

Last chapter for Rotary's regional magazine champion

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The Rotary world lost one of its true pioneers when Herbert Paul Henningham – the man responsible for the evolution of the Rotary World Magazine Press – died at his home in Springwood, NSW, on December 2, just two months short of his 98th birthday.

*Bob Aitken AM
Managing Editor/Executive Director,
Rotary Down Under Inc 1984-2014*



From the rice fields of Leeton, NSW, radio journalism, office work and retail selling to war service, social work and journalism, it is difficult to understand how Paul Henningham crammed so much into his amazing life.

Paul was the eldest son of Herbert W Henningham and English girl Mercy Trent. His father served at Gallipoli in 1915 and won the Military Cross for Valour in the Somme, France, in 1918. He brought his young wife back to Australia and Leeton after the war and they had four children, of whom Paul was the eldest. His brother Jack, one year younger, was killed in WWII at the age of 21.

His family and Rotary were his passions. He never forgot his roots or lost his love of the Australian bush – and he never stopped unselfishly giving to Rotary and the community.

Paul saw distinguished war service in Papua New Guinea and was so conscious of the plight of many returned service men and women after the war that he completed a Diploma of Social Studies. He worked with several service organisations – including a role as editor of the *Australian Legion* newspaper – until 1954, when he launched and published his own newspapers – *The Guardian* and *Newtown Daily*.

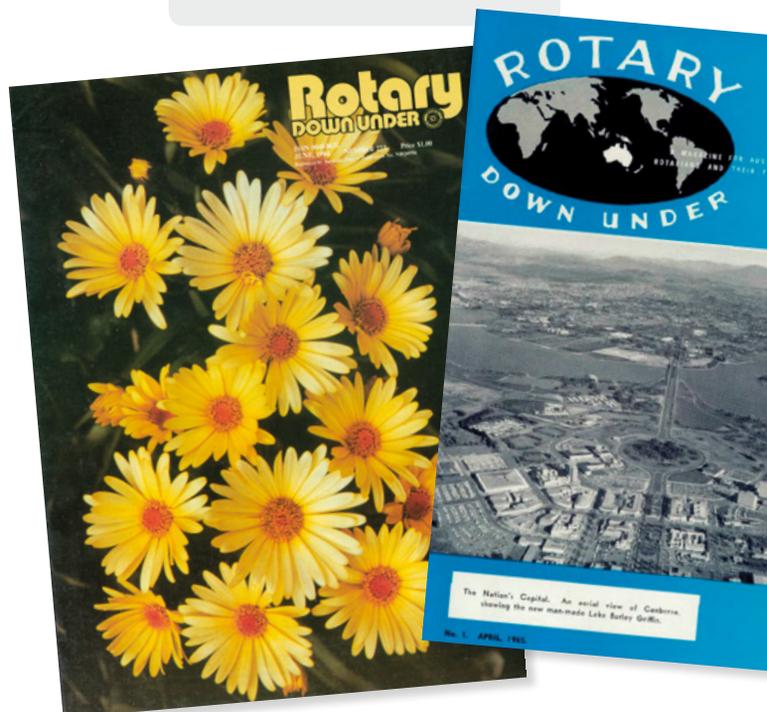
Paul married his first wife Jean in 1944 and the union produced three sons – John, Edwyn and Stephen. However, they divorced in 1957. He married Margaret Corringham (Peggy) in 1959 and subsequently added two further sons to his family as they grew the family newspaper business.

At the time of his passing, Paul had 11 grandchildren (one deceased) and 10 great grandchildren with one born since and a further addition on the way.



Paul was always respected. Even if people did not always agree with him, there was never any malice in anything he wrote, and so he has always been thought about fondly. He was a good fellow. We wrote to each other fairly often. If you were to write about a serious matter you might get a serious, pretty formal reply. Then, the next time he wrote, it would be something out of the box. I think it is fair enough to say that Paul took Rotary seriously, but did not take himself too seriously. In our communication, neither of us took the other too seriously. I have often harboured the idea that Paul would write my obituary. Now he has been spared that embarrassment.

