

# THE YORKER

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## Melbourne Cricket Ground Staff - 1920.



LEFT to RIGHT: "Dolly" GEORGE LEWIS. JACK HOUSE. JACK BROWN. ERNIE TOUT. HERB FRY. CHARLIE OVER. ALAN DAVIDSON. TED MORTON. BERT LUTTRELL (CURATOR).

## THIS ISSUE

The Curators of the Melbourne Cricket Ground by Jim Ricci.

Alf Batchelder on why the MCG was named after an American Colonel during WWII.  
David Allen pays tribute to the footballers who have passed away in the last 12 months.

"100 years ago" - the first league Grand Final on the MCG.

Opinion: Bernard Whimpress on reviewing sports history.  
Six books reviewed.

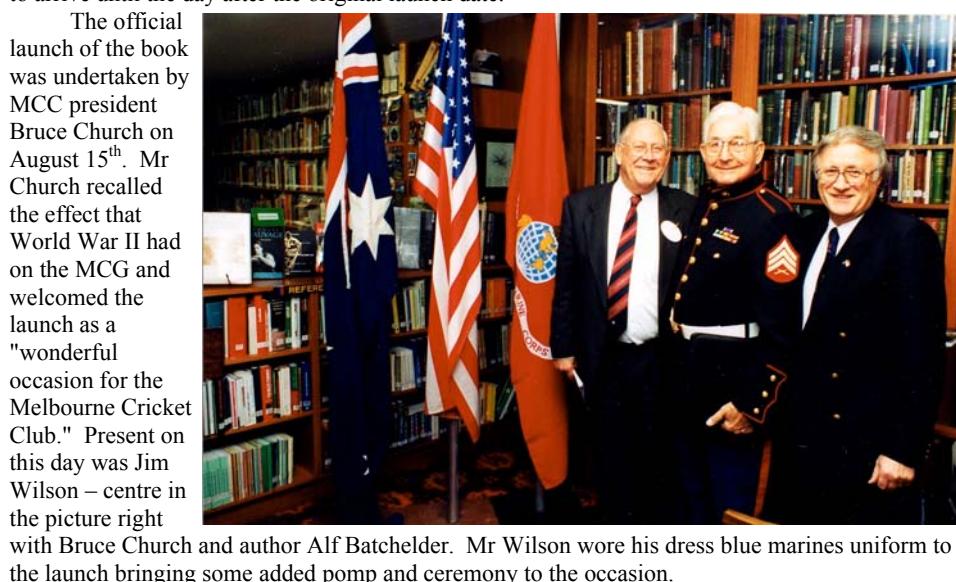
# LIBRARY NEWS

## Send in the Marines!

A group of US Marine veterans returned to their wartime base at the MCG on August 16<sup>th</sup>. The marines were part of a 3600-strong US contingent that was stationed at the MCG in 1943 following the bloody battle for Guadalcanal.

Their experiences in their temporary home are recounted by Melbourne Cricket Club Library researcher Alf Batchelder in the MCC Library's latest research publication *Melbourne's Marines - The First Division at the MCG 1943*.

In a first for the library, there were two official launches of the book – necessitated by the fact that all but one of the marines were delayed at Guadalcanal by an air strike and were unable to arrive until the day after the original launch date.



The following day, with the arrival of the full contingent of marine veterans a second launch was held. Then the Marines toured their former home and were guests at a lunch in the MCC Members Dining Room hosted by assistant secretary Peter French.

Pictured, left, are the marines in front of the US Marines plaque in the entry to the Members Pavilion. (L-R) Bill Finnegan, Al Schlemmer, Wilbur Bewley, Lou Imfeld, Joe Delaney, Jim Wilson.

Alf Batchelder spent six years putting the book together, using letters from former US Marines as a key tool in his research. The renowned author, whose previous works include *MCC Roll of Honour 1939-45*, *An Unforgettable Summer* and the *Centenary Test Melbourne Cricket Ground 1977*, admitted he had become very emotionally attached to his latest offering.

