CONFIDENTIAL TO PRESIDENT

THE PRESIDENTS'S FUND

As I approach 90 and having the good fortune to be the longest serving active member in Legacy, I want to place on record the history and value of the President's Fund.

The credit for its establishment belongs to the late Lagatee Walter Berry, who was a member and director of the well established and highly reputed firm of Henry Berry & Co. whose business was basically domestic and building supplies.

The Club by 1930 had done much to expand Legacy all over Australia after the adoption of the widows and children of deceased conrades. But from 1930 to 1933 Australia suffered the worst depression in employment since the disastrous "ninetees". Conditions were so bad that the Parliament felt compelled by law to enforce reduced salaries and wages by a determined percentage.

After 1925 we changed course from the original creative policy of mutual membership Comradship amongst members to the responsibility of the needs of the children of deceased comrades - soon after that to include the widows. At the same time of those early years we led the policy of creating corresponding Clubs all over Australia.

We secured information from the Repatriation Department of the names and addresses of deceased ex service men which formed the main source of contact to the families. Originally we set about creating a Junior Legacy organisation for the benefit of the sons of those who had passed on later to be extended to daughters and widows.

Classes were established to create mutual relationships for boys - classes for comradeship, physical culture, advanced education, camps, etc.

No sooner had these activities been achieved when we expanded to include daughters, mostly for weekly gymnasium and mutual relationships, and employment.

Raising funds for these activities was the responsibility of selected influential personnel amongst the membership and they achieved the needs of those days at little cost to the Club.

Enrolments to membership in early years was based on selected personnel willing to contribute their services for the policy base and as the duty responsibilities increased the selection of new members became restricted. Those who had enrolled for comradeship alone gradually resigned as demands for service became neccessary.

It was this development that embarassed Walter Berry, a partner of the family company of Henry Berry Pty. Ltd. a leading organisation whose business was basically household needs.

Walter had served beside me in France when he was a personal assistant to General Monash, in the responsibilty of Camp Commandant of Aust. Corps Headquarters.

As the pressure for alloted duties developed, Walter Berry, for personal private reasons did not want to resign, and approached me in my Presidential year of 1932, offering to provide a Fund named after his Company, with a proposed permanent contribution to be disbursed secretly by the President for the relief of any member of the Club who became financially embarassed.

My Board of Management welcomed this gesture and the Henry Berry Fund was created on a permanent basis and each year's contribution passes through me to the President. The secrecy of names has been retained by successive Presidents to this day.

But I have recently learned that the Berry Fund is now practically devoid of funds.

So Mr. President, it seems a great pity that a fund that has been of such value to an unknown number of Legatees over the years, with the decreased value of money, needs some form of expansion.

May I invite you to raise the matter with the Board of Management to consider ways and means to create a continuation of the secrecy fund to be available on the same basis. If the idea of the Berry Fund could appeal to those members who could give grants on a similar basis, there is no doubt that instances may occur or are existing.

Walter Berry died soon after this Fund was created. He was walking along Bourke Street, after attending a night meeting of some kind to catch his Toorak tram home, when he dropped dead in front of Myer Emporium.

A Kennedy

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