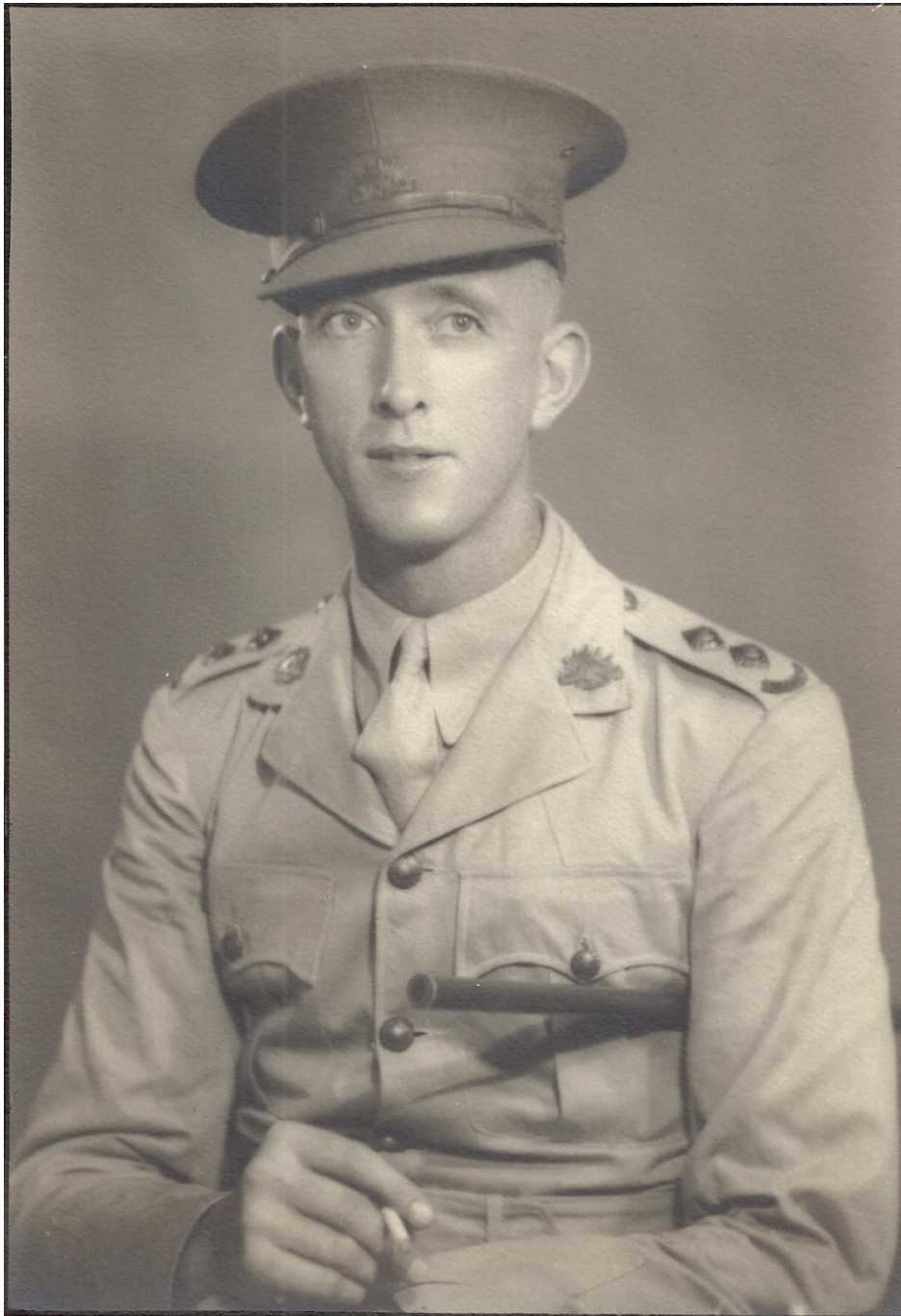


The War (POW) Years Diary (re-constructed) 1945-46

of

VX48828 Lieutenant Gillon Ronald Griffith

2/3 Motor Ambulance Company (MAC)



Lt Gillon Ronald Griffith VX 48828 (POW) DOB 20 Mar 1909
Enlisted 19 Aug 1940 - Discharged 26 Nov 1945

Finding time in plenty, in which one can work at individual efforts, I have decided to attempt this, a resume of my wanderings, efforts and perhaps thoughts, during this period of fifty-six months or so which have been spent away from our homeland and loved ones.

The 8 Australian Division, or, perhaps I should say the two Brigades, i.e., 22 Aust. Inf. Bde. and 27 Aust. Inf. Bde. and Corps troops, which comprised the Australian Forces in this very inadequately defended portion of the world, together with the British Forces, have been for the last three and a half years, having the rather doubtful pleasure of being Prisoners of War, and under the very watchful eye of the Imperial Japanese Army.

Perhaps, to say that the 8 Aust. Div. and British forces over here, would not be altogether correct, but at least the remains of these forces are; although the numbers of each are rather staggering when one considers them. To the best of my knowledge there was somewhere in the vicinity of 29,000 British and 14,000 A.I.F. troops marched into this concentration area at Changi, immediately after our inglorious unconditional surrender on Feb. 15th, 1942.

Since then, various parties have been moved to different places, and in Sept. 1942, some 12,000 British and 8,000 Australians were on working parties in Singapore or, to give the place its new Japanese name, Syonan To. Two large working parties have been taken overseas, where, we did not know, and yet another party had left for Japan. This latter force included in its numbers all officers above the rank of Lt. Col. So it can be seen that we are now both British and Australians without our Generals and their respective staffs.

Of the Indians taken prisoner, and they were considerable, we see very little as their concentration area is situated on some other part of the Island.

The tropical conditions of this country have treated me kindly. Although, like countless others, I have experienced my share of minor disorders such as tinea, prickly heat and a mild dose of Singapore ear. The eternal hot sun, which, by the way, shines 365 days in the year, and the heavy rainfall, make conditions very humid; but this discomfort and difference to our usual living conditions have been overcome by most of us in the course of our acclimatization, to such an extent that now, to me anyway, it is just a succession of sunny days, and, when the moon is full, beautiful tropical evenings, complete with palm trees, balmy air, quietness, and to the disgust and suffering of many, mosquitoes.

So much for a forerunner or preface, and now, with no set plan or layout for what I am going to do, I shall get under way and see what my memory and lack of writing experience or ability can achieve.

