



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 9 - June 2019

Celebration
Third annual
luncheon

Meet the MANCO
Putting a face to
the names

Why do people volunteer?
Military Service, Volunteerism and Veteran
Support, Ideas and Perceptions



Having reached the halfway mark in 2019, the festive season at year-end will be upon us before we know it. The first half of 2019 has seen a combined Golf Day presented in collaboration with 71 Signal Unit at the Parow Golf Course on 29 March 2019. This first ever combined event was a success storey and it presented the opportunity for a Reserve Force Unit to work hand in hand with a military veteran organisation. Fourteen 4 x ball teams participated. What was extremely pleasing was that Brig Gen (Ret'd) Denis Jelliman and his wife travelled all the way from Pretoria to support his veteran association.

On Sunday, 5 May 2019 our association presented its 3rd Annual luncheon. See on page 4 in this publication about this special occasion.

We have been publishing the photographs of our Top 5 (Exco), but in this issue I would like to present the faces of all our current Manco members, particularly as our AGM will be held later in June creating the possibility that we may see new faces after the next election of office bearers.

My gratitude goes to my Manco for their ongoing dedication and support.

My appreciation also goes to those of our members and readers who regularly extend positive sentiments towards us and what we aim to achieve.

Robbie Roberts
Chairman

Upcoming Birthdays

June

3rd – Fanie Bekker
6th – Alfred de Vries
9th – Willie van der Merwe
18th – Nolan Meyer

July

8th – Joe Coetzee
8th - Themba Mbali
12th – Tim Reilly
14th – Jerome Solomon
17th – Simphiwe Mtyenene
30th – Abu Baker Daniels

August

12th – Matt Tennyson
14th – Warren Oor
16th – Karen Tennyson
21st – Ed Wittert
23rd – Jessica Siew
30th – Trunell Morom



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Third Annual Luncheon

The Signals Association holds its Third Annual Luncheon in Cape Town.

Our Third Annual Luncheon was held at the Parow Golf Course on Sunday, 5 May 2019 when 60 invited guests attended a sit down 3 course meal which, as previously, was excellent real home made cooking. The club's Tannie Susie and Chief chef Margret, once again proved themselves outstanding caterers.

Keeping to the tradition of the Association, the Vice-Chairman welcomed all present, where after our Secretary General lighted the "Flame of the Signaller" and handed it to the Chairman for placing the burning torch into the outstretched hand of "Jimmy", the figurine of Mercury, as the Association's Symbol of Office.

We were extremely fortunate to have in our midst Uncle (Sgt) Syd Ireland who, at age 98, attended with five of his grandchildren. Syd, as far as we know, is the last surviving Signaller from WWII in South Africa having served with the Cape Town based 3rd Brigade Signals Company as a wireless operator in Kenya, Abyssinia, British Somalia and Egypt, spending much time in Cairo and Alexandria taking part in the Battle of El Alamein.

We were also extremely fortunate to have as our guest speaker, Naval

Captain Trunell Morom who is an Associate member of our association and a long-standing Friend of ours. She has been associated with our association for many years since the time she served as officer commanding of SAS Unitie, the last SA Naval Reserve Force unit to be decommissioned.

We publish below Capt (SAN) Trunell Morom's speech in which she pays tribute to Uncle Syd and those who served during his time in the military.

"Good afternoon everyone – I feel very privileged as a Naval Officer to be invited to talk at this very special luncheon – the third annual luncheon of the Signals Association.

Senior representatives of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy were called upon to speak at a dinner – in that order as was in keeping with the seniority of the arms of service. Very proud of their traditions, the Army and the Air Force both referred to the Navy as the "Cinderella of the Forces". The Naval Officer listened to this and eventually it was his turn to talk. He started his talk by saying "I don't know much about Cinderella but I do know that she had two ugly sisters!"

However - I would like to believe



From left to right: Captain (SAN - Retired) Trunell Morom, Robbie Roberts, 'Uncle' Syd Ireland.

that the Signallers are not one of the ugly sisters. Like the Navy, I see them as the gentlemen of the Defence Force. After all, many years ago, the Royal Corps of Signals experimented with crossing a woodpecker with a carrier pigeon. They wanted to get a bird that would knock on the door before delivering the message.

We live in the modern age – a teacher asked her Grade One Class "What sound does a dog make?" "Woof Woof" answered the class. The teacher's next question was "What sound does a cat make?" Meow Meow came the reply. "And what sound does a mouse make?" "Click" chorused the class. True – but quite sad!

