

## **Rotary 15**

### **COMMUNITY NETWORKER**

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF PARRAMATTA CITY, DISTRICT 9675**

#### **Rotary Four-Way Test**

The Four-Way Test challenges Rotarians, in everything they do, to ask themselves:

Of the things we say or do:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?

#### **Meeting 20 January 2014**

##### **Ron's Introduction**

President-elect Ron Edgar chaired the meeting which was rather down on numbers. Even our scheduled guest speaker failed to show. But the year is still very young. The next projects were the Australia Day barbecue at Parramatta Park on Sunday and the Barefoot Bowls event on Monday, 10 February, at the Parramatta RSL Club.

##### **The Barbecue**

Past-president Johnny Ching said that for the barbecue, numbers were down on those who had put their hands up to serve on shifts between 4 am and noon that day and there was still some organising to be done in the next few days. Kevin Wylie, a long-standing member making a welcome return, with long experience with barbecues, warned that at peak times there would be queues of people lining up and it was necessary to have the food flowing as quickly as possible.

##### **The Centenary of Gallipoli**

I attended a combined meeting of the three Parramatta Rotary Club executives on Wednesday this week. The resolution was that we write to the Federal MP for Parramatta, Julie Owens, suggesting several options for the commemoration of Gallipoli. Dave Shakespeare, from Parramatta Daybreak, said the celebration should be of the entire war and the sacrifices it entailed, not just Gallipoli. The meeting, which also included Chris McSeveny, president of Parramatta Rotary Club and Janis Harvey, of Parramatta Daybreak, agreed with the general idea that as many schoolchildren as possible should become involved in the celebrations. The meeting was favourable to the idea from our club that there be an essay/poetry, art work project in which the schools participate. It should not necessarily be a competition, just a project in which, on the suggestion of Parramatta Daybreak, the results would be published in a book and the book put into local libraries. The meeting was

responsive to the idea that the theme for the project should be the connection the local community had with World War 1. That is, local families whose forefathers served in the war, units that went from Parramatta, naval vessels named after Parramatta. That could easily bring out some unique information which would otherwise be lost for all time.

Another idea, from Parramatta Rotary Club, was that a memorial wall be erected commemorating the centenary and incorporating a mural which might be in paint or in ceramics. The suggestion here was that not only might schoolchildren be involved but students from the local TAFE and the University of Western Sydney. A further idea was that we put to the Government that war memorial lists in all schools be upgraded if necessary or if not present at all they should be created. And yet another idea was that the Government subsidise the transport of nominated students from local schools to go on a day trip to Canberra to see the Australian War Memorial. The meeting asked me to write to Ms Owens putting these ideas forward.

### **International Convention**

Johnny Ching mentioned the International Convention. He said that if there were a lot of visitors from the Rotary Club of Ramon Magsayay, our sister club in the Philippines, then there might be a small dinner between the two clubs in addition to the convention events.

### **Dates for Diaries**

26 January. Barbecue in Parramatta Park

27 January. Public holiday so there will be no meeting.

3 February. Regular meeting.

10 February. Barefoot Bowls at Parramatta RSL Club – no lunch meeting

5 April Bunnings Barbecue

### **Apologies and Guests**

Apologies to Joy Gillett on 8837 1900 before 9.30 am on Monday morning.

This is the latest time apologies can be accepted as numbers must to be given to the hotel by this time.

If you are bringing a guest please also advise this to Joy by that time to ensure a meal is prepared.

The Club is required to pay for the number of lunches ordered. Invoices for the cost of a meal will be sent to members by Vandana if you do not apologise for non-attendance by the time stated.



### **Patrick Milligan**

There being no subject which excites my passions this week, I thought I might run the draft of an “obituary” – written in advance with Patrick’s Milligan’s permission – on Patrick himself whom I am going to bring to the club as a guest speaker.

The difference between the two brothers might lie in the way German shells hit them in World War 11. Terence Alan “Spike” Milligan was blown into the air in 1943 in the Italian campaign, suffered severe shellshock, and in the view of younger brother Patrick, was never the same again. He was taken from the front line and put into an entertainment unit, where he teamed up with gunner Harry Secombe. The shellshock probably triggered a manic depressive illness from which he never recovered. But his manic phases, which produced his torrent of zany humour, left the world in fits of laughter for decades to come. Patrick, for his part, was blown sideways and backwards by a shell during the invasion of Europe in 1944. He was nicked in the legs by shrapnel but kept soldiering on, right to the end of the war and some time

afterwards. Then, a good-humoured, talented, a funny but essentially normal individual, he went on to a career as an artist.

Migrating to Australia at the invitation of his parents in 1952, Patrick became a prolific newspaper artist with John Fairfax and Sons Ltd, painted privately and participated in theatre, but never lost respect and awe of his elder brother and to the end of his life carried around copies of Spike's humorous ditties. And in this quiet, humble "other Milligan", much of the humour of the Goons came out, as he regaled his audience with stories of another world, a world of British imperialism, British India, Burma and the British Tommies of World War 11.

