

# Western Front

Newsletter for ex-servicemen / women who were called up or who volunteered to serve their country, South Africa, in the SADF / SANDF, SAP / SAPS, or the South African Correctional Services, and who now reside in Western Australia.



***"In grateful recognition and memory of our countrymen, the Immortal Dead of South Africa, who, at the call of Duty, made the supreme Sacrifice on the battlefields of Africa, Europe, Asia, on the Sea, and in the Air. They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old, age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them. Lest We Forget."***

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## Ben se Pen

The Virus continues to create havoc amongst us veterans who would like to get together again just for a beer or two around a camp fire or at our monthly meetings and to catch up with what has happened to everyone with all this restrictions and whatnot going on but, alas, time will tell what is to happen. The end is not in sight....yet! One disturbing aspect though is that the boys are getting quiet and that is not a good thing! Social media, Facebook, Whatsup etc has very little traffic nowadays.

Who knows how things will be after the restrictions are lifted? One thing is for sure and that is life will not be the same as before on many fronts. Social distancing it seems and everything that goes with it are measures that will stay with us for a long time to come and something that we'll just have to adjust to. It is said it is not the strongest, fittest, richest persons etc. that survives but those who adjust the quickest and best. Let's strive to be the latter.

We have officially reached the end of our archived stuff and all the more reason for our members here in Western Australia, especially those in far-flung places, to start contributing to the newsletter. So far we've had a few contributions and that is exactly what we're after. We want to hear your stories and if you have interesting photos even better. Every photo tells a story and is worth a thousand words.

Reading Veteran John Niemeyer's account of his corporal made me think back to my first year in the army. Read my account of a 'kopperaal' I encountered elsewhere in this issue. Who else has a story to share about his 'kopperaal' or someone he knew?

## Guess who? - Raai Wie? (Answer on last page - Antwoord op laaste bladsy)



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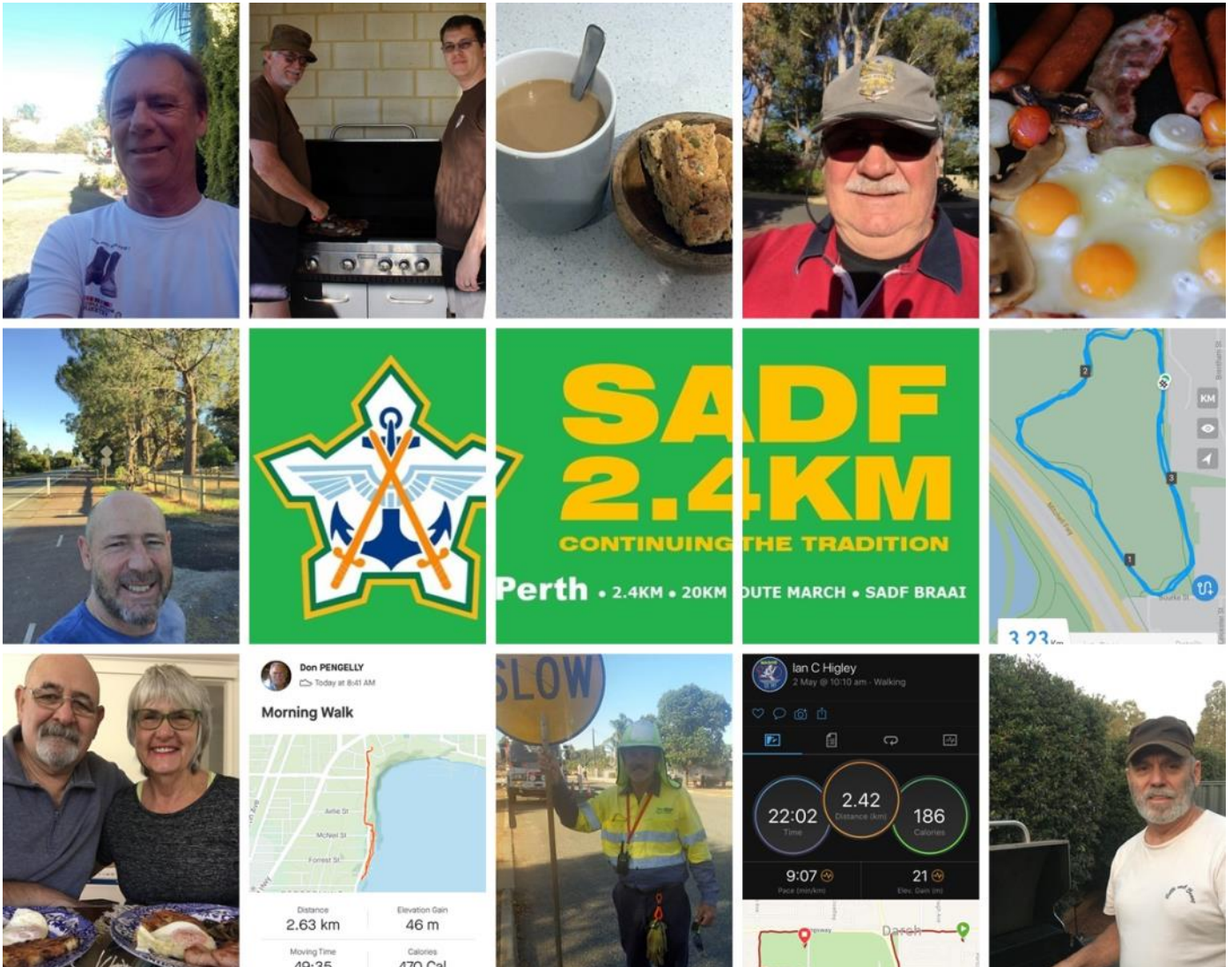
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## SADF 2,4 - 2 May 2020

Perth's SADF 2,4 for the month of May 2020 done and dusted, the second one done in somewhat unusual circumstances. With the restrictions on group sizes lifted to ten we couldn't be sure how many veterans would pitch up at Kings Park and therefore opted to go the 'decentralised' way by having veterans complete their 2,4's on their own time, own turf....

A number of veterans did take part, had their brekky's and all and sent in some pictures. Two veterans sent word making it known that they would be missing out. Slade Healy was occupied work wise out of town and Johan Burr-Dixon is recovering from procedures to his eyes. Right now coping with one patched-up sore eye is enough PT. To all the veterans who made an effort, well done boy's! Die 'kopperaal' is trots op julle!



## ANZAC Day Parade - Perth - 25 April 2020

ANZAC Day Parade 2020 will be remembered as the parade that never happened....all because of a little virus. At first the marches were officially called off and then somewhere along the line someone came up with the idea that veterans and citizens alike wishing to honour the sacrifices of so many soldiers should step out onto their driveways at 06h00 and do just that. Before long guidelines were published and the radio stations came on board to sound the bugles and so did ANZAC Day parade 2020 happen.

SAMVOA Veterans also took part. Veterans who stepped outside were asked to take a 'selfie' or have someone take a picture and send it to the Western Front. A collage of those who did just that were compiled. The following veterans answered the call and did so in their own fashion.....Veterans Dave Stevenson, Garth Pienaar, Ian Higley, Ben Opperman, Gavin Neunborn, Slade Healy, Deon Booysen, Andre Rix, Alf Steel, Peter Cilliers, Donovan Forbes, Dawie de Wet, Marnus van der Merwe, Anton van Heerden, Zander Opperman, Baren van Heerden, Bill van Til, Craig Howard, Eric le Grange, Ian Calvert, Jess van der Nest, Johan Jankowitz, Johan Burr-Dixon, Philip Niman, Kevin van der Mescht, Ron Fouche, Troy Hosking, Wynand van Staden, Vintcent Redpath, Jacques van Tonder, Ewen Morten, Peter Colvin, Marc van Reenen, Roy Chase, Tony Ellis, Christo Miller, Brian Halstead, William Mullany, Mike Anema, Lesley Wittstock, John Niemeyer and Robert Oosterloo.

Veterans Errol Kristal†, Frans de Langet†, Fred van Heerden†, Riaan de Villiers†, Tim Chadwick† are also listed as present as though they would have taken part in the march and this will continue to be the case with our departed friends and our activities whenever the roll is called.

# ANZAC Day Parade - 25 April 2020 - Perth



## Choppertech Notes - Chapter Two

### A South African Perspective Continues

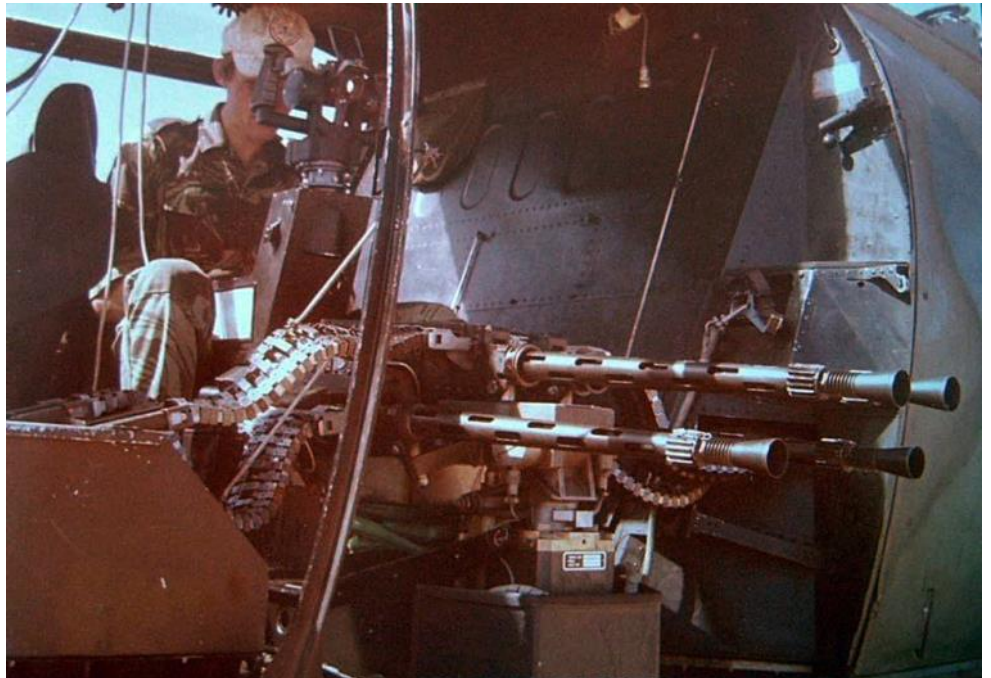
*Choppertech is a book written by Beaver Shaw, a Rhodesian flight engineer amidst a tumultuous but also an amazing time in the history of Southern Africa when wars and conflicts abounded and thus turning the sub-continent upside down. An updated version is being done now and our own Slade Healy was asked to write a South African perspective and what will be read is his writ.*

*Just about everyone taken up in the turmoil has memories of their time in uniform...some bad and some not so bad. In order to survive mentally and physically one had to adapt and learn how to exploit on one hand and manipulate on the other hand the extraordinary circumstances we found ourselves in. Beaver Shaw's story is just one of them. Hopefully many more will step forward with their stories for all to read. It need not be heroic 'skiet, skop en donder' - stuff only at all. There were those who served behind the lines with distinction whether it be in the workshop, stores, procurement, operating theatres, kitchens etc. An army cannot fight on an empty stomach, fight without bullets, fly and sail in unworthy aircraft and boats and so forth. We would like to hear their stories as well.*

*As the Perspective comprises many pages it will be spread over a few newsletters. Be sure to read them all. It makes for fascinating reading. The story continues. - Ed.*

#### Casevac

I got called out one night for a casevac south east of Rushinga, not an easy one as there was hardly any moonlight or horizon, with boss Tol Janeke leaving the decision to go up to me. A callsign had split early that evening to move into ambush positions for the night and somehow one walked in a circle back into their mates, causing quite a few injuries with one serious. No GPS in those days, just the old dead reckoning on a black night, and on passing Rusambo I got the army to put up a flare just to my north, which was reassuring as it pinpointed me on track. The callsign talked me into a LZ and we managed to get the badly wounded soldier back to Mt. Darwin and the medics.



#### Op Newton

There was one unusual op, a short one and Newton I think it was labelled, in the Dotito area in June '75, the int boys had info that the terrs were coming together for a big meeting at full moon and so a cordon was set up and if memory serves me correctly 13 Alo's were involved, including two K-cars. Sadly, the closing of the net was sprung a day too early and contact was made with gooks walking in from behind stopper groups that had walked into position. We had 2 separate orbits going with RLI callsigns aboard when we spotted 3 terrs crossing a small river bed, but I could not call it in as the radios were buzzing and I could not get my message out. Plus the corporal in charge

was screaming for me to put them down, which I did as fast decisions were called for. Against all rules as it was the commander in the K-car who usually called the shots as to where to deploy. That callsign sprinted off after the gooks and only on getting airborne again was I able to get a gap and brief the commander on what I had done and where his callsign was gallivanting. Bottom line is they had a great contact and all was forgiven, although it cost me a round of drinks in the pub, but overall the op was considered a lemon.

Pat Armstrong from Support Commando was commander in one of the K-cars and had spotted a gook putting down his AK 47 and walking with his hands up in surrender and as a live capture would help with the current confusing int picture, he briefed

the callsigns close by requesting a capture. He described perfectly where this gook was approaching from and the anthill he was about to skirt and of course those young troopies were only interested in slotting gooks. The terr stood no chance as he came into view and got riddled with Pat ending his running commentary by radioing to the world "Oh shit, you shot him".

#### Unusual Delivery

Another memorable occasion was when Wingco Keith Kemsley was escorting a TV crew around the operational area, and we were inbound with stiffs from a big contact. I got briefed on the radio that they would be filming when we landed, not knowing that the director was female and had told the Wingco that she could take

## Choppertech Notes - Chapter One (Continue)

the gruesome stuff. I hovered right up to this TV crew and only landed when I noticed the cameraman stepping back. Those waiting RLI troopies wasted no time just yanking the body bags off the floor of my chopper, they landed with a great thud on the ground. No love lost here for sure and the lady turned a whiter shade of pale. Ginger Baldwin was coming in next with a net full of bodies dangling off the cargo hook and I briefed him accordingly. He kept his load about roof height off the ground and as the cameraman stepped back he released the net, making a much bigger thud than mine, also those bodies were not in bags which gave greater effect. Our lady director promptly turned and gapped it, with the Wingco shaking his finger at us and with just a trace of a smile on his face.

At least this delivery service was better than another occasion where the terrs in the net still had some phosphorous on them which slowly burnt through the net. Bodies fell out along the way and one can only imagine the effect that had on the local population, so much for winning the hearts and minds. Better still, I would have loved to have seen the look on that crews faces when they discovered their net was empty.



American Bob McKenzie, both great soldiers and leaders. Bob had an interesting burn like scar on his shoulder, from the shockwave from a hit he took in Vietnam from an armalite round. He sadly lost his life years later on ops in Sierra Leone and I still have a copy of the Soldier of Fortune magazine in which there is an article on his interesting life. The callsign across the border had to be hot extracted after Kelvin Storey was tragically KIA, with the late Monster Wilkens coming to the rescue.

I was in Salisbury a few days after this and doing the rounds one Saturday eve, and came across some of the SAS boys in a

turned into a late night. Other popular venues favoured by various units those days were La Boheme, the Blue Room at the Windsor Hotel and the Monamatapa Hotel, better known as the Claymore because of the shape of the building. Can one imagine the stories told if those walls could talk.

Another Saturday night found us somehow in the RLI pub at a time when the Brit government had once again done something that really upset the Rhodies. There was a Brit sergeant in the RLI who was especially peeved and we all ended up on the parade ground at quite a late hour, whereupon the sergeant now fully attired in his step outs marched on as the army do and ceremoniously tore up His Majesty's passport into a nice little pile, and burnt it! Luckily the RSM was not around to see the spectacle, or hear the sergeant being cheered on and I have always wondered what happened to the man after that.

