OAKS ESTATE HONOURS A LEADER

The President and members of the
Oaks Estate Progress Association committee
cordially invite you to the dedication of a plaque
commemorating
the leadership and community spirit of
Capt. Bede Tongs MM

by
Senator Kate Lundy Senator for the ACT
on Sunday 27 October 2013, at 11 am
at the Oaks Estate Community Hall
William Street, Oaks Estate.

Morning tea will be provided afterwards.
RSVP phone: 6299 2409, email: oepa@hotmail.com.au
by 24 October 2013

Please join with the Oaks Estate community in acknowledging
Bede’s generosity and dedication on this special occasion

PLAQUE DEDICATION PROGRAM

1. Welcome to guests and setting the scene
   Dr Karen Williams - President Oaks Estate Progress Association

2. Bede my father, growing up in Oaks Estate, and now
   Mr Garry Tongs – The son of Capt. Bede and Mrs Joan Tongs

3. Bede Tongs: my story
   Captain Bede Tongs MM

4. Dedication speech and unveiling the plaque
   Senator Kate Lundy Senator for the ACT

Morning Tea
Setting the Scene: from the President of the Oaks Estate Progress Association

The Oaks Estate that Captain Bede Tongs (Bede, as he is locally known) came to in 1946 after returning from distinguished military service in New Guinea was one of uncertainty. In those days the future of Oaks Estate was often the topic of prolonged discussion in what was then the Federal Capital Advisory Council and the National Planning and Development Commission. The Canberra Times in 1950 reported that “the future of Oaks Estate as a planned community or whether it must be liquidated quickly” was being debated.

Bede joined the Oaks Estate Progress Association’s campaign to improve the facilities of their community and he was President during the 1950s and 1960s.

Previous Progress Association committees had campaigned for basic water and electricity services, achieving those in the late 1930s and early 1940s. By 1953 Oaks Estate was provided with a community hall. Bede gifted to the community the land on which the hall stands, the area of open space next to it, and the old preschool site (the present playground area) beside that.

The hall was an old dormitory building, an ex Eastlake hostel hut. It arrived on the back of a truck and the Oaks Estate community, using volunteer labour and their own materials, renovated the building.

Having led through direct action, Bede and the committee continued to campaign on issues including the construction of the pre-school playground. The Oaks Estate fundraising Queen Competition of 1954 was just one successful activity through which the Progress Association raised money for the construction and furnishing of the proposed play centre.

Other issues pursued included improvements to the existing but rudimentary fire protection, a bus shelter for the hard earned, new bus service, and the provision of sewerage, kerbs, gutters and footpaths.

I have nothing but admiration for our former Oaks Estate community leaders and their achievements. It would have been so hard to persist with what were often many years of effort. The Oaks Estate community of the past lived in far less comfortable circumstances.
than we do today. They weren’t just trying to improve Oaks Estate. They were working to ensure the community’s very existence.

Bede still holds a strong interest in the affairs of Oaks Estate and has remained active within the Progress Association. He is also a veteran of Kokoda and the Aitape-Wewak campaign in New Guinea and a former President of the 3rd Infantry Battalion Association.

Even at 93 years old Bede continues to inspire us through his actions. He was in Sydney recently to deliver the 2013 Ralph Honner Leadership Oration for the Kokoda Track Foundation. Bede is an ambassador for the Foundation. He really is unstoppable.

Dr Karen Williams
October 2013

(Below left) Marie Goiser and family – winner of Queen Competition 1954. courtesy Frank & Angeline Roberts

(Above right) Oaks Estate Community Hall, early 1960s – Preschool buildings in background (Helen & Ron Howell’s wedding). courtesy Frank & Angeline Roberts