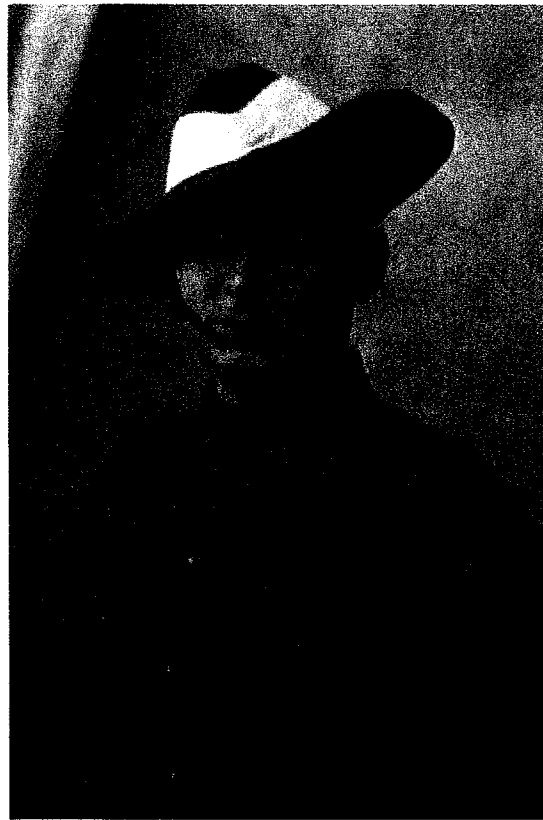


Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize 2022

**The Life and Service  
of  
Michael Cetinich**



*By Vinka Lakić*

*Year 10*

*Endeavour College, Mawson Lakes*

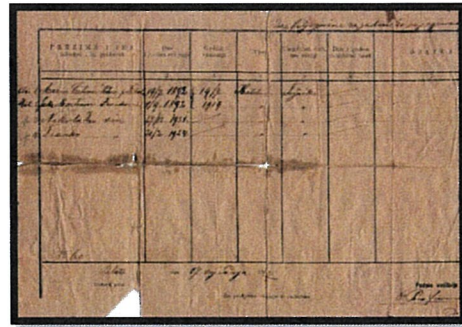
## Part A



*Michael Ivan Cetinich in his Army uniform*

From time to time this world produces individuals who humbly and sacrificially place their own ambitions and desires aside in the service of others, particularly at a time of national crisis. One such man whose sacrifices attributed to the triumphs of others and who placed himself selflessly at the service of his nation was Michael Ivan Cetinich (pronounced *Set-in-it*ch). Born on 27 December 1921 in Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia, to Marin (Mick) Cetinich and Yaka Martinovich<sup>1</sup>, Michael entered the world amid political and social disputes between the national groups of this new country, formed in the heady aftermath of the First World War. Despite being born 'Michael,' he was referred to by his family and friends as 'Mick'<sup>2</sup>.

The Cetinich family were Croatian Roman Catholics. When Michael was nine years old, he and his family migrated to Broken Hill, NSW, attracted by the promise of better economic opportunities there<sup>3</sup>. The Cetinich family settled at Broken Hill in 1930.



*The Cetinich family emigration papers listing the names of Michael, his brother, and parents.*

The Cetinich family underwent naturalisation formalities which were finalised on 22 May 1930.<sup>4</sup> Michael quickly adapted to the Australian way of life; he learnt English and completed his primary school education. He did not pursue secondary education, however, and instead became a painter<sup>5</sup>. The Cetinich family immersed themselves in the Broken Hill community. Numerous members of the Cetinich family were founding members of the Napredak Club. The Club aspired to bring together Yugoslavian migrants living in Broken Hill, and to welcome and help integrate the newcomers within the community. Michael was an accomplished banjo player, and together with his brother Frank, often entertained at the club<sup>6</sup>.