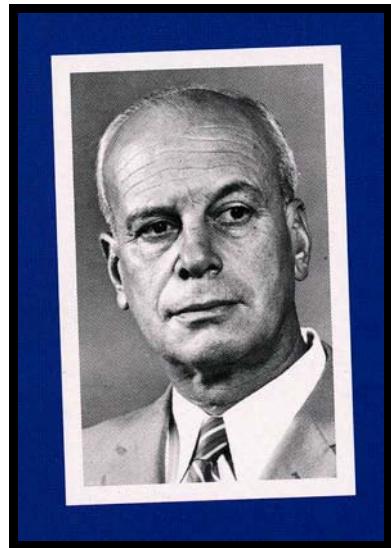
In gratitude to the work that Alf undertook in the project, the delegation of First Marines Division veterans presented him with a special 1<sup>st</sup> Division cap and declared him an honorary Marine.

The Veterans group is pictured in front of the Members Pavilion. (from left to right, Wilbur Bewley, Lou Imfeld, Al Schlemmer, Jim Wilson, Bill Finnegan, Joe Delaney).

Copies of Melbourne's Marines can be obtained from the MCG Shop for \$9.95 plus postage.



Contact Ian Ramsey on 9657 8860 or [ianr@mcc.org.au](mailto:ianr@mcc.org.au) See inside back cover for further details.



### Vale D.A.R. "Ben" Kerville

On July 31, 2002 sports journalism lost a Legend. To the Melbourne Cricket Club and the Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum – we have lost a great friend and supporter.

Ben, as he was known, was the prince of writers. He knew sport past, present and perhaps even predictions for the future would have been possible. A respected writer of that famous sports bible, *The Sporting Globe*, Ben would have the stories full of facts, anecdotes, and always a true copy of "just what did happen at the game". He not only covered football, cricket was also a labour of love, and the "greats of the game" were long-time friends. If you needed to know about an English, Indian or West Indian etc. tour – you just asked "Mr Ben". His coverages also included the ultimate test of sports achievement – the Olympics. That bridge between athlete and media was never a problem for D.A.R. Kerville – he gained their trust completely. Ben is a respected member of the Media Hall of Fame here at the "G".

Perhaps not known by many people, Ben worked in radio in the early days and was there when the Sporting Globe/3DB "Royal Children's Hospital Appeal" first started. In wartime, he was to join the RAF and fly the famous Lancaster Bombers in 47 missions over Europe, a truly remarkable feat. In peacetime, he enjoyed music, played the piano, was a marriage celebrant and played a mean game of bowls.

He established the Public Relations firm "Commercial Communications Australia" and thus unfolded a 30-year working partnership with his son Ian. A short time later their association with the Melbourne Cricket Club commenced and has continued to this day.

May we extend our deepest condolences to the family of the late Ben Kerville. A friend to all at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

**Peta Phillips**

**It is with great sadness that we record the passing of one of Australia's greatest cricket collectors Pat Mullins. Mr Mullins sold his collection to the MCC in 1988. A tribute will be paid to Pat in the next issue of The Yorker released during the Boxing Day Test match.**



## WHO WAS MURPHY?

As the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the present Melbourne Cricket Ground approaches, it is somewhat curious that the most mysterious year in that century and a half did not occur back in the very distant past. Surprisingly, it is 1942, a year belonging to the youth of many senior MCC members and the year in which the Melbourne Cricket Ground was known as 'Camp Murphy'. Wartime censorship in those uncertain times ensured that little information was recorded in the press.

The unique situation in which the Melbourne Cricket Club found itself meant that Committee Minutes and other documents contain only sparse coverage about the Ground and its use. The fluid nature of the MCG's American population in 1942 meant that few records were left behind. Moreover, the fact that the Ground was not the home of a single coherent military unit makes it very difficult for the modern-day researcher to obtain reminiscences from the veterans who were stationed there. Thus, we do not share with the men of 1942 a relationship like that which we enjoy with 1943's 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the First Marine Division. Among the 'unknowns' about the MCG in 1942, one mystery has long remained uninvestigated: who was Murphy?

