



Figure 1: A photograph of Private Mario Giovine in 1943 (Mario Giovine's private collection, 1943)

Lance Corporal
MARIO GIOVINE

Service No: S112033: 4th Infantry Battalion, 8th Brigade

November 8th, 1924 - Present

Never one to do things by half, Mario Giovine enlisted in the Australian Army during WWII on the 18th of January 1943, embracing the unknown like he had done so many times before. For change to Mario was more “like an adventure, always welcome with vigor” (Giovine, 2025). Born on a farm on the 8th of November 1924, in Cassinasc, in the province of Asti in the Italian region of Piemonte to parents Maddalena and Giovanni Giovine, Mario, the second oldest child, lived a “simple but happy life” with his younger brother, Giuseppe and older sister Rosa (Giovine, 2025; National Archives of Australia, 2013). By age four Mario welcomed his first exploit into the unfamiliar, immigrating alongside his family to Australia on a small Italian government grant in hope of a better life, arriving in Adelaide, South Australia (SA) on the Principe Di Udine out of Genoa on the 15th of July 1928 (See figure 2) (National Archives of Australia, 2013).

Figure 2: Declaration of Immigration form containing details pertaining to Mario Giovine and his family (National Archives Australia, 1928).



Figure 3: Rosa, Mario, Giuseppe and Luigi Giovine on the farm in Summertown (Mario Giovine's private collection, 1932)

The family initially settled on a small allotment in Summertown in SA with the intention of farming. For three years they toiled, at which time Mario attended Uraidla Primary School and welcomed a new brother, Luigi, born in February 1929 (See figure 3). Despite the presence of a dam, the lack of water made for little success, and the farm was surrendered in 1931. From here, they moved to Newton (Giovine, 2025). Drawing lessons from previous missteps, Mario's father established a shoe repair shop in central Adelaide, a profession he knew well,

having previously made boots in the Italian army (Giovine, 2024). Subsequently, Mario attended Athelstone primary school, spending his free time with the local children “making bird traps and catching yabbies” (Giovine, 2025).

Mario thrived in his new environment until the age of thirteen, at which time tragedy struck. His mother heavily pregnant, died giving birth and his brother, Guiseppe fell victim to Polio. The financial strain compelled change. Mario, in uncharted territory, abandoned his studies readily and found employment at Rossiter's (presently known as Rossi's Boots), working in

the trade of his father, having spent weekends in the shoe repair shop honing his craft (Giovine, 2025).

Figure 4: Displays a signed enlistment and oath to serve in WWII by Mario Giovine (National Archives of Australia, 1943)

By September 3rd, 1939, Australia, being part of the Commonwealth joined with Great Britain in declaring war against Germany (History, 2018). At the time Mario was 14 years old and still at Rossiter's, working tirelessly with many others to supply the boots worn by the Australian troops. Mario was happy to contribute in this way but wanted to do more (Giovine, 2025).

Seven weeks after his 18th birthday Mario enlisted in the Australian army at Wayville (SA) (See figure 4). He felt it was his duty. He commenced training at Woodside, SA for a period of two months, before being moved interstate to a unit in Dubbo, New South Wales (NSW) to make up a contingent, the 4th Infantry Battalion, 8th Brigade (National Archives of Australia, 2002). Here he knew nobody but established friends quickly. For six months, Mario endured general military training, he

found it both “physically and mentally challenging” due to the high number of physical conditioning programs and the extent of requisite knowledge (Giovine, 2025). On occasion the Battalion were provided as a labour force given the large exit of young men to war. At one point Mario was consigned to a farm in Renmark, rising early to fetch the cows in, milking them, returning them to the field, only to repeat the effort in the evening, and betwixt picking grapes, an exploit that Mario considered “more exhausting than army training” (Giovine, 2025). So much so that on his return he developed a respiratory infection that required hospitalisation for a period of six days (National Archives of Australia, 2002). By years end the Battalion was dispatched to Northern Queensland (QLD) for jungle warfare training, taught survival skills and combat skills specific for New Guinea's terrain (National Archives of Australia, 2002).

