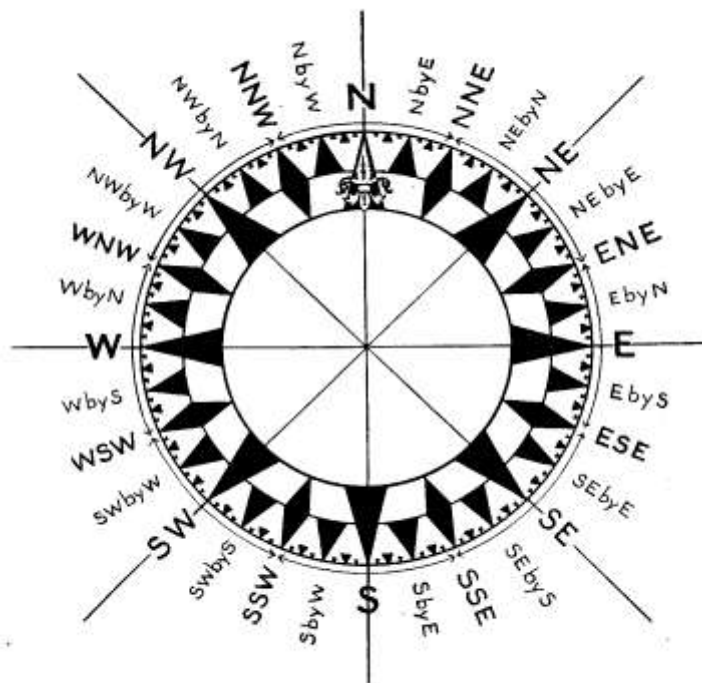




**AUGUST 2008**

**ISSUE 55**



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## Editor's Note

We are back from our UK holiday and are eagerly anticipating all the stories that you have waiting for us to put in the next newsletter.

Mike Day has sent in the next installment of his life story and we received a couple of articles from Vindi boys who are not able to attend the meetings.

*Mick & Jill Surfield*

## Skipper's Log

We are getting towards the end of the year again! Our next social event (after the cruise) will be the annual picnic in the park.

The AGM was well attended and we had a couple of surprises catching up with members we hadn't seen for a while. It was just great to see Vern and Eunice.

Unfortunately the Annual Dinner did not go ahead this year. Next year it is hoped to change the format of this event, as we really want people to attend, this will be discussed and everyone will be advised at a later date.

The first Merchant Navy Day for Australia was celebrated at Port Adelaide and went extremely well, many thanks to all the Vindi Boys who made time to attend. It is difficult when we are still working, but it was a very important date and thanks must go to John Williams who did a grand job.

If you still want to remain a member of the SA Vindicatrix, please note **SUBS ARE DUE**. Thankyou to all those who have already paid.

It is good to have Mick and Jill Surfield back from their overseas trip and we look forward to more great newsletters, but please remember they always need more material, so whatever you have hiding in your past, skeletons and all, share with the rest of us.

Bill and Marlene Robinson are still travelling, last port of call China. We look forward to seeing them in November.

**ANNUAL PICNIC**



**IN THE PARK**

Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup> from 11.30am Botanic Gardens  
Just look for Mike Day's van and the Red Ensign

Please bring all you would require for a picnic and the social club will give each person \$5.00. It is impractical for us to bring along food for everyone these days, especially as our car is a miniature and only holds me and HERSELF, who must be obeyed.

Regards  
**Tony**

## From the Almoner's desk

It was a treat at our last meeting to see Vern and Eunice Evans back with us after several months away. Vern is progressing well and we hope to see them regularly.

Our lovely indomitable Vindi Lady Pat Rix is also doing well, and a chat on the phone with her, leaves one still laughing and admiring her wonderful humour.

Vindi mate John Hines is recovering from knee replacement surgery and tackling his rehabilitation with his usual gusto and determination. John is unable to attend our meetings so he finds our newsletter a close link. Our best wishes are with John and wife Wendy.

Our thoughts are also with Graeme Tetlow and Isobel. Graeme has had a spell in hospital and his road is not easy at the moment, but we know you can't keep a Vindi boy down for long.

From the book *'Over the Hill'* I quote;

Signs of ageing;            When your birth certificate is written in Roman numerals.