The notion of quartering service personnel at the Melbourne Cricket Ground had surfaced as early as June 1941. After Japan's attacks on Malaya, the Philippines and Pearl Harbour in December, Australia faced the greatest external threat in its history. In February 1942, Prime Minister John Curtin therefore announced the conscription of all of the nation's resources, human and material, for 'the purposes of war'. Regulations were introduced enabling the government 'to require the use of any property in the Commonwealth for the prosecution of the war.' Shortly before Curtin's announcement, officers from Military Headquarters inspected the Ground with a view to using stands on the northern side to house troops. Late on the afternoon of April 2, MCC secretary Vernon Ransford was notified that 'the whole of the Ground was required for Commonwealth purposes as from the 7th day of April 1942'. Two months after the first American personnel arrived in Melbourne, the MCG was to be handed over to the Port Quartermaster, United States Armed Forces in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Since mid-March, Melbourne had been the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur. As the region's Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, MacArthur wanted to establish a solid base for his campaigns to lead Australian and American forces north against the Japanese. By mid-April, about 36 400 American servicemen had arrived in Australia. Just over half of these were members of the United States Army's 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Many were young, untried and not fully trained. For much of 1942, the flow of men and materials into and around the country meant that few constants marked the American presence in Melbourne.<sup>2</sup>

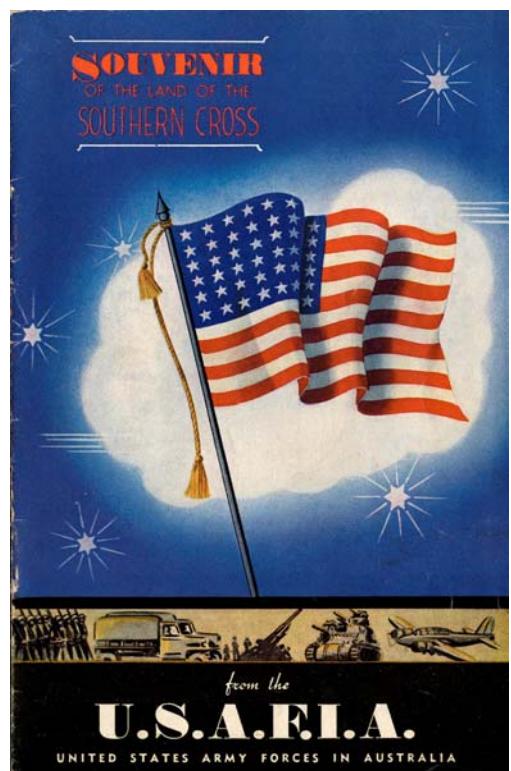
In this flux, the Melbourne Cricket Ground housed the 11<sup>th</sup> Replacement Control Depot, a staging area where 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force personnel waited until their particular skills were required elsewhere. At one point, men of the 49<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group were quartered there. 'B' and 'C' Flights of the 8<sup>th</sup> Photo Reconnaissance Squadron arrived in July before moving to Townsville. In mid-1942, with 22 officers and 1069 men in twelve squadrons, the Ground held the largest single concentration of USAAF personnel in Australia.

In April, the *New York Times* had announced that the US Army would name bases in honour of Americans killed in the southwest Pacific. The importance of the Melbourne Cricket Ground was emphasised when it was one of the first two camps associated with the new policy. The home of the 11<sup>th</sup> Replacement Control Depot was renamed in memory of Colonel William H. Murphy of the Signal Corps, while the camp in Royal Park remembered the USAAF's Major Floyd Pell, killed in Darwin on February 19.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of MCC General Committee Meeting, June 24, 1941; Morrison, James: *Nor The Years Condemn: Air War on the Australian Front 1941-42*, Brisbane, 1992, p.108; MCC Letter Book August 1941-July 1946, A-F, letter from Ransford to J. F. Guthrie, April 9, 1942; Minutes of meetings of MCG Trustees.

<sup>2</sup> Manchester, William: *American Caesar*, Richmond South, 1978, pp.290-291; Morrison, James: *op.cit.*, p.355.

<sup>3</sup> Hilliard, Bill: email to Alf Batchelder, August 21, 2002; 'The AAF in Australia to the Summer of 1942', *Amy Air Forces Historical Studies*: No.9; *The Argus*, April 14, 1942, p.2; *The New York Times*, April 14, 1942, p.3.



