

Story – “The Rains Came” Topic

Third Place – Raindrops Keep Falling

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It seemed to me it always rained during the school holidays or on some special event which I wanted to attend. This special holiday was supposed to be two or three weeks on the beach surfing before returning to school to complete my final year. Unfortunately the weather was so bad it did not turn out that way.

The rain pelted down on the galvanized iron roof and the noise was so deafening you could hardly hear your self speak. The heavy wind caused the ill fitting windows to rattle in their worn wooden guides, while a small stream of water leaked through the many gaps in the window frames.

The plaster ceiling was soaking up the rain water like a wet sponge. The rusty iron roof was leaking so badly it looked as if a bulging lump of wet plaster would crash to the floor at any moment. My mother, her cousin and myself were busy putting every empty container we could find in the kitchen and laundry under the drips of water which were leaking through the ceiling onto the lino floor.

This run down holiday cottage was to be our home for the next two or three weeks, a time when much of the time was spent indoors mopping floors and emptying containers of water.

When I finally visited the beach the sand was cold and wet the surf was too rough and dangerous, so the holiday was a complete waste of time. When the rain eventually stopped so did my holiday and it was back to school once again.

The cricket season had just started and I was hopeful I might secure a position in a school team where the standard of cricket was higher than that in the house cricket which I played. Twice a week for four or five weeks I attended cricket practice enjoying this time on a turf wicket with leather six sticher cricket balls, but all without success.

I had decided to give cricket away when out of the blue I was informed. “A member of the team is unable to play on Saturday due to illness so you will take his place.” At last I had my chance. I cleaned my white cricket boots and packed them into my duffle bag with my batting gloves, then waited for the big day to arrive.

Friday night the rains came and it was still raining heavily on Saturday. Unfortunately the cricket match was cancelled. By the following week the team member had recovered from his illness. I lost my chance to gain a position in the team, although it was never really mine to start with.

The next term was the football season which is a sport which was played in all weathers, but it seemed to me we always played in the wet. There was no trouble making a team this time. Rugby Football was compulsory at school and all had to play except boys with a medical problem. The Head Master always said “Playing Rugby Football will make men of you so any boy missing football practice will receive a dose of my cane.”

When playing in the rain on a wet field our football jerseys and shorts stuck to our wet bodies while our worn out boots filled with water. When tackled it was not uncommon to end up with your face in the mud and a pile of bodies on top. There were some dry days but not many.

Joining the school cadets was also compulsory. All cadets were supplied with surplus Australian Army uniforms which had seen much better days. Boys of all shapes and sizes were compelled to wear these ill fitting uncomfortable uniforms. Trousers and Tunics were either too tight or too loose, too long or too short and the boots never seemed to fit and often needed repairs. Instead of a well turned out cadet unit many of us looked like a unit of scare crows. Parade was held every Monday after school for two hours wet or dry. I seem to remember only the wet days standing on parade in a soaking wet uniform.

The school year ended with a cadet camp at the Ingleburn Army Base. Having made our way to Liverpool Station with our kit bags and rifles the cadets were transported by army trucks to Ingleburn where we spent the next ten days. It rained a great deal of the time. Fortunately for us, our accommodation was in huts - not in leaking canvas tents.

Some of the cadets served in the Officers' Mess and a few worked in the cook house, while others, including myself spent a few days on the rifle range shooting Bren Guns and 303 Enfield Rifles and also received instructions on how to throw dummy hand grenades. I cannot remember all the activities our platoon took part in but I won't forget my guard duty in a hurry.

Myself and another cadet were required to do a night of guard duty at the camp entrance. We were inspected at odd times by a sergeant in the regular army who made sure we stayed awake at all times. I wondered what we would do if someone did enter the camp gate, although I suspect the sergeant was keeping his eye on us some where.

The main problem was the heavy rain which never seemed to stop that night so consequently we were both soaked through. Later we were relieved by two other cadets who took over as night guard, leaving us free to retire wet and tired back to our hut for the remainder of the night.

At last the mostly wet ten days came to an end and we were transported back to Liverpool Station in open army trucks then we caught the train back to school.

As far as I am concerned a verse from an old song says it all for me.
"Into each life some rain must fall - But too much has fallen in mine."