



July 2015

Newsletter

Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators

If you wish to attend the next ARISSEA luncheon,
please print this first page,
complete the Booking slip,
include a cheque for your payment and
post to John Allsopp.

If you are entitled to a tax receipt from
Stewart House for your donation this year, it is
being sent to you separately through Australia
Post.

I hope that you find this Newsletter of interest.

Peter Robinson, Newsletter Editor.

Booking slip 7th August 2015 Meeting

Complete and return with your cheque by 17th July to:

John Allsopp, 23 Lyndon Way, BEECROFT, 2119 (phone 9980 2114)

Here is my payment of \$_____ (at \$40.00 per head)

for _____ and me to attend the ARISSEA luncheon
at 11.30am for 12.30pm at '**99 on York**', 99 York Street, Sydney on Friday 7th August.

Please provide _____ vegetarian meal(s).

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone No. _____

* Print your surname here. _____

Make your cheque payable to the *Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools* and cross it 'Not negotiable'.
Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after 24th July.



July 2015

Newsletter

Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators

From the President



Chris Carroll
President

Chris Carroll and his wife Karlene are currently somewhere in Spain and not due home until late June. In an email last week Chris has asked me to “thank the executive and the membership generally, for their positive response to his nomination for President”. He went on to write that he “hopes to live up to our expectations”.

In tendering his apology for the executive committee meeting last week, Jack Harrison explained that getting to meetings was becoming more difficult and that he would be grateful if he could be relieved of his responsibilities for the co-ordination of luncheon meetings and of being an active member of the ARISSEA executive committee.

The committee accepted Jack's resignation and acknowledged that he has made a very significant contribution to ARRISEA and its members over many years. Jack was first elected a member of the executive committee in 1993 and since then has remained an active contributor of work undertaken by the committee.

The Annual General Meeting Minutes each year, 1994 to 2015, contain an acknowledgement of this contribution by assisting with and then, as the Assistant Secretary and Luncheon Co-ordinator, negotiating and managing the annual program of luncheon meetings.

I am very pleased to welcome John Allsopp, Terry Burke and Alan Lachlan as newly elected members of the executive committee. Alan Lachlan has stepped into the Vice Presidency and John Allsopp will be the Stewart House Contact and the Luncheon Co-ordinator.

Alan Pratt and George Green both indicated that they were not in a position to accept a nomination for election to the 2015-2016 executive committee. Both Alan and George have made important contributions to our Association. Alan Pratt will continue to represent our interests as Dr Reynold Macpherson finalises the publication of "The Institute" – an historical account of the work of the NSW Institute of Inspectors in its various iterations over the last century.

Geoff Walton
Secretary

President's Report to the 2015 AGM

I feel honoured to have served for the past year as ARISSEA President. I hope that I have proven worthy of the trust and confidence you had in me. It's been enjoyable working with such an excellent committee. We've had numerous robust discussions and everyone on the committee has made a significant contribution to ARISSEA's successful operations.

In this report, I'll particularly acknowledge some of the key members without whom ARISSEA would not have been able to achieve what it has over the year. However, the list of contributors is much longer.

I must start by thanking Geoff Walton, our ubiquitous Secretary and welfare officer. The quality of Geoff's work across all of our initiatives and in providing the backbone that strengthens ARISSEA cannot be overstated.

By most measures, ARISSEA has had another successful year. Our greatest challenge is the slow decline in our membership. We have suffered a number of sad losses, as might be expected of an ageing collective. We remember and miss our departed colleagues.

However, the unique familial connections that once were strong amongst senior educational officers of the Department have faded in the contemporary environment. We need to seek innovative ways of attracting new members to our association.

Our achievements in 2014/15?

The Newsletter continues to be a wonderful device to keep our members informed and connected. Thanks to Peter Robinson as Newsletter Editor. Thanks also to the many contributors of articles, news, reflections and commentary who have responded to Peter's encouragement.

Overall, our luncheons have continued to be well attended and are highly valued collegial events. Thanks to Jack Harrison as luncheon organiser and to Ian Vacchini for highlighting our participation.