   You remember a time when you could fix the television by giving it a good thump.

   Even Wonderbras can't give you a good lift.

   You don't have too much trouble bending down, it's the getting up again that's the problem.

*Anne Withey*

### PORT ADELAIDE LEADS THE WORLD



On Australia's first ever Merchant Navy Day, Port Adelaide today became the first port in the world to grant the Freedom of the City to the Merchant Navy.

The South Australian Governor, Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR and Mrs Liz Scarce were special guests at the ceremony.

Port Adelaide's unique ceremony took place after a Community March and Commemoration to celebrate Merchant Navy Day.

The event came out of the Rudd Labour Government's electoral promise to give long overdue recognition to the Merchant Navy's vital role in the very existence of Australia by proclaiming September 3<sup>rd</sup> as annual national Merchant Navy Day.

In peacetime all of Australia's vital needs from oil imports to commodities exports are transported by the Merchant Navy and in wartime its troops and military supplies.

The first man killed in World War One was a merchant seaman from the crew of a brigantine and in World War Two merchant seamen were the first and last men killed.

Merchant Navy and Maritime Union of Australia veterans and other serving and former merchant seamen and waterside workers marched with RSL veterans and the Merchant Navy Association, Vindicatrix Association, South Australian

Maritime Museum, National Trust and Mt Gambier residents linked with the Admella 150 Festival.

The march along Queens Wharf on the Port River finished at The Navigator memorial which tells the story of South Australia's worst ever shipwreck, the sinking of the SS Admella 149 years ago.

Spectators included teachers and students from local schools and many local families with a seafaring history.

South Australia's new Minister For Veterans Affairs, Michael Atkinson, City of Port Adelaide Enfield Mayor, Gary Johanson, and International Transport Federation Director, Dean Summers, addressed the marchers, followed by a short service by the new Port Chaplain, Robin Trebilcock.

The world renowned SA Pipes and Drums band led the march with a contingent from RAN Headquarters South Australia paying tribute to its sister service.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> is also Battle for Australia Day in which the RAN and Merchant Navy played a vital role throughout the Pacific. Military veterans also took part in the Port Adelaide march.

At 4 pm the Mayor of the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, Gary Johanson, presented a large symbolic key and charter to former merchant seaman and Maritime Museum volunteer Keith Ridgeway and the crew of the veteran tug Yelta at a Civic Centre reception attended by 60 guests.

The key and the charter will go on display in the Port Adelaide Seafarers Centre and become part of the port's rich maritime history.

John Williams

### War Time Poem

You may see them on the streets walking around on groggy feet  
You may see them clutching lamp posts, for support  
You may see them arm in arm with girls of doubt and full of charm  
leading sailors to their pleasures whilst in port  
You may look on in disgust as they grovel in the dust  
You may shudder when they go out on the spree  
But you don't see the rip of their lonely black out ship  
making furrows in a mine infested sea  
You didn't see them fight the Hun with their obsolete four-inch gun  
You didn't see them foil Hitler's ocean plan  
For they are a hero and a sport until they return to port  
Then they are nothing but a drunken sailor man.

Sent in by Eddie Nicholls

By following the simple advice I heard on a TV medical show, I have finally found inner peace.

A Doctor proclaimed the way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you have started.

So I looked around my house to see things I'd started and hadn't finished and before leaving the house this morning, I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle shhhardonay, a bodle of Baileys, a butle of vocka, a pockage of Prunglies, thamainder of bot Prozic and Valum scriptins, the res of the chesescke an a box a chocolets.

Yu haf no idr who fkin gud I fel. Peas sen dis orn to dem yu fee AR in ned ov inr pece.

Email from Brian

## My First Ship

After leaving the Vindi, I joined my first ship the Celtic Monarch of Glasgow, in the Mount Stuart dry dock in Cardiff. The accommodation was in the raised poop deck aft, the semen were all Scots mainly from Glasgow, and I was the peggy. One of my jobs was to fetch the meals from the galley to the messroom and after the third breakfast someone said 'Hey peggy, don't you want your egg?' Rationing was still on and I answered that I had already had my two eggs for the week, which got a bit of a laugh. An egg every morning; I don't remember any eggs on the Vindi. The lads had warned me not to walk on the pavement after dark, but keep in the middle of the road; the streets were very narrow around the dock area and it was good advice as it turned out. I was returning to the ship late one night when a sexy voice said 'Want a bit of fun mate' 'No thanks, I'm in a hurry' I answered. Two figures came out of the next dark doorway, 'What's the matter ain't she good enough for you' one of them said. I took off like a startled rabbit and didn't stop running till I was back aboard ship.