On 3 September 1939, World War II broke out in Europe, and Australia was again at war supporting Great Britain. Michael was keen to serve his adopted country by enlisting in the Australian Army, which he did on 3 October 1941<sup>7</sup>. Government regulations at the time meant that anyone who enlisted from Broken Hill did so in the 4<sup>th</sup> Military District, which at the time covered all of South Australia and western parts of NSW, including Broken Hill.<sup>8</sup> Technically, therefore, Michael enlisted as a South Australian. Presenting himself as an experienced, skilful painter, Michael possessed an attention for detail and a familiarity with painting materials and tools. He was accepted into the Army on 16 October. Recognised for his skills, he was

<sup>1</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>2</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>3</sup> *Barrier Truth* newspaper, 23 February 2022, p.3

<sup>4</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=849287>

<sup>5</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>6</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>7</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>8</sup> Belinda Holmes

transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Military District Headquarters in Darwin on 16 December<sup>9</sup>. The 7<sup>th</sup> Military District was primarily responsible for military operations in the Northern Territory. The nature of Michael's assignment is unclear, but it is assumed that he was assisting in the development of topographical maps<sup>10</sup>.

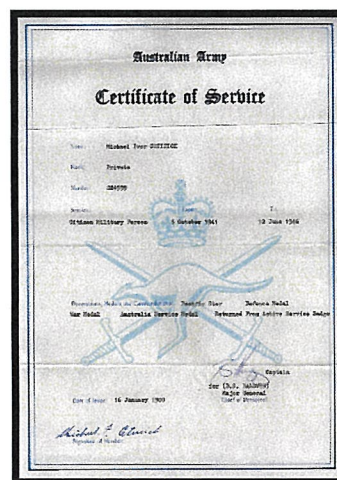


*7<sup>th</sup> Military District Headquarters, Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin, 1942.*

Michael's life in Darwin changed drastically after the Japanese bombed the town on 19 February 1942. One can only imagine that this must have been a harrowing experience for him. Australians had never before seen bombs dropped on their country or civilians lose their lives at the hands of the enemy.<sup>11</sup> Panic ensued in the town; people sought to escape by any means possible.<sup>12</sup> At some point during his deployment to Darwin, Michael injured his right hand. It is not clear from official records how Michael sustained his injury, but on 6 July he was issued with a medical certificate<sup>13</sup>. Michael continued his service with the 7<sup>th</sup> Military District until he was transferred to the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion on 18 August 1942.

Over the course of the next three years, Michael would transfer between the 2/43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Australian Works Company, and 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Works Company, where his skills were further developed and utilised. Michael made good friends in the army during this time<sup>14</sup>.

Then, on 31 July 1945, Michael disembarked at Torokina, a coastal village in Bougainville as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division commanded by Major General William Bridgeford<sup>15</sup>. Michael had no explicit training in the 5<sup>th</sup> Works Company that would have prepared him physically for what was to be a challenging campaign.



*Michael's certificate of military service, issued by the Australian Army*

The Bougainville campaign was one of the final and most brutal campaigns to be waged in the Pacific War. Since 1942, around 40,000 Japanese troops had occupied the island. Over the next three years, the Japanese were gradually forced to the north of the island, and the Australians encountered stiff resistance along the way<sup>16</sup>. The Australian Army had to rapidly reconfigure itself to meet the unexpected challenges posed by combat in the jungles, swamps, and

<sup>9</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>10</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>11</sup> Lockwood, p.8

<sup>12</sup> Lockwood, p.167

<sup>13</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>14</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>15</sup> Pelvin, p.205

<sup>16</sup> MacDougall, p.412

mountains of Papua, New Guinea, Bougainville, and Borneo.<sup>17</sup> Michael became accustomed to the tough jungle environments and played his part effectively. He never left his comrades to battle alone and assured the safety of others before his own<sup>18</sup>. When Bougainville was liberated the following month, in August 1945, 516 Australians had died and 1,272 were wounded; 18,000 Japanese were also killed<sup>19</sup>. Two Australians were awarded Victoria Crosses for their brave actions. Michael himself survived the campaign and on 15 March 1946 returned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Works Company in NSW. He continued his work here until his discharge from the Army on 12 June 1946<sup>20</sup>.



