

## VALE - KEN OLIVER

**KEN OLIVER** 2/1 of Earlwood passed away on 29th August 2009 at the age of 87 years. He had been in Prince Alfred Hospital for several weeks but was transferred to Canterbury Hospital where he passed away.

The funeral service was conducted at Earlwood Anglican Church on 4th September by Rev. Marshall Ballantine-Jones to a packed congregation. Bardwell Park RSL conducted the Poppy Service and the Eulogy on Ken's army service was delivered by Don Crawford, 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalion Association, as follows:-

**KEN OLIVER** enlisted in the 2nd A.I.F. on 10th March, 1941, and was posted to the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion. After training at Dubbo Camp he sailed on the "Queen Elizabeth" to the Middle East in June, 1941, where he served with the unit until they returned to Australia in March, 1942.

After training in Australia for several months, Ken went to New Guinea with the Pioneers, the Unit to Imita Ridge on the Kokoda Track and Don Company, of which Ken was a member, to Milne Bay. Their ship M.V. "Anshun" berthed at the Gilli Gilli wharf area and before the ship could be unloaded was shelled by the Japanese Navy a couple of times, rolled over and sank. They lost all their equipment, but suffered no casualties.

The Pioneers served in New Guinea until October 1943 before returning to Australia where they were sent to the Atherton Tablelands in North Queensland for extensive jungle training. This training included Beach Landings at Trinity Beach before the Unit sailed on 21st May, 1945 for their final campaign in Borneo.

After fighting at the landing and beach-head, B and D Companies moved to the beach area of Tempadeong which was occupied by the Japanese. After the capitulation on 15th August, the Japanese surrendered their swords and disclosed the disposition of their forces. The surrender ceremony in the Pioneers company lines was certainly a momentous occasion for the Battalion.

Ken was discharged from the A.I.F. on 8th February, 1946. He joined the Committee of the Association after he retired and assisted our Welfare Officer in visiting sick members in hospital and attending funerals. He was a regular attender of our ANZAC DAY march and reunion each year.

In June 2005 Ken was nominated by the Association Committee to take part in a mission to Borneo to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the landings. Ken was honoured to be selected to represent the 2/1st Pioneers on the mission, the only army veteran from N.S.W. He was also able to pay his respects to his brother, Bob, who was listed as Missing in Action while serving with the 2/9th Btn. in Malaya in January 1942.

In conclusion thank God for the life of our departed friend and we extend our sincere sympathy to his wife, Beryl and son, Dean on their loss. He will be sadly missed by his fellow Pioneers.

Following the Pioneer tribute, Dean Oliver delivered a very fine Eulogy on his father's life, as a good father and friend.

A private cremation service for close friends and family of Ken followed later in the day at Rookwood Gardens Crematorium.

Ken had been a regular attendee at Association committee meetings and was always keen to take part in discussions on the programme. He was thrilled when the Association nominated him to represent them on the Government sponsored pilgrimage to Borneo in 2005 and at the next meeting gave a wonderful resume, illustrated with photos, of his trip. Then in November of that year, together with son Dean, he visited New Guinea calling in at Moresby up to the gateway of the Kokoda Track and down to Milne Bay.

Pioneers in attendance at the funeral were Don Crawford, Max and Peg Herron and son David.

## PIONEER NEWS - 57 YEARS OLD

The Pioneer News has just concluded its 57th year of publication and still going strong, thanks to the support of its many contributors through donations as well as letters for the Mail Bag. Without this support the paper would cease to exist.

At a committee meeting of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Btns Association in 1948 it was proposed that every effort be made to write the history of the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and, if at all possible, to endeavour to publish a newsletter. However, it was not until 1952 that the Committee of the day felt sure they could turn out something regular and worthwhile that could maintain contact with those members of both units whom they already knew and try to re-establish relations with those members of both units whom they had not seen for years since the war finished.

The Committee comprised Hec. Page, Frank Cheal and Bill Robertson 2/2, and Max Law, Rod Pegg and Harry "Monty" Montague 2/1. Subsequently, Max Law, as secretary, wrote to the various newspaper groups around Australia and in almost every case the Association's plea for members was published in city and country newspapers alike, resulting in quite a list of members being enrolled.

The first issue appeared in December, 1952, edited by Max Law 2/1 and Frank Cheal 2/2. It was a small typewritten sheet of eight pages containing a President's message (at that time Hec. Page 2/2) and a message from our Patron, that great lady Mrs. Lilla O'Malley Wood, with very encouraging words for the new venture. Mrs O'Malley Wood had been instrumental in forming the 2/1st Pioneer Btn. Comfort Fund in 1940 and later included members of 2/2nd Pioneer Btn when that unit was reformed in 1942.