*– RI past president
1978-79 Sir Clem Renouf*



June, 1984, and April, 1965 – the historic last and first editions of *Rotary Down Under* magazine under the direction of editor Paul Henningham.



Lieutenant Paul Henningham, Australian Imperial Force, 1941-46.

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I, like many of you in our family of Rotary, was saddened to learn of the passing of a devoted friend and Rotarian who was a legend in our Rotary world.

Paul Henningham was a true ambassador for *Rotary Down Under*. He made friends worldwide and always showed an interest in helping solve the problems that come up in every organisation – including Rotary.

We, who were some of the first editors of regional magazines, have a special reason to be grateful to Paul as he showed us how to get started and how to understand the hurdles ahead from Rotary.

I enjoyed meeting and talking to Paul in my several visits to the offices of *Rotary Down Under*, as well as the many times we met at different Rotary International events.

I convey my condolences to Paul’s family, as well as the *Rotary Down Under* family, on behalf of so many he helped keep moving forward.

– RI past president 2000-01
Frank Devlyn

A meticulous journalist and publisher, Paul joined the Rotary Club of Marrickville, NSW, in 1955, but later transferred to the Rotary Club of Newtown, NSW, as charter vice-president.

In the mid 60s, in the face of much high-powered opposition, he joined the Rotary Clubs of Newtown and Bayswater, Vic, to campaign for the establishment of a national Rotary magazine.

A master tactician, he gained approval from the then 11 Australian districts to publish three “pilot” issues – April, May and June of 1965. Paul was editor and several senior Rotarians volunteered to carry out the vital tasks of sales and administration.

A referendum was conducted after the third issue and Australian clubs and members left no doubt about the success of the venture – 12,198 in favour and 2150 against, with 2544 abstaining. Some 404 clubs were in favour, with only 20 against.

Paul and his team of strong supporters clinched ultimate victory in 1976, when the RI Board finally moved

to allow regional magazines as an “approved and prescribed” alternative to *The Rotarian*. *Rotary Down Under* circulation immediately jumped to 35,000.

While all this was happening, Paul and his wife Peggy were raising their young family in the Lower Blue Mountains village of Glenbrook, NSW, and Paul assisted with the charter of the Rotary Club of Blaxland-Springwood, later to become the Rotary Club of Lower Blue Mountains. He joined the club in 1970, after completing his term as president of Newtown.

Paul led the *Rotary Down Under* organisation for 19 years before passing the baton to me at the end of June, 1984.

During these years, his Rotary service had no boundaries.

Apart from senior roles as district

governor (1973-74), chairman and member of various RI committees, moderator of a Rotary World Press Seminar, and RI national representative for Australia in the International Year of Peace, he was the driving force behind several major programs.



Margaret and Paul Henningham – married 59 years.





• **RDU editor Paul Henningham passes the editorship to Bob Aitken in May, 1984.**

He had 30 years of leadership in the Rotary Youth Leadership Award program – nationally and internationally – and wrote the first official RYLA handbook.

He was heavily involved in the early years of *Probus* – chairman of the *Probus* Publications Committee and edited the *Probus News* for 11 years. He and his great friend Jim Stanford established The *Probus* Centre South Pacific.

Paul and Peggy's warm friendship with Lord and Lady Ranfurly in England led the way to the extension of the Ranfurly Library Service to the South West Pacific.

He was involved in the establishment of Rotary's Regional Institutes, with another old friend in Brian Maguire of Leeton, and played a major role in the promotion and presentation of the first RI Convention in Sydney, NSW, in 1971.

Paul and the RDU Board of the time purchased the first Rotary Down Under House in Station Street West, Harris Park – which ultimately opened the door for the purchase of the major premises in Parramatta.

Paul was a strong supporter of FAIM (forerunner to Rotary Australia World Community Service) and

pushed strongly for Rotary to lead in the recognition of Indigenous culture within its programs.