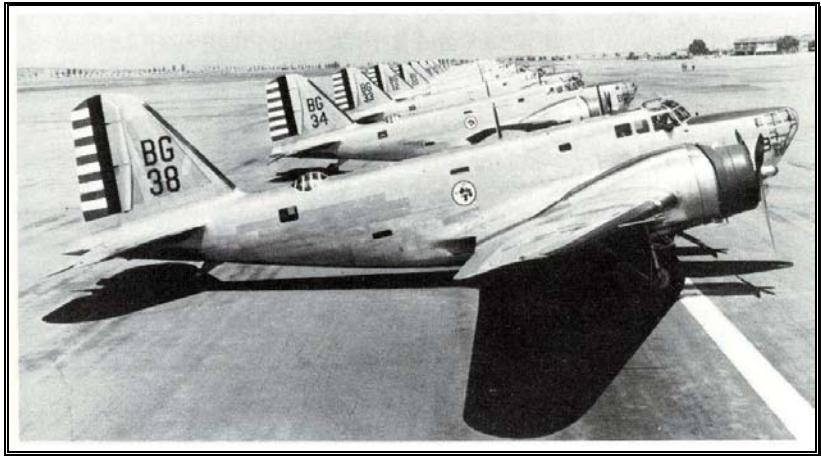
Later in the war, the Royal Australian Air Force named the Ground 'RAAF Ransford', in honour of the MCC secretary. Consequently, years before the modern trend of renaming sports grounds, Col. Murphy and Vernon Ransford shared the rare distinction of having their names given temporarily to the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Much is known, of course, about Vernon Ransford, whose portrait is displayed in the Long Room. Unfortunately, Col. William H. Murphy has remained a shadowy figure and, as yet, we have no portrait with which to associate his name.

The chain of events which led to Murphy's connection with the Melbourne Cricket Ground goes back to 1941. On October 22, just over six weeks before Pearl Harbour, General Lewis Brereton was touring American military installations on Oahu. He was 'surprised and somewhat disappointed to note the incomplete preparations against air attacks, particularly the lack of adequate air warning equipment.' In noting that most of the warning equipment was 'rudimentary', the general was pleased that 'energetic efforts were under way to improve it.' In particular, he was impressed by the efforts of Col. William H. Murphy, who had formerly been with Air Force Combat Command but was now a member of the Signal Corps. Brereton considered Murphy 'an exceedingly able and energetic officer' who was 'doing his utmost to complete the organization', and expected that the 'combined communication center and command post' he saw under construction would 'be in operation in the near future.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Brereton, Lewis H.: *The Brereton Diaries*, New York, New York, 1976, p.12.

A fortnight later, Lewis Brereton arrived in Manila as Air Commander of the Philippine Air Forces, Far East Air Force. Again, he was not impressed by the strength - or lack of it - that he found. He immediately asked for Colonel Murphy to be sent from Hawaii 'to supervise the air warning equipment in the Philippines'.<sup>5</sup> Then, with orders from MacArthur to 'go on south', General Brereton and his staff flew to Java on Christmas Day. Though the war had been underway for only 18 days, it was clear that Japan would soon strike at the oil fields of the Netherlands East Indies. Brereton was therefore planning to move his air force to Java to resist their assaults. Once again, he looked to Colonel Murphy's expertise, assigning to him 'the job of overhauling Java's creaky air warning system'.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of February, Major Austin Straubel, who had been in command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group for less than a week, piloted a B-18 bomber, serial number 36-338, to Bandoeng in western Java. Aboard the aircraft with him were the co-pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Russel M. Smith, and the engineer-radio operator, Sergeant George W. Pickett. Straubel was having problems with Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Eubank, 'from whom he was tired of taking instruction', and wanted 'a serious talk with Brereton to sort out command arrangements...'. On February 3, Straubel left Bandoeng in the B-18. In addition to the two crewmen who had accompanied him there, Straubel's aircraft now had four other officers aboard: Major Joseph A. Burch, a member of Brereton's headquarters staff, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Glenn H. Boes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Erwin R. Kriel of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Squadron - and Colonel William H. Murphy. Straubel had orders to take his passengers to Soerabaja before flying on to his base at Malang.<sup>7</sup>



First flown in 1935, the twin-engined B-18 Bolo medium bomber was based on the design of Douglas DC-2 airliner. Low cost, rather than speed, payload and range, led the Army to order the type in quantity, so that by December 1941 B-18s were 'the most numerous bombers deployed outside the continental United States'. Unfortunately, the B-18 was also 'hopelessly obsolete' by then. Though aircraft 36-338 had seen service in the fighting in the Philippines, it was now being used as a transport.<sup>8</sup> As Straubel headed towards Soerabaja and Malang in 36-338, he was flying into danger, for the Japanese were launching their initial air attacks on Java. At Malang's Singosari airfield, airmen standing outside their quarters watched the approach of what they believed were 'new types of American fighters'. Then 'all hell suddenly broke loose' as Japanese aircraft attacked with machine-gun and cannon fire.<sup>9</sup>

