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16  
Personal History

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LEGACY

Apart from family the most continuing element in my life in Australia has been Legacy. For the un initiated I quote 'Legacy is a unique Australian organization of ex servicemen who translated the concept of mateship born in war into an obligation of voluntary service caring for the dependants of their comrades who died on service or subsequently'.

Founded in 1923, it is now a network of autonomous Clubs covering Australia, each of whom interpret their obligations in their own way, bound only by the Code, which contains the most important phrase 'Personal service is the main essential'.

I was invited to join Melbourne Legacy in 1961 by a good friend Ron Foskett. I had only lived in Australia for four years and knew little of what it meant and has turned out to be one of the most important influences of the past three decades. Perhaps having no close relatives nearby the friendships made through Legacy have been deep and enduring

As to the work of Legacy, in the early period of my connection the dependants of comrades who died on service or subsequently meant widow with children. Caring meant visiting the homes of the allotted families, helping to make the decisions which would have been made by the absent husband or father, such as advice on schooling or financial budgets; practice help with school homework arranging holidays or outings. Assistance with cash grants were a less important matter but in some cases were necessary.

Legacy has never been regularly funded by governments so the finance required has always had to be raised from the public by badge selling or arranging sporting events. Wives of Legatees have usually arranged their own Clubs and gave great help in social and fund raising activities.

As the years passed the help which our dependants wanted from Legacy changed. Children grew up and job seeking became important and by the 1980s Legacy found it's self caring for widows whose children had left home and whose needs were good housing and clubs and entertainment to counter loneliness.

To handle matters of mutual interest and to make representations to Governments a Coordinating Council gradually was gradually established which meets once a year at major Clubs in rotation.