

Obituary

Lt Col Henry Laurie (Harry) Bell, M.Sc., Ph.D. died at Armidale, NSW on 8 December 1984, aged 55 years. At the time of his death he was the immediate Past President of this Association. He was President in 1981 and 1982.

Harry's two, almost lifelong, interests were his soldiering profession and his hobby as an ornithologist. In both fields he achieved distinction. As a young lad he was particularly intrigued with military history while, at the same time developing a keenness for bird study. His interest in soldiering led to his joining the Citizen Military Forces on their re-establishment in 1948. Four years later he was selected for the first course at the Army Officer Cadet School at Portsea. Following graduation he was commissioned into the Infantry. Subsequently he served in Korea and Vietnam; then, after a very successful course at the Army Staff College, he began what was to be a long and close association with Papua New Guinea and its people. He served as a Company Commander in the 1st Battalion, The Pacific Islands Regiment for three years, and after a year in Vietnam he returned to PNG to the Military Cadet School where he trained many of the embryo leaders of that emerging nation.

Throughout this period he maintained his keen interest in ornithology contributing many papers in numerous journals, particularly the *Emu*, and a number in our own journal. Harry Bell was intensely interested in the birds of Papua New Guinea. He initiated moves for the preparation of a New Guinea Field Guide but the artist selected was heavily committed and unable to participate. At the same time American ornithologists were also planning a guide; when he learnt of this, Harry offered his services. He became one of the main contributors writing accounts for more than 100 species covering herons, rails, fantails and scrubwrens. The Senior Author, in a letter to me, stated "Harry was, by far, the most co-operative member of the bird book team. He always had his work done before the deadline, . . .". "He added a great deal of information to the drafts of other people's accounts, and thus was an important part of the book effort." It is unfortunate that Harry was not able to see the publication of this work to which he contributed so much. However, he

took great delight last year in showing me colour slides of many of the plates.

In 1975, for health reasons, he retired from the army and began his formal academic career in Canberra. From there he returned to Port Moresby, to The University, as a teacher, at the same time studying for his M.Sc. Finally, the Bell family settled in Armidale where he continued his studies, at The University of New England, for his Doctorate of Philosophy. This was conferred on him in 1983 and, at the same time, he was appointed a Research Fellow at that University.

This latter part of his studies was achieved despite his suffering from cancer. His determination, the high standards he set himself, his honesty, integrity, vigor (later affected by his disease) and his ability are but some of the traits of character by which he will be remembered for a long time.

The task of a soldier's wife is not always easy, often separated by long distances for lengthy periods. His wife, Naomi, gave loyal and loving support in all his endeavours. The Bells moved into their new home at Armidale early in 1984. It had been Harry's desire to plant out his garden with native trees and shrubs. However, as his health deteriorated, he realised that he would be unable to do this. A group of friends offered to assist and he was able to supervise the work shortly before he died.

At a memorial service in his honour, the following was the summary of the eulogy. "There will be those in Papua New Guinea, Australia and elsewhere in the world who are, as yet, unaware of this event here today but who have much cause to appreciate Harry's effect on their lives. When they learn of his passing into the silence they will remember him with much gratitude, respect and affection. That memory will endure far into the future. Each of them, and us, may have our own special thoughts about Harry when we recall him as an erudite and courageous soldier, leader, scholar, scientist, teacher, gardener and, more importantly, husband, father and friend."

He will be greatly missed but well remembered by his loved ones and his many friends of which I was privileged to be one. To his widow, Naomi, their daughter and two sons, we extend our deepest sympathy at their great loss.

S.G.L.