



RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch  
Memorial Hall, 14A Ferrars Pl, South , Melbourne Vic 3205

## RETURNED SOLDIER – “APOSTRATOS”

English Newsletter Supplement - September 2013



Dear Members and Friends of the RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of our Committee to wish all our Veterans, members and their family's good health. The blisters on my feet have now healed after walking the Kokoda track earlier this year. Hopefully I will see you all at our next formal function, which is the Sub-branch **Christmas dinner**. I'm sure you will enjoy this edition of the Returned Soldier “Apostratos” Newsletter.

*Steve Kyritsis, President*



### Inside this Issue - Walking the Kokoda track



### Steve takes up the Challenge

In 1942 the Australian Territories of Papua and New Guinea were as much a part of Australia as the Northern Territory. It is then quite true to say that Australian soil was invaded by Japan in 1942. The centre piece of this invasion was an attempt to capture Port Moresby via the Kokoda track. From Port Moresby the Japanese could, if they desired, launch an invasion of the east coast of mainland Australia. Without it they could not.

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Date	Milestones and Past Events
Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Book Presentation</b> - Greek-Australians in the Australian Forces WWI & WWII” at the Brisbane Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch QLD with the Cultural Committee of the Greek Orthodox Community of St George.
19 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>96<sup>th</sup> Anniversary</b> of the <b>Battle of Fromelles</b> WWI
27 <sup>th</sup> July 2013	<b>60<sup>th</sup> anniversary</b> to the end of active fighting during the <b>Korean War</b> and the Day the Armistice was signed.
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> August	<b>Vietnam Veterans Day</b> - honours our Servicemen and women who served & died in the Vietnam War 1962-72. In total 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam, with 520 deaths (including 200 National Servicemen) and 2500 wounded.
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Battle for Australia Day</b> - commemorates all who served & died in the defence of Australia during the New Guinea campaign during 1942 & 1943 WWII. It is marked on the first Wednesday of each September.
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2013	<b>Father’s Day</b> at the Hellenic Sub-Branch.



### ....More from Anzac day 2013

Pictured left to right – Manny Karvelas (Senior Vice President), Bill Mountgouris and George Makris.

Would you believe that this was the first ever Anzac Day parade attended by Bill and George?

Leading Aircraftsman George Makris served with the RAAF from 1943-1946 and spent time in what was then known as Dutch New Guinea.

Private Bill Mountgouris served with the Australian Army from 1943-1946 and also spent time in the Pacific.

## 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 - Book Presentation at the Brisbane Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch QLD

I would like to thank the Cultural Committee of the Greek Orthodox Community of St George together with the Brisbane Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch QLD for inviting me to Brisbane on 15<sup>th</sup> April to talk about my book “Greek-Australians in the Australian Forces WWI & WWII”. A large number of people attended this event including the President of the Greek Orthodox Community Mr Jim Georgiou, Dr Vlass Efsthatis, President of the Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch QLD, General John Pearn Vietnam Veteran, Dr Ian Howie-Willis Professional Historian Canberra and Vietnam Veteran. The event was organized by Mr Tom Dracopoulos and Mrs Anna Efsthadiadou. I thank them both for their true Greek hospitality whilst I was in Brisbane.

*Steve Kyritsis*



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Date	Future Events
Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> October 2013	<b>OHI (No) Day.</b> We commemorate the day 28 <sup>th</sup> October 1940 when the Greek Government gave a resounding No (OHI) to the Italian Mussolini Government demands to cross into Greece as part of their Axis Alliance war plans. The very next day, Greece was invaded by 10 Italian Divisions (200,000 men), thereby bringing it into World War Two. Our Sub-Branch members will begin OHI Day by attending a Church service at the Greek Orthodox Church South Melbourne (9:30am start). There will be two wreath laying ceremonies, firstly 12:00noon at the Australian Hellenic Memorial (Birdwood Avenue near the Shrine of Remembrance). At 1.00pm, we lay wreaths within the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. We conclude with a light complimentary lunch back at our club rooms. All members are welcome.
Monday 11 <sup>TH</sup> November 2013	<b>Remembrance Day.</b> 11.00am at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance.
Saturday evening 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2013	This year the Hellenic Sub branch of the RSL will celebrate our <b>Christmas function</b> early at our clubrooms. As with every year, our annual raffle is on again with many great Prizes. The Raffle ticket price is only \$2 each ticket. Please support the sub branch by selling all your tickets.

We are saddened by the passing of

### Mr Allan Thomas Stewart

A WWII Veteran, Allan was one of the original '39ers and had served in the Greek Campaign during 1940-41. He was a regular special guest at Hellenic Sub-Branch wreath laying ceremonies and Battle of Crete functions.

The RSL Hellenic Sub-Branch would like to pass on our Condolences to the Stewart family.



11<sup>th</sup> January 1916 - 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013



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### Walking the Kokoda track - Steve takes up the Challenge ..... Continued from page1

Whilst writing my book, Greek-Australians in the Australian Armed Forces WWI & WWII, I discovered that many Greek-Australians had served in the New Guinea campaign during 1942 and 1943. People such as John Manolitsas of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the three Manus brothers of the 2/1 Battalion, two of which were killed three days apart whilst fighting at Eora Creek and the medic Konstantinos Vafiopoulos who was compelled to amputate the leg of a wounded digger to save his life on what later became the famous “Con’s Rock”. 56,000 Australian Army, RAAF and RAN personnel were involved alongside 24,000 US troops in operations against 27,000 Japanese troops.



