

Letters to the Times

The *Midwest Times* encourages readers to send in letters/faxes and is happy to publish your responses, opinions and comments on matters of importance. All correspondence should be brief, succinct and not exceed 250 words. Nom de plumes are acceptable although publication requires a signature and contact phone number. The editor reserves the right to edit all letters.

Send your correspondence to **The Editor, Midwest Times PO Box 2391, Geraldton 6530, fax (08) 9964 3711 or email: midwest@midwest.com.au**

RSL News....

by Peter Barden

AN unforgettable experience as an eight-year-old was recalled when Mrs Lori Roberts visited Geraldton from Caloundra in Queensland for the dedication of the two million dollar HMAS Sydney II memorial on Mount Scott on November 18 and the sea-service the next day.

Living in Victoria 60 years ago, Lori and her 10 year old brother Graham were in a family group watching a navy newsreel at Middle Brighton in Melbourne that featured HMAS Sydney II.

Lori and Graham hoped they would be lucky enough to get a glimpse of their father, Chief Petty Officer ordnance artificer Laurence Thomas Woolmore.

However, half way through the documentary the viewing ceased and their grandmother, Margaret Hargraves, was called to the stage. *outside*

The devastating news was relayed to the family and the rest of the audience that the Sydney's complete crew of 645 was missing, the

ship presumed sunk.

Mrs Lori Roberts has described as wonderful and superb the generosity of Matilda and Arthur Abreau of Gummer Avenue with whom she has stayed during her Geraldton visit. The front and back garden home is in the street named after Geraldton's fourth Catholic Bishop, Dr AJ Gummer, and is almost directly opposite the Sydney II memorial.

Lori Roberts said the magnificent memorial based on a superb concept would not have had the same meaning if constructed elsewhere because its situation was virtually "next door" to where her father and other 644 crewmen were lost.

Lori said she had the pleasure of the company

of Jessie Cunnington of Toronto, Canada formerly of Victoria (whose father was Petty Officer ordnance artificer Alan Leonard Fyffe Cunnington) at the sea service for which a lovely wreath was made by Matilda Abreau.

Lori was also remembering her brother Graham who passed away in Perth last year a week before what would have been his 69th birthday.

She said she was greatly impressed by the memorabilia display at Birdwood House that featured all HMAS Sydney's and other naval and military equipment including the treasured bugle of Sgt Roy Thompson of Geraldton who paid the supreme sacrifice three days after he and brother Claude landed at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915.

Lori was delighted to learn that youthful City Band member Irene Davies often officiates with this historic instrument.

Thankyou

ON behalf of all the visitors to Geraldton, I would like to express a very special thanks to each and every member of the Geraldton Community who showed such warmth and love to all the people who travelled great distances to take part in the wonderful commemorative services held at Mt Scott for loved ones lost on HMAS Sydney II in 1941.

The Memorial site is a credit to every person who worked at creating it, I hope it has helped families to heal and bring peace to their hearts.

My personal thanks go to Matilda and Arthur Abreau and Matilda and Joe Rebola who each took me into their homes and hearts and let me share their families and friends so willingly. To the nuns, priests and the many people with whom I was privileged to share time, God Bless you all and thank you for caring, I will always remember you in my prayers and in my heart.

*Lori Roberts
Caloundra QLD*