

Chapter 13

The Korean War

*We didn't do much talking,
We didn't raise a fuss.
But Korea really happened
So please – remember us.*

*We all just did our duty
But we didn't win or lose.
A victory was denied us
But we didn't get to choose.*

*We all roasted in the summer
In winter, we damn near froze.
Walking back from near the Yalu
With our blackened frozen toes.*

*Like the surf the Chinese kept coming
With their bugles in the night.
We fired into their masses
Praying for the morning light.*

*All of us just had to be there
And so many of us died.
But now we're all but half forgotten
No one remembers how we tried.*

*We grow fewer with the years now
And we still don't raise a fuss.
But Korea really happened
So please – remember us.*

Roberto J. Pinselaar

The Korean War was the first major conflict following the end of the Second World War. It was also the first military action of the Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The Cold War conflict was a civil war that became a proxy battle between the superpowers as they clashed over communism and democracy. It was a war of political ideology.

The main reason the United States became involved in Korea was to do everything possible to keep communism from spreading around the world. Since the beginning of the Cold War the United States had practiced a policy of containment against the expansion of communism and wanted to prevent the ideology from taking root in different regions of the world. For its part, the Soviet Union had actively supported the spread of communism in places such as Cuba, Korea, Vietnam and Eastern Europe. The American involvement in the Korean War was to contain what was coined at the time, the Domino Theory, whereby if one country fell to communism then its neighbours would tumble like a line of domino pieces..

The Vietnam War started as a civil war between North Korea and South Korea in 1950. At the end of the Second World War, Soviet forces accepted the surrender of Japanese forces north of latitude 38° N (known as the 38th parallel) and the U.S.A. forces accepted Japanese surrender south of it. Negotiations failed to reunify the two halves, the northern half being supported by the Soviet Union and the southern half being backed by the U.S. In 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea, and U.S. President Harry Truman ordered troops in to assist South Korea. The UN Security Council, minus the absent Soviet delegate, passed a resolution calling for the assistance of all UN members in halting the North Koreans. At first North Korean troops drove the South Korean and U.S. forces down to the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, but a successful amphibious landing at Inchon, turned the tide in favour of the UN forces. They pushed the North Koreans back up the Korean Peninsula to the Yalu River on the Chinese border.



Invasion of Inchon – September 1950

China – whose border was now threatened by the US – then entered the war. Chinese forces stole through the mountain passes, mostly at night, and penetrated the US army and fought a brilliant guerrilla war and forced the Americans back to the 38th parallel. Once this parallel had been reached both sides dug in and it became a war of attrition. The stalemate continued for two years before an armistice was negotiated. However during this period of attrition, the US unleashed an apocalyptic air bombing campaign which destroyed nearly all of North Korea's towns and cities – and 85 per cent of its buildings. Although napalm is usually associated with the later Vietnam War, it was first used in Korea to devastating effect. In August 1951, an international war correspondent, Tibor Meray, stated that he had witnessed "*a complete devastation between the Yalu River and the capital.*" He said that there were "*no more cities in North Korea.*" He added, "*My impression was that I am traveling on the moon because there was only devastation - every city was a collection of chimneys.*"

Like most wars, it is not known how many people died in the Korean War, but it is certain that most of the people killed were civilians. The figures I quote here are more conservative than some other sources but who knows what is correct? In total, about three million people died, two thirds of whom were civilians. The remaining million were killed in battle - including 600,000 Chinese and 300,000 Koreans (on both sides). The American Department of Defense (sic) quotes a death toll of American troops of 36,574 and other UN troops make up the balance.

From 1950-53, 17,000 Australians in all defence forces fought as part of the United Nations (UN) multinational force. After the war ended, Australians remained in Korea for four years as military observers. Since then, Australia has maintained a presence, discharged by the Australian Military Attaché.



Australian troops move through the wreckage of a North Korean town.

Of the 17,000 Australian combatants who served in the Korean War - 340 were killed, 1,200 were injured and 30 were captured.

Neither side 'won' the Korean War but South Korea was saved from the yoke of communism. It is now a successful and prosperous nation. Officially the war has not ended although shots haven't been fired for 70 years. It is a ceasefire that hasn't been followed by a peace treaty. It has also left North Korea as one of the poorest nations on earth – under the oppression of totalitarianism more than communism. Kim Il-sung was the Commander of the North Korean forces during the war and ruled the country until his death in 1994. His son, Kim Jong-il, succeeded him, and he in turn was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-un.



Official portrait of Kim Il Sung, often seen in public places.

Now, North Korea is often referred to as the 'Hermit Kingdom'. It is widely recognized as having the worst human rights record in the world. Severe restrictions are placed on the political and economic freedoms of its citizens, internal travel is tightly controlled and employment is doled out on the basis of political reliability. Political prisoner camps holding about 200,000 prisoners force their inmates to work in conditions approaching slavery.