To begin with, I would like to point out two things; and there is no parallel between the two. The first is that owing to regulations that govern us, my personal diary which would be a great help now, was passed into records in December 1941, and so lost to me for any reference and the second is the strange way in which Sunday has been a day to remember on numerous occasions. To mention but a few; it was a Sunday we left our camp at Bonegilla on the first leg of our journey to Malaya; it was a Sunday that the building I had occupied with my 2/3 M.A.C.(Motor Ambulance Convoy) section at Malacca received direct hits from Japanese bombs (we had moved out only a few hours before). It was a Sunday that I received orders to proceed to Segamet to commence the evacuation of the first Australian war casualties from the Gemas show; it was a Sunday some time later whilst at Sukit Panjang we received a direct attack of dive bombers that very nearly wrote finish to all in our unit, and last but not least a Sunday, that our leaders for good or bad agreed to our capitulation.

February 3 1941 was the date of our embarkation for the grand experience and the unknown. Spirits were high then but I feel sure that if we had only known how we were going to miss our wives, mothers, sweethearts and friends in later days, then we may not have been so happy, our training days had come to an end in Australia, and we had had some grand times under a popular commander in Lt. Col. H.P. Summons (VX40219). Many had been the queries and desires of the men of the unit as to

when we were likely to be sent away, but speaking for myself, I was in no hurry to go, as I realized we would be away a long time, and after all I had been married only a short time.

However, the day arrived for our leaving and great was the jubilation. A practice loading on to M.T.(Motor Transport) for transport to Albury was carried out during the Sunday afternoon, and we left Bonegilla to the cheers and good wishes of countless other troops who were remaining.

Gone now were our long weekend leaves, final leave etc., and the last few days were nothing more or less than a succession of parades for all kinds of reasons including various issues of clothing and necessities, equipment, embarkation rolls, numbers, pay books were to be adjusted, men's equipment inspected and goodness only knows what else. Rumour was high these days. Was it to be Middle East or Malaya? The Queen Mary was in Sydney, were we to travel on her? The men said "Yes"; and although it was kept a close secret officially, we had come to take notice of the No. 3 seat, because more often than not, they were correct.



HM Troopship QUEEN MARY in Sydney Harbour,
May 1940

The telephones in the camp were being worked overtime each night, so great was the desire of most to have as much conversation with folks at home, whilst still able to do so; and I was not far behind the best of them. My leave taking of my dear wife, mother and both families I had done as casually as I dared, mainly because I have no liking for tear-rendering scenes, my embarrassment is terrible, so I rang

Moira quite often, as well as others including mother and Avon. I feel sure Babe felt it more than she ever let on, and poor old Chic did not sound so bright when I rang her on my last night to let her know we were leaving next day. My own feelings that night were very mixed, and I did not know whether to be glad or sorry to be getting away at last.

Our advance personnel which included Capt. Now Major Searby (VX45273), Jack Sandell, and Jack Lardner in one party, and Bert Campbell and Duschar in another, had been gone some days. They had travelled direct by passenger ships through the N.E.I. (Netherlands East Indies). the former travelling on the "Ruya" and the latter on the "Tegelberg". We did not know this at the time and wondered where and when we would see them again. The place turned out to be Malaya and the time some 18 or 19 days later.

At first dark we left Bonegilla for Albury, and the entraining went without a hitch. Carriages were of the usual N.S.W. type and not to compare with the Victorian Railways. Very few people were about to see us off, in fact, I doubt if very many knew of our move. It was a great help for me that the lads moved well and orderly during the entraining etc. as I was required to make numerous checks with embarkation rolls before we actually boarded our transport.

Well, we were away with a complete unit and a well-trained one, and all made what arrangements they could for sleeping, or in other ways, passing the night. I shared a compartment with a few officers, including Captain (now Major) Bruce Anderson (VX47449), Captain (now Major) Rosson (VX48629), Grant Forsyth and one other. Sleep was nearly impossible, so I felt very relieved when we pulled into Moss Vale, and we learned we were to breakfast there. A slight rain did not deter the boys from piling from the carriages and taking a much needed constitutional up and down the platform.

Sausages and potatoes with coffee and bread made up the meal, and I enjoyed it. Moss Vale was then left behind, the old station, from what I could see, was still intact, but I daresay the restaurant was left counting its losses, for, on the train, in addition to ourselves, were the 2/10 Field Company Engineers. The rest of the train trip was most uninteresting, and I was glad when the outskirts of Sydney town came in sight. There was the usual straightening out of gear, jackets, etc., were donned again, it was now quite hot, and very slowly we pulled into the docks amid the calls and brief conversation of the railways employees.



Ron Griffith at Circular Quay 1940 or 1941

On the opposite side of the jetty, there was awaiting us a ferry, by which means we were to be taken out to the "Mary", which was lying at anchor in the harbour. Thank goodness, we did not have far to carry our gear, as it was considerable, so once more, we were checked and found correct. We were later to be complimented by the higher authorities on all our movements from the camp to "The Queen", and it spoke very well for the discipline and training we had had. I had a personal feeling of elation, for I had had more than a little to do with them in that respect.

My first sight of the "Queen Mary" (later referred to as H.T.Q.X. and Q.X.), gained as we rounded a point and came under our wonderful "bridge" was something I will not forget, as up till then I had never set eyes on a ship anything like her size, and she seemed to grow as we drew nearer. The cheers, cooees and singing going on aboard the ferry were near deafening, and they increased as we pulled alongside, and the men already aboard "The Queen" added to the tumult. Another check was made as we went aboard, and were shown to our quarters. Our men were mainly on "C" deck with the officers On Main. Here I was thankful that I had even the modest rank of Warrant Officer (W.O.), for I also found myself being shown to Main deck, and in particular to Cabin 86, which I shared throughout the voyage with five other W.O.'s, Jerry Veitch, Osborne, R.S.M. Australian General Hospital (A.G.H.), Gus Mayberry, R.Q.M.S. 10 A.G.H., Bert Saville, Provost (later Lieut.), and Geoff Middleton (later Lieutenant).

The first impressions of the H.T.Q.X., as the boat was named, were certainly lasting, and I never failed to marvel at her size, appointments and comfort. It was not hard to realize what she must have been like pre-war, and I often wished that I had had Moira aboard with me and we were doing the trip sans war. Although I spent some time in the following days looking over her, I still left her at the end of 15 days, feeling that I had seen only a portion of her. Truly a marvellous boat, and the dining service, which was still being run by the ship's company, was excellent, and the meals themselves beyond all expectations, seeing as how we were off to a war.

