

Eulogy

LCDR Henry Hall MBE, OAM, RAN (Rtd)

Wednesday, 5 July 2017 – HMAS *Albatross*

Commodore R.G. Morrison CSC, RANR

Lieutenant Commander Henry “Nobby” Hall had a milestone anniversary a few months back - 95 years young he was - four score and fifteen. He was proud of his innings and rightly so.

My thanks to Nobby’s daughters, Gwyneth and Jenny, for inviting me to share a few words about their much-loved Dad. Indeed, a special and personal thank you. My thanks to dear Joyce, Nobby’s devoted partner as well.

May I also take this moment, on behalf of our Chief of Navy, to thank all past and present uniform folk for your presence here today – Nobby would be so humbled.

Nobby Hall joined the Royal Australian Navy just prior to World War 2 and served our nation for well over four decades. Almost half of his time was served at sea, and much of that in challenging times.

My name is Bob Morrison and Nobby Hall was a mate of mine. We met at HMAS *Albatross* in early 2007. I was the Commanding Officer at the time; we clicked from word go and have kept in close touch ever since.

Nobby was a great man - a truly great man - with top shelf human qualities integral to his make-up. His long and distinguished career in our Navy only helped to draw them out.

A young sailor during the Second World War, Nobby was a proud “Cruiser” man. He served onboard many of His and Her Majesty’s Australian Ships including *Australia*, *Mildura*, *Canberra*, *Hobart* and *Shropshire*. Later in his career he served in the carrier’s *Sydney* and *Melbourne*. He served with distinction - he served with honour – he served with pride.

He was decorated for his courage at the Battle of Savo Island. He was there at Balikpapan, Brunei Bay, Tarakan and the Philippines. He was at the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay.

He later commissioned; was made a Member in the Order of the British Empire and of course he spent many years serving here at *Albatross*. In 2010 he was recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list when he awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to veterans and their families.

His close friend and colleague from the Returned and Services League, Fred Dawson, will share with us later the detail of Nobby’s extraordinary career record – and I mean extraordinary. Please listen between the lines and absorb the extent of this fine man’s contribution to our Navy and, in turn, our Nation.

Nobby served through times the likes of us have never seen or are unlikely to see. He joined the Navy in 1938 as an Ordinary Seaman and “swallowed the anchor” 43 years later, as a commissioned officer, coinciding when the likes of our current most senior officers were embarking on their own careers. He served through the on-set of the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons. He served through the missile age. He served in tumultuous times.

To me and many others, it is Nobby’s post service contribution that we also respectfully remember. A noble and utmost selfless man, after he retired from the Navy he devoted his efforts into supporting veterans and their families, and mentoring young sailors and junior officers under training. He did so with gusto, sincerity and equal distinction. There are many stories I could share with you about the wonderful times I had with my good friend which I cannot do justice during this brief moment.

Much of Nobby Hall’s life was the Navy; the Navy was Nobby’s life. He loved the Navy – he breathed Navy – he dreamt Navy – he had it for breakfast, lunch and tea.

Nobby Hall was a man of our people

For years Nobby was a most welcomed guest at Navy activities and events across the Illawarra and South Coast regions and wider when the occasion called. It often did.

He cherished his involvement with the commissioning of HMAS *Canberra III*, all those years after that fateful period with her namesake at the Battle of Savo Island. He was very proud to be referred to as ‘Father of the Met’ (meteorology) Branch.

Nobby had many, many friends – serving and ex-serving – in uniform and out. Sailors, Officers, Admirals, Chiefs and young Seaman, Commanding Officers and their crew, ship’s drivers, stokers, bosuns and more. He knew all the Commanding Officers at *Creswell* and *Albatross* - everyone knew Nobby.

Along with his generosity and vast knowledge, he particularly valued accepting invitations to attend Official Receptions and Graduation parades at the Royal Australian Naval College.

Indeed, his professional affinity with junior officers under training at the College was something to behold. He was always encouraging our new trainees to strive for their best. He was well known for his palm cards that he would hand out to anyone within earshot. These cards held words of wisdom for a junior officer - they always had a leadership message - they were snippets of gold.

While avidly sharing his knowledge and encouraging juniors, Nobby was equally passionate about Navy's future and what should be done, particularly with the ongoing development of Navy people. He was never backward in coming forward in letting the incumbent Chief of Navy know how to improve the RAN Divisional System - I am sure Admiral Barrett and his predecessors can vouch for that!

