

## 'THE SHALLOWNESS OF IT ALL'

Written by Justin Shell, a member of the Heathcote Volunteer Bush fire Brigade, and inserted at the request of that Brigade.

Nobody knows how hollow I feel.

Nobody can comprehend, the disappointment, the pain, the anger, that lies within this bag of bones.

Sunday I cried and never stopped. By Monday I was numb.

As if lighting the fire wasn't enough  
As if the heat of day wouldn't stop belting down.

But three of my best mates as close as family would never return home to this house.

Keith: a man of honesty who held the life of others over his own.  
Always first in, last out.  
How we shall miss.

Greg: a man of learning.  
A man who tried so hard.  
Although we never really said it we did love him.

and

Tom: 'Big Tom' a quietly spoken man, a man who didn't mind getting dirty,  
a man who you could talk to and he would listen intently.  
A real 'down to earth' person.

Then we come to the injured -

Sharon: Keith's daughter, a very lucky girl. She told me before we entered the field 'This is the first fire I have been to that I haven't put up my hair'. She was lucky - that hair saved her face. Minor compensation for losing a father such as Keith.

Jimmy Fowler: Although new to the game, showed promise. I hope he keeps it up.

Robert Sawyer: He'll be back, fighting fit, a good bloke.

Craig Goodail: A stable bloke, another who'll be back.

Craig Blanch and Paul Fenn: It was their first fire.

God only knows what's going through their heads.

As for me, I don't know. If I go out, will I crack, or come back fighting? At the time of the accident I was at Loftus Station. I had smoke inhalation and very bad cramps. Half an hour earlier Keith had sent me out of the field to the hospital due to the cramps. As for the others, I don't know.