Deployed on the 10th of January 1944 for his first tour aboard the SS Van Heutsz (See figure 5) from Cairns, QLD, Mario was somewhat excited, despite the incredulous heat and the putrid



Figure 5: A photograph taken by Mario Giovine of the SS Van Heutsz on the 10th of January 1944 (Mario Giovine's private collection, 1944)



Figure 6: A photograph of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy's' in Finschhafen, New Guinea in January 1944 (Mario Giovine's private collection, 1944)

stench of vomit en route. After six long days the 4th Battalion disembarked in Finschhafen, New Guinea on the 16th of January 1944. Striking to Mario was the vegetation, "completely flattened by the bombing", as well, the warm reception from the locals, the "Fuzzy Wuzzy's" (See figure 6), New Guinean natives recruited into war by the Australians against the Japanese (Anzac Portal, 2020; Giovine, 2025; National Archives of Australia, 2002)

The 4th Battalion were commissioned as a 'mopping up crew', operational after a battle or campaign, where their specialty was to root out any remaining Japanese soldiers and eliminate them (Australian Army 1944, pp.118-121). Initially, they were involved in the clean up along the coast of Finschhafen, then piled onto landing crafts (See figure 7), and sent to Sio to support the 9th division in the Huon Peninsula Campaign. In Sio, the Battalion went straight to work clearing the Rio Coast between Sio and Saidor (AWM52 8/3/41/3). During this operation they worked their way along the shore, avoiding the hills and came across "very few Japanese



Figure 7: A photograph of Mario coming ashore from a landing craft at Sio in 1944 (Mario Giovine's private collection, 1944)

troops", but the ones they did apprehend were disposed of by their Corporal, as "it was his job and his job only" (Australian Army 1944, pp.118-121; Giovine, 2025).

Moving on to Madang by mid-February, the Battalion were made responsible for the Madang-Bagadjim area (See figure 8) (AWM52 8/3/41/3). On arrival Mario succumbed to Dengue fever and spent seven days in the base hospital (National Archives of

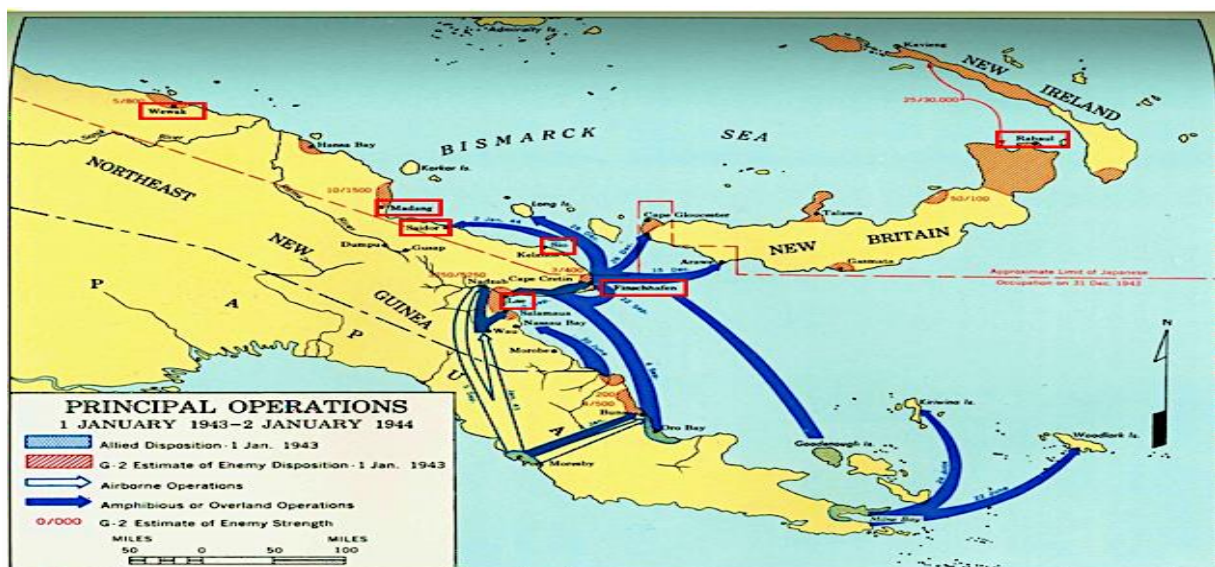


Figure 8: A map displaying the towns in red descended upon by the 4th Battalion during WWII. (Premier Relics, 1943)

rejoined the Battalion carrying out patrols between Maclay River and Booster Bay, infiltrating areas of heavy jungle, heavy rain and heat (See figure 9). Here Mario became adept at maintaining silence, as “the slightest noise would vibrate in the jungle giving away one’s location” (Australian War Memorial, 2025; Giovine, 2025).

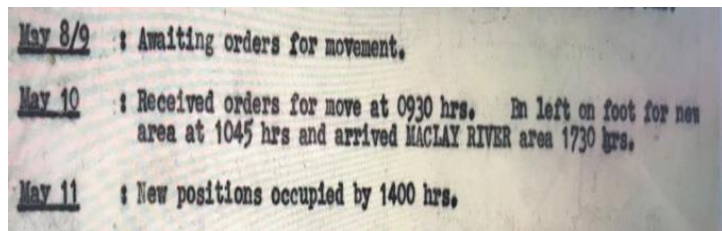


Figure 9: A unit war diary entry from May 8th, 1944 displaying the movement of the 4th battalion to Maclay river (AWM52 8/3/41/4)

By late May 1944 the Battalion was ordered to support the troops in the Ailape-Wewak Campaign (Australian War Memorial, 2025; AWM52 8/3/41/4). More dangerous than ever before, Mario recalls leaning into his catholic beliefs because of a “genuine fear”, for the first time instructed to “dig a trench to sleep in to avoid being shot” (Giovine, 2025).