The *Rotary Down Under* staff adored him.

This message from one of his first staff members, Joy Gillett OAM, who now heads Australian Rotary Health, says it all:

"I would like to let people know that Paul has always been the most considerate and kindest person I have ever known. Back 50 years ago, when I was first employed at *RDU*, he joked that I was his 'adopted daughter'. He was such an extraordinary person, who genuinely cared about people and wanted the best for everyone.

"Nothing was too much trouble for him, and I knew if I did ask for something, he would do everything in his power to make it happen."

Paul continued regular visits to *RDU* since his retirement and all subsequent staff – including me – shared this deep affection. At my request, the RDU Board conferred the title "Editor Emeritus" on him.

He was always available to assist me at any time with any challenge. His depth of knowledge was invaluable and his dry sense of humour a great comfort in demanding situations.

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Paul Henningham became a legend in his lifetime. It was a long haul that began when Paul published the first Australian Rotary magazine – on newsprint! Paul could never have dreamed its future that has become the high-gloss RDU magazine we have today.

From the earliest time, Paul editorials were a 'must read'.

His view did not always conform to Rotary policy, but they did create another point of view – a point of view with which I agreed most times.

Paul was a Rotary historian – and many times I requested his help. No one knew Rotary better than Paul. He was a great writer – a genuine essayist and did me proud when I assumed the RI presidency in 1997.

– *RI past president*
1997-98 *Glen Kinross*

Of course, Paul's service to the community at large was just as impressive as his service to Rotary, especially his service to Legacy as a Legatee and editor of the *Legacy Torchlight*.

The image of this 97-year-old veteran of community service tending to the needs of Legacy widows years younger than him is quite priceless!

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He really enjoyed his work with the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Sydney.

Paul was devoted to the Rotary Club of Lower Blue Mountains and its members. Nothing could quench his desire to serve, and right up until the month before his passing he was on deck at the monthly Market Day, helping with his favourite Rotary Book Stall sales.

Every Australia Day, he and his charter member mate Bill Peard could be found at the public relations/administration tent at the entry to Glenbrook Park, welcoming anyone and everyone who took time to stop and chat.

No obituary for Paul Henningham is complete without recognition of his amazing body of written work – he was a historian of the highest order...

- *The Story of Regional Rotary Institutes in Australia*, 1978;
- Managing editor of *Rotary Down Under*, 1965-1984;
- Contributor to *The Rotarian Reader* – a 75-year Anthology, published by *The Rotarian* in 1986;
- *Gift of God, Friend of Man* – history of timber industry, 1986;

- *Seventy-Five Years of Service – Rotary in Australia* – 1996;
- Contributor to *Leaders in Service Down Under*, 2000;
- *In Search of Health* – 2001 – for Australian Rotary Health;
- *With Health in Mind* – 2011 – updated for ARH;
- *History of Probus* – 2014 – for Probus Centre South Pacific;
- Editor and notes to the narrative

poem *I, Jane Austen* by Mary Corringham, 2001;

- *Century of Rotary in Oceania* – current work in progress, which will be completed in his name.

I was indeed fortunate to spend the last 30 years of my working life at *Rotary Down Under* and to be part of the wonderful Henningham magazine legacy. Rest in Peace old friend – and thank you. •

Paul was a hero for me, as those early days of *Rotary Down Under* must have been very challenging for him. In his quiet but strong way, he stayed firm and created a publication that has been consistently a model for the whole world of Rotary.

On a personal level, we shared a love of words and of books and the times we spent together were always enjoyable, with so much to discuss.

You wonder how many lives have been altered because of the books that went to the Pacific Islands through Paul's efforts via the Ranfurly Library and other literacy projects inspired by RDU?

The world is a poorer place without Paul Henningham. Go well.

– *RI past president 2006-07*
Bill Boyd CNZM QSO



Margaret and Paul
with their five
sons: Ted, left,
Guy, Craig, John
and Stephen.