

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to Term Two and a very significant assembly. Thank- you to Clarke Martin for joining us today...you have been a great supporter of our school across our short history...we have learnt much from you and we look forward to hearing from you again shortly and thank- you for your continued support and for your service.

Most of you are probably aware that at the end of 2023, along with Ms Kirk I had the privilege of accompanying 20 wonderful students along the historic Kokoda Track. I am very proud that Beaumaris Secondary will have another amazing group of students heading over in November this year.

So our Team, under the guidance of our NoRoads chaperones took turns of reading the accounts and heroics of our soldiers as we re-traced the steps of their battles from the airstrip of Kokoda back towards Port Moresby. Following an extremely arduous Day 1, we arrived at Isurava battlefield on the morning of Day 2, and we told and heard stories of the hardships faced by the young men, many not much older than our Year 11s/12s seated in the tiered seating.

You will see on the screen the iconic and moving image of Isurava, represented by the four pillars of Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice and Mateship.

At Isurava I was given the opportunity to recount the story of Stan Bisset and also his brother Harold (nicknamed Butch). It would be fair to say that this was a task that I found very challenging and certainly struggled with....however, I would like to share that story with you today.

You will see on the screen Stan on the left and his older brother Harold on the right.

Stan was born in St. Kilda in 1912, two years after his brother Butch. Much of their childhood was spent in what was seen at the time as the sleepy bayside Village of Black Rock. Stan developed into an outstanding athlete and leader and was selected to go to England with the Australian Rugby Union Team in September 1939. Unfortunately, due to the declaration of WW2 the day after they arrived, the tour was cancelled. They were only able to play one game, against the British Army in Bombay on their return trip to Australia, a game in which they won comfortably.

Throughout his life Stan led by example. He had an unshakeable sense of duty and honour and a star quality...the indefinable amalgam of physical presence

and remarkable character. He was a genuine sporting great who blossomed into a Military Hero.

Stan and his brother Harold (Butch) joined the 2nd/ 14th Battalion which fought superbly in the Middle East, before being rushed back to join the young diggers of the 39th battalion at the crucial battle of Isurava in August 1942. Butch was hit in the stomach by a burst from a Japanese machinegun. As the battle raged around them, Stan spent 5 hours with his dying brother. He held Butch's hand, he sang his favourite songs and recalled times of their childhood as Butch slipped in and out of consciousness and finally died. Stan set aside his grief and continued to fight. He was later awarded the Military Cross for repeated acts of valour and leadership throughout the campaign.

At the end of our Trek I was able to visit Butch's grave at Bomana war Cemetery just outside of Port Moresby.

And the following image....most of you have actually seen this, but never taken much notice of....including myself. Because Stan and Butch Bisset actually attended the same camp that most of you have had the privilege of attending. The amazing Lord Somers Camp....as members of the Powerhouse Rugby Club...and high in that dining hall lists a commemoration of the powerhouse battalion who never made it home....and there you see Hal Bisset's name commemorated on that honour board.

So tomorrow when I contemplate the weariness of the first, albeit shortened week back at school and the desire to stay in a comfortable warm bedI feel compelled to commemorate the service and the lives of amazing young men such as Stan and Butch Bissett by forgoing a sleep-in to attend the dawn service...in fact since returning from Kokoda, I have made the pledge to myself that I will never again miss a dawn service. I hope that many of you, particularly if you haven't done so before also take the opportunity tomorrow morning to pay your respects to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to give us the life and the freedoms that we have today.

Thank-you