

THE AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER



Name : Peter Farquharson

School : Mt Gravatt State High School
Loreburn Street
Mt Gravatt 4122

Level : Lower Secondary - *Grade 8 year 12/01/13*

Title : Corporal Mervyn Alexander BELSHORE



*Brilliant A+ - I wish this had been ready
for the competition!*
Stanley

I would like to tell you the story of my grandfather, Corporal Meryvn Alexander BELSHORE. He was a soldier with the 61st Infantry Battalion which fought at Milne Bay, on the very eastern tip of New Guinea, during 1942. ✓



When war was declared in 1939 Grandad was only 18 years old. He was working at a sawmill in Brisbane. The job had been found for him by Thompson Estate Harriers Athletic Club. The club had bought him to Brisbane from the country town of Clermont so that it could supervise his training. Grandad's main love in life was athletics. He was a very strong, fit young man. ✓

Grandad wanted to join the Royal Australian Airforce but his mother was not willing to sign his papers. But on 20th October, 1941 he became a member of the Citizens Military Forces and was issued with his service number - Q102254. He was pleased to be in the army. ✓

Grandad served in Australia before being sent to Milne Bay. It was at Enoggera in Brisbane, and then in Townsville that he got to know and be known by many of the other men of the 61st Battalion. Three of these ^eman were Sergeant Jim Mackenzie,



*Sergeant Noel Despard-Worton
61 Battalion*



Corporal Mervyn Belshore in uniform while serving in Brisbane

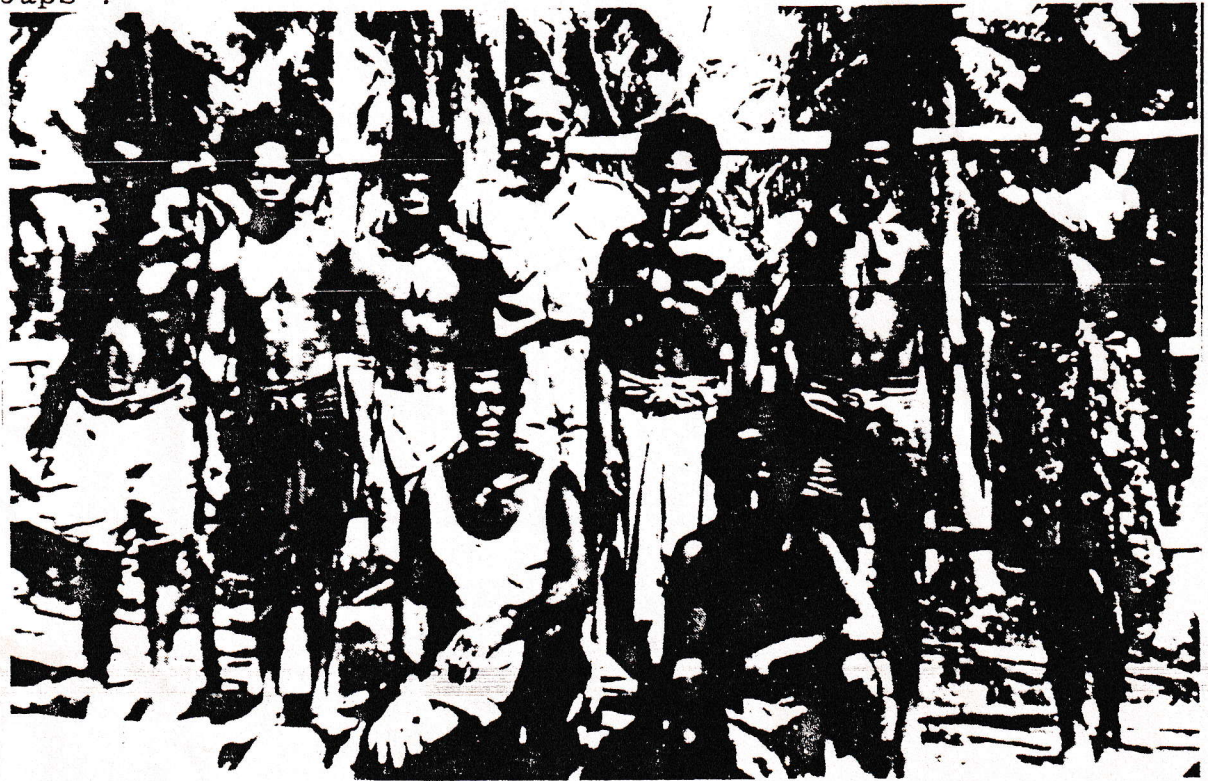
Sergeant Jack Newcombe and Sergeant Noel Despard-Worton. These men have helped me learn more about my grandad.

