for the Southern Cross model. The Museum also wrote to Charles Ulm seeking details of the construction of the Southern Cross. Wood continued

making detailed scale models for the Museum over the next 43 years, producing some 21 models in total, documenting key events and designs in the history of aviation from the 1890s to the late 1950s. These models still form a large part of Museum Victoria's aviation collection today. He died in September 1982.

## John Clark

John wrote as follows:

**'I have some information about John Turnbull which you might like to add to your record. He was a distant cousin of my Mother.'**

**John Edward Turnbull** was a surveyor with the CRB and joined up with the 2/1 Australian Topographical Survey Company enlisting on 8 June 1940. He was a Warrant Officer and served in New Guinea. He was Mentioned in Despatches for Distinguished Services in the South West Pacific area as promulgated in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. 45 of 6 March, 1947. He was congratulated by the CRB Secretary, Rolf Jansen, in a letter dated 6 March, 1947. He was discharged on 24 Aug. 1945.

John was a thorough gentleman and probably never mentioned the above to anyone. He married later in life to Aileen Moore, a teacher at Scotch College. After Aileen died, John eventually went to live with his sister Joyce in the Blue Mountains.'

## Ray Brindle

Ray wrote to me about Cedric Tuxen who served in the First World War. This is what he wrote.

'I noticed that you hadn't much information on **Cedric Einer Tuxen**, and cast doubt on whether he was an engineer, as he claimed when enlisting. As a sometime planning historian, I have an interest in the Tuxen family. Cedric's brother, Saxil Tuxen, took over their father's surveying and mining engineering practice in 1913, and went on to become one of Australia's leading town planning enthusiasts. He worked with Burley Griffin on the Ranelagh Estate design, an early example of a non-grid layout, and also was responsible for more than 30 suburban subdivisions around Melbourne, many of which attempted to follow the novel garden suburb ideas coming out of the UK at that time. He has a meaty entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

CE Tuxen joined his brother's practice briefly as a cadet engineer. His entry in the History of the Municipal Engineering Foundation Victoria, which I have sent with this note, clarifies his professional standing around the war years, and his role at the CRB:

"He was appointed Assistant Engineer to the Shire of Glenelg in Western Victoria in 1913, a position he held for only six months when he was invited to join the newly

formed Country Roads Board. He was Assistant Engineer and Personal Assistant to a Member of the Board from 1913 to 1922, with a break of three years in the 8th Field Company of Engineers in France. During his period of service with the CRB Cedric spent much of his time locating new roads in the East Gippsland area of Victoria under very difficult and primitive conditions."



Cedric Tuxen

Tuxen then went to the City of Brighton and was the City Engineer for more than 40 years. He played a key role in the LGEAVic, and the Municipal Engineering Foundation Medal for Excellence in Engineering is named after him. Winners of the Medal include such familiar stalwarts as Ken McNamara, Max Pawsey, Alan Robertson, Ken Dowling, John Nicol, and Bob Seiffert. Geoff Glynn was the 2019 awardee.

I commend the MEFV source to any reader who is interested. Not surprisingly, the full text is available on line.'

## David Dix

David wrote to me about Kevin Bush, Ron Smith and David Patterson. This is what he wrote:

**Kevin Bush** – *Kevin took over the Pipe Testing Officer's role when Frank Jackson retired.*

He was an aircraft midship gunner during World War 2. On one occasion the bomber in which he flew was shot down over Germany. I understand the entire crew bailed out before the bomber crashed to ground however Kevin could not immediately undo the Perspex bubble in order to get out of the crippled bomber. Finally he was able to release the bubble and jumped out only to find that he was hanging by one strap of his parachute as he descended.

He landed in the snow and injured his ankle. A German policeman arrived on the scene and told Kevin to stand up. Kevin couldn't because of his injured ankle. He was subsequently handed over to the German military and became a Prisoner of War until the war ended.

