



## Victorian Chapter

### President's Musings – July 2020

On August 24<sup>th</sup> we planned to restart our Speaker's Program with an address by WO Ray (Pedro) Rich OAM BEM RAN Rtd. Pedro was going to recount his experiences of the Voyager II tragedy which occurred on February 10, 1964 when his ship came in to collision with HMAS *Melbourne II*. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone our meetings until happier times.

Our colleagues in Sydney hosted a 'Zoom' presentation on July 21 and a number of our Victorian members were able to enjoy viewing it. We enjoyed an excellent presentation by Gillian Lewis entitled 'Finding HM Bark Endeavour'. I was able to join the Zoom Meeting by clicking on the link provided by Noel Phelan in the invitation I received, and typing in the meeting ID provided. To join the August presentation, you email Noel Phelan and request an invitation. The current email address to contact Noel on is [noelphelan@bigpond.com](mailto:noelphelan@bigpond.com).

On August 29, 2017 Alf Batchelder and I visited the USS Bonhomme Richard, a Wasp- class amphibious assault ship (Landing LHD6). Her primary mission is to embark, deploy, and land elements of a Marine landing force in amphibious assault operations by helicopter, landing craft and amphibious vehicles and she has the capacity to be a light aircraft carrier when required. When we toured the ship, the F35B Fighters she carries had been flown off. With a displacement of 41,006 tons



*A fire continues to be fought into the evening on board the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) at Naval Base San Diego.*

she is a larger version of our Canberra class LHD's. She is a very impressive ship and it was with profound distress that we learnt of the calamitous fire damage which occurred. As previously reported

the fire began on Sunday July 12 and there is an

excellent video available of the fire damage available on <https://navypic.net/news.html>. This is our Navy Victoria Network Website and it is on the July News page, which the above link will take you. Scroll down and you will find the video on the damage which was listed on July 18, and on July 14 a video of the ship on fire was also listed.



*Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday, right, walks through the ship to view the aftermath*

Marty Grogan and I journeyed down to Dromana on June 18 to visit Gerry Shepherd. Gerry served in the RAN in both WWII and the Korean conflict. On his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday he made himself available to serve in the Navy, however he wasn't called up until July 4 1944, thirteen months later. Gerry was a member of the Commissioning crew of the Tribal Class destroyer, HMAS Bataan. She was launched in January 1944 and commissioned 25 May 1945. She proceeded to the Philippines in July 1945 and from there was sent to Japan, reaching Tokyo on 31 August 1945 to take part in the surrender ceremony, which took place on 2 September. Bataan remained in Japanese waters assisting with the evacuation of allied prisoners of war and as the Australian Squadron representative until 18 November 1945 when she sailed from Tokyo to return to Australia. In 1946 Gerry served in both the corvette HMAS *Lismore* and the Tank landing ship HMAS *LST 3008*.

With the advent of the Korean War in 1950, Gerry re-enlisted in the RAN and during the conflict he served in both HMAS Anzac and HMAS Bataan.

Over the years since the Wars, Bataan as well as his fellow crewmates have been very special to Gerry. He has been very active in his Bataan Association. He obtained the Admiralty plans of the ship and undertook the building of a model of her to scale and which is meticulous in its detail. Truly a magnificent model as the photos(*below*) prove! Both Marty and I were most impressed when we viewed it.

At Gerry's request, Marty contacted our friend John Perryman, the Director of Strategic and Historical Studies at our Sea Power Centre in Canberra to ascertain if Sea Power would like to provide a suitable home for the model.

Upon viewing the photos, John enthusiastically accepted Gerry's offer and thus this excellent model is assured a prominent position at Sea Power to be enjoyed by many, indeed when the current Covid position eases Gerry and members of his family intend to go to Canberra and view her in her new home. They will be made very welcome.



Gerry now lives in a beautiful spot in Dromana overlooking the bay. Still involved in local affairs, he is an active member in the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Dromana, having been a member for many years.

Yours Aye!

*Rex Williams*