A guest speaker was our innovation at the very successful August luncheon last year. Jane Simmons, Executive Director, Learning and Leadership, was outstanding as she described the changing organisational structure of the Department and some of the learning-focused reforms that are happening in schools.

In passing, I note that the Department will be renamed the Department of Education from July 1 this year.

The ISEA's history of the Institute would not be a quality record without the generous sharing of knowledge and insights by ARISSEA members. Thanks to Alan Pratt as our ISEA History Project contact, our editorial team and to the many other members who contributed.

ARISSEA has maintained its financial and in-kind support for our charity Stewart House, thanks to Eula Guthrie and the other Friends for their promotional activities.

We have very considerably tightened our grasp on our membership records thanks to Allan Mills' work as Membership Officer and in designing a much enhanced data base. We've also updated a number of forms and procedures in the interests of clarity, consistency and a desire to be shipshape.

Our major organisational reform has been the drafting of a new constitution and thinking about becoming an incorporated association. I have outlined, in a couple of newsletter items, my motivations, purposes and what I see as the benefits in drafting a new constitution and incorporation.

The committee has examined and discussed the new constitution and its implications thoroughly. I value the comments and support of committee members, such as Vincent Delany, Syd Smith, Chris Carroll and Alan Rice, for their wise counsel on numerous issues, not least the constitution. The draft constitution was circulated to all members of ARISSEA and a number of supportive amendments have been included in the document that will be offered later in this meeting for your approval.

ARISSEA has emerged from this past year with a number of successes to its credit. We have achieved all of this while remaining a sustainably financial organisation. Thanks to Richmond Manyweathers as Treasurer for his careful stewardship.

Finally, in thanking you again for the opportunity to be ARISSEA President, I commend to you Chris Carroll as the incoming President. I wish Chris and the committee every success in carrying ARISSEA forward.

Ray Gillies
President 2014-5



Ray Gillies

From the Secretary

62nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was held at The York Conference and Function Centre on May 1, 2015. President Ray Gillies opened the meeting at 1.20 pm. Twenty four members and guests were present and twenty four apologies were received. Attendance as recorded on Ian Vacchini's spreadsheet.

Minutes of Previous AGM (as published in the July 2014 Newsletter), were accepted on a motion moved by John Edwards and seconded by Warren Fairfax.

Reports: In speaking to his report, President Ray Gillies told members that he was honoured to have been given the opportunity to take on the role of President and thanked members for their expression of trust and confidence in his leadership. His acknowledgement of the achievements of individual members of the executive committee were supported by those present and carried by acclamation.

Reports from The Secretary, Membership Officer and Treasurer were tabled and discussed during the meeting, are published in this newsletter. The reports and related recommendations were accepted and endorsed on a motion moved by Ian Vacchini and seconded by John Edwards.

Notice of Motion

1. That the Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators Constitution Draft 3 (7 October 2014) including amendments to clauses 17.9, 20.5, 21.8, 24.3, 31.2 and 37.2 and superseding the current ARISSEA Constitution (accepted at the AGM Friday 8 May, 1992) be endorsed and adopted. Moved Ray Gillies, Seconded Vincent Delany. The motion was unanimously accepted by members present.
2. That the 2015-2016 executive and committee be authorised to move towards having ARISSEA registered with the NSW Department of Fair Trading under the Associations Act 2009. Moved Ray Gillies, Seconded: Ian Vacchini. The motion was unanimously accepted by members present.

General Business:

Terry Burke made two suggestions that he thought should be considered before lodging the Constitution with NSW Fair trading:

1. Changing the name of the Association by removing reference to “Inspectors of Schools”.
2. Including an additional object “2.6 provide members with a forum for educational issues”

A number of members contributed to the ensuing free flowing discussion about the potential benefits that the Association as an entity and its members could gain if both suggestions were acted on. Others drew on their experiences to provide advice about options for giving effect to the suggestions.

