

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



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NEWSLETTER

No. 100 AUGUST, 2013

A FRIEND TO ALL —

JOHN GAVIN RALSTON

by his nieces Margaret Smith and Lorraine Coulton

John Gavin Ralston, better known as "Jack" was born 26 July, 1914, at Eden, NSW. He was the ninth of ten children to Alexander John & Eliza Ralston (nee Baade).

Jack came to Orbost in the early 1920s, with his parents and siblings, and lived at the corner of Tennyson and Salisbury Streets, which was known for many years as the "Ralston house". It now features a high picket fence.

He was educated at Orbost Higher Elementary School, and then entered the printing trade as an apprentice "Linotype" operator with William Ross, at the "Snowy River Mail", where he worked for twelve years with his brother Les.



John Gavin (Jack) Ralston 1914-1967



Jack Ralston O.H.E.S. 1926 Football Team

In 1940, he married local girl Jean Cameron in Melbourne. Jean was the eldest child of Harry & Lillian Cameron (nee (Harding)). As newlyweds they lived at the end of Tennyson Street (now Sergio Bensi's residence).



Roma Cameron (Jean's sister), bridesmaid; Jack and Jean Ralston; Jack Webb, best man.

With the outbreak of the second World War, Jack, intensely loyal, enlisted on the 25th March, 1942, service No. VX77905. After almost twelve months duty in the Islands, and with the rank of Corporal, he was drafted to a printing unit which published the Australian edition of "Guinea Gold", the official newspaper for all troops in the area.

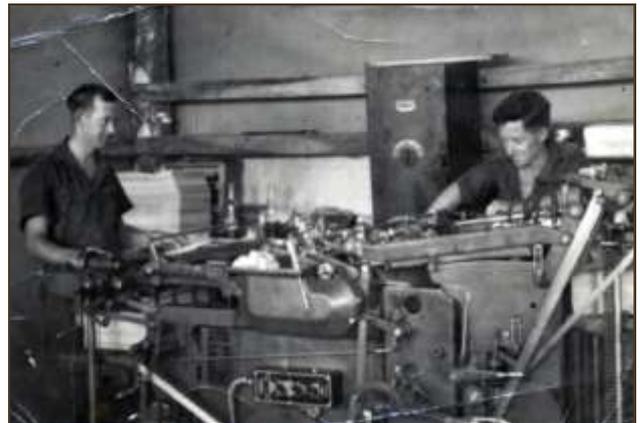
After the cessation of war, Jack was discharged on the 20th November, 1945. He resumed his trade at the "Snowy River Mail" and worked there until 1949 when he purchased Mr Keith Morgan's seed & produce business (previously McKinnon's), and now the lower end of Foodworks supermarket.

After her mother's death in 1949, Jean and Jack moved into the nearby Cameron home on "Glen Avon", to care for her father Harry and brother James. They had no family of their own, but acted as second parents to their nieces Lorraine & Margaret Smith, (owing to their father's years of ill health).

Jack and Jean operated the business together, known as J G & J M Ralston, Seed & Produce Merchants. Their business stocked a full range of garden products, budgies and animal needs, and supplied the farmers with maize and bean seeds, baling twine, etc. They were also an agency for "Sun" insurance. The backyard became a



The "Guinea Gold" Newspaper, Australian Edition. During World War 2 Jack Ralston completed majority of his war service attached to the printing unit of this official newspaper. It was published in Port Moresby for the Australians serving and fighting in New Guinea against the Japanese. An American edition of "Guinea Gold" was also produced for the U.S. troops and flown daily to Burma, Gona and Milne Bay. The Guinea Gold newspaper was published from 19th November 1942 to 30th June 1946.



Private Jack Ralston of Tennyson Street, Orbst, (left), at 'Guinea Gold's' high-speed press. He was one of the team that produced the first Northern Edition of 'Guinea Gold'.



