



THE BEACON

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE AMBULANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin O.A.M. Museum

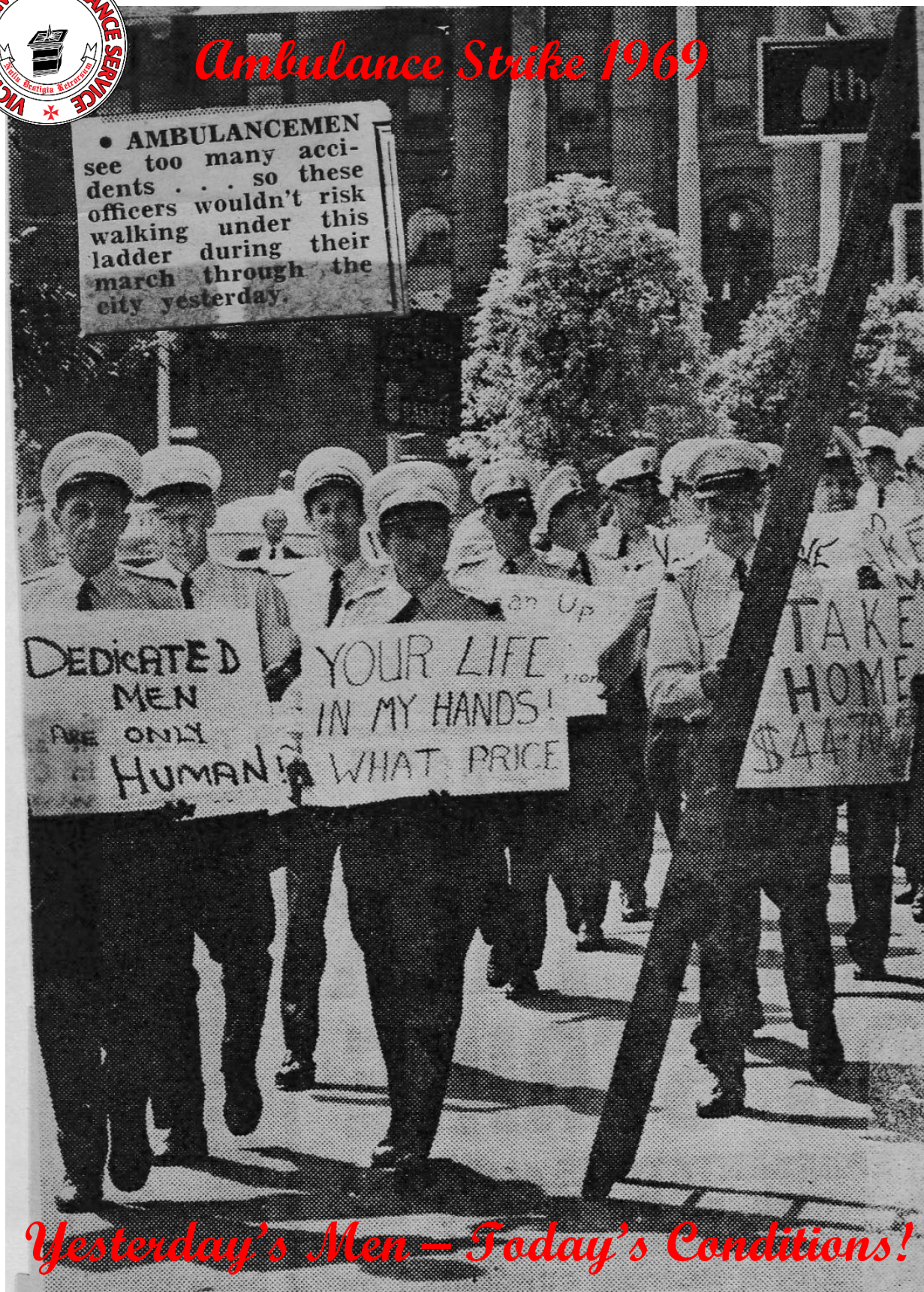


26th Edition – Autumn 2023

\$4.00



Ambulance Strike 1969



Yesterday's Men – Today's Conditions!

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Victoria**



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**Persons joining in May will receive the current issue of The Beacon posted.**

## *Our Chief Executive Attends 1983 Ash Wednesday Commemoration.*



**On Sunday February 12, 2023,** our AV *C.E. Jane Miller* attended the 1983 Ash Wednesday Commemoration at Cockatoo. The Commemoration was supported by over 1000 people, Emergency Service Executives, and E.S. members. Here is Jane's account of her attendance at the Commemoration.



Ash Wednesday was one of the most significant bushfire events in Australian history with more than 180 fires occurring in Victoria and South Australia on 16 February 1983. Last Sunday, I was honoured to represent Ambulance Victoria and lay a wreath at the CFA Ash Wednesday 40th Anniversary Commemorative Service in Cockatoo.

As we mark the 40th Anniversary of Ash Wednesday, it's important to remember that people may experience different emotional, physical and psychological reactions. Many in our community were significantly impacted, and although many decades have passed, we recognise that people who were impacted may continue to need support. If you know someone who was affected by Ash Wednesday, it is a good idea to check in on them. If you or a loved one need extra support during this time, please contact [1800 MANERS if required](https://www.maners.org.au) – support is always available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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### ***The Firestorm History:***

February 16, 1983, dawned to another very hot day. As the day proceeded, temperatures broke 43 C. A hot wind gusting to over 100 kmh developed to combine a pending disaster. Fires broke out across S.A. and Victoria, in Victoria impacting on Mount Macedon, Trentham and Warburton. There were separate bushfires burning at different locations across Victoria. Late on this day an extended front dust storm swept across Melbourne limiting visibility to just 100 metres. Little thought had been given to a re-occurrence of the horrific "Firestorm" bushfires of 1939 taking 71 lives. Prior to evening, 100 km North winds hit the bushfire burning at South Belgrave creating a "Firestorm" rapidly taking the fire from South Belgrave Eastwards, razing the towns of Upper Beaconsfield and Cockatoo. The fire is believed to have been started by H.T. power lines rubbing on trees creating sparks. Twelve firefighters lost their lives caught in a wall of fire at Cockatoo. Once again, the terrible loss of homes in these areas can be contributed to houses being built in the heart of the bush, many with trees growing up to the eaves. (and many built back in the same place again post fires) Building in these locations is akin to throwing a sheath of dry straw onto a camp fire. The firestorm brought rapid destruction and death to the above unprepared towns. In darkness, and the confined area of these narrow hillside towns, flexibility of vehicle movement proved difficult pre and post fire. Ambulance requirements were provided from Ambulance Service Melbourne's Ferntree Gully Branch. At first overwhelmed, conveying deceased and injured firefighters and residents resulting from the evening firestorm. After transporting the deceased and injured from the area decimated, a FTG ambulance was placed on standby at Cockatoo, another as backup standing by at Gembrook. Early on the following morning of February 17, Area Superintendent John Brown was despatched from Melbourne H.Q. to co-ordinate the evacuation of the deceased and injured residual, and others occurring. Air ambulance, both fixed wing and rotary, were not in a position to assist in this process due to the terrain, and also as Hospitals were in reasonable proximity to the fire-devastated areas.



***Jane Miller A.V. C.E. and Alistair Drayton SES A/Chief Operations accepting and laying floral tributes.***

*Images courtesy of Keith Packenham AFSM-CFA*



## *The Curator's Desk*

**Welcome to all members** and museum friends. I hope you had a safe and pleasant Easter with loved ones and others, as Chris and I did with our family and friends.

With Easter now behind us it also means the year is well and truly slipping away, and there is much to do. To date this year we have made significant achievements, still building on the great foundation of Chas's work. With the assistance of an excellent working committee and dedicated volunteers, we moved forward in all directions. Over the remaining part of 2022, and year to date, we have successfully implemented additional administration systems. Group tours continue to peak, with impressed visitors creating word of mouth conveyance which subsequently leads to further demand for museum tours. To complement this we have been able to harness today's modern technology and

present a marvellous PowerPoint video presentation. Associated with the in-house group tours sits our popular regional vintage ambulance and equipment display schedule.

We hope our new **Chief Executive Jane Miller**, is settling in to her new position and enjoying the challenges of this critical role. However, we are hoping Jane, when time permits, will take a couple of relaxing hours off and visit our museum to personally see the immaculate preservation of our state ambulance history and heritage. Whilst on this subject, for maintaining and expanding this vital public asset, I see it as essential to maintain strong collaboration with the AV departments we work with. Subsequently, an invitation is also extended to each Department Head to visit and obtain first hand a clear understanding of our operation and what it involves. This visit would also give vision as to the outstanding AV PR passed on to the public both here at Bayswater and at regional displays. The internal and external showcasing of our vintage fleet, equipment, and methodology of that era, also creates an individual enlightening journey of the progression through the decades of our proud Ambulance Service. Accompanying this history, we recognise the pioneer ambulance personnel and supporters along the way that have built our service. Recently our museum received a visit from newly appointed AV senior Fleet Manager **Ben Weinert** and AV Fleet Co-Ordinator **Scott Jennison**. Ben and Scott came along to inspect, by term of endearment, "Their Old Fleet". This eventuated to be a very productive outcome with a view of our internal processes documented.

I mentioned beforehand dedicated volunteers. I cannot find the words to express my deep appreciation to these persons who give so much and expect nothing in return other than the satisfaction of the result of their input. Also, it is simply factual to state that without their dedication and knowledge our museum could not function. To add to this, together with our "crew" I warmly welcome **Anne Reeves** and her twin sister **Maria**; both have joined the "family" to assist with catering and cleaning tasks. **Phil Nestor** has also come into the fold and will be working upstairs computer logging history, equipment, and memorabilia. Thank you and welcome Phil. We also pass on a very special thank you to our museum members who loyally support the organisation, we cannot do without you. Others with an interest in our museum who wish to become members are most welcome!

From time to time we will have individual features in The Beacon of members holding various portfolios. This initiative has a twofold purpose, firstly to photographically identify the person holding that portfolio, secondly to outline the duties of that particular role. Pete will begin this new section in this edition beginning with **Terry Brooks, Bill Redpath, and Gary Dole**, titled "**From The Vehicle Co-Ordinator And Workshop**".

To complement our appreciation of the selfless gift of time and skills from our great crew of museum volunteers, our museum committee are considering creating a special title and keepsake award of **Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin OAM Museum "PLATINUM VOLUNTEER"**. This will be a recognition earned by the recipient potentially based on attendance and tenure, overall service, or an outstanding contribution to our organisation. More on this to come in the next Beacon "Winter" edition.

Finally, our museum quarterly publication The Beacon over a 6-year time frame has gone from strength to strength and is now sought after for our proud history and other ambulance-related news and developments.

This completes my overview of the past three months. Thank you again to all involved in preserving our history with your loyal support and input, this makes our museum the proud state entity that it is.

Drive safely and take care.

**Ralph Casey ASM**

**Hon. Curator**





## *From the Editor – Autumn Beacon 2023*

**It has been** another very mild summer. The cooler weather is not unwelcome up here North of the Murray river in summer time, overriding our sometimes prolonged 40 plus degree days.

In February, Barb and I took a post-Covid, and well overdue trip to my home region of Victoria; Walhalla, Moe, Sale, then Maffra to see my brother. Incorporated in our trip was to see the new A.V. branches at Moe and Sale, most impressive. We continued on around the coast to Eden, up to Cooma, then Canberra to pick up a family member, Jack Russell “Oscar” from our daughter at Casey. The highlight always of this journey is visiting my birth and home town Walhalla in the beautiful Baw Baw plateau. My beloved mountains, valleys, and rivers, always reach out in warm welcome to this aged bushman, and nature as well, gifted spectacular weather on the day.

Several years ago I was told by a credible source (unfortunately now deceased) of a bizarre incident which purportedly occurred three decades ago and would appear to have been a great injustice to our Ambulance Service. If so, it explains the main reason why I constantly appeal for contributions of our history. The stated event affects us all, and those who follow on. Since the forthcoming of this claim, I have sought veracity, which has been supported by others. As such, one would have to assume it would be correct.

In 1993 – 1995, the then state government ordered a re-structure of the Victorian Ambulance Service, with the main focus on the then Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS). Although, the re-structure was not entirely isolated to MAS as there were implications to a degree for some regional services. I do not intend to visit the overall disastrous and tragic consequences that this re-structure imposed on our service and the community. This debacle has already been consigned to history. I do intend however, to outline the far-reaching and irreparable damage that potentially resulted, and the inevitable outcome of this purported action. Whereas a degree of past history has been recovered, there has been so much lost forever. The supposed destruction noted below virtually paralysed the process of preserving our proud state ambulance history and heritage.

The state government of that period 1993/95, appointed an administrator to carry out this “Ambulance Re-structure Process”. The original administrator appointed was former bookmaker Jack Firman. For some reason that will potentially always remain unknown, it seems part of an administrator’s commission was to destroy former records pertaining to our Service. This, to all appearances, included personnel records, case records, running sheets, accounts, and so on. I would imagine with this demise, also any surviving history on hand since the inception of VCAS in 1915/16 until 1976, then after named (A.S.M.) and (MAS) and now state wide AV. accomplishment of this task would have destroyed all of our ambulance history up until the 1993/95 period, and if so, an act of history vandalism on an unprecedented scale. Therefore, if we now wish to preserve this passage of our history, we must rely on those members surviving with knowledge of their era to bring it forward for preservation while time permits. As you will appreciate, to source and record lost treasures of our past is an extremely difficult task, but with your assistance we can make the best of it. In conclusion, no governing body of any parallel should ever be given authority to carry out an act of document destruction such as reportedly occurred in our Ambulance Service. I would be extremely pleased if this issue was to be proven incorrect, and the stated documentation presented, requiring a published retraction. However, other than this outcome, should a dispute arise in this regard, the question then would need to be raised, if we do not have access to these records, where are they?

Moving on to a brighter note, commencing in the next (Winter) Beacon we will introduce a couple of new features. One will be **“Our Legends.”** This will feature persons who have made, or make a significant contribution to VCAS/ASV/AV. The feature will revolve around personal milestones, achievements, unusual characters, notable service, etc. These profiles will not necessarily be restricted to the afore-mentioned personnel and volunteers. Others with an outstanding contribution to our service will also be showcased. The second addition, by popular request, will be **“Where Are They Now?”** focusing mainly on former colleagues and vehicles etc. Contributions are most welcome.

Many thanks to AV, Manager Content, Ext. & Engaging Division **Lisa Hind**, Lisa’s prompt provision of information and images for this edition of The Beacon has been very much appreciated.

In conclusion, a vocabulary tip for other ageing museum members. Be careful how you state your membership to others. Beware of saying “I belong to our Ambulance Museum” the reply may well be *“Yes I thought so!”*

Keep well and keep smiling.

**Peter Dent – Hon. Editor**







# AMBULANCE MEN IN CITY DECIDE STRIKE

## WILL GO ON

**A**MBULANCE drivers throughout the city and suburbs are to remain on strike indefinitely.

Only emergency services will be on standby.

This was decided unanimously at the Trades Hall yesterday by 230 striking officers of the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service.

The strike started at 6 p.m. on Friday and was to have ended at 11 a.m. yesterday.

The officers passed a resolution pressing for a three-pronged "new deal" for the ambulance officers and the public.

The secretary of the Victorian No. 1 Branch of the Hospital Employees' Federation, Mr. K. Mitchell, said yesterday the strike was called after the VCAS cancelled a joint meeting called to investigate the officers' complaints.

## Terms set

Mr Mitchell said the officers' terms for a resumption of work were:

- An assurance that the management of the service would pay wages on which a man could respectfully provide for his family.

- A complete reorganisation of the service "to provide the public with a more modern and efficient ambulance service."

- A complete "new deal" so far as conditions of employment were concerned, particularly the elimination of "childish cloak and dagger conduct on the part of supervisors."

"These men simply cannot give their families a decent life on the present salaries they are being paid," Mr Mitchell said.

"They are completely desperate."

## 'Callous'

"They spend years studying and are paid salaries which are less than a cleaner would receive in private industry."

"The management of the VCAS has been unashamedly callous and insensitive towards its own staff, and this has caused good men who like their work to feel that they have no future."

The vice-president of the VCAS, Councillor L. T. Fox, said yesterday the service would try to settle the dispute as soon as possible.

"We will be in touch with the Wages Board first thing tomorrow morning to ask for an immediate hearing," he said.

"Our prime concern is for the public."

The chairman of the Hospitals Commission, Dr. L. H. Lindell said: "I have not been approached by the parties concerned, but the sooner the Wages Board steps in the better things will be."

"All parties concerned must get together and discuss the matter."

FRID MONDAY 8TH APRIL 1968.

DEAR SIR,

I A/D C MARTIN ATTACHED

TO THE RINGWOOD DEPOT OF V.C.A.S.

WISH TO APPOLOGISE FOR THE WASHING OF ONE AMBULANCE ON TUESDAY 2nd

MY REASON FOR WASHING THIS VEHICLE WAS NOT TO GO AGAINST UNION POLICY, BUT THE VEHICLE WAS IN SUCH A DISGUSTING CONDITION THAT AFTER COMPLETING THE DAY AND BEEN CRITICISED BY THE RELATIVES OF SEVERAL PATIENTS, I FELT ASHAMED TO SAY THE LEAST

WHILE THIS IS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR MY ACTION, I TRUST THAT THE FEDERATION WILL ~~EXERT~~ ACCEPT THIS AS A REASONABLE EXPLANATION FOR MY INFRINGEMENT OF THE BAN IMPOSED.

YOU HAVE MY COMPLETE ASSURANCE THAT THERE WILL NEVER AGAIN BE SUCH A REPRATION OF THIS BEHAVIOR.

YOURS

FAITHFULLY

*C. Martin*

LETTER WRITTEN TO

HOSP EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

LYGON ST

CARLTON

Reply Received Apology Accepted

11th APRIL 1968

### The Hospital Employees' Federation of Australia

Registered under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act

OND STREET, CARLTON, 3053, VIC.

PHONE 34 4792 • 34 4208



11th April 1968

Mr. C. Martin  
Pitt Street  
RINGWOOD 3134

Dear Mr. Martin

Thank you for your letter dated 8th April 1968 in which you apologise to the Federation for washing an ambulance in defiance of the ban placed on cleaning ambulances by a general meeting of ambulance officers previously held.

In view of your explanation and apology I propose to take no further action in the matter, accepting your assurance that there will never be a repetition of this behaviour again.

With kind regards,

I am

Yours fraternally

*Keith Mitchell*

KEITH MITCHELL  
SECRETARY

# GAOL POWERS IN AMBULANCE DISPUTE

## GOVT. SENDS IT TO COURT

**T**he State Government yesterday intervened in the ambulance dispute.

It acted in a bid to restore normal services for Easter.

The Government referred the dispute to the Industrial Appeals Court.

This court can order a return to work and necessary impose fines and gaol sentences.

It has the same powers as a Court of General Sessions.

A judge presides and it has a representative of the Chamber of Manufactures and the Trades Hall Council.

The Minister for Labor and Industry, Mr Rossiter, said last night: "A state of emergency exists.

## Rare use

It is the first time since 1963 that the Government has directed the Industrial Appeals Court to make an inquiry.

Today is the 14th day of the strike by Melbourne ambulance men. They want a \$13 pay rise.

Yesterday ambulance drivers, collectors and office clerks of the Central Victorian Ambulance Service based on Bendigo imposed restrictions in support of Melbourne men.

Another meeting tomorrow will decide on a 24-hour strike proposal.

The secretary of the Hospital Employees' Federation No. 1 Branch, Mr K. Mitchell, said last night: "It is depressing that the Government has bypassed the need for reform of the service and concentrated, instead, on an attack on the ambulance men."

"Compulsion and coercion will harden the dispute."

For the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service Cr Les Fox said he was very happy at the decision and hoped the dispute would be speedily resolved.





## *Industrial Unrest 1969*

**The last edition** of The Beacon featured industrial unrest in our service created by state government intervention within our Ambulance Service 1993/95. This edition continues this topic as, in distain or not, this is still our state ambulance history. When the first serious industrial action took place in 1969, I was, as others, caught up in the middle of it, then stationed at Ringwood Depot. I am unaware of any record that reflects the personal feelings, and ramifications of this industrial action on front line personnel involved at the time. This is not withstanding a press report at the time from fellow officer and friend *A/O Ian Crighton*, at that period Ian was the Ringwood depot union delegate. Accordingly, his report reflected in that sense “Pro Union in support of the cause”. (H/Sun 7 March 1969)

It should be noted and recorded how this industrial action was viewed overall by front line paramedics, the personal feelings of involvement, the stress on families, both income wise and psychologically. It also should be noted this is my personal account only, however in the duration, a response that appeared supported by most officers having to take part in the action. In 1969, Union approaches were made to the then VCAS committee for a salary commensurate with this profession, also improved conditions and equipment. These requests were considered “Insolence” as to a very large degree the “Master - Servant” mentality was still intrenched in management. In the final outcome, and from the point of view of service members, all avenues of negotiating with management were futile and completely exhausted. It was considered anything further would again be fruitless, we had reached the end of the line. To place this situation in perspective, an A/O with ongoing training, working 24/7 shifts, and the requirements the job entailed, would attract a wage entitlement of approx.\$62.00 P/W Gross. Conversely, a municipal council labourer working 0800 hrs to 1700 hrs Monday to Friday, salary was parallel to this wage. Bearing in mind this was also in the “Deadly Decades” incurring 20 road fatalities weekly, and well exceeding 1000 per year in Victoria alone and cardiac deaths rampant, (49,500 nationally in 1968 – (17,300 in 2020). If an ambulance was not attending a road fatality it likely would be in attendance at a cardiac arrest, often “one up”. If you factor in the demographics of this era, the MCA and cardiac death tolls were horrific. On so many occasions, we had to share the tragic death of a victim with loved ones, this may be at the scene, or when a life expired in the back of the ambulance, children presenting the worst case experience. The greater majority of us had young families, mortgages, and other financial commitments and outgoings, so financial balancing was not easy. Pre-strike action incorporating other methods were deployed, being a ban on book work, and washing ambulances, the latter becoming a contentious issue!

Many of us believed, and I still believe, having a filthy and/or graffitied ambulance does not bring public support, on the contrary. In fact the majority of public response I have encountered has been negative and critical, it also lowers the high status and regard for paramedics. However, the Union were pedantic on this particular course of action (please see re-produced images accompanying this account). Regional Services contemplated joining this industrial action of VCAS colleagues. Having worked both regionally, and City/Metro, and also being a country boy, striking would be a very difficult undertaking in a smaller country community. The country service presents a completely different set of circumstances due to the close knit personal connections of country people. Arising also is the tyranny of distance involved in these regions to obtain medical care. Although there is no question these services would have been supportive if requested.

The strike action commenced in March 1969 after a meeting at Trades Hall with the Union secretary of the HEF No 1 Branch, **Mr Keith Mitchell**. Keith Mitchell had the verbal ability to reach deep into inner feelings, this was not a difficult task given the situation described above. The strike was supported and so it began, there were to be interesting days ahead. Albeit even with all avenues of negotiation exhausted, and no other option available, to this day, I still believe most frontliners, due to our professional image, were uncomfortable participating in this strike action. Immediately the strike commenced, VCAS management introduced a roster for emergency response calls only, a condition of the strike action. This meant paramedics’ shifts were reduced to approximately 50% of the normal duty roster. Subsequently, wages were paid in accordance for time worked, putting greater pressure on the already strained family income. The ambulance committee held firm, I imagine trying to starve the men back on duty, however the men’s resolve held firm as well. Reduced income made the home situation most difficult, this was not only in terms of financial commitments, but other factors also presented. Men that were normally at work were at home under “Mum’s Feet”, this caused problems, further fuelled by lack of money and hardship. Normal basic social activities were restricted, and the great tradition of going for a beer ceased, with the very occasional takeaway meal, as every cent was required for family home commitments. Apart from going to the “local”, I made my own beer so Barb and I seemed to have many more Ambo mates and wives calling in at home than normal. I do not know what alcohol percentage the beer was, however, it had a kick in it, as we found out afterwards, without fatalities! For those who can recall, the beer recipe was the old Richmond Brewery “Tiger” beer not in kits as today, and a work of art

process to make. Often this would lead to visitors staying on at the “*Chateau ‘D Montrose’*”. We would scratch up an evening meal between us all, this was really just camaraderie and supporting each other in this tough time. One case of strike boredom creating good fortune deserves mention. Brian and Lyn Shott called at home late one morning. Shotty and I were walking up the back yard kicking stones when Brian spotted an old hot water service behind the shed. He exclaimed; “they have a copper tank inside the casing, valuable scrap metal!” Like men possessed, we took to the old service with great vigour to rapidly extricate the copper tank. On completion, we expediently loaded the tank into the back of my F.E. Holden Station Wagon and headed to a scrap metal dealer not far down Canterbury Road. When telling the proprietor of the strike action I think he felt sorry for us and gave me \$20.00 for the copper tank, a tidy sum in 1969. As it happened, the Dorset Gardens Hotel was just 2 or 3 kms away, so after “two or three” we bought the girls a couple of bottles of wine and headed home, still with additional housekeeping money. We were two very popular blokes!

Moving back, I feel public sentiment on this industrial action was divided. On one hand there was a sympathetic outlook for Ambulance personnel trying to secure a decent salary and conditions. On the other, a sense of desertion, even to some a dereliction of duty, seen in the perspective that one of the three major Emergency Services was striking and potentially leaving the public vulnerable. This is of course not the case given that emergency response capability was in place, in reality nothing had changed in covering normal emergency calls throughout Melbourne and the greater Metropolitan area. The only persons to be inconvenienced, regrettably were the day to day transport cases to day clinics and non-urgent patient transfers. It should be added also that there was a fairly broad line drawn between “Emergency and Non-Emergency” case evaluation. I believe there was not at any stage of the dispute a situation where life was placed at risk, not as “blown up” by the media, and also for political advantage. In fact, the strike emergency call roster if anything may have overreached for emergency case response compared to normal day to day operation. A back up by non-Union management staff was at all times also available should further emergencies require.

Eventually, a breakthrough came in the dispute, this breakthrough created when the VCAS committee and the Union were instructed by the state government to take their case to the State Industrial Appeals Court. This became a drawn out process. A/O Ian Crighton attended the court proceedings as a Union witness, Ian being a Ringwood team member meant we were well updated early on each court day’s proceedings. Putting VCAS’s management outlook and attitude on the ongoing dispute, Ian reported on one occasion the following: A VCAS barrister addressed the court with the context of “*These men your honour are seeking a salary increase of \$13.00, per week, when all in fact they do is ‘cart’ people to hospital*”. I believe this statement speaks volumes in the chain of events that were occurring. At the completion of the Appeals court case, the judge awarded paramedics an acceptable wage increase, and the men returned to normal duty.

So, taken successfully, had been the very first pioneering steps in bringing about the remuneration and conditions that apply in today’s Ambulance Service.

Also, put in place were a contingent of Ambulance Officer representatives to meet regularly and discuss any potential problems that may constitute distention between men and management. The panel consisted of one representative from each branch, and two from H.Q., totalling a twelve member panel. This initiative worked well, however attracted some not so complimentary names such as “The Terrible Twelve” and “The Dirty Dozen”.

Industrial unrest arose again in 1973, again bringing prolonged strike action to our Ambulance Service. Officers were threatened with dismissal by telegram, however they fought on. In view of previous unrest the state government issued a request for the then VCAS committee to resign, which occurred. A new board led by **Sir Laurence Hartnett**, was put in place, moving the Service forward in new direction and management.

I feel reasonably satisfied now that the ambulance personnel aspects of this 1969 dispute have been told and recorded in our history, albeit in brevity. Any further information, comment or information on this article, is most welcome. Notwithstanding that additional information forthcoming, I see no reason to re-visit this industrial unrest after this edition, even given it be part of the trial and tribulation incurred developing our Ambulance Service.

Ed.

## *Words of Wisdom.*

*Some people travel to the coast and they see the ocean. Some travel through the countryside and they see paddocks. Some travel into the bush and they see trees.*

*Yet others travel to the very same destinations and at each one they see a thousand miracles of nature.*

PKD

*Chinese Proverb: Confucius say “young camping couple may have naughty intent”*







*Telegrams*



*Phone and*



*Mail*

*We are delighted with the growing response from readers and others giving feedback and contacting The Beacon with various aspects. This provides an interest to other readers, and also prompts return comments.*



*Here is a sample:*

**Roger and Joan Vidler** found an old wooden toy ambulance in an abandoned kids sand pit, not sure what these two were doing in this sand pit? Anyway they decided to restore the toy to former prestige. Roger took on the task and really excelled, requesting ambulance stickers that I posted to him. Here is the completed project which Roger and Joan are kindly donating to our museum.

### ***To the Editor (as received)***

*Hello, my name is **Ronald Attwell**, I am the nephew of **Ronald Forth**. We today received your article in your magazine with the farewell to my uncle. I would just like to express my families sincere thanks. We are very grateful and were very honoured by it. Uncle Ron did very much love his ambulance and also all vintage cars, he had a unique love for them. I myself fell in love with Humber's it is my favourite old car and will always continue to be. Again I express my sincere thanks, we cannot thank you enough, thank you very much for your time.*

**Australasian College of Paramedicine.** Initially requested through RAAV, was a contribution of our Victorian Ambulance history over the past 50 years. The Victorian article was required to complement the other states appearing in their publication "The Responder." This is a special edition of their magazine celebrating the College's "**50 Year Anniversary.**" The Beacon was pleased to accommodate this request and provided an interesting article as sought, together with images. Accompanying, our Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin OAM Museum also gifted the college three Ambulance Victoria published books. Titles: *30 years Women In Ambulance. MICA Victoria The First 50 Years, and Lights, Sirens and Challenges.* The books were gratefully received by the college. The Beacon, at request, may contribute regular articles to "The Responder" in coming months.



Australasian College of  
**Paramedicine**

**Dinky Di** is a very special close friend of mine, Di alerted me to the "**On Razor's Edge**" case, as she has very strong family connections to Ambulance. Thanks Di. I am sure our readers will be gripped with this hair-raising story. (pity it can't raise my hair!) Keep up the good work!

**Violet Town** is in the news again. This quaint small village in North East Victoria gained national notoriety due to the "Southern Aurora Train Crash" that occurred there in February 1969. The Southbound Southern Aurora passenger train collided head on with a northbound goods train, killing only 8 people, and injuring 17, a miracle toll. Violet town residents have made this untoward event work in their favour tourist wise over many years, forming a hard working promotional committee. Again, in the month of February 2023, occurred another milestone. The town was awarded "**Best Monument or Memorial Award**". Murals of the disaster are featured on the road leading to the accident site.



### ***Our Member, Family News.***

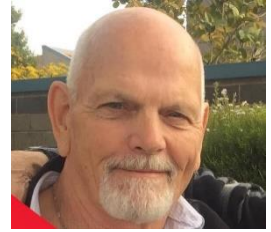
**Chris and Ralph Casey** enjoyed a wonderful pre-Easter family reunion. Grandkids, **Ollie** 8 and **Ella** 6, arrived from Hong Kong with Chris and Ralph's daughter **Rachel** and hubby **Trent**. Chris and Ralph have not seen Ollie and Ella for 3 years, so what an emotional catch up this was. The unfortunate part of this, the visit was only a 5 day duration and the family returned to Hong Kong. Rachel teaches English to Chinese students, Trent is a commercial pilot with Cathay Pacific, Ollie and Ella attend school locally.

*(Photo, Front: Ella, Chris, Ollie, Back: Ralph, Rachel holding Benji.)*



Cont'd over

**Signal 8 Ambulance Service Victoria** founder and stalwart, **Ted Van Dyken** has undergone major abdominal surgery at Newcastle NSW for a serious diagnosis. Ted's surgeon is very pleased with the outcome with a positive prognosis. Despite experiencing on going post operative pain, he is in good spirits and progressing well. Ted, an original Ringwood Ambo, and 30 plus year man has made a significant contribution to the retired Ambulance and associated sector. Signal 8 originated in 2020 whilst Ted was in hospital for another not so serious issue. "Signal 8 Ambulance Service Victoria" connects many old colleagues, creates interest, and offers much more to the retired sector. Membership is free to former and current Ambulance personnel, and in cases counterpart Emergency Service members may join.



*All the best mate for a speedy and complete recovery.*

**For the information of** members and friends of our Late Curator, **Chas Martin O.A.M.**, Chas's wife, Marg and the Martin family are taking Chas's ashes for placement in the memorial wall of the Western General Cemetery located between Ararat and Stawell on April 23/24, 2023.

*"Chas is going home. R.I.P."*

**Inquisitive:** Our long-term good friends and former neighbours are **Roy and Sue Reaper**. Invariably, I nicknamed Roy "**Grim**", an appellation that adhered. Roy and Sue have a paramedic son, **Cameron** in our Service. I wonder if he has inherited this same tag??

~~~~~

Is the Black Dog snarling at you?

You are not alone! The "Black Dog" never rests, it's vicious long term snarl and bite are a cruel occupation legacy. The "Emergency Services curse" for the unsuspecting is the dog's prolific hunting ground. Early intervention is its enemy and deterrent. Today there are professionals from whom to seek early intervention and assistance.

Talk to your GP or another trusted medical professional.

Discuss it with a trusted friend. It does help.

Phone Lifeline 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636.

Someone is waiting to help and share your problem.

PTSD can be treated if you take the first step.

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### ***Introducing QLD Ambulance Service, Guest Writer.***

- **Paramedic Stephanie Nixon.**

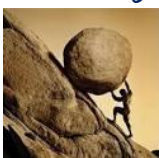
**Stephanie Nixon** is a full-time Advanced Care Paramedic located in Charleville, QLD working on Bidjara country. Stephanie has over ten years' experience as a paramedic with the majority of that being in rural and remote areas of South West Queensland. Stephanie has since started her masters in paramedicine and is a regular contributor to the Australasian College of Paramedicines "Responder" magazine. Stephanie is also a recipient of an EMF Grant and is pursuing her interest in the out-of-hospital research space.



Look out for Steph's first article in the next (Winter) Beacon.

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Courage



Have courage for the great sorrows of life, and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task go to sleep in peace.

Anon

PCs RISK LIVES *October Monday 1976* AS TRAIN HITS



Two policemen risked their lives today in a vain bid to stop a train ploughing into an ambulance.

One leaped into the driver's seat and tried to move the ambulance from the Union Rd. crossing in Surrey Hills.

The other Constable Malcolm Hull, 18, raced up the track waving his arms trying to halt the train.

He had to leap aside as the train raced towards the ambulance, called to tend a council worker seriously injured by an earlier train.

The train bore down on the ambulance and smashed it 70 metres down the line on to Surrey Hills station.

The policeman in the ambulance escaped with grazes and shock.

Head injuries

The workman died later in Box Hill Hospital from head injuries.

The drama began when the workman, employed by Camberwell City Council, was hit by a Lilydale-bound train at 9.21 a.m.

He was climbing from a two-metre trench dug to clear a blocked drain when he was struck on the head by the train.

The ambulance was called and was parked straddling the line away from Melbourne while ambulance men tended the workman.

When a city-bound train appeared at 9.13 a.m. the crew of the Camberwell divisional van made a bid to halt it.

The two ambulance men, Mr Don Rhodes, 40, and Mr Jon Edwards, 37, were only inches away from the second train as it hit.

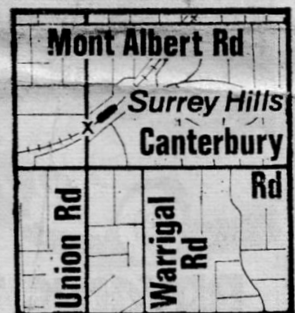
The ambulance was extensively damaged to the left-hand side.

Ambulance man Jon Edwards, said: "We were trying to transfer the injured railway worker on a stretcher and put him in the back of the ambulance to give him oxygen."

"He had been working in a pit between the railway lines and apparently poked his head out at the wrong time."

"When we arrived he had fallen back into the pit and a doctor was working on him."

"Just as we were about to load him on to the



stretcher we could hear the train coming.

"One of the policemen who was with us started running down the track waving his arms telling him to stop."

"But the train driver kept blowing his horn and he kept coming through."

"It frightened hell out of me, and I'm still shaky."

A workmate of the dead man said his friend had worked for the council for more than 20 years as a pipe layer.

A VicRail spokesman said today boom barriers were up when the ambulance drove on to the track.

But they came down when the city-bound train approached.

The Herald

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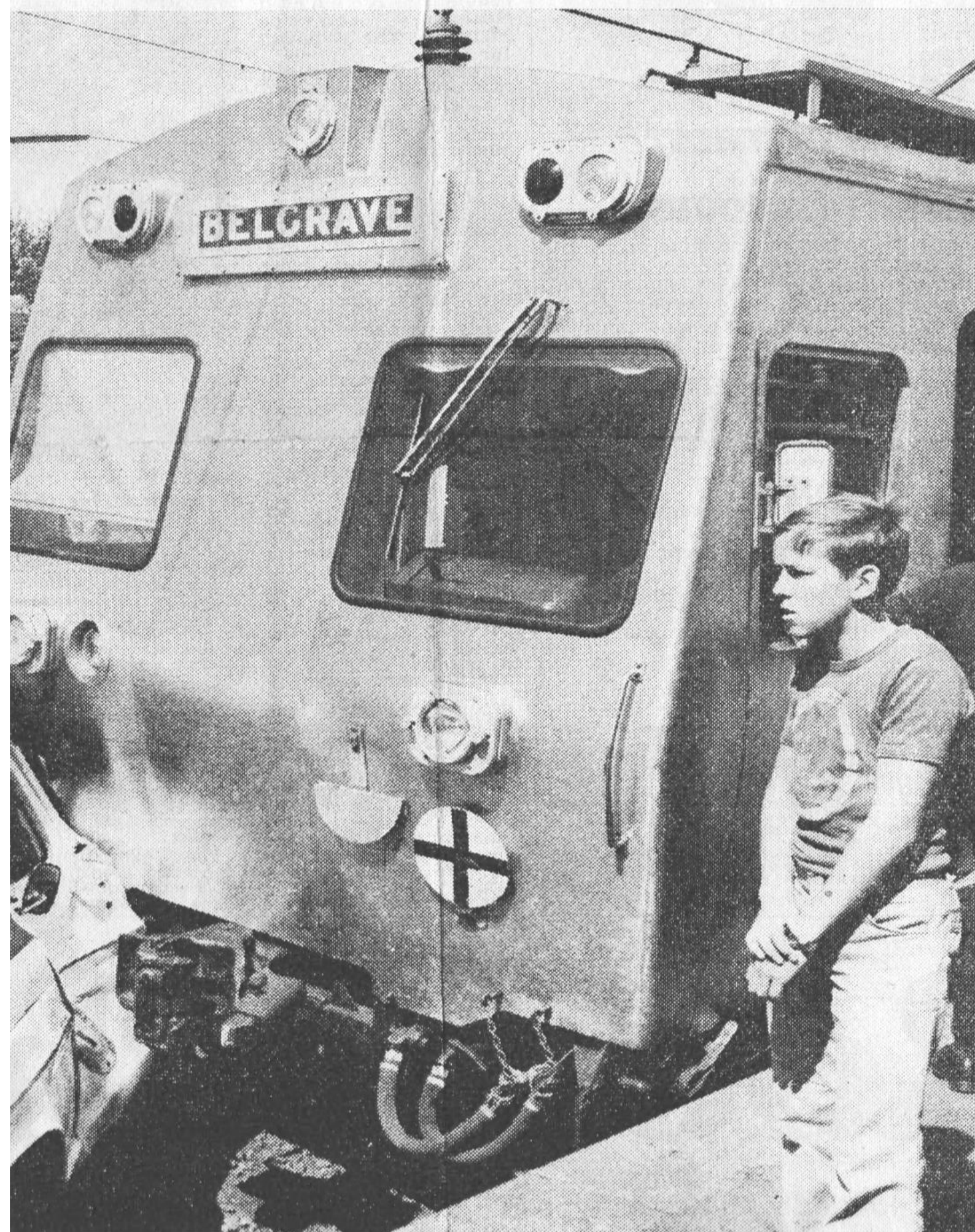
MELBOURNE, MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1976

26 PAGES.

THE ambulance is wedged under the train between platforms at Surrey Hills station today. Pic-



Dragged 70 metres





SINCERE APOLOGY

The Summer edition of The Beacon carried a tribute to the two Queensland Police Officers who were cowardly shot and killed in the course of duty in December 2022. Although offered in total sincerity, this article was completely incorrect. The detail sourced from another organisation contained the wrong identities. However this is not the issue, the issue is, it was my error publishing this article, and as Editor I accept full responsibility. The two persons featured in this edition were in fact the survivors of this murder, Police constables **Keely Brough** and **Randall Kirk**. The Police officers tragically killed were constables **Rachael Mc Crow** 29 and **Matthew Arnold** 26.

The Beacon made contact with the QLD Police Force and explained this error, together with a sincere apology. The QLD Police were most understanding and appreciated our concern and the good will of our potential tribute. I apologise to the two surviving Police members, and also to any loved one or other person disturbed by this error. Steps are taken at all times to ensure fact and accuracy of The Beacon publication, in this case they failed.

Peter Dent.
Editor.



Const. Rachael McCrow



Const. Matthew Arnold

Life has been cowardly snatched from our two young counterparts Rachael and Matthew. They will live on forever in our hearts and memories. Rest peacefully in God's care.

"The darkness of this tragedy makes these two beautiful stars shine brighter forever"



In respectful and compassioned memory of Constable **Angela Taylor Victoria Police Force**. Tragically killed from a car bomb attack on Russell Street H.Q. Melbourne, 27 March 1986. Aged 21

Rest peacefully our dear counterpart, you are always in our thoughts.

British Happenings.



Most Ambulance Services members throughout the World have a mischievous sense of humour, creating situations of mirth. This is no doubt a “stress outlet valve” the laughter involved retaining depleting sanity. This contribution is from a master of the practice, Nick Thresher. ASM.

Here is one of my favourites from way back in the late 1980's that happened when I worked for London Ambulance Service.

Practical jokes are few and far between these days, perhaps for fear of being accused of bullying or simply lack of imagination. There was a day when practical jokes were the norm and it was only a matter of time that you would be the victim, perpetrator, or in my case – both.

London Ambulance Service would operate trainee Ambulancemen & Ambulancewomen (that was our official title back in the 80's) from either Bloomsbury, Smithfield or Waterloo Ambulance Stations.

Bloomsbury & Smithfield roster only had trainees and their instructors that worked three up – two trainees and one instructor on a crew. Whereas Waterloo also ran a roster line with qualified personnel. This worked well as often the instructor would jump a job that was given to the qualified crew so that their trainees gained experience on a wide range of ambulance work.

Sleeping on a night shift was not allowed anywhere in the service, yet crews often found a way to get some shut eye during the night. We were permitted to loosen our tie and take our boots off, yet the thought of putting a mattress down on the floor could mean instant disciplinary action if caught.

Trainees were expected to participate in either branch cleaning, laundering the blankets or sitting in an armchair with the instructor leading a training discussion on a given topic during a night shift if they had some down time. This could be problematic at Waterloo if the qualified crew were trying to 'rest & recline'.

One particular night shift the discussion topic was 'what job am I not looking forward to being despatched to?'. The trainees came up with the usual answers – multi-casualty incidents, birth imminent and anything to do with paediatrics. The qualified crew that night was keen to join into the discussion and promptly announced that they have no concerns of any jobs these days however they both have a major fear of not going to a job. In other words, they are both 'rest & reclining' and the red 'phone rings. They take the details down using pen and paper and return to their seats to put their boots back on, look up the job in a street directory and smarten themselves up a bit, and then they both fall back to sleep in the chairs and forget to go out on the job.

This was too good an opportunity to miss. A few weeks later when we were all on night shift together a plot was put into action. Fake job details were written down on a scrap of paper and attached to their clip board by the red 'phone. The qualified crew were comfortably snoring in their chairs and the trainees were working in the laundry. The red 'phone was accessed by the evil perpetrator who called Waterloo Station. The attendant of Waterloo 1 arose from his slumber and answered the telephone. The conversation went something like this:

'Waterloo 1 here'

'Central Ambulance Control here'. 'What time did you clear on that RTA on Charing Cross Road' We've got the police here on the other line saying they are still waiting for another ambulance for a patient at that location'

'We never got sent to Charing Cross Road. I don't know anything about an RTA'.

'It says here that Waterloo 1 accepted the job at 0420hrs and I've got your initials acknowledging receipt of the job'. 'We gave you that job over 45 minutes ago' 'What's the story?'

The Waterloo 1 Attendant looked at his clipboard, saw the job details and realised that his worst nightmare had actually happened. I've never seen such a flurry of activity. The mess room lit up like Trafalgar Square on New Years Eve, the crewmate jumped from his chair straight into a wall, the profanities from them both would make a soldier blush and they grabbed their ignition keys off the table and raced out to their vehicle in the garage. They were met with six hysterical colleagues that couldn't breathe from the laughter from this well-orchestrated prank.

Now, payback was expected and required by our Code of Conduct. I just didn't know how, when or what form of retribution would befall us.

It was a Saturday dayshift a few weeks later. The instructor told his trainees that they would take every job that came in today right up until 1430hrs. The very obliging qualified crew would not have to go out on any job, the trainees will do them all, until 1430hrs that is, when the England v France rugby union international will be on the TV.

And so the poor trainees and their instructor were run ragged for the entire shift as the others did nothing. I sat down as the teams walked out for the match formalities. At 1431hrs the red 'phone rang, the instructor was content that he didn't have to go out as per the agreement and could comfortably watch the game without interruption. The Waterloo 1 attendant returned to the mess room with job details on a piece of paper. He handed them to the instructor and said, 'they want you to go out on this one'. My blood pressure rose to a dangerous level and I developed venous distention.

'What, we have an agreement. We've done it all today, the national anthems have just finished and the game is about to start'.

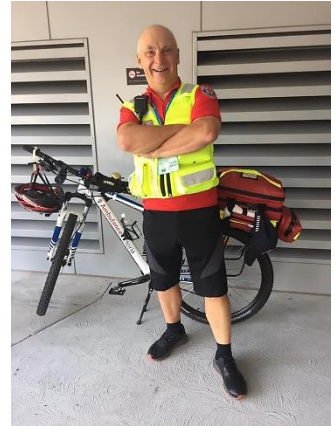
'Well, you better get on the radio and tell 'em then'. 'They said that it's a major incident at The Elephant & Castle and they need an Officer there to manage the scene. Apparently, you're the only one nearby'.

I snatched the details out of his hand, shouted to my two trainees 'common you two, we've got no choice' and as I stormed out of the mess room, I could hear the crowd singing Swing Low Sweet Chariot as the game kicked off on the TV.

I cursed my way to the vehicle, only to find a crowd standing around with a big 'gotcha' banner.

Moral of the story – he who lives by the sword will die by the sword.

*Nick may as well have taken the job, end score **France 1. England 0.***



Nick in London Ambulance attire

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## *A Case On Razor's Edge*

*Do you think this particular Code 1. case incident would put the wind up you?*

This incident happened recently when one of our interstate counterparts responded to a *Code 1* call. Stationed regionally in a coastal location, the female/male crew received a case of "a two year old under a truck".

With all systems go, the crew proceeded with speed to their destination several kilometres away and on single lane country roads. Making good time, they came around a corner to be confronted with a police road block with tyre spikes in place. Here they were stopped by police and told they could not proceed as they (police) were waiting to intercept a stolen truck travelling at excessive speed. An urgent conversation took place and they stated the reasons for the Code 1 ambulance case. The police were still reluctant to let the ambulance proceed due also to the risk of collision with the stolen truck en route. The ambulance crew leader pressed for clear passage, particularly with the nature of the case. Under duress, the police began to lift the spikes to let the ambulance through. However, precisely as they began to do this, the stolen truck came in view travelling, as predicted, at great momentum.

Dropping the spikes back, the police took cover as the truck hurtled towards the road block intending to crash through. This left the ambulance in the middle of the road, unable to move, and directly in the path of the speeding stolen truck travelling towards them. The ambulance crew braced for a potentially fatal collision, verbally supporting each other in the last seconds. The stolen truck careered through the road block over the spikes, veering towards the ambulance, but their guardian angels were there with them. With punctured tyres, the truck only took the driver's side rear vision mirror off the ambulance and continued to career off the road and crash into scrub, rapidly swarmed by police. The tapes were immediately lifted and this valiant crew proceeded to their destination.

The better outcome of this case was the infant was not critically injured; however, the very young patient was air lifted to hospital by the Ambulance Service helicopter.

On return to base, maybe an essential change of uniform items were required. The paramedic driver, when requested in his report to detail how the driver's side rear vision mirror was smashed from the ambulance, stated, "he was unable to look back on that"!!

*A terrific effort colleagues, we are proud of you! and we are glad you are both OK. All's well that ends well.*

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Change someone's day. Give them a smile, and remember, laughter is the best medication for stress!

Former Ambulance Colleagues Service Tribute – An Explanation.



Prior to his passing in June 2022, **Chas Martin** OAM for many years travelled our state delivering eulogies for our passing colleagues. Prior to Chas, eulogies were presented by the late D/O **Alan Watkins**. Both colleagues carried out this function freelance, with the occasional assistance in the North East of the state by the late **Jim Osmotherly**, sadly Jim also passed shortly after Chas last year. As a result of the passing of Chas and Jim, it appeared that none of our departed colleagues received an ambulance eulogy at their funeral, a sad omission.



Editing The Beacon often takes me into consultation with our retired counterpart Emergency Services, in particular the MFB/FRV. In conversation with Secretary **Russell Hawthorn**, our AV eulogy situation, and the absence of it for our passing members, arose. Russell advised that his association went to lengths to support families losing former MFB members. This is comprised of four uniformed retired firemen plus Russell who travel the state with a beautifully restored vintage Dennis 8 pump fire appliance. The four uniformed and gloved firemen act as pall bearers, placing the casket onto the fire truck when, and as requested, and carry it to the final resting place. Russell Hawthorn reads the eulogy and recites the Fireman's Prayer. This leaves the family with a wonderful memory of their loved one's passing, and final tribute of that colleague's career accomplishment. Russell also provided me with photographs of this type of service, a very touching commemoration.

The Objective

I considered this MFB commitment, and as we have similar facilities at our disposal, I felt it was sad that we were not offering something of the same for the entirety of passing colleagues. Late last year (2022), with this knowledge at hand, I wrote a fully detailed submission to A.V. proposing that we bring our former member funeral activity in line with our counterparts. As we are lucky to have access to our own excellent AV Pipes and Drums Band, and beautifully restored vintage ambulances that could, and both have, previously represented at various members' funerals. It was further proposed that a formal AV service eulogy be delivered by a retired, uniformed paramedic. This would be supported by a Paramedics Ode, the casket AV flagged, with cap, and medal/s display where appropriate and other wishes of the loved ones carried out. At the service end the family/loved ones would be presented with a personal scroll or similar dedication of the passed colleague, there were also other issues covered. In this process it was also discovered that AV does not have a Paramedic's Prayer, or Ode. On notification to Chief of Staff Kerry Douglas of this, wheels were immediately put into action by Kerry to rectify this omission, this is now well in progress.

Contained also in my submission were the following:

- (1) As this program is to be open to **all** retired Ambulance Service Victoria members and partners, I recommended that the program be directly under the A.V. umbrella, operating freelance as in the past, and once again not associated with, or isolated to, any attribute of AV. This point was considered to ensure the wider retired ambulance community are aware of this presentation, and it is freely accessed without involvement with a third party. Ambulance Victoria also provide Pastoral care to all current and former personnel throughout Victoria. It was also considered that many former Ambulance personnel do not belong to associations such as RAAV, nor wish to do so. It should be noted that RAAV have a register of RAAV members' funeral wishes, however this does not include non-members.
- (2) RAAV were offered this concept for members, however RAAV prefer participation at funerals and events under their own badge design and attire. This is, of course, the organisation's prerogative to do so, and as the association members wish. Normally RAAV badged attire is requested by the secretary when posting passing members funeral arrangements to membership by email contact.
- (3) The entire objective of this initiative is to **reinstate** colleagues eulogies at their funeral, and to take the presentation to a higher level, forming a fitting criterion for all passing colleagues and family at this difficult and trying time, and also to be parallel with our Emergency Service counterparts.

It is also made very clear in this submission, as stated above, that this initiative be available throughout the entirety of Ambulance Victoria former personnel, ACOs, Cert, their partners, and in cases other loved ones. The tribute is by request of the bereaved, where discrete contact is made and the wishes of those concerned are noted and respectfully carried out. At that time all the initiatives available are

made known to those persons. From this point there is no further interruption to the family, all wishes will be put in place for the funeral as requested.

- (4) The submission also stated that the writer is prepared to take on development of this program throughout the various regions of Victoria, with participants. Also, the writer is prepared to personally cover the North East Victoria Region, and beyond, should this be requested, at his own personal expense and time, as is the case with state development of this colleague tribute plan.

As many of us give way to age, we no doubt consider how we personally would like to be farewelled, and also consider what the wishes of our loved ones would be at this time. It is also nice to think of the legacy of a lasting impression to be held by family of the farewelled loved one.

I believe that this is the least a colleague who has served the community in our Victorian Ambulance Service should receive in tribute and recognition. In summary, this initiative only replaces what was previously available, as you cannot cut across something which at present does not exist.

I am delighted that **Neil Akers** ASM has joined me in this program. Neil, located in Morwell, has a 50-year paramedic milestone with the Victorian Ambulance Service, and many other achievements. Neil will cover the Latrobe Valley, and Gippsland regions. He will be a great asset to this plan. It is envisaged more participants will come on board as awareness develops of commemorating passing colleagues' service to ambulance.

For further information please contact Peter Dent 0427 508888. Email yintambos@bigpond.com Also any colleague, wife, or ambulance associated person, willing to assist with this initiative in any way or role, please contact me. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated so we may support others. Ed.

Foot Note. In the case of state borders, (Murray River) and our interstate Counterparts: Should these (NSW) counterparts not have, and require, this eulogy facility within the towns close to the border and East of the Murray River, we will be pleased to assist, with the casket tributes under their own emblems. **We are as one!**

If you consider this of interest, please email the information on, or make our colleagues aware of this tribute availability.



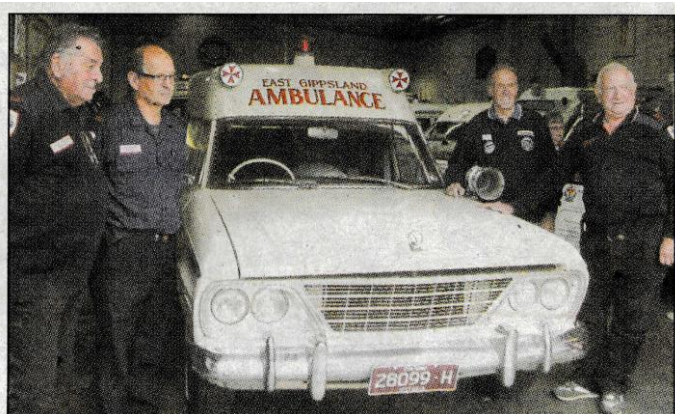
S/O 2 Course Mayfield, 1969 – Know anyone?



Pioneers of Our AHSV Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin O.A.M. Museum.

Over the past six years I have covered much of the general history of AHSV/Ambulance Victoria Museum development, which has duly been written and recorded. Given this, there is little point re-visiting that history in this edition.

However, I do see the need to recognise outstanding contributors. Persons alongside Chas Martin OAM who assisted him to achieve this great public asset and icon. Over the duration names associated with the earlier



Retired ambulance officers Mal Peters, Neil Hall, Neville Hardy and Chas Martin with the former East Gippsland ambulance – 2012.

commencement of AHSV/ Ambulance Victoria Museum have been mentioned. To complete the history of this accomplishment I would like to compile a listing of all members involved. If you, or a person known or deceased were involved, could you kindly advise me by email. If avoidable, I would not wish to omit anyone. Please email: vintambos@bigpond.com. The preliminary listing will be published in The Beacon prior to the final record publication, and a “AHSV Pioneer Recognition” board placed at the museum. The initial listing on hand is **Ken Curtis, Jim Yandle, Chas Martin, Jack Skinner, John Head, John Brown, Neale Johnson, Peter Leek, Darrell Rintoule**. I believe there would be many more to add to this listing.

The exceptional and long term commitment by the following AHSV member is well worthy of recognition:

Darrell Rintoule became Hon. Treasurer of AHSV/ Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin OAM Museum in July 2001, a position Darrell holds to this day, nearing 22 years on. In this extended period of time Darrell has carried out his role with great diligence, accounting for every dollar ingoing, and outgoing, his bookkeeping skills being immaculate. Any financial information required in this aspect has been immediately forthcoming on request. In addition to Darrell’s AHSV Treasurer commitment, in 2014 on the retirement of **Ron Batten** as **RAAV** Treasurer, he assumed this treasurers role also. He held this additional responsibility until circumstances occurred in 2018, and Darrell considered it was not in his best interest to continue.

Thanks from all of us Darrell, and please continue the great work.

Darrell’s career profile appears on the following page of The Beacon.

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*Ambulance  
Victoria*



### *We Share your Loss and Grief*

**Paramedic Steven Tougher, New South Wales Ambulance Service.**

**The Committee** and members of the Ambulance Victoria Chas Martin OAM Museum extend to the loved ones, and NSW Ambulance Service, our sincere sympathy in the tragic loss of respected **Paramedic Steve Tougher, 24 yrs.** on Friday April 14, 2023. To Steve’s wife, Madison, family, friends, and colleagues, our heartfelt thoughts and extreme sense of loss are with you at this time of great sadness and shock.

Our front line men and women of all Emergency Services go forward every shift to assist others, never knowing what lies before them. The dangers are known; however all have the expectation of returning home to loved ones at shift end. For a colleague to be struck down in this manner sends shock waves throughout the entirety of the Emergency Services network, Nationally and Internationally.

***We are one - Always***

## *“From Lad To Leader”*

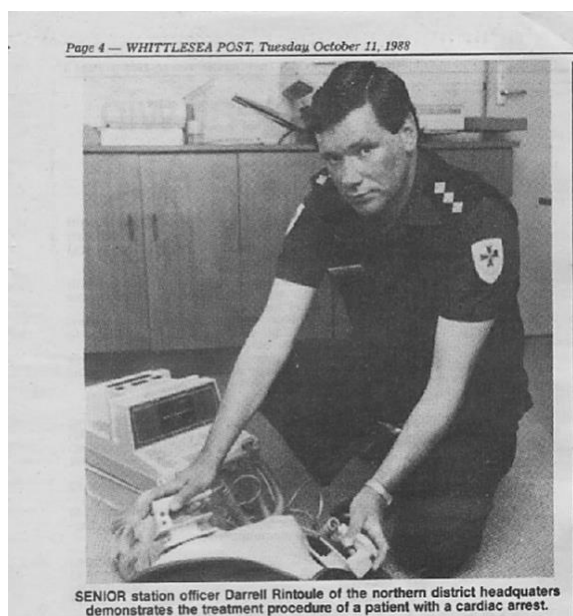
**Darrell Rintoule** was raised and educated in the Western district farming town of Nhill, Victoria.

Completing his education at Nhill, he applied and successfully entered a 3-year Victorian Civil Ambulance Service Cadetship. He commenced on February 2, 1970, at Latrobe Street H.Q. Melbourne, aged 17 years 6 months.

The entry age of cadets was 16 years of age, generally taken in a group. Ambulance cadets immediately underwent a 4 week live in course at AOTC. followed by another 2 week live in course within 12 months. After completion of the 3 year course, failing to pass the final examination resulted in termination. Those successfully passing out of AOTC did so as an A/O grade 3. On road training during the 3 year period was normally in the accompaniment of an S/O 2 mentor. Once qualified, cadets underwent the same AOTC training as other paramedics to obtain further qualifications. However, cadets were not permitted to take front line duty until the age of 18 years or drive an ambulance until that age. Darrell's first 12 months in the Service were a “baptism of fire” Attending the West Gate Bridge Disaster at its peak on October 15, 1970, aged 18 years, with A/O **Bill Sharp**.(Dec.) This disaster lives on today in the minds of all surviving attendees, and those who were associated. The magnitude of this tragedy will present in memories and history for many decades to come.

In 1976 Darrell married **Bev Lugg** an Integrated School Teacher. The couple brought two children to the marriage, a son **Leon**, and daughter **Abbey**, Darrell and Bev have four grandchildren.

Darrell set about making the best of his cadetship, working intensely to progress through the Ambulance ranks.



He worked for 18 months at Preston Branch in 1975/6, then appointed S/O1 at Fairfield Branch, subsequently moving to the newly completed Northcote Branch, bringing decommissioning of Fairfield Branch. Due to a spinal complaint diagnosis attributed to lifting, Darrell was appointed S/O2 at Latrobe Street H.Q. Control room in 1978. A new diagnosis of his complaint revealed that lifting was not of any detriment, in fact this may assist the complaint. With this mind-relieving new diagnosis at hand, Darrell applied for a vacant S/O position at Northcote and was successful. Continuing up the ladder, in 1982 he was appointed District Officer (D/O) Western Region operating out of the Broadmeadows Office. In this particular time frame Metro had taken over the peripheral ambulance branches of Melton, Bacchus Marsh and Sunbury. This created a new challenge for Darrell, as Metro were unfamiliar with “on call” and other issues associated with peripheral branches.

In 1991 Darrell was appointed Area Superintendent, Western Region a position held until the 1993 MAS restructure ordered by the state government. In this Administrator appointed restructure all Ambulance positions were made redundant. As a result Darrell was appointed Group Manager West, in 1994. Following his appointment he was asked to work in the communications centre to identify issues that were not considered an operational task. Darrell identified seventeen items of a ridiculous nature, such as paramedic comms personnel putting pay slips in individual order for the pay office staff and ordering taxis for nonoperational staff. He also became involved in contract management and secretary to the committee out sourcing the communications centre. Once Intergraph became operational, there were a number of complaints regarding their performance. Staff, hospital staff, and the public were requested to complete an observation report. The outcome of this reporting was Darrell being deployed to Intergraph at Tally Ho to investigate. The resulting report saw the “Quality Review Team” established. Encompassed in his investigation were incidents occurring within the control room, the evidence so disturbing, a “Royal Commission” was ordered by the then Bracks Labor state government. The Royal Commission was empowered to investigate the Intergraph operation and performance, and also the terms of the contract it was so awarded.

Darrell returned to Doncaster H.Q. at management request and took up the role of “Operational Fleet and Equipment Co-Ordinator”. This role included testing different vehicle types (i.e.) VW and Mercedes Benz, vehicle design, new equipment, and contract management. Darrell also chaired the “Vehicle Group, vehicle replacement and equipment repair, he was also the service Y2K Co-Ordinator in 1999”.

Attending West Gate Bridge in the infancy of his career had seasoned Darrell well. He was the Ambulance Commander at the “Hoddle Street Massacre” the Jika Jika fire within Pentridge Prison, as well as the years of



on-road challenging cases. Darrell Rintoule retired from Ambulance Victoria in 2011. Off duty, Darrell's recreation was on the Grand Prix original committee, accredited with taking the prestigious race from S.A. He attended the first 10 years of racing working in the Command Centre with Emergency Service Personnel. He was also a Grand Prix member and involved in event management.

*Well Darrell, this has been a very impressive and successful 41 year career path. It has been a pleasure to write your Ambulance achievements, especially as I remember the day you commenced at VCAS as an under 18 year old youngster. Well done colleague! You are on track to be another 60 year contributor to Ambulance like Chas.*



## *Request for History Clarification --- VCAS Air Ambulance Badge 1963/66*

I am in possession of a typed document passed to me regarding "Training of Ambulance Officers in 1963 to act as Air Ambulance attendants". The document states that in 1963 a course comprising of 75 Ambulance Officers took place for the training of these Ambulance personnel for the purpose of Air Ambulance Attendants. It states a further course to this effect took place again in 1965, however does not state a location for this training. On the completion of these courses, successful candidates were awarded an "Air Ambulance Badge" (circular Maltese Cross with a single wing, see image on uniform).

The document was purportedly provided by a former highly respected VCAS/ MAS District Officer, (now Dec.) the document carried a typed Monica dated 2008, with no signature provision. It is further stated around 1966, Air Ambulance moved to the Mayfield Centre then subsequently to Essendon Airport. It also indicates



that some trained officers flew on Air Ambulance. However in 1966 all holders of this badge were asked to hand them in to VCAS, and presumed the qualification was made redundant. The badges were reportedly then to be used by Air Ambulance staff; I would imagine this would be by our flight nurses of the time. The author writes "*It is difficult to understand why this was the case considering it was a badge of merit having passed the required course, and this does not appear to happen in other services*". I have always been under the impression that only flight nurses were the pioneers of our Air Ambulance. Subsequently I would personally like to know if this information can be supported.

I joined VCAS in 1965 and knew this particular D/O well, however I cannot recall knowledge of this training criterion, qualification, or badge. Although through the haze of the years I may vaguely remember this emblem, also it is indicated on the apelet on the uniform of the person in the image. Knowing the purported author, I do not question the veracity of this statement. I realise this is a long way back in our history, and I am hoping someone out there can clarify this information. This is another of the many cases of accessing our history.

Ed.



## *ANZAC Day – 2023*

### *25<sup>th</sup> April, 2023*



*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them"*

## *"Lest We Forget"*



## Our Vehicle Co-ordinator and Workshop Report

**Terry Brooks** is Deputy Curator of our Museum; Terry's designated role is the museum's Vehicle Co-Ordinator. This is a very demanding task encompassing many responsibilities which include bookings and required preparation of vintage ambulances for film hire. This includes specific signage, and other requests. The role also encompasses providing vehicles for commemoration purposes, ensuring vehicle log books are kept up to date, and the registration requirements of our vintage vehicle fleet. Another critical role, and extremely time consuming, is attempting to source mechanical parts for our aged vehicles when required. Terry covers ancillary duties in addition and assists Curator Ralph Casey.

**Moving to our workshop**, I never cease to be fascinated with the ingenuity of **Bill Redpath** and **Gary Dole**. In the first instance we are extremely fortunate to have mechanical people with the expertise and knowledge to work on very aged and various make and model vintage ambulances, particularly in this day and age. These two men not only excel here but go over and beyond that criterion at times. They are able to seemingly achieve the impossible. One can imagine trying to obtain parts and information on vehicles up to, and over, 110 years



**Bill**

old, "the two wizards do". Here is some of their magic: Our 1913 Talbot was naturally "crank handle" started, risking aging broken wrists. Bill and Gary engineered a fly wheel and starter motor for the old girl. Also the 1913 Talbot was running rough. Gary traced the problem to the magneto which was firing out of synchronisation. He downloaded the magneto manual, studied it, then re-assembled the myriad of intricate parts, re-fitted the magneto, "Bingo" the Talbot ran like a clock for the first time ever at the museum.



**Gary**

**Bill Redpath's** mechanical business was an authorised repairer for AV prior to Bill's retirement. Many of the ambulances involved in this duration were now in the vintage category. His knowledge is a gift to us. Bill has also programmed each vintage vehicle for a thorough mechanical workover, ensuring all vehicles run at peak performance. It is incredible how unexpected history is created. The 1913 Talbot ambulance required a radiator replacement. Alas, the radiator core is a "Honey Combe" type core, fitted into the radiator when the vehicle was manufactured in Britain 110 years ago. Without doubt, this was yesteryear's technology, a product well and truly in memories, and a radiator replacement seemingly an impossibility! In an amazing outcome, and by sheer chance, Bill Redpath knew of a radiator repairer at Berwick. Coincidentally, he incurred a personal radiator problem requiring him to take one of his own units to be repaired. Whilst at the repairer he raised the issue of our Talbot radiator, here came our breakthrough! The manager knew of a vintage radiator repairer in New Zealand. It seems this repair firm had purchased the 1888, 144 year old, original and refurbished core manufacturing machine from a company in Britain. This same equipment had made the radiators for that era of Talbot vehicles. The new owners shipped the machine to New Zealand and continued to manufacture vintage radiator cores. The Berwick repairer provided the Talbot specifications to New Zealand and a new radiator core is being manufactured. The product will be shipped to our museum on completion.

**In other workshop news**, Chas's favourite vintage ambulance, our 1963 Studebaker, broke a spider gear in the diff. Eventually, with a stroke of luck a second hand diff was located by Ralph and delivered to the museum. Our two wizards got to work dismantling it for the part required for a transplant into the Studebaker, which is expected to be back to normal very soon. Ron Forth's former 1964 Humber Super Snipe has required mechanical work prior to obtaining museum registration. The Humber required a new drag link as the link fitted had been welded to take a power steering set up, for registration purposes the steering had to be restored to original status. Terry was able to locate the part through a contact the Humber Club provided and the process of fitting this part is taking place. A couple of other majors, our 1960 Chrysler Royal ambulance blew a gear box, however Bill was able to locate a company in Carrum to carry out repairs, another off the list! Finally the Ford F350 has had the front end repaired thanks to Gary and Bill, with the assistance of a suspension company and further assistance from AV fleet. All up it has been a very busy and expensive period, however, in Murphey's law, these things normally occur all at once. I am sure you will agree the prowess, foresight, and diligence of these two men, Bill and Gary, form an irreplaceable asset to us. Adding to the kudos is the fact they work under very difficult circumstances at the museum. They do not have a workshop, repairs are carried out in the vehicle display area, there is no hoist facility, and very limited equipment. The absence of a hoist creates the need for these aging men to crawl under vehicles. Vehicle repairs



**Replacement Diff**



are also often carried out at their private residence. In other news. It is great to see our 1942 Chevrolet ambulance back home after being stored away for two years due to lack of space here at the museum “Fete Accompli”

**Around the regions.** Nearly all of our regional events and vintage display team headed up to Hanging Rock on February 12. The showcasing of our vehicles in country towns creates great AV, PR from these local areas as well as regular followers. The Yarra Glen show a week later achieved the same enthusiastic public turn out. We have several currently serving members particularly younger paramedics, this is great to see. It would be excellent to have them come along to a display in their region and see yesteryear’s ambulance. This would also be an opportunity to talk to the public regarding today’s service, expertise, equipment and technology.



**Hanging Rock - Sunday February 12, 2023:**

**Yarra Glen Show - Sunday February 19, 2023**

**Film production** adds another dimension to the showcasing of our vintage fleet. Our museum is very well patronised in this aspect. Filming shoots are very time consuming and anytime 7/24, a dedicated team carry out this role, *Terry Brooks, Gary Dole, Ralph Casey, Buddy Holley*, and occasionally others.

**Every department** of our museum is operated solely by loyal volunteers. Without this selfless input we could not operate and present our priceless Ambulance history and heritage to the people of Victoria and beyond.

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Our museum crew muster on each Monday for our busy work roster.



L-R Gary Dole, Terry (Doc) Brooks, and Peter Leek. Pete is the highly respected "Granddad" of our museum having been both a British and Victorian Ambo.



**Ambulance
Victoria**



About Us

We are located at 1/55 Barry Street, Bayswater, Victoria 3153. Email: ambulance.historical@outlook.com

Our museum is supported by Ambulance Victoria and operated solely by volunteers. The museum charter is to preserve our proud Victorian Ambulance Service history.

The museum presents 25 immaculately restored vintage ambulances dating from 1887. Motor ambulances dating from 1913. There is a comprehensive range of vintage equipment, memorabilia, photographs, information board, and historic records. We also showcase our vehicles at regional events for A.V. P.R..Visitors and visiting group parties are welcome and entertained with our PowerPoint video presentation of our operational history.

Today's events – Tomorrow's history!

Looking Back

Our First Issue of The Beacon, January 2017 – 8 Pages.



THE BEACON

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF

Ambulance Victoria Museum



Ambulance Historical Society Victoria Inc. 1/55 Barry Street Bayswater, Victoria 3153 Curator: 0428 813 385 Email: vintambos@bigpond.com

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WELCOME! This is the first issue of “The Beacon” Ambulance Victoria Museum Newsletter. We hope, with your input, we can make this publication interesting, informative and enjoyable for all. We envisage a quarterly publication schedule to keep members up-to-date with the museum activities. If you have any suggestions for new topics, items of interest, photos, articles and particularly personal milestones, funny stories, etc. then please contact Peter vintambos@bigpond.com or phone 0427 508 888. It would be great to hear from you.

Congratulations to Chas on his well-deserved award and also a special thanks to wife, Marg for her tireless efforts assisting our museum.

The Quill.



FROM THE CURATOR I hope you all had a great Christmas with your families and enjoyed the New Year festivities welcoming 2017.

With the challenges of 2016 now largely behind us, a year that has seen us settle into our new premises, the massive task of evaluating and recording of all our memorabilia which is still ongoing, promoting our new location to visitors and the general requirements of the move to Bayswater, with this a special thanks to Steve Eather and Ambulance Victoria.

Our museum has been developed from hard work, determined effort, dedication and generosity into today's proud historic state icon – Let's always keep it that way.

No doubt the year ahead will again present a further demand for additional effort and input. The museum can only progress, and indeed survive, with the dedication of you as members.

I wish you all a healthy and happy 2017 and look forward to working with you throughout this year.

Chas Martin - Curator