

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

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ONEHUNGA.

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Soon be Christmas again, Chaps, another year almost gone, and time to attempt to think up another way of expressing seasonal greetings. Why a new way, that is something I won't dwell on, but it seems to be the thing to do. I was chewing it over last week -- in the Boss's time -- but no dice. So I tried a walk around the factory, it sometimes helps, or else diverts. Then I spotted a Maori; sure he would write it out in Maori for me. Then a Tongan, and a Samoan, and so it went on. They could not all write it off pat. Some had to talk it over with their compatriots, spelling difficulties, you understand. But to see a Chinese lass take a pen and scribble a few weird complicated symbols in Chinese, that was something.

The Scots posed a problem, I did not want Robbie Burns. I asked for the real thing, Gaelic, no less, to save me rounding up the Welsh and the Irish. Well, some of them could and did say it, in Gaelic, but as for spelling it; have you ever seen Gaelic written? Polish is child's play compared with what these boys can do with the alphabet. But by next day I had it.

Altogether I had Seasonal Greetings written in seven different languages other than English, and they now tell me I missed a Hindu and a Malay. Here is the list I collected:-

Tongan, Samoan, French, Dutch, Chinese, Maori, and Gaelic.

And the two I missed, then allow another miss just in case, and English, and we have eleven different languages among about eighty people. It all shows how New Zealand is developing, and how much goodwill is required, from all, to make us into one nation -- Christian Goodwill -- the spirit of Christmas.

And all that brings us back to where we came in:

YOUR PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE

EXTEND TO YOU AND TO YOUR FAMILIES

THEIR BEST WISHES FOR A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

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MESSAGE FROM THE PADRE.

For the twenty-fifth time your Editor has asked me to write a Christmas message, and, as the season approaches, one cannot help but notice that, despite all the stresses and strains of life, once again the miracle of Christmas steals into one's heart.

Most of you know that since I left the Army I have been a school teacher to small boys, and as such, it is natural for me to express my feelings with a story about Christmas.

Once upon a time in an ancient church there was a great organ on which the people had not yet learned to play. One after another tried the instrument, drew out the stops and wakened some of its harmonies, but none of them dreamt of the wonderful music which lay hidden there. Then one day came the Master. He sat like other men before the keyboard and began to play. The people below were hushed into silence and whispered, "Is this the organ we have owned so long? This which sighs and weeps and then thrills with passion and great joy?"

From that day the hope was to reproduce the music which was once revealed and when the best players did their best men said, "This makes us think of the Master's playing."

Just such an instrument is human life, complex workings, its possible dis-chords, its hidden harmonies; and many a philosopher or artist or prophet has drawn from within it something of the music which lies there. Then one day comes the Master. He knows what is in man and, taking upon himself human life, reveals the music of it.

From that day forth, the hope of the world has been to produce that harmony. And when the best of men do their best we say, "This man makes us think of the Master's playing."

May God bless you all at Christmas and may you in the coming year know something more of the Master's Playing.

Paul Sergel

Thank you, Padre.

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We put the acid on at the last Committee meeting for material for this issue, and guess what! We got some.

Cedric Randerson sent in three pages (Nos. 3, 4, & 5) reviewing our activities over the past months, and, bless him, gave an explanation of how and why our last ladies' night didn't come off. Thanks, Cedric, that saved me trying to explain it all.

Sandy Murray (page 6) tells the story of entertaining visitors from the Welch Regt. Thanks, Sandy. May I add the explanation that we are occasionally called upon by the Army Assn. to provide cars and entertain members of this regiment when they have a day off in Auckland. They are based in Hong Kong, and are sent to N.Z., a company at a time, for joint exercises with N.Z. units. It is good for us, and the Welshmen appreciate it. If you would like to have your name on the pool of drivers, see or ring, Scotch Paterson. He could do with a larger list than he has at present.

THE DINNER-DANCE THAT WASN'T.

A post-mortem is a negative kind of thing but it has merit as a means of finding out what went wrong and of pin-pointing any mistakes that should be avoided in future.