North Korea has over one million active and over eight million reserve and paramilitary troops making it the largest military force in the world. This is about one third of its population. But of greatest concern to the wider world is North Korea's arsenal of nuclear weapons but the strength of it is uncertain. It is also alleged to have a large stockpile of chemical weapons.

Perhaps it could be said that the result of the Korean War has created a new monster in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? It certainly hasn't made our lives more secure.

So far, I have only found three ex-CRB servicemen who fought in the Korean War – Max Airey, Michael Doyle and Ken Goudie. These are their stories.

Stoker Mechanic Maxwell (Max) John Airey, 36747 (V39527)

Max was born in Carlton in May 1931 at the height of the Great Depression. He had one sister – Marlene. His family later moved to Heidelberg where his father died suddenly when Max was only 10 years old. As a consequence of his father's death, Max and Marlene were separated. It was a difficult time for his mother and Max had to live with his grandmother while Marlene stayed with her mother.

In November, 1948 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) for a period of 12 years. At the time of joining up, Max's occupation was cited as 'clerk' although he was only 17 years old.

His initial rank was Stoker but in 1950, he was promoted to Stoker Mechanic. His service was peripatetic. According to his archive, from November 1948 to November 1960, he served on *Penguin* (Tarakan), *Penguin* (twice), *Cerberus* (six times), *Lonsdale* (Burdekin, Barwon, SiR, LRW.E.R.), *Gladstone*, *Lonsdale II*, *Quickmatch* (twice), R.N.N. (Hong Kong), *Woomera* (twice), and *Sprightly*.

Some of this requires explanation. HMAS *Penguin* is not a ship. It is a RAN naval base located on Middle Head in Sydney Harbour with a number of specialist units and training facilities. I don't understand the reference to Tarakan. Tarakan is in Borneo (now Kalimantan) in Indonesia. It is a small island and was the site of a number of major battles during the Second World War. HMAS *Cerberus* and *Lonsdale* are also naval bases located, respectively, at Crib Point and Port Melbourne in Victoria. HMAS *Quickmatch* was a destroyer, HMAS *Gladstone* was a patrol boat, HMAS *Woomera* was an Armament Stores Carrier, and HMAS *Sprightly* was a Tug. I cannot find an explanation for

the other acronyms in the file – which I have copied accurately – except that they might refer to locations because of their grouping with Burdekin and Barwon. I could not find an acronym for R.N.N in Hong Kong. It may be a typo and should have been RN for Royal Navy. His service there was only three days.

But Max's most important service was listed under a separate entry in the archive - marked Operational Service - and it shows that from August 1951 to February 1952, Max served in the Korean War aboard the Aircraft Carrier, HMAS *Sydney*.

Sydney began her first patrol of the Korean War on 4 October in the western theatre, transferring four days later to the east coast for special operations. On 11 October, operating against troop concentrations and suspected store dumps on the east coast, *Sydney* created a light fleet carrier record by flying 89 sorties, making a total of 147 sorties in two days of operations.



Fireflies are readied for launch from *Sydney*'s flight deck – 1951.

Sydney was used to carry out aerial raids on land targets as well as patrolling seacraft in enemy waters. Operations against the enemy communications continued throughout her service. In October 1951, a flight of five Fireflies made a determined attempt to block a railway tunnel

between Chaeryong and Haeju. The primary objective was unfortunately not achieved, but the line was effectively cut. One of the aircraft was forced down in a frozen rice paddy 50 miles behind enemy lines. The two downed aviators resisted capture by enemy soldiers with the aid of an Owen sub-machine gun and a protective overhead umbrella provided by Sea Furies from *Sydney* and Meteor jet fighters from the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) 77 Squadron. The two airmen were later rescued by *Sydney's* Dragonfly helicopter which had flown 172 kilometres to carry out the rescue at the limit of its endurance. It then recovered to Kimpo and returned to *Sydney* with its passengers the following day. The helicopter pilot, Chief Petty Officer Arlene 'Dick' Babbit, USN, was awarded the Commonwealth Distinguished Service Medal as well as the United States Navy Cross for his efforts that day, earning the distinction of being the only allied serviceman in Korea to receive the awards of two nations for the same action.

In November 1951, snow and high winds prevented the resumption of flying operations and in the succeeding days of the patrol there was limited activity.



