

1. Typed by
Britta to here

Recommence after 3 mths lay off
through attack of Prostate Cancer
& progressed into bones

Brief Record of Army Service.

2 Recruit Defol Locumwal 2-3-43

11 Repair & Servicing unit ¹ ~~1~~ ² ~~2~~ ³ ~~3~~ ⁴ ~~4~~ ⁵ ~~5~~ ⁶ ~~6~~ ⁷ ~~7~~ ⁸ ~~8~~ ⁹ ~~9~~ ¹⁰ ~~10~~ ¹¹ ~~11~~ ¹² ~~12~~ ¹³ ~~13~~ ¹⁴ ~~14~~ ¹⁵ ~~15~~ ¹⁶ ~~16~~ ¹⁷ ~~17~~ ¹⁸ ~~18~~ ¹⁹ ~~19~~ ²⁰ ~~20~~ ²¹ ~~21~~ ²² ~~22~~ ²³ ~~23~~ ²⁴ ~~24~~ ²⁵ ~~25~~ ²⁶ ~~26~~ ²⁷ ~~27~~ ²⁸ ~~28~~ ²⁹ ~~29~~ ³⁰ ~~30~~ ³¹ ~~31~~ ³² ~~32~~ ³³ ~~33~~ ³⁴ ~~34~~ ³⁵ ~~35~~ ³⁶ ~~36~~ ³⁷ ~~37~~ ³⁸ ~~38~~ ³⁹ ~~39~~ ⁴⁰ ~~40~~ ⁴¹ ~~41~~ ⁴² ~~42~~ ⁴³ ~~43~~ ⁴⁴ ~~44~~ ⁴⁵ ~~45~~ ⁴⁶ ~~46~~ ⁴⁷ ~~47~~ ⁴⁸ ~~48~~ ⁴⁹ ~~49~~ ⁵⁰ ~~50~~ ⁵¹ ~~51~~ ⁵² ~~52~~ ⁵³ ~~53~~ ⁵⁴ ~~54~~ ⁵⁵ ~~55~~ ⁵⁶ ~~56~~ ⁵⁷ ~~57~~ ⁵⁸ ~~58~~ ⁵⁹ ~~59~~ ⁶⁰ ~~60~~ ⁶¹ ~~61~~ ⁶² ~~62~~ ⁶³ ~~63~~ ⁶⁴ ~~64~~ ⁶⁵ ~~65~~ ⁶⁶ ~~66~~ ⁶⁷ ~~67~~ ⁶⁸ ~~68~~ ⁶⁹ ~~69~~ ⁷⁰ ~~70~~ ⁷¹ ~~71~~ ⁷² ~~72~~ ⁷³ ~~73~~ ⁷⁴ ~~74~~ ⁷⁵ ~~75~~ ⁷⁶ ~~76~~ ⁷⁷ ~~77~~ ⁷⁸ ~~78~~ ⁷⁹ ~~79~~ ⁸⁰ ~~80~~ ⁸¹ ~~81~~ ⁸² ~~82~~ ⁸³ ~~83~~ ⁸⁴ ~~84~~ ⁸⁵ ~~85~~ ⁸⁶ ~~86~~ ⁸⁷ ~~87~~ ⁸⁸ ~~88~~ ⁸⁹ ~~89~~ ⁹⁰ ~~90~~ ⁹¹ ~~91~~ ⁹² ~~92~~ ⁹³ ~~93~~ ⁹⁴ ~~94~~ ⁹⁵ ~~95~~ ⁹⁶ ~~96~~ ⁹⁷ ~~97~~ ⁹⁸ ~~98~~ ⁹⁹ ~~99~~ ¹⁰⁰ ~~100~~ ¹⁰¹ ~~101~~ ¹⁰² ~~102~~ ¹⁰³ ~~103~~ ¹⁰⁴ ~~104~~ ¹⁰⁵ ~~105~~ ¹⁰⁶ ~~106~~ ¹⁰⁷ ~~107~~ ¹⁰⁸ ~~108~~ ¹⁰⁹ ~~109~~ ¹¹⁰ ~~110~~ ¹¹¹ ~~111~~ ¹¹² ~~112~~ ¹¹³ ~~113~~ ¹¹⁴ ~~114~~ ¹¹⁵ ~~115~~ ¹¹⁶ ~~116~~ ¹¹⁷ ~~117~~ ¹¹⁸ ~~118~~ ¹¹⁹ ~~119~~ ¹²⁰ ~~120~~ ¹²¹ ~~121~~ ¹²² ~~122~~ ¹²³ ~~123~~ ¹²⁴ ~~124~~ ¹²⁵ ~~125~~ ¹²⁶ ~~126~~ ¹²⁷ ~~127~~ ¹²⁸ ~~128~~ ¹²⁹ ~~129~~ ¹³⁰ ~~130~~ ¹³¹ ~~131~~ ¹³² ~~132~~ ¹³³ ~~133~~ ¹³⁴ ~~134~~ ¹³⁵ ~~135~~ ¹³⁶ ~~136~~ ¹³⁷ ~~137~~ ¹³⁸ ~~138~~ ¹³⁹ ~~139~~ ¹⁴⁰ ~~140~~ ¹⁴¹ ~~141~~ ¹⁴² ~~142~~ ¹⁴³ ~~143~~ ¹⁴⁴ ~~144~~ ¹⁴⁵ ~~145~~ ¹⁴⁶ ~~146~~ ¹⁴⁷ ~~147~~ ¹⁴⁸ ~~148~~ ¹⁴⁹ ~~149~~ ¹⁵⁰ ~~150~~ ¹⁵¹ ~~151~~ ¹⁵² ~~152~~ ¹⁵³ ~~153~~ ¹⁵⁴ ~~154~~ ¹⁵⁵ ~~155~~ ¹⁵⁶ ~~156~~ ¹⁵⁷ ~~157~~ ¹⁵⁸ ~~158~~ ¹⁵⁹ ~~159~~ ¹⁶⁰ ~~160~~ ¹⁶¹ ~~161~~ ¹⁶² ~~162~~ ¹⁶³ ~~163~~ ¹⁶⁴ ~~164~~ ¹⁶⁵ ~~165~~ ¹⁶⁶ ~~166~~ ¹⁶⁷ ~~167~~ ¹⁶⁸ ~~168~~ ¹⁶⁹ ~~169~~ ¹⁷⁰ ~~170~~ ¹⁷¹ ~~171~~ ¹⁷² ~~172~~ ¹⁷³ ~~173~~ ¹⁷⁴ ~~174~~ ¹⁷⁵ ~~175~~ ¹⁷⁶ ~~176~~ ¹⁷⁷ ~~177~~ ¹⁷⁸ ~~178~~ ¹⁷⁹ ~~179~~ ¹⁸⁰ ~~180~~ ¹⁸¹ ~~181~~ ¹⁸² ~~182~~ ¹⁸³ ~~183~~ ¹⁸⁴ ~~184~~ ¹⁸⁵ ~~185~~ ¹⁸⁶ ~~186~~ ¹⁸⁷ ~~187~~ ¹⁸⁸ ~~188~~ ¹⁸⁹ ~~189~~ ¹⁹⁰ ~~190~~ ¹⁹¹ ~~191~~ ¹⁹² ~~192~~ ¹⁹³ ~~193~~ ¹⁹⁴ ~~194~~ ¹⁹⁵ ~~195~~ ¹⁹⁶ ~~196~~ ¹⁹⁷ ~~197~~ ¹⁹⁸ ~~198~~ ¹⁹⁹ ~~199~~ ²⁰⁰ ~~200~~ ²⁰¹ ~~201~~ ²⁰² ~~202~~ ²⁰³ ~~203~~ ²⁰⁴ ~~204~~ ²⁰⁵ ~~205~~ ²⁰⁶ ~~206~~ ²⁰⁷ ~~207~~ ²⁰⁸ ~~208~~ ²⁰⁹ ~~209~~ ²¹⁰ ~~210~~ ²¹¹ ~~211~~ ²¹² ~~212~~ ²¹³ ~~213~~ ²¹⁴ ~~214~~ ²¹⁵ ~~215~~ ²¹⁶ ~~216~~ ²¹⁷ ~~217~~ ²¹⁸ ~~218~~ ²¹⁹ ~~219~~ ²²⁰ ~~220~~ ²²¹ ~~221~~ ²²² ~~222~~ ²²³ ~~223~~ ²²⁴ ~~224~~ ²²⁵ ~~225~~ ²²⁶ ~~226~~ ²²⁷ ~~227~~ ²²⁸ ~~228~~ ²²⁹ ~~229~~ ²³⁰ ~~230~~ ²³¹ ~~231~~ ²³² ~~232~~ ²³³ ~~233~~ ²³⁴ ~~234~~ ²³⁵ ~~235~~ ²³⁶ ~~236~~ ²³⁷ ~~237~~ ²³⁸ ~~238~~ ²³⁹ ~~239~~

4 Airfield Construction Sqdn Goddoughs 25-6-44

Headqtrs Northern Command Linschop 31-8-44

2 Personnel Dept Bradford Park 17-7-45

87 Mosquito Survey Squadron Parkers 9-1-46

2 Personnel Dept Bridgfield Park 23-4-46

C Discharge from R.H.F.

We ~~disembarked~~ left the train ~~board~~ lined up in three columns & set off in 100° heat to march to the station along a gravel road. We had not ~~been~~ been issued ~~us~~ with uniforms or boots at this stage so many of the chaps were only wearing very ~~light~~ lightweight shoes and they really suffered. I was fortunate as I had a good pair of leather shoes on. It was a tough 3 kms to the station & with no lunch I am afraid by the end of it the Air Force was being told what to do with itself. This was our introduction to No 2 Recruit Depot Tocumwal.

We were given a sandwich for lunch then issued with our eating irons - Knife, fork & Spoon, two enamel plates & mug, a Palliase (a long jute bag) ^{two blankets} which we filled with straw, allocated to huts & left to our own devices till tea time. Also we ^{were} given 2 blankets.

8/9/98 We filled our palliase with straw and collapsed on it for the rest of day. We were housed in huts about 40 feet long & 20 feet wide. They had a pair of double doors each end several small high narrow windows along each side & outside lining were of corrugated iron. With temperatures topping 100° plus (38 to 40°) each day they ^{were} hot boxes during the day & lasted well into the night.

Next day we were issued with our uniforms, blue for going out Kaki drill & underwore which was generally two sizes too big & woollen material which was too hot to wear out at Tocumwal. Two Boiler suits for work & everyday ^{work} boots shoes & socks.

Allocated our rank, everybody was F.C.1 & number in my case 131573 which stayed with you for your service career.

Then down to Medical Hut to receive immunisation

needles. 6 of them all told three in each row. The chap ahead of me peaked over at the ^{5th} ~~right~~ of the needles all that was said "jab him where he is, makes it easy" and they then rolled him to one side of line & left him to recover.

So Began 3 weeks of intensive training up to 7 hours a day ^{partly} marching, drilling with rifles running around the aerobome & generally getting us into some degree of fitness and mental attitude to cope with future situations. As I was in reasonable fit condition I did not find it real tough but some who had come out of city offices etc really found it very tough going.

The fourth week we marched approx 6 km out to the Murray River. On the road which was built up above the surrounding ground level. we were strafed continually by planes from the base - we were supposed to slide into the ditch beside the road & take cover which was now existent. Growing in these ditches were dozens of wild paddy melons, round about the size of rockmelon. We would get these ~~melons~~ ^{on} when on road level bowl them along the surface, they gathered quite a bit of pace. They would travel some distance before diving back into ditch. So bad if you happen to be in line as they gave quite a lively thump.

We camped on the bank of the river for the week - no tents and sleeping on bare ground. ~~At~~ Here we did rifle training with live ammunition. There was a full commando training course which included rope climbing ^{poles} ~~rope~~ poles between trees about 20' above ground built ^{up} ~~up~~ barrels to climb through, barbed wire entanglements to negotiate & Ropes strung across billabongs.

Cast.
Cast.

Mr

Mr

12/6 Mr

Mr

With a full kit on we had to negotiate this by locking your boots on the rope & putting yourself hand over hand across the water. We caught an instructor on the rope right in the middle of the lillabing. We rushed the rope and started swinging it from side to side. He hung on for some time but eventually fell into the water. "Boy did he ^{give} us hell on the course after that."

At the end of this week of intensive training we were supposed to have sufficient elementary knowledge to help defend any aerodrome or work station to which we were posted. We returned to the base camp at Tournival and in the next two days we were given our movement orders to various stations or ~~for~~ to special schools for further training. Five of us were handed postings to Mt Druitt - our first reaction was where the hell is Mt Druitt & no one could tell us what or where it was.

Eventually we were told to proceed to Sydney and then by train to Mt Druitt on the western line where we ^{would} find a unit called No 11 RSL Repair & Salvage unit which was just beginning to form up.

Two of chaps posted were mustered as Carpenter Generals as this was also my mustering. We were allocated to the same section & sent space. Despite coming from widely different backgrounds we became firm mates which has continued to this day. We were of ~~various~~ of completely different personality & came from widely different backgrounds & all about the same age.

Ralph Lynch was from Glebe in Sydney - streetwise could drink & like a fish

John Wright Scots college educated polished manners and from wealthy family

~~Myself from the bush as it was then~~

No 11 R SU officers Connected directly to our section.

Wing Commander C.R. (Rex) Taylor Regular R. H.M.F.

Flt Lt. H. Stephenson (Steve) adjutant

Flt Lt. W.J. Stevenson (Doc) Medical officer

Flt Lt. G.J. Clappett Supt Equipment officer

Flt Lt. Hartnell Engineer officer.

Fdg officer Potts (officer)

Flt Lt. Woodford Junior Equipment officer

Flt Lt. W. S. Wynne Accountant & pay officer

Flt Sgt Bar Fdt Sgt Pendegast

Sgt Waite

Sgt Flinckell

Warrant Officers Turner (Wally) W.O.D

" " McKenzie (Ron) W.O.E.

Practically Only 2 or 3 of our 28 officers survive at this time
or 4 or 5 sgt's have passed away

There was also a poultry farm on the other
boundary and after a short time the owner was
complaining that his egg production had dropped
quite a deal. I wonder why & where did the
surplus eggs go.

This site after the war was abandoned
to the bush. In 1990 ex members of our unit
with assistance from Blacktown Council & RAAF personnel
from Richmond air base were instrumental in having
the site cleared of scrub etc, the bases of ~~off~~ concrete
& mess huts were left and a large trackite stone with
the names of all units who formed at Mt Druitt & their
CO's inscribed on it was erected to commemorate
the site. A Parade was held & about 40 ex members
of units marched up the road & stone was officially
unveiled. It was a proud moment for us all. Unfortunately
Blacktown Council had planted about 50 trees around
the area but they took legs & walked the night before the
opening.

Myself - from the bush as it was then first time in the big city & first time away from home.

In no time we formed a fairly close partnership respecting each others ~~strong~~ strengths & weakness which endured not only after we went to New Guinea, where after a few months we were detached to separate units, but lasted till the present day.

Headquarters for the unit was a very old three story home on top the hill in the middle of a 600 acre paddock.

Working & storage areas were several hundred yards down the slope.

Our tent area & mess headquarters was 1 mile N.E. of headquarters amongst a patch of scrubby trees but up against as fence on the other side of which were housed 50 or more pigs. The smell was unbelievable → when it rained & we received a bit of sun.

We were housed in new per tent and soon constructed beds from old aircraft cases to keep us off the ground. When winter approached we placed several layers of paper on the boards wrapped ourselves in 3 blankets with overcoat on top and slept in our boiler suits.

We constructed kitchen & mess hall & latrine blocks on site. They consisted mainly of poles in ground withessian thatched around. Kitchen & mess hall had a very crude roof covered with iron, very flimsy but nevertheless survived the 6 months we were to spend in this awful accommodation when we moved over the road to a new camp but only after quite a bit of drama. Thank goodness we had a very strong C.O who stood up for his men.

(24)

A new camp had been constructed in the bush much closer to our working areas. Consisting of huts, kitchen, latrines all with concrete floors & formed paths around the area. Just as we were about to move in a new unit No 14 RSL started to form & they were allocated the new camp as our unit was supposed to be on the move.

Our CO & the C.O of 14 RSL got their heads together and we moved & pitched our tents on the new playing fields. We shared the facilities, combined our rations & staff which worked very well & it was only then that the two C.O notified headquarters in Melbourne as to what had happened. It was almost 3 months before we actually moved on board for New Guinea.

I was one of the working party detailed to clean up our old camp. We made it quite a simple procedure. Saw 44 gal drums of aviation fuel which was simply ^{Pumped} over all the buildings laid a trail of fuel about 100 yds from same & dropped a match. Boom & in a matter of minutes camp was gone.

While being squiffed & packing up all the gear for transport life became a little boring. We attended dances at Mt Suint or St Marys where a large ammunition works was & employing several hundred girls. We had Saturday & sometimes Sunday leave so I was able to get home to Mrs Vale. We had guard duty to do in conjunction with guard dog unit formed on site. The dogs in their custom string No 8 wire about 50 to 70 yds long around each stores area with a dog attached to same by means of a running loop. We use to get up one end of the wire & rattle same. As the dog charged down our mates would slip over the unguarded end.

Names of men in our section were Sgt Waite (old) ↙

Carpenters	Fred Anthony	Moss Vale
	John Wright	Rose Bay
	Ralph Lynch	Glebe
Fitters	Snodgrass	Cullingham
	George Benjamin	Romsgate
General Hands	Will Borrett Borrett	Victoria
	Alf Brock	Adelaide St Aust
	Eddie McCabe	Nallangance
	Dave McCabe	Via Lismore
	Dave Foley	Lismore
	Alf George (Corp)	Seymour
		Victoria

as you will notice we covered a fair area of the eastern states

Our section consisted of 1 sgt & 10 other ranks, 1 Carpenter
 3 general hands 2 aircraft fitters. We came from all
 walks of life - a taxation clerk, ^{from Adelaide} Avantas mechanics from Sydney
 3 sawmillers from the Lismore district. Our sergeant was
 a ~~very~~ good leader & organizer from Brisbane but had
 1 fault. He was married to a pretty girl ~~but who~~
 who was living nearby. When a certain time of the month
 came round he would say the most outrageous things
 about her which, strange as it may seem, used to
 upset all the boys in section especially the married ones.
 One time when he was carrying on one of the
 boys, name not known, got a U.S. ticket, these
 were placed on any article which was unserviceable, and
 hung across the photo of his wife which sat on a
 shelf above his desk. All hell broke loose when
 he returned & saw it but it had the desired effect
 as he never did say anything nasty about his wife
 in the ensuing months.

Our life at Enniskillen developed into a
 regular pattern of making crates & boxes & packing
 all the new stores as they arrived ready to be dispatched
 overseas, making dog kennels to house the dogs which
 were arriving at the new dog unit, trips to
 Richmond & Bankstown, sitting on the back of open
 semi trailer tray to pick up aircraft crates to pack
 our stuff.

a daily parade each morning & at least 1-2
 hrs fitness training each day. There was also
 guard duty, mess & latrine duty which came
 round on a regular basis. As time passed
 there were regular rumours of us moving and
 one way in the unit drew radio beams on
 each the pans in the latrine block which

we were lined in a row of ten. With ~~beams~~^{beams} of radio drawn on the pan covers he painted on the floor in front "Good Guts Radio." This caused quite a laugh among the boys.

We were to be ~~issued~~ issued with snake bite kits one to each person but the C.O. told us on parade they have difficulty obtaining same. They consisted of a small wooden ~~box~~^{box} about 3 inches long with condys crystals in ~~wood~~^{wood} to one end & a sharp steel point in the opposite end. When C.O. made the announcement one chap, who had a joke record as long as your arm, Honest Joe stepped forward & said Sir give me leave & I'll have the whole unit equipped by morning parade. Next morning Joe turned up with two of each kit, 300 were on strength, ~~but~~ not the wooden issue ones but stainless steel ones.

Another variation to the routine was to go on a salvage mission. I went with one salvage unit to the Swamps of Hexham outside Newcastle. We left late on a Friday and when we approached ~~Hawthorn~~^{Hawthorn} river we struck a line of cars about 3km long. The river was crossed by ferry in those days. We copped a fair amount of abuse but under army orders we had priority so drove straight to head of Que. With our semi trailer - crane truck - & couple of work trucks we practically made a full load so this delayed the cars even more. The plane a Vultee Vengeance dive bomber was half buried in the slush so we had a fair bit of bother getting it out. Another hazard ~~was~~ were the Mosquitoes the famous Hexham greys as they were known. There were huge clouds of them & made work very unpleasant. We retrieved the plane & returned with it to Bankstown, ~~at~~ where we all ordered off the trailer including the driver as we ~~were~~^{were} not allowed in the hangar. Top-secret even though

we ^{were} working on the same plans at our airstrip. A driver came out from inside the factory to back the semi in so we all sat on the bank outside & watched him make several futile attempts to get it in not helped by advice from the bank. Finally in sheer frustration the Overseer of the hanger came out & said to our driver could he put it in. Sick Murray hopped in behind the wheel took it up the track its own length reversed & went straight in & was heading out the back door before they called him to a halt.

Rumours were abundant & it was mid October that a great cheer went up when told on parade we were to move within the week. All our equipment was packed & we marched out on the 29th Oct to Mt Druitt station & travelled to 2 Embarkation depot at Bradfield Park about 480 officers & men.

As the depot was equipped to only handle Air crew going overseas a unit our size stretched the goodwill of place so after a fortnight we had to collect all our gear from the wharves as no ship was available & went by train & truck to Coominya outside Sparwick in Queensland. I went on a truck convey loaded on to train in Sydney we had our cook house van & could walk the length of train back & forth. It took us 56 hours before we were to reach Yerongipilly ^{south} ~~this~~ side of Brisbane where we unloaded to proceed to Coominya & establish a camp. We were to stay there till end of December.

This time we were ~~at~~ subjected to real heavy training - mock bomb attacks - shelling windrows of timber along which gilekite was planted and would be blown up as we approached & anything up to 16 ~~and~~ mile ^{long} marches with full pack. It certainly had all of us in tip top condition when we embarked late December.