**"Defeat, everywhere I go, defeat!"**

We had quite a bit of interaction with our Rhodesian allies and did various courses together, which was great as good operational experience got pooled for both sides to benefit from. Ian Harvey, a legend on the Alouette and later a senior officer under Robert Mugabe, came down to South Africa for a course and stayed with us at the SAAF Officers mess in Voortrek-



### SAS and RLI

Another time we got based at Marymount Mission to standby for a SAS operation across the border in Mozambique, working with the OC Brian Robinson and the

corner of the Coq d'Or. I got called over and got introduced to Kelvin's parents, a bit of a shock as it was unexpected and I really did not do a good job of getting my condolences across. Needless to say, it

kerhoogte. Other legends were Chris Schulenberg and Dave Scales from the SAS who were also conveniently in Pretoria at the time, taking a break from the army and running a pub downtown. It was only a matter of time before we went to check up on them, it was a small, narrow little pub near the Poyntons building. Another entertaining evening got underway and when closing time came, they simply closed the doors and we continued till some unearthly hour, as per ops normal. Both these fine soldiers went on to perform some extraordinary feats, incredibly brave they were, and some trivia here is that Schuley had been recruited by Bob Meecham while on a rugby tour from South Africa.

My wife finally got to meet Schuley years later when Priscilla and Dale Collett, another fine soldier from the Selous Scouts, had a small party at their house in Lyttelton to celebrate the anniversary of Dale being shot, and subsequently paralysed from the waist down, in Mozambique (in the same contact that Tim Bax was also badly wounded). Such was his positive attitude that a wheelchair was never going to slow Dale down. It was the era of the Clint Eastwood movies and I recollect Schuley wearing a scruffy beard (Scouts



Scouts and who I got to meet again in Maputo in February 2000 during the devastating floods in Mozambique. Jean had been around other interesting hot spots in the world (rumour had it that he could not ever go back to France for some misdemeanour he had apparently committed) and I remember Bob Wishart telling the story of a big booze cruise on Lake Kariba the Scouts had on being disbanded and Jean wailing in his French accent "Defeat, everywhere I go, defeat!"

### Dale Collet

Dale later went on to run a debt collecting

modified his bakkie back in Gaborone with some complex arrangement whereby he was able to pull himself up onto the tailgate, pull in his wheelchair after him, roll over onto some sort of angled stretcher and then pull himself into the cab and through the rear window on some pulley arrangement. What ingenuity, what a never say die attitude, so typical of the Rhodie spirit, and what strong neck muscles he must have developed. He already had hand controls for the disabled on the vehicle and his license application caused such a stir that it went all the way up to the Minister for approval.

The real fun came when he drove himself to a Scouts reunion in Pietersburg in South Africa and was stopped on his way home that Sunday by traffic cops just outside of town. They initially wanted to impound him and his bakkie, but typically he sweet talked his way out to the extent that the traffic chief even came out to see his contraption, and then offered him an escort! That would be such good YouTube material today. This story continues with Dale not content with just his bakkie, he engineered a similar arrangement for his motorbike and then did a long charity ride to Cape Town. What a character, what chutzpah. The bike had a sidecar, all olive green in colour and was a Chinese copy of the old WW2 BMW from when the Russians had liberated the whole factory. And true to form his helmet was Jerry too.



standard anyway) with a long poncho, the only thing missing was a cheroot dangling off his lips. The other renegade in attendance was Jean Michel, a delightful little Frenchman who also made his mark in the

business in Botswana and at some stage ended up in hospital in Pretoria with really bad bed sores, having to lie on his stomach for weeks on end, not negative at all and no complaint coming from him. He regaled me with the story of how he had

## Choppertech Notes - Chapter One (Continue)

### Longdrop with a view

The north east of Rhodesia was another hotspot and at some stage we based up at a spot called Mutawatawa, its claim to fame being having the longdrop with the best view in the country, perched as it was on the edge of the escarpment looking eastwards into Mozambique. We had a contact there and Aubrey Brooks from the Scouts liberated a top hat he found in a hut and promptly donned it, but that did not last long as one of our friendly forces in the sweep took a potshot at the black object moving through the bush and put a hole through it. I last saw Aubrey in shackles on TV when he was jailed after the abortive coup in the Seychelles in '81, with bluejob Chaz Goatley also involved in that escapade.

### Perry Childs HC

On my gypsy travels we got to be based at Mudzi for a while, near Benson Mine, where we had a contact after our fireforce got talked onto a group of terrs by a scouts OP. Perry Childs was leading in the



hospital in Mtoko, where he sadly died. Perry had also been wounded in the leg but kept going and took over as commander and deployed and controlled the callsigns like an old hand. Later we all landed on top of a large nearby granite koppie to wait out the sweep before pulling back to base. Perry is now retired from Qantas, living in Lorne in Australia and for his actions that day was awarded the Honoris Crux decoration.

### Family jewels

One morning we responded to a landmine incident and I was following Mike Borlace, a fearless Brit who went on to do some crazy stuff as well. On the way he stirred up some terrs he just happened to fly over and who were then prepared when I flew right over them. They opened up on us and to me it sounded like seat belts hitting the sides of the chopper, similar to an incident I had previously with skydivers letting the belts out into the slipstream. Percy Ferreira, my engineer, very quickly corrected my assumption as he had spotted the gooks lying against rocks and shooting at us. The sound of AK rounds when they are close are more like an old fashioned typewriter being tapped at a fast speed, a sound never to be forgotten. I called in the sighting and we continued with our mission. The next time I got shot at was when we were picking up a Scouts callsign in Mozambique and could not find them at the given grid-ref. We usually flew at tree

top height but I climbed up to about two thousand feet to make comms as we could not loiter for long due to fuel remaining, and shortly after this they starting talking us onto their pickup point. Next call from them was to be informed that we were being shot at, obviously way off the mark as we could not hear or see a thing, so the extraction was an anxious and hasty one. Another incident was a troeipie getting burnt around the family jewels, while on the thunderbox. One of the duties of the medic in camp was to sprinkle some sanitary powder down the longdrops, I guess for smell and/or flies – but he had run out of supplies and made up his own muti with allsorts, including some leftover Jet A1 fuel and petrol. The poor soldier lit up for a smoke while sitting on the throne and threw the match down the hatch, and got the whoosh of flame from the ignited fumes shooting past what little gap there was. Nasty stuff and I can only imagine what the BOI must have been like.

### Easter '76

On Easter weekend '76, terrorists ambushed tourist motorists and motor cyclists on the main road to Beit Bridge, which was a very disturbing development as it opened up a new front in the south east of the country, threatening the main supply line from SA. To counter this new escalation, we started operating out of the dirt strip at Rutenga, living in tents, but at least the beer was always cold. The local farmers were fabulous and it was not long before we had a hamburger hut set up for us, with the wives practically giving away some of the best grub around. Such was the spirit of the people. Not that army food was bad in the first place, it was certainly way better than the fare in South West Africa. Go figure. Those Rhodesians farmers were something else, they kept going when they were easy targets and cowardly landmines being planted on their farm roads. I will never forget wives with kid on hip and an Uzi slung over the other shoulder, what inner strength they had, what a support act to husbands that were also frequently away on service. Formidable pioneers, certainly no snowflakes there. (To be continued)



K-car with maj Mike Ainslie aboard as commander - our run in was slightly offline and got corrected by the OP when I happened to fly directly over the group, a sphincter tightening moment as we had not seen anything. Not long after pulling up into orbit Mike got shot and being badly wounded Perry landed to transfer him into another chopper to have him flown to

## Ex-SADF Veteran supports Operation BUSHFIRE ASSIST - Leut Will Singer RAN

**Albany, WA** - Ex-SADF infantryman and now Royal Australian Navy, Lieutenant Will Singer, knew that it was time to 'step-forward' when record-breaking temperatures fuelled a series of massive bushfires across Australia.

Will said that while on Christmas leave, he received a call to volunteer from Joint Operations Command (JOC) to provide direct support to the bushfire crisis as part of the Australian Defence Force's main effort.

"You never know what to expect - even after a deployment to Fiji to support Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations after the devastating effects of Cyclone Winston."

Will was posted to Keswick Barracks in Adelaide joining Joint Task Force 1111 supporting operations in South Australia and Tasmania.

"Reporting to the Task Force Commander-Brigadier Cantwell, my job was to lead the military camera teams and manage the



Leut Will Singer hunkers down with the Army on Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo Island which were interesting 'side-bars' to the effort."

"Being the only navy member embedded within the Australian Army took some rapid adjusting too—they conduct their business a little different to navy."

"Our spirited army working tirelessly with state authorities to re-open roads, restore essential services, remediate fences for livestock control and deliver food, water and fodder to the affected communities."

