COBBERS



'It's a good idea'

By HAL RICHARDSON
(In hospital)

I THOUGHT you might like to know this. It began when a bloke was reading "The Argus" during the weekend.

He was reading the announcement of the Old Cobbers' Column.

"The war's over," he said. "I'd be happy just to forget it."

That was understandable. He was speaking from his bed in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital—in Ward 16.

And a lot of ex-servicemen — particularly those still fighting the war from a bed in Heidelberg — feel like that.

But nobody paid any attention to him. You see, in hospital, particularly at the weekend, patients often talk just for the sake of talking. You get more lonely at the weekend.

But the bloke harped on it.

"They must reckon we're all drongos," he said.

What's wrong?

Then another bloke put his paper down.

"I don't see what's wrong with it," he said, and then it was on.

Another chap — pretty sick, too—his name doesn't matter (you remember the Army maxim, "No names, no pack drill") said, "If I send my name in the only character who would write to me would be the bloke I owed a quid to.

"I borrowed it one night

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in the swy game. We were at a staging camp and we moved out next morning. I never saw him again."

From across the ward another bloke said, "I'd like to write a few lines to one of our mug officers.

"He had that many red lines in my pay book it looked like a pakapu ticket. I'd tell him something to remember."

I wondered

That seemed about the end of the subject. I lay back on the bed and wondered then what had happened to Leo Kedward and Les Haines.

It's been a long time now. I wondered how they were getting on.

And Harry Meurer. He is back in the Army again somewhere up in New South Wales. Remember those stews we made, Harry, out of oobi and pigweed—plenty of water in it and a bit of dirt mixed in?

They carried us through, didn't they, Harry? We got out.

I looked round the ward.

I looked round the ward. Those sick fellows have no time for sentiment. No time for sympathy. On the surface, that is.

Sometimes at night, after lights out you hear one fellow say: "Bluey, you remember that thin bloke? He was in the cookhouse just after we landed at Milne Bay. You know, he . . ."

And so it goes on, until the thin bloke is traced back to the pub where he works now as barman, or up to that yellow clay that cradles his long bones.

But the memory of him is warm. You can see it glowing in a man's eyes as he talks about his old cobbers. And they say, admiringly, or sadly, wearily or viciously: "How was he?"

That is what I thought as I lay there.

"A good idea"

Then from across the ward a bush bloke, another sick boy, broke the long silence:

"I think it's a good idea.

"I might hear from some of my old mates. I'll be here for a long while yet.

"They might even come out to see me. I'll send my name in."

Here it is:

NX33812,
Gnr. H. A. Richardson,
2/15 Fd. Regt.,
R.A.A.

Three patients at Heidelberg who would like to hear from old cobbers are:

J. S. Colman, 2/2 **Pioneers**, who wants to hear from **Bert Wills**, who was a P.O.W. in Java, and from **Jack Dunn**, of A Platoon, C Coy., both of the 2/2 Pioneers.

Ben Couston, 46 Bn., wants to contact **Hughie Boyd**, also 46 Bn., whom he saw last in Queensland, when the unit was disbanded, in 1943, and **Norm Long**, of 1 Aust. Army H.Q.

3 400319, Pte. N. Hart, still serving, but in hospital after returning from Korea, wants to hear from **Pte. Mick Hunter**, A.A.O.C., whom he believes is somewhere in Victoria.

Other calls are from:

Alan Walker, Regimental No. 7338, 5 Bn., 24 Reinforcements, is very anxious to hear from anyone who served with him and remembers him. Will his comrades please write to Mr. A. F. Bechervaise, 14 Grosvenor rd., Glen Iris, S.E.6.

Bob Conningsby, of A Coy., 58 Bn., 1st A.I.F., now of 27 Eglinton st., Moonee Ponds, wants to contact two comrades of World War I. They are **ex-Captain Wally Galbraith**, 23 Bn., 1st A.I.F., formerly of Geelong, and **"Darky" Chenall**, A Coy., 58 Bn. Both are somewhere in Victoria. Will they write, or phone him at FU2916.

The Argus invites you:

If you are a country ex-serviceman or ex-servicewoman planning a visit to the city to send us your full name, unit designation, home address, and date of your visit for publication in the Calling Old Cobbers' column.

If you are a city ex-serviceman or ex-servicewoman planning a visit to a Victorian country district, to use the same service.

Publication of your name and other details under the Calling Old Cobbers heading will be the signal to your old cobbers that you would like them to write and make a date to meet you when you are in town.

Address your letter:

"Cobbers"
"The Argus"
Box 2448, G.P.O.,
Melbourne, C.1.