While here a local farmer used to arrive with a cut down chevrolet car loaded with watermelons which he sold for 3[¢] or 6[¢] each. On our last day here we were all lined up on parade ready to move when he came straight down the centre of airstrip, pulled up beside the CO & other officers & said Here is a parting gift for the boys
→ so we embarked on trucks loaded with melons.

The unit moved off in trucks to Pinkenba Wharves in Brisbane while our section was left behind to clean up the site so we left much later in the day.

Loaded on a semi-trailer loaded high with gear & we were all sitting on top of this.

There had been torrential rain before we left and about 10 miles from the site we came on a ~~long~~ long line of cars stopped by a flooded creek. Our ~~own~~ driver Dick Murray walked up had a look at the water came back & said to the boys on top of the load "Hang on I'm going through you may get a swim" & took off. He nosed into the water which was about 3 feet deep & 30 to 40 yds wide. Semi-trailers were not the monsters on to-days ~~wide~~ roads. Ours was a small Chevrolet truck with a 20' trailer. Dick eased it into the water with every car driver on both sides of the creek urging him on. With a few rock & rolls Dick eased us safely through & we were on way to cheers of the ~~assembled~~ assembled car drivers...

We arrived at a staging camp near Pinkenba after dark in pouring rain and told there were two tents for us to camp the night in.

When we carried our gear to them they were an absolute Quagmire with water draining through them

2/2
Once in the open sea we all were a jittery mob
& every lump of flotsam or old coconuts were
considered to be subs Quite funny when you
~~look~~^{stop} & think back about it.

also when boat drill was on everybody was
ordered below decks if an aircraft or ship ~~about~~ was
given. On these occasions two men were stationed
at the top of each ladder. We were housed in
the rear hole & straight above us was mounted
a 4" gun. One day I & a mate were doing
the guard duty when they decided to fire the
gun. When it went off we both took 1 leap
down the six or so steps & landed in a heap
at the bottom much to the delight & laughter
of all the troops below. The idea of the guard
was to make sure nobody left the hole during
attack

29.

Some one spotted a truck loaded with tarpaulins so we helped our selves to a couple of these and spread over the mud & managed to get a little sleep.

at dawn we located the rest of the units & had breakfast. We each had a number chalked on to our tin hat loaded on trucks & proceeded to wharf where we were to embark on the Edward. O. Baker a liberty ship. The no number on our hat was checked at the foot of ramp & moved on board. The date 17th January 1944

We were sleeping in the cargo holes on top of our equipment although those in our hold were sleeping on cases of live ammunition. ~~We~~ There was only a bare 6' ft to the steel decks above & we were packed in each sleeping touching the next person ~~ground~~. No bed or palliasse just a tarp over the false floor. Altogether there were nearly six hundred men on board. Our mobile kitchen was strapped to rails on top deck latrines were a row of open holes along one side of the ship which were hosed very frequently to clean the area. A wet burn if you were there when the 4" hoses were turned on.

at Long last we saw the the mooring lines being thrown off & we drifted away into the river. ~~We~~ It was a strange feeling seeing the stretch of water between you & land & made you wonder where we bound for & if we would see good old aussie again. We moved to the mouth of Brisbane river & stayed there all day before joining several other boats on a dash up the coast to try & get behind the protection of Barrier Reef before daylight.

We sailed up the coast to Townsville where we waited a while another unit was loaded on board. I imagine my surprise when one of the first ~~on~~ board was my next door neighbour from home Bruce Jackson.

We sailed up inside the reef for several days and awoke one morning to find ~~us~~ ^{ourselves} in open sea with patrol boats & destroyers sailing busily up & around the convoy which now consisted of about 20 ships. We were ~~no~~ now given boat drill & ship evacuation drill as there was submarine activity ~~as~~ ^{or} we were in the coral sea.

→ Life on board ship was very relaxed. all you wore was a pair of shorts or togs & a hat because of the heat.

We eventually arrived at Milne Bay where we saw our first evidence of the horrors of war. Broken Palm trees wrecked buildings & sunken ships. A Real sobering thought ^{which} brought a wall of ~~silence~~ silence over the whole ship.

From Milne Bay we proceeded up the coast past Buna & Goodenough Island to anchor at Lae. We had taken eleven stops to there fortunately incident free. On 28th January we pulled into Lae wharf eleven months after having joined up & the beginning of a 20 month tour of duty in the area.

