

Coorparoo
& Heritage Group
Districts

Invites you to hear

Dr. Betty Lee

Speak about

Commander Eric Feldt of the Coastwatchers

Commander Eric Feldt OBE is rather a forgotten hero of World War II in the Pacific. Without him the coastwatchers, whose vital warnings helped keep Australia safe, would not have existed in the way they did. He was responsible for the initial physical setting up of the coastwatchers and was their first leader. 81 year ago, through 1942, and into 1943, his strength, intelligence and support contributed greatly to the success of his brave team of spies. Eric Feldt was born in Ingham in 1899 and in 1915 his parents relocated to Brisbane, which became Eric's home town after the war until his death in 1968. The story of Eric Feldt will be told by Dr. Betty Lee.

Dr. Betty Lee is the great niece of Eric Feldt. She is a retired general practitioner living in Brisbane. While naturally proud of her great uncle, Betty knew little more about him than having read his 1946 book *The Coastwatchers*. In retirement she was able to research Eric Feldt's life, which culminated in her writing his biography *Right Man, Right Place, Worst Time*, published in 2009.

Come along and listen to Betty speak about the life of this man and his role in protecting Australia.

At this meeting long standing members of the group will be presented with Certificates of Recognition.

Where? **Kingsbury Room**
Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre
347 Old Cleveland Rd. Coorparoo

When? Saturday **3 June 2023** at 2.00 pm

Non-members are welcome, but why not join our group? A small donation to offset hiring charges would be appreciated.

Contact President Ron Baker OAM 0412 944 095 Vice President Richard Jeffreys OAM 0411 511 369
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MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

It is with deep sadness that we advise of the passing of two of our long standing members Judy Rechner and Marie Dooley. Judy passed away early on Easter Sunday morning after a long stay in several hospitals, the last being the P.A. Hospital. Judy was a foundation member of our group and a committee member for many years until her health started to fail. Judy was privately cremated. Marie passed away on 29 April. She joined our group in the early 1990's and served on the committee for many years. Our condolences have been sent to the Dooley family.

At the April meeting Brisbane City Council's Archivist, Annabel Lloyd spoke about the material held in the Council's archives at Muriel Avenue Moorooka. The archives hold valuable information about the activities of the Brisbane City Council since its formation in 1925. In addition to minutes of all council meetings, information relating to Brisbane transport, street names and parks are just some of the information available at the archives.

Dr. Betty Lee will be the guest speaker at the June meeting. Betty is the great-niece of Eric Feldt, Commander of the Coastwatchers during WWII. In retirement Betty researched Eric Feldt's life and this research culminated in her writing a book *Right Man, Right Place, Wrong Time* in 2009. Betty will speak about Eric and the daring feats he and his fellow coastwatchers often behind enemy lines.

The presentation of Certificates of Recognition to long standing members of our group will take place at the June meeting prior to introducing the guest speaker. Originally scheduled for the April meeting it had to be deferred owing to Councillor Cunningham being unavailable at the time. Unfortunately two of the proposed recipients have now passed away.

On Anzac Day President Ron laid a wreath on behalf of our group. There was a wonderful turn-up for the ceremony and the weather was perfect, unlike last year when it rained for the entire ceremony. Queensland and for a short time Australian cricket fast bowler, Tony Dell, gave the address and told how he unknowingly suffered from PTSD after serving in Vietnam and how he finally came to live with it.

Don't forget our annual bus excursion in October. This trip is planned for 7 October and we will look at, from the coach, some of the historic homes in the Hamilton Ascot area. Expressions of interest will be called for at the June meeting with booking confirmation in late August. The cost is yet to be determined.

Planning for the Women of Coorparoo & District seminar at the St. Stephen's Church Hall on Saturday 2 September is well under way with most of the significant women chosen and their speakers organised. Costs are yet to be determined. If this seminar proves to be popular the group hopes to run another seminar next year to include the women not selected in the original seminar.

Continuing our articles on Coorparoo identities in this Newsletter we feature the late Judy Gale Rechner, historian and foundation member of the Coorparoo & District Heritage Group. This story was written by Judy herself for the Coorparoo Village history.

JUDY GALE RECHNER

Hello I am Judy Gale Rechner, the Cat's mother. I was the first resident to move in and sleep in Xavier (The Coorparoo Village Building 1). I have two Burmese cats and they have quite a large cage so that they can come and go 24/7.

I have had three major careers. I started as a Junior Secondary teacher of maths and science, soon after graduating in maths and history. I taught in Berwick Victoria, Adelaide, Perth and Brighton Victoria. My next change was to study for a year to become a teacher librarian and this morphed to becoming a professional librarian. I love cataloguing.

My next change of direction involved two years' part-time study and residential schools at New England, and I graduated with a Graduate Diploma in Local and Applied History. Soon after I gained work with the government Heritage unit as a research historian. I improved my qualifications by gaining a Master of Arts (History) by research. My thesis was on Workers' Dwellings, public housing for Queenslanders. I used my thesis as a basis for writing and publishing Brisbane house styles 1880 to 1940: A guide to the affordable house. Over 9,000 copies have been published and the book still brings income. These days I sometimes get jobs helping owners/architects/lawyers identify when a Brisbane house was built. If it was built pre 1911 it can be very hard to have it demolished or moved.

In the late 1970's I bought my first computer, a Tandy 80; known as Trash80, and I started to learn how to program. Living and working in Stanthorpe I started a computer course through the Darling Downs IAE in Toowoomba. Whilst playing married ladies in Wagga Wagga I gave up on my computer studies. In those days there was no mouse or windows, you did everything with your fingers. I still do a lot of things using the keyboard! The last few years I have been a Brisbane Seniors On Line (BSOL) mentor, helping people over 50 get on line.

I have a deep love of history, mainly Brisbane and local history these days. I have compiled several books. I am not a creative writer but do love to research a subject and then tell a story using other people's words. I have compiled several little heritage tours: The Old Coorparoo Shire: a heritage drive tour (1990), Spring Hill heritage tour: Wickham Terrace (1997), and Where have all the creeks gone? Camp Hill heritage drive tour (2001). A fascinating project was researching the story of Queen Alexandra Home on Old Cleveland Road and Grand old lady of lace was published in 2002. I really enjoyed speaking to girls and one man who had lived in this former Methodist Children's Home and the people who had worked in the building while it was TAFE College. One major problem for me is that I have appalling spelling and no grammar! Modern computers help overcome some of these problems.

Another interest probably comes from my childhood. One of my father's employees was an amateur race driver and my brother and I were carted around to race tracks from an early age. At 17 I went out with my own car as an amateur race driver. I have owned some fun cars starting with a MG GTB and I was an active member of the MG Car Club. My next sporty car was a blue Fiat X19. I told everyone it didn't have an engine because it had a front and back boot! A few years ago I was driving a Hyundai Coupe and these days I drive a Kia Koup.

Soon after moving into the village I went into depression. I couldn't cope with the mountain outside my unit. That has long since gone, and I have been allowed to add to my garden, and I think the planter boxes outside Xavier are lush and great value. Hope you agree. Moving to The Village was one of the best things I have done in my life.

What Judy did not say in her story was that she was a Foundation member of the Coorparoo & Districts Heritage Group and a long time Committee member until health forced her to resign. She was also a committee member of the National Trust of Queensland, East Brisbane Branch and also served a term as its President. In addition Judy was also a member of the Brisbane History Group and the Royal Queensland Historical Society. For many years she undertook valuable research with the RQHS as a

volunteer. In recent years Judy volunteered with local radio station 4MBS providing assistance with the station's Silver Memories programme.