Figure 10: A photograph taken by Mario Giovine of the Japanese soldiers held in the Lae POW camp (Mario Giovine own private collection, 1945).

Throughout June the Battalion advanced steadily and occupied Bogia, Potsdam and then Hansa Bay, and by October they were marching into Wewak, “greeted by the Salvation Army of all things, volunteers who had turned up in a corvette to provide hot coffee” (Australian War Memorial, 2025; AWM52 8/3/41/5-6; Giovine 2025).

Having served two years in the army up to this point, Mario was offered a leave of absence in December of 1944, travelling back to Adelaide to spend time with his family. After five weeks furlough, Mario returned to Townsville QLD on the 17th of January 1945. Truant for the first two days, he was docked two days’ pay, only to contract malaria five days later, recover slowly, contract malaria again, then scabies, crippling him for a period of 6 months (National Archives of Australia, 2002).

Having served two years in the army up to this point, Mario was offered a leave of absence in December of 1944, travelling back to Adelaide



Figure 11: Mario guarding the Japanese soldiers as they dig trenches to dispose of rubbish (Mario Giovine’s private collection, 1945)

Once well, Mario, now elevated to Lance Corporal from Private, embarked on his second tour from Cairns aboard a ‘Catalina Flying boat’ on June 21, 1945. Arriving in Malang, just outside of Lae, where his Battalion awaited, Mario’s new duty was to guard Japanese Prisoners of War (POW) at the Lae POW Camp (see figure 10) (Australian War Memorial, 2025; National Archives of Australia, 2002). He found the Japanese to be very respectful, normal people away from the war. They set up a little village within the walls of the camp, where they had their own chickens, eggs, grew vegetables and were allowed to exit the camp to dispose of rubbish (see figure 11) and climb palm trees to retrieve the fine leaves at the top to make sake. They

were even trusted with knives during the day, given in the morning and returned at night (Giovine, 2025).

WWII officially ended on September 2nd, 1945 (History, 2018). Mario was “relieved”, however, he was determined to finish out his tour (Giovine, 2025). He resided at the Camp until all Japanese POWs were repatriated. On the 4th of January 1946 he was transferred to Rabaul, where he remained until his formal discharge on the 26th of July 1946, after having served three and a half years (National Archives of Australia, 2002).

Mario transitioned back to life in Adelaide as if he had not left. He returned to Rossiter’s, progressed to Avalon and finished at Clark’s in 1989. He married his childhood sweetheart, Jean in 1949 (See figure 12 & 13) and together they had three children (See figure 14). He lived in Parkside initially, then moved to Magill in 1962, and still resides there today at the age of 100. Outside of work Mario immersed himself in football, initially playing for the South Adelaide ramblers, then as a player and coach at Hectorville Football Club (See figure 15). On a Saturday at any given time, Jean his wife would be at the football running the canteen while he coached, both bestowed life membership for their service (Giovine, 2025; Hectorville Sports and Community Club, 2022).



Figure 12: A photo of Mario and Jean Giovine on their wedding day in 1949 (Mario Giovine’s private collection, 1949)



Figure 13: Mario Giovine with his wife, Jean on their 50th wedding anniversary (Mario Giovine’s private collection, 1999)



Figure 14: Mario with Brian, Marilyn, Jean & baby Anthony at the beach in 1958 (Mario Giovine’s private collection, 1958)

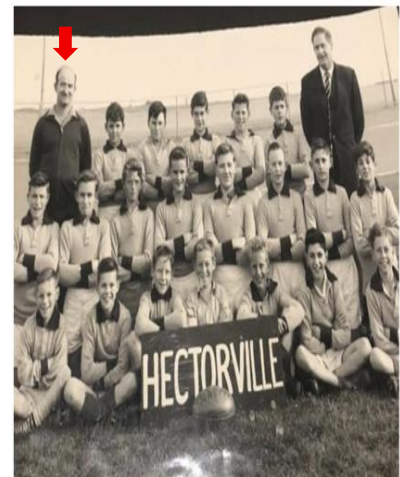


Figure 15: Coach Mario Giovine with the U14 boys Hectorville football team in 1963 (Mario Giovine’s private collection, 1963)