Action: Ray Gillies, as immediate past president asked that, and the meeting agreed to refer the suggestions to and seek a response from the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Election of 2015/16 Executive Committee

Committee Position	Elected 2015
President	Chris Carroll
Immediate Past President	Ray Gillies
Vice President	Alan Laughlin
Secretary	Geoff Walton
Treasurer	Richmond Manyweathers
Newsletter Editor	Peter Robinson
Membership Officer	Allan Mills
Luncheon Coordinator	John Allsopp
Welfare Coordinator	Geoff Walton
Stewart House Contact	John Allsopp

Committee member	Terry Burke
Committee member	Vincent Delany
Committee member	Syd Smith
Committee member	Alan Rice
Committee member	
Observer	John Edwards
Observer	Bill Grant

In closing the meeting Immediate Past President Ray Gillies announced that Chris Carroll, the incoming President, was currently overseas and wished Chris and the members of 2015-2016 committee good fortune with the work that they were taking on. Meeting closed at 1.50 pm.

Treasurer's Report

FINANCIAL REPORT 2014/15

Income and Expenditure, Year Ended 31 Mar, 2015

Balance b/f	7,386.89	Lunches	4,273.50
Subscriptions	2,380.00	Newsletter	1,213.48
Stewart House	2,655.00	Stewart House	3,360.00
Lunches	4,320.00	Constitution dist'n	335.40
I Remember...sale	25.00	Room hire meetings	958.50
Interest	264.86		
 Total income	 \$17,031.75	 Total expenditure	 \$10,140.88
Balance C'fwd 2015/16	\$6,890.87		

CBA Chq A/c balance 31/03/15 \$6,934.07
Term Deposit \$11,136.82

Lunches 2014

Banked \$4,320.00 Payment \$4,273.50 Surplus \$46.50

May	\$1,200.00	\$1,155.00	\$45.00
Aug	\$1,360.00	\$1,425.50	(\$64.50)
Dec	\$1,760.00	\$1,694.00	\$66.00

Recommended additional Stewart House support

Luncheon profit	\$46.50
Individual member donations	\$795.00 (balance of 2014/5 contrib's)
Association Contribution	<u>\$658.50</u>
TOTAL: Recommended payment:	\$1500.00

Note \$1,860.00 from member donations in subs to May 2014 AGM previously forwarded to Stewart House

Total ARISSEA support 2014/15 = \$3,360.00
 2013/14 = \$3,380.00
 2012/13 = \$3,325.00

Recommendations:

1. That Stewart House Contributions be forwarded forthwith.
2. That member subscriptions remain at \$15.00 p.a.
3. That \$2,000 be added to the major Term Deposit when it next matures (Aug, '16).

Richmond Manyweathers,
Treasurer, 14 Apr 2015

From the Secretary

Am I a Financial Member?

Geoff Walton

Several members have expressed concern about the continuity of their membership of the Association.

The annual membership subscription falls due at the Annual General Meeting in May each year.

Membership Subscription Renewal notices, showing your financial status (at the time of the AGM), are prepared by Allan Mills, the Membership Officer, in collaboration with Treasurer, Richmond Manyweathers. These are mailed (Australia Post) to all members early in April.

Commencing this year, if our records show that you have not applied to renew your membership by September you will receive a note in the mail and a follow-up phone from a member of the executive to remind you that we have not received your membership renewal application and subscription. If and where necessary we will follow this up again with a reminder letter in December.

If you have not applied to renew your membership by the 31 March, 2016 you will receive a further letter notifying you that in order to continue your membership of the Association you need to pay outstanding fees by the AGM and that by failing to pay the outstanding fees you have chosen to cease your membership of the Association.

In the normal course of events, we will continue to send you copies of the Association Newsletter until the AGM in May 2016.

May Lunch



Geoff Walton and Graham Sims

Members say

MOMENTS of FAME

Graham Sims

The recent death of Malcolm Fraser has reminded this old bloke, (as if we needed reminding), of our shared and inevitable mortality.

Coming, as it did, so soon after the death of his old foe, (become friend), Gough Whitlam, it somehow also reminded me that, although I never met Malcolm Fraser, I can validly claim to have met and had encounters with both Whitlam, ('The Great Man') and his nemesis, Sir John Kerr.

In the 1960s, I taught French to the Whitlams' younger son, Stephen, at Sydney Boys' High. Stephen was an excellent student, although aloof and self-assured in a way that reminds me of the French proverb, "La pomme ne tombe pas loin de l'arbre." (Like father, like son).

Stephen appeared to have a fascination with beauteous, young, unclad damsels of fair complexion. Whenever I set the class an essay in French, irrespective of the topic, Stephen's would invariably end, "et soudain, je me trouve tout seul avec une belle blonde nue." (and suddenly I'd find myself alone with a beautiful, naked blonde.)

Towards the end of the year, there occurred the inevitable 'Parent-Teacher Evening', and, as I was sitting at my allocated desk in The Great Hall, the lights suddenly seemed to dim, as if from an unexpected eclipse.

I looked up, to see two gigantic figures looming over me, none other than Gough and Margaret Whitlam. I invited them to sit down, (even though this made but little difference to the dominance of their imposing presence) and Gough asked, "Well, Mr Sims, how's young Stephen going in his French?"

"He's doing well," I was able to reply, but I then threw caution to the winds and added, "I just wish he wouldn't end EVERY essay with his being alone with a beautiful, naked blonde. At least she could be a brunette or a redhead, for variation, once in a while."

Looking up at the two imposing figures before me, I suddenly wished I hadn't been so foolhardy. They gave each other a knowing smile; Margaret produced a photo from her handbag, and showed it to me, while Gough added, "Obviously, Mr Sims, you haven't met Pip."

The photo was of Stephen, smiling, and with good reason, for, standing beside him was a truly gorgeous, young blonde. The look she was giving her beau left me in no doubt that, on appropriate occasions, she would have also satisfied his third descriptor. There was no question, it seemed, of brunettes or redheads ever getting a mention in his essays.

In 1964, I was a Teachers' Federation witness in a work-value based salaries case, linked with the additional workload implicit in the Wyndham Scheme, then being introduced.

The QC appearing for the Public Service Board, opposing our case for a salaries increase, was none other than the formidable John Kerr, QC.

As a young rookie, in only my second year of teaching, I watched in fear and trepidation as Mr Kerr and his 'Junior', Kevin Murray, made mince-meat out of some of our 'star' witnesses, who were far more experienced and worldly-wise than muggins me.

Repairing to The Metropole Hotel, for a much needed liquid lunch, I was shakily downing a scotch, when a hand gripped my shoulder and the out-of character, thin, reedy voice of John Kerr said to me, "Ah, young Sims...so you're to be my next victim, after lunch. Let's see what I can do to you, eh?"

I was all set to consider bribery, or a sudden fainting-fit, when, frabjous day, he looked at my lapel, on which was pinned my Fort St Boys' High School Old Boys' badge, and he said, "Just a minute, are YOU an Old Fortian? What's the School motto?"

"Yes, I am," I stammered, and blurted out, "Faber est quisque suae Fortunae."

"Ah, indeed" Kerr considered. "I'll go easy on you then," and thank heavens, he did.

There was, however, a moment when I thought I'd need far more than my Old Boys' badge to save me from his wrath. Brilliant cross-examiner that he was, Kerr had seized on some

dopey non-sequitur that I'd just stumbled around, and I knew he was about to catch me out.

At this precise moment, (Oh, frabjous day, again), the senior judge on the Tribunal suddenly interrupted Mr Kerr in full flight, leant towards me from 'the Bench', and said, "A moment, Mr Kerr, if I may?"

"Mr Sims, I note that you're teaching at Sydney High. Is that correct?" (It had already been so established some time before, but an eye-rolling Mr Kerr had to let 'Mr Justice X' proceed.)

"Yes, your Honour, I am at Sydney High."

"Ah", he continued. "Tell me, how are the First Eleven going this year?"

"Not too bad, your Honour", I offered...but I don't think Mr Kerr was listening. He had a strange, strangled look on his face.

Some years later, I found myself seconded to the RAAF School, in Penang, Malaysia, and was on the staff when John Kerr QC led an Inquiry into Service conditions etc. Along with many other staff and assorted RAAF personnel, I was lined up, on the school oval, to be introduced to Mr Kerr and his Inquiry members.

The Headmaster was just about to introduce me, when Kerr stopped him in his introductory tracks and said "No need, it's young Sims from Fort St. Nice to see you again," and warmly shook my hand.