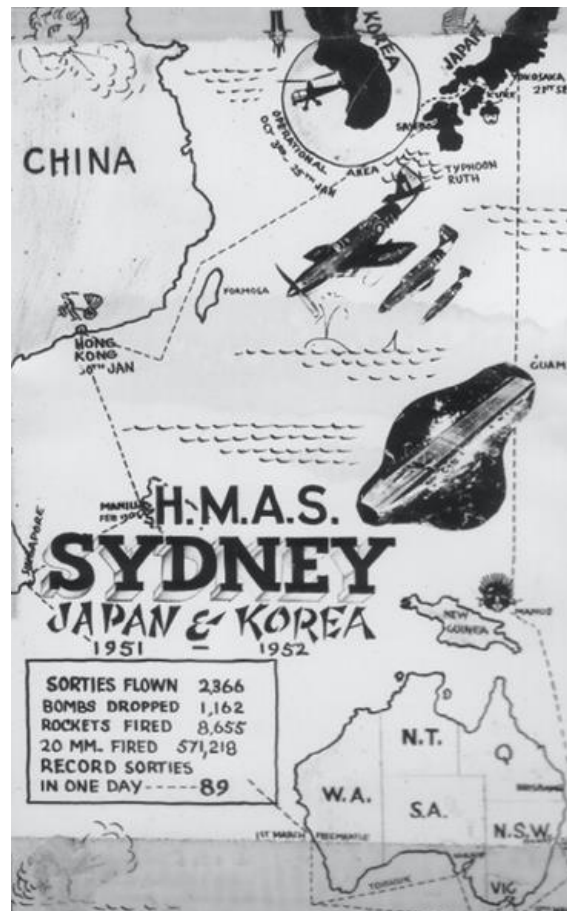
Sydney's crew was not prepared for the intensity of Korean winters.

However, it soon cleared and, profiting from a spell of fine weather which continued unbroken until 14 December 1951, *Sydney's* aircraft maintained a high rate of attack. Troop concentrations in the Changyon Hanchon areas, the Chinnampo waterfront, coastal small ships and rail communications all received attention. On the morning of 13 December 1951 a Sea Fury was shot down to the westward of Pyong-Gang and in the afternoon a second Sea Fury was shot down off Ongjin. Both pilots were rescued, the first by a United States helicopter from Paengyong and the latter by a friendly junk.

Operations continued until 25 January 1952, *Sydney's* last day of participation in the Korean War. During the period of 17 to 25 January a total of 293 sorties were flown including one day on convoy escort and two days when weather conditions prevented flying. Sasebo (in Japan) was reached on 26 January and the following day, screened by the destroyer HMAS *Tobruk*, the ship sailed for Australia.



HMAS *Sydney* berthing at Station Pier, Port Melbourne, following active service in Korea.



The exploits of HMAS Sydney are summarised in this poster.

A Stoker was someone who specialised in Engine-Room duties. The name was acquired from the days when ships were coal-fuelled. Prior to oil fired boilers, stokers were primarily responsible for transporting and shovelling coal to the furnaces. Coal fired boilers required a constant feed to keep temperatures high enough for the production of steam, and of course you can't pump coal in the same way as oil. Thus the advantages of oil, and now diesel, gas or nuclear engines in modern surface fleets, are pretty obvious. With the decline of coal fired ships, stokers' duties shifted towards the field of engineering, so that they could be responsible for anything from the propulsion systems to hydraulics, electrical and firefighting systems. The word 'stoker' is now only a colloquial term for a marine engineering technician.

Max's experiences during the war would have been below decks keeping the engines going. It required considerable training and from his assignments listed above, he must have gained a wide knowledge of the workings of many types of ships.

Max left the RAN in November 1960 with the rank of Leading Engineering Mechanic. He started working at the CRB soon after his discharge and for many years he was an Administrative Officer as Bill Gill's assistant in the Offices Services Section. At the CRB, he met Stella Bertram who was a comptometrist in the Accounts Division. They married in 1968.



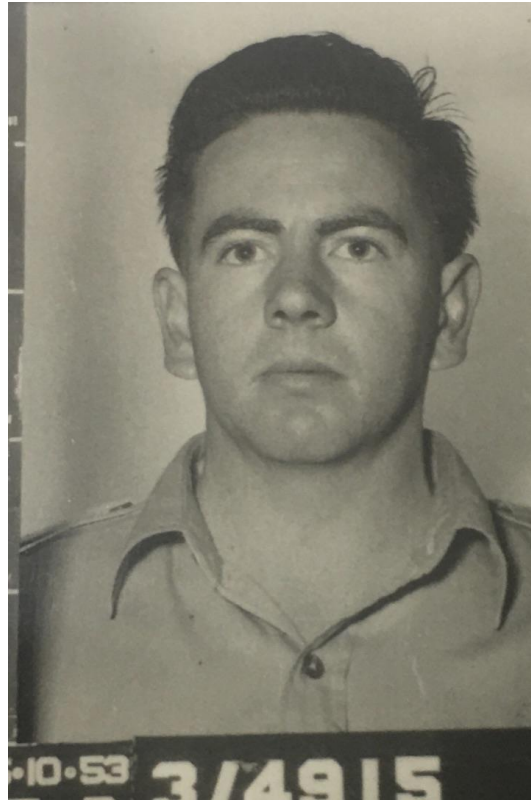
Max and Stella on their wedding day.

