Legacy and Sister Clubs

(Speech by Legatee Schofield at Geelong Legacy Annual Meeting 1954)

It is my privilege and pleasure to propose the toast of “Legacy and Sister Clubs”.

First I would like to say a word about “Sister Clubs”. Much of the value in Legacy of attending the annual meetings of other clubs is NOT listening to the toasts, reading the annual reports and balance sheets BUT FIRSTLY in the unofficial chats which members have together, exchanging ideas, problems and methods of carrying out their particular Legacy jobs – all binding our great Legacy family today; and SECONDLY the ‘horse sense’ or words of wisdom and plans for the future from the representatives of our Mother Club – Melbourne – and our ‘guiding stepmother’ co-ordinating council. We do welcome all representatives of other clubs to this dinner and only hope that your visit here roves as valuable as enjoyable.

The main toast is “Legacy” and looking back over this year two things have occurred which should vitally effect Legacy and Legatees.

Firstly the visit of our most gracious Queen – who by her special interest in our widows and wards and her own example of unselfish devotion and service to her people should inspire us in our work, and make us strive to do even more for those for whom we care. Never let us forget that war, in destroying all that is finest and best, leaves for us who are left only their example – we must strive to ensure their children grow up as loyal Australians inspired by their example to serve their country and fellow man in peace as willingly as their fathers in war. I feel that the work being carried out by our Intermediate Clubs is the result of such inspiration.

Secondly, I wish to refer to the death of the founder of Legacy – LIEUT. GEN. SIR STANLEY SAVIGE, KBE, CB, DSO, MC, ED, or, as he would much prefer, Legatee Stan Savige. I well remember some years ago on asking him to wear his uniform with all its trappings when opening our new gymnasium he said “No, I am legatee first and prefer it so.” This, I think, typified his whole outlook. He did an amazing amount of work for the good of the community and always the welfare of Legacy was foremost in his thoughts and actions. He was a man for whom, the greater his personal success, the greater he felt his obligation of service to his country and fellow man. I feel that I should endeavour, particularly for the younger Legatees of the last war, to say something about the life of this fine citizen, fine soldier and fine Legatee.

He was born on June 26th 1890 at Morwell, of very humble parents, in a very humble home. I feel it was his proud memory of this that made him a champion of the underdog and so understanding with his fellow citizen and soldiers. He was educated at Korumburra State School and later in life, mainly by his own efforts, he was an avid reader of military history and devoured books of all types which broadened his mind and he became versed in a very wide range subjects and an excellent after dinner speaker.

He was a member of the Junior and Senior Cadets and then a Scout Master until he enlisted in the 24th Battalion as a private early in 1915. Due to sheer ability he rapidly passed through the ranks and was promoted Lieutenant in the field in the same year for his work on Gallipoli. As Adjutant of the 24th Battalion and the I.O. Brigade Major Sixth Brigade under Gellibrand in France he won three M.I.D. (mention in despatches) and later the Military Cross about which General Gellibrand concludes a personal letter of congratulations to Lt. Savige with the following “If all Military Crosses were as well earned they would be a bit rarer and more through of – for the man who wears your bit of ribbon is a good solider and has proved it”.

In 1917 he was selected for that gallant band “Dunsterforce” for service in Persia where he served until 1919 and won the D.S.O. for his outstanding exploits. It is of interest to younger members that later he found time to write a book “Stalky’s Forlorn Hope” based on the doings of “Dunsterforce”.

On returning to Australia a group of individuals were inspired by a letter written in August 1923 by Stanley Savige’s old chief – General Sir Jon Gellibrand, who had formed the Remembrance Club in Tasmania. They met and soon after the Melbourne Club was formed. In Stan Savige’s own words given at his farewell dinner in 1939 – “Our first ideals might, I think be summarised like this. A demonstration was required to convince the public, without any misapprehension at all, that the men of the AIF were a decent crowd of fellows, capable of standing on their own little flat feet and finding a niche for themselves in life. It was also proved, to our minds, that, if any help was to be given to the returned soldier, no greater help could be given than by his comrades endeavouring to establish him in business, and that became the second plank in our platform.