"Although parts of the island looked apocalyptic—I noticed green shoots surfacing among the scorched trees indicating signs of recovery and hope for the island community."

"It would be easy to think that the devastating bushfire season is finally over, the truth is that for many the pain is only just beginning."

About 4400 Australian Defence personnel including about 1100 reservists are provided direct support to the bushfire crisis.

### Background

**Leut Will Singer MBA, RAN, CMC** is an accomplished and multi-skilled Naval Officer with highly developed leadership and innovative skills, and with management experience honed over 30 years in private enterprise and the Australian Defence Force.

Will is an accredited Certified Management Consultant and an experienced knowledge leader, having worked for multinational companies across Australasia, Europe and Africa. He served in the South African Mechanised Infantry (3 SAI, 1 SAI and

61 Mech.) during the Angolan Bush War and has been commissioned as an Officer in the Royal Australian Navy.

Will has a Master's in Business Administration from the Edinburgh Business School (Heriot-Watt University) and contributes to military newspapers, financial journals, small-business media and business newspapers. He has also authored a book called *Profit Factory*.

Will is a Staff Officer with the Sea Power Centre Australia. He lives with his family – wife Cindy, son Liam and daughter Olivia – in Albany, Western Australia.



Leut Will Singer hands over the J09 Public Affairs rotation to Lt Tanalee Smith

public affairs operations in the Adelaide Hill and Kangaroo Island areas."

"I deployed into Kangaroo Island where sadly two people and thousands of animals were killed when flames devastated the island."

"There was a lot going on with local and international media interested in the progress of Defence's recovery efforts on the island."

"The battle-rhythm was pretty high with the media wanting a piece of the action while mitigating potential public affairs incidents at the same time."

"I had to organise the production of Animal Planet and a Bushfire Concert on

### Army Museum Sunset Concert 2020



Veterans Roy Chase, Slade Healy, Andre Rix and Garth Pienaar had a great evening at the Army Museum Sunset Concert on Sunday, 08 March 2020 and as always the massed pipes and drums were spectacular.



## The Comrades Marathon - The Living WW1 Memorial - Proudly South African

*In this issue we look at the history of the Comrades Marathon. It's impressive to say the least. Just about every South African, wherever you may find yourself, will know of this event but the history and it's origin, very few I dare say. This year will mark the 99th Comrades Marathon but whether it will take place remains to be seen.*

*Now, most of us national service men and especially those from the parachute battalion in Bloemfontein will know who 'Tannie Mossie' is and what she did for those paratroopers 'dienspligtiges' who set off for a tour of border duty. Her real name is Joan Abrahams and she compiled the history of the Comrades Marathon which we will share with you in this issue of the Western Front. Joan has done a lot for the 'boys in uniform' and next month we will take a closer look her. Here is her story....*

Since 1921 South African soldiers and veterans have commemorated and still commemorate the fallen of World War One and other wars, in different ways as well as differently to many other Allies and nations. The Comrades Marathon being a prime example.

The Comrades Marathon is a race of 89 kilometers and was run for the first time in 1921 with 34 veterans participating. By the year 2000, 24000 participants entered in what is today known as the world's toughest ultra-marathon, the Ultimate Race.

The WWI veteran who originally thought of the race was Private No 487, Victor Clapham. He had fought and marched 1700 miles across the Savannahs in the East African Campaign while serving in the 8th South African Infantry. As a result of

While the South African soldiers who were known as Springboks were fighting in East Africa other South Africans fought in Europe. In France after the Battle of Delville Wood where the Springboks suffered severely, Colonel Thackery included the following in his report to Brig.-General Tim Lukin:

*"Runners were the only means of communication left and they were more often killed than able to get through. I know of eight who were killed. The few messages that got through took hours. A very large number of runners are required."*

Major Heal also reported on 08 August 1916 about a runner during the battle of Delville Wood:

*"Can you see that boy in 'D'? He was sent back with an urgent message, badly wounded and realised he couldn't last out. He crawled back and handed the message all blood-stained to the officer with: 'I'm sorry, Sir, but I couldn't get through with it,' and fell dead".*

Vic Clapham was determined to honour the Fallen by remembering them in a unique way. He persevered with his idea of testing and overcoming individual frailties and problems by suggesting a marathon race. The race was named the Comrades Marathon as a result of the way in which it had started.

The comrades of the Durban Light Infantry and the Royal Natal Carbineers in Pietermaritzburg felt the need of a reunion after they returned from WWI. As a challenge and with much encouragement from Vic Clapham they threw the gauntlet down and challenged each other to a race. For a number of years the marathon races ended alternatively at each of the two respective drill halls.

The first Comrades Marathon race in 1921 was a 'down run,' (Pietermaritzburg to Durban). 34 Veterans of WW1 participated.

Originally, the race was run on the 24th of May - the birth dates of both General Jan C Smuts (the commander under whom



Private Vic Clapham

Private Vic Clapham had personally fought in East Africa) and General Tim Lukin (the Commanding Officer of the South African Forces that had fought and suffered in Delville Wood and Europe). May 24 was also officially known as Empire Day.



Arthur Newton was the greatest ultra-marathon runner of his time.

In 1922 Arthur 'Greatheart' Newton won the Comrades Marathon. He won this ultra-marathon on a total of four occasions between the years 1922 to 1927. No wonder he was nicknamed 'Greatheart'. He was also a veteran of WWI having served in the Natal Light Horse as a dispatch rider. While running the Comrades, he had much time to remember his comrades and experiences during the Great War.



A copper medal, named the 'Vic Clapham Medal' is awarded to runner who complete the race in 11 to 12 hours.

contracting Blackwater Fever, Dysentery and Malaria, Private Clapham was sent back to South Africa and was boarded in 1917. His memories of death, suffering and camaraderie spurred him on to think of a way of remembering his buddies, their sacrifices and service.

## The Comrades Marathon (Continues)

Arthur Newton died in 1957 but his ghost is said to be resting at 'Arthur's Seat'. This 'seat' is literally a 'hole' that has been cut out of the embankment about half way through the race, close to Drummond and about 150 meters from the Wall of Honour. 'Arthur's Seat' is reputed to have been a favourite resting spot of Arthur 'Greatheart' Newton.



Arthur's Seat

Tradition has it that runners who pay their respect at this spot by stopping, placing a flower at the spot, doffing their peaks and greeting Arthur's spirit with, "Good morning, Sir," would most likely enjoy a good second half of the race. The tradition is so strong with runners in-the-know that in 2011, with the up-run when the red poppy of remembrance appeared on the number patches of the athletes, a refreshment table close to 'Arthur's Seat' handed out red roses to the runners for that specific purpose. (Red Flanders poppies do not flower in South Africa at that time).

In 1922 the age limit for participation was set at 18 years, the same age requirement for enlistment during WWI.

Vic Clapham became known as the 'Father of the Comrades' and organized the race annually until 1938. To honour his memory, the Vic Clapham medal was introduced and is awarded to all runners who finish the race between 11 and 12 hours. The symbolism being that the guns of WWI stopped firing at 11:00 on the 11th of the 11th month 1918. Vic Clapham was also responsible for establishing 15 MOTH (Members of the Order of Tin Hats) shell holes (meeting places) after WWII and was in charge of the MOTH museum at the Warriors Gate, Durban.



The direction in which the Comrades Marathon is run alternates each year. The 'up run' starts from Durban and the 'down run' starts from Pietermaritzburg but no matter in which direction the race is run, the race starts after the public clock in the tower of the City Hall in question, strikes the hour and the Westminster Chime. Since 1948 the sound of Max Trimboune's imitation of a cock crowing has also been introduced at the start. The Westminster Chime and hour stroke is the same chime that starts the international observance of the 2 Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance at 11:00 on Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, annually on 11 November.

Many South Africans who had run the Comrades in memory of the fallen of WWI, joined the fighting forces during WWII. Some survived to participate again after the war but two previous winners did not. Frank Sutton had won the Comrades Marathon in 1928. He volunteered for active service during WWII and fell on 29 November 1942. His name is recorded on the stone memorial at El Alamein and hopefully he is also remembered by others who participate in the 'living memorial' to the fallen Springboks.



