



RADM William Lynch, MC, USNR  
National VP for Health Programs

Recently, several other Naval Reservists and I had the distinct honor of participating in a memorable event in the “land down under.” Since 1998, the Reserve Forces Day Council, a civilian Association of serving and former Australian Reservists, has conducted Reserve Forces Day celebrations throughout Australia. This annual event recognizes past and present Reservists, thanks employers and families for their untiring support, and elevates the profile of current reserve forces within the community.

Reserve Forces Day 2003 highlighted the 100th anniversary of two famous and essential corps of the Australian Army. The Royal Australian Army Medical and Nursing Corps were first formed on 1 July 1903. Like medical Reservists serving in the U. S. Armed Forces, these Corps have always relied on volunteer members joining and bringing their civilian expertise with them. Unlike the United States, Australia has a government-sponsored health care system, and, therefore, does not operate any military hospitals. The active components (Army, Air Force, and Navy) of the Australian Defense Force have a very small Medical and Nursing Corps, made up entirely of young general medical officers and nurses. All medical and nurse specialists reside in the Reserve Components of the respective services.

Enough for now about the organization, let me tell you about the trip and events. Our U.S. Naval Reserve contingent consisted of three flag officers, five Medical Corps officers, five Nurse Corps officers, seven enlisted members, and the Navy Band from New Orleans. We departed New Orleans aboard one of the new Naval Air Reserve C-40's. After an overnight stay at Hickam AFB in Honolulu, we arrived in Sydney, Australia, on Saturday, 28 June.

## Reserve Forces Day – Australian Style

COL John Moore, National Executive Director of the Reserve Forces Day (RFD) Council, and members of his staff cordially greeted us. The officers attended a regimental dinner with all of the fanfare of bagpipes, drums, and officers in kilts, hosted by the Sydney University Regiment. The evening ended with a series of toasts to the Queen Mother, President Bush, and other distinguished leaders of government and the military.

On Sunday, 29 June, we were joined by the contingents from the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The entire group of nearly 150 medical personnel formally marched to the Government House of New South Wales where Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, officially welcomed the group. Later in the evening, we were officially welcomed by the RFD Council at the “Aussie Pub Night.”

The following day, June 30th, it was back to serious business with an interesting tour of Victoria Barracks and Headquarters. Prisoners brought to Australia constructed this military fortress, perched high upon a hill overlooking Sydney. It housed the Australian Army in the early 1800's and remains functional even today. After the tour, it was back to Canberra, the Australian capital.

On 1 July 2003, one hundred years after the establishment of the Royal Australian Army Medical and Nursing Corps, the overseas contingents participated in wreath-laying ceremonies at the Australian Service Nurses National Memorial and at the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier. Following the placement of the last wreath by RADM's Debbout, Morris, and Lynch, a lone bugler sounded the “Last Post.” The ceremony concluded with a moment of silence followed by the National Anthems of all the participating countries.

Rain and overcast skies greeted our morning in Sydney on 2 July. RADM Morris and I, along with other senior leaders, presented interesting briefs to all of the medical personnel from the overseas contingents and the medical staff from

Concord Hospital in Sydney.

Saturday, 4 July, was a very special day for the entire group. The day started off with a traditional American breakfast (grits included) with lots of red, white, and blue fanfare. Later the same evening, we were treated to a special reception hosted by the American Consulate in Sydney and attended by hundreds of government and business leaders.

It was off to New Castle by train on Saturday, 5 July. The overseas contingents joined a much larger Australian military contingent and marched in a parade with bands, flags, and banners through the streets of New Castle. I am pleased to report that all Naval Reserve personnel proudly marched in unison to the Navy Band playing “Anchors Away.”

Sunday, 6 July, was a beautiful winter day in Sydney. A cloudless sky of blue mantled the bustling city of Sydney as preparations for the Reserve Forces Day Parade began. Over 5,000 military personnel (active and reserve) with military equipment and weapons (past and present) paraded through the streets of Sydney to the cheers of thousands of citizens and visitors. The U.S. contingent was led by the Navy Band, followed by the Navy group headed by RADM Debbout, and the Army group headed by Major General Ken Herbst. As we stepped off in unison to the march music of the Navy Band, one could appreciate the pride the entire group was feeling. As we approached the reviewing stand, the Navy Band played “Anchors Away,” and we all swelled with more pride than our uniforms could hold. American flags of all sizes waved to the cheers of thousands of jubilant Australian citizens. I can only end this day with one comment – WOW !!!

Later that night, we said our goodbyes to our new friends aboard a Sydney Harbor cruise ship. As we toured the waterfront on a cloudless night with the Southern Cross clearly visible in the night sky, the lights of the towering skyscrapers reflected red, white, and blue on the calm waters of the harbor. We had just experienced a trip of a lifetime. 🇺🇸