Lorraine Smith (Coulton), Jack Ralston, Margaret Smith in front of Ralston's Seed & Produce Store.

garden nursery, servicing the townspeople well. Jack grew his own basic vegetable seedlings, however, when the 'New Australians' came to the district to work in the timber industry, he was called on to supply capsicum, egg plant and other unknowns. In those days seedlings came in long thin timber trays, and you could purchase one or 100 plants. In the beginning Jack did his deliveries by bike. Rae Thomson (Mrs Dick Wilkinson) who started work there in 1956 said the florist part came much later, "almost by accident". Another big part of their business was the Commonwealth Oil Refineries fuel depot in Clarke St, which later became BP. Lorraine recalls often going with Jack when he did his deliveries of 44-gallon drums to sawmills and farms from Sardine Creek to Karlo Creek (Wingan River). Eventually Frank Morris and later Peter Coulton were employed as drivers to pump the bulk fuel.

Jack was a loyal and faithful member of the Presbyterian Church, serving on the Board of Management for 20 years. He was ordained into the eldership at the opening of the new church in 1964.



Presbyterian Church Concert - early 1960s

Back: L-R: (Hidden), Mrs Napier, Thora Jones (Napier), Fay Moss (Williams).
Front: Norma Cooney (Williams), Jack Ralston, Betty Bordin, Eric Wehner.

Interested in sport, Jack excelled at cricket, acquitting himself well with both bat and ball in the local competition, and at Country Week. His astute captaincy and his power to inspire helped the "Band of Hope" team win many premierships. Fishing was also one of his great pastimes.

He was a member of the Orbost Municipal Band. In 1949 he joined the Masonic Lodge and was a past Master 1957-58.



Jack Ralston at the showground (Lochiel Park) with Mrs Firth (or her sister, Mrs Smooker).



Country Week Cricket Team 1932-33

Back: L-R: Jack Ralston, Royce Andrews, Harry Perry, _____, _____.
Middle: _____.
Front: _____, _____, Frank Meehan, Dr. Nettleton.



A Great Catch by the Locals!

L-R: Brian Turner, Don Blackmore, Jack Ralston, Ted Myhill, Len Turner.

Brian Turner worked at Phillips & Stone, Don Blackmore was a painter and decorator, Ted Myhill worked at G P Motors, and Len Turner (Brian's father) was visiting Orbost.

Jack Ralston gave outstanding service to the Orbost sub-branch of the RSL. He was elected to the executive in 1949, secretary in 1950, senior vice-president 1954-1966, and a representative of 37A district board for the sub-branch, during which time he held the office of president. In recognition of his service he had the honor in 1962 of being awarded life membership.

Sadly, Jack died from cancer on the 15th April 1967, after a short illness.

At his funeral service the Rev Alan Parton aptly summed up the feeling of the mourners when he said, "We give thanks to God for the life and example of Jack Ralston".

As acknowledgment to his contribution to the community, a new Court which runs off Reed St. was named, Ralston Court, after him.

From his obituary titled 'A Friend to All': "For the men of both World Wars, Jack Ralston ever showed a sympathetic understanding and for them and their loved ones he was ready and willing at all times to give a helping hand and it could be truthfully said no Digger in need was ever refused help, either in gift or kind, from him".

At the time of his death two sisters and their families resided in Orbost: Eunice (Mrs Jack Warren) and Mary (Mrs Eric Wehner).

When Jack Ralston's name is mentioned today, people always say "he was a very nice man".



Ralston family members in front of Mary Wehner's residence, Carlyle Street, Orbost - about 1958.

Back: L-R: Jim's wife, Jim Ralston, Mary Wehner (Ralston), Dot Ralston, Jack Ralston.

Front: Dorothy and Maree Wehner, Lorraine Smith.

'Snowy River Mail', Wednesday, May 28, 1969 ►

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, January 20, 1954

**Returned Soldiers—
JACK RALSTON
NEW PRESIDENT**

After many years of untiring work in the interests of returned soldiers, Mr Tom Parkinson did not seek re-election at the RSL annual meeting on Friday night.

Eulogistic reference was made to Mr Parkinson's sterling work, and the wish expressed for his continued health and happiness.

Mr Jack Ralston was elected president in Mr Parkinson's stead, with Messrs Ralph Cooney and Pat Joiner vice-presidents. New secretary is Mr Jack Webb, with Mr Steve Pugh treasurer.