When I spoke with Mr Mackenzie he explained to me how my grandad was known by so many amongst the 750 men of the 61st Battalion. "We knew him by what he did and what he was like - as you might know the captain of the school football team." Mr Mackenzie described him to me as a strong, well-built man who got on well with everyone. He was sound, solid, sincere and very trustworthy. He did what he had to in a quietly confident manner and had a very human way of handling people.

Grandad was shipped to Milne Bay on a Dutch Merchant ship which had escaped the Japanese invasion of Indonesia. Milne Bay was only 200 miles from the northern most point of Australia. only 700 miles from Townsville. Had it fallen into enemy hands, it would have been almost impossible to stop the Japanese invading Australia. The battle fought at Milne Bay was the turning point of the war in the Pacific. It marked the first defeat on land of what seemed to be, up to then, an invincible Japanese force. (see map next page)



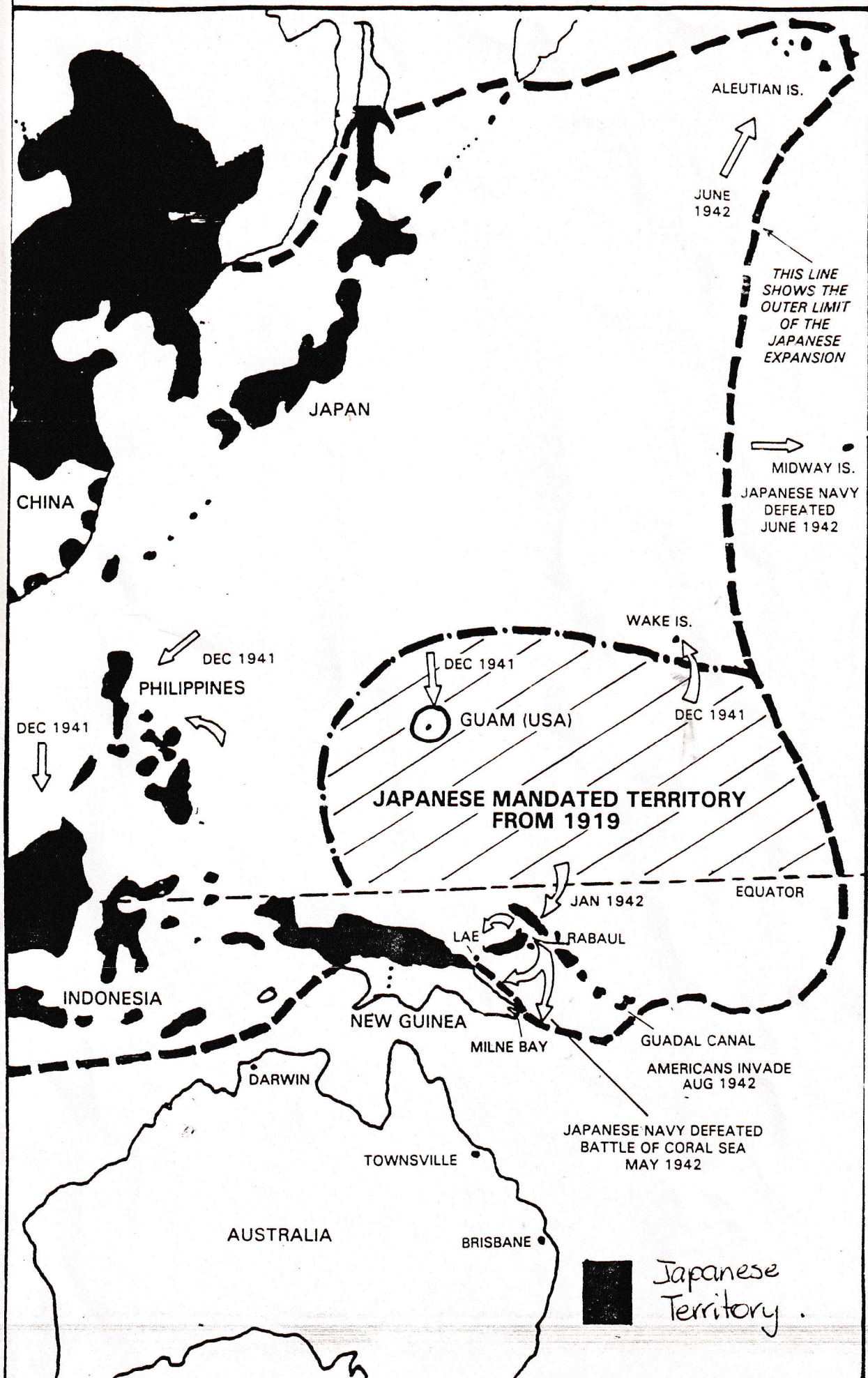
If you asked any serviceman who was stationed at Milne Bay what he remembered most about his time there he would say :- rain, mud, jungle, mosquitos, leeches and on the positive side - Fuzzy Wuzzies (natives), mates and of course the fact that they beat the 'Japs'.



An Australian airman poses with some of the village workers.

THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

THE EXTENT OF THEIR PACIFIC EXPANSION AT MID 1942



In nearly everthing the men did, the local natives worked tirelessly beside them. Our 'blokes' quickly came to respect and really appreciate the villagers and their quiet, gentle manner of doing things. In all the preparations and fighting that went on in the Milne Bay area, things would have been very different if it had not been for the natives. We would not have beaten the Japanese into the area by just one day. Allied headquarters became operational on the evening before the first Japanese air raid.

Grandad had just over a month at Milne Bay before he met a Japanese marine face to face. He and his mates, however, did not just sit around. A working day for the men of Grandad's battalion, went something like this :- four hours unloading ships, four hours on roads, four hours on weapons and four hours patrolling.



Men of 61 Bn working on a road in the vicinity of No3 Strip.

The rain and mud influenced everything that everybody did. Milne Bay's weather had two classifications :- Summertime - rains everyday, wintertime - rains all day. Grandad told my mum when she was little, that his boots and socks were always wet but sometimes it was not water but blood, from leeches, he would tip out of his boots.

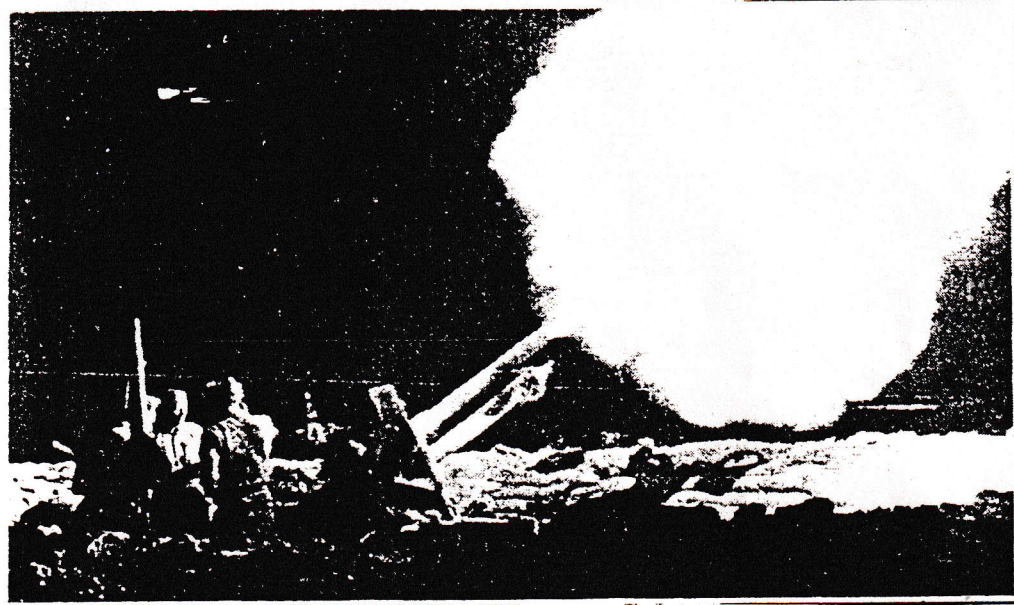
Mr Mackenzie told me that the roads were horrendous because of the rain and heavy traffic that moved constantly along them. The crown of the road would end up being so high that it was almost impossible to travel it, in any vehicle, without slipping into the deep, muddy ditches on either side. Road works went on 24 hours a day. Many a hole of boggy mud had to be filled with literally anything that was available. Sergeant Mackenzie and his men used a truck load of army biscuits to do the job one day - good fill, for a little while.



This picture shows the terrible state of the roads in the Gili Gili base area - with boggy ditches just waiting to entrap any wayward vehicles. The Marmon Harrington type truck had a poor reputation in these conditions.

Grandad's platoon (9 or 10 men) was sent away from the main base at Gili Gili to the outpost of Taupota, on the north coast of the peninsular. It was their job to watch against Japanese infiltration from the north. They walked approximately 30 miles from the base area, across the Stirling Mountain Range, to reach Taupota. It was a tough walk, through dense jungle. I think it was during this walk that one of the few things of the war that Grandad would talk about happened. The men with Grandad were frightened to cross a narrow, fast flowing river they had come across. Grandad ferried their weapons across, holding them high above his head and then went back for each man in turn, to help him across.

Later a full company was sent to boost the numbers at Taupota. All up, there were 35 to 40 'blokes' alone on the north shore. Taupota outpost was left out of the battle for a while. The men could see and hear it raging in the bay area. It was like watching a terrific storm, with lightning flashing and thunder roaring.



Allied gun fire which lit up the night sky, like lightning, for the men of the Taupota Outpost.