The ship was over thirty years old, a coal burner with lascars down below, rod and chain steering and was able to do seven knots with the wind and sea behind her. After a couple of weeks we set sail for the West Indies and the first meal at sea was fish curry and I lost the lot and was seasick for over a week, but kept on peggying. It was a few years before I could look at a fish curry again. Our first stop was Antigua, where I had my first foreign leg over, it cost me 4/6 and a bottle of coke, which was quite expensive as a deck boys wages were only £9.00 a month. She was black as the ace of spades and had a little straw hat perched on top of her head and we walked arm in arm down the main street afterwards.

Our next stop was St. Kitts in the Leeward Islands, where to save wharfage while waiting for cargo we went and dropped anchor in a lagoon out of the way. It was beautiful; a golden beach with palm trees and a flat blue sea, there was even a sunken sailing ship of some sort with two masts sticking out of the water. It was the weekend so on Sunday a lifeboat was lowered and with the second mate in command and me on one of the oars, a mob of us headed for the beach with plenty of sandwiches and drink. What a day that was for a young first tripper, like something out of *Treasure Island*.

Next port of call was Galveston, Texas where we loaded sulphur, filthy stuff which gets everywhere. Everyone seemed to wear cowboy boots and all the shops had western music playing and all the bars and eateries had enormous juke boxes playing the same thing. The ships carpenter was from Egypt and was paying off to get treatment for a hernia, but when the taxi driver came on board to collect him and saw he was a bit on the dark side he refused to carry his bag down to the taxi. Joe, one of the seamen did it. That was my first contact with racism.

Then it was back to the West Indies, Port Royal in Jamaica, and after finishing our jobs for the day me and the galley boy took a stroll ashore. As we got outside the gates we were spotted by half a dozen women, 'There they are' someone yelled and they charged towards us. We turned and ran but were not fast enough, 'You come with me', 'No, you come with me', as they grabbed us and argued. Happily they were only lusting after our bodies. It turned out there had been a very bad storm and they were happy to do a turn for a packet of sandwiches, so we went back on board, spread the good news and started cutting loaves of bread up. A good time was had by all.

We left Jamaica for Cape Town, it took 41 days to get there which must be some sort of record for slow steaming. I worked on deck with the seamen in the afternoons and on Sunday I did a two hour trick on the wheel. As I said before, the ship had rod and chain steering with huge chains running along the scuppers on the after deck. A favourite game when I was on the wheel and the weather not too bad was to jam a crowbar between a set of bits and a link in the chain to jam the steering, put a curve in the wake and get me a 'Watch your bloody steering peggy' from the second mate who always seemed to walk out and look astern when this was happening. A link in the chain snapped one day, it was lucky the sea was not too rough, but it was all hands on deck, safety of the ship. There was a very large fresh water tank on top of the poop which supplied the crews quarters, and one of my jobs was to pump the water up manually with a to and fro hand pump, before collecting the dinner from the galley. A very effective but tiring muscle builder.

We arrived in Cape Town and the only things that I recall worth a mention were going upstairs on a bus, seeing the lascar messman sitting up front, sitting beside him for a chat and being told in no uncertain terms by the white bus conductor to get to the back in the 'whites only' section. I was ashore with Joe and Archie, two of the Abs, having a drink in a bar and while I was getting my round in, a very funny fellow, all necklets and bangles started making up to me. Joe and Archie saw what was going on and told me to return to the bar and when laughing boy asked me to go outside with him to go. It was quite dark outside and there were only two hits, him being hit and him hitting the ground. He was robbed of his wallet and finery in a flash. Joe and Archie were expert at this and took off like a pair of greyhounds, looked back and yelled 'Come on peggy' as I was still standing there with my mouth hanging open. I passed them easily. The two of them were good blokes, but hard men. Joe used to carry a cut throat razor in the breast pocket of his jacket when he went ashore. He was rated up to ships carpenter when the previous chippy paid off.