Now, I have no idea how many people John Kerr would have met in the five or so years which had passed since my first and only brief encounter with him. I neither did nor said anything memorable in the witness-box...yet he remembered me.

When, inevitably, I think of the controversy in which he later became entangled, his strange behaviour at The Melbourne Cup, and the opprobrium in which he was destined to be held by most Australians of the time, I can't help but remember my own, quite fortuitous encounters with him, the steely grip he had on his legal responsibilities, and his kindness to a young teacher, understandably terrified of the impending 'hatchet-job' he was about to do on me.

May Lunch



Arthur Buchan

Friends of Stewart House

Thursday 16th July: Lunch at Doyle's Restaurant at Watsons Bay. This is our usual indulgence of delicious fish chowder followed by fish and chips. The ferry departs from Circular Quay Wharf 4 at 11.00am and 12.07pm.

Cost \$40 includes \$10 donation for Stewart House.

Meet inside at 12.15pm for 12.30pm start.

Contact Barbara Kenny 9986 1718 by 9th July.

Thursday 20th August: Gary Cooper will present a fascinating talk about the Wayside Chapel.

Ryde Eastwood Club.

Cost \$10 donation for Stewart House.

Meet at 10.45am for 11am start. Lunch at own expense.

Contact Hazel Grimmond 9980 7498 by 17th August.

Friends of Stewart House continued..

Wednesday 9th September: Morning High Tea, David Jones restaurant, Castle Towers, Castle Hill.

Meet at 10.45am.

Cost \$30 (includes \$10 donation to Stewart House).

Contact Diane Hill 9665 7202 or 0417 170 173 by 7th September.

Monday 12th October: RAN Heritage Centre, Garden Island. Visit the Naval Museum and wander around the Public Access Precinct and have lunch at the Salthorse Café (at own cost).

Cost \$10 donation to Stewart House. 10.40am Watsons Bay ferry from Wharf 4 to Garden Island.

Meet at the Museum entrance at 11am.

Contact Margaret Harmer 9744 2625 by 5th October.

May Lunch



Ian Vacchini and Terry Burke

REGIONAL RELICS OF THE PAST

David Maher

A visit to Ballina enabled Lionel Phelps and me, and our respective wives, Lenore and Anne, to grasp zealously the opportunity to share three hours of vibrant and meaningful reminiscing and conversation on Monday, 16th March.



Lionel Phelps and David Maher

Lionel and I first met in 1948 at the Balmain Teachers' College, (Motto: Luctor Et Emergo), where we experienced the memorable tutelage of Mr George Cantello, and we have remained close friends throughout our subsequent personal and professional lives.

We treasure our first appointments as Teacher-in-Charge of one-teacher schools, namely Weabonga and Bungarby.

It is a truism that we should never forget the beginning of events. Appointments concurrently in 1982 as Regional Directors of the North Coast and North West Regions respectively strengthened our friendship and it was further consolidated during Regional Directors' Meetings as we were both members of, and stayed at, the R.A.C. in Macquarie Street where the breakfast waitress knew how we both liked our eggs cooked.

Members say

Are you available to provide in-kind support for Stewart House during October 2015?

Geoff Walton

Graeme Philpotts, Chief Executive, Stewart House, has contacted me with an invitation for ARISSEA members to join with members of the Stewart House Board to conduct an assessment of the program that is being provided for young people.

Graeme explained that over the last twelve months there have been significant developments in the delivery and content of the two-week program.

In 2015, the assessment will be looking at the out-of school-hours program, some aspects of the school program and how the in and out-of-school components are integrated to provide Individual Learning Programs for targeted young people.

For more details contact Geoff Walton ph 9639 6847 mob 0418 241 406.

May Lunch



Eula Guthrie

Members say

Ron Prowse

As a very long term member, and a Life Member, I have enjoyed reading the newsletters. That is, until today, when I was horrified and disappointed that our editor had chosen to include the “article” by Will Robertson.

Our newsletter, our general procedures and members’ behaviour has always been secular, dignified, non-political and non-religious. This “article” is blatantly opposite.