The subscription at the time was 2/6d, but donations of larger amounts were gratefully received. The postage was 3d each, so there was not a lot left over to publish the paper. Max and Frank attempted to get enough news to continue printing the news each quarter, enlisting the help of a young typist at the bank where Frank worked to type the contents onto a stencil to be roneod. This was done free of charge. After a few issues two good friends of Max who were printers set up and printed the News free of cost. This arrangement carried on for some time and gradually the Pioneer News began to take on a more professional look.

By the end of 1953, however, the news had grown from its small beginnings as a typewritten roneod sheet to a small printed edition and able to be registered at the GPO as a periodical. The Mail Bag in those days was printed as "In Passing" and as time went by and more members were contacted, the number grew.

As it was now possible to contact members by virtue of the News, the Association was able to hold quite a lot of functions resulting in not only the men getting together for the ANZAC Day march and reunions but families able to join in outings and meet one another.

These were in the form of Christmas parties for the children (money for gifts often being raised by Mrs O'Malley Wood and the ladies from the Comforts Fund), picnics, car trials, dances, etc. These were all very well patronised and would have not been possible only by publicity in the News.

By 1958 our mailing list had grown to nearly 900 members of both units and printed for the grand sum of £13-8s (\$27.60). Before the addressograph machine was purchased in 1959, the wrappers for the paper were typed each issue by Peg Herron as at that stage Max was a co-editor with Max Law. When Max Law was transferred to Adelaide by his firm in 1959 Max Herron was appointed as editor, with Vic Whiteley as co-editor and responsible for the Mail Bag.

However, in 1963 Bob Lake was appointed as co-editor when Vic Whiteley resigned and

was very ably assisted by daughter Gail who typed the Mail Bag for Bob from 1963-1966. When Gail married, his other daughter Eileen "fell" for the job and carried on until she retired from her position at the ABC. Bob held the position as co-editor until his untimely death in September 1996.

During the seventies Max and Bob were assisted from time to time with articles by John Harnetty, ex C Coy., - 2/1, who was an interpreter in the 2/1 during the war years, and later became a journalist on one of the city newspapers. The articles were full of humour and a great source of amusement to all who had the good fortune to read them.

Over the years the paper has gone from strength to strength and from that small beginning we have the News as it is today.

The Association, over the years, has been greatly indebted to all those who have given of their time in the wrapping of the News. With so many of the earlier helpers no longer with us, it is hard (with failing memories) to record all those who have been a tower of strength in this task but we are reasonably sure that the following is a fairly accurate list. Prior to 1957 the paper was wrapped at the home of Fred Callaway and included Bert Holmes, Tom Crossman, Alf Carter and Max Herron. After that date and up to the present time, Max has been responsible for making sure the paper is printed and then wrapped for posting at his home in Beverly Hills.

Since 1957 the following members and their wives have given sterling service and are to be commended for their efforts: Max and Peg Herron, Bob Burnside, Don Lawson, Gavin Todd, "Sailor" Witham, Bob and Joyce McGregor, Jack and Laura Westwood, Harry Mostyn, Wal and Lal Page, Gordon and Olive Finlay, Jack Dodson, Alf Carter, Bob and Jean Dixon, Jim and Kathleen Field, Reg Armstrong, Jack Henderson, Doug and Roma Shearston, George and Joyce Walker, Nev. Woodham (on the occasion his taxi was in the Beverly Hills area), Ruth Rhodes, Marj and Jack Kerslake and Don and Val Crawford.

With age catching up and so many of the above who have passed on, or moved away from Sydney, the sole wrapping committee now consists of Max and Peg Herron, with help from Don and Val Crawford and Marj Kerslake when necessary.

In 2002 the Secretary found it necessary to change the system of posting out Pioneer News because the old system depended on addresses being printed on the wrapper produced from individual stencils and these were no longer available.

When the secretary informed Treasurer Don Crawford of this, Don said he would shop around for a new process and eventually came up with the mail order firm of Mailroom Express who would print our details on the envelope and print the addresses at the same time. This new system was adopted and now the News (already folded by courtesy of the Printer) can be inserted in envelopes by two people in a couple of hours. Each year Don's daughter Sandra Bowmer makes any changes to the roll and emails them through to Mailroom Express, for which we are very grateful.

On reading back over the earlier News it is sad to read of so many old friends who have passed on, including Max Law (one of the original editors) and then in 1996 our long-time Mail Bag editor Bob Lake. They are gone but will never be forgotten.

Keep your letters coming and, hopefully, we may continue for many more years.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE APRIL

Send with news of your family and happenings to Max Herron, 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills, NSW 2209.