Your Committee made careful preparation to hold the annual Ladies Night of the Branch in Auckland on Saturday, 3rd October. On the experience of the last two Ladies Nights held in Auckland, we expected an attendance of between 80 and 100 people and would have been satisfied with any number between 60 and 80. Members were asked to send their replies by 25th September but, by that date, the attendance indicated by the replies was only 18 people. At that stage, one or two of us got on the blower and received telephone confirmation that about 12 more people could be expected, making a total of 30. Later starters might have boosted the total to 40 but that would not have been enough to make the show a success. So, on the Tuesday before the date of the "do", we had to make the painful decision to cancel it.

Where did we go wrong? We fixed a rather later date than usual to avoid a clash with the lambing season but, in doing so, we struck the between-seasons period when the Winter sports bodies are having end-of-season functions and the Summer sports bodies are busy launching a new season. The date just did not suit a lot of people with prior engagements. Another mistake was that we did not give enough advance notice. The printer held up the Circular and it was sent out a week or two later than we intended. Someone suggested that we are all getting too old for this kind of frivolity but surely this can't be true. Most of us can still dance or go through the motions and those whose joints creak too much still enjoy a good meal in pleasant surroundings and a night away from the goggle-box in good company.

We will go into this next year and try to find the right answer. If you have suggestions to make, the Secretary will be pleased to hear from you.

INTELLIGENCE SECTION.

MERV. ASHDAN has been on the net so well list after a major operation in Tauranga Hospital. He is reported to be recovering well.

ALEX. SAUNDERS seems to be always on the move - his employers, the Bank of N.S.W., see to that. A year or two ago, Alex. was transferred from Winton in the deep south to Hamilton; now he has shifted further north - to Kawakawa.

JACK MORGAN (Tauranga) was in hospital recently for a hernia operation but is out and about again and looking well.

Welcome to new members of the Branch JACK GREEN and BILL HULTON. Jack is living in Melbourne, where he runs "Kiwi Jack's Cleaning Service". Hopes to be at Wanganui in 1972 for the National Reunion. Bill moved here from Wellington recently and is living at Orewa.

HERE'S THAT MAN AGAIN.

The Treasurer (bless him) is the man who tries to keep the money flowing into our Bank account so that there will be enough there to flow out again when the bills have to be met. He usually manages to end the financial year with a modest surplus or not too large a deficit. He reports that the present situation regarding financial members is about normal for this time of the year. About 50% of our subscription income comes in during the first few months of the financial year, either by mail or from payments at the Branch Reunion and other functions. Then, in October or November, the Treasurer sends out accounts to those who have not yet paid. This year's accounts went out a few weeks ago and quite a few members responded promptly; a lot of others (about 90 of you) have not yet heard the call. Some few of those 90 unfinancial members will be hard up but, in most cases, it is just forgetfulness- a disease that affects us all from time to time.

We can't run the Branch on good intentions, so how about it you sluggards. All we ask is that you send a dollar bill (with your name and address) to P.O. Box 13-058, Onehunga. The season of Goodwill is almost upon us. Get this little job attended to before you set out on your Annual holiday. Christmas is the season when we should think of those who are less fortunate than ourselves so, if you have an extra dollar to two to spare, remember that donations to our Welfare Fund and Crete Fund are most acceptable. Many of our members give generously to these funds and we express our grateful thanks for all donations, large and small, that have come in this year.

REPORT ON THE CRETE KIDS.

We reported earlier this year that our four original sponsorships through the Save the Children Fund had either terminated or were likely to do so within the next twelve months. The Annual Meeting adopted a recommendation that we sponsor one more child on the island of Crete, which means that we have undertaken to continue paying \$60 per year for a further four or five years.

Here is the present position. The four kids we sponsored when they were 12 or 13 years old have grown up. The two girls, ADRIANA and EVANGELIA, are both married and (we hope) living happily ever after. The boys, CONSTANTINOS and EMANUEL, have left school and are now self-supporting. A few months back, S.C.F. sent us another case history in response to our request and we have accepted sponsorship obligations for IOANNIS KALITZAKIS, aged 11, of Maleme, Crete. Like the others, IOANNIS comes from a poor family in the area of Crete that is part of the history of the 22nd Battalion.