We went to Durban and then sailed for Algiers, Bona and Oran. The second steward was Polish and was in the habit of

strutting about singing foreign legion songs and wearing the white kepi. When we found out we were going to French Algeria that came to a stop, and he did not go ashore at all and kept a very low profile. The general opinion was that he was a legion deserter. French Algeria was an education in itself, with 'Exeebish-exeebish' everywhere, and while a few of us were in a certain establishment Joe and Archie told the ladies that I was a 'cherry boy'. I do not think that many old Vindi boys can claim to have had a freebie in a French knocking shop, but I certainly can.

Back to the UK, Liverpool and then down to Cardiff where we paid off. When I got my wages there were a few large white paper notes with 'Bank of England promise to pay the bearer five pounds'. I asked where I could change these for real money and was laughed at, I had never seen a five pound note before. We were all asked to come back next trip but I heard later she went to the breakers. I was lucky with my first trip, a great crowd and a good run.

Derick Johnson (Deck, 49)

### Tales of an Ancient Mariner cont

After paying off 'Llangibby Castle' and saying farewell to the English Channel (The Ditch) and French Coast on August 29<sup>th</sup> 1944 I went home for a spot of leave, which lasted only one week. I received a priority telegram on September 12<sup>th</sup> to report to Manchester Pool office. My elder brother, Pete, had left early that morning to return to his RAF unit after two weeks leave. I signed on *Samdart* the next morning, this was a SAMBOAT (Subsidised American merchant ship). I went home on the afternoon train to collect my sea kit and spend a last evening with Florrie. The following day I took my gear aboard, as did the Chippy and Bosun. Travelling by the old tram service, I spent some time with my uncle in his Halfords cycle shop which was in Manchester centre, and then with my cousin Marjorie in Levenshulme. I left her and my aunt at 9.30pm and was aboard by 10.30pm. That night I slept on a bare mattress.

The following Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup> we let go, passed through the locks and under Barton Bridge, and with no more bridges to navigate we rigged the radio aerials. On the Wednesday we arrived at Garelochhead in Scotland to load cargo. It took me a couple of 'tricks' to get used to the steering wheel as it was all steel and only had six spokes. The SAMBOAT's were given to the UK for \$1 US and there was a certificate on the bulkhead behind the wheel signifying that. On the Friday we got leave, so I went home by lorry to Helensburgh, by train to Glasgow, another train to Manchester at 5.40pm arriving 1.30am Saturday. I walked across town to London Road station, had a cup of tea and cake in the Forces YMCA canteen then caught the 2am goods train from Stockport to Buxton arriving home at 5.40am. To avoid waking my mother, I borrowed a kitchen knife from a neighbour to slip under the window catch in the front room and slept on the lounge until breakfast time. Getting my bicycle out I called at Florrie's but she was in London until Sunday. I left that Saturday night in pouring rain catching the 11.30pm train for Manchester. Tea and sandwiches at the YMCA canteen, then I walked across town to Exchange station. I caught the 1.10am train to Glasgow arriving at 9.30am. Another walk to Queens Street, had a cup of tea in the Church of Scotland's forces canteen and took the 10.30am train to Helensburgh, then bus and boat getting on board just after noon. I must have travelled as many hours on land during the war as I did at sea, at least it seemed that way. The rest of the day was spent fixing bottlescrews on rigging and dhobeying. Sunday saw us at Faselane loading.

After a blowback in the engine room, we were finally on our way via Greenock down the Clyde to join a convoy going to North Africa, Algiers, Oran, Bona and on to Sicily, Salerno and Naples. In Naples we dropped the hook on top of a sunken barge full of 44 gallon drums of German 'ersatz' petrol which brought a lot of them to the surface. We hoisted six of them aboard before the shore authorities (British Army) came out to see what we were doing and stopped us. We used most of the green, pink and blue petrol during the rest of our voyage as a cleaner, even to getting into a drum of it after a messy spell of painting the topmast. We also got ashore more often in one of our four lifeboats, which had been fitted with an Austin Seven engine. My birthday came up whilst in Naples and the San Carlo theatre had just been re-opened after bomb damage. The British Army had cleared it up a bit and put on an opera with Italian stars. I took three of my AB mates to see *Barber of Seville* and they enjoyed it after expecting to be bored stiff by opera. Before going to the evening performance, eight of us deck crew had our photo taken. An Italian street photographer had taken over a German photography studio where I had previously had my birthday portrait taken to send home. In the group there were two from Manchester, one from Canada (Lofty), one South African, one New Zealander, one Londoner and the Philippine /Japanese cook and of course, me.