Nobby was a model Divisional Officer

A personal story.

He was a regular visitor to HMAS *Albatross* during my time as CO and where he always and I mean always inquired about the welfare and wellbeing of the many folk who worked at the base. Very, very giving, I was particularly grateful for the time and support he devoted to the younger serving men and women, which also extended to their families.

After my departure, I was aware Nobby made separate contact with the Office of the Chief of Navy requesting the details of a current serving sailor who he had never met, but the "sailor's sad family situation" brought about by military service and which he had heard about through the media, needed to be "acknowledged by others besides the chain of command". I know LCDR Nobby Hall followed through with yet another unselfish deed. He was the ultimate Divisional Officer.

Nobby loved wearing his Navy uniform which he wore on every appropriate occasion

His rig was always immaculate from top to toe – he wore it well – he wore it with much pride.

I recall a time we had in my office early in our association: "Nobby, you're out of uniform. You're missing your Navy Sea Readiness Badge". Distraught he was. So down to *Albatross* 'Slops' (clothing store) we marched to make matters good. On the way I made the mistake of asking if he had completed 12 years at sea and thus qualifying him for a Tier 4, Gold badge. "Walked up the gangway in 39 with my kit bag and can't remember going ashore", he retorted with a 'why are you asking me this glint' in his eye. What a character.

Nobby was a Flag Man – a vexillologist and a very knowledgeable one at that.

He always had a flag or pennant flying at the main mast at 'Spin Drift', the family home at Currarong. Mind you, not any flag – predominantly naval flags and pennants that any 'Bunting Tosser' (signals yeoman) worth their salt would be proud - the *Royal Standard* was a favourite. I wouldn't be surprised if he had a Chief of Naval Staff flag. I can confirm he had a Chief of Navy car pennant in his collection – on loan it is!

Nobby had a wonderful way with language - language from a bygone era.

Not only 'JackSpeak' which readily rolled off his tongue, but with the Queen's English. He was well read and was sharp as a tack. He was also prolific with the pen and had beautiful, beautiful writing. Moreover, each piece of correspondence was often accompanied by a meaningful message.

Nobby loved to spin a yarn or three – he was superb at it.

Only recently he was sharing more stories with me about Navy and his experiences with "VAT Smith" and "Tony Synnot" (both those distinguished flag officers received big ticks from Nobby), when out came a flash-back about "Harry Farncomb", and then another about the "Talking Horse"!

Harry Farncomb of course was Rear Admiral Harold Bruce Farncomb. Apparently Lower Deck Henry Hall was at then Captain Farncomb's beck and call – no more said!

"And who was the talking horse?" I asked. "Dollard" he replied in a flash. For those unaware, Captain Allan Nelson 'Et' Dollard was one of several Commanding Officers during Nobby's time at *Albatross*. "Dollard cut the mustard" according to Nobby.

Typical Nobby – stories, stories, and more stories, Wonderful stories, brilliantly articulated and often accompanied by a *ditty* or two. He had phenomenal recollection - Lo and behold if you were a senior officer and a light-weight! That said, he was always, always respectful.

While Navy was in his blood, Nobby was very much a Family Man.

He loved his family. I have been fortunate enough to meet Gwyneth, Jenny and Joyce in recent years. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of Nobby's life.

I very much enjoyed visiting him during his later years at the "Beach House" at Currarong and at the "Town House" in Bomaderry. I witnessed many special times – he loved his family in spades.

My wife and I had the privilege of visiting Nobby at Currarong a few weeks back – he was tiring, but rallied for the occasion. Gwyneth and Joyce were there, along with his great-grandson. Nobby talked and talked – he was holding court. He talked about the Navy and our people - he talked fluidly and with purpose and presence - it was special and precious.

I have my own memorial space at home dedicated to Lieutenant Commander Henry Albert Longdon Hall, MBE, OAM, RAN (Rtd) – many books, papers, letters, cards, snippets, trinkets and Navy memorabilia that he has kindly passed my way over the years.

I mentioned Nobby Hall was a generous man. One time he gave me his personal Navy officer's sword – a beautiful gesture. It will stay with Navy.

However, Nobby's defining gift to me without doubt, was his friendship – **a wonderful Navy friendship.**

Rest in Peace and God Bless You Lieutenant Commander Nobby Hall

A good life - a good man.

A great Navy man - one of the finest to don the uniform.