

EDITORIAL EMOTIONS

It has been an extraordinary month.

I'm saddened at the death of our MacLeod Society President **Fraser McAskill**; but honoured to have known him. However it is not my loss so much as knowing the grief felt by his family and our friends.

Fraser had a great zest for life and its experiences. His death was sudden, tragic and too soon. He was a custodian of McAskill history and a great barracker for Clan MacLeod to which he proudly affirmed his and the McAskill connection. His engagement and enthusiasm with the public at Clan events and our Clan Marquee was irresistible and full of knowledge. He was a wonderful representative of Clan MacLeod.

I was deeply affected by the Beaconsfield Mine disaster, especially today, rescue day, identifying with them all, as a miner, and stirring my personal history of a mine cave-in.

Then there are the appalling deaths in the workplace, and it has been a tragic month, and a tragic day, for that. Although some jobs are more dangerous than others we should never consider lives expendable in a job.

However, in China **6,300 miners** perish annually, and there is no international conscience for it. If they were political activists or health workers there'd be serious scrutiny. Why is an industry or state run system, which tolerates a predicable significant death load, not tried for murder?

In '76 I saw one South African mine cemetery with hundreds of headstones and 6 freshly dug open graves, waiting to meet its 20 deaths per month average. The Republic of Sth. Africa tally of mining casualties over 83 years to 1994, was 69,000 dead and over 1million injured.

We all qualify for death; with no degrees, no exceptions, no priority preferred list; but even there, we are not equal in death.

I'm puzzled why one worker (an off duty soldier) gets a state funeral, while another worker doesn't; and why, through national publicity, one family gets a Prime Minister's promised support and others apparently not.

I am cynical of garlands covering bad practice, and we can see the consequences of profits before protection.

There have been 10 deaths (that I know of) at workplaces since Easter.

This year, about 300 Australians will die of workplace accident trauma, and another 2000 will die of workplace related diseases. That's more than the national road toll.

What's this to do with our Clan Society? Well, I don't know, except that I just want to tell someone about it. -Alex.

