

A Presentation by Mr Rod White AM.RFD, President Hornsby RSL Sub Branch, of a Eulogy to the Late, Mr Warren James Forbes, resident of Turramurra and a business proprietor of Hornsby, who was Born 20 June 1923 and Died 31 December 2009.

“ On behalf of the Hornsby RSL Sub Branch Committee and Members, The Hornsby RSL Club President Mr Colin Bourke his Board, Executive and Members and the Hornsby War Memorial Hall Committee President Mr Billy Lee York and his Colleagues, I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to Warren’s family and friends, particularly to his son’s, Lyndsay and Craig and their families.

Warren Forbes was a most respected and successful person. He was a modest man but proud of his family achievements, in peace and in war. Being one of that courageous generation that were born into the post World War One era, growing up through the Great Depression and confronting the trauma of the Second World War, Warren experienced aspects of life as a young fellow that the rest of us wish we never have to, nevertheless he set about making the best of his lot.

The establishment of Forbes Footwear by the family at what we now know as Willander Court in 1940, was soon followed by the war service of Warren’s brother William, who served in the European Theatre with the famous 463 and 467 Squadrons RAAF. William was killed in action in early 1945 as a Wing Commander with 467 SQN whilst on night operations over Germany. He was awarded both the DSO and the DFC. Warren was immensely proud of William’s contribution and suffered his brother’s supreme sacrifice. A written record exists from one of the crew who survived as a POW, who states that when the aircraft was hit and could go no further, William gave the command for the surviving crew members to bale out, but as this fellow was leaving the plane he could see that William was still at the controls of the aircraft, where he remained to the end.

In due course, Warren enlisted in the Army and was attached initially to the Coastal Artillery at North Head near Manly. Through his service he had three different regimental numbers, due to various phases of service in the CMF and the AIF. At the time of entry into Sydney Harbour by the Japanese Midget submarines, Warren was on duty with the heavy coastal guns at North Head, which were sighted to engage enemy shipping up to 15 miles to

sea, incapable of bringing concerted fire down onto vessels already within the Harbour.

It was from this position he was able to witness some of the intense activity within the harbour that night, resulting in the sinking of the Kuttabul, the search for the midget submarines and destruction of some by depth charges, followed by the flurry of activity for quite some time thereafter.

Having resumed his civil career back in Hornsby after the war, Warren immersed himself in supporting the local veteran community. He went on to serve for many decades, concurrently, with the RSL Club, the RSL sub Branch and the War Memorial Hall. For over 50 years he was very closely associated in one form or another, with these and other great local institutions.

We remember Warren especially for his personal mannerisms. He was wonderful company to be with and he enjoyed the comradeship of those of all ages that he met. Professionally, he epitomised all the attributes of a good, successful and astute businessman. He was always meticulously attired, capable of sharing with others sound advice based on real experiences and enjoyed having direct input into the betterment of organizations, that he wanted to see succeed as his interests had.

We recall his passion on a range of issues. As a fellow business operator he would address meetings, particularly annual general meetings, in a robust but engaging manner. His proposals and the motions put for consideration by Warren, had always been soundly based and effectively presented. It was this style of interaction that saw Warren become a form of respected mentor to many others. A good example of this was his ability to engage in key issues with the Boards and Senior Executives of the RSL Club and other groups. Bob Ayscough, the former long standing CEO of the Hornsby RSL Club, would recall the frequent meetings with Warren on a broad range of issues.

As with any business or organisation, challenges and difficult situations will always arise and it was Warren's great ability, to effectively collaborate with the various bodies to bring about stability and a way forward. The close affinity held today between the RSL Club, The RSL Sub Branch and the War Memorial Hall Committee, is clearly evidence of this.

Warren was a Director on the Board of the Hornsby RSL Club and for his most significant contribution over a very long period to the Club and its members, he was appointed a Life Member.

Likewise at the Hornsby War Memorial Hall Committee, he gave unmeasurable support for decades, as an elected officer and with the Hornsby RSL Sub Branch, he was a pillar of support to successive Presidents, Committees and the Members. Warren was the key link, in the chain of these local organisations, that share similar ideals and objectives.

Indicative of Warren's high standing amongst friends, was our knowledge of some of the personal support he gave to others. "The Digger Spirit" was always within him. Whether it was standing on the roof of his shop as our official photographer, for the Commemorative Services and Parades at the Hornsby Cenotaph, Laying on the mound with a Lee-Enfield Rifle at the Annual Diggers Day Shoot at the Hornsby Rifle Range, or giving crucial support when an old mate needed a hand, like how he supported his friend John Portlock, a Korean War veteran and a long serving vice president of the RSL Club, who passed away not so long ago.

I can assure you there were many other situations where Warren gave someone a hand in one way or another, without making any fuss about it.

To the Family and Friends,
We are honoured to have known Warren Forbes and to have experienced the sincerity of his friendship and wisdom.
We salute his unparalleled contribution, to his local community, through the many groups large and small, that he served in a most honourable way".

"Lest We Forget"

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Hornsby RSL Sub Branch, Sydney NSW Australia