ADDRESS GIVEN BY IAN DAVIS, AN ANZAC VETERAN AGED 93 YEARS, PROPOSING THE TOAST TO HER MAJESTY'S ARMED SERVICES AT THE SERVICES DINNER OF THE AUSTRALIAN CLUB ON 21 APRIL 1989.

Mr President, General Gration, Fellow Members and their Guests -

When the President invited me to propose the toast tonight I was delighted, but as the days went on I started to worry how I should start. I thought you would not want me to list the Great Engagements that the various forces had been involved in, or the courage, loyalty and bravery of the personnel. I then decided that I might string together some reminiscences of my contributions and of my experiences as a very humble member of one of Her Majesty's Forces.

As you will readily perceive I am not a public speaker, but even accomplished speakers have their problems. Mr Roy Hendy, who was Town Clerk of Sydney for many years and a very accomplished speaker, once told the story that he was addressing a gathering of a couple of hundred and noticed one of them loading a revolver. He paused and whispered to the chairman, "Do you think I had better stop?" The chairman replied, "Don't worry, he's not after you but the fellow who invited you!" Should any of you have similar thoughts please direct your fire at the President, who was responsible for inviting me tonight.

I enlisted at the age of 18 years and am now in my 94th year. Friends tell me that I have a very poor memory but a very good forgettry, so if I wander a bit you'll understand.

I hope General Gration will not think I'm pulling rank when I tell you of my promotion from the ranks. When we were training in Egypt before going to Gallipoli, I was called to the orderly room and told that I was to be given the rank of "acting lance-corporal". I stress the word "acting". I wondered what my duties would be as I always thought that the rank of lance-corporal was as low as anyone could get. However I didn't have to wonder very long as within a week I was demoted for dodging a church parade.

I was not at the landing at Gallipoli, but went there as a reinforcement as the Battle of Lone Pine was drawing to a close.

I didn't have to wait long to find out the horrors of war because on the second night I was detailed with two others to man a listening-post out in no-mans-land for three hours. Periodically the Turks swept machine-gun fire at random over no-mans-land. After one hour one of my comrades was shot through the shoulder and had to retire back to the trenches. An hour later my second companion was shot through the head and fell dead at my feet. Being alone I was at my wits end, but remembered a story in a school magazine, "That a good soldier never left his post". So I'm sure in that remaining hour I saw every Turk in the Turkish Army.

At this stage we were four hours in the firing line and four hours out. Later this was changed to two hours in the firing line and two hours out. In the preparations for the evacuations the lines were thinned out and then we were one hour in the firing line and one hour out. The time out of the firing line was devoted to de-licing the seams of our clothes. Strangely we would lie down to sleep in wet uniforms, and wet boots and socks, but we did not seem to catch a cold.

Our only pay while we were at Gallipoli was one of ten shillings. As there were no tuckshops to spend the money, everybody played 2-up. In a couple of weeks about twenty had all the money, and a week later it was all in the hands of Herbie Collins, a great gambler and one time captain of the Australian cricket eleven.

The daily food menu wasn't produced by the Australian Club, but still we managed some variety. For breakfast we had bully-beef and dog biscuits. For lunch we had dog biscuits and bully-beef. And in the evening it was bully-beef stew floating in green fat, and it was dished out into our dixies. However we did receive a daily rum issue. There were five of us who at that stage were all teetotallers. We had a bottle which just held the five rum issues and we bartered it for additional food such as condensed milk. A candle was the prize barter as the only light we had was from the moon which wasn't very effective for de-licing purposes.

There were no gas attacks at Gallipoli and we were never issued with gas masks. (We had instructions on what to do if there should be an attack and this was to remove our sock, urinate on it and hold it to our nose and mouth. We were also told the gas attack would come over as a white cloud.) One night we had a heavy fall of snow which one of the relief mistook for gas and sounded the alarm. Fortunately the mistake was discovered before I had time to take my boots and socks off! All the drinking water had to be brought ashore from troop ships by barges, and frequently there was a short supply which was badly missed because of the salty food. This greatly restricted the washing and bathing facilities.

Recently the papers have been full of the problems the Water Board is having with sewage. I have been tempted to write and tell the Board how we overcame those problems at Gallipoli. For urinating, galvanised piping was knocked into the ground and at the top there was something like an ice-cream cone but bigger which were known as 'pissaphones'. For major operations there were trenches about 12 feet long and three feet deep. Patrons had to relieve themselves by crouching like a kangaroo on the edge of the trench. The story is told that two were there together sharing the facilities and the Turks were persistently shelling with shrapnel. One asked the other if he were nervous, who replied that he wasn't. Another blast of shrapnel came over, and he was asked again if he were sure he was not nervous; and again the reply that he was not. Following a third shrapnel blast he was asked again if he were certain he was not nervous. And the reply came that he was certain he was not nervous and asked why his mate was persisting with the question. The reply to that was, why do you keep wiping my behind?!!!

I won't weary you with all the preparations which were made for the evacuation. These have been well documented by historians - enough to say I was there until the last hour and I regret to say that it was the most successful part of the campaign. Following the evacuation we returned to Egypt where the Battalion was re-formed. After that we went to France landing at Marseille and travelled to Belgium in trucks labelled "eight horses, or forty men". Then we marched to The Somme for the battle of Posieres. It was there that I lost my arm and a piece of the same shell hit a bag of Mills' bombs being carried up to the front line of the battle, and this killed or wounded ninety people.

After being wounded I was shifted to England and spent time in several hospitals, finally to one at Roehampton where there were 600 beds, every patient being an amputee. Facetiously we were classified, with one limb off as a malingerer, two limbs off - slightly wounded, three limbs off - wounded, four limbs off - seriously wounded. At this time there was an Australian who lost both his arms above the elbow and both his legs above the knees, but still was able to joke about his disabilities. If you sympathised with him he would say that he had a good job waiting for him when he got back to Australia as Billy Hughes (the then Prime Minister) had promised him a job as his paper-weight.

My Battalion was the second in the 1st Infantry Brigade and I have been told by the secretary of the association, 'since disbanded', that there are only eleven survivors, and that I am the youngest of them.

Thank you all for listening to these disjointed remarks and I would ask you now to be up-standing and drink the health of Her Majesty's Armed Forces coupled with the name of General Gration.