War is not linked to a particular age-as far back as anyone can remember, there have always been wars and there will always be wars. The ways in which wars are fought have changed and will still change – but there will always be wars and countries will

always be preparing for wars that everyone hopes will never happen. Everyone world wide is always aware of the imminence of war somewhere in the world.

Many of you will relate to what I am now going to say. My grandparents generation lived through World War One – men volunteered to join up and fight for their country and the upholding of good against evil. My parents generation lived through World War II – again men and women volunteered to join the Allied Forces and fight for good to conquer evil even though they knew they could lose their lives doing so – and many did. Many however came back having helped to establish a safe world for the next generations to be able to live peacefully. I was fortunate – my father came back from fighting in North Africa otherwise I would not have been here!

My brother's generation lived through the border wars – as did many of you here today. You had no choice to volunteer or not – you were conscripted. After 1994, conscription fell away and military service once again became voluntary and still is today.

The Signals Association has through the almost 20 years of its existence - not always as the Signals Association - provided the continuity of the indescribable amazing camaraderie that exists between men and women of all generations who have served as Signallers – filling a vital role in the de-

fence of their country

The Third Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association was started by Major Charles Holloway in 1946 and for seventy years, the Association met at least once annually for lunch – the members had all participated in WWII as members of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company, South African Corps of Signals – they served in countries in North Africa, they participated in the Battle of El Alamein – and they came home. One can only imagine the reminiscing and the exchange of war stories at those functions – experiences that only those who had seen active service would understand.

The Signals Association was established at Signals Formation in Pretoria in 1995 – the successor to the South African Corps of Signallers Association which was established in 1944 but became non-existent several years later.

The Signals Association (Western Cape) was established in 2000 by Lt Col Robbie Roberts – starting with 16 members, it has grown to more than 100 members, many of whom are from 71 Signal Unit. Although through the subsequent years, the Association has not promoted itself much, its aim is now to grow steadily and make itself visible to the outside world in the hope that it can attract the interest of as many former signallers and communicators from the Communications Divisions of the Arms of Service worldwide.

The Association is extremely proud of its eighteen years of membership of the Council for Military Veterans Organisation (CMVO) – it was the first “Current Day” association to be registered and is the only registered and recognized military veteran organization for signallers in South Africa.

The question can be asked – if the Signals Association is celebrating its 19th Anniversary, why is this only the third Anniversary Luncheon?

Until 2016, the 3rd Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association held an annual luncheon which the Signals Association supported and attended. With only three members remaining, the 3rd Brigade Signal Company Association decided to transfer their seventy year old annual luncheon tradition to the Signals Association as the next generation of Signallers. Many of you here today attended the luncheon in 2016 when the 3rd Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association Flag was lowered for the last time and the Signals Association Flag hoisted for the very first time. A new tradition was also introduced – the lighting of a “Flame of the Signaller”.

I mentioned earlier that my father had fought in WWII – he was a gunner. He was so determined to serve his country that he lied about his age when he volunteered in 1939 – growing up we could never understand why – when asked his age – he would say for example 48 army age! He was six

years older! I don't know much about his war experiences other than that he was in the Artillery, he did some of his training in Potchefstroom and he fought in Egypt including at Tobruk and at El Alamein. He would talk about the camaraderie but never spoke about the horrors of the battles. Looking back, I think he instilled in me the meaning of being a volunteer and more importantly volunteering because you want to play a role in ensuring that your country is a safe place for all. My father was a humble man, a gentleman with enormous integrity and high values, always caring about others – a way of life and values that he instilled in his children. He passed away in 1977. Years later in 1997 or 1998, as a member of the Reserve, I was fortunate enough to meet three gentlemen who reminded me so much of my father – the three surviving members of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association - Major Charles Holloway, Mr Timoney and Mr Sydney Ireland.

We are extremely blessed that Mr Ireland – the last surviving Signaller in South Africa from WWII - is here with us today together with his grandchildren. Very sadly, his daughter Jenny who was always by his side when he laid a wreath at all the annual Memorial Services passed away suddenly in December last year. His daughter Barbara has taken over that role but unfortunately she couldn't be

with us today.

I am sure you don't know that apart from being the most senior person here today in age – Mr Ireland is 98 – he has also recently become a television star! Three weeks ago he was interviewed by BBC Television and a week later by a Russian Television station – in his daughter's home. The BBC are compiling a documentary on the Veterans of WWII which will be screened later this year. We are not sure when the Russian documentary will be broadcast or whether we will be able to watch it.