Committee elected were:

Messrs. R. E. Smith, J. Irvine, W. J. Malins, A. Trevanion, A. W. Furphy, Geo Mehler, R. Hall, B. Healey, J. S. Heyne.

A strong financial position was revealed by the balance sheets.



Headstone Orbost Cemetery.

Following Jack's death, Jean continued with the BP agency in Clarke Street until May 1969.

Notice

As my association with BP Agency is now ended, I would like to thank all customers for their past patronage.
Signed J. M. RALSTON.

A selection of notices and advertisements from the 'Snowy River Mail' which provide an insight into the diversity of Jack Ralston's business and the changes that evolved over the years.

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, December 21, 1949

BUSINESS TO CHANGE HANDS

I desire to notify the public of Orbost and district that as from January 1, I will be taking over the business of Mr. K. Morgan, who has served you successfully as a seed and produce merchant. I will do my utmost to serve the needs of Orbost and district residents.

J. G. RALSTON.

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, June 1, 1955

LEMON TREES ORANGE TREES SHRUBS

Obtainable from
J. G. RALSTON
Seed Merchant. ORBOST
C.O.R. AGENT

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, May 4, 1960

C.O.R. Products

Prompt Deliveries.

Lighting Kerosene: 2 gals, 4 gals and 44 gals.
Ready-mixed Zoom for Mowers, Outboards.
Motor Spirit, Power Kerosene, Distillate, Diesel Oil.
Oils and Greases.

J. G. Ralston
Nicholson Street
ORBOST 42.
C.O.R. Agent

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, May 31, 1950

FRUIT TREES

ROSES SHRUBS

Order Now

J. C. RALSTON

Seed and Produce Merchant
Phone 42, Orbost, Box 150

GRASS SEED

GOOD STOCKS OF ALL
CERTIFIED SEEDS FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY.

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, February 1, 1967

INTERFLORA



New to Orbost

WREATHS, BASKETS
ETC.

Arrangements
Made for Delivery
Anywhere.

J. G. Ralston,
Nicholson Street
ORBOST 42.
B.P. AGENT.

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, May 6, 1952

GRASS SEED

NOW IS THE TIME TO
ORDER,

PRICES ARE RIGHT.
STRAWBERRY CLOVER
NOW, 12/6 LB.