*Michael and his wife Joan Thomson on their wedding day.*

After his discharge, Michael returned to NSW and to the love of his life, Joan Marie Thomson<sup>21</sup>.

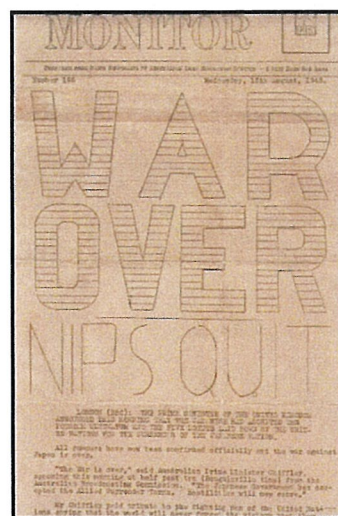
Michael had met and fallen in love with Joan prior to his enlistment, and Joan had waited loyally and patiently for her man to return home. Joan's father ran the Duke of Cornwall Hotel in Broken Hill, and this is where the pair first met sometime in 1940. Michael had been introduced to Joan through his younger brother, Frank, who was dating Joan's sister<sup>22</sup>. Having been discharged in NSW, to Michael's surprise the Thomson family had moved to Sydney during his war service; however, there were not too many complications with this change, and Michael and Joan married on 15 February 1947<sup>23</sup>. Later that year, their first and only child, Marie Cetinich, was born.



*Michael's medals: the Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, and Australian Service Medal.*

In 1948 the Cetinich family moved to Drummoyne, NSW. Here Michael pursued a new line of work, being employed at the Dunlop Rubber plant at Birkenhead Point in Port Jackson<sup>24</sup>. The factory was situated on the waterfront. Michael worked three shifts a day: the morning, afternoon, and night shift, and assisted in building excessively large tyres for both machinery and trucks alike. After twenty years of working at Dunlop Rubber, Michael was rewarded with the position of Shift Foreman. Michael was deeply respected by his family; his daughter, Marie, adored her father beyond

measure. He fought for the country he had come to call home and never once did he speak ill of it. His Yugoslavian inheritance had made him a strong and passionate man, but his



*"Monitor" broadsheet, published by the Australian Army Education Service, announcing Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945.*

<sup>17</sup> Threlfall, p.2

<sup>18</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>19</sup> MacDougall, p.412

<sup>20</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>21</sup> Marie Cetinich

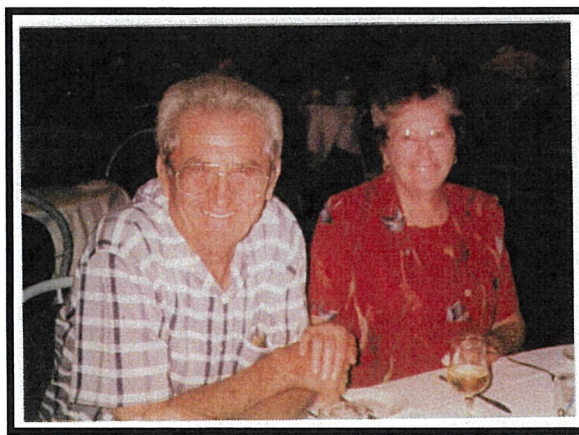
<sup>22</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>23</sup> *Barrier Miner*, 17 February 1947, p.6

<sup>24</sup> Marie Cetinich

involvement in World War II highlighted his fighting spirit and strong sense of mateship. According to his daughter, Michael never relived or shared his memories from the war<sup>25</sup>. Yet every year on ANZAC Day, he would march to remember the mates he had lost during the perilous times he endured in Darwin and Bougainville. While at times he would weep, his tongue would never bring to life painful memories of hardship and loss for his family to hear. Michael was awarded four medals during his service, specifically the Pacific Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal, and the Australian Service Medal (A.S.M).