Bomana War Cemetery New Guinea. This is the largest war cemetery in the region with 3,779 graves of Australian and Allied servicemen, including 700 unidentified servicemen.



One of the many small creek crossings

Each year five thousand Australians take up the mentally and physically challenging task of walking the Kokoda track. I decided I had to walk this famous 96km long track. Because of the difficult mountainous jungle terrain, I was advised to best get fit if I wanted to complete the trek. My 4 month physical training plan included daily hour long walks, climbing then descending Mt Macedon, Mt Donna Buang and the “1000 steps” in Mt Dandenong. All of this was done in walking boots, not runners (an old infantry trick to get used to blisters). I was ready, or at least I thought I was.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> June, I arrived in Papua New Guinea for a twelve day trek of the famous Kokoda Track with seven others in the group. Wow. We trekked across some of the most beautiful terrain I have ever seen. Jungle everywhere, the many rivers and creeks presented lots of obstacles. Mountains and more mountains. My mind often flashed back to my time spent in the Vietnamese Jungle in 1968 with the 3RAR infantry battalion. This terrain was much more rugged and I am very much older than in 1968. I was glad I did not have to carry more than my 15kg pack. Thank goodness the mountain altitudes were a relatively cool 25-27 degrees with little humidity and few





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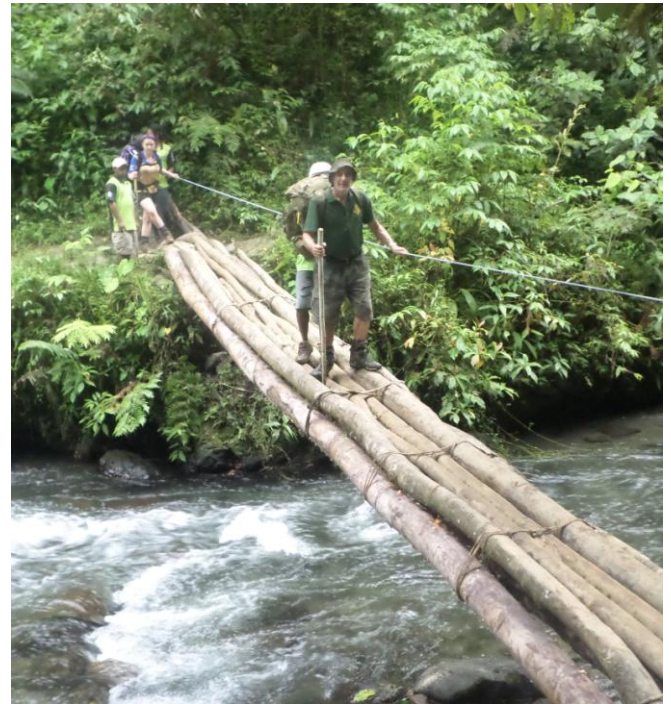
mosquitos. We walked 9-10 hrs per day, sometimes only travelling at about two kilometres per hour. Occasionally we stopped at local villages and bought fruit from the locals. There were descendants of the “Fuzzy Wuzzies”, natives that helped many of the Australian troops during the 1942-43 campaign.

After 12 long days I had completed my trek across the Kokoda track. I lost 4kg of weight during my pre trip fitness training and 6kg during the 12 day trek. On the plane trip home I thought to myself, how did they fight on that trail over 60 years ago? At parts, only wide enough for one man, each one carrying a rifle, ammunition, webbing, pack, food rations and water? I was very tired but my mind was buzzing. An experience I will never forget.



Above - One of the small villages on the way to Kokoda

Right – Yet another river crossing



### Did You Know?

Together with two Hellenic Navy (HN) Corvettes, RHS KRIEZIS and RHS TOMBAZIS, the following four Greek Merchant Marine (GMM) cargo ships participated in the 1944 WWII allied Normandy invasion:-

- 2 C/S "AGIOS SPYRIDON", captained by George Samothrakis,
- C/S "GEORGIOS P.", captained by Dimitrios Parisis,
- C/S "AMERIKI", captained by Spyridon Theofilatos,
- C/S "HELLAS", captained by George Trilivas.



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**Veterans that attended the Medal presentation ceremony for Australian Servicemen of the WWII Greek Campaign. The event was held at the Greek Consulate in Melbourne on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013.**

*(Photo submitted by Ken Tsirigotis)*



Left to Right – Jim Tsiporiadis (WWII 1942-46), Jim Saratsiotis (Korea 1954), Ignatios Doukelis (Korea 1953), Sgt Ken Tsirigotis (Afghanistan, East Timor 4 tours), Captain Nick Politis (Afghanistan), Theo Spanos (Korea 1951), Theo Spirakos (WWII 1942-46).

The Hellenic Commemorative medal of the Greek Campaign 1940-41 that is applicable to Australian Servicemen that served in Greece WWII during this period. This is not a new medal and was first awarded by the Greek Government in the 1980's.



**Next Edition Returned Soldier “Apostratos” – Due out November 2013**