

us three hundred and sixty six pounds – on terms.

When we arrived in Perth, Dad bought a pig farm in Newburn Road, Queens Park. I helped with the pigs for a while, and then Dad said I had to get a job. My first job was on McAllister's Poultry Farm in Welshpool. I also worked at Crystal Jam Factory and Hardies Fibrolite in Rivervale making asbestos pipes. My first job earned me 30/-shillings a week, and lunch.

Bill came to live with us about six months after we left Tammin. He got a job at Cresco Superphosphate in Bassendean. Apart from his war service, it was his only job. He returned to it after WW11.

I made new friends and often went to the dances in Pier Street on a Saturday night. We tried other venues too. There was always about six or seven of us and we always had fun. We would walk, bus or train to the dances. Sometimes Bill took us in Dad's Ute.

As we got older alcohol crept in. For a long time Yalumba Port Wine was our favourite at 2/6a bottle. We all put in for it and Fred Peterson, the

oldest would buy it. We would swig away on it and then go to the dances.

Snig Walker, one of our group bought a second hand Ute and we would all pile in it and drive around on a Saturday night. We would all put in 6d for petrol and always had great times.

Merve Macintosh's father had a garage and we would fill up there. Merve was a quiet bloke. He went on to win the Sandover Medal three times.

ARMY DAYS

WW11 started in 1939 and things stayed the same for a while. Gradually we saw more and more people in uniform. One day when in Perth with Mum I saw a recruitment booth in Forrest Place. I told Mum I was going to join up. She just looked at me and said I hope you know what you are doing. I was nineteen years and one month. When asked how old I was, I said twenty one. No questions were asked.

That was that. I got a rail pass to Karrakatta, the main army base in Perth. I passed a medical and along with hundreds of others, was sent to the Naval Base Depot. We stayed there for a

week then went to Northam Army Camp. We had all sorts of needles Tetanus, Cholera, Diphtheria Small Pox etc.

My civvy days were over and I stepped into another world.

Bill had joined the army about twelve months before. He transferred to the AIF about the same time as I joined up. Our army identification numbers were very similar. Bill was - WX14368 and I was WX14294. He was sent to the Tenth Light Horse and I went into Infantry. I soon found out that I knew nothing about the world. I mixed with all kinds of people, single and married, rich and poor and soon new friendships were formed.

We had physical training, marching drills and rifle practice. When asked to do something, you did it. Discipline was very strong and no-one complained.

We got passes to go home for the weekend and still went to the dances but new faces were there and things were beginning to really change.

In Northam I was in "A" Company and was the thirteenth reinforcement to the 32nd Battalion. Our platoon lieutenant was Day and our sergeant was Crouch. Strict routine soon made us as fit as fiddles. We got issued with rifles - 0.303 Short machine Lee Enfield (S.M.L.E.). Then we got our dog tags. They were round discs made from an indestructible material, stamped with you name and religion. They were never to be removed from around the neck. Only death or discharge allowed for their removal.

In our platoon there were three aboriginals. This surprised me because they were not allowed to join up. There was Matthew, Cyril and Arthur. Mat kept them in line. About a fortnight before we left for overseas combat, they went into Northam and got into a fight. Mat got hit over the head with a picket and died. He was given a military funeral. We never saw Cyril or Arthur again.

When we received our pre impartment leave we knew we getting close to going to war. I and three others hired a taxi and went to Perth. Mum and Dad took me off and we said our goodbyes. One the way back to Northam, the

driver went to sleep and we ended up in the bushes but luckily, no-one was hurt.

A few days later we lined up in camp and marched to the Northam Station. From there we caught the train to Fremantle Wharf. We went to Gauge Road and there we saw the Queen Mary – 80,000tons and Queen Elizabeth – 85,000tons. We boarded the Q.E. and as we did the soldiers who boarded from the east started to throw us cigarettes and giving us a bit of stick.

We had to walk across a plank over the water with all our gear on to get on board. A bit hairy, but everyone made it. There were bunks everywhere and we sailed on the seventh of November, 1941. I remember mud everywhere so it must have been low tide.

We were fed in shifts. All sorts of gambling went on. During the day the ships zig zagged abreast of each other to make it harder for submarines to detect. We travelled at about forty knots and were led by a cruiser which was always ahead of us. At night no cigarettes were allowed because of the black out. I loved to get right up on the bow and watch the flying fish leap out of the water. Porpoises used to put on a show too.