The afternoon before unloading at Lae we issued with two tins of Billy baf & 1/2 dozen clog biscuits. Hard clog biscuits about 1/2" thick & 3" square & told that was our rations for next 48 hours.

Next morning we were along side wharf at Lae but discovered that the unloading ladders of

(31)

were to short because it was high tide & we were 4' short with the ladders. Carpenters quickly constructed extension steps & we were ~~reloaded~~ straight on to motor trucks for 22 miles ^{desembarked} trip to Nadzab.

Only on arrival at our campsite we discovered that the advance party sent to construct our camp had been moved to build accomodation for 2 flying Squadrons so both our Campsite & work Area a few miles down the road were bare patches in the Kunai Grass.

Our first night in New Guinea was spent sleeping under the stars, fortunately our tents & stretchers were unlashed first so we had ~~at~~ a stretcher to sleep on.

Next day was a hive of activity. Timber which we had brought with us enabled all tents to have a floor approx 18" to 2 feet above the ground. With approximately 300 men on site this proved an easy task as tents were ^{set} out in lines, I think it was 12 tents per line with basic personnel to each tent everybody was under cover before the heavy tropical storms hit.

As only surface water was available & proved very unsatisfactory Boreos were sunk and water was pumped to overhead tanks with square ship tanks on top.

Showers & ablution blocks were constructed with concrete floors. As this took some time 44 gal drums (200 litres) were placed in rows at end of tent lines. Quite a site as the boys trooped down in the row soaped up & then yaw mates through threw buckets of water over you to wash soap off.

Work went on at a frantic pace when mess halls for cormen sgt's & officers ~~were~~ a huge kitchen and a hospital with 12 beds were built. We put wooden frames up pitched roof, of iron & walls were of

also the K.V.a which we brought with us allowed
1 single bulb to each tent so that we had
electricity till lights out at 10 PM each night.

sisalkraft paper & gauge were which proved very satisfactory. All this was ~~done~~ carried out with materials brought with us due to the foresight of our CO & Equipment officers. All this was completed ⁱⁿ 2 to 3 weeks & our attention turned to our working areas.

The working areas were situated about 3 miles down the road towards Lae. At the end of an airstrip it had area for workshops & several parking bays in which planes could be parked before or after servicing.

Our section had the job to construct a complete sawmill. It consisted of a large circular saw. KVA generator to drive the electric motor and a swing docking saw plus a working area to pack machinery for despatch.

It had an iron roof & heavy walls for protection which we chop down whilst working. Also a small secure building was built for our W.O. Engineer McKenzie to carry out his work.

Equipped with D-4 Caterpillar tractor to haul logs to our mill. It was often ~~ref~~ rather hazardous as in the jungle were craters formed by bombs. These were filled with a slimy mess of rubbish our tractor headed into one & was wholly or partially submerged.

It was hard work to extricate these machines but fortunately they suffered little damage.

Another hazard were the clumps of prickly Wai-t-a. While ferns clumps were several feet across & up to six feet high with each frond lined with hook like thorns. They gave you a nasty cut or scratch which if not treated immediately turned into nasty sores.

Another danger were large trees which stood above our track. They were ideal for target practice as you passed by. After a few cuts with the axe & they would

Kelly Lawler



would topple over as they had so many bullets in them to almost cut the tree through. Also how Circular Saws did not take to kindly to the armour piercing bullets embedded in the trunk.

We were kept extremely busy working long 12 or 14 hour days unpacking spares for the Kittyhawks in for repair & ~~over~~ crating engines to be returned to mainland for complete overhaul. This went on an days a week with Sunday usually a rest day but not always.

There was little variation to the routine

livened up sometimes with a visit from Jap reconnaissance planes, a Liberator crashing & exploding within a 100 yds of our work area, a Thunderbolt & highwing fighter planes ~~colliding~~ ~~colliding~~ cutting one another in half during exercises & landing on edge of our area.

Also the Liberator bombers would come back from missions with ~~wings~~ parts of wings & fuselage missing & unable to land. They would do a circle of the Strip then the crew would jump two at time. The Pilot would be the last to jump & before he left the plane it would be set on auto pilot & headed for the mountain.

Immediately a fighter Squadron would scramble & engage in a little shooting practice.

Twice we had crippled planes come down within a close proximity to our working area one exploding on impact injuring several of chaps were bowled over by the blast from it.

