

TEN YEARS IN REVIEW

Ten years ago in June 1993, the first issue of 'Tiger Rag' arrived in an envelope at the homes of members of the fledgling 105th Field Battery Association.

It had been drafted using a DOS-based word processing program and printed on a dot matrix machine. There were only two images: a photocopy of a picture of the Association's new banner, and a sketch of a tiger reading a 'Tiger Rag' under a palm tree - hand drawn by my daughter using a Battery plaque and a Calvin & Hobbes cartoon for inspiration. Small wing-ding stars, dots, squares and rectangles began and concluded items. The membership list showed 40 life and 86 annual subscribers. There were three honorary life members.

The front page boldly proclaimed 'Our First Reunion - Brisbane 1 to 3 October 1993'. A small editorial introduced the newsletter and exhorted members to contribute to future issues. 'Don't hold back - we'll publish almost anything!' was the challenging gauntlet thrown down.

I was the Association's founding Secretary and had produced the ten single-sided pages of information without the benefit of other contributions. These had been copied on my own slow old sliding top photocopier, collated, stapled, folded, enveloped and stamped.

Much has changed over the last ten years as 'Tiger Rag' has matured in parallel with our Association. Ten years on we find ourselves not only in a new decade, but a new century which is significantly distant from the heady days of the Association's formation to be worth reviewing developments.

First, let's have a look at the Association itself. A very competent Management Committee controls the day to day business of an incorporated organisation which boasts a listing of some 640 old Tigers stretching across Australia to the UK. Of these, 260 are members, 200 being life subscribers. Accumulated funds exceed \$31 000 including an extensive merchandise inventory. Members stricken during reunions have been repatriated and families in need have been assisted over the years. The historical collection in 105th Field Battery's lines at Enoggera, Brisbane is a regular beneficiary of both finance and manpower.

Reunions have proved to be lifelines for members. Held annually at locations from Townsville to Canberra, these assemblies of the ambush of Tigers have reintroduced old friends and adversaries, bonded like-minded spirits and attracted former social recluses to leave their dens and see how the other half have survived the years. The record 151 people who sat down to dinner at the Reunion 2003 in Canberra was tangible evidence of the support.

'Tiger Rag' has also grown up. As it celebrates its 10th birthday with 28 pages of letters, news, views, multi type images and history, its contract-printed, booklet format proudly stands head and shoulders above peer publications. A team of writers, graphic researchers, proofreaders and distribution workers now support me as an editor who is humbled at being elected by acclamation during each AGM.

It is thus fair to say that we have 'dun good'. I deliberately use the royal 'we' because without the encouragement of you the membership, no committee, no matter how dedicated, could ever find the enthusiasm to continue to manage your assets. You should be cognisant that here I am defining 'your' assets as not only the tangibles of money and merchandise, but also the trust, written and verbal contributions of encouragement and the physical support at reunions which you share with those whom you have elected to provide direction, leadership and administration for the Association.

Hold your heads up high, Tigers! As an example of what can be achieved by a brotherhood which sprang from serving one's country in uniform, we are the envy of many. The six of us who gathered at the Irish Club in Brisbane following the heady dedication of the Vietnam Forces Memorial in Canberra in October 1993, and who each contributed \$105 to kick-start the 105th Field Battery Association frequently look back with enormous pride at what has been accomplished over the last ten years. You the membership share an integral part in these feats and must never underestimate the immense value of your verbal, written and physical contributions.

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Arthur Burke