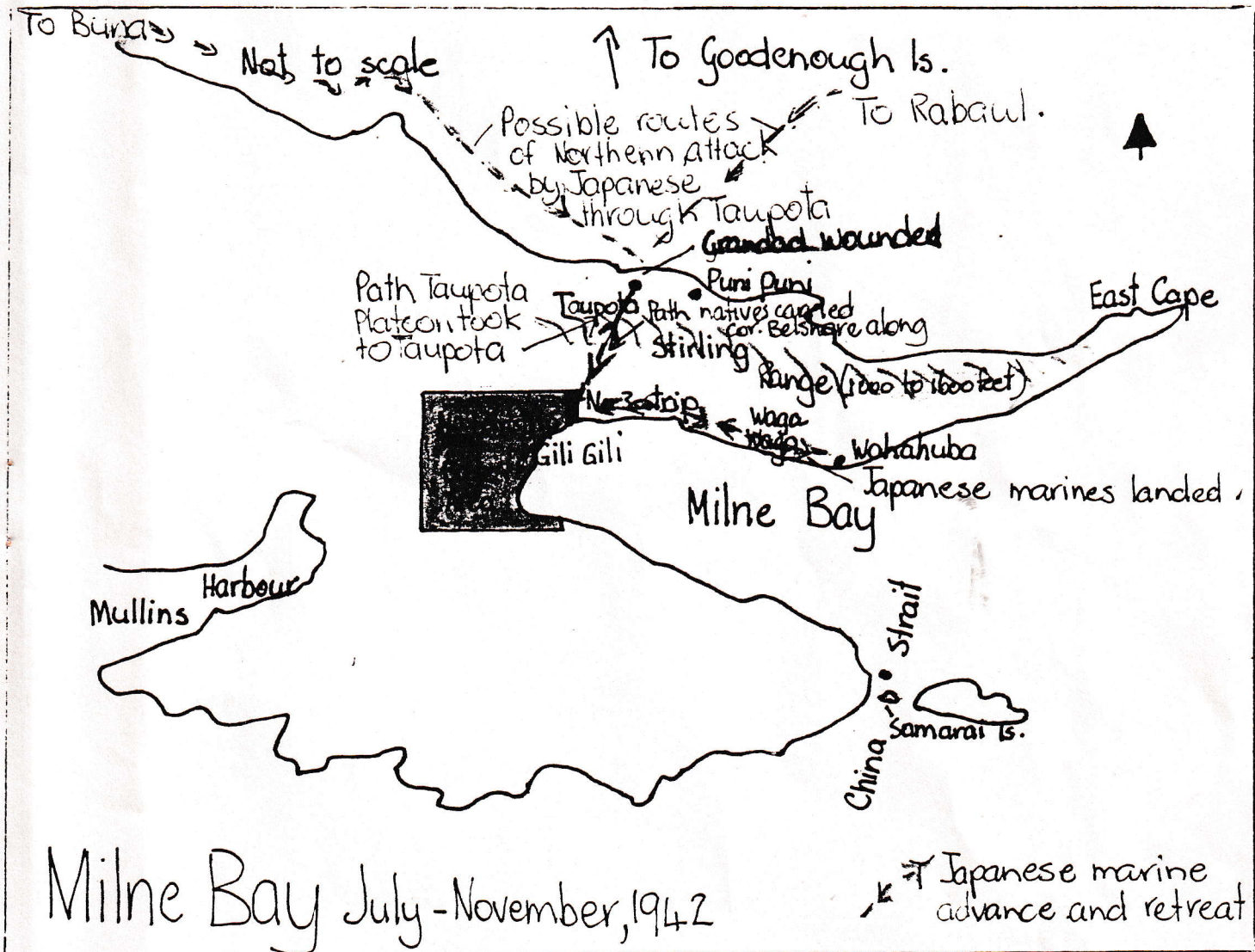


The allied forces at Milne Bay defeated the Japanese marine force that landed there in twelve days of heavy fighting. The Japanese marines that were left behind, after evacuation, tried to make their way to safety on foot. Many went through the outpost of Taupota. For Grandad and the other men, fighting with these stragglers was heavy but very sporadic - very nerve wracking.

Grandad did not see an end to the straggler problem. He was shot, when an ambush on a large, well armed party of Japanese went drastically wrong. He and his Lieutenant, Harry Shaw, were left to deal with the whole party of Japanese alone. Both Grandad and Lieutenant Shaw were hit as they engaged the enemy but they still managed to shoot six or seven Japanese.

interesting ✓

Grandad was very badly wounded by machine gun dumb-dumb bullets. They entered his body and exploded causing damage to his left arm, left shoulder, left lung and ribs. It was the 'Fuzzy-Wuzzzy Angels', as Grandad called them, who carried him over the range and back to base camp. They cried for him a lot of the time - he had become their friend.