Michael epitomised the ANZAC Spirit. During his wartime service from 1941-46, he had been transferred to numerous battalions and he overcome a pressing hand injury, as well as a B2-classified disease in correlation to his feet.<sup>26</sup> Michael demonstrated the qualities of perseverance and of mateship. Even in his later years, he is remembered to have said, when speaking of his choice not to claim war benefits, *“There’s poorer buggers who need it more than me.”*<sup>27</sup> Despite being transferred from state to state, and unit to unit, Michael was determined to do his country proud. In doing so, he also represented the Yugoslavian migrant community in Australia with distinction. Michael was a man who led by example and loved his family dearly. His migrant background did not dent his desire to serve Australia. The war helped to forge in Michael compassion and empathy, characteristics that he is remembered for today. Michael passed away from emphysema on 7 August 1999.



*Michael, around 60 years of age, with wife Joan*

In a society where celebrating culture and tradition is of utmost significance, may Australia, a land with an abundance of diverse faces and tongues, not forget a devoted man whose loyalties were to this country. May the spirit of Michael Cetinich enlighten our nation forevermore.

Word Count: **1,470** (excluding bibliography, footnotes, captions, and titles)

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<sup>25</sup> Marie Cetinich

<sup>26</sup> <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6341515>

<sup>27</sup> Marie Cetinich

### Farewell To Hotelkeeper, Wife And Daughters

At the Duke of Cornwall Hotel on Friday, November 23, a farewell was tendered to the licensee, Mr. W. Thompson, his wife and two daughters (Joan and ) and by their intimate friends. Mr. Jack Vandell, on behalf of the gathering, presented them with suitable gifts to remind them of the good times spent together in Broken Hill and in appreciation of the many kindnesses and favours granted.

Mr. Vandell expressed regret at the departure of "Bill" and his wife and family, but said they carried with them the good wishes for the future, and should they ever return to Broken Hill they would be welcomed with open arms.

A tasty grill supper, with Mr. Jack Cosman in charge, was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Among those present were Mr. Mrs. Joan and Jane Thompson, Mr. Mrs. Fred Johnson (husband), Mr. and Mrs. Fred Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. W. Drummond, Mr. and Mrs. M. Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. J. Newell, Miss N. Johnson and Messrs. A. McDonald, W. Noman, J. Morris, M. McGrath, T. Jaeger, and T. Hoyle.

Excellent music was supplied by Mr. J. Morris (electric guitar), Mr. Fred Johnson (banjo), Mr. W. Drummond (cello and piano-accompanied).

A very enjoyable evening terminated with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne".

On Sunday afternoon at the Mechanics Club Mr. Thompson was farewelled by the members of the club. Mr. Fred Cole (president), in presenting "Bill" with a leather suitcase, spoke of the worth of the departing guest, and the good fellowship that existed between their guest and the members. Mr. Thompson was a member of the club could ill afford to lose. On behalf of the members, he wished him the best of luck in his future undertakings.

Mr. Cole's remarks were endorsed by Mr. J. Vandell (former vice-president), who said they were sorry to lose "Bill" because of his conviviality and comradeship.

Other speakers were Mr. T. G. Kelly (junior vice-president), Messrs. Lee Hertram, George Heel and Jack Cosman.

Hertram, George Heel and Jack Cosman.

Mr. Thompson, in responding, said he regretted leaving the city and in the short time he had resided here he had made many friends, and the severing of those friendships proved difficult. If the occasion ever arose he would be only too glad to return here and take up business again and renew old friendships.

During the afternoon the orchestra played several items and community singing was indulged in. Mr. Percy Moakford sang a parody to "Bill" Thompson as "You're Going to Leave the Old Home". A complimentary tea was served.

