

Lest We Forget Their Service Our Heritage

Lest We Forget Memorial Project - Celebrating The Hero Within

Bob, (the shortest NCO in the A.I.F) was passionate about Australia; about the roles and responsibilities of all to defend, nurture and guide our young, about educating the youth to develop with a spirit of service to community; respect for previous generations, and a deep commitment to making the world a better place for us having lived in it. He had an ability to bring out the "hero within" some of the most unlikely persons.

Over his lifetime, Bob collected a great deal of war time memorabilia, books, paintings, poems, medals, personal letters and dossiers concerned with defence. He took every opportunity to talk with adults and school children and relate various stories illustrated by these artifacts.

Bob was concerned that after his death these items should be part of a display that was accessible to all. A display that encouraged all to search for the "heroes within themselves." He found that, in himself, as a young man in the battle of Muar for one, and through his experiences as a POW on the Burma-Siam Railway.

Why Have A Lest We Forget Display? What will it do for me anyhow?

Practically every settlement within the country/electorate has a war memorial of some sort. Practically every family in outback Australia has a connection to some past or present serving member of the defence forces – be they son or daughter, father/mother, grandparent, uncle/aunt, great grandparent etc. A war memorial museum, library, and education centre in the outback has relevance to all.

The memorabilia, stories, poems, artwork, photographs, medals are of spiritual significance. The spirit of service shown by the quiet achievers in our society; those who continue giving to their community, those who do not ask "what is in it for me?"; those who are not members of the "paid to care" brigade; those who put others first always; the unsung heroes who keep working and giving to the end of their lives. They touch all our lives whether we choose to recognise it or not. We all, in this country, live with the underpinning knowledge that those of this group will assist us in any time of need be it great or small, regardless of culture or personal differences or whether our trouble is self inflicted. Australian Mateship is extended to all, not just those whom are classed as personal friends.

Our celebrated Australian Spirit of Service/Mateship may be lacking in parts of our country today. It is fashionable to regard oneself as self-made and deserving rather recognize the contribution of others and in turn contribute to keeping the community strong by passing on that service. There is no education, exhibition, or wide spread celebration to recognise and promote the Spirit of Service and the hero that is within all of us.

Encouraging local groups to develop exhibitions and displays that celebrate the good, the heroic, the way the larrikin Australian humour is/was used to lighten impossibly hopeless situations is one way to give celebration of the good in our society -past and present, to counter the depressive effect of exposure to the media celebration of the deviant.

Without the respect for previous generations and the acknowledgement that today's privileges are a direct result of the hard work and sacrifice of those who have gone before; the understanding that schooling is not the same as education; the young people and the city based bureaucrats will continue to base their decision making processes on a flawed premise

Families travel through our outback regions each year. They take it all in -- the sights, the sounds, the lasting impressions of the people; the spirit, the (practically) crime free towns, marvel at the freedom from fear (of deviant people, of crime etc) which allows children to grow and develop out here and the elderly to continue self directed lives despite physical infirmity. They visit every tourist attraction and absorb the message be it recognising the enormity and wonder of the universe at the Cosmos Centre, the privilege of the way people live now from a Pioneers museum, the whys and wherefores of artesian water; a real understanding of the tasks faced by those settlers who moved off from the coastal fringe and a certain knowledge that today's technologically advanced education system has equipped them with fewer survival skills than the elderly folk they have met on their travels. This experience of outback travel, outback education, a shared experience with their parents and often times, grandparents, influences youth in a way that cannot be attained by all of the reading of politically correct texts or technologically elite experiences.