Grandad was not expected to live. He was full of shrapnel. He was eventually loaded on board a ship to be transported home. While he was at Gili Gili he was given a blood transfusion, courtesy of Sergeant Jack Newcombe, whom I mentioned earlier. When Grandad arrived back in Australia, he and his stretcher together weighed seven stone (45 kg). He was still not expected to live by the doctors at Brisbane's, Greenslopes Military Hospital. There were five men in the ward Grandad was in. He was the only one who survived. He had a very faithful doctor. Dr Stubbs-Brown was at his bedside when ever he opened his eyes -

day or night. Once the doctors realized that he was going to live, Dr Paddy Dixon wanted to amputate his left arm because he believed the mess it was in would reduce Grandad's chances of living. Grandad said simply "No thanks Doc." Grandad worked hard on his arm. He plaited leather whips to exercise it and gradually pulled it away from his body, where it had become 'stuck' through lack of use. He also learnt to lace leather handbags, as part of his therapy.

Grandad finally left hospital after twelve to eighteen months. He could not return to his pre-war job at the sawmill because of his injuries. He supported himself by making handbags using the skills he had learnt in hospital. The American servicemen mostly bought them. He never accepted an army pension.

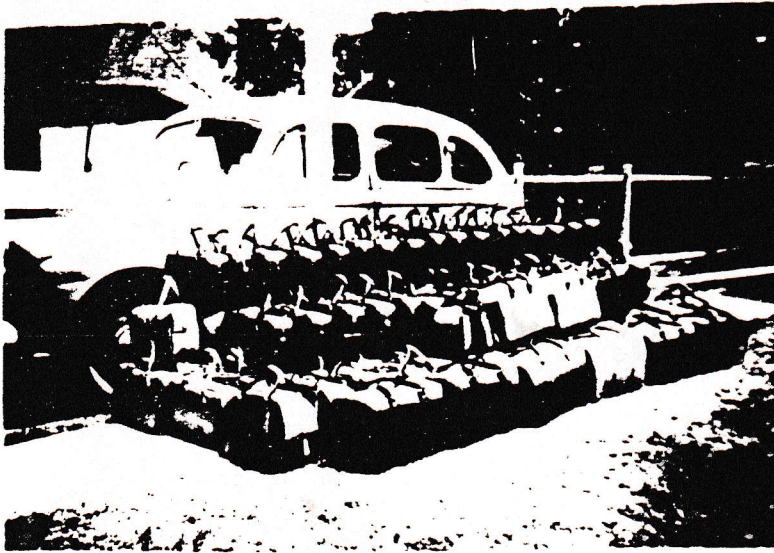
Grandad was in and out of hospital for the next five years. He met my grandma there. She nursed him and thought he was very cheeky.



Sister Shaw (Grandma) (Back!) with well cared for returned service men at Greenslopes Military Hospital.

Sister Shaw (Grandma) washing a returned soldiers hair at Greenslopes Military Hospital.

They married and set up a leather manufacturing business operating from under the house they built at Mt Gravatt - a big risk, but that was how much quiet confidence Grandad had in himself.



A weeks work for Grandad and Grandma form their leather manufacturing workshop

Grandad's life was drastically ^{as} changed as a result of the war, yet he never complained. All the doctors that ever had anything to do with him agreed that it was only his physical fitness from a life on the athletic field that pulled him through.

He was never bitter that the war ^{ended} his athletic career. He simply turned his attention to the administrative side of athletics and quietly began to become the best that he could at that.

Grandad died in 1965 from his third major heart attack. His war injuries had put such a terrible strain on his heart. No one ever thought of him as being a sick man because he never acted like one. He was a happy person who just got on with living. I'm glad my grandad was such a good soldier, but I wish that he hadn't got shot so that I could have known him.

✓ Just what a wonderful man was - he must be proud!

The newly built Belshore

home at Mt Gravatt.

The leather manufacturing workshop was under the front of the house. Grandad is standing in the front doorway.

On the 26/2/2019 Grandma will have lived in their home for 70 years.



QUEENSLAND
 Amateur Athletic Association
 SENIOR
CHAMPIONSHIP CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that M. Belshore secured
3rd place in the 120 Yds. Hurdles Championship
 of Queensland on the seventh day of December, 194

at Brisbane.

D. S. Carter
 President.

G. Oliver
 Hon. Gen. Secretary.



Athletic certificates and medallions won by Granddad

Appendix 2. Athletic Photographs.



Granddad Belshore hurdling 1940-41 at the age of 20.



Granddad Belshore
putting the shot
1940-41 (20 years)

Appendix 3.

61 Battalion

black-green



Corporal Belshere
wore this cloth
badge on his
uniform.

61 BATTALION - MANNING SHEET

COMMANDING OFFICER (CO)	L/Col	MELDRUM Alex
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Major	WILES Harry
ADJUTANT	Lt	LAWSON Angus
ADJUTANT ASSISTANT	Lt	O'CALLAGHAN Geoff
REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR (RSM)	WO1	BALDWIN Noel (Bluey)
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (IO)	Lt	HOBBS Stan
PADRE/CHAPLAIN	Capt	JAMES Gordon
QUARTERMASTER (QM)	Lt	BRINKLEY Frank
REGIMENTAL MEDICAL OFFICER (RMO)	Capt	HAWKINS (Butch)

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING (OC)	Capt	TREMLOW Eric
1 PLATOON—SIGNALS	Lt	MORLEY Graham (Mumma)
2 PLATOON—TRANSPORT	Lt	EMMETT H. (Nugget)
3 PLATOON—MORTAR	Lt	KLINGER Len (KIA 27.8.42)
4 PLATOON—PIONEERS	Sgt	ASKEW Bill
5 PLATOON—CARRIERS	Lt	STANLEY Les
6 PLATOON—ANTI A'CRAFT	Sgt	THOMPSON Ces

A - COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING	Capt	GOWLAND Robert (Bob)
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Lt	SHAW Harry
7-PLATOON	Lt	TODHUNTER R.
8-PLATOON	Lt	SHAW Harry
9-PLATOON	WO2	O'DONNELL (Toddy)

B - COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING (OC)	Capt	BICKS Charles
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Not known	
10-PLATOON	Lt	SANDERSON Wallace (KIA Aug 42)
11-PLATOON	Lt	ROBINSON Herb
12-PLATOON	Lt	McCOY James

C - COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING (OC)	Capt	CAMPBELL Ken (Soapy)
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Capt	RUDDER Bill
13-PLATOON	Lt	LAWSON James
14-PLATOON	Lt	KING Eddie [DOW 27.8.42]
15-PLATOON	Lt	TOMLINSON C. (Thommo)

D - COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING (OC)	Capt	DAVIDSON Lee (Gramps)
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Capt	NIXON-SMITH Lee
16-PLATOON	Lt	WHITTAKER John (Jack)
17-PLATOON	Lt	O'KEEFE Tom
18-PLATOON	Lt	RITCHIE Sydney

E - COMPANY

OFFICER COMMANDING (OC)	Capt	GRAHAM James
SECOND-IN-COMMAND (2IC)	Lt	BROWN Alex
... PLATOON	Lt	CUNNINGTON M.
... PLATOON	Lt	LEWIS H.
... PLATOON	Lt	DONALDSON Colin

Granddad (Corporal Belshere's) CO was Lieutenant Harry Shaw.

Appendix 4. Corporal Belshore and Corporal
Belshore's War Service Medals.



Top L to R.. War Medal 1939/45, Pacific Star, 1939/45 Star
Bottom. Australian Service Medal.



A close up photo of Granddad
in uniform - He loved his
stout hat with its turned-up
brim held there by his rising
sun badge.

Appendix 5. Newspaper Articles

Courier Mail, 1956.

Granddad
↓

"THIS IS THE TORCH"



QUEENSLAND Amateur Athletics' Association official and Olympic Games reserve starter, Mr. M. Belshore (left), who showed an Olympic torch to inmates of Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital yesterday. Mr. Belshore, who was discharged from the hospital yesterday, is with Padre J. C. Farquhar (centre) and Mr. H. G. Lister, of Wavell Heights.

Newspaper articles from Brisbane newspapers - most often written by [unclear]

Sportrait



OLYMPIC starter, Merv. Belshore, owes his life to athletics.

Belshore, one of Queensland's leading athletes in the immediate pre-war period, was shockingly wounded in action during the Japanese attack at Milne Bay in 1942.

His left shoulder socket was torn out and his left lung collapsed.

Corporal Belshore spent two-and-a-half years on his back in hospital.

Doctors told him that only his physical fitness from a life on the athletic field pulled him through.

Against medical opinion, he competed for a time after the war and by chance one day at the Exhibition Ground in 1946 he became a starter.

The regular starter had failed to appear. Merv was asked to do the job. . . he handled the athletes competently. . . in no time he was official Association starter.

Belshore has made a study of starting—"I maintain it is something which you must get the urge to perfect."

Then in 1952 at the Australian championships at the Exhibition Ground—the scene of his initiation as a starter—he hit the Australian headlines.

An unknown local sprinter by the name of Hector Hogan beat the hot favourite, John Treloar (NSW) in the 100 yards and the cry burst forth that Hogan had got a "fly" at the start.

The race is still a controversial subject in athletics and opinion is almost unanimous that Hogan did beat

the gun. Belshore has maintained a strict public silence on the incident.

Belshore managed State teams to Adelaide in 1955 and Melbourne in 1956 and was one of three starters selected for the Melbourne Olympic Games.

He says that he and other officials probably learnt more in a couple of weeks at the Games than in their whole careers.

Mervyn Alexander Belshore was born at Clermont 36 years ago and at school was an above average athlete, cricketer, footballer and cyclist.

At the age of 14 in 1935 he won eight events out of eight at the district sports and the same year he left school and came to Brisbane to work as a timber machinist.

He joined Thompson Estate Harriers and between 1936 and 1940 won five State titles, including the open 120 yards hurdles and open discus.

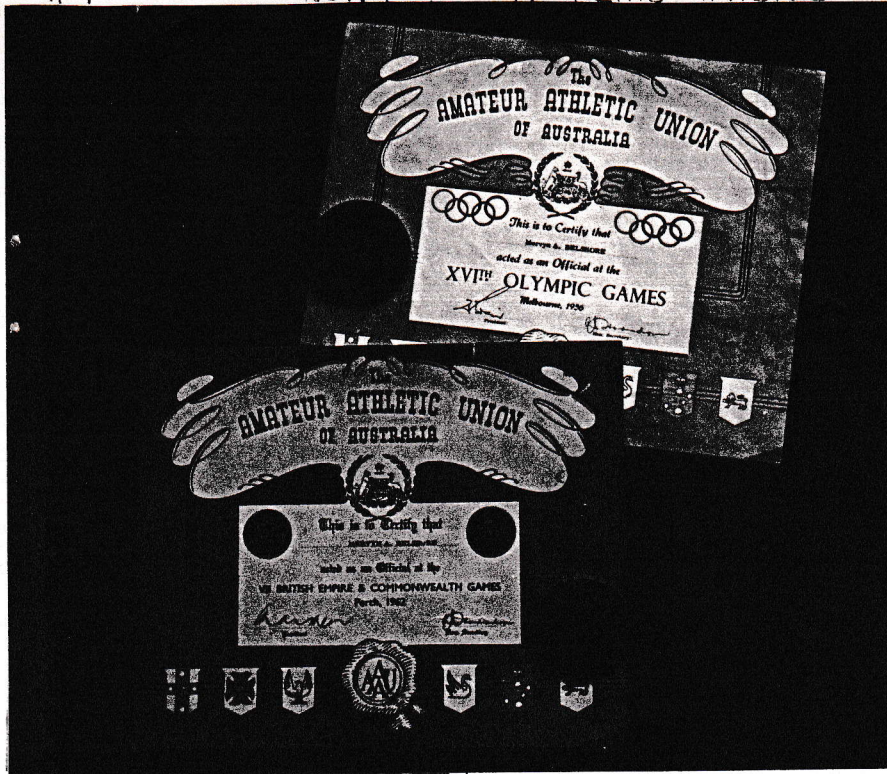
Apart from these two events, he was placed in shot, hammer, javelin, decathlon, high jump, pole vault and hop, step and jump titles.

He swam with Commercial Club and the YMCA.

Belshore has one hobby which has proved of great benefit to athletes in Queensland, including Chilla Porter—movie photography.

A Mt. Gravatt travel goods manufacturer, Belshore has a son, Peter, 4, and two-year-old twin daughters, Christine and Patricia. —JOHN MORTON.

Another Sportrait Next Week



OUT AMONG AMATEURS ... with Tom Linneth

OWED LIFE TO GREAT LOVE OF ATHLETICS

MERV. Belshore, the man behind the gun in Queensland athletics, owes his life to his love for the sport.

In 1942 Merv, now official Q.A.A.A. starter, had his left shoulder joint completely blown out in New Guinea and spent 18 months on his back.

Doctors told him that the physique and stamina he developed from athletics saved his life.

Only the year before being wounded Merv cleaned up the State's best as a junior and had a big future as an all round athlete. His main events were 120yd. hurdles, discus, and pole vault.

This season at St. Lucia he has competed in the discus and hammer events—without any help from his left arm. And he still manages to get up near the standard of the leading performers in those events.

He has been a State selector for four years.

Certificates + Medallions certifying that Granddad was an official at both the Melbourne Olympics 1956, and the Perth Commonwealth Games, 1962.



The late MERVYN BELSHORE

at the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956. His death was a sad blow to the sporting fraternity.

Articles from the Clermont State School's Commemorative magazines.

A Brisbane newspaper article (date not known).

AND had Merv Belshore been alive, it's fair to say he would have been just as proud of Jack and Sam.

Jack Forrest and Sam Martin won't mind it said I'm sure, that they were proteges of Merv's starting pistol.

They are members of the starting panel for athletics events at the Commonwealth Games, and as much as any athlete who competes, they've deserved their selection.

Like many of their fellows, they've sacrificed summer weekends at home or away for close to three decades to achieve their goal.

The late Merv Belshore was one of the men who pioneered the science of starting sprint events.

In this era when split seconds are the talk, there's ever so much more to it than "on your marks ..."

Merv, an Australian war hero in the jungles of New Guinea and a member of the starting panel at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, learned his pistol lessons the hard way.

It was he who pulled the trigger to give the late Hec Hogan that controversial start which won him the first of his seven successive national 100 yards championships at the Exhibition Ground in 1952.

Many, many years later Merv told me that the claims of the beaten favorite John Treloar that Hec had got a "fly" might have been right.

John Morton

A Brisbane Newspaper article

In 1932, the late Mervyn Belshore, in the boys' high jump (11 years and under) recorded a phenomenal 4 ft. 4½ ins. In 1935, he was to win the Open High Jump with a spectacular leap of 5 ft. 1 in, six inches ahead of his nearest rival. At this meeting Mervyn was to win the 100 yards, 440 yards, broad jump, high jump and pole vault. Mervyn Belshore's career as an athlete was destroyed as a result of crippling wartime injuries, but his keen interest in athletics remained, and his proudest achievement was his selection as an official starter

In the Sporting Sphere we also had an outstanding performer in Mervyn Belshore who was so much superior to other boys of his age that I communicated with officials of the Thompson Estate Harriers Club in Brisbane to see if they could help him to develop his native ability. They secured employment for him at Hancock and Gore's Sawmill and undertook to supervise his training. Mervyn won a couple of Junior Championships in Field Games but World War II intervened, and those who knew Mervyn Belshore would know where he would be. A shrapnel wound in the shoulder put an end to his active participation in field games but he now turned his attention to the administrative side of sport and reached his greatest heights when he was chosen as starter for the athletics in the Olympic Games in Melbourne. It was with deep regret that I heard of Mervyn's untimely death less than two years ago.

Appendix 7.

'Later' Family Photoes.



The last 'complete' family photograph ever taken.

Lto R Grandma, Grandad

Mum, Unde Peter, Aunty Chris

BELSHORE ST



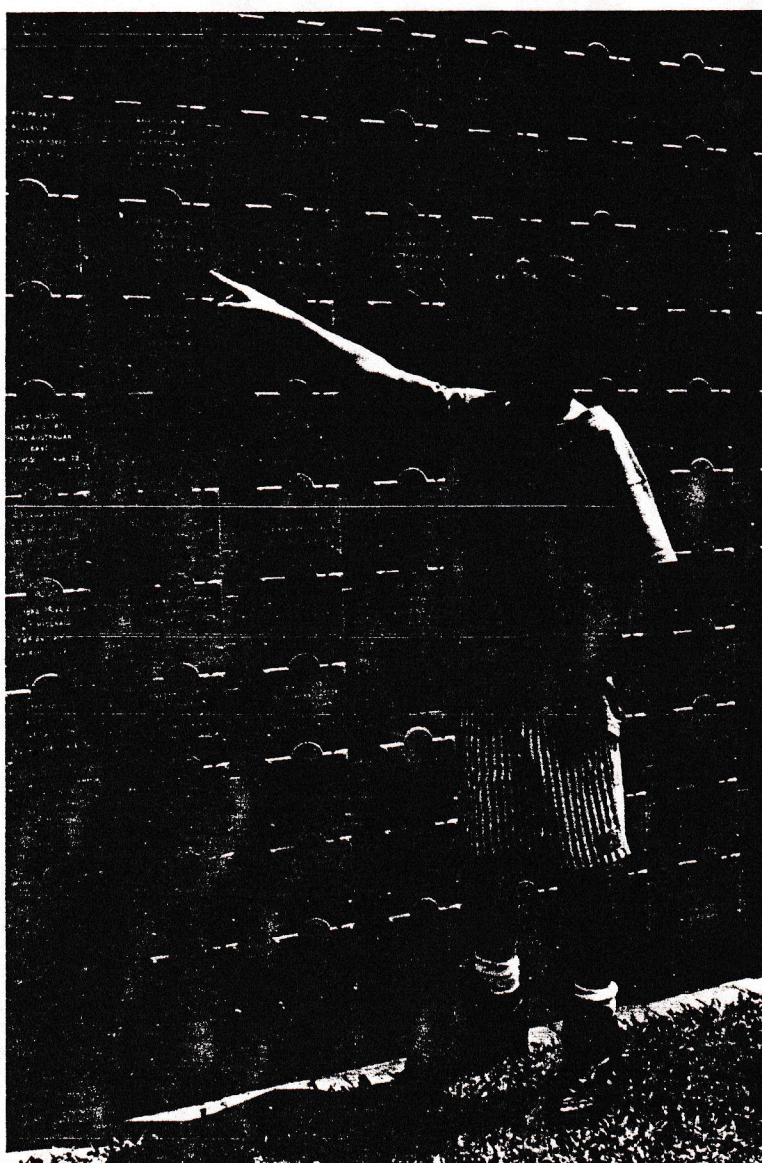
MORAMBAH

The town of ~~Germont~~ thought so much of Grandad that they named a street after him. Grandma stands beneath the street sign.



The last photograph taken of Grandad before he died. He had just come out of hospital having suffered a heart attack (THIS WAS CANBERRA)

Appendix 8. Corporal M.A. Belshore's plaque
at Mt. Thompson Crematorium



Me (Peter Farquhar) indicating Granddad's plaque in the Seru meh's area at Mt. Thompson Crematorium