### "Dorothea's" Social Highlights Of The Week

**SATURDAY'S** bride will be Miss Joan Marie Thomson, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. Thompson, of Drummoyno, Sydney, who will marry Michael, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. M. Cetinich, of 338 Wilson street, at St. Peter's Anglican church at 3 p.m. Rev. A. McDonald will officiate.

The bride will be attended by her sister, Miss June Thomson, and Miss Olga Cetinich, sister of the groom, and little Leslie Crozman.

MRS. F. DOBSON, who has been holidaying with Dr. and Mrs. R. Potter, left today by plane for her home in Adelaide.

CELEBRATING her 15th birthday recently was Miss Beverley Maiden, who had members of the family to tea. Rev. left on Friday night to resume studies at Gilton Girls' School, Adelaide.

FRIENDS OF Miss Leonard Sweetman will be interested to hear of her safe arrival in New Zealand. Miss Sweetman was on the stranded Waiparaiti, and was taken ashore with the other passengers. She will spend a holiday in New Zealand before going on to Canada.

MRS. DASHBOROUGH, accompanied by her daughter, Mrs. Hugh Fisher, and her daughter, Grace Louise, left on Wednesday night's train for Adelaide for an extended holiday. On Mrs. Fisher's return Mrs. Dashborough will visit relatives in West Australia.

MR. AND MRS. R. W. THOMSON, with daughter Jane, will arrive on Wednesday night from Sydney. They will stay at the Grand Hotel and are coming to attend the wedding of Miss Joan Thomson and Mr. Michael Cetinich which will take place on Saturday next.

MRS. R. ROPER, accompanied by daughter Marjorie, returned on Wednesday's Comet from Sydney after a happy holiday.

MISS SHEILA EDDY, of the National Library of Australia

MISS SHEILA EDDY, of the Hospital staff, is spending a holiday in Sydney and is staying at the Hotel Metropole.

TO CELEBRATE the birthday of Mrs. A. Morris, of South Broken Hill, her friends, Mrs. V. Edgcombe, Mrs. A. Hill and Mrs. A. Chage gave a luncheon party at the Royal Exchange Hotel last week.

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Alma Mothers Club will be held on Thursday, February 13, at the infants' school. The business will be the presentation of the balance sheet and the election of officers for 1947. All mothers interested in the activities of the club are invited.

MRS. E. CARWITHEEN, who has been holidaying in Sydney since December, returned by Friday night's Comet after an enjoyable vacation. She also visited Adelaide and Melbourne and was joined in Sydney by Mrs. E. I. A. Richards.

AT THE Penrith Hospital on January 27 a daughter, Carolyn Rita, was born to Mr. and Mrs. David Cook, formerly of Broken Hill. Mrs. Cook, before marriage, was Miss Goldie Hubner. Mr. Cook was formerly a member of the Central Fire Brigade staff.

OFF TO ADELAIDE by Wednesday night's express was Miss Ivy Boon to spend three weeks' holiday.

CLIPPER for the Barford.

Newspaper article from the Broken Hill newspaper, the Barrier Miner, in December 1945 discussing Joan Marie Thomson, and her family's farewell from the Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Broken Hill.

Newspaper report from the Broken Hill newspaper, the Barrier Miner, announcing Michael and Joan's upcoming wedding in February 1947.

## Cetinich-Thomson Marriage At St. Peter's Church

TWO bridesmaids and a flower girl attended Miss Joan Marie Thomson, when she took marriage vows on Saturday with Mr. Michael Cetinich, at St. Peter's Anglican Church at 3 o'clock. The bride is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. Thompson, of Drummoyno, Sydney, and the groom the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. M. Cetinich, of 338 Wilson Street, South Broken Hill. Rev. A. McDonald officiated.

Given away by her father, the bride made a stately figure in her gown of gleaming white satin. A tiny oval of satin finish, of the tulle yoke which formed a heart-shape and was edged in satin knitting. The diamond shaped motif was softly gathered and buttons and loops extended in the low peaked waistline. Her long sleeves were peaked over the hands and the full skirt fell into a long full-length train. A heart-shaped head dress of tulle held her billowing embroidered tulle veil in place.