She was certainly a crowded little tub; we had almost a complete 22 Inf. Bde. aboard, totalling just on 6,000. The usual boat drill and boat stations was practised; the baths, two of them, one forward, one aft, were made available at different times; the ship's barber operated all for our use; and as a Sergeants Mess, we had a large room aft on "A" deck. Needless to say, there were many "happy" nights spent there, as perhaps can be imagined. Our main trouble seemed to be to get enough beer before our night's quota had run out, which it did every night.

We spent our first night in the harbour, as stores and men were still coming aboard. The small craft circling the Q.X. seemed endless, and were kept at a distance by the harbour police. All kinds of ideas were in practice to try and draw the attention of someone on board. The throwing overboard of messages in any form was definitely prohibited, but this did not prevent many from trying. The water seemed, and was, a long way below us as we stood on the upper decks and looked down. Truly a wonderful experience, one's first day aboard the "Queen Mary".

Everything was in order by the following morning when we were lined up on decks to receive a visit of farewell from the Governor-General, who passed between the ranks wishing good luck and good cheer to all and sundry, including officers, nurses (about 30 were with us), and men. It was a beautiful day, and just as I finished my midday meal, I felt the barely noticeable throb of our engines which told us we were at last to move away from our homeland, knowing not how long it would be before we saw her again, or what lay ahead.

Everyone who could be spared seemed to be on deck, bands were playing, ferries whistling, and these, with the cheers and singing of the thousands of men on board, were most inspiring. Small craft were numerous and looked like midgets from my viewpoint, way up on the Sun deck, and it seemed as though every vantage point in the harbour was crowded with people waving farewell. Our escort for the first part of the trip had preceded us out, and as we started moving, I saw the other two transports, the "Amsterdam" and old "Aquitania", which were to form our convoy, leaving from Sydney. They

had a large number of New Zealanders on board and eventually left us in the Indian Ocean for the Middle East.

As we passed through the Heads, we received the final wave and cheer from the people assembled there, and I think our singing died down somewhat as it dawned on us that we would not be back here again for a long time, if at all. My feelings once again were very mixed, perhaps a little sad, but I think the excitement of sailing for the unknown, and as it was my first ocean voyage, I was not unduly upset by the leaving behind us all we held dear. Even now, we had heard nothing official as to our immediate movements, and when we turned south after clearing land, conjectures were rife. We formed up, with H.M.A.S. Hobart out in front, Q.M. on left, with the Aquitania on right, and in rear of the Queen came the "New Amsterdam". The sea was very kind, and in fact it was nothing else but throughout the voyage, much to my disgust, for although I'm sure I would be very sick in adverse weather, I would have given pounds to have had at least one heavy sea, even if it was only for the experience, and also to see how this giant we were travelling on would behave. In a way it seemed a waste to have such a big boat for the calm weather we experienced with unceasing monotony. We soon settled down, our speed was not great, as we could only travel as fast as the "Aquitania" could manage. The "Amsterdam" looked a picture following us, she was a modern boat and had beautiful lines and looked clean and, like the "Mary", had turbine motors, which contrasted greatly with our old friend on the right, which poured smoke from her funnels day and night, and being painted black, looked dirty compared to ourselves and the "Amsterdam".

I was surprised to find how quickly sea travel can become monotonous, and can now understand why some are sick of travel, a thing I could never understand prior to this trip.

Our Orderly Room, which was ideally situated in the "Cocktail Bar" on extreme rear of the Promenade deck overlooking the water, was shared by Orderly Rooms of 10 A.G.H.(Australian General Hospital), 2 Mobile Bacterial Laboratory., 2/4 C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Station). I soon got to know the shortest route from there to my cabin, but with so many passages, alleyways and decks, I'm afraid I took many a wrong turn during the first few days when trying to find my way to such places as the mess, which was on "A" deck, the dining room on "C" and the swimming pools, the forward being on "C" and aft pool on "F" deck. Perhaps some who know me, and this includes my wife, may be surprised that I lost my way to the mess of all places, but I can assure same I soon found the shortest route.

We were soon hard at work writing letters so as to be ready for mailing if we berthed at any port, and here it was that our letters first started being censored. Censorship regulations were strict. Photographs were practically forbidden, as was any news of our ship, destination or in fact any news that would be of use to an enemy. In later days the men got to know what was allowable and what was not, and so made the censors' job easy, but at first I'm afraid there was many a letter mutilated because they would not obey the instructions issued.

A ship's newspaper was started and called the Q.X. Press, and by this means we learned a little news of the outside world, as well as the doings of all the units on board.

My duties on board were not very severe, the detailing our share of the various ship's duties and the parades being mainly the lot. Space for parades was, of course, very limited, and not very much could be done in this respect. Quite often we had surprise boat drill exercises, and the boat seemed to be alive with the thousands of troops and nurses hurrying to their stations. The nights were always lively in the mess where we had a grand piano, and often this was supplemented by concert bands made up from the various units. All units were invited to write their own words to the popular tune of "Too-doo-loo-dill-i-addity", and as these were sung each night by the groups of Sergeants responsible for their origin, we never had a dull night.

Beer was of Sydney town, and the mess was only allowed a certain number of barrels per night, so, as the mess was always crowded and waiters were few, it was always a tossup as to whether one could

get as much as one desired before the delectable amber gave out; and so with drinking, singing, and good fellowship, we passed practically every night. In fact, there was very little else to do, although a picture show was running, because cigarettes on open decks were not allowed, and all covered decks were shuttered each night, as were all portholes which, of course, were blacked out.

Our meals were wonderful, and when seated at meals with white-coated stewards, printed menus and the very best of foods, and each meal of at least four courses, it was hard to realize that we were headed for a war. I'm sure that this part of the ship was being run no differently than if we had been ordinary paying passengers. The officers also ate in the same dining room as we sergeants, but, of course, after we had finished. Fresh bread each day, and fruit straight from the refrigerators was most welcome, the latter in particular, when we approached the tropics.