I would like to read you a letter that was written to Uncle Syd's mother in 1943 from his Divisional Officer. After returning home from El Alamein, Uncle Syd was seconded to a Unit that provided a shuttle service between Egypt and South Africa – he was their communicator on the shuttle aircraft.

Mr Ireland – Uncle Syd – we are honoured that you are here with us today – you are a very special and dear person to all of us – and we are very proud of our Television Star!

And now – to conclude –

“I might wish you health, I might wish you wealth, or – that good fortune would caress you.

But – wealth might bring sorrow, And health could fail tomorrow.

So – I shall simply say “May God continue to bless the Signals Association for many, many more years to come.



And now Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to join me in raising your glasses in a toast to the Signals Association on this their Third Annual Luncheon. May there be many many more."

Geoff Laskey, a former commanding officer of 71 Signal Unit then gave a brief talk on "The Evolution of the Military Signaller", which guests found very interesting.

Also with keeping with the traditions of the Association, the Scroll of Honour of the 3rd Bde Sig Coy Reunion Association, together with that WWII association's Minute Book, were put on display for guests to have a look at and peruse the 70 year old historical minutes of all their meetings between 1946 and 2016.

On 27 May 1940, some 287 Other

Ranks and 7 Officers marched from the Castle past the City Hall and down Adderley Street in Cape Town en route to the station from where they travelled to Potchefstroom, then to Durban, from there they sailed to Mombasa. From there they travelled to Kenya, Abyssinia, Berbera, Egypt, El Alamein just to mention a few, all in support of the 2nd World War. These were all members of the Cape Town based 3 Brigade Signal Company, South African Corps of Signals.

The Scroll of Honour contains the names of all the members of the Cape Town based 3rd Brigade Signal Company who were included in the embarkation list of the Signallers going to War.



Guests at the Luncheon



Meet our MANCO



Robbie Roberts
Chairman



Piet Jordaan
Vice-Chairman



Howard Shagom
Secretary General



Wilna Bekker
Treasurer



Pierre Fourie
Public Relations Officer



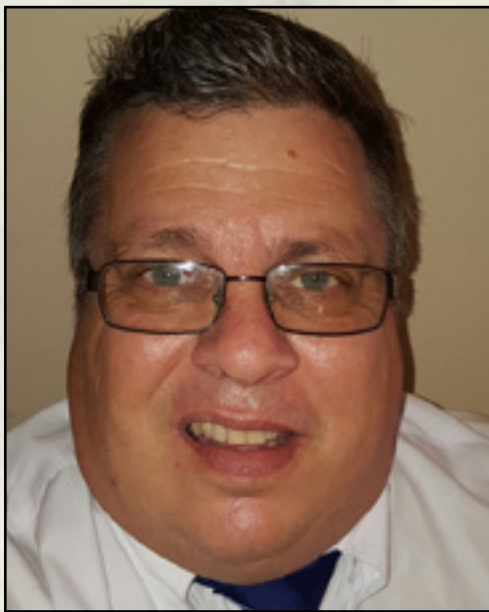
Alfred de Vries
Manco Member



Geoff Laskey
Manco Member



Fahmy Rhode
Manco Member



Carl Schmidt
Manco Member



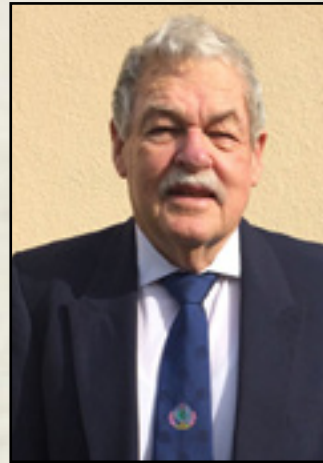
Willie van der Merwe
Manco Member



Marc Goodleser
Manco Member
(Co-opted)



Ian Robertson
Manco Member
(Co-opted)



Johan Smuts
Manco Member
(Co-opted)

Military Service, Volunteerism and Veteran Support, Ideas and Perceptions

By Lt Col (Ret) Geoff Laskey, Member of Manco of our association.

I think we should commence by defining the term "volunteer". A volunteer is a person who voluntarily offers or enlists himself or herself for a service or undertaking.

It can thus be stated that volunteering is generally considered an altruistic (unselfish) activity where an individual or group provides services. A definition that sums it up the best for me is the following, "To choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's basic obligations".