After the war, Kevin worked as a carpenter building houses for the building workers on the Eildon Dam project. He enjoyed this part of his life largely because he could drive around the district in his MG sports car accompanied by his wife Lily.

**Ron Smith** – *Ron was a Bridge Clerk of Works.*

During World War 2 Ron was a British Paratrooper. He told me that he was involved in an operation to capture a particular German gun during the D Day Invasion. One hundred paratroopers were assigned to the task and they managed to take the gun with only 20 men – the other 80 were dropped in the wrong location or got lost after they had landed.

**David Patterson** – *David served in the Vietnam War.*

He became a bridge designer on his return to Australia.

I can distinctly remember David. Does anyone know of his whereabouts?

## Eve Grimm

Eve sent a message to say that **Owen Thomas** served in Vietnam. I contacted Owen and he told me that he trained to go to Vietnam as a platoon Commander, but at about the time his training finished, the Australian Government had started to wind down our involvement, so he did not go to Vietnam. He did, however serve in Sumatra on a geodetic survey assignment.

## John Liddell

John's wife, Jenny, came from Colac and we knew her family well. Her father, Les Atyeo, was the General Manager of my uncle's department store and I often saw him when I worked there each day, and Saturday mornings, through my high school days.

**Les Atyeo** was a prisoner of war of the Japanese and, at great personal danger, he kept a diary of his experiences. He knew Paddy O'Donnell well and he is mentioned a couple of times. I haven't read the diary yet but I am hoping that I might glean a bit of information about Paddy.

I feel honoured that Jenny sent me the diary (via John) as Les did not want to publish it because of the personal feelings he expressed in it as a husband. However what little I have read of the diary so far, I am certain that Les's love for his wife was a major factor contributing to his survival.



## And now for something beautiful

*I would love to receive your suggestions or submissions on what you think is truly beautiful.*

In the Newsletter 222 I described a few buildings I have seen that made me marvel at human creativity. Here are a few more.



The Taj Mahal in Agra in India never fails to move me. I first saw it in the 1980s when we just arrived at the gate and went in. No fuss, just a few tourists and some local visitors. I last visited just a few years ago and you have to join a queue, go through security, pay your entry fee and join a throng of people all of whom are taken aback by the beauty of it.

We've all seen postcards and photographs of it but it is even more beautiful than they convey. The Taj Mahal is situated in a Mughal garden on the bank of the Yamuna River. It was built by the Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, between 1632 and 1648. It is probably the greatest monument to love ever built.

It has a UNESCO World Heritage classification. Its citation says:

*'The Taj Mahal represents the finest architectural and artistic achievement through perfect harmony and excellent craftsmanship in a whole range of Indo-Islamic sepulchral architecture. It is a masterpiece of architectural style in conception, treatment and execution and has unique aesthetic qualities in balance, symmetry and harmonious blending of various elements.'*

Everyone knows of Frank Lloyd Wright – and everyone has seen a photograph of one of his buildings. He is the iconic architect of early 20th Century USA. His most

famous building is the Kaufmann House otherwise known as Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, USA. It is a bit like the Taj Mahal. Everyone knows the image but it is even more perfect in reality. Like the Taj, Fallingwater is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

It was built in the 1930s. Wright had lied to his client that he had started to work on the design of the house and when Kaufmann unexpectedly rang Wright that he was going to drop in in about two hours to see the plans, Wright calmly sat down and produced the design. Kaufmann had instructed Wright to design the house below the waterfall so that they might enjoy the view of the falling water. Instead, Wright designed the house to sit atop the falls. Kaufmann was initially



The cantilever verandas are anchored into the rock behind the house.



The fan vault ceiling.



External view of the chapel.

upset with the departure from the plan but eventually he came round to Wright's vision, thus creating a world-recognized masterpiece.

At my first visit to the King's College Chapel in Cambridge, I was seduced by the choir. They were rehearsing. The choir comprised young boys dressed in their red robes and the chapel reverberated with their music. This was like getting two for the price of one! Pam and I laughed because as soon as the choirmaster dismissed the boys after their heavenly performance, they charged out of the chapel and started World War Three outside.

It is the perfection of Perpendicular Gothic architecture and was built between 1446 and 1515. It is famous for its fan vault – the largest ever built.

The chapel surprisingly escaped major damage during the Civil War, despite the fact that Cromwell's troops used it for a training ground in inclement weather. It is possible that Cromwell himself, being a Cambridge student, gave orders to spare the chapel. Most of the stained glass was removed during WWII, and the Chapel again escaped damage.

The last masterpiece I will describe is the only one I have not seen. It is the rose red city of Petra in Jordan. Alas, I might have left it too late. Again it is an iconic image

Little is known of its origins except to say that the city of 30,000 people was carved out of the sandstone by the nomadic desert people of the region whose wealth was derived from the incense trade. Because of the colour of the rock it is often called the 'Rose City'.

Petra was only rediscovered by Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt in 1812. Archaeologists have explored less than half of the sprawling site, and in 2016, with the help of satellite imagery, a monumental structure was found still buried in the sand. It's no wonder that Petra remains Jordan's top tourist attraction and one of the most revered of the World Heritage sites.

Of course there are hundreds – even thousands – of other buildings I could have included here because of their beauty. I would be interested to have your nominations.



The Treasury at Petra, carved out of the sandstone by the Nabataeans in the Second Century A.D.



The Monastery at Petra

# Trivia and didactic whimsies

## Continuous Improvement

After a particularly poor game of golf, a popular club member skipped the clubhouse and started to go home. As he was walking to the parking lot to get his car, a policeman stopped him and asked, "Did you tee off on the sixteenth hole about twenty minutes ago?"

"Yes," the golfer responded.

"Did you happen to hook your ball so that it went over the trees and off the course?"

"Yes, I did. How did you know?" he asked.

"Well," said the policeman very seriously, "Your ball flew out onto the highway and crashed through a driver's windshield. The car went out of control, crashing into five other cars and a fire truck. The fire truck couldn't make it to the fire, and the building burned down. So what are you going to do about it?"

The golfer thought it over carefully and responded... "I think I'll close my stance a little bit, tighten my grip and lower my right thumb."

## Political spin in Australia – but beware!

Someone sent me this story and I found it to be quite funny and worth telling.

Judy Rudd, an amateur genealogy researcher in south east Queensland, was doing some personal work on her family tree. She discovered that ex-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's great-great uncle, Remus Rudd, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Melbourne in 1889. Both Judy and Kevin Rudd share this common ancestor.

The only known photograph of Remus shows him standing on the gallows at the Melbourne Jail.

On the back of the picture Judy obtained during her research is this inscription:

*'Remus Rudd horse thief, sent to Melbourne Jail 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Melbourne-Geelong train six times. Caught by Victoria Police Force, convicted and hanged in 1889.'*

So Judy recently e-mailed ex-Prime Minister Rudd for information about their great-great uncle, Remus Rudd. Believe it or not, Kevin Rudd's staff sent back the following biographical sketch for her genealogy research:

*"Remus Rudd was famous in Victoria during the mid to late 1800s. His business empire grew to include acquisition of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Melbourne-Geelong Railroad..*

*Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to government service, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad.*

*In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the Victoria Police Force. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honour when the platform upon which he was standing collapsed."*

That's how it's done! That's real political spin.

However, somewhat disappointingly, there is not even the tiniest shred of truth in this oft-told tale. In fact, the story is nothing more than an old joke that has been bandied around for decades. A number of versions have circulated, many of which target other prominent political figures that live in the United States and Canada. Previous US versions have variously named George Bush, Al Gore, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Joe Biden, Ted Stevens and Harry Reid, as having "Remus" the hanged horse thief and train robber as their great-great uncle. Another variant targets Canadian political leader Stephane Dion.