These two ships transported thousands of troops and stopped for no-one. If anyone fell overboard, too bad. Once it cut a destroyer in half and there were no survivors. That didn't happen when I was on it though.

We arrived in Ceylon. That night they turned the lights of the Queen Mary on and she looked magnificent. We reached Port Tewfik (Suez Canal) in thirteen days and were taken to shore in a smelly craft of some sort. I remember an officer saying that if anybody lit a cigarette they would be shot. Nobody did!

After arriving on the shore, we marched all our gear to staging camp. We were there for a day before being loaded onto a train. We were all bloody hungry as we did not eat overnight.

The Q.E. was sold to China for scrap after the war and then was completely gutted by fire. What an end to a magnificent ship.

The Q.M. was sold to the Yanks and became a floating restaurant.

Our troops went from Egypt to Palestine by train. The only food we had was our emergency rations. We stopped at Ismalia and crossed the canal on an old barge. It was pulled by cogs and chains. We boarded another train and finally reached our camp at "El Cantara". After settling into a routine, training started. When we went on route marches we had a ten minute break for every hour that we marched. We did this across Palestine, a dry, featureless place. It is now called Israel.

Whenever we stopped Arabs would come out of nowhere and sell us oranges. They called everyone George and we did a bit of bartering to get them. If a bag broke, we would grab whatever we could and pay 'nix'.

We were reinforcements for the 32nd Battalion which was just out of Tobruk on leave. Our tent had six men to it and one of them was Private Talbot Gordon. His brother Jimmy had won the V.C. in Syria. One day he came to visit Talbot and we all shook his hand. He was wearing his V.C. too. He won it for storming a machine gun post single handed, with grenades and a bayonet.

We were allowed leave on occasions. My mob went to Haifa for a few days. We were allowed to buy booze and we strolled around the town like lords. Christmas Day 1941 was spent sand bagging a creek after it broke its banks.

New Year passed too and we heard rumours that we were going to move further up the western desert area to Greece.

In early February we were put on parade and names were called out. Mine wasn't. Those called out went into the 9th Division and fought the Battle of El Alamain. Many were killed, quite a few that I knew. Included in the killed in action list was Talbot Gordon. The rest of us were sent back to Australia because the Japs were running over Malaysia and heading for Singapore, New Guinea and Australia.

We boarded an old bucket from the Yankee's Merchant fleet. It was named "West Point" I took a dislike to the Yanks. They were loud mouthed, tobacco chewing, overpaid, braggers. They fed us on beans and bacon. There were about 6,000 troops on board and the queue for meals was endless.

The ship was armed with five foot guns, bofers, and anti air craft guns. Also mounted around the decks were 152 Bren Guns, manned day and night. It took seventeen days to reach Fremantle and was small enough to pull right up against the wharf. We arrived on 28th March, 1942.

I got leave until midnight but took a long time to get home. I stayed the night with Mum and Dad who were surprised but pleased to see me. Dad took me back to the troops in the morning but I copped seven days for being A.W.O.L. We left that day and arrived in Adelaide three days later. We were sent to a place called Gawler about thirty miles from Adelaide. We were then given three weeks home leave. When we got back to Karrakatta we were told our battalion had shifted to Sydney. We caught the train to Sydney and eventually ended up at Campbell Town.

The trip across Australia was quite an ordeal. I was lucky enough to get a train compartment but many crossed the Nullarbor in cattle trucks. We had four berth compartments with six of us in it so two took turns at sleeping on the floor. We changed trains many times on the way. We had our meals when the train stopped and we all went to the cook's wagon at the back of the train.

That only happened when we were on the Nullarbor though. All other meal stops were done by volunteers who did a great job.

We mucked about in Campbell Town doing not much then we heard that Singapore had fallen to the Japanese and that Darwin had been bombed. We set off for Queensland and just after we left we heard that Japanese mini subs had raided Sydney Harbour.

We were put with the N.S.W. battalion – the 2/3rd, I think. We didn't like the eastern staters much and they didn't like the boys from the West.

We camped in the bush somewhere and I was transferred to Bill's unit. It was the 2/4th Reconnaissance Squadron. We were sent to Puckapunyal, Victoria. Shortly after that they went into armoured vehicles and were called the 2/4th Armoured Regiment. At some stage we were moved to the Narrabi Plains in N.S.W. We did lots of army drills and training and then went to Southport where we were for several months.

