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Newsletter #11 from Old Salts ex RNZN

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OLD SALTS

Ex Royal New Zealand Navy



Welcome to this latest update from the Old Salts.

COMING UP: Old Salts Luncheon Howick RSA – Friday 10 August, 1130 muster

Come and enjoy a top lunch at the Howick RSA and listen to our guest speaker – WWII Merchant Navy Veteran Able Seaman **Donald Love**.

The Merchant Navy played a critical role during all wartime conflicts – transporting troops, military equipment and vital cargo, under constant threat of enemy raids. Of the 185,000 allied men and women who served in the Merchant Navy, one in three did not survive either war – with most of those lost having no known grave. No other group of civilians faced such risks during wartime or other conflicts.

Sadly, this is something most ANZAC Day services here forget, or choose to ignore.

Donald Love joined the Merchant Navy in September 1941 on his 16th birthday. After his initial training aboard the *TS Vindicatrix*, his first ship the *RMS Cameronia* – survived a torpedo attack from a German Junkers JU88. He would then join his next ship on the “fateful convoy that nearly died” to be torpedoed again. But I will let Donald who at 93, and as ‘sharp as a tack’. tell the story of what’s it like to be at war as a merchantman. For he survived to tell the tale.



Those who joined us in Hawaii for ANZAC day will recall Donald as a survivor –

veteran and gentleman.

Lunch will be the chef's best carvery, seasonal vegetables and salads along with duff. \$20. Per head. To assist in catering **bookings are essential by August 3.**

Contact: Jill Thompson on Mob: 021 2744426 email: jillt.nz49@gmail.com

Or Keith Ingram on 09 5334336 email: keith@skipper.co.nz

'Up Spirits' maybe piped.

Friday 10 August 11.30 am – Howick RSA. 25 Wellington St, Howick.

ANZAC Day 2018 Pearl Harbor report



By now, even the last of the stragglers who departed Hawaii for other exotic places have returned home to a chillier welcome.

In April this year, it was a trip down memory lane for a bunch of 'Old Salts' who had served in Pearl Harbor during the 1960s and early 70s with the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Back then our Navy crews would do pre-conflict/hostility training and naval work-ups with the US Navy fleet training team, prior to our ships heading for patrols in the far east station during the time of hostilities. This was in the days when New Zealand was regarded as more than just a friendly nation to America. We were a full ally

then.

Pearl Harbor was an important training stop for our naval ships serving to maintain peace during the hostilities in the far east. After departing Auckland, the ship's company would immediately start their on-board training – associated with both the need to be offensive and defensive in action stations. During this time action stations were closed up and tested, damage control, firefighting and emergency drills, along with first aid and search-and-rescue in darkened compartments, filled the crew's days as the ship made passage to Hawaii. This was all in preparation for the US Navy work-up and training both at sea and along-side. It was serious stuff, with the Kiwi crews preparing to be tested by the best of the US Navy's hardened Master Chiefs and officers.

These were a challenge where no favours could be asked or given, tests that would push the ship's company (average age 22 years) to the limit of endurance. Yes, it was the aim of these hard-nosed Master Chiefs, recognised as the toughest of the US Navy (and its pride) to find weaknesses and to break you. But not the Kiwis. The unwritten challenge within the New Zealand fleet was to be the highest- scoring ship to complete the work-up. While it was 'easy' to head off our American counterparts, topping the efforts of the previous highest scoring Kiwi ship was the challenge.

Trust me, when *HMNZS Taranaki* scored the highest in 1967 and held the coveted trophy, the whole ship's company, from the youngest sailor to old 'Silk' himself, stood with pride.

But it was ANZAC Day 2018, being hosted in Pearl Harbor this year by the Consul-General of Australia and New Zealand and the RNZN that was the main event which attracted the Kiwi naval veterans tour group and their partners. Built around this day was a busy schedule of tourist events that would give the tour a distinct nautical naval flavour, as well as the obligatory hospitality and shopping trips.

Memories are what we make of them. If I was asked what struck me, or stuck with me the most from this tour, I would have to say the American people. Everywhere we went (granted we were identifiable by our 'ID' lanyards and a mix of ex-Naval branded kit) without exception, we were told "Thank you for your service".

It did not matter where we went. Visitors from the US homeland, the locals, some service-folk, people on the street, on buses and in the bars – caring folk would come up and extend the hand of friendship and simply say; "Thank you for your service". "Thank you. It was an honour and a privilege to serve," would be our quiet response. What more can one say...?

Margaret Mitchell ex WRNZNS PO Steward offers this summary:

*ANZAC day, wow what a day, good old Keith organised early morning wakey, wakey calls from 0315, so it **was** an early morning start. We walked through the tunnel following a piper to the Diamond Head Dawn Service, in an old gun turret on the point. We had the traditional rum and coffee prior to the service where we also watched the sun rise, overlooking the cliffs, another moving experience. More rum, coffee and pastries, was had before returning to the hotel for breakfast. At 0900 we were off again, this time back to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, the Punchbowl, the most gold braid and scrambled eggs I have seen in a long time. I felt very privileged to be asked, along with Ivan Davies, to lay a wreath on behalf of the "NZ Naval Veterans". 27 other wreaths were laid.*



Margaret Mitchell and Ivan Davies receiving the wreath

We were then treated to a reception and light lunch aboard USS Missouri. A very special touch in my eyes, was that they gave away little packets of ANZAC biscuits with an exclamation of their history. Being real devils for punishment, we moved on to the Waikiki Yacht Club for up-spirits, joined by both Rear Admiral Fred Wilson (Rtd), and our Chief of Navy Rear Admiral John Martin, somewhat on a high we returned to the hotel around 1800, a rather long day.

With a couple of shopping days thrown in to the outlet stores, and goodies bought, we finished the week off with an amazing evening. "A Magic of Polynesia Dinner" the meal was great, the illusionist spell-binding, just an awesome way to top off an incredible week.



The Team ready to go onboard USS Missouri

If you get a chance read the latest issue of *Professional Skipper* magazine S124. 'ANZACS in Pearl Harbor'. While not a travel blog, it offers an interesting insight to past history.

Keith Ingram



Vivienne and Keith Ingram on the tour of sacred sites



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