Phil Masterson-Smith wearing no. 45  
Comrades 1931

Phil Masterson-Smith was another champion who lost his life in WWII. He had won the Comrades in 1931 at 19 years of age. The record of being the youngest winner of the Comrades Marathon is still recorded against his name. Today the minimum age requirement is 20 years in the year of the race. Phil Masterson-Smith volunteered for active service with the Royal Natal Carbineers. He lost his life on 5 June 1942 at the Battle of El Alamein.

The Comrades Marathon was not run during WWII (1941 – 1945) but some returning veterans who had run the race before the war returned to run the Comrades race after the war. They ran in memory of their buddies who had fallen in WWII. Bill

Cochrane was the champion of the 1935 Comrades Marathon. He joined the South African fighting forces as a gunner in WWII. Bill was captured in the Western Desert and landed up in a prisoner-of-war camp for the rest of the war. While imprisoned he resolved that if he survived the war, he would re-run the Comrades which he did with great success. He won the 1946 race and ironically ran past the Oribi prisoner-of-war camp near Pietermaritzburg where the Italian POW's watched him pass. They were waiting to be repatriated.

In 2012 Anthony Clapham, great grandson of Vic Clapham (the 'Father of the Comrades Marathon'), successfully completed the race and won the Vic Clapham medal. Anthony Clapham ran the Comrades as a "red-socker". The "Red Sock Friday Movement" is a global social community that celebrates the companionship and endurance experienced by friends who were POW (prisoners of war) escapes in Italy during WWII.

*"My inspiration to run the Comrades initially was in memory of my great grandfather Vic Clapham" - Anthony Clapham*



1930 - Wally holding the Comrades winner's trophy.

The great Wally Hayward was another Comrades Marathon champion who fought during WWII. He returned from the front as a decorated veteran and went on to win the Comrades on five occasions.

Wally was one of the greatest Comrades Marathon runners. His seven medals included five wins, three of them record

breaking runs. He had a remarkable Comrades career spanning 60 years. Wally remains the oldest person ever to finish the race.

He passed away on 29 April 2006. Since 2007 the Wally Hayward medal is awarded to those who do not finish in the top 10, yet complete the race within six hours.



Another WWI tradition that was observed until 2003 was that of the cut-off time. Before 2003 it had been 11 hours because the guns of WWI stopped firing at 11:00 on 11th day, of the 11 month, (November) but now a new tradition has been included. A cannon shot is fired at the start of the race. This tradition is most appropriate because the guns of the 73 Siege Battery, South African Heavy Artillery held the record for the cannon in WWI with the fastest firing rate. The record was thirty-two rounds in eight minutes with each gun.

In 1974 Black South Africans were allowed to compete officially for the first time. Many having up to then participated unofficially. Many Black soldiers had fought and died in WWI. The sinking of the S.S. Mendi with the heavy loss of life incurred being a case in question.

In 1975 when the Comrades celebrated its Golden Jubilee women were also allowed to enter for the first time. It was as if the organizers remembered that women had done military service in uniform during WWI especially as nurses and ambulance drivers. Up to 1975 the few ladies who

had run the Comrades Marathon had done so unofficially.

At the turn of the century in the year 2000; 24,000 participants from all over the world, entered to run the Comrades Marathon in what is today known as the world's largest and toughest ultramarathon. Each runner sported on their official number patch, the red poppy of remembrance. Hopefully they knew that he or she was participating in a race that is part of a Living Memorial to the South African soldiers (Springboks) who fought in World War One.

In 2009, Chris Mann, honorary Professor of poetry at Rhodes University, wrote the following tribute to Vic Clapham:

### *In memoriam Victor Clapham*

*Well Vic. I wonder what you'd make of this.  
I mean the flag-hung square, the jostling crowds,  
A helicopter clattering through the dark.  
Runners in their thousands, massed down the street  
And someone famous being interviewed  
In a bright white glare on the steps of City Hall.*

*I wish you could be here, right here with us  
Dressed in your baggy shorts and tennis shoes  
Smelling the wintergreen, the nervous sweat  
And feeling strange pricklings in your skin  
As speakers boom the anthem down the street  
That lifts the day from normal into epic time.*

*Look at the scaffolding, the tents, the bins,  
The marshals with clipboards and yellow bibs.  
They do this for nothing, year after year  
It's a bit like the Olympics now  
All sorts of money-scheming hangers-on  
But still, somehow decency on a podium.*

*Isn't it much, much bigger than you thought?  
At times I wondered what was in your mind  
When back home from the war to end all wars  
You'd sit in the hot steel cab of your train  
Swabbing your neck and chest with cotton waste  
And slowly swigging a bottle of cold sweet tea.*

*Tell me, didn't it churn you up inside?  
Watching each day across the shunting yard*

*The salesmen on the platform in white shirts  
The women in high-heels and fancy hats  
Saying good-bye with a kiss and a wave  
As if their dads and uncles hadn't died at all?*

*Didn't you really hate it when young blokes  
With slicked-back hair in the Railway's Hotel  
Would turn away from you, beer-mug in hand  
And switch the talk to Saturday's races  
The moment you even mentioned the war*



To remember that the guns of WW1 stopped firing at 11:00 on the 11th of the 11th month, the red Flinders poppy of Remembrance was displayed on the official number worn by each participant in 2011.

*And passing round the hat for a memorial?*

*That must have got to you, as if your pals  
Who'd marched their youth along the street  
In rows and rows of boots and bayonets  
On their way north to mud and death in France  
Weren't even worth a few words in a bar.  
Is that why you dreamed us into this marathon?*

*Well Vic, each year, out of that dream emerge  
Not just the rugby types you started with  
That group of balding friends in boxing vests  
Trotting off down a farm road with a laugh  
But men and women of all sorts and shapes  
The black, the blond, the bronze of our humanity.*

*Does hope, a marathon of hope like this  
You make me ask, remind the heart of grace  
Look Vic at what you got going with pride  
A huge jostling ritual of human decency  
Whose athletes set off down a cheering street  
Then toil across the landscape of South Africa.  
(Chris Mann)*

-o0o-



## Nuwe R3-geweer vir Kommando's



Die eerste R3 is onlangs deur maj R. J. Smith, SM, namens die Direkteur Tegniese Dienste aan It-genl W. P. Louw, SM, Hoof van die Leër, oorhandig. Hierdie eer het maj Smith te beurt geval omdat hy die offisier was wat die verbouing van die R1 na die R3 onder beheer van Direkteur Tegniese Dienste ontwikkel het.

**H**IER is goeie nuus vir die Kommando's. Die R3 is nou gereed om aan Kommando's uitgereik te word om die ou 303-gewere te vervang.

Die R3 is 'n verbouing van die R1. Die nuwe geweer is 'n selflaai-enkelskoot-wapen, terwyl die R1 natuurlik van enkelskote na die vuur van sarsies verstel kan word deur 'n geringe meganiese verandering. Die R3 is nie veranderbaar nie en dus slegs tot enkelskote beperk.

Vir maklike uitkenning is die R3 wat aan Kommando's uitgereik gaan word, se stelknip blou geverf. Op die oog af lyk dit R1 en die R3 origins egter eners.

Toe die eerste R3 geweer onlangs aan die Hoof van die Leër, It-genl W. P. Louw, SM, oorhandig is, het hy aangekondig dat die R3 eerste uitgereik sal word aan dié Kommando's wat daarin slaag om op eie inisiatief veilige bewaarkluise vir hulle gewere te bekom. Plaaslike owerhede of ander instansies kan dus hulle Kommando behulpsaam wees om spoedig hierdie pragtige gewere te bekom deur te help met die daarstelling van die voorgeskrewe bewaargewere.

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## Surviving Traditionally

**T**HE scribe of a newsletter sent regularly to old gunners of a wartime regiment of artillery has been preoccupied lately with the problems of guerilla warfare (aren't we all!).

He's got round to comparing guerilla fighters with mosquitoes that attack you in bed at night.

"He's a small target. Flay at him with your hands and you'll rarely hit him. Switch on the light and you'll attract more mosquitoes. Cover up and you'll still expose your face. He descends, takes his blood when you eventually fall asleep, irritated and exhausted, and then another mosquito continues with the same plan the next night and the next."

As the writer says, guerillas don't win battles but they cause their enemies to lose the war.

So what to do?