We were the first New Zealanders to sponsor Crete children through S.C.F. We have done something to help five children from the Maleme district and we have been indirectly responsible for others from the same district finding N.Z. Sponsors. More case-histories were sent than we could handle and the kids we did not select found other sponsors here. The few hundred dollars we have sent over a period of several years scarcely represents a major sacrifice on our part but it is real money in terms of the cost of living standards of Cretan peasant families. Its value in terms of international understanding is beyond measurement.

GAMAL AND FAROUK.

Thirty years ago, the lemon-squeezer hat had become a familiar sight in the streets of Cairo and, in the five years that followed, Egypt was home base for thousands of Kiwi soldiers. We took over Maadi and Helwan, crowded into the electric trains at Bab-el-louk Station, gaped at the Sphinx and the Pyramids, wandered through the bazaars and made the most of everything that Egypt had to offer. Once we got used to the heat, the sand and the smells of Egypt, we found the place quite fascinating and its people almost as interesting. We acquired a grudging respect for the business acumen and low cunning of the street-hawker and the shoeshine boy. We almost learned to tolerate the persistence of the vendors of "feelthy" pictures and the young men who proclaimed the inexpensiveness and standard of hygiene of their sisters. We found that George Wog had a sense of humour and we somehow contrived to like him while despising him simultaneously. Perhaps we sensed that he was the victim of an economic system based on extremes of wealth and poverty. It was not our problem but we could not help being aware of the grinding poverty of the Egyptian masses.

We knew nothing and cared less about Egyptian politics, except that the Boss-man was King FAROUK. We knew all bout FAROUK and FARIDA, his Queen and we paid FAROUK the amount of respect we thought was his due by singing our own version of the Egyptian national anthem every time we heard it played. It didn't really matter who ruled Egypt because the place was important only as a base for British military operations and, as far as the British Army was concerned, FAROUK could do what he liked as long as he did what he was told. The question did not arise except on that occasion in 1942 when FAROUK decided that ROMMEL would be marching into Cairo at any moment and got the welcome mat ready.

We knew nothing of a bloke called GAMAL ABDEL NASSER, who at the time was a junior officer in Farouk's Army. Like the Italians, they wore natty uniforms but their reputation as a military force was about zero. We used to see their trucks dashing around the Canal Zone but we regarded them with supreme contempt.

Our war-time knowledge of Egypt and the Egyptians has made the post-War history of that land (from the fall of FAROUK to the death of NASSER) of special interest to us. FAROUK was allowed only seven years after the War in which to grow richer and fatter before being given his marching orders. Young Lieutenant NASSER became Lieutenant-Colonel NASSER, the brains behind the Army revolt which kicked out first FAROUK and then the British. The Egyptian Army was at last given a chance to show its worth but the results were exactly what we would have predicted 30 years ago. It folded up in the face of the Anglo-French invasion force in 1956 and crumpled again when the Israelis attacked in the six-day War of 1967. And what of the ordinary Egyptian - our friend George the Wog. Sad to say, he's not really any better off than he was when we knew him. The rich may not have got any richer but the poor are, if anything, poorer than before. They loved NASSER as much as they hated FAROUK but it hasn't done them much good. NASSER'S dreams of Arab leadership came to nothing and, in the process, he impoverished his own country and virtually handed it over to the Russians, exchanging one foreign boss for another. He nationalised the Suez Canal but now it lies idle while the desert sands drift into it. The Army may have another go at the Israelis but the only certain thing is that they'll get walloped again. NASSER didn't do any more for his country than FAROUK after all and poor old George deserved something better than that.

I thought that the following resume of the comments from two members of the Welsh Regiment who were temporary visitors on a training course a short time ago, could be of interest to 22nd members.

These two chaps were about 24 - 26 and in their regular army career they had had service in Cyprus, Malta, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Borneo, Kenya Colony — before self-government, and Aden.

They contended that the NATO defences would be sufficient to stem any Russian attack towards Western Germany and that the reason for the Russian intervention in the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian uprisings was because if these had succeeded it would have brought the Western Frontier a further thousand miles closer to the actual Soviet border. However, in the event of any attack on the Western nations the satellite countries would pose a serious threat to the Russian lines of communication and their advanced forces would be completely separated by the strong resistance movements between the battle front and the Soviet border and this is the only fact, apart from Red China, that has prevented any major out-break so far.

They said that if a Conservative Government was returned in England that Britain would again come to the Far East and they themselves had a very tender spot for New Zealand. In Cyprus they had close association with the New Zealand Police keeping force and spoke highly of their efficiency and general goodwill shown to them by both Turks and Greeks. In fact the Welsh boys stole the New Zealand Police banner but the Kiwis reciprocated by stealing their goat. During their service in Hong Kong on the Kowloon border there is an awful lot of indiscriminate firing in their direction and these British troops are continually frustrated by the fact that they cannot return the compliments without incurring a penalty of one month in the "cooler."

Incidentally, their flight to New Zealand from Hong Kong had one stop only — Hong Kong, Darwin and then Auckland — two 16 hour stretches.

Many of us will recall the march from Cairo to Alex, 100 miles in 3 days.

These two chaps were also present at the investiture of Prince Charles and actually witnessed the bomb incident and contended that if the Welsh civilians had caught the two gentlemen concerned there wouldn't have been anything left for souvenirs.

Incidentally they do not dispute the famous Try and are also very much in favour of Prince Charles.

Thank you, Sandy.

You know I had two of these chaps for a day, and found it quite an experience. They had both seen photos of our main cities and really expected that outside the cities there would be just jungle!

One of them, a builder, was intrigued at the colours of the houses. After the drab stone buildings and tiled roofs of Wales, he thought brightly coloured timber houses and painted roofs were really something.

They did not have much sense of humour, though. I spotted a negre among their number and asked was he a Welsh coalminer. I was told, quite seriously, that he came from the West Indies.

GHOST STORY (Well its near Xmas when the wee folk walk)

In early 1941 the Luftwaffe turned their attention to Suez Canal -- the canal and magnetic mines spelled trouble for the Top Brass. Accordingly a N.Z. Infantry Training Battalion was rushed to the Canal -- Ask Ask duty, if you please -- and spread along the length of the Canal. A typical post was an officer and a platoon of infantry. One of our duties was to light a gooseneck flare at a certain point in the event of an air raid.

To reach this particular point one followed the Suez-Port Said Road for several hundred yards and then struck out through a belt of trees and across the desert to a high sandhill. Now in these trees the Egyptian Army had a sentry post, and every man as he made his way through was challenged by said Wog sentry. No matter how well I had worked out just where I would meet the sentry, that challenge never failed to throw me. The challenge from the darkness, the knowledge that there was an unseen rifle close to my stomach, and the bloke on the other end was probably just as scared as I was, none of it helped one bit. I usually started talking fast, "Saieeda, George, saieeda. Kiwi. Kwyess. Kiwi."

How do you reply to a Wog sentry? Nobody knew. But apparently he knew to expect us and nobody was shot -- on either side.

One night, sitting at the base of that sandhill, I spied movement far out in the desert. Whatever it was, it was light coloured and coming towards me. As I watched I realised there was something odd about this "thing." It was floating -- yes, that was it, it was floating along above the ground, and still coming straight for me. I grabbed my rifle, rammed one up the spout, and ducked behind the sandhill. Poked my head out for a cautious shuft -- it still came on. Now I could see. A man wrapped in a white cloak, squatting, and definitely several feet above the ground.

Thoughts of Alladin's genie came to my mind. Magic carpets. Flying carpets. That was it, flying carpets, and a genie. That good book -- the Infantry Training Manual, laid it down that ground troops would engage low-flying aircraft. But nary a word about flying carpets. The mysterious east, raw troops, why, oh why, didn't someone provide for this situation.

I took another cautious look as "it" reached the base of my sandhill and took off on a new bearing. "It" was only a few feet from me. It WAS a man -- and he WAS wrapped in a white (near white) cloak -- and he WAS squatting several feet above the ground -- a member of the Desert Patrol, no less, and his camel was practically invisible in the darkness.

I removed a round from the chamber of my rifle. Saieeda, George, Sai-Bloody-eeda. Rudyard Kipling's ghost gave an audible chuckle -- or it could have been the camel grunting.

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A floating 'Thing', a gooseneck flare, and me in the wilderness.