A sad irony hangs over Straubel's apparent unawareness of impending disaster: Colonel Murphy was a radar expert; possibly Lieutenants Boes and Kriel were as well, for one account says that the passengers on the B-18 belonged to Murphy's staff. At 9.00a.m., 18 aircraft from the Tainan Kokutai of the Imperial Japanese Naval Air Force had left Balikpapan to attack Maospati airfield, near Soerabaja. In the lead were aircraft of the unit's 3<sup>rd</sup> Chutai. Apart from a Mitsubishi

C5M 'Babs' reconnaissance aircraft, the formation comprised Mitsubishi A6M Reisen fighters, better known by their codenames of 'Zero' or 'Zeke'. Arriving over Java at 12.05, the pilots spotted the lone B-18 thirty miles west of Soerabaja. Two A6Ms, flown by Naval Air Pilot 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Yoshisuke Arita and Naval Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Yoshio Motoyoshi, broke away to attack.

Straubel tried to outrun them but, in an aircraft with a top speed of about 215 miles an hour, his task was hopeless against the faster and highly manoeuvrable fighters. It was only a matter of time before 36-338 went down 'a fiery wreck'. In the crash, Straubel and his co-pilot Lieutenant Russel M. Smith were thrown clear. Accounts differ on their physical condition at that point. Straubel ventured three times into the burning wreck trying to save the others. In their rescue efforts, both pilots sustained fatal burns, and died the following morning in a Dutch hospital. It is known that one of their passengers, Major Burch, died in hospital, but it would seem that Lt. Col. Murphy and the others lost their lives in the aircraft.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of more detailed information, it is likely that two reasons shaped the decision to give the name 'Camp Murphy' to the Ground that housed the 11<sup>th</sup> Replacement Control Depot. At that stage of the war in the southwest Pacific, Col. Murphy was one of the highest-ranking American officers to have lost his life. In addition, he had been highly regarded by General Brereton, who was apparently in Melbourne around the time the B-18 was shot down.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the reason, the name of William H. Murphy has become a proud part of the Melbourne Cricket Ground's history. May he - and the others aboard the B-18 - rest in peace.

Alf Batchelder

Alf's most recent publication was *Melbourne's Marines : The First Division at the MCG 1943*.

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I am especially grateful to Monica Walsh, Research Curator at the RAAF Museum, Point Cook, for her assistance in finding details about the 11<sup>th</sup> Replacement Control Depot and the Japanese attack on the B-18. Gene Salecker, author of the meticulously researched *Fortress Against The Sun*, has been extremely generous in his efforts to uncover details about Col. Murphy, while Bill Hilliard, of the USAF's 8<sup>th</sup> Photo Reconnaissance Squadron was most helpful in explaining the nature of the 11<sup>th</sup> Replacement Control Depot.

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<sup>5</sup> Salecker, Gene E: *Fortress Against The Sun*, Pennsylvania, 2001, p.31; Brereton, Lewis H.: *op.cit.*, p.86.

<sup>6</sup> Salecker, Gene E: *op.cit.*, p.85; Edmunds, Walter D.: *They Fought With What They Had*, Boston, 1951, p.311.

<sup>7</sup> Edmunds, Walter D.: *op.cit.*, p.311; Dorr, Robert F.: *7th Bombardment Group/Wing, 1918-1995*, Paducah, 1996, p.89. "Diary of Operations of the 19th Bomb Group in Java," pp. 47-49, Papers of the 11<sup>th</sup> BG at the US Air Force Historical Research Agency.

<sup>8</sup> Francillon, René J.: *McDonnell Douglas Aircraft since 1920*, London, 1979, pp.200-209.

<sup>9</sup> Salecker, Gene E: *op.cit.*, p.120.

<sup>10</sup> Salecker, Gene E: *op.cit.*, p.121; Taggart, Chaplain William C.: *My Fighting Congregation*, New York, 1943, p.88; Edmunds, Walter D.: *op.cit.*, p.311; "Diary of Operations of the 19th Bomb Group in Java," pp. 47-49; Shores, Christopher, Cull, Brian and Izawa, Yasuho: *Bloody Shambles*, Volume II, London 1993, p.150.

<sup>11</sup> Salecker, Gene E: *op.cit.*, pp.129-130; correspondence with Alf Batchelder.