I am an atheist and a republican but would expect, that if I wrote an “article” similar to that, that the editor has chosen to publish in this issue, he would have refused it, and rightly so.

Free speech would be supported by every member, but overtly religious, biased and implicitly monarchistic statements have no place in our publications.

May Lunch



Alan Laughlin and Vincent Delany

Graham Sims

There was a time, a LONG time, in human history, when people faced danger, real and present danger, every day and assuredly every night of their lives. That danger might take the form of a cave bear, a sabretooth cat, a lion or some other deadly beastie which might well have homo-something-or-other on its menu.

Equally, it could take the form of a terrible storm, from which there was virtually no shelter, or be in the form of starvation, disease, or some other force of nature against which our ancestors were helpless.

Nor should we forget that more than a few of such dangers are still faced today, especially by those of our human kin who live in environments less 'sympathetic' than we do.

Even in our modern, 'safer', urbanized environments, there are people, remarkable people, who willingly place themselves in danger in order to help others.

These obviously include police officers, paramedics, firemen, doctors, nurses and many others. These laudable folk face dangers because of their commitment to assist others, and because they have been trained to do so. This article is NOT about them.

On the other hand, every day, it seems, one hears or reads of people who leap out of aeroplanes, off high cliffs, bridges or buildings, (some actually use a parachute), who hang-glide over the ocean, who swim with Great White Sharks, who climb dangerous, icy mountains, who crawl through cracks in the stygian gloom of subterranean caverns, who run marathons through the hellish heat of Death Valley, who walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls, and countless other VOLUNTARILY undertaken acts of mindless insanity and yet they and their dopey deeds are invariably described as 'heroic', and they are feted, as having achieved something of inestimable worth to humankind.

Apart from these sanity-challenged individuals, there is now a flourishing industry, specifically structured to assist otherwise normal people to voluntarily risk killing or maiming themselves, by such logical and essential activities as 'bungee-jumping'. Do they REALLY have so much faith in a rubber-band?

Swimming with sharks, (large, hungry, bitey sharks), parachuting (and 'free-falling') out of small planes, and paying for the 'privilege' of doing so.

Any one of us who's regarded our life, however mundane, as a privilege in its own right, and who's resisted the temptation to arbitrarily bring it to a painful end BEFORE the fates have so determined, is deemed to be a 'wuss'.

This is a neologism supposedly combining 'wimp' and 'puss(y)' and a term for which I've never felt the need, coming, as I do, from a proud generation in which the good old Aussie

term, 'sook', was well used and understood to refer to someone who wasn't 'game' enough to do something he or she was 'dared' to do. Sometimes, it was a fair description.

Sometimes, being a sook was preferable to being a bloody idiot. 'Sookdom' was in the eye of the beholder.

Today's risk-taking 'heroes' are invariably described (all too often posthumously) as 'living on the edge' (of insanity?); of 'living life to the full', (perhaps THEY were 'full' at the time); of being 'larger than life', (life, or rather, death, has a habit of reminding us that we're not all that 'large' after all).

At their funerals, they are inevitably described in the glowing terms of social contributions more properly reserved for brain surgeons, public benefactors and nuns ... and I can't help wondering WHY?

Just how DOES society benefit from an irresponsible idiot's decision to climb over a safety fence, on the edge of a cliff, fall over the cliff, kill or critically injure himself, and thereby make other, responsible people place themselves in UNNECESSARY danger to rescue what's left of him?

Some of these ratbags, simply put, just seem to be (more than) a few of the proverbial bricks short of the apocryphal load, or have a hard-wired self-destruct button permanently set to 'ON'.

But others, to the complete amazement of THIS old bloke, seem, apart from their death wish, to be quite 'normal'. (In this context, the word 'normal' DOES need to be in quotes.)

I have, (or, sadly, in some cases, had) friends or acquaintances who, after a life of calm and productive normality, felt a sudden, irresistible need to hire a small plane, (when they weren't really GOING anywhere), and then, once it had, (if they were lucky), ascended to a lethal height, actually referred to in the trade as a "SAFE height", JUMP OUT OF IT, when, presumably, the pilot had the competency and fuel to land them safely back on terra firma, if they'd had just a little more patience and commonsense.

Of course, they used a parachute, which, they fervently hoped, had been properly assembled and prepared. But it's still a long and wobbly way down, especially when the options are to sit in your comfortable seat and be 'driven' back to mother earth or, better still, NOT TO HAVE LEFT IT in the first place.

And then, AND THEN, having had the immense good fortune to have landed safely, with their legs only minimally shorter and with only mild concussion, they react to their luck, NOT by kissing the ground and vowing never voluntarily to leave it again, but by screaming 'That was amazing! When can I do it again?' There really should be a brain surgeon or psychiatrist or two on hand, just to count their marbles.

Only this week, for example, as I was writing this article, a group of would-be skydivers hired a small plane, (a pink one, of course), so they could jump out over Lake Taupo, in New Zealand.

Surprise! Surprise! The plane's engine cut out BEFORE they had a chance to do their scheduled jump, so, given this unexpected emergency, what were they forced to do? Why, of course, they had to jump out. Which was what they were planning to do anyway.

Unfortunately (in one sense), the poor old pilot had to join them, which, presumably, had not been his intention. Whose parachute HE used was not explained, but lady luck smiled slightly less favourably upon him, for while his clients landed in the lake, where they were picked up in boats, fortuitously nearby, the pilot landed in blackberry bushes, on shore, from which he had to be extricated.

And the company that owned the little pink plane? Well, they offered the ultimate in compensation to the inconvenienced skydivers - a FREE jump, the following day, from a different plane, (probably not pink.) MOST TOOK UP THE OFFER!

It was not reported what offer was made to the pilot, or what counter suggestion he offered the company.

Somehow, it reminds me of the bloke whose girlfriend thought HE was a wuss, because, unlike her, he refused to try skydiving (parachuting).

He was, however, smitten with her, so, unbeknown to her, he signed up for a parachute jump, and, in utter fear and trepidation, found himself standing in the fuselage of a plane, along with a group of other 'volunteer' jumpers.

To his complete astonishment, he then noticed that the jumper in front of him appeared to be BLIND. As well as his parachute harness, this gent wore dark glasses, carried a white cane, and, incredible though it seemed, had a labrador, on a leash, standing beside him.

"Good grief," he was asked, "Are you really blind?"

"Totally", came the reply; "Can't see a thing!"

"But you skydive anyway? It must be very difficult for you. How do you know when you're nearing the ground?"

"Oh, that part's easy. The leash goes slack!"

And THAT story, in its turn, reminds me of the chap who jumped off the top of The Empire State Building, without a parachute. As he passed each storey on the way down, he would say to himself, "Well, so far, so good!"

So, apart from a large dose of imbecilicitis, what do these worthies have, that I don't have? What motivates them? Why can't they be satisfied with the wonder of just being alive, of LIFE, just as it is?

For a while, I thought they might be imbued with the genetic or cultural memory of the great explorers and adventurers of the past, such as Livingstone, Burton, Thesiger, Scott, Burke and Wills, Mallory, Hillary and so on.

Given that some of these were thought of as mad or irresponsible, back in their own day, perhaps some of their spirit has rubbed off, but I don't think that's the explanation.

Perhaps our modern, urbanized, technological and leisure-driven lifestyle presents too few challenges for some restless, bored or unsatisfied souls, who feel the need to step beyond the confines of 'normal' (there's that word again) life and 'do things no-one's ever done before'.

If this is an explanation, why doesn't it apply to all, or most of us? Why, for example, have I never felt an overwhelming, (or even an under-whelming) desire to jump out of a plane, or say 'bonjour' to a Great White, or to wire walk between tall buildings, or to crawl into a spooky canyon, or to be honest, to do ANY of these 'amazing' things?

Nor, by the way, would I have a lordly expectation that it would be someone's obligation to rescue me if I were to do so, and get into trouble, in the process.

Now folks, I'm far from an adrenalin junkie, but my life has not been 'risk-free'.

I had polio when young and spent months in a children's hospital, having 'an iron lung' breathe for me. I nearly bled to death at the age of eleven or so.

I've wandered, alone, through the jungles of Malaysia and Indonesia.