On those ideals we endeavoured to carry on the job of work – a job that did not promise any reward for an individual, but the greatest possible help to all in endeavouring to serve those who had been with us, yet were less fortunate than ourselves.

Some time afterwards, at a meeting where a few of us were gathered, Frank Doolan brought up the idea of endeavouring to do something for the dependents of the men who fought alongside us. We, like other solider organisations, had perhaps become more concerned in work to sustain the man who had returned and was up against it. We had forgotten the responsibility of looking after the dependents of the men who did not come back.

And then began a very careful investigation to see how this could be tackled. I remember the first conference was convened by George Browne, when he arranged that we should see Mr Frank Tate, the then Director of Education, who inspired us to further efforts. Another man who was in his prime in those days, the then Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Mick Ryan, gave us great help.

The problem arose as to how we would start work. Somebody was told off to see the Widows’ Association. The lot fell to me, and I refused to go without the help of only VC member of the Club Donovan Joynt. We had half a dozen quick ones at the Naval and Military Club, and then told our story to the ladies. They said it was the very thing they were looking for, so we were then full steam ahead. That was followed by a meeting of the boys who would be interested in the show. We thought 25 or 30 would turn up; 70 arrived. We discussed the matter with them, and began the system of co-operation at once. We told them that that night, a month ahead, the gymnasium would be started; they would be issued with gymnasium togs, the instructor would be there, and they would be advised of the location of the hall.

We didn’t have a hall, we didn’t have a bob, we didn’t have an instructor. We advised them in due course, and started on that night. We issued them with uniforms. We took a bit of a risk about that (or the firms who backed the bills did.)

There was one very useful lesson we had learned earlier – we picked it up from our old chief – that is, if the job is worthwhile you must have faith in it, and don’t worry about the ways and means but get on with it. The bills were paid for the sand shoes and the short pants, and the singlets; the money came along.

Although vitally interested in all activities of Legacy, and especially young people, he would not become president until 1930 and was chairman of Junior Legacy from 1932-33. He had established, mainly by hard personal physical effort, a camp at Somers for Junior Legatees – of which he was very proud.

With the rapid development of Legacy throughout Australia the need for a guiding hand was felt and the job of working out a plan for what was to be the Co-ordinating Council was given to Stanley Savige and Legatee Kemsley. Stan Savige then became Chairman of Co-ordinating Council 1937-38. His service in World War 2 is known to most of you. Starting as a brigadier commanding the 17th brigade in Lybia, Greece and Syrian campaigns, he finished as a Lieutenant General in command of 2nd Corps in Bouganville; serving also in New Guinea and commanding 3rd Division, 1st Corps and New Guinea Forces. For his distinguished services he was awarded CBE, CB, MID.

Stories 1 DOB

 2 Greece

 3 Syria – “I would rather be unpopular with a live soldier than popular with a dead one.”

After the war, not content with the service he had already given to his country, he served as Co-ordinator of Demobilisation and Dispersal in 1945-46 and Chairman of the Gratuity Board. His service to the community was recognised by your Sovereign in 1950 when he was created a KBE.

I could go on for a considerable time listing the community service jobs he undertook – Australia Day Council, Member of the Lord Mayor’s Camp for country children, - Chairman of the State Savings Bank, Trustee of the Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Victoria, etc. However I feel the two which gave him most satisfaction were firstly, the expansion of Legacy in Gippsland and secondly, the establishment of a Legacy Club in London. I would like to conclude with two more extracts from his 1939 speech:-

There is one thing I am absolutely certain – it has never failed us and it will never fail us in the future – my belief that our work in regard to values is rather of a spiritual than a material nature. When we decide, after sincere examination, the type of work that should be done, the best thing to do is to forget the yarn of the accountants and economists, and get on with the job.”

“That has been the history of the success of Legacy. I haven’t the slightest doubt in the world that, if that spirit is departed from, on that day will be seen the beginning of the crash of Legacy. You can go to history and examine any great cause which was founded on the highest motives. When it degenerated to material affairs and material forces for its work, then began the decline and fall of that organisation which started on spiritual rather than material lines.”

I know it would be your wish when, as we honour this toast, to Legacy and Sister Clubs, we remember Legatee Stan Savige and all he has meant to Legacy. Never forgetting his guiding legacy principle. “There is no substitute for personal service.”