After Naples and Anzio invasion we went to Taranto on the other side of Italy, then back via South African ports and across the South Atlantic, around Cape Horn and up to Montevideo, there we rigged shifting boards in No 3 hold for a load of grain. Then it was up through the Panama Canal and on to Baltimore and Rosario for more grain. As Christmas was approaching I wrote from Baltimore to Virginia, my pen pal from my school days, who lived in Ohio. We had been sending Christmas cards since I was at school in 1936. Virginia lived with her parents and they invited me for the Christmas holidays. I got leave for three days as nothing was happening in port over the Christmas week. As it was cheaper travelling around the States in uniform, I borrowed a blue battledress from the South African AB (Red shoulder patches 'South Africa'), black socks from the Captain, an officers cap badge (Ministry of Sea Transport) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate and bought a cheap peaked cap like US Coast Guards wore. My friend in Ohio cabled me money for the train fare as we were only allowed \$5 US a week subs. I received 3 letters and 2 phone calls from Virginia in Payne, Ohio and letters from my family every day whilst in Baltimore.

It was snowing hard as I caught the evening train from Baltimore to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where Virginia was to meet me. She had driven her Dad's car from Payne across the Indiana state border on icy roads. We met at the rail station at 4.30am as my train was very late, had a snack in the waiting room cafeteria then drove home, arriving at Payne by 9am. After meeting her family we sat down to a breakfast of orange juice, cereal, eggs and bacon. It was Christmas Eve when I got there and as always in USA everyone visits each others families and all through the day visitors and extended family members kept dropping in. Her Dad ran the local Drug store (chemist/milk bar) so Virginia and I spent a couple of hours helping him and serving milk shakes. Arriving home at 5pm and after having our evening meal we sat around talking and I was plied with questions about England, the bombing, and all the foreign places I had visited. This lasted until the early hours of Christmas Day.



It snowed all night, and after the usual breakfast we all went to church for the Christmas service. I'm sure that I was introduced to half of the town's population outside the church. Then it was home once more for a Christmas feast. Mum, Dad, Virginia, her older and younger brothers, two girl cousins and myself sat at the table. Just after starting to eat there was a sudden silence in the babble of conversation and I looked up to see what was going on. They were all looking at me, and apparently were intrigued in my use of a knife and fork. The US custom is to cut up the meat on your plate, put down the knife and transfer the fork to the right hand to use. They all tried to copy my way, pushing the food onto the fork with the knife causing a riot of laughter. The meal was the full American Christmas fare and lasted over an hour, finishing with pudding and flaming brandy sauce and coffee. After eating we all got stuck into the washing up. The next couple of hours were spent opening presents and flaking out on the lounges. Virginia took me to see her old High School where she used to play the saxophone in the school band. Once again there were visitors and friends around for Christmas tea and in the evening we sat and talked.

Boxing Day was spent in Dad's store where we served milk shakes and ice cream (temperature outside about -1°). After lunch we went to Fort Wayne by car to see a show at 5pm, then to a drive in café for a meal. It was the first time I had experienced being served on a tray clipped to the window ledge of the door. Then it was off to the train Depot (station) for my train back to Baltimore via Pittsburg, Toledo etc. The train left from Fort Wayne at 11.30pm, Van Wert 12.40am, Lima 1.30am, Harrisburg 1.15am, arriving at Baltimore 5.20am. I sure did see a bit of American life on that *Samdart* trip I was aboard by 7.30am and was painting over the side and stern by 8am, after clearing ice off the hatches. I went ashore each night to the Merchant Navy club to phone Virginia, the first night she was out visiting and I only spoke to her older brother John Henry. Next night all the phone lines were down in Toledo owing to heavy snowfalls, so I couldn't get through again until we got to Rosario a week later. Virginia sent my train fare again but told me to wait till the weather cleared and the roads were open. I managed to get a refund on the rail ticket and posted it back to Virginia. Until January 13<sup>th</sup> when we finally left Baltimore after Rosario I received a letter or a cable every day from Payne.