Volunteers play an integral role in the life of soldiers and their families and are found throughout the military community world-wide. As more and more Units leave their countries and return from service, the needs of their families and the military veterans continue to grow daily. The socio economic situation in our country particularly also contributes to a great extent to this situation.

With the growing needs of our military, as well as our veterans, we are always in need of volunteers within Units, Veteran Organisations and Military Veteran Institutions. Unit associations helps members of the military, veterans and their families prepare,

cope and respond to the challenges of military service. In South Africa this effort in my mind is still very fragmented and uncoordinated and is an area of great concern.

In recent decades, the trend among numerous countries has been to move from conscription to all-volunteer military forces. The Indian Army is the world's largest standing volunteer army. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in 2010 their army had strength of 1,1million active personnel and 0,9 million reserve personnel.

The South African National Defence Force also depends heavily on its part time forces to perform certain tasks and operational requirements. The part time force is one which derives its manpower from volunteers rather than conscription or mandatory service. The part time forces in South Africa at this stage consist entirely of military volunteers.

It is however important to note that with the benefits of volunteer forces there are also some socio-economic and other related challenges which at this stage seems be overlooked to a great extent in South Africa.

The type of support referred to is;

- Structured support for military

families during deployments and emergencies;

- Sustained and structured service to our nation's veterans after their service ends. Now a military veteran is a person who has served and is no longer serving in the armed forces and was honourably discharged. However in South Africa although a part time force member can be classified as a veteran, they are not entitled to the same benefits as a person who served in the SANDF Permanent force. This is a subject for discussion on its own.

Now why do people volunteer?

There are various reasons why people volunteer their services, for instance;

- Meeting new people;
- They are passionate about the particular cause;
- To use their existing skills in a productive way and/or to develop new skills;
- Find a purpose and feel involved;
- Make a difference; and
- Also their very own special reasons.

The question I would like to ask is "Is volunteerism still alive and well in the South African Military environment?"

Volunteering in general has changed. The changes in the landscape of volunteering are due to many inter-related changes. These include social, cultural, economic, and tech-



Geoff Laskey

nological changes in the world.

It would appear that the rate of volunteering generally appear to be declining. An aspect which has changed is the way people volunteer. Studies world-wide indicates that people are volunteering differently than they did in the past. The changes include;

- Individuals want to volunteer for shorter amounts of time(short, focussed and productive involvement);
- Individuals want a specific role or task (there is a trend towards more clearly defined roles);
- Individuals want to do what they like and are good at;
- Individuals are more willing to vote with their feet – if the volunteering in a particular field is not

working for them, there are plenty of other options for them to explore.

All of this means that volunteers are becoming more selective in what volunteer work they do and herein lays the challenge for the SANDF part time forces and the military and veteran associations like the Signals Association we are involved in. There are struggling veterans across the country with so many different types of needs; there are numerous meaningful opportunities that suit both the skills available and the needs of the veterans they can serve and support.

Although the veterans organisations generally served their members well I think the time has arrived for associations to realise that it is not business as usual any more, we need to look at our strategies and change the way we think and operate. The foregoing is essential if we want to attract and involve more active and younger members and ensure the continuation of the associations we serve in and treasure so much. As mentioned there are struggling veterans across the country with so many different types of needs, there are numerous opportunities and veteran associations must find ways to play a more meaningful and prominent role to address these needs. Associations must gear themselves to identify needs and face the challenges in a structured and integrated manner.

Jodi Picoult, stated that - "The human capacity for burden is like bam-

boo- far more flexible than you'd ever believe at first glance."

In my opinion Military Veteran associations in South Africa should gear and commit themselves to a more structured, integrated and sustained approach to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of military veterans and veteran's institutions. This will require great effort, some sound management practises and especially expertise when it comes to funding models and methods.

The above may sound very much as a "pie in the sky" idea but with the correct people (volunteers, private sector, NPO's SANDF and other government departments) and the correct approach and full commitment of all I am convinced that this can be achieved. The important issue is that all efforts must be integrated, co-ordinated and veteran needs driven.

In this regard the Council for Military Veterans Organisation must also gear itself to lead and facilitate the process of change where necessary. Their role to coordinate, integrate, guide and transform the activities of military veteran's organisations in South Africa cannot be underestimated and veteran organisations must support them in every way possible.

Margaret Mead said - "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. - Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Remembering D-Day

Thursday 6 June 2019 will be the 75th anniversary of the Allied invasion to liberate Europe during World War II. We look at some D-Day trivia.

