

Ken Hayes: National Service Training

Certificate of Service 3/723458 - Lance Bombardier

Edited by Paul Spencer, Christine & John Hancock

Served with	From	To
National Service	26 April, 1955	31 July 1955
Citizens Military Forces (Part-time Duty)	01 August 1955	30 June 1960

I was born on the 10th of November 1935 in Hamilton Victoria. My father worked in various jobs due to the depression and became a “gun shearer” and was much in demand. At one stage he was hired at the Anna Creek Station in South Australia and on occasions he rode a bike from one station to another. My mother worked in a café and taught piano. My parents were married in 1931 and lived the rest of their lives in Hamilton.

I had an uncle, George Wythe who served in WWI in France and he posted and brought home over 200 items of memorabilia that I still have and display at the RSL Clubrooms on Remembrance Day each year. My father Cecil Keith Hamilton Hayes enlisted in the 4th Light Horse on the 1st of July 1922 and was discharged 4th May 1927.

Another Uncle John William Hayes and two cousins Basil and Rex Wythe were captured by the Japanese at Rabaul on January 23 1942. They lost their lives when they were being transported to Japan as POWs aboard the Japanese ship the Montevideo Maru when it was sunk by the USS Sturgeon on the 1st of July 1942. There were over a thousand casualties. The Yanks had not realised that Allied POWs and civilians were on board. Official notification of the three deaths was not received until October 1945. I have become a Life Member of the Montevideo Maru Society to honour my Uncle and cousins.

I attended Hamilton Primary and then High School, representing the High School in football, cricket and athletics. I commenced work with Repco Auto Parts in Hamilton in 1951. When I turned 18 on the 10th November, 1953 it meant that I would be called up for National Service Training. I expected it would take place in 1954, but I had to wait until 1955. This was due to my workmate Don Witham being called up at the same time; we were both employees at Repco in Hamilton, I was deferred so that only one of us was away from the Company at a time.

I left for my fourteen weeks training early one morning by train with many others from Hamilton and District. We travelled first to Melbourne, then transferred to another train arriving at the army siding Dysart near Puckapunyal, Victoria. When we arrived it was dark and we were bundled into trucks for a short drive to the camp. I can't remember if we received our clothes that night or whether these were issued next day.

The Unit I was assigned to was the 14th Battalion, Baker Company, 6th Platoon. The officer commanding this platoon was Warrant Officer Emmett and his deputy was Sgt Jones. The platoon consisted of about 90 recruits, and we were housed in three large tents.



Assembling a Tent at Puckapunyal



A 6th Platoon Tent at Puckapunyal

Beds had a galvanised metal frame, with 12 gauge wire netting for the base, plus mattress, sheets, pillow and slippers. There were thirty men to a tent. (see photo)

There was a small wardrobe for hanging uniforms etc and a small chest of drawers each. Our uniform allocation consisted of two pairs of heavy trousers, two jackets, two light weight trousers, 3 or 4 shirts, tie, several sets of underclothes (jocks went below our knees, most uncomfortable) jumper, belts, heavy duty overcoat, beret and slouch hat. I can't remember about toiletries. Our rifle was hung under the bed.

The 90 of us were allocated beds etc. in alphabetical order so my neighbours were Geoff Hadden and Graeme Hooley from Warrnambool. Another person I met was Sean Dorney from Warrnambool. Sean and I met again 50 years later when his son married my wife's niece, Joanna Rees.

Showers and toilets were close by the tents. It was a winter camp and extremely cold. We almost froze first thing in the morning when we were woken up. After ablutions it was straight to the parade ground, from there we marched to breakfast. We marched to and from all meals; I think breakfast was 0730 hrs, lunch at 1300 hrs and tea at 1800 hrs. After breakfast we assembled on the parade ground again for the days exercises.



Baker Coy Orderly Room Puckapunyal

Approximately one week after arrival I was told to report to the Platoon Officer in the company Orderly Room. On one of my induction forms it was noted that I had learnt typing at Night School at Hamilton High School. The Officer said, "See that typewriter there, you are here for the duration." The next day I reported to the Orderly Room after breakfast and began typing all types of military documents, and other documents for the Officers including

the "Rules and Regulations of the Puckapunyal Golf Club"! Some guys in my tent thought I got a "cushy" job but the Army was just utilising my skills.

About one month later Don Waller, also from Hamilton and I were promoted to Lance Bombardier and were allocated to a two man tent, size about 12 x 12 feet. This was much more comfortable for us. We received our stripes and had to sew them on

ourselves. Little did I realize then that Don was connected to my wife to be (Barbara) via her Uncle's brother.

Whilst at Puckapunyal our Platoon was ordered to the air-force base at Laverton for gun training with planes towing drogues. I did not have much to do as I wasn't in the gun crews but worked instead in the temporary Orderly Room office. (see photo). I did see my first Sabre jet whilst here.



Inspecting Sabre Jet Laverton

Although never rostered to Guard Duty at Puckapunyal, in the evening I was rostered with other NCO's to march the men to the weekly picture shows. Because of the size of the building there were two shows per night, so if on duty you had to watch the film twice. After the first showing, one lot marched back to camp, and another arrived and the process was repeated.

Most week-ends there were car loads of families to visit and several busloads of young ladies (not sure what they were interested in!) On Saturday evenings we could go in to nearby Seymour for films, dances and other functions.

During the 14 week training there were three week-end leaves. I returned home for the first and third. For the second leave I visited an old friend from Hamilton, Colin Jeffrey who had worked at the Glenelg Butter Factory (next to Repco). While I was at Puckapunyal he was living at Seymour. We had a great time reminiscing about old times.

After my initial 14 weeks I returned to Hamilton. Further training was still required however and we had weekly parades held at the Hamilton Drill Hall. There were also week-end bivouacs every three months, plus a two week camp in the sand-dunes at the West Beach at Port Fairy in late January for the next two years. The Senior Officers were locals known to me. The camp entailed more training on Bofors and 25 pounders.

The two week camp at Port Fairy was a military experience with several hundred men living in tents. As I had been in the Orderly Room at Puckapunyal I did not receive any training using the two guns therefore I was appointed to be the Medical Corps under Cpt Dr Chan Piercy from the Hamilton & District Base Hospital. Subsequently I was part of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC.) I had a driver and ambulance at my disposal. We set up our own Medical Centre, the dimensions were about 20 x 20 feet with six beds and several tables plus various items of equipment. The Medical Centre in contrast to the tents was equipped with flooring. I was trained to drive the old WW11 vehicles (Ford and Chevrolet). I received basic training in First aid and minor medical procedures which including given injections etc (most of it forgotten).

I was popular with the officers as there was always rum in the Medical Kit that they added to their coffee; additionally there were always a good supply of condoms available!

An incident that comes to mind occurred on one week-end bivouac when one of the men fell out of a moving 5 ton truck and was badly shaken, heavily bruised and had several grazes. It was decided to take him to the Hamilton Hospital for further

treatment. I was in full uniform with my colourful mauve Royal Australian Army Medical Corp shoulder patch on my uniform. Barbara and I were going out together by then and she was nursing at the Hospital. It apparently caused quite a stir as several of her peers recognised me.

The most serious incident was when one soldier got his fingers jammed in one of the guns and as the Doctor was not present at the time it looked beyond our scope to treat him so we took him to the Port Fairy Hospital. Live ammunition was used with the guns pointing out to sea where planes towed the drogues for target practice.

Whilst in camp, Sunday was Open Day so that members of the public could see what we were doing. The Medical Corps was responsible for the toilets so became busy erecting hessian walled areas for toilets (male and female). We used the old "thunder boxes" under timber seats. The waste had to be collected and then taken away, so the Medical Corps had some unpleasant jobs.

I received special leave to attend a Masonic Lodge meeting at Port Fairy one evening, having received approval from one of the Officers that my father knew. On arrival I was warmly welcomed and many Army Officers were surprised to see me, a "Nasho", there. Some of them recognised me later during the camp.

Near the end of my two years Cap Dr Chan Piercy advised me I was to be promoted to Bombardier, but my time as a "Nasho" was over so it did not officially occur. Although many of the guys did not enjoy National Service I thought it was well worth the experience, I believe it should be re-instated. I am certain I benefited from the experience.

My wife Barbara trained as a Registered Nurse in Hamilton, later studying Geriatrics and specialising in Aged Care. We were married on the 22nd of October 1960 at Wesley Church in Hamilton and have three children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren. I advanced through various positions at Repco and became a Branch Manager in 1963 spending 3 years in Bairnsdale, 4 years in Geelong and four years in Melbourne before I was transferred to Adelaide as Company Supply Manager in 1974. I resigned from Repco in 1985 and worked as the assistant to the Bursar at Woodlands, Church of England Girls Grammar School, Glenelg until retiring in 1999.



Barbara & Ken

I have been involved with many Clubs and groups including the following:

- 1960 Member of the Methodist Church (now Uniting)
- 1976 Rotary International Clubs: Blackwood, Flagstaff Hill and Brighton
- 1989 Justice of the Peace
- 1995 Member of the Brighton RSL Sub-Branch and Almoner 2008 onwards
- 1996 Member of the Holdfast College for Seniors (Co-ordinator 2003-2006)
- 1998 National and Synod Uniting Church Fellowship Committees
- 2000 Member of the Historical Society of South Australia
- 2007 Member of the Uniting Church Historical Society
- 2007 Member of the **Huguenot** Society
- 2008 Member Brighton Probus Club

After the move to Adelaide Barbara became the Manager of Residential Services at Resthaven, Marion for eighteen years. She has also been a board member including Vice President of the Alzheimer's Association (SA) for 12 years. We share a great interest in history in general and our respective families' histories. Currently we are transcribing 60 years of her father's diaries from 1924 to 1984.

My interest extends to the American West and the American Civil War, whereby I met another 'buff' Paul Spencer, Secretary of the RSL Sub-Branch. I asked Paul if he could suggest a role within the Sub-Branch for me and in 2008 I became the Club Almoner, a role I find most rewarding and in which Barbara is a great help.