He died in March 2022 aged 91 years. His wife, Stella, predeceased him. She died in February 2006.

Private Michael (Mick) Thomas Doyle, 34915

Michael was born in Flemington in 1933. He cited his occupation as a textile worker and on his attestation form he admitted that he was fined £5 for exceeding the 25 mph speed limit in Carrum in February 1952.

He enlisted in the Australian Army on 23 February 1953 for a period of six years. At the time of his enlistment he was 19 years and eight months old. He was graded as a Private 1 Star.



Private Mick Doyle's enlistment photograph.

After undergoing training in Australia, Mick flew out of Sydney on 29 October 1953 for Japan where he joined the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR). The 3 RAR was Australia's main land force contribution to the United Nations forces in the Korean War. After a period of intensive training and reinforcement in Japan, the battalion arrived in South Korea in late September 1950. The battalion took part in the United Nations offensive into North Korea and the subsequent retreat into South Korea following the Chinese offensive in the winter of 1950–51. In October 1950, the battalion distinguished itself at Chongju during the UN northward advance to the Yalu River. It was one of three units to receive the US Presidential Unit Citation after the Battle of Kapyong in 1951.

In 1951, 3 RAR fought the Battle of Maryang San, which is widely regarded as one of the Australian Army's greatest accomplishments of the Korean War. 3 RAR remained in Korea until the war ended in 1953, sustaining total casualties of 231 men killed.

On 29 December 1953, Mick flew from Japan to Korea. By this time, a truce had been declared between the warring parties. On July 27, 1953, the United Nations reached an armistice with China and North Korea. A demilitarized zone was established along the 38th parallel. The terms of the armistice were tacitly approved but never formally signed by the South Korean government, and to this day, there remains a fragile peace between the North and the South Korea.

Mick served in Korea for a year and during this time he had two periods of leave in Japan and one in Korea. Mick boarded the SS *New Australia* in Pusan in November 1954 and returned to Australia. After returning to Australia, he qualified as a Driver Class III after which he transferred to 2 Field Ambulance. He later transferred to the Royal Australian Infantry. His archive shows that he injured his back at Point Lonsdale in December 1958 and he was discharged soon after, in February 1959, after 'Expiration of period for which he was engaged. (Honourably)'.

He worked for the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology before joining the CRB. Mick became a chainman at the CRB and worked with Don Durant. He told Don about the Australian Air Force pilots who, on taking off, were particularly adept at raising the wheels of the fighters at the very instant that the planes became airborne. Mick said you should have seen the piled up wrecks at the end of runways when the Americans tried to do likewise.

In December 1969, Mick married an American woman, Sarah Dick. They lived in Crawfordsville, Indiana and Mick died there in April 2013.



Mick's grave in Indiana, USA.

Corporal Kenneth Campbell Goudie, 3400473

Ken was one of the 17,000 Australian servicemen who served in the Korean War. He was born in Drouin in 1929 and served as a Corporal with the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment between 1952 and 1953.

The battalion suffered 42 killed and 107 wounded during the nine months that they served on combat operations in Korea.



Kenneth Goudie - images on the Australians at War Archive of UNSW.

Ken's father served during the First World War and was seriously injured in the Battle of Fromelles rendering his right arm useless.

Ken left Drouin High School after completing his leaving Certificate and became a cadet engineer for Warragul Shire Council. He studied engineering through distance education and after about a year, he transferred to Ballan Shire Council where the Shire Engineer was a Licensed Surveyor. It was here that he learnt about surveying but he was not certificated. He was later to qualify in both civil engineering and surveying.

He was only 17 when he applied for a surveying job on Ocean Island and Nauru – both located on the equator and both rich in phosphate. In fact he bumped his age up to 18 in order to get this job. Later he took up a job in Papua New Guinea before returning to Australia in 1951 to work for the CRB.

He only worked for about a year in the Plans and Survey Branch of the CRB, before he decided to join the army which was advertising for soldiers to serve in Korea. He signed up for 12 months and, in Korea, he applied his surveying skills in mapping minefields and site layouts.

Ken died in 2010 aged 80 years. After his death, his family donated a large and important database that Ken had collected for over 20 years, of information and images relating to more than 3,000 Victorian honour rolls and 97,000 service personnel to the Australian War Museum.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Sergeant E. J. 'Slim' O'Sullivan of Woollahra, NSW, and Corporal Ken Goudie of Drouin, Vic, hold up a Communist propaganda sign Goudie recovered from the barbed wire in front of a forward company of the battalion while out mapping mine fields. The sign reads: "You risk your life, big business rakes in the dough". In 2004 the banner was donated to the Australian War Memorial at a ceremony attended by both men.