Desmond Patrick (Patrick) Milligan was born in Burma on December 3, 1925, in the shadow of the Great Pagoda in Rangoon. His father, Leo Alphonsus Milligan, and Irish-born sergeant-major in the British Army, Burma Detachment, was the third generation of his family to have served in the British Army. His mother, Florence (nee Kettleband), was daughter of a British soldier, Henry Kettleband, who had been posted to India. She met Leo during World War 1 when Leo was performing in a theatre show for the troops. They married and Spike was born in Ahmednagar, India, in April, 1918.

The family moved when Leo was posted to Burma where Patrick was born. Patrick, eight years Spike's junior, readily took Spike's lead when he and the other children played war games in the jungle, from time to time using an old German machinegun that had been taken to Burma as a war trophy. The group, which included Chinese and Burmese children, children from soldiers' families and children from servants' families, formed at one point the "Lamanian Army" and fought battles in the foliage. In 1933, the family left Burma for London and Patrick, who had been schooled in a Christian Brothers college in Rangoon, went to a cockney school in London. He left at the age of 15 and, because he was displaying early artistic bent, his father paid for him to attend an art course.

But war intervened. In 1943, at the age of 17, Patrick Milligan was conscripted and joined the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Regiment (the Oxenbucks), training in Northern Ireland. In 1945, after the D-Day invasion, Milligan was posted to Europe and found himself fighting at the northern end of the Siegfried Line in the Battle of Reichswald Forest, the biggest battle of the war in Europe, where the shell with his name on it landed and he was wounded by shrapnel. Milligan fought on and on, battle after battle, as the British troops seized town after town. When they got to Hamburg, Germany capitulated and the British went in as victors. There was some fun-and-games, with lusty Allied troops chasing equally willing German women, all of them trying to beat a curfew imposed from above. "One story got to me of a whole field of young men and women rising from the grass and running for their lives as the curfew vehicle approached," Milligan said. "Eventually the curfew had to be abandoned because it was not working."

The military service however, continued. Milligan, transferred to the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry, was sent to Palestine to intervene in conflict between Jews and Arabs. He saw the sights of Jerusalem and enjoyed himself trying to swim in the Dead Sea. But there was also danger. He and his comrades were rocked by a massive blast when the Jewish underground blew up the King David Hotel. He was then sent

with his regiment to Cyprus to guard German prisoners-of-war and for a few days was under instruction of a German POW as he learned to ski in the Cyprus mountains. Milligan was then demobilised and in the process met a naval warrant officer, Kathleen Roberts, whom he married. The British Government paid for him to do a four-year art course at Goldsmith College, University of London.

In 1951, Leo and Florence Milligan migrated to Australia because the climate, “so much like India”, agreed with them. Patrick and Kathleen accepted the advice and followed. Patrick got a job doing designs on glassware. But the accommodation did not suit Kathleen and she left him. The only thing he ever heard from her again was through a solicitor finalising a divorce. But at the glass factory he met a fellow worker, Nadia Klun, of Greek origin, and they married.

Milligan got a job with John Fairfax Art Department where his talents were fully utilised and with Nadia he moved into a home in Eastwood, in Sydney’s north-west, which his parents had left to resettle in Woy Woy, on the central coast. Milligan and his wife had two children but lost one in infancy. The other, Michael, was to grow up to become an advertising executive. In the meantime Milligan accepted an invitation to join a theatrical group, Producers, Actors, Composers and Talents (PACT) group, operating out of Surry Hills in inner Sydney and stayed with it for years, occasionally appearing on stage. A member of the Ryde-Eastwood Art Society, he did portraits, painted abstracts and illustrated two of Spike’s books, one being *The 101 Best and Only Limericks of Spike Milligan* (1982) and a book of serious verse, *The Mirror Running* (1987).

Milligan was kept forever busy, as his link with a disappearing world became more widely perceived. He wrote his own account of the war, *View from a Forgotten Hedgerow*, which he published privately. Patrick preserved all the 80 books Spike wrote, including Spike’s account of the war, *Hitler, My Part in His Downfall*, and kept a battery of Spike memorabilia to hand. One of these was a reflection by Spike, aged eight, as he saw Mahatma Gandhi walk past. “He’s not as black as he’s painted, said my grandmother. I found out he was not painted, it was his real colour!” And another was a poem by Spike on his nose and the war, “A World War 11 Nose”:

*My nose, my nose,  
Lived dangerously.  
Its courage was no stunt!  
And during the war in Germany,  
It was always out front!  
Yet when the battle war o’er,  
And we’d defeated the Hun,  
Suddenly, for no reason at all,  
My nose started to run!*

Spike came to Australia many times, giving Woy Woy a bit of stick (“The world’s only above-ground cemetery”), but also dropped in on Patrick at Eastwood. Sadly, Spike died in 2002 and Nadia in 2007. But together, the brothers, the flamboyant one and the quiet one, have made the world a happier and more interesting place.

**Malcolm Brown**