

# Standing up for prisoners of war

**CHARLES** Edwards, 93, is the last man standing.

The sole Victorian survivor of Don Company, 2/19th Battalion, 8th Division, 2nd AIF.

For 1301 days, he was prisoner of war of the Japanese. That's when he met Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop.

"It was 1944 at Camp Ramuang and I saw this very tall Australian officer talking to a little Japanese bloke -- quite firmly."

Charles and Weary worked together on the infamous Burma-Thailand railway where the doctor became a legend, working to save wounded and sick men and putting his life at risk by standing up to the brutality of their captors.

Charles, with his Vietnam veteran mate Ross Smith, called by Weary's statue in St Kilda Rd to say hello to the PoW legend.

They'll be back again at the statue at 1 am on Tuesday, July 12 -- Weary's birthday -- for a wreath-laying ceremony and the launch of an appeal to raise \$200,000 for medical research by young doctors through the Sir Edward Dunlop Medical Research Foundation.

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Cheeky Charles' joke on Japanese

CHARLES Edwards, still fit and chipper and blessed with a remarkable memory, reckons he's still here because of the work done among the PoWs by the 43 doctors whose names are engraved on the steps leading to the statue.

But Pte Edwards, typically Australian, may also be worth a statue one day.



Ex-POW Charles Edwards visits Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop's statue. Picture: Craig Borrow Herald Sun

At one stage, the Japanese forced him to sign a paper promising he wouldn't try to escape.

"So I signed it: 'Ked Nelly'."

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A-blast from private's past

APART from surviving 42 weeks on the death railway at Hellfire Pass, Charles is one of the very few men alive who knows what it is like to be close to an exploding atomic bomb.

He was originally a baker from Wagga Wagga when he joined the 2/19th with the men of the Riverina.

Pte Edwards was taken prisoner at Parit Sulong on January 22, 1942 -- among the first Australians to become captive before the fall of Singapore.

After surviving Hellfire Pass, he was shipped to Japan where he was put to work in a kitchen that fed other PoWs working at a coal mine near Hiroshima.

He can remember the time and date precisely: "It was 0815 hours and 17 seconds on August 6, 1945 and I was working with my mate Bert Kelly.

"There was this bright silver light and I thought I had died. There was a kind of halo around Bert's head.

"We went outside and we were hit by a wave of hot air and then we saw this dirty big cloud rising in the distance."

Charles Edwards now lives peacefully in a retirement village in Donvale.

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Donate to Weary foundation

IF you'd like to commemorate Weary -- and his rare breed of men -- send your donations to the Sir Edward Dunlop Medical Research Foundation, care of the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, PO Box 5444, Heidelberg West, Victoria 3081.

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Romance still alive in Rosebud

CONGRATULATIONS to Ethel and Geoff Smith of Rosebud, celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary today.

The Smiths arrived from England in May 1949 and have established an Australian dynasty comprising four children, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

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RAN makes an exhibition of itself

THE RAN is celebrating its 100th birthday, and new navy chief Vice Admiral Ray Griggs will be at the Shrine on Friday at 11am to open a fascinating exhibition, Pride of the Nation.

Admiral Griggs, who started naval life in 1978 as a humble radar operator, will be especially interested in one of the items on show -- the original binnacle from the German raider Emden, destroyed by HMAS Sydney in 1914.

The binnacle held original navigation instruments, including a magnetic compass.

Show curator Jean McAuslan says that many of the exhibits have come from the Naval Heritage Collections at HMAS Cerberus and from Sydney's Spectacle Island.

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On track for better times

AH, for the good old days on the railways.

Good old days when the trains ran on time, the carriages weren't stuffed sardine cans and there were staff on duty at most stations.

We've just heard from Tom, of St Albans, who served 40 years and two days with the railways, 30 years of them as a station master.

Tom's got hold of some government gazettes dating from 1884 to 1929, listing all the positions available when the railways looked after everything with everybody.

"There were more than 700 positions in the heyday, starting with 'auditor' and 'axeman'.

"Just take the Hs, every position from a 'holder up' to a 'handy lad' to a 'horse driver'.

"There was a hairdresser, too, at Spencer St. I remember getting my hair cut by him."

Nineteen of his family worked for the railways, dating back to 1878.

The railways looked after their own, too.

"When one of the family got injured in a shunting accident, he worked the gates at Sunbury for 17 years until his retirement."

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Poms pass on passwords

HOW many PINs and passwords are you now struggling to remember?

And security codes at work that have to be changed regularly?

Research in Britain suggests the average Pom has to remember up to 10 passwords a day.

One in three admitted to writing down details -- naughty, naughty -- to avoid forgetting them completely.

More than half of those polled admitted they use the same password for everything.

The most difficult details to remember were said to be those for banking websites.

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Simpson out of the shadows

AND now, Simpson the song.

A report in the British Shields Gazette says the story of John Simpson Kirkpatrick -- of Gallipoli's Simpson and his donkey fame -- has been set to music by a Newcastle band called White Fire Sky.

English-born Kirkpatrick's early life included leading children on donkey rides on the beach at South Shields.

Kirkpatrick later became his family's breadwinner, migrating to Australia before joining the Anzacs and gaining immortality by carrying wounded soldiers to safety down Shrapnel Valley on his donkey.

He saved many lives before he was killed, at 22, in May 1915.

The song can be found by searching for Shadow On The Shore on YouTube.

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Review ruffles some feathers

YOUR taxes at work.

The ACT Government has held an earnest inquiry into whether one ACT Government brand should cover more than 50 departments, services and statutory bodies governing this most over-governed paradise on earth.

Yes, was the result, except for the case of the Territories and Municipal Services Directorate.

It has had a gang-gang cockatoo as its logo since the 1970s.

And so it was found the directorate "had clearly stated their case to government for the gang-gang logo to be retained".

The gang-gang, we learn, has a call like a squeaky gate.

Now well oiled again.

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Seniors don't find IT so funny

RUSSELL passes this one on, which he says is doing the rounds on the seniors' internet:

"As we Silver Surfers know, sometimes we have trouble with our computers.

"I had a problem yesterday, so I called Eric, the 11-year-old next door whose bedroom looks like Mission Control, and asked him to come over.

"Eric clicked a couple of buttons and solved the problem.

"As he was walking away, I called after him, 'So, what was wrong?'"

"He replied, 'It was an ID-ten-T error'."

"I didn't want to appear stupid, but nonetheless inquired, 'An, ID-ten-T error? What's that, in case I need to fix it again?'"

"Eric grinned. 'Haven't you ever heard of an ID-ten-T error?'"

"'No,' I replied. 'Write it down and I think you'll figure it out,' he said."

So I wrote down: ID10T.

I used to like Eric . . . the little b-----."