On Tuesday 6 June 1944 the largest seaborne invasion force in history landed on an 80 km stretch of the Normandy coast in France.

Codenamed Operation Neptune, it was part of Operation Overlord, the liberation of German-occupied

north-western Europe from Nazi control. It was also the launch of the long-awaited second front. It was simply termed D-Day.

Here is some information about D-Day that you may, or may not, know.

- Planning for Operation Overlord began in earnest in 1943 with Dwight D Eisenhower being appointed as Supreme Commander.
- Marshall of the RAF, Sir Arthur Tedder, was the Deputy Supreme

Commander.

- Marshall of the RAF, Sir Arthur Tedder, was the Deputy Supreme Commander.
- General Walter Bedell-Smith was the Chief of staff to the Supreme Commander.
- Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay was appointed Commander of the Navy Forces.
- Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory was appointed Commander of the Air Forces.
- General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery was the Commander of the XXIst Army, as well as Commander of the Land Forces.
- About 3,200 reconnaissance mis-

sions were launched in the run-up to the invasion to take photos of vital locations.

- In the summer of 1943 an early copy of the plans blew out of a window in Norfolk House, London. A man who was passing by handed them in, saying his sight was too bad to read them.
- Beach landings in Normandy were chosen instead of the Pas-de-Calais because defences were lighter and advancing troops would have fewer rivers and canals to cross.
- There were to be five landing zones along a 80 km stretch of coast. The Americans would attack at Utah



and Omaha, the British at Gold and Sword and Canadian troops at Juno.

- It was vital that D-Day take place on the date of the highest half-tide at the most Westerly beach (Utah), 40 minutes after first light and following a night when the moon rose between 01h00 and 02h00. Such occasion occur only three days each month and in June 1944 they were the 5th, 6th and 7th of that month. If the invasion wasn't launched on one of those three days it would have had to be postponed for another month.
- D-Day was originally set for June 5 but had to be postponed for 24 hours because of bad weather.
- In 1944 authorities became concerned when a number of secret code names appeared as answers in the Daily Telegraph's crossword puzzle. In the month before the D-Day attacks, no less than five code names, including 'Utah', 'Omaha' and 'Neptune' were spotted in the puzzle answers. Alarm bells rang at MI5, which suspected someone was trying to pass information to the enemy, although a search of the writer's home and office turned up nothing.
- Hitler anticipated that the Allied Forces would invade France from the northern coast. To fortify and prepare for this, he assigned Erwin Rommel to head construction of defences. Rommel was placed in

charge of finishing Hitler's Atlantic Wall which consisted of 3,800 km of bunkers, land mines, and various obstacles to make a beach landing more difficult and hazardous for the Allies.

- A phantom army of dummy camps, planes and tanks was constructed in Kent and Essex in order to deceive Germans into thinking the invasion would be at Calais.
- New gadgets designed for D-Day included a "swimming tank" and a flame throwing tank called "the crocodile". There were even collapsible motorbikes.
- Eisenhower's famous statement to the troops as he gave the order for Operation Overlord open with "You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you."
- US General Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote a letter that was to be opened 'in case of failure'. In it he wrote "Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone." The letter is mistakenly signed 5

July instead of 5 June - presumably he was a little preoccupied at the time.

- High command thought a successful landing would cost 10,000 dead and 30,000 wounded – 30,000 stretchers and 60,000 blankets were issued.
- From 23h00 on 5 June some 24,000 airborne troops were delivered behind the German lines to secure important roads and bridges. Along with more than 2,000 aircraft, 867 gliders were used.
- Defences on the beaches included concrete gun emplacements,

wooden stakes, mines, anti-tank obstacles, barbed wire and booby traps. Around 50,000 German troops opposed the landing forces.

- Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was asleep when word of the invasion arrived. No one dared wake him and it's said vital time was lost in sending reinforcements.
- Total Allied casualties on D-Day were much lighter than feared – around 10,000 with 4,572 killed including 1,641 Brits. The Germans are estimated to have lost about 9,000.

Memorial Services

Marina Valentine, our loyal member on the spot in Pretoria, laid our wreath at the Annual CMVO Memorial Service at the Voortrekker Monument on Sunday, 26 May 2019.



Our member in the Eastern Cape, Nolan Meyer, laid our wreath at the 3rd General Wreath laying ceremony help in Port Elizabeth on Sunday 19 May 2019.





How many of the readers remember the ‘Doppie’ cartoons from Paratus?