Our scribe offers no suggestions but he does quote the following standing orders formulated in 1759 by Major Robert Roger who commanded Roger's Rangers, a frontier force in North America at that time:

- (1) Don't forget nothing.
- (2) Have your musket clean as a whistle, hatchet scoured, 60 rounds powder and ball and be ready to march at a minute's warning.
- (3) When you're on the march act the way you would if you was sneaking up on a deer. See the enemy first.
- (4) Tell the truth what you see and what you do. There is an army depending on us for correct information. You can lie all you please when you tell the other folks about the Rangers, but don't ever lie to a Ranger or officer.
- (5) Don't never take a chance you don't have to.

(6) When we're on the march we march single file far enough apart so one shot can't get through two men.

(7) If we strike swamps or soft ground we spread out abreast so it's hard to track us.

(8) When we march we keep moving till dark so as to give the enemy the least possible chance at us.

(9) When we camp half the party stays awake while the other half sleeps.

(10) If we take prisoners we keep 'em separate till we have had time to examine them so they can't cook up a story between them.

(11) Don't ever march the same way home. Take a different route so you won't be ambushed.

(12) No matter whether we travel in big parties or in little ones each party has to keep a scout 20 yards

ahead, 20 yards on each flank and 20 yards in the rear so that the main body can't be surprised and wiped out.

(13) Every night you'll be told where to meet if surrounded by a superior force.

(14) Don't sit down to eat without posting sentries.

(15) Don't sleep beyond dawn. Dawn's when the French and Indians attack.

(16) Don't cross a river by a regular ford.

(17) If somebody's trailing you, make a circle, come back on to your own tracks and ambush the folks who aim to ambush you.

(18) Don't stand up when the enemy's coming against you. Kneel down, lie down, hide behind a tree.

(19) Let the enemy come till he's almost close enough to touch. Then let him have it and jump out and finish him with your hatchet.

All border fighters (except guerillas!) please note.

# THE GALIL

by Irvin Cohen  
(Article in BATTLE)

**WHEN** Israel Military Industries took the wraps off its 5,56 mm Galil assault rifle, it was upon the remarkable weapon's sole apparently unmilitary feature that the headlines seemed to concentrate—the now-famous bottle-opener. True, it DOES open bottles (and in the Israeli Army context that means those with non-alcoholic contents) but that is not in itself the quality which a growing number of foreign customers are queuing for — if indeed the order has been accepted in the first place.

The very morning of my visit to the IMI plant where the Galil is made, the company regretfully declined an export order for several thousand; priority for the present must go to supplying the large numbers required by Israel's own forces. One country that will be receiving the weapon is Britain, which has ordered a small number for evaluation.

## VERSATILE

It is not difficult to see why the rifle is in such demand. The Galil is highly versatile, accurate, extremely reliable under the most punishing conditions, and embodies excellent "human engineering". It has been designed to serve as the basic weapon of the infantry squad, replacing weapons which now fulfil the separate functions of sub-machine-gun, automatic rifle and light machine-gun. Because of its ability to fire a range of anti-tank and anti-personnel grenades without conversion, it also to some extent replaces heavier weapons, such as the two-inch mortar and the rocket launcher.

The Galil has only recently been reaching Israeli units in quantity. "Production is just getting into gear," said Ya'acov Lior, the 54-year-old managing director of IMI's arms manufacturing division and deputy director general of the state-owned corporation, which makes almost all of Israel's home-produced arms and ammunition.

It was in 1968 that the Israeli General Staff issued a requirement

for a new multi-purpose rifle. At that time the Israeli infantry and paratroops were principally equipped with the FN 7,62 mm rifle, the FN light machine-gun of the same calibre, and the 9 mm Uzi sub-machine-gun — the weapon that first put IMI, known locally by the Hebrew Ta'as, on the international armaments map. There was a great deal of comparative testing and consideration of alternatives, and at one stage the decision was almost taken to adopt the US M16. But it was thought not to have the required versatility.

The Galil is the creation of two men — Israel Galili, Lior's 51-year-old head of development, credited with the design or improvement of 37 weapons, and Lior himself; the weapon's name derives from a compound of their surnames. They would work into the night on the design, suggesting innovations and ironing out problems.

## THE AK-47

Some features were inspired by the Soviet AK-47 Kalashnikov, a large number of which had fallen into Israeli hands during the 1967 Six-Day War and have since been introduced into local service. "We took ideas from the Kalashnikov, more than from any other weapon, and we are not ashamed of it," said a senior official. "At the time it was the best rifle in the world and everyone acknowledged this, not least the Americans in Vietnam, who preferred it over their own M16. There is no such thing as a totally original weapon." Development spanned five years, and incorporated extensive field trials.

The standard Galil is a gas-operated weapon with folding stock, bipod and carrying handle; it weighs 4,3 kg without ammunition, which comes in arch-shaped magazines holding either 35 or 50 rounds. Automatic fire is at a rate of 650 rounds a minute, maximum effective range is 600 metres and muzzle velocity is 980 m/sec. Main attraction of the 5,56 mm round over the 7,62 mm, apart from its high lethality, is lower weight (less than half), which means greater magazine capacity and enables more spare ammunition to be carried.

Design features provide a unique combination of simplicity, reliability and safety. There are only 105 parts, compared with the M16's 162. For field cleaning it strips down to six parts without use of tools. Overall length is 97 cm, or 74 cm with stock folded. A spring-loaded mechanism locks the skeletal metal stock into the extended position. A fixed stock, in wood or plastics, is available as an

**CARRIED** by the handle, the new Israeli Galil has a slight sideward tilt so that it does not get into the soldier's way. But this is by far not the most unusual feature of the new rifle. This "honour" is reserved for the notch in the frame at the near end of the foregrip. It is in fact a **BOTTLE OPENER** — for soft drinks! The article explains why it is there.

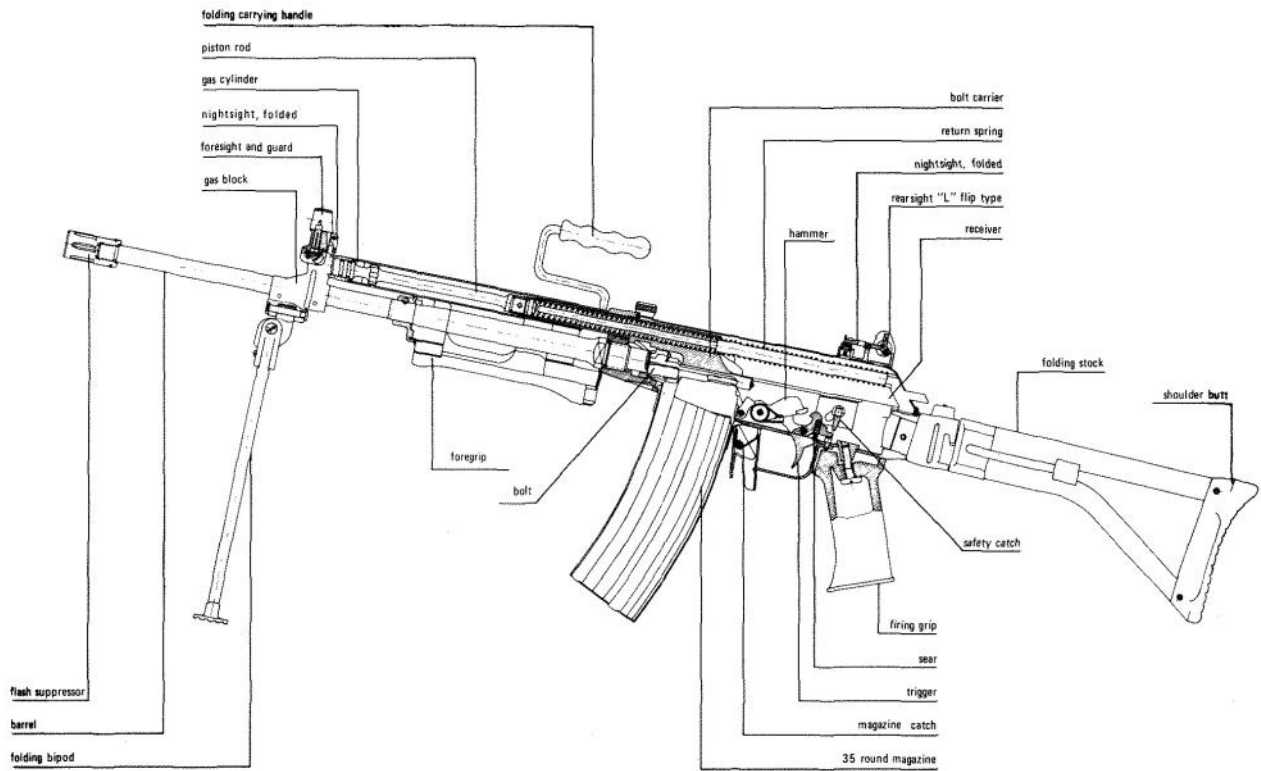
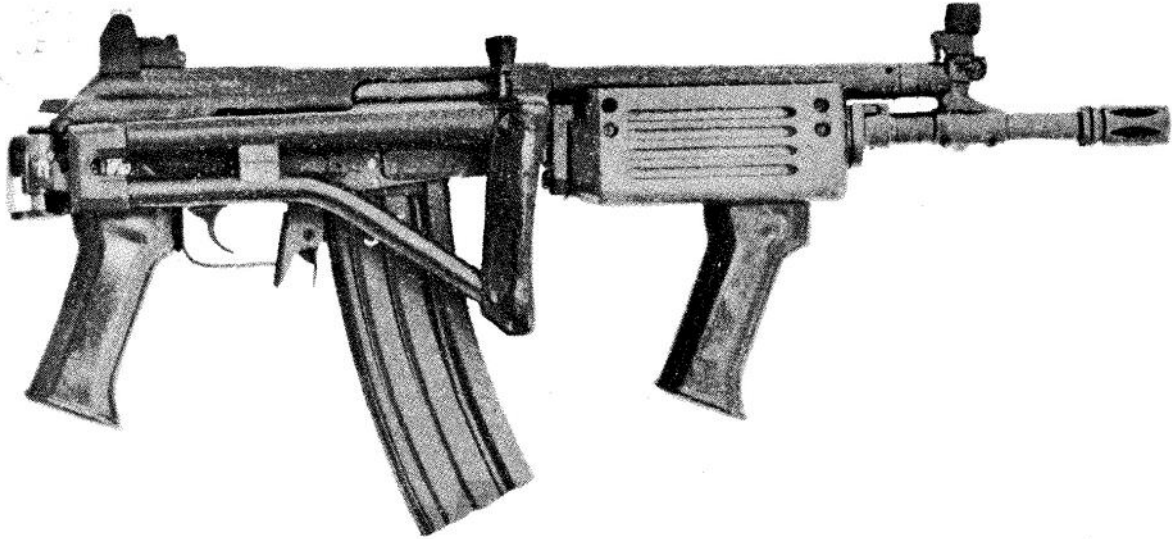
option. Operationally, the stock would be folded for use in the assault role, and extended when required for rifle or light machine-gun use with bipod down. Flat-trajectory — that is, anti-tank — grenades are fired from the shoulder or hip, and the anti-personnel variety or flares with stock resting on the ground.

## "COOK-OFF"

Low operating temperatures in breech and barrel avoid overheating, enabling prolonged fire without jamming or "cook-off" — a round going off in the chamber without the trigger being pulled, due to a build-up of breech temperature. Waste gases from the firing chamber blow back and remove dirt from the moving parts, the secret of the Galil's reliability after exposure to sand, mud or water. Demonstrating this point when the weapon was officially unveiled in spring last year, Galili fired hundreds of rounds from a Galil which had first been buried in sand then immersed in water. (For good measure he also jumped up and down on it with his not inconsiderable weight; it emerged unmarked.) Test weapons have fired more than 12 000 rounds without stoppage or component failure.

The rifle is built to withstand the shock of dropping and the effects of prolonged jolting, so that accidental discharge cannot occur under those conditions. Setting the three-position selector to "safe" blocks the trigger but the limited bolt movement allowed permits checking that the chamber is empty, either visually or with a fingertip.

Three sights fitted as standard are foresight, set at 100 metres; flip-type rearsight set for 300 and 500 metres; and folding fluorescent nightsights set for 100 metres. The flash-suppressor, apart from also reducing recoil, serves as a mounting for grenades and bayonet. Elimination of adapters saves precious seconds in combat. Grenades



- TOP: The Galil, with stock folded.
- MIDDLE: A diagram of all components.
- BOTTOM: The bottle opener! No Israeli soldier likes going to war without his adequate supply of soft drinks. To prevent him from abusing magazine lips, flash-suppressor or other components, the design incorporates this novel bottle opener.



# THE GALIL

are fired with ballistic cartridges housed in an instantly identifiable 12-round magazine, another safety feature which considerably reduces the dangerous possibility of standard ammunition being used. The light but sturdy bipod fulfils two other functions in addition to its main one of providing support when the rifle is used in the light machine-gun role. It serves also as a wire cutter, and when closed the feet act as a guiding channel for rapid insertion of the magazine at night.

## TILT

Carried by the handle, the weapon has a slight sideward tilt so that it does not get in the soldier's way, even with the bipod unfolded. We now come to that bottle-opener, and it is not so unmilitary after all. Installed to dissuade the troops from damaging magazine lips, flash-suppressor or other components, it is notched into the frame at the near end of the foregrip. Magazine lips are reinforced all the same, to withstand dropping or mishandling. Cocking handle, fire selector and magazine catch can be operated from either side, catering for the minority of left-handers in every army.

The Galil is also available in SAR (short assault rifle) version, intended for special forces and police duty. The barrel is shortened from 46 cm to 33 cm, bipod and carrying handle are deleted, and a pistol foregrip is optional. Weight is reduced to 3,5 kg, range is reduced to 400 metres and rate of fire slightly to 620 rounds a minute. There could be a big market for the SAR version, particularly among the 50 or so countries that have bought the Uzi and now seek a 5,56 mm sub-machine-gun which retains the essential features of the standard model, including grenade-firing ability.

Optional extras, in addition to those already mentioned, include telescopic sight, bayonet, carrying sling, and adapter for automatic firing of training blanks. While versatility and performance place the Galil ahead of other 5,56 mm weapons into something of a class by itself, IMI has been anxious not to price it out of the market and on export contracts it is expected to be competitive with the M16. Thousands of the M16 were, incidentally, introduced into Israeli service temporarily to fill the pressing need for large numbers of 5,56 mm rifles while Galil production was built up.

## LABORATORIES

Lior's division is one of several into which IMI operations are split. Others cover manufacture of ammunition, explosives, and spare parts. The development division includes central laboratories for research and quality control. Production in the 20 or so factories is now five times greater than in 1967, with output estimated to be worth around £60 million, 20 to 25 per cent of which is exported.

The factory where the Galil is produced is the most important in the arms manufacturing division, and it is doubtful whether another arms plant exists in which so many diverse weapons are produced in such a compact, not to say cramped, area. A stroll with Lior through the machinery-packed shops showed, in addition to the Galil, production of 105 mm tank guns, 106 mm recoils rifles, 30 mm Defa aircraft cannon, Uzis and the last few FN's of the bilateral licensing deal that gave IMI the right to make the Belgian weapon in exchange for permission to manufacture the Uzi in Belgium. The 105 mm barrels arrive from what must still be referred to as "abroad" — a security-inspired euphemism which fools nobody — as heat-treated and rough-bored tubes, with the precision work remaining to be done.

## REBORED

In one corner Soviet 100 mm barrels were being cut and rebored to provide a sleeve for the 105 mm gun mounted by the Ordnance Corps on T54/T55 tanks captured in the October War, the same procedure having been used in the conversion programme for tanks of the series taken in 1967. The 105 mm and the 30 mm cannon represent the main strands of Israel's armament standardisation policy for tanks and aircraft respectively.

Uzi production, now into its third decade, is almost entirely for export. The wooden-stock version is no longer produced, but could be reinstated to meet a particular order.

Basis of much of IMI's production is still on the US Second-World-War machinery purchased at knock-down prices both before and after Israel achieved independence in 1948, since augmented by modern plant. Both old and new is subject to modification by IMI engineers and wherever possible tied into an automated pattern. Although a state corporation under the wing of the Defence Ministry, IMI has to stand on its own feet and in-

vestment must come out of profits. Hard-headed attitudes prevail. Expansion has generally been based on existing factories rather than new building, and specialised items requiring facilities that would be costly in terms of acquisition and manpower for the run required are farmed out. Much component manufacture is subcontracted to local industry and sometimes parts are bought from abroad. Running IMI is not made any easier by the fact that workers — originating from 35 countries — are subject to military call-up.

Lior, who has now headed the arms division for 16 years, joined the embryo weapons industry in 1941, when factories were literally underground and all operations were carried out under constant threat of discovery by the British Mandatory authorities. He speaks nostalgically of the pre-state "old days", and of the elaborate "covers" contrived to conceal the then-illegal activity, which encompassed manufacture of Stens, 2-inch and 3-inch mortars, and a range of ammunition including shells, grenades and bullets. When the authorities finally located one arms dump, in a kibbutz settlement, they were amazed at the quality of the weapons and refused to believe they were locally produced. Only one or two workshops were ever discovered.

## SELF-SUFFICIENT

IMI has come a long way since then. Range — and in some cases scale — of production now exceeds that of most other national defence industries. Israel has long been virtually self-sufficient in ammunition of all kinds for the land, sea and air forces, an achievement which involves making several hundred varieties ranging from bombs and rockets to the Galil's 5,56 mm rounds. Significant progress is being made towards self-sufficiency in weapons; the aim is to have 75 per cent home production by 1977. Many new or improved products are under development by IMI, some in association with Rafael, the armament development authority.

Meanwhile the Galil seems certain to emulate or even exceed the Uzi's success in world markets. Demand is such that, as with the Uzi, licence production abroad must be on the cards. As for the immediate future at home, IMI is prepared for new requirements following conclusions drawn since the October War. "We will be able to do whatever is required of us," said Lior. ●

## The Story of a little dog called Smokey

*There are many stories of pets in the military whether they be domesticated or wild. Some are proper mascots whilst many others are innocent victims of war and then adopted by soldiers once found in a state of fear and perhaps near death. Each has its own unique story. These adopted animals gave the soldiers hope and something to look out and care for. In a sense it was good therapy for many during their tenure in the military. There were many such animals with the soldiers on the border and in Angola as well. The recce's had their lion, other units had their monkeys, deer, cats, dogs etc. Western Front would like to hear of such stories, so veterans, please think back and let us have your recollections and stories to share with the rest of us. If you have photos the better - Editor.*

*Here is the story of one such animal, a small dog called Smokey.....*

**Elva Marie, FB** - Smokey was found in a foxhole in New Guinea in Feb 1944. The American thought she must have been a Japanese soldier's dog, but when he took her to a POW camp, they found out she didn't understand commands in Japanese or English. The soldier sold Smokey to Cpl William Wynne of Cleveland OH for 2 dollars Australian.

Over the next two years Wynne carried Smokey in his backpack, fought in the jungles of Rock Island and New Guinea, flew 12 air/sea rescue, She survived 150 air raids on New Guinea and made it through a typhoon at Okinawa, made a combat jump in Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, in a parachute made for her. She would warn G.I.'s of incoming artillery and was dubbed the "angel from a foxhole." Early in retaking the Philippines combat engineers were setting up a telegraph line to an airfield. The joints collapsed filling them in with sand. Cpl. Wynne knew that Smokey could climb through the pipe with a new line and that is what she did.

Smoky's work saved approximately 250 ground crewmen from having to move around and keep operational 40 fighters and reconnaissance planes, while a construction detail dug up the taxiway, placing the men and the planes in danger from enemy bombings. What would have been a dangerous three-day digging task to place the wire was instead completed in minutes.

In her down time she performed tricks with the Special Services to improve the moral of the troops and visited hospitals in Australia and Korea. Visiting with the sick and wounded, she became the first recorded "therapy dog". After the war she became a sensation back in the states, had a live TV show, and often visited Veterans hospitals. Smoky's work as a therapy dog continued for 12 years. Wynne had Smokey 14 years before she passed away. He buried her in a 30 caliber ammo box in Rocky River Reservation, Ohio.

Smokey, the smallest war hero weighing in at 4 lbs even and standing 7 inches tall.

-oOo-

**For old time's sake....who remembers? - with Veteran Ian Cocker**



**Pamwe Chete - 'We Are Together'**



For old times sake....who remembers? - with Veteran Garth Pienaar



-oOo-

Editorial Shrapnel



Rare photo of the 1940 Tour de France



## My Corporal - Veteran Ben Opperman

**Wonderboom Military Base 1975** - Reading Veteran John Niemeyer's account of corporal Cherie had me involuntarily think back to a corporal we had at Wonderboom military base. Corporal Bakkel (or Buckle, memory fails me) he was. Now corporal Bakkel had a bout of polio as a child which rendered him with disformed pelvis and legs, both short but one significantly shorter causing him to limp quite badly. His upper body was normal and had it not been for the polio he would have been a giant of a man, muscular and well built. But that was not the case. Corporal Bakkel had a bad temper with a very short fuse. His disability seemed to make things worse. But he had a booming voice that carried far, the right thing for a corporal. He wasn't an instructor or anything but he sort of kept the discipline around the base, the mess hall, the tented quarters and so forth. He worked in the city like the rest of us but back in camp he had other responsibilities.

His long arms – they seemed much longer with his deformed lower half – seemed to dangle from his broad shoulders and when he moved around he had this awkward but funny moves and to make things worse was his arms swinging around helping to propel him. At normal pace it was hard not to snigger but when he got riled by some irresponsible *troep* and picked up speed all would fall apart. There would be no stopping laughing as long as you manage to keep out of harm's way. His effort to move would be accompanied by his loud voice. Everybody around the base would know *kop'raal* Bakkel was on war footing and it was best to keep out of his way!

But apart for his physical shortcomings *kop'raal* Bakkel was a good guy who would most of the time play along with the other *troepe* and provide much laughter and so on. I pitied the odd *troep* he managed to lay his hands on though. One had to eat and sleep and that would be the time for him to hobble up to you for a bit of reckoning.

I don't know what happened to corporal Bakkel. We cleared out the same time. He was going to civvie street and I was off to Natal Command in Durban for another year. I can only trust he is well and still with us.

### 😊 **How to make your Editor happy** 😊

- Please submit something with a military slant, anything.....no really!
- Please send text in a Word document
- Please send photos as separate JPEG's at high resolution
- Please do not embed your photos/images in a word document
- Please do not send me links to online services
- Last but not least – ALL errors of whatsoever kind in the Newsletter are SOLELY the fault of your humble Editor. So if you find an error – give yourself a pat on the back...!

## Veteran Slade Healy - In Memory of.....

**Chittering, WA** - Veteran Slade Healy paid tribute to the memory of two of our friends on ANZAC Day in his special own way by planting a unique tree for each of them on his property in Chittering. We are no strangers to his property as many an '*Afrika-braai*' had been enjoyed there with many to come.

Tim's tree was a small offshoot from a Curry tree in his garden some time ago. He potted it and it has grown well. "Appropriate I thought as he loved his curry and was a Durban boy. Lest we forget."

Riaan's tree, him being an ex-intelligence guy, is a 'mag-nie-sien-nie-boom' but has an appropriate link to Africa. "One of the big poles in the boma wil also be named after him as he organised them. Lest we forget."

The 'throne' that Tim carved from an old tree trunk with his chainsaw middle of last year will also take its rightful place in the boma which is not quite finished yet. Maybe, just maybe, some of us boys should go there and lend a hand to finish it and for a bit of a '*daknatmaak-braai*'.....the sooner the better I reckon.....



**Graham du Toit** - An Aermacchi AM - 3CM 'Bosbok' Serial No 920 parked in a shona near Xangongo during Ops Protea. The pilot, Captain Daniel Laubscher won the HC flying this aircraft when he knocked out a Soviet ZA-23-2 anti - aircraft gun being used by FAPLA troops in the ground role using his 68mm SNEB smoke marker rockets after an artillery and air strike failed to neutralise this weapon. One of his rockets hit the enemy gunner in the chest. This particular aircraft now flies for the SAAF Museum Flight and still remains in its original bush war configuration, complete with 68mm rocket pods. A unique piece of history preserved.

Looking back - Wynand du Toit's visit 2017



Humour in Uniform



Guess who? Raai Wie?



Veterans Garth Pienaar and Wynand du Toit