We got three weeks leave before being sent to New Guinea. I was in 'B' Squadron.

We arrived in Madang and it was real jungle country and very humid. It had all sorts of leaches and insects to make things very uncomfortable.

We camped on a coconut plantation. For two shillings a native would climb a coconut tree and get coconuts for us. The milk was delicious and a real treat. We had to take Atabrin tablets to prevent Malaria. We all started to turn yellow because of the tablets which tasted disgusting.

We stayed in Madang camp for several months. The Japs were about thirty to forty miles up the coast from us. Awful things happened. One guy, Clem Skinner began to hallucinate. He ended up taking his gun and walking into the jungle. We searched but never ever found him. In 1992 I wrote to the war graves commission to ask about him. They replied that he was still missing in action. Presumed dead.

The "Fuzzy Wuzzies" built us big, open sided houses out of logs. They thatched the rooves with palm leaves. We had to have mozzy nets and we had stretchers as beds.

We moved on to Bougainvillea Island in the Solomon's. We went on two ships. I was on the one that was diverted to a small atoll called Emarue in the St Nazair group of islands. It stored ammunition for the Americans. It took us a week to unload all the ammunition.

When we arrived in Bougainvillea we landed at a place called Torokini on the south coast. The other half were pleased to see us as they thought we had been sunk.

The Yanks left us to it. We were A and B Squadron 2/3rd plus 3rd Division Australian Infantry and a Kiwi Air Force Squadron. Our job was to push the Japs down Buin Road.

We waterproofed our tanks, put them on a Troop Landing Craft and went further down the coast and landed at Toko. We went inland to Buin Road. I was in Six Troop. Our tank was named "Black Swan". I was a Trade Group Two gunner. I earned nine shillings a day. My brother Bill was the driver, our crew commander was John Marmion, the radio operator and gun loader was Ron Wilkinson. Our troop commander was Lt Roughton. We had three tanks in our troop. Our tanks armament was a three inch Howitzer

mistook us for Japs and had a go at us. Luckily no-one was hurt.

Slowly, we made our way to the Puriati River. We camped on the east side of the river and Harold Hole was killed here. A Japanese shell hit his tank as he was getting in. Lee Cusack was wounded. A few nights later when on guard duty I was pelted with grenades by the Japs but we tossed them out and the infantry threw theirs at the Japs.

The morning after the grenade attack Ron Wilky was in his place, Bill was in the driver's seat, I was on the top of the tank about to get in, John was still on the ground. The Japs opened fire on us. I got in the tank very quickly, John flew in behind me. I could see bullets hitting jungle. Lt Roughton was outside giving orders through the intercom. We moved across the track and let go with the machine guns. We got quite a few Japs - 36, and buried them in a mass grave. Lt Roughton was hit in the shoulder but refused medical help until three days later.

We pushed on and the Japs seemed reluctant to attack us again. Unfortunately Keith Dahl and Tommy Brown were killed by mortar bombs from

the allies. Tim Dunstan died when his tank was blown up while crossing a bridge. Jack Arnold was wounded. We lost another tank and soldiers when it ran head first into the muzzle of a 105MM gun hidden on the track. The following tank scattered the Japs and then the Infantry moved in.

Frank Clark's gun jammed on one occasion and he lost an eye in combat. The Japs came to finish him off and I gave them a blast. The Japs scattered and Frank's life was spared.

We went back to Keko Creek and it was here that we heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, then Nagasaki. The war was over. We never went any further and eventually got back to Torokino Camp safely.

Thinking back in later years, the Bougainvillea Battles had no bearing on the war and should have been left alone. Many innocent lives were lost for no real reason. In a way I am sorry I never visited Japan as I was so bitter towards them after the war and it would have been nice to see them in times of peace. Our close knit unit was very strong and still is today for those who are left. We love our reunions.

The Army gave me discipline, mateship as nothing else could. Many friends were buried on foreign shores and no-one from civilian life will ever understand the feeling a man in uniform has about war.

Bill and I opted for discharge when we got home. Bill flew home and I went by boat – the “Westralia” I think. We embarked at Brisbane and caught the train back to Perth

I took some leave with Bill Cody and we spent Christmas 1945 in a small town up the line from Seymore. A train strike had stopped us there so we weren't home for Christmas. After the strike we got back on the train and arrived in Perth on 4th January, 1946. I was discharged on 8th January 1946.