Virginia's husband was a sergeant in the army and was stationed on Salisbury Plain. I met him years later in America, but just missed him during D Day operations when I was on *Llangibby Castle* in Southampton Waters.

Across the Atlantic to Gibraltar which we passed at 3pm January 27<sup>th</sup> and tied up in Port Said on February 3<sup>rd</sup> for a couple of hours waiting to enter the Suez Canal at 7.30pm. Passed the island of Perim at the bottom of the Red Sea, where we stopped zig - zag coursing (Submarine evasion action). Arrived at Rangoon, Burma on February 15<sup>th</sup> where the ships were blacked out at night in case the Japanese flew over. From Burma we sailed across to East Africa and home via Durban and Cape Town. I paid off in Leith on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1945. We were stuck on the bottom at 2am going into Leith and used a tug to free us.

I enrolled at Liverpool Nautical College for my 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate's certificate. I stayed in Plimsoll House overlooking the Roman Catholic Cathedral, with about 20 others taking the same course. Most weekends I went home to Buxton and during the mid summer went to a week long agricultural camp with the 1<sup>st</sup> Buxton group. We drew the dole from the Merchant Navy Officers Pool at weekly intervals, but after three months paying full board and all incidental expenses of the course, books etc I ran out of money (Still paying my allotment to my mother).



I signed on the *Durban Castle* in Liverpool on October 1<sup>st</sup> as AB Quartermaster, we were transporting troops to North Africa and Italy. We carried a British Army Guards Regiment, American Texas Rangers Commandos, Berber Native Troops and French Army Units over to Sicily and Anzio invasions and around to South East Italy, Taranto. We were quartered under the fo'c'sle head, most of the troops who were not below decks were sitting or standing, packed together on deck. We had a unit of US Texas Rangers on the No. 1 hatch outside our quarters and we did a bit of food and souvenir exchanging. One of them was cartoonist and did a caricature of me in exchange for a pair of wool socks, the US issue were not too good for cold Italian weather in November. I also asked him to do a

portrait but he said he wasn't good at that, but did one anyway.

After the *Durban Castle* paid off in Southampton on November 29<sup>th</sup> I had two weeks leave at home. My next period was again at Liverpool Nautical College where I had to restart the course. During my two weeks leave Florrie and I became engaged and during the week before Christmas break at college I went to Manchester for my cousin Marjories wedding. My next ship after the three months at college was a coaster *Glanryd* out of Newport, South Wales on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1946. We went to Hull and over to Antwerp twice. At Antwerp the local population would come down to the wharf to beg for food and clothing as the town had been wrecked by our bombers and the Germans blowing it up as they left. I met a lady school teacher who wanted coffee and inner tubes for her bicycle as her tyres were stuffed with grass. I told her that I would be back in a week. On my return I took her inner tubes from my spares at home and also a large tin of coffee that I got from the cook. The people ground up tulip bulbs as a substitute for coffee.

One of the last ports of call before paying off was of all places, SHARPNESS. I was there Saturday March 30<sup>th</sup> and went home for the weekend to Buxton until April 5<sup>th</sup>. I finally paid off the *Glanryd* on May 9<sup>th</sup> in Port Talbot as I didn't like coasting work and was discharged from the Merchant Navy on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1946.

I was engaged to Florrie and we were planning to get married and join the numerous treks from UK across the Sahara to East Africa to the peanut farms. As the Army and Air force personnel were being de-mobbed and jobs were being taken up quickly, I got my first shore job with a Forest Nursery firm south of Buxton at Darley Dale. I used to cycle the 15 miles each way until I got full board at the Railway Crossing Gatehouse, a couple of miles from the hillside nursery. It was through that job that I finally got to Australia. But there is a lot of water gone under the bridge before that time.



A smile costs nothing, but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts for ever. None is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it, and none is so poor but that he can be made rich by it. A smile creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in business and is the counter sign of friendship. It brings rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and it is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile, give them one of yours as no one needs a smile so much as he who has no more to give.