J. G. Ralston
Seed Merchant. ORBOST.
C.O.R. AGENT

'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, January 26, 1955

KILL BLACKBERRIES with KILLABERRY

Obtainable from
J. G. RALSTON
Seed Merchant. ORBOST
C.O.R. AGENT

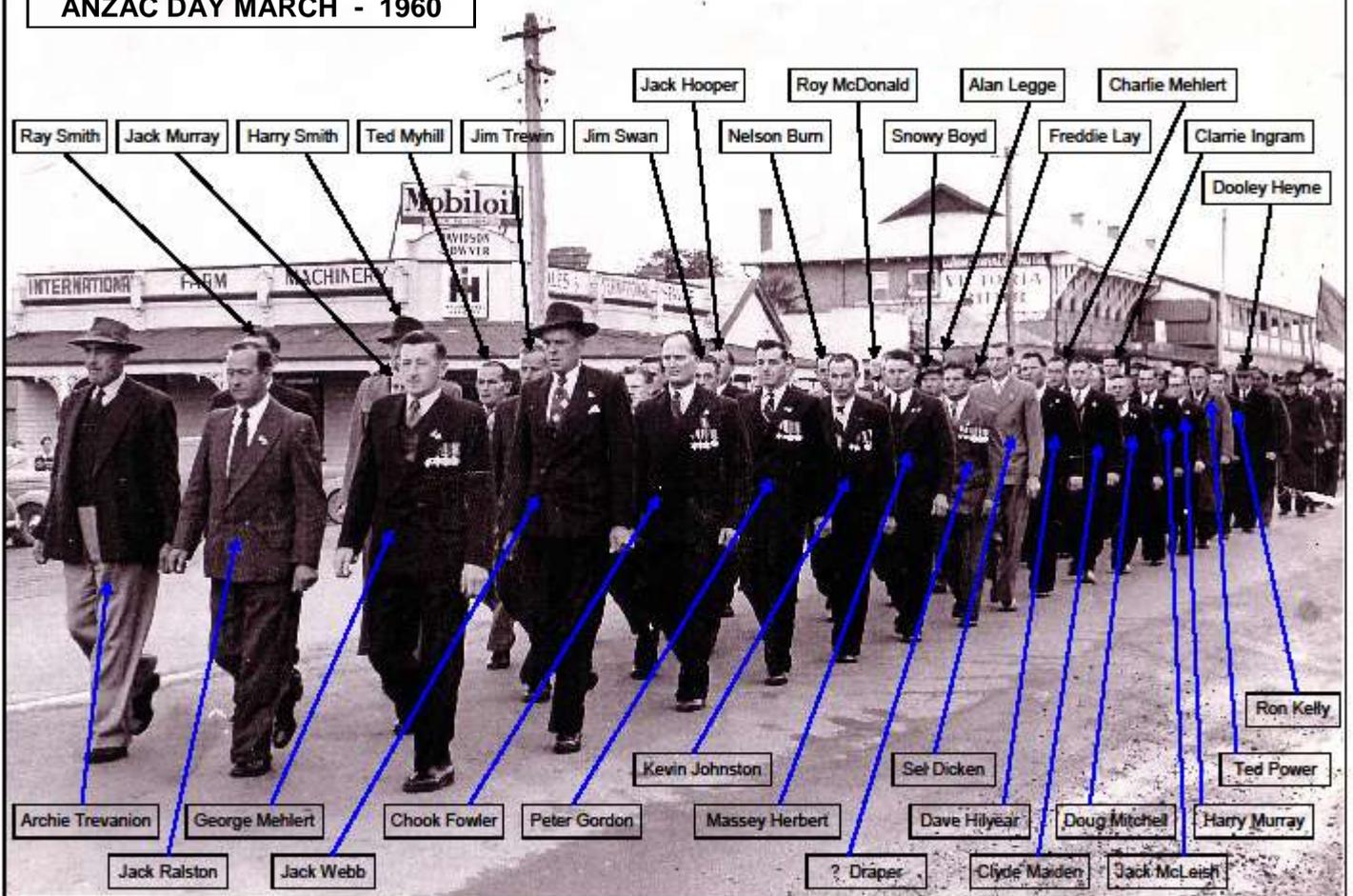
'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, May 14, 1969

J. G. Ralston,

Agents for BP
Quality Products
BP Tractor Fuels,
Lubricants, Heating Oil,
Agricultural Sprays,
Comprox Detergent, etc
Local Agent for State
Accident and State
Motor Car Insurance.

For Prompt and
Efficient Service.
PHONE 208.
ORBOST

ANZAC DAY MARCH - 1960



Corporal John Gavin Ralston VX77905 and his Certificate of Discharge dated 11th December 1945 at right

Certificate No 307634

Australian Military Forces
Certificate of Discharge

This is to Certify that

-- VX77905 Corporal John Gavin RALSTON --
-- S.O. Print & Press Unit --

Served on Continuous Full Time War Service in the
- AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE from 25 MAR 1942 to 11 DEC 1945 -

for a Total Effective Period
of One thousand, three hundred and fifty eight -- Days
which included Active Service
In Australia for 450 days Outside Australia for 575 days
Decorations and Awards during that Service

- N I L -

War Badge H.A.S. A228576

This Soldier has been discharged from the AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE
taking effect on and from
the eleventh day of December, 1945.
Place ROYAL PARK J. A. Orr Capt.
Date 11/12/1945 Officer in Charge J. A. Orr Ech. & Rec

Description of the Soldier on Discharge

Height 5 ft. 8 ins Eyes BROWN Complexion Fair Hair FAIR
Marks or Scars -----
Trade Group in which employed during Army Service -----

Specimen Signature of Soldier J. G. Ralston

*NATIVE BIRTH/MADE THE BRIDGE OF SERVICE, LISTED BY CONDUCTIVE IN FORCE OR NAME THE SOLDIER WAS ASSIGNED TO THE
"NATIVE" MARK THE MARKING OF AUSTRALIAN AND FOREIGN. IF DOES NOT INCLUDE WAR MEDALS.