A CIVILIAN AGAIN

Immediately after the war things were scarce. Tea, butter, petrol, clothing etc and you needed ration tickets to buy anything. I had three hundred pounds in deferred pay and mucked

around for a while without really doing anything. I painted Mum and Dad's Cannington house and went to the pub every night.

I worked at Stirling Dam near Harvey for a while then went back to Hardies Fibrolite. I also worked in the ice works for a while.

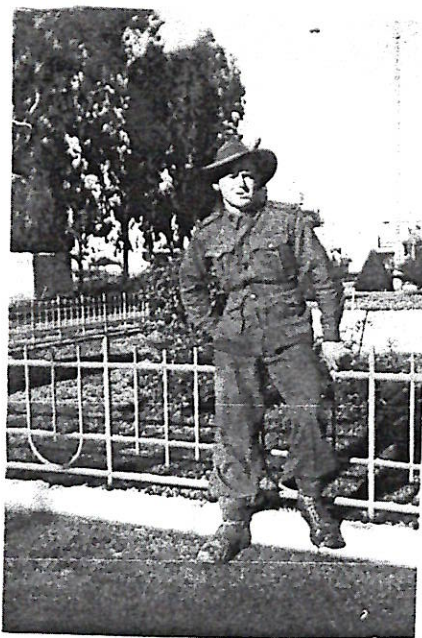
The army put me through a vocational guidance school and I came out as skilled in the motor trade so I applied for a job as a panel beater. I began a six months course in late 1948 and worked in West Perth learning welding etc.

I then got a job at Attwood Motors in Stirling Street, Perth. I spent my time working. Going to dances and the footy and knocking about with various mates – Grose, Duckwood, Bourke, Underhill are a few names that I remember.

One night I met Kathleen Nichols, a Pemberton girl who worked as a nurse at the Mount Hospital. After an off again, on again relationship we became engaged and were married on the 13th January, 1951. We were married in St Peter's Church Victoria Park.



MOM. BILL DAD
QUEBEC PARK 1940



ME AT HIRFA PULSTINE
1941-2



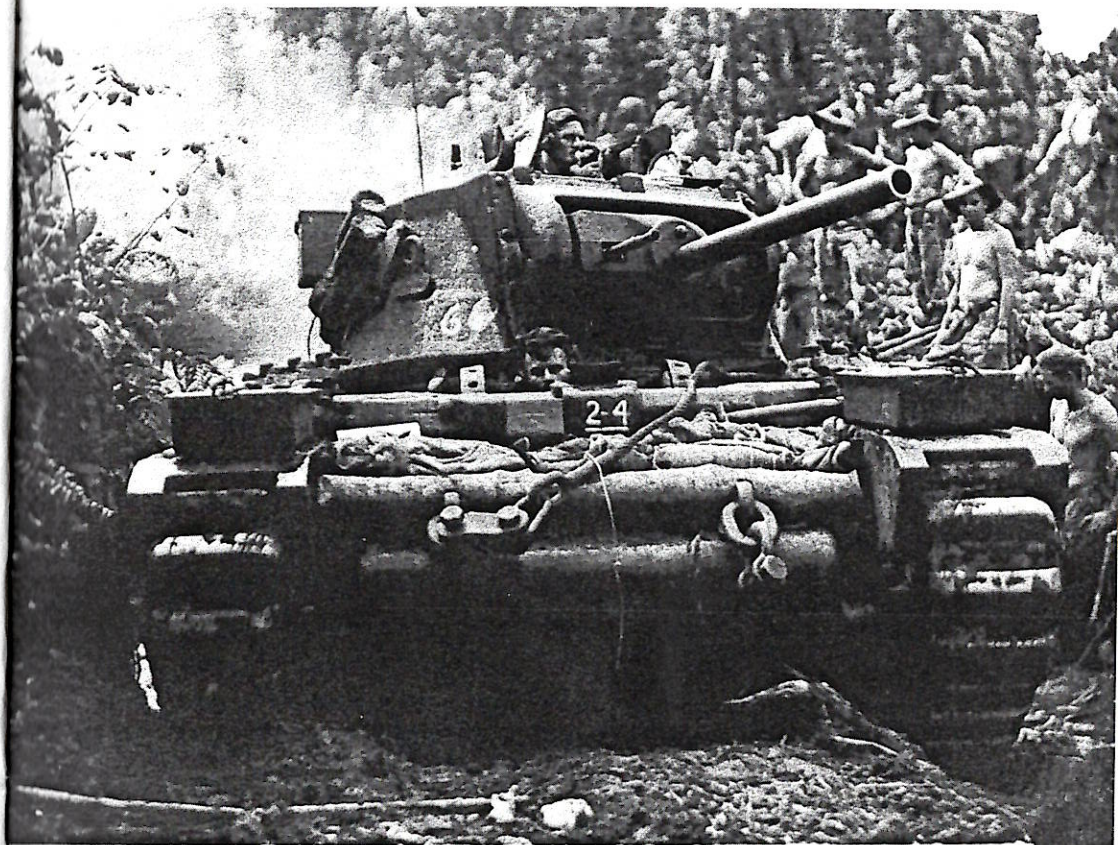
LT. PARROT-HILL
& BILL CORR
EXAMINE TANK HIT
BY 105^{MM} SHELL
KILLING HAROLD MOLE



