

HARRY'S 80th. BIRTHDAY 3 May 2000

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE LIFE OF HARRY WHEATON (as written by his youngest brother Noel)

Born 3/5/1920 The family owned the general store at Gulnare when Harry was born - believed to be at the Hospital at Gladstone. However, without getting an extract of Birth Certificate we are unable to confirm this - Harry understands that he was born at Gulnare

1922 Family moved to Wanbi, taking over the General Store and Post Office .

1926 Started school at Wanbi - the school was at that time located in the old Supper Room which is behind the Institute. At this school until the end of 1933.

1934 and 1935. Attended St. Peters College as a boarder in School House. Did not enjoy this period of his life and in fact detested the restrictions imposed by school boarding house life and also the fag system and initiation ceremonies which were quite brutal in those days.

1936 Left school and returned to Wanbi where he worked for his father in the store. This continued through 1937 ,1938 and 1939.

1940 Enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. However, was discharged medically unfit later in the same year. He persisted in his endeavors to join the armed forces and tried to enlist in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, but without success.

1942. From then on his career was not without excitement. Called up for National Service in the Militia and was immediately successful in volunteering for active service in the A.I.F.

January 1943. Harry Joined "C" Company of the 2/10th.Battalion at Sanananda in New Guinea which was after the Buna campaign. Sanananda was a dirty, filthy, typhus-ridden jungle and swamp and the beach there was the scene of the last stand by the Japanese In New Guinea - that campaign closed on 24/1/43. Harry has mentioned that he was also at Cape Endaiadere, Sinemi Creek and Cape Killerton.

16th. Feb. 1943. By plane to Port Moresby where the Battalion was congratulated by the Minister of the Army, Mr. Forde. On mentioning that he was the Army Minister, one Private (presumably not Harry) enthusiastically shook his hand with the remark "you ruddy padres did a mighty job too."

10/3/43 By ship to Cairns.

12/3/43 Training at Ravenshoe Queensland.

August 1943. To Port Moresby - training until the end of 1943.

8/5/44 Back to Australia - staging camp near Brisbane. Then Atherton.

29/5/45. Sailed in LST,s to New Guinea. To Milne Bay and then on past Buna and Sanananda and reached Biak on 8/6/45 - sailed for Morotai on 9/6/45 and disembarked there on 12/6/45.

23/6/45 In training a convoy of 120 craft moved out to sea for a trial landing exercise.

26/6/45 A convoy of over 200 ships moved out of Morotai and on 1/7/45 after a heavy bombardment by warships (including rocket ships - 4500 rockets) and carrier based aircraft the contingent landed at Balikpapan on the south east coast of Borneo. Soon after establishing a beachhead US planes inadvertently bombed and strafed Hill 87 occupied by HQ and "D"Company of the 2/10th. Killing 3 Officers and 3 Ordinary Ranks and wounding 11 Ordinary Ranks. Fighting continued through July.

10/8/45. The first issue of beer in Borneo (3 bottles per man) was followed later in the day (9.15 pm) by Japan's acceptance of unconditional surrender.

2/9/45. Surrender formalised in Tokyo Bay on board USS Missouri.

1945. Demobilised and returned to Wanbi. Worked in the store for the next three years.

1948. The business at Wanbi was sold and the family moved to Holton Street, Glenside Commenced Rehab Course in Carpentry and gained employment with the Building Division of the Education Department building prefabricated classrooms in many parts of rural South Australia - including Mount Gambier, Streaky Bay, Iron Knob, Kingston , Port Macdonald, Parndana etc.

1952 Holiday visit to U.K.

1954. Joined a cricket tour of U.K. with a group managed by Cecil Skitch. The team played about 50 games of village cricket in various parts of England and included a brief visit and a cricket match against a Royal Air Force team stationed in Holland. At the end of the tour joined three or four others on a trip to Paris which included a visit to the Moulin Rouge where, we understand, Harry really enjoyed his first encounter with life on the stage among a bevy of Parisian beauties. His interest in cricket was huge and his exploits also included a long partnership with Kym Bonython of about a hundred of which Harry's contribution was 2 . Also an occasion when his team was in deep trouble against Payneham in Adelaide Turf A1. With the opposition one down for more than 100, in desperation the Captain threw Harry the ball and he promptly took Nine wickets for 70 odd - A SPOC club record at that time.

Against Teacher's College the pleasure of having Sam Gallagher (a top footballer for Norwood and SA and a good batsman) caught and bowled for about 90 in 1948. That day he also caught NKW (Noel his younger brother) in the outfield for a miserable score. He played many games later for Myer in the same competition with ex State players such as Tom Close and Bob Roxby, (who played for NSW.)

1958. Left the Education Dept.

1959. Worked with his Father (Tom) and Brother (Gavin) in a grocery store at Croydon.

1960, 1961, 1962. With Brother Gavin, in delicatessen business at Ferryden Park.

1963. Joined Myer Emporium as a salesman in the Carpet Department and later in men's wear in the basement. Worked for 22 years at Myers and in that time had one and a half days sick leave (and that due to a hangover). This job was not without a touch of humour and on one occasion he is known to have flirted with the possibility of the sack when talking to a customer he made a suggestion of doubtful propriety discussing the preferences for either zip or button up flies. No further comment is appropriate in this assembly. Retired on 3/5/85.

27/1/65 to 16/4/85. During this 20 year period Harry gave 75 pints of blood to the Red Cross Blood Bank and deeply regrets that he didn't contribute more than a hundred.

1970. Had the extreme good fortune in meeting Barbara Toms - resulting in Harry purchasing the Unit next door to Barbara in the mid 80's - a wonderful relationship that has now extended over 30 years .

Harry also influenced Barbara to contribute 33 pints of blood to the Red Cross Blood Bank over the years. Barbara and Harry's travels have included South East Asia - Singapore, Hong Kong, The Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. Darwin and Kakadu - Esperance - Roxby Downs etc.

On one occasion they travelled to Tarcoola in the VW (when the Alice Springs railway was under construction) and spent a very interesting fortnight with Andrew and Wendy on an out-station heavily populated with kangaroos about 30 miles out. Barb doing a bit of boundary riding on the back of a motor bike.

They also enjoyed trips to southern Yorke Peninsula and many cruises on Murray Lenthall's boat.

During this time Harry was extremely interested in aeroplanes and spent many exciting times looping the loop out at Parafield with a friend from the same group of flats who was heavily into aerobatics. Barbara also participated in the odd flight without the looping bit.

It is great to see so many people here today, particularly those from interstate, which simply confirms that Harry is held in very high regard. We wish him all the best of good health and contentment in the years ahead and look forward with confidence to doing it all again for his 90th in 2010.

Those with a glass suitably charged will be happy to join me in a toast to the good health of Harry.