I've ridden and loved motor-bikes for about 58 years, and still do so, and I celebrated Christmas 1998 by having four heart attacks.

I've been married twice, both times to women. Oh, yes, and I eat take-away kebabs with impunity, (although I prefer sweet chilli sauce).

So, perhaps deludedly, I don't really regard myself as a wuss, (or even a sook). No doubt, in the (glazed with excitement) eyes of today's daredevils, I probably qualify, but I DARE one of them to tell me so, to my face!

And now, to my amazement, I've reached the genuinely unexpected age of 73 years; each and every one of which I treasure, for its triumphs and disappointments, its successes and failures, its pleasures and pain, its friendships and lonely times, its joys and sadnesses.

To my initial surprise, I find enjoyment in 'smaller and smaller' things. (No, I haven't become a microbiologist.) I feel no compulsion to swim even with sardines, let alone sharks. As for jumping off a tall building, I'm delighted if I can walk up a flight of stairs, or climb three rungs of a ladder without getting dizzy.

Life itself is the ultimate risk management exercise. NO RISK!

May Lunch



Ron Gale

Members say

Those were the days

When one goes back 50 odd years, many things have changed. Most of us would remember the incidents below and then wonder if some recent changes were really a step forward. Another era, another set of values, I guess.

Syd Smith

My mum used to cut chicken, chop eggs and spread butter on bread on the same cutting board with the same knife and no bleach, but we didn't seem to get food poisoning.

Our school sandwiches were wrapped in wax paper in a brown paper bag, not in ice pack coolers, but I can't remember getting E. Coli

Almost all of us would have rather gone swimming in the lake or at the beach instead of a pristine pool (talk about boring), no beach closures then.

We all took PE. And risked permanent injury with a pair of Dunlop sandshoes instead of having cross-training athletic shoes with air cushion soles and built in light reflectors that cost as much as a small car. I can't recall any injuries but they must have happened

because they tell us how much safer we are now.

We got the cane for doing something wrong at school. They used to call it discipline, yet we all grew up to accept the rules and to honour and respect those older than us.

We had 50 kids in our class and we all learned to read and write, do maths and spell almost all the words needed to write a grammatically correct letter....., FUNNY THAT!!

We all said prayers in school irrespective of our religion, sang the national anthem and no one got upset.

Staying in detention after school caught all sorts of negative attention we wish we hadn't got.

I thought that I was supposed to accomplish something before I was allowed to be proud of myself.

I just can't recall how bored we were without computers, Play Station, Nintendo, X-box or 270 digital TV cable stations. We weren't!!

Oh yeah... And where was the antibiotics and sterilisation kit when I got that bee sting? I could have been killed!

We played "King of the Hill" on piles of gravel left on vacant building sites and when we got hurt, mum pulled out the 2/6p bottle of iodine and then we got our backside spanked.

Now it's a trip to the emergency room, followed by a 10 day dose of antibiotics and then mum calls the lawyer to sue the contractor for leaving a horribly vicious pile of gravel where it was such a threat.

To top it off, not a single person I knew has ever been told that they were from a dysfunctional family. How could we possibly have known that?

We never needed to get into group therapy and/or anger management classes. We were obviously so duped by so many societal ills, that we didn't even notice that the entire country wasn't taking Prozac!

How did we ever survive?

Love to all of us who shared this era.

And to all who didn't, sorry for what you missed.

Wouldn't trade it for anything!

And remember that life's most simple pleasures are very often the best.

AAAhh, those WERE the days!!!!

Address changes

(Changes shown in Bold)

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MASON Bill
IRT Woolwich
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READ Ian H
Stafford Lakes Retirement Community
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ROWLAND David
382 Shepherds Hill Road LAURISTON 3444
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Deaths

27/5/2015 PAUL D M (Don)
2 Highfield Place
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Members are reminded that material is needed
for the **November 2015 Newsletter**
Accompanying photos are most welcome,
preferably as JPG email attachments.

Copy deadline: 16th October 2015

Peter Robinson,
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Have you contributed in the last 2-3 years?
If not, your ARISSEA friends may like to know
what you've been doing,
what you are thinking or
what you remember.