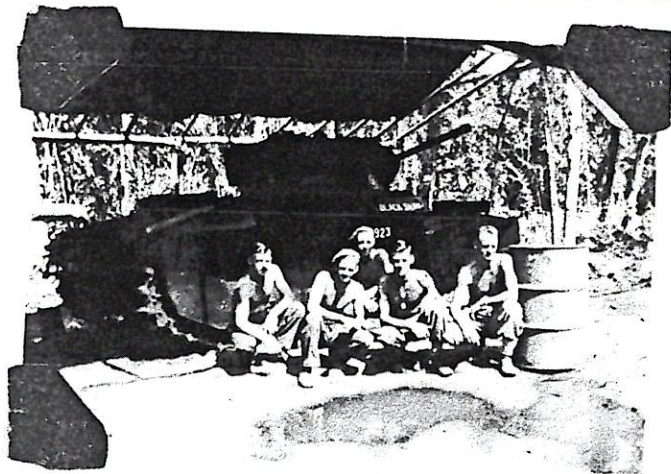
DAVID CAMPBELL
 SGT. WILLIAM HANCOCK



NO. 6 TROOP 13 SQUADRON
 STANDING.
 CHARLIE BLANKS BILL COOY
 GEORGE VAN ROMPEY RON
 WILKINSON - DUNCAN,
 HARRY BECK
 SITTING BILL DOYLE BERT
 DOYLE JOHN MARMION
 DAVID CAMPBELL
 MISSING SGT. HAMMOND 1 AND ???



OUR TANK "BLACK SWAN"
 C/O JOHN MARMION
 DRIVER W.H. DOYLE
 GUNNER A.E. DOYLE
 RADIO OPERATOR } RON WILKINSON
 GUN LOADER }

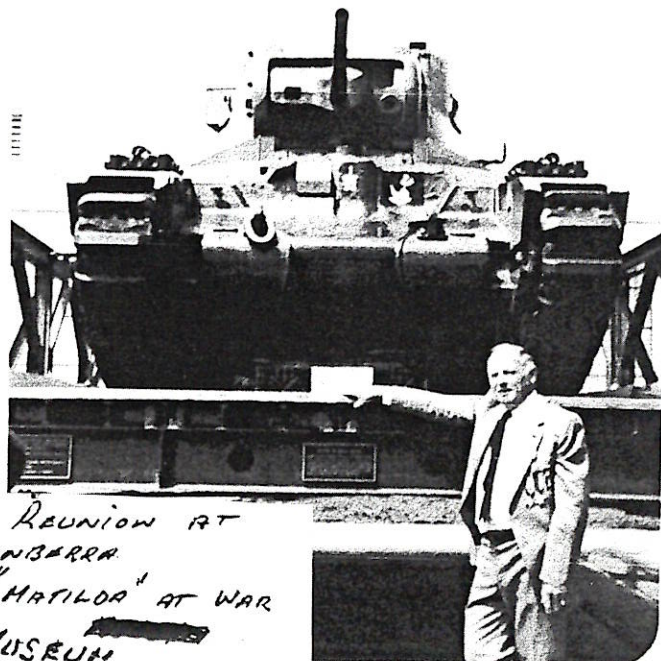


1ST ON LEFT. A. DOYLE
2ND FROM RIGHT W.H. DOYLE (BROT)

I HAD GROWN A
MOUSTACHE !!

BOUGAINVILLE

40469



1986 REUNION AT
CANBERRA
HE & "MATILDA" AT WAR
MUSEUM