Figure 16: Photograph of the medals awarded to Mario Giovine for his service in WWII. From left to right: 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, 1939-45 War medal, 1939-45 Australian Service Medal and 1945-75 Australian Service Medal (Mario Giovines private collection, 2025)

Mario is a true ANZAC and embodies the quality of courage. From the beginning and throughout, Mario exhibited great metal, he marched out to every campaign in New Guinea with a willingness to expose himself to Japanese aggression and risk death or significant injury time after time. Even in his darkest hour, feeling scared for his life in the Ailape-Wewak Campaign, having to dig a trench to sleep in for fear of being shot, he bravely persisted. For the length of his deployment Mario's valour never wavered and can be observed today in the medals he received as symbols of his service (see figure 16).

Perseverance is also an ANZAC quality that runs throughout Mario's journey. Littered with challenges from the outset, Mario first endured six months of General Military training of which he found to be incredibly challenging, yet he persisted, successfully transitioning to jungle warfare instruction and deployment. Ill for six months between tours with malaria, scabies and malaria again, his tenacity saw him recover and return for a second tour. Mario's doggedness also facilitated an ability to forge through the unsettling heat, the torrential downpours and the constant fear for his life, as he was determined to survive and return to his family.

HASS word count: 1563

PART B:

When the opportunity to participate in the Premiers Anzac Spirit School Prize presented itself, one person sprang to mind, that of WWII veteran Mario Giovine. I first heard his story at the Magill Anzac Day dawn service in 2024, recounted by his grandson, Drew. His narrative remained with me for well over a year, as I was inspired by his ability to adapt to change and embrace every challenge with zeal.

My research journey began with a hunt for online information pertaining to Mario Giovine and WWII. I came across a written piece by Vincent Tarzia, Drew's speech from ANZAC day, service records from the National Archives of Australia and dairy entries documenting the 4th Battalions movements throughout the war.

From here I engaged the President of the Magill RSL subbranch, Meredith Burgess via email, and asked if she could contact Mario on my behalf, to see if he would be interested and accepting of an interview and written piece on his life. Meredith passed on my details and my wishes. Mario graciously accepted.

A face to face was organised. Prior to this I spent a great deal of time scrutinizing the information I had already gathered. I wrote out a timeline of events, leaving blank spaces for questions for Mario to help fill-in the gaps. I emailed these questions to Mario prior to our meeting to give him time to consider and reflect on the answers.

During the recorded interview I asked many questions about Mario's life, he supplied all kinds of colourful answers, anecdotes and photographs. As well, he shared his pride and joy, his medals.

Meeting Mario in person was a true privilege. He was a lovely man who so willingly chronicled his life history, giving me additional motivation to create his story.

With the interview transcribed I began to analogize the information provided from the voice recording and various primary and secondary resources, inclusive but not limited to, the Jungle Warfare book, the 4th Battalion unit diaries, Mario's service record and dated personal photographs. At times it was challenging to align the information. Periodically I found myself emailing Mario with further questions to clear up any misunderstandings.

Eventually the research came together, and I realised, not only had I produced a written piece of work that showcased Mario's journey from birth till present, I had also adopted a new appreciation for words like courage, resilience, perseverance and mateship, and gained a better understanding of the importance of expressing gratitude to those that contributed on and off the battlefield serving our country.

HASS word count: 425

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Figure 2: National Archives of Australia (1928), Declaration of Immigration form containing details pertaining to Mario Giovine and his family. Viewed on 27 Jul. 2025, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=32109650&isAv=N>

Figure 3: Giovine, M. 1932. A photograph taken of Rosa, Mario, Giuseppe and Luigi Giovine on the farm in Summertown [photograph] (Mario Giovine own private collection).

Figure 4: National Archives of Australia (1943), A signed enlistment and oath to serve in WWII by Mario Giovine. Viewed on 17 Apr. 2025, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6412460>

Figure 5: Giovine, M. 1944. A photograph taken by Mario Giovine of the SS Van Heutsz on the 10th of January 1944 [photograph] (Mario Giovine own private collection).

Figure 6: Giovine, M. 1944. A photograph of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy's' in Finschhafen, New Guinea in January 1944. [photograph] (Mario Giovine own private collection).

Figure 7: Giovine, M. 16th January 1944. A photograph of Mario coming ashore from a landing craft at Sio in 1944. [photograph] (Mario Giovine own private collection).

Figure 8: Premier Relics (1943), A map displaying the towns in red descended upon by the 4th Battalion during WWII. Viewed on 9 Jul. 2025, <https://premierrelics.com/new-products-35/rare-new-guinea-nubia-1943-invasion-map-operation-michaelmas-pacific-theater-operations>

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