

A Simmering Culture

by Laird Darren Gallagher

For those who remember, over the last few years we have looked at martial arts folk, footballers, dancers, golfers, role-players and of late even medieval re-enactors. Recently I attended the Australian Blues Music Festival in Goulburn this year, as I have done for the last nine years. You know, there is something intoxicating about sitting in a room with a lot of smoothly dressed cats, wearing the hats and three-piece suits, snapping their fingers to the tunes at hand. Shortly after this, I headed out to Acer Arena to see Iron Maiden - a contrast I know, but a great throwback to my younger 'big hair



Photo courtesy of Nuroc Dance Company, NSW

metal' days. Looking out over the sea of black t-shirts in the crowd, it dawned on me just how much value unity provides any operation.

Just as the Rock'n'Roll scene is a sea of bowling shirts and swinging skirts, rockabilly has so much "Kulture" that they even

changed the spelling of the word to make it their own. Defence is one such group, where each Service is literally overflowing with customs, tradition and culture.

From the 'Passing of the Port' to the 'Crossing of the Line', there is something really quite special underpinning our organisation. Over the last 15 years or so, the ADF has made considerable ground towards becoming a tri-Service environment, and it could be said that the kids have never played so nicely together than they do today.

But has this rain of purple colour put out some of our Service fire? If put on the witness stand, I would have to say 'Maybe.' But, just as the embers of chivalry still flicker in the hearts of men, the Service culture and customs are still very much simmering away. Sailors may no longer enjoy the one gallon per day beer ration that they once had in the late 1600s, and airmen may not have as much wax in their mustachios, but a blast from the evening gun during a ceremonial sunset, or a game of Two Up on ANZAC day, is enough to put a tear in the glass eye of any Service member.

So do you know the customs and traditions of your Service? Do the sailors out there know that the three stripes on the blue collar (introduced in 1857) relate to Lord Nelson's three victories? Do you know what the terms 'Rocky' or 'Chocko' refer to? Being part of something that is as old as the ADF is like having a hobby presented to you on a silver platter. There are people out there in the civilian community who are military enthusiasts and know all there is to know about different uniforms and origins. Being in Defence, you have more resources at your disposal to research this stuff than your average Joe, so



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check it out. At a ceremonial occasion in the public eye, there is nothing better than having a little ace up your sleeve should someone ask, "Excuse me, why is your uniform....?"

Ciao for now

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