

BREAKER: Film event takes on morality in wartime conditions

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Stratos, the idea behind the series is to bring together members of the church and the community at large to engage together with important and sometimes difficult issues.

“How do we bring people together to have discussions about the things that really matter?” he said.

Morant was among a large contingent of Australians who shipped out to serve the British Empire during a major conflict in South Africa from 1899 to 1902, pitting the soldiers of the Empire against tough Dutch-descended settlers of two independent republics, known as Boers.

The doughty Boers, organized into highly mobile mounted units called commandos and bred to the Mauser rifle, were giving the British fits. The Empire put out the call to its colonials for mounted riflemen. And from Canada, New Zealand and Australia they came. The Breaker enlisted in the 2nd South Australia Mounted Rifles and shipped out early in 1900 for South Africa. He had two years to live.

By 1901, the war had degenerated into a grinding guerrilla campaign, with mounted counter-guerrilla forces chasing the increasingly worn-down and desperate Boer commandos.

Frustrated by their inability to bring the war to a close, the British under General Lord Herbert Kitchener began a systematic campaign of farm-burning to destroy the Boer guerillas’ supply base and herded women and children into concentration camps — it was the century’s first use of that sinister term — where they died in their thousands from disease and poor nutrition.

It is also believed that Kitchener secretly ordered that no quarter be given to Boer commandos caught wearing khaki from captured British uniforms. At this stage in the war, that was common practice, as the Boer partisans were ragged and had no other real means of supply. It was a necessity of war, but it also allowed for deception tactics, for which the Boers were notorious. The Boers were also known to fly a white flag, then open fire on the troops attempting to accept their surrender. They blew up trains and hit garrisons in lightning raids, escaping into the vastness of the veldt (prairie grasslands).

Morant had transferred to a unit called The Bushveldt

Carbineers, commanded by his best friend, Captain Percy Hunt, tasked with counter-guerrilla operations in a very remote and desolate area. After Hunt was gunned down in an ambush and subsequently mutilated (either by Boers or by natives of the district), Morant and the men under his command went on a killing spree, including shooting down unarmed prisoners.

Morant, his friend Lt. Peter Handcock and Trooper George Witton were eventually arrested and tried by a British court martial.

“There’s never been any question that Morant, Handcock and Witton did the killings for which they were tried,” Cornelius noted. “Morant freely acknowledged it. The question was whether they were acting under orders and thrown under the train as the British tried to negotiate a peace deal. Was Lord Kitchener using these three Australian troopers as scapegoats to wash his sins from his own hands? That’s the crux of the courtroom drama of the movie.”

Cornelius believes the Morant case raises important questions that we continue to wrestle with today in the counter-insurgent campaigns of the past two decades.

“For me, it’s less about judgment and more about understanding,” Cornelius said. “I think we have to be very careful about how we judge these kinds of circumstances. On one hand, accountability is important and you’ve got to have

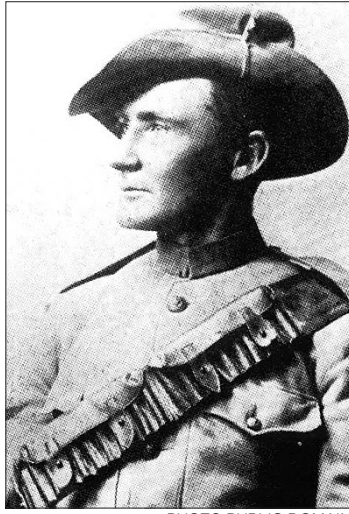


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Harry Harbord “Breaker” Morant – Australian bush poet, horsebreaker and war criminal, executed in Pretoria, South Africa.

guardrails or you risk total moral chaos; on the other, well... I always harken back to the words of my friend Tom Gibson, who lived here in Sisters. Tom was a captain in the 101st Airborne and saw heavy combat at the Battle of the Bulge. Stephen Ambrose quoted him in ‘Band of Brothers’ and again in ‘Citizen Soldiers,’ regarding a story about a Lieutenant Speirs, who allegedly offered cigarettes to 10 German POWs, then calmly hosed them down with a .45 Thompson submachine gun.

“Tom’s comment was: ‘I firmly believe that only a combat soldier has the right to judge another combat soldier. Only a rifle company combat soldier knows how hard it is to retain his sanity, to do his duty and to survive with some semblance of honor. You have to learn to forgive others, and yourself, for some of the things that are done.’”

ARTIST: Youth’s work on display through February

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the boys have had access to the supplies since they were toddlers. I remember Keegan would draw on the walls and I had a hard time erasing his art because it was really good for his age.”

Williams’ eldest son, Riley, 13 years old, expresses his creativity with photography and videography.

Keegan’s enthusiasm for drawing began when he was about three — or when he could hold a pencil and make it work.

Keegan told *The Nugget*, “I don’t usually plan what I am going to draw. I just start drawing and it just happens. But I do like to watch a lot of other artists; it inspires me. I also like to look at something, like my backyard, and change it up in my drawings to the way I’d like it.”

Keegan’s artwork covers a variety of styles, from pointillism to abstract with a little realism mixed in.

“I like to design cartoon-type drawings, sort of a mixed style, but more realistic,” he said.

One of his drawings is from the 1997 animated short film “The Old Lady and the Pigeons.” He drew the inventor of the electric lightbulb, Thomas Edison, in an impressionistic style.

He recently added color to some of his drawings using markers.

Keegan’s other creative interests are playing the piano, sculpting, painting and whittling wood.

His artwork is up for the entire month of February.

Thomas noted, “The wall in the Good Day Café is booked for the year, but we are always connecting and booking people.”

For more information about the art wall in Good Day Café, call Bedouin, 541-549-3079

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