The second landed on the road quite close to our sleeping area. The plane was supposed to be guarded by American G.I. but several fellows just walked past them to inspect the plane. One of these was from our tent Dave - a real character and scoundrel from near Casino. He climbed up to rear turret & waved

to us on the ground. at that moment a spark set the whole plane on fire. Dave jumped from the turret hit the ground & took off down the road with his hands clutching the cheeks of his behind. Unfortunately this triggered off a mental collapse. Next day after treating us to a display of waving his arms at a spinning circular saw, he took off into the jungle. It took us about two hours to find him ~~kind~~ hiding in the middle of a huge Wai.T.A. ~~which~~ wild bush. As we hacked at it to get him out he would retreat further into it. He was taken to Hospital & repatriated home but he caused chaos on the way home at Port Moresby Aerodrome. he ^{and} another chap escaped from their restrictive harness jumped out of the plane & took off down the ~~set~~ centre of the strip & lucky not to be mowed down by a plane landing.

after 5 months at Nadzab. ~~and~~ several of us were suddenly posted to other units. I was posted to 4th works unit at Goodenough Island. I flew in a D.C.3. to Milne Bay transferred to another D.C.3 which had two engines as cargo. Took off a jinx on trip by a L.A. King just arrived from Sydney. He said on the way over that somewhere in New Guinea his father was with the R.A.F.T. & was in his mid forty years.

After a very rough trip because we ran into thunderstorms we landed on Goodenough & conveyed by truck to the unit & told to go to a certain tent. Imagine the surprise & excitement when we went to the tent & King found his father there.

I was only at his camp for a few days when we ~~loaded~~ embarked on a liberty boat bound for Finchhafen. We stood offshore at Finch- and were unloaded into a landing barge. We went over the side of

of the boat on single Rope ladders. When you reached the bottom of ladder you hung on till the barge & boat came together. You let go the ladder & landed in the barge. Our kitbags came down four at a time on a single Rope. These dropping had to ~~just~~ judge when the two were together. They missed with one strap bag between the & as they came together cut the rope so 4 of the boys were minus all their gear. It was good when we landed on beach & one of the worst experiences I had whilst on active service.

I was with 4 A.C.S. & 480 B.U for some months building storage sheds when I joined Northern Command works unit constructing No 10 Stores depot. It was a huge complex covering 3 or 4 acres. we never did get it finish as she was moved towards the Philippines with such rapid speed that it was soon bypassed with parts etc required one or two thousand Kilometres away. Christmas came upon us & we all shared & pooled our special issues with several smaller ~~and~~ units & had a huge party. I do not ^{know} where it came from but a piano appeared. We had one chap in our unit who always showed no interest in anything. As he walked into the mess that night he spotted the piano walked over placed his mess tin & gear on top of it & sat down & touched one or two notes and some very ~~classical~~ comments from the boys. He then launched into Pack up your troubles & long way to Tipperary. So began a 2 to 3 hour session of music song & drink. He played all types of popular music through to classics & we certainly had a terrific time. He disclosed later that he had diploma's from Edinburgh University & Sydney conservatorium of Music. When on service you never knew who your bed mates were & although only a small unit we had men from Company executives to men of mill habermas & tradesmen, to ex ~~crimes~~ & fellow one or two on the run from the law.

We were a completely independent unit and had several sporting teams & competed inter-unit mostly against the yanks as there were very few Aussie units left in the area. In the area we had several men at the top of ~~for~~ their ladder. Will Slattery & Herb ~~Narvo~~ Narvo Aust & state boxing champs. Narvo also first grade football for Newtown (Sydney club). Several players who were playing F.F.L. in Melbourne 1st grade. In our own cricket team we had Bill Brown international cricketer & still alive living in Brisbane.

Besides working 10 hours a day 6 days a week we had travelling camp concerts, swimming in the bay and fishing for a change of diet. We take a power barge out to the reef spot a school of fish, throw in a block of dynamite & a hail presto jump overboard & retrieve a good feed of fish. It was a change from tinned beef & fish.

With the war front moving swiftly to the north they started to wind down construction work & time hung on our hands quite a bit. It was at this stage that my health gave let me down with six weeks in hospital a touch of malaria - then infidigos - then a severe bout of ~~malaria~~ dengue fever.

When I reported back to the unit the Co said I should be sent home as I had 19 months tropical ~~service~~ ^{service} when usual term was 15 mths.

He arranged my posting home but as the pig push had started on the Phillipines & Northern islands I had to 10 days before getting a plane out as we were bypassed & all planes were being passed through Darwin. Eventually we were flown out 20 of us all told on a Yank Douglas Ventura en route to Adelaide.

We were a mixed bunch of R.A.F.F. & F.I.F. personnel.

all short voluntary no subsidy to help
walk to Stehe school. Hope train one or two buses
Now buses to front door.