We passed many days in which we did not even sight land, but our course took us down round the bottom of Tasmania, they would not risk the possibility of mines in Bass Strait, and on the following day we picked up the "Mauritania", which had embarked troops from Melbourne, and she took up her place in the convoy some half-mile astern of the "Aquitania" and in line with the "Amsterdam". This made our convoy of four ships rather a valuable prize for an enemy, as we totalled Lord knows how many troops, and over 200,000 tons in shipping. As we approached the Bight I wondered if we would get a "Sea", but I was disappointed for all we got was a swell, and the Queen just continued on her way with the customary lazy roll, and when a day or so later we found the sun on a different quarter of the boat, we all knew we had turned north and nearing Fremantle. We were soon proved correct, for we saw land for the first time, and shortly were anchored from 2 or 3 miles off land in a calm bay and a very hot sun.

For years I had had a strong desire to see the "West", so one night imagine my disgust when we were told that there would be no leave. This was bad enough, but when we saw the "Mauritania" and "Amsterdam" run in and tie up at the wharf, I, for one, and there were thousands like me, experienced keen disappointment. They all had leave during the three days we rested there, but try as I might, I could not work myself into any of the small official parties that went ashore daily from the Queen Mary. And boy, was it hot! Next to no breeze, and the "Mary", as we were to find out later, was never built for the hot climates.

Our cabin had a bathroom attached, and as cold sea water was plentiful, I had many a cold bath during those days and others that followed. We filled in time as usual during these days of waiting, by playing deck tennis and quoits, exploration, if one's desires were still not realized by this time, and then at nights before dark, it was always worth a visit to the upper decks right aft, to see the two-up schools, and in fact all types of gambling that were always in progress. Two-up was supposed to be taboo, but the amount of money that changed hands on that boat was colossal. So passed nearly three days, namely, from Monday morning to Wednesday afternoon, and it was then that I saw one of the sights that will stay clear in my mind for many a long day. The "Mauritania" was seen to leave her berth, and we were all on deck or at portholes to watch her as she came past us. She came quite close to us, as we lay at anchor, and she, like ourselves, was well loaded. Her personnel were perched on every available vantage point, with the nurses wearing their red capes lining the rail of her promenade deck. The waving, cooees, cheering and singing that went on both ships as they passed was, I think, the most inspiring scene I had ever witnessed. I had often heard that one would never regret the experiences gained by going overseas with a force, and certainly, scenes such as this and many others will always live.

We moved out of Fremantle harbour a little after this, and now our escort, as far as we could see still only one ship, was the H.M.A.S. "Canberra", in place of the "Hobart". The "New Amsterdam" seemed to be late coming out, and we were still well out and formed up before she came up to us. We were soon out of sight of land, and this was our last view of Australia, and the next time we saw land was as we neared Singapore. Life on board soon settled down again to its usual routine, our mail had gone ashore, and those of us who were fortunate had received letters that had come overland. Having left Sydney on Tuesday, 4th February, we had now been on the water eight days, this being

Wednesday 12th. For the next six days the weather became hotter and hotter, and life on board was not very pleasant, particularly at night with the boat closed up, and even in spite of the fan and ventilators in our cabin, it was still stifling.

Whilst in Australia we had received various inoculations and one vaccination and, in my case, the vaccination had not taken. Some two days out of Fremantle I, with many others, were down again, and this time it took. And how it took! After putting up with it for a couple of nights, I was put into hospital with a high temperature by our Capt. John Park VX44998 (a great fellow, and one of the best, later to lose his life (on 9 February 1942), and recommended by Lieutenant Colonel H.F. Summons VX40219 for a V.C.), who happened along to the R.A.P. one night I was there for a sedative. The arm was pretty sore, and it was very hot lying in bed, so even after a short stay in hospital, I was allowed up and it was a relief to get up on deck, although I felt as weak as a kitten and had no interest in anything. It was a pity really, and I often regretted that I was not feeling better at the time, for that was the day we left the convoy and came on alone, escorted now by the H.M.S. "Durban".

It was a Sunday, and our leave-taking was another event that will stay in my mind. Without warning we suddenly swung out of line, and after the days of straight monotonous sailing, even this was an event, and turned about. For such a giant it took very little water to turn in, and having turned, we cut across the rear of the "Amsterdam" and "Mauritania", then turned left again and at advanced speed we passed on the outside of the "Mauritania" and "Aquitania". Once again the cheering, waving, singing etc, went on and it stirred us to no mean order, and showed the wonderful spirit that prevailed everywhere. Having passed the "Acquitania", we gave a final wave and then swung off to the right and headed towards Sumatra; the others continuing their way to the Middle East.

The weather now was extremely hot and we were getting our first taste of the hot humid tropical atmosphere that we were to learn to dislike and curse in the not too far distant future. That was Sunday 16, and we were getting near the end of our journey. During the next day we had occasional distant glimpses of land which of course were islands. Excitement was high, purchases of tobacco and cigarettes, which were very cheap were being made before it was too late; but, if we had known, there was no need, for the N.A.A.F.I., which we were to trade with on land were just as cheap if not cheaper.

The next day, Tuesday 18, was our last on board and about midmorning we ran in through the boom, and at reduced speed made our way up the Straits of Johore to berth finally at the Singapore Naval Base.

Our trip up the straits was the first real look we had of Malaya, for in most places, the straits, which separate Singapore Island from the mainland are little more than a mile wide, and so enabled us to obtain a close view of the shore. Things and sights which impressed me most was the wealth of vegetation and swamps reaching down to the water's edge; the bathing pagars or fenced swimming pools at intervals as cruised along, and then back from the water's edge and among the low hills and valleys were the various types of houses and dwellings. Among the first of these were large white structures on the left; these being as I was to find out, the barrack buildings of the British garrison quartered on the Island. In contrast to these large white buildings, were the small dirty looking native houses and occasional kampongs or villages. Everything was green and the rolling hills were covered with trees, scrub, cultivated fields, or plantations of banana, pineapple or coconut palm. In fact the tall palms seemed to grow everywhere and looked exactly as I expected a tropical land would appear.

I think everybody was at some vantage point to see as much as possible of this country we were to occupy for the next how long? The channel we had to keep to turned continually, which meant that as the giant Queen made her way majestically along, new panoramas were continually opening up ahead of us, and in spite of our slow speed, the screws were turning up the mud which we left in our wake.

We had lunch whilst in the straits and shortly after we ran into a wider expanse of water fringed on the left with buildings, huge cranes and docks, and into one of the latter we slowly turned.

So this was our destination. This wonderful Singapore and Malaya, of which we had heard so much, and had travelled some thousands of miles to defend. How we laughed later. Everything we now saw and did was something new, and the excitement and eagerness of all on board to get ashore and see and do things was intense. We berthed easily with the help of dozens of black and brown skinned natives, who chattered like a whole pack of monkeys; and who were ordered by white men. On the wharf were hundreds of people including men in various types of uniforms; British army, navy, airforce, native police, who were mainly huge bearded Sikhs (afterwards so much hated for their treachery), officials in white ducks and topees, a British band, and last but not least all these Tamils, Chinese, Malays, Eurasians, other Indians and what have you. The practice of throwing on to the wharf for the pleasure of watching the coolies diving for them, in spite of the efforts of the police to keep them back, soon became popular and became more so when the lads decided to heat them over a fire before throwing them down. The way they dropped the hot coins was just nobody's business, and great was our fun.

Our unit was to be disembarked that afternoon so we were lucky as it was stifflingly hot, and we were only too keen to get ashore after 16 days. A parade was held and all ranks received their first Malayan currency all being on a fixed amount of:- Officers \$20, N.C.O.'s \$15 and privates \$10. How strange it seemed after a life of pounds, shillings and pence. The dollar was worth 2/11 (two shillings and eleven pence) Australian, so all our transactions in the future had to be worked out on that basis.

The 2/9 Field Ambulance was the first unit to be disembarked although various individuals had already gone ashore. I was one of the first few on to the wharf and there, loaded down with gear and a cut lunch, handed to us as we stepped off the boat, I fell the unit in as it came off. I don't think I've ever felt so lousy as I did that day, as I still had a temperature and feeling very weak after my few days in bed; and what with that and the sticky humidity of the day, as well as the large amount of gear, I did not get the kick I should have out of it all. The Department of Information was soon on the job and a cameraman caught us as we came off. That picture in which I happened to be well to the fore, evidently travelled all over Australia at least; for a lot of people sent me the paper or magazine in which it appeared. Two people sent it from the Albury press, and once later on I came across it in an American newspaper.

What a relief it was to get ashore and feel solid earth once more. The towering hull of our late home looked larger than ever from down here and one felt very small standing beside her. However we were not to stand there for long as we were told to pick up our gear and follow a guide off the wharf to the railway some 400 yards away. To hear the languages spoken by the various types of Asiatics and the Europeans in charge of them, fell very strangely on the ears, but we were soon to become quite used to it.

Arriving at the siding at which our train was waiting, we were given about 15 minutes to purchase from a tented canteen which was handy, and this again was an experience I shall not forget. These canteens, at which we were to deal in plenty later on were run by the N.A.A.F.I., (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) and usually had a European in charge, with the serving usually being done by Malays or Chinese. This was our first chance to spend Malayan money, and I'll never forget the scene of the men buying beer, cigarettes, chocolates etc. and then trying to work out the cost in Australian. As we had been paid in dollar notes, we were to be complexed by receiving the various coins and smaller denomination notes in the change. The beer was on ice, and Cascade at 32 cents a bottle seemed to me a pretty good buy, and it proved better than just a buy when we got down to it. Tins of 50 Craven A at 45 cents seemed an unbelievable price when we worked it out, for that meant only about 1/3 where the same at home when we left was priced at 3/9. This was to prove typical of the N.A.A.F.I. and most everything was very cheap to us.

It was very funny to watch the lads trying to make themselves understood to the natives behind the counters, and I got all the fun I wanted just by watching them. Everyone was in the best of spirits enjoying this novel experience to the utmost, and this in spite of the fact that we were all wet through

with sweat, and not feeling very comfortable from that point of view. Our brief opportunity at the canteen was cut short however as the train was ready to leave, and we had to get aboard.

We were not to see Singapore worst luck as we were booked for a place called Port Dickson some 260 miles north. I did not mind personally how soon we got aboard for I was just about out on my feet.

The carriages were of a different design than any we had ever seen, and were quite comfortable. A centre corridor ran through each carriage and seats were collapsible in such a manner that two made a comfortable bed. The gauge of the railway in the F.M.S.R. (Federated Malay States Railways) is only a metre but travel is very comfortable and although the engines look like toys, they are really very good. We had other units as well as ourselves, and so had a long train drawn by two engines, and they made good time. A number of Malay sailors were down to see us off, and the fraternising of our lads with them was immediate, and all were good friends.

It was now late in the afternoon, and after our one last look at the H.T.Q.X., we left her to her fate and drew away from the base headed for Johore, and the north. The usual storing of baggage and the settling in of oneself followed and once settled down spent the last hour of daylight lapping up the scenery as it went past. Evidently our arrival had preceded us, for all along the line there were thousands of natives out to stare at us in their usual unenlightening way, and dressed in anything from a loin cloth to a sarong. Many were the colours of their dress, and many were the breeds of natives we saw, although there seemed to be a preponderance of Indians, mainly Tamils.

At the northern end of the island we ran on to a shunting line, the engines changed ends, and we then ran on to the Causeway, which is a road and railway some half mile in length crossing the Straits, and connecting Singapore Island with the mainland at Johore Bahru. Darkness had fallen, worse luck, so our view was practically nil, as it was advisable to keep the carriages closed up both to keep out the soot and cinders from the engine, and also to combat our first and new enemy, the mosquito, who seemed to choose the evenings in which to carry out his nefarious work.

Our brief halt at the station, where more natives were in evidence endeavouring to sell drinks and eats; but what a difference to the prices we were asked by the N.A.A.F.I. Things were almost twice the price. I regretted not being able to see the country through which we were to pass, but all one could see on that trip were natives of all nationalities who were at the various stations, which by the way were very poorly lit, that we passed through during the night. Still feeling terrible, and I think I was overtired, I spent a very unpleasant night, sleeping in cat naps, and praying for the trip to finish. We were all together, i.e., the sergeants mess, which consisted of Geoff Middleton, Ian Forsyth, Frank Cartledge, Ted Jones, Bert Swabbs, Harry Cannon, Ron Churches, Bill Wishart, George Copeland, Harry Frankland, Harold Winzer, Jerry Veitch, and Ted Waddingham. As well as these there were, of course, Jack Sandell and Bert Campbell, who had preceded us. I was awake at Gemas, where we were shunted once more, and put on the line for Port Dickson, and at about 3 a.m. we halted finally at a wayside siding called Bagan Pinang, where, under rather dismal conditions, there being only two or three arc lights burning, we disgorged from the train, to find a British R.A.S.C. there to transport our heavy baggage, and guide us to our new camp. Most of trucks had Malay drivers, and I remember marvelling at the fluency of a British sergeant when ticking off a few of the Malays or Chinese coolies who were there to do the work. The personnel were to march some few miles, and, feeling as I did, I was not looking forward to this in the least, but, evidently I was looking as I felt, for the C.O. approached me and told me not to attempt to march, but to ride with the baggage. I was never so thankful for an order in all my years in the Army, and I obeyed to the letter as, after all, all good soldiers should.