The bride carried a sheaf of fragrant white flowers and she wore a necklace of pearls and diamond earrings set in silver, the gift of the groom.

The bride's sister, Miss June Thomson, of Sydney, and Miss Olga Cetinich, sister of the groom, were bridesmaids. They wore frocks of rose pink and forget-me-not blue chequered theme respectively. Heart-shaped necklines were fashioned into their precious styled frocks. The bodices fitted and the waistline was met by a soft sash, tied on the side with the ends falling to the bottom of their six-gored skirts. They wore matching pink and blue shoulder length veils topped with sprays of pink and blue flowers and similar shaded mittens. They carried bouquets of pink and blue flowers.

Little Leslie Crozman was flower girl. Her powder blue frock

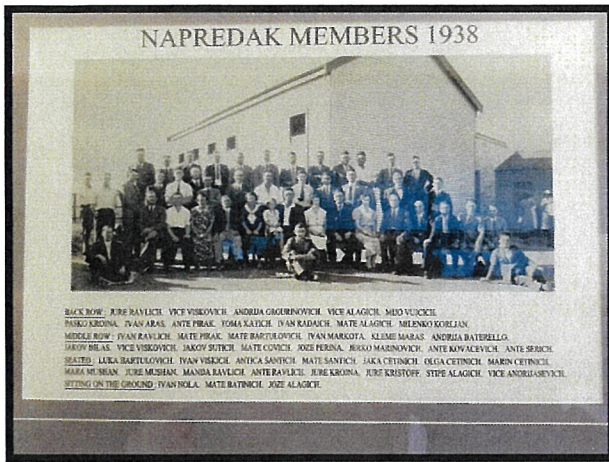
was made with a Y neckline trimmed with a gathered frill of the same material, and the fitted bodice peaked at the back and front. She had short puff sleeves and buttons and loops trimmed the centre back. Her blue tulle head dress was surmounted with pink and blue flowers. She carried a spray of pink and blue flowers.

Mr. Frank Cetinich, brother of the groom, was best man, and Mr. Frank Martinovich was bridesman.

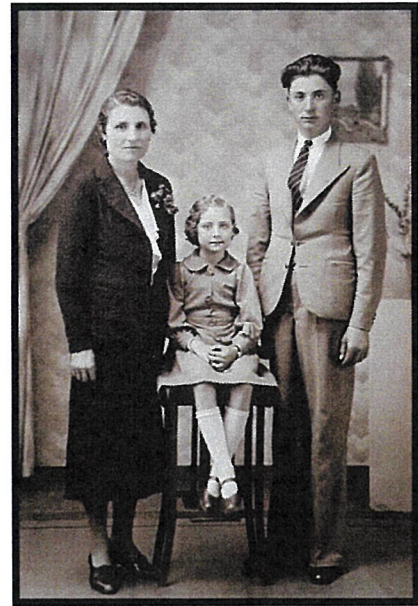
A family reception followed at the groom's home, and later about 50 guests attended the Napier Hotel where a dance was held. Mrs. Thomson received the guests wearing a pale blue crepe frock made with a low waistline, embellished with seed pearls and allied with black accessories. Mrs. Cetinich, who assisted here, chose a navy blue frock with buttoned trimming from neck to waistline and three-quarter sleeves. Her accessories were navy. The wedding cake was a three-tiered.

Mr. and Mrs. Cetinich have made their home at 338 Wilson Street.

Report in the Broken Hill newspaper, the Barrier Miner, in February 1947 featuring details about Michael and Joan's wedding.



*The Napredak Club Members of 1938 (Michael's younger sister, Olga, is seated on her father's knee)*



*Michael alongside his mother, Yaka, and younger sister, Olga*



*Joan Marie Thomson*



*Michael and Joan on their wedding day, 1947*



*Michael and Joan's Drummoyne home of 48 years*



*Michael and Joan with their first granddaughter, Lauren, born on 30 May 1999. Michael could not contain his excitement. Sadly he passed away 69 days later.*

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Cetinich, Marie. Daughter of Michael Cetinich. FaceTime discussion with Vinka Lakić, 15 May 2022. Assisted in providing information about her father, Michael Cetinich, and photographs of him.

Holmes, Belinda, ANZAC House, Adelaide. Discussion with Vinka Lakić concerning details regarding 4<sup>th</sup> Military District and the nature of Michael Cetinich's enlistment, 27 April 2022, and 5 May 2022.

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## Part B

*“I gravitated particularly to the story of Michael Cetinich.”*

When the Premier’s ANZAC Spirit School Prize competition was introduced to me during a History lesson in Year 9, I knew immediately that I would like to take part in it. I admired the opportunity to honour a South Australian servicemember whose story has not been recognised to the extent of others. I first browsed the Virtual War Memorial Australia website and after



*A photo of me at the front of Keswick Barracks, ANZAC Parade, Adelaide*

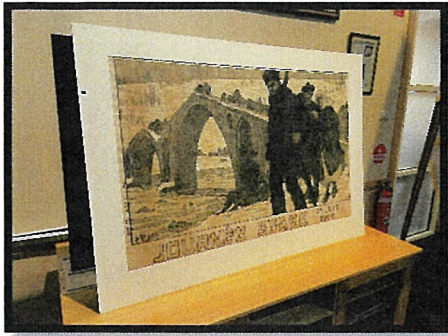


*Seated inside at the 'Australians with Serbs in World War One' event*

shortlisting some names of servicemembers that I would be interested to research, I organised a trip to ANZAC House. I gravitated particularly to the story of Michael Cetinich. I delved deeper into the circumstances of his life and service through researching his war records in via the National Archives of Australia website, and fortuitously Michael’s records had been digitised and made publicly available. At ANZAC House, I read parts of Adrian Threlfall’s *Jungle Warriors: From Tobruk to Kokoda and Beyond, how the Australian Army Became the World’s Most Deadly Jungle Fighting Force*. This book provided me great insight into the Australian Army’s campaign in Bougainville, Borneo, and New Guinea.

My visit to ANZAC House provided me with many primary resources, but I believed that there was more to be discovered. While at ANZAC House, I obtained the contact details of Danny Jovanovic who works at the Serbian Community SA association. With Danny’s help, I was able to identify Michael’s parents, and the circumstances surrounding the Cetinich family’s arrival in Australia. To my delight, I was invited to the exhibition, *Australians with Serbs in World War One*, held by the Australian Cultural Foundation, in association with the Serbian Ex-Servicemen’s Association and the Army Museum of South Australia. Despite having discovered Michael’s Croatian heritage prior to attending, this event was emotional, insightful, and powerful; the exhibition highlighted many primary resources ranging from artworks, medals, and uniforms; and included several guest speakers.

Sometime after the exhibition, I emailed the Broken Hill and Drummoyne RSLs; Des Kennedy from the Broken Hill RSL was able to put me in contact with Nancy Keenan (Alagich), a woman heavily involved in Broken Hill’s Yugoslav community. Nancy passed on the details of my research to Dennis Cetinich, the nephew of Michael Cetinich; Dennis and I conversed,



*A photo of Pierre Mourgue's  
'Journee Serbe. 25 Juin 1916,' 1916*

and he in turn provided me with the email address of Marie Cetinich, Michael's daughter, who resides in Sydney. Marie was delighted to be able to share her father's story and provide vital family information. Marie and I organised a FaceTime session and we spoke for two hours; Marie reminisced about her father and his life. Marie also kindly provided me with pictures of Michael in his uniform, his wedding day, and of his wife, Joan.

Researching the life of Michael Cetinich has been beyond rewarding; and I am proud to call Michael one of my own, but so too should Australia.

Word count: **463** (excluding captions and titles)