



Australian American Association Queensland Division – Brisbane



NEWSLETTER 22nd EDITION ~ May 2023

81st Anniversary of Battle of the Coral Sea

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Patron: Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland.



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From left - Terry Aronson, Dr Peter Glazebrook, Mike Harris, Teresa Pokoj, Helen Stanley and Alice Langford.



The Australian American relationship is linked across both sides of the Pacific Ocean, with a common heritage and many countless and cherished ties.

*We also remember those who paid the price for our freedom.
Lest we forget.*

President's Message.

Commemoration of 81st Anniversary of the Battle of Coral Sea.

Dear members and friends,

Thank you, all those who attended our Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration Service, held at the Australian American War Memorial, Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place Newstead Park, Brisbane, Australia on Saturday 6th May 2023. We have now received sincere comment from guests that the service was most appreciated.

180 guests [consisting of 51 Wreath-layers] attended the service to honour and remember those who fought and those who died, in this epic battle [from 4th to 8th May 1942] that saved Australia from invasion.

Guests also attended to lay wreaths to remember relatives, friends and loved ones who served in all theatres of war.

I am eternally grateful to the Commander of HMAS Moreton – RAN CMDR Fiona Southwood, the Catafalque Party and RAN Band Queensland, based at HMAS Moreton, who provided a wonderful display of vocal and musical support for the event, with 'taps' played by the American Legion Bugler Lauren Folster. As well, I thank RAN Chaplain the Reverend Stephen Briggs, RAN Chief Bandmaster Simon Potter and RAN Chief Boatswain Paul Cannard, for their magnificent support in making the service a most meaningful and solemn event.

I wish to thank the Representative of Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland - Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Robinson RAN, US Ambassador to Australia - Caroline Kennedy's representative – US Defense Attaché Colonel Shane Gries, Commodore Paul O'Grady RAN (Commodore Flotillas), Rear Admiral Michael 'Buzz' Donnelly Commander of Carrier Strike Group Five/Task Force Seven Zero, United States Navy 7th Fleet. As well, I thank the Consul Generals and representatives of the US, Japan,

Korea, Italy and the Netherlands and all representatives of government, relevant veterans and religious organizations, and all other guests who attended.

A special thanks to our excellent MC, Former Senator the Hon. Santo Santoro, Life Member of the Australian American Association, Brisbane, and the two Popular Australian Recording Artists Bernadette Gill and Johnny Greenwood. Bernadette for her Lament that she especially composed for the event entitled "Lament of the Coral Sea" and Johnny for singing the Australian favorite bush ballad "Waltzing Matilda" and their supporting musicians.

Thanks to our Association's Secretary Alice Langford for organizing the event's catering of sandwiches and other refreshments for the event. Also, our Treasurer and Assistant Secretary Teresa Pokoj, for her baking of hundreds of delicious Shortbread Biscuits, Banana Cake and Carrot Cake in handy packs for you to take home. As well, our Vice President Terry Aronson, who provided the bottled water. Also, our Association's event volunteers - 2nd Vice President Helen Stanley and Maurice Hand, Secretary Alice Langford and Peter Cumming, Board Member Dr Peter Glazebrook, Bill and Chris Elliott, Sally Elliott, and others. Also, Brisbane City Council staff - Melanie Dames, Suzanne Conner, JD Hart and Newstead Park Head Gardner Steve Humphries for their wonderful service to us.

I thank the Queensland - Police Service and Ambulance Service - You may not have seen them, but they were there, as always, to ensure the safety and good health of all of our guests.

As well, a very big thank you goes to our Association's Treasurer and Assistant Secretary Teresa Pokoj, for her outstanding work in partnering with me, in the planning and organizing of the complete event.

The following defence force, governmental officials and dignitaries, attended the event -

- RAN Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Robinson - Representing the Hon Dr Jeannette Young, Governor of Queensland.
- Representative of US Ambassador to Australia Caroline Kennedy – US Defense Attaché Colonel Shane Gries.
- United States Consul General Hon Christine Elder,
- Japanese Consul General - Hon Junji Gomakubo.
- Republic of Korea Consulate Head of Mission – Hon Kyungun Kim.

- Italian Consul General the Hon Luna Angelini Marinucci,
- Netherlands Consulate Rep - Lt Col Peter Burgerhout Defence Attaché & Capt Laurens van der Laan Royal Netherlands Army.
- RAN Commodore Paul O'Grady (Commodore Flotillas).
- USN 7th Fleet Rear Admiral Michael [Buzz] Donnelly Commander - Carrier Strike Group Five/Task Force Seven Zero & Flag Aide Lt Steve Zakravsky.
- RAAF Group Captain Dennis Tan RAAF Base Amberley.
- Australian Army Lt Col Khalad El Khaligi Commanding Officer 1st Regiment Royal Australian Artillery, Representing Brigadier Mick Say Commander 7th Brigade.
- US Army Major Matt Montazzoli, attached to Australian Army 1st Division.
- RAN Commander Fiona Southwood, Commanding Officer HMAS Moreton.
- Australian PM's rep Hon Graham Perrett MP Federal Member for Moreton.
- Opposition Leader's rep - Hon Phillip Thompson OAM,
- Mrs Melissa McMahan MP, member for Macalister - representing Premier of Queensland, Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP.
- Cr David McLachlan Councillor for Hamilton Ward, representing The Right Honourable Adrian Shrinner, Lord Mayor of Brisbane.
- Phillip Thompson OAM MP Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Federal Member for Herbert representative for Hon. Peter Dutton MP Leader of Opposition.
- Former Senator Hon Santo Santoro & Life Member of the Australian American Association Brisbane.
- Inspector Lynne Archer representing Commander Katrina Carroll of the Queensland Police Force.
- Hon Tim Nicholls MP Member for Clayfield & Life Member of the Australian American Association Brisbane.
- Executive Director Kirrily Magill representing Office for Veterans, Department of the Premiers, Cabinet.
- Capt. Kasper Kuiper representing Brisbane Maritime Museum and combined Company of Master Mariners of Australia.
- Cr Vicki Howard Councillor for Brisbane Office of the Cabinet, Chair for Community, Arts & Night-time Economy.

*Welcome Address given by Mike Harris,
President of the Australian American
Association, Brisbane, at the 81st Anniversary
of the Battle of the Coral Sea, held on Sat 6th
May 2023, at Newstead Park, Qld Australia.*

I am very honoured to join with you in commemorating the 81st Anniversary of this most significant Battle that it has been said, saved Australia from invasion! It was fought in waters, as close as 800 kilometres off our beautiful Queensland Coastline and that ladies and gentlemen, is so tremendously close to us here!

This colossal battle, saw warships from the US and Australian Navies, matched together against those of the Imperial Japanese Navy. This battle persisted for 5 tough, hard-gruelling days, between the 4th and the 8th May, 1942. It was the first aircraft-carrier battle ever fought, and the first in which the opposing ships never sighted, nor fired directly upon, one another. This was because all of the attacks were made by aircraft, bombing and torpedoing; all desperately vying to destroy each other's ships.

We have on display the 20 photographic plates produced by Paul Johnson, on the table over there. They paint a graphic description and story (plate by plate) of the battle, and reading through them really puts you in touch with the realism and desperation of those who were involved in this epic encounter.

It is also noteworthy that...on the 8th May 1942 (almost 81 years ago) was the date of the sinking of the US Fleet-Carrier - USS Lexington, that beautiful ship the 'Lady Lex' as she was most affectionately called, went down with the loss of 216 of her crew and 35 aircraft.

And, most importantly today, we must remember the sacrifice of all those who fought

in this battle, and the ultimate sacrifice of those who died. Such is the tragedy of war the fact, that some never get to return home to their families and their friends!

Today, we Australians fervently renew our gratitude to the United States of America for the support it provided during our very desperate time of need, and for the Alliance to which this Battle means so much. In these very different present and challenging times, Australian and American forces continue to uphold the great traditions that were forged, so long ago.

With the passing of time, the Commemoration of this Battle, has become an occasion to acknowledge the enduring significance of Australia's long-term strategic relationship with the United States of America. Particularly now, as both of our Nations face the most difficult and dangerous security environment, experienced in the past 81 years.

We now see the crisis that has developed in Europe, with the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, and as well, there is the broader challenge to world-order and our national security response, focusing on our own Pacific-Region. At the end of the day, our shared prosperity and security, depends directly on our ability to properly defend ourselves in the face of any threat, as we did during our darkest days of World War 2.

So now, on this day of commemoration, we express our thanks to our Australian Defence Force and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

We will remember, this day, tomorrow and always, those who paid the price for our freedom and there is always a price to be paid, by those who serve.

And, so.....**Lest we forget**

I thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

REMEMBERING THE PRESENCE OF UNITED STATES FORCES IN AUSTRALIA 1941 - 1947.

A short distance upstream from where the Annual Battle of the Coral Sea Wreath-laying event is held at "Newstead Park" is the site of the old "Newstead Wharves". This is the location where the Heavy Cruiser "USS Pensacola" berthed on 22nd of December 1941. It was also the berth in late November 1947 for the Ship "USAT Goucher Victory", a Victory class WW2 Ship, successor to the Liberty class ships. "USAT Goucher Victory" was named after Goucher College, a then all female college with a famous WW2 connection.

The story began with the first presence of US Forces in Australia, when a convoy of 7 cargo and troop ships [known at the "Pensacola Convoy"] was being escorted by the "USS Pensacola", en-route to re-equip the US Base in Manila. However, following the bombing of Pearl harbour by Japanese forces, the convoy was diverted to Brisbane. Along the way, the convoy was joined by an escort of Royal Australian Navy Cruisers – "Canberra" and 'Perth' and the Royal New Zealand Cruiser – "Achilles".

As the "USS Pensacola" and her Convoy, steamed up the Brisbane River, cheering crowds of local people were seen all along the banks of the river, happy to see the arrival of the convoy. The convoy was the first of the military forces (US battalions of men and their military equipment) to arrive from the US on Australian soil. The convoy discharged its men and equipment at a location at Hamilton Wharf - now known as "Pensacola Place" near Brett's Wharf, which is located downstream from Newstead Park.



The Heavy Cruiser – "USS Pensacola".



US National Guard soldiers marching along Racecourse Road Hamilton in Brisbane, after being discharged from their troop ships.



Victory Class Ship "USAT Goucher Victory".

The story finished 6 years later, as 1,900 coffins were loaded during December 1947. It is especially important as on the 22nd of December, six years to the day and watched by 30,000 Brisbane residents, the last American was loaded on the "USAT Goucher Victory" - who was an Unknown American Soldier. That ship a few days later took its sombre cargo back to Guam to be transferred to another Victory ship with the final resting place of its cargo, being new at that time, the National Punchbowl War Cemetery.



A ceremony was held in the Brisbane City Hall on 22nd December 1947 to honour the American dead. A coffin containing the body of an Unknown American Soldier was paraded ceremoniously through Brisbane City "King George Square" where the cortege stopped in front of City Hall and wreaths were laid.



The Cortege then moved to "Newstead Wharves" where Taps were sounded and 3 rifle volleys fired.

MARK YOUR 2024 CALENDAR

Please don't forget to mark on your 2024 calendar, the date of our Association's next Battle of the Coral Sea event, being held on Saturday 4th May 2024 at the Australian American War Memorial, Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place Newstead Park, Brisbane.

THANKS TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS:

- *Hon Di Farmer MP Q State Member for Bulimba.*
- *Hon Tim Nicholls MP Q State Member for Clayfield.*
- *Cr Kara Cook BCC Member for Morningside Ward.*
- *Cr David McLachlan - BCC Member for Hamilton Ward.*
- *Dr Peter Glazebrook - Australian American Association Brisbane Board Member.*
- *Hon Tim Nicholls MP Member for Clayfield and AAA Brisbane Life Member;*
- *Cr Vicki Howard Councilor for Brisbane Office of the Civic Cabinet.*
- *Stuart Mansbridge General Manager AMCHAM.*
- *Surendra Prasad OAM Chairman Australian Indian Heritage War Memorial Committee.*
- *Lt Ron Rees Australian Army "In Memory" MacArthur Museum.*
- *Brisbane City Council.*
- *Teresa Pokoj Treasurer AAA Brisbane Board of Directors Member and Life Member.*
- *United Service Club Queensland.*
- *Captain Kasper Kuiper Chairman of Qld Maritime Museum & Combined Company of Master Mariners of Australia.*

The Veterans Care Association

is an Australian organisation set up by Chaplain Gary Stone, to support returning veterans and their families to overcome Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other challenges, in returning to civilian life. The VCA gives practical direct support to our wounded, injured and sick, and acts as a central hub for Veterans Services, bringing together traditional medical practitioners, therapists, councillors and more, to support the veteran's journey to good health and vitality. Should any veteran or their family require support, please contact the Veterans Care Association at: - 2 Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove Qld 4059. Ph: 0403 270 515. EMAIL:

Support@veterans

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

A very warm welcome goes to:

- ✚ *Dr Betty lee,*
- ✚ *Dr Jeffrey Singer.*

PLEASE NOTE:

The "Photos Supplement" with photos taken at the Battle of the Coral Sea Event, is attached to this Newsletter.

Yours Faithfully,

*Mike Harris,
President [Newsletter Editor]
Australian American Association,
Queensland Division, Brisbane.*