After a certain amount of delay we got away, and it was not long before we pulled up alongside a large white building, and there were met by Capt. Searby (Major VX45273 Medical Officer) and the others who had left us way back at Bonegilla, and, believe me, it was good to see them again. They had beaten us by some days, and had everything ready for us to move straight into our barracks. I was given a room, so in went my gear, and after yarning with Jack Sandell for a while, the rest of the unit

arrived, and so good were the arrangements for quartering, we were able to move them by companies direct to their sleeping quarters where all were allowed to rest for the remainder of the night, which was not very long, for in no time it seemed, dawn was breaking, and we could get a good look round our new home, and see the immediate topographical features in the vicinity. Our long trip was finally over now, namely, this morning of the 19th February, which was just nineteen days after leaving Bonegilla.

At daybreak, 6 a.m. I think most of us were up and about anxious to see where we were, what we were in, and whatever else may be in store for us. As it turned out we were particularly fortunate, as we were in part of the barracks usually used by the Malay Regiment, a battalion of which were still quartered in other parts of the barracks. We were allotted two long double storied buildings and a gymnasium which was turned into a hospital. The buildings were of concrete, plenty of shelter, without restricting the maximum of air; and each building was of four dormitories some 60'x25', a staircase situated centrally, with rooms 10'x8' in each corner of each floor. Stretchers, pillow, sheets, blanket and mosquito net were laid out for each man, and barrack furniture of all kinds made conditions for living fairly pleasant. My room which faced the west suited me admirably, for in it I had lockers, chest of drawers, mirror, table and chairs; and from the windows I looked out over the Straits of Malacca some half mile away. Between me and the water was the parade ground of the Malay Regt., then a Malay mosque, and from there to the waters edge a grove of tall coconut palms. All this I overlooked from our high position on top of a hill. Attached to each of the buildings were showers and latrines, baths here being practically unknown. Cookhouse and men's mess were also there, all in permanent structures so we were very fortunate. To complete our good fortune we had within 20 yards of our main building, an open air picture theatre and another two-storied building which contained on the ground floor, a canteen run by the N.A.A.F.I., two billiards tables, and the rooms upstairs were used as Sergeants messes, the balconies of which overlooked the theatre. It was a wonderful layout and I for one was very keen and satisfied.

The area taken over by the 22 Brigade (Bde) extended nearly a mile, and for those who could not fit into the barracks there had been constructed long atap huts which were airy affairs and typically native in their structure; dried palm fronds laced together being used for both walls and roof. Scattered within our area were many civilian residences that had been taken over by the army, and into these went the officers and Bde. H.Q. Eight nurses who later came to the hospital from 2/4 C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Station) also used one of these buildings and seemed very satisfied.

The terrain was interesting being hilly and everywhere flowers were blooming, wild orchids were on mess tables, and the multi-coloured leaves of the various bushes and shrubs, to say nothing of the wild flowers made a pretty sight and one far removed from what we came here to do.

Various A.S.C. (Australian Service Corps) units were either with us or in Seremban as was the 2/18 Bn. The units attached to Brigade were 2/5 Field Hygiene Section, 2/5 Mobile. Bacterial Laboratory, ourselves and the other two battalions, 2/20 and 2/19 were in the area whilst 10 A.G.H. had moved straight to Malacca being serviced there by the 2/2 M.A.C. who were some of the few Corps troops sent across with us.

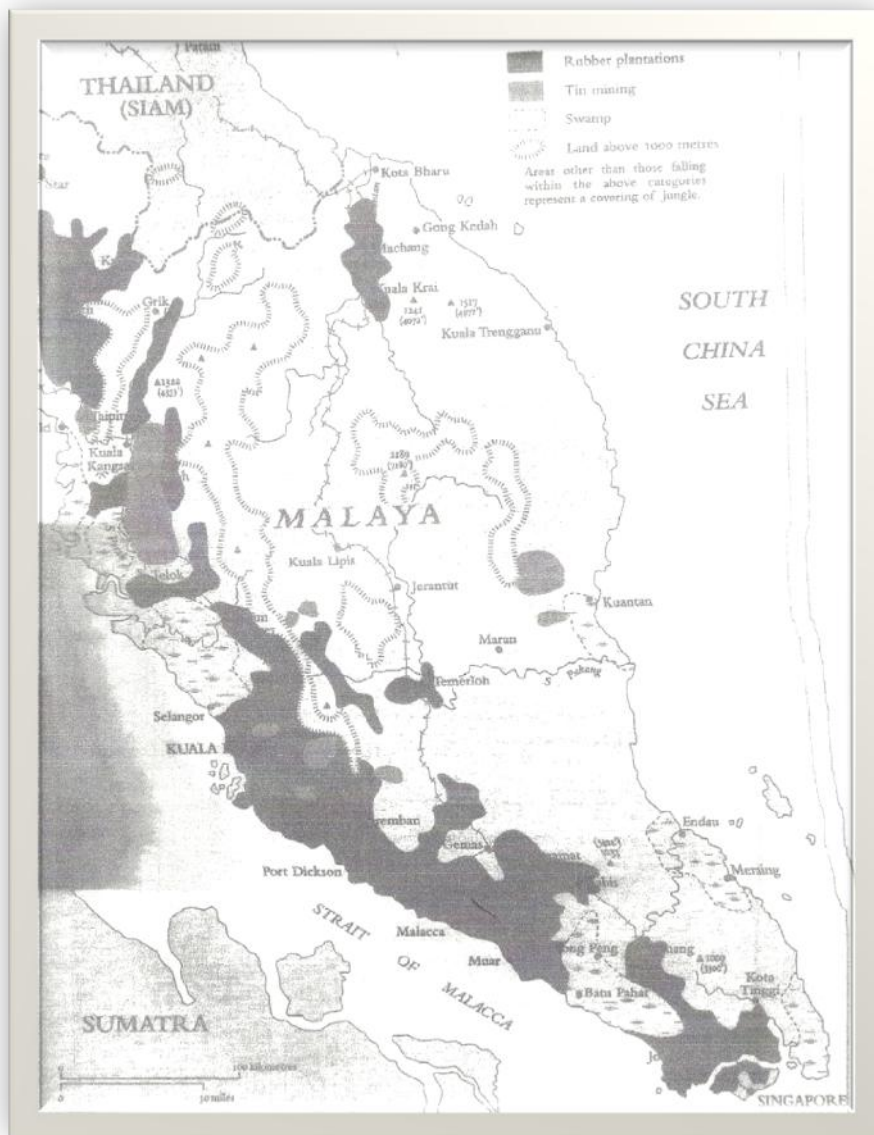
We settled down quickly although our program was not very strenuous in the early days, mainly because we needed acclimatizing, our main enemy was the sun and the humid atmosphere which kept us in a continual sweat. So to combat this, most work in the way of field training was done during the morning and an enforced siesta taking place during the afternoon until 4 or 5 o'clock, when once more a little more work was carried out. Towards the end of the first week our transport section, which had been left behind at Singapore, arrived with our vehicles, so once again we were nearly complete. The boys were greatly taken by the smartness of the drill carried out by the Malays, who were officered by British, their parade ground work being the last word and a picture to watch.

For the first month or two I usually carried out an hour's drill with the men and the sweat they lost must have been gallons for I was always wet through just with calling out the orders. They soon

toughened up, so I went on to route marches at first only small but later building up to 10 or 12 miles. Usually we could arrange for a swim to finish up and they were popular.

Our evenings were filled in either in the quarters as we had electric light, in the canteen, or, in our case, in the mess where we had our bar erected, and we settled down to the important task of getting used to this Malayan beer which went by the names of "Anchor" and "Tiger" the latter being by far the better. Later we were able to purchase Australian and Tasmanian Beers and they were a whole lot better. Beer we were warned was not the best of drinks in this country, so for the first time I went on to Whiskey, which, with dry ginger, I got to like fairly well; and when the pictures were on it was very pleasant to sit in the breeze which always sprung up at dusk, on the verandah and have a noggin or two whilst watching what was more often than not, an excellent show.

In April, to make more room, we combined our mess with Bde. H.Q. and so we became a larger group; and as there was a couple of rats in their midst, I was not too keen, but did not worry much as I knew that I would be leaving in the near future.



Our official opening night we celebrated by having a dinner, and to it we invited Sister Drummond (later Matron of 13 A.G.H.) and her girls, and also Brig. Taylor, of 22 Aust. Infantry Brigade. It was

a great night as we carried on the celebration in the mess after, and more than one was more than merry before we went to bed. Lofty had been presented some few weeks earlier with a python, a 15 footer, which we kept in a box in the mess, and when we put him out on the floor that evening, he caused quite a stir. An amusing outcome of that night was Lou Atkinson's love affair with Sister Raymond, the beauty of it being that she did not know anything of it. Lou wrote rather a nice note to Ray, the next morning, and it was intercepted by Copeland and Wishart, who, being practical jokers, kept it and answered it themselves, and so had poor old Lou in a dither for weeks. The deception was still going on when I left for Singapore some time later.

It must have been April some time that poor old Lofty lost his stripes. Lord knows, I had warned him often enough and had protected him more than once, but he got a bit tight one night whilst Orderly Sergeant, and after midnight I was awakened by Harold Winzer to do something with him. The place was in an uproar. Lights were on, and Lofty was putting Frankland, who was drunker than he, under arrest. The guard was there as well as our piquet, but I closed the works down quickly, put Frankland in the guard tent and waited to see what the morning brought forth. Sure enough they both came up before the C.O., and Frankland got off scot free and Harry C. lost his stripes. It was most unfair, and I felt genuinely sorry for Lofty, and that was not only because I liked him. He is one of the best natured fellows I've met, and even now, in our P.O.W. days, we get together quite often and eat and yarn together. The part I did not like was seeing a sergeant put back in the ranks to become the block for all and sundry of the men who felt now that they could talk as they liked. Lofty took it all like a man though, and I admired him for it. It was not easy for him, I'm sure.

The days slipped by, we becoming gradually accustomed to the conditions. Language classes started up, and we picked up words here and there. The highlights were, of course, mail days, and leave weekends. Mail was coming through very regularly by air, and I never missed a mail to speak of. If for no other reason, I was glad to be married, for Moira was wonderful in all the letters she wrote and I can't recall a mail she missed. I was receiving a large number, and believe me, it was quite an effort for me, being such a poor and slow writer, to keep up with them. Our leave was either to the nearest large town, Seremban (there was nothing much at all at Port Dickson), Malacca, some 60 miles south, or Kuala Lumpur, a similar distance north. Seremban, 25 miles away, was quite a good little place, and I made various purchases during the few visits I paid it, and found it quite reasonable in spite of the bargaining system that sprung up, by our fellows continually trying to beat them down in price. I'm sure we were the losers in the long run, for it only meant that these wily natives advanced the price for a start, and so allowed for the bargaining. All towns in Malaya smell to high heaven, and this was no exception, and one day passing through the market, I nearly passed out. From this town I purchase piecers of Malayan pewter which I sent home.

I think I enjoyed Kuala Lumpur (K.L.) better than any place I ever saw here, and spent a few leave days in this northern capital. Here the eastern and western elements and buildings and ideas stand out in keen contrast to each other, and one is able to travel through one end of the town and be as native and smelly as could wish, and then to the other end where huge administrative buildings, banks, cricket padangs and clubs and hotels were in evidence. Had a very fine meal at the air-conditioned Majestic Hotel, before running out to see the Batu Caves one day. These were interesting, and one climbed 186 steps to reach them, situated as they were half way up a sheer mountain face. Inside were many interesting writings, and if one was lucky, a yogi or two may be seen sitting in his pitch dark corner. They seemed to me to be nearly mental. That same day we were shown over a tin dredge, and a noisy clattering thing it was too. Still, as such things are supplying a large proportion of the world's tin and profits are high, I don't suppose they mind. Back to K.L., where I purchased a few odds and ends including, I remember, a set of stamps for Pa-in-law, and after tea in the eastern end of the town, we rickshawed some two miles to another quarter of the town and spent until 10 p.m. in the fun parks, called "Worlds", in this country. Here they have all kinds of side shows, Chinese plays and pictures, pictures also in English, and in some a huge dance hall where one can, on the purchase of chits, always obtain a dance from "taxi girls". These are mainly Chinese or Eurasians, and they dress and dance beautifully. Generally speaking they are a very thin and flat-chested lot, and are exceptionally light on their feet.'

Kuala Lumpur, particularly in the European section, is more or less modern, and differed considerably to Malacca, which is perhaps the oldest town, and still retains traces of the early Portuguese settlers, in her buildings and ruins. The drive in from the north follows the coast for the last few miles, and is a particularly pretty run, with the wealthy merchants' houses, huge trees of frangipani, crotons, etc., gold links, and bordering the shore the ever present tall coconut palms. Our Artillery Regiment, 2/10th, was in barracks here, as were the 10 Australian General Hospital, who had taken over a complete wing of the Civilian Hospital. In later days I was to be sent to Malacca, and it was here that I messed. At this time our 8 Div. A.I.F. H.Q. was at K.L., and we lost Capt. Bruce Anderson (Medical Officer) to them during April. These leaves were very pleasant outings, one was still seeing new things and customs, and I generally managed to get hold of something or other to send home for one of the many womenfolk, to whom I tried to give something at some time or another.

One large scale training scheme was carried out when the whole brigade moved from Port Dickson to Kuala Lumpur, the practice being to move a large force and take up a defensive position and operate. The whole move was by Motor Transport (M.T.), and took many hours, but it was quite a break. On the other side of our life here, we spent some time at controlled sport, and had sports meetings and field games on the padang within our area. Our lads, under the keen sportsman, Capt. Park (mentioned previously), did very well at these events, and later built up an Australian Rules Football team which became famous. A big help here was having Harold Ball, of Melbourne Football Club as one of our members, and he, of course, did a good job. Harold was later to lose his life with John Park, and it was a sad blow to the unit in general.

I was very keen on Port Dickson, and did not relish the thought of leaving my comfortable quarters here, when I was given, with Jerry Veitch, the opportunity of attending a four months course at an Officer Cadet Training Unit (O.C.T.U.) at Singapore. Everything had settled down, and we were quite at home by this time, and I think the best thing enjoyed by the men was the fact that our washing was all done for us by sending it out to washing contractors called "Dhobys". At the same time, our first skin troubles commenced in the form of tinea, prickly heat, etc., and Dhobys Itch, and I did not use the privilege, but had Ted Hibbert, my batman, do it instead. I escaped with nothing worse than prickly heat, but got the lot later at the O.C.T.U. when we had to use the Dhoby. Pontoon at 10 cents a card was a popular game, and my usual card luck stuck to me even in this country.

On the night of May 8 1941 my stay at Port Dickson came to an end, and Jerry Veitch and myself packed and left to catch the night train from K.L. which arrived at Seremban at approximately 10.30 p.m. We had a small send off from the boys and quite a few snorts passed over the tongue before we got away. This was to be my first trip to Singapore for I had turned down earlier opportunities in favour of others who had not been, when we were supplying escorts with all V.D. cases from our area. However here was my turn and I was a little excited as usual when I'm starting off on a new venture or trip, and once again it was to be a night trip and so prevent my seeing any of the landscape. I guess though it would have been exactly like the rest of the country, with miles and miles of rubber plantations interspersed with padi and occasional cultivated fields or palm groves. Being of warrant rank we travelled first class and had a sleeper which was a distinct improvement on the trip up on a troop train.

We went in by car and Geoff, Frank and Ian Forsyth came in for the run. The station, very poorly lit was crowded with thousands of low class natives sleeping anywhere they could get either on seats or on the ground and I believe this was a common practice, for very few actually travelled on the train.

One or two others were also travelling on this train to attend the course, so after final farewells the train started and once having stored our gear we made our way to the buffet car where a bar was in operation and there we sat and talked until nearly 2 a.m., when we made our way back to the car and were just about settled in when we stopped at Tampin and in got a few more who were to attend the school. These boys were from the 2/10 Field Regiment. Ron Beer had only half his moustache and they were very happy, so it was easy to see that they also had had a send off. They took a while to

settle down, but finally we all slept and I awoke at dawn. Hopping out right away I washed dressed and found we were nearing Johor Bahru (J.B.). The country was as I expected, thickly covered by all manner of tropical vegetation and actually very uninteresting.

The others were up so we all went into breakfast and on the tables were copies of the morning paper with the compliments of the C.E.S.R. A very good thought and something that our Railways might easily emulate. As I finished eating we pulled into J.B. so I took a stretch along the platform and from there got a glimpse or two of some rather large buildings just on the edge of the town. These were the new Johore hospital, a beautiful building, and the Sultans Palace also stood out. I was to see plenty of them later on as I was stationed in Johore for three months after the school had finished.

We crossed the causeway and ran the last twelve or thirteen miles to Singapore, and here it was like touring in a different country for the rubber trees disappeared to a large degree and the vegetation was not so thick mainly due to the fact that here we were nearing the hub of the universe and the population was necessarily denser.

It was a nice fine day and after getting our goods and chattels together we were all ready. We arrived at the Station, there to be met by a couple of English Sergeants who had come in a truck and vans to transport us out to the O.C.T.U., which was in Churchill Lines, some fourteen miles out at Changi which is the N.E. corner of the island. Our view of Singapore was limited to the outside edge and the streets through which we passed on our way out, but we passed a few well known places which we were to see more of in the future. Such places as the Singapore Cricket Club and the famous "Padang", the Administrative Buildings, St. Andrews Cathedral, Raffles Hotel and then on to Lavender Street, Air Port, which is just outside the City, and then along the coast road to our new home.

Arriving there a roll was called. We were divided into squads of six or seven and placed under the tender care of a British Sergeant who was to be our squad instructor in P.T., all field exercises and weapon training. He showed us our rooms, which were actually married quarters of the garrison in ordinary times, so I saw straight off that we were to be more or less comfortable for our stay there. I was to share an upstairs double room with a Fred Harvey who had come from the A.A.S.C., and he turned out to be a bright customer, a keen sport, particularly when it came to water polo. Our room was excellent, bright and airy, having all shuttered windows at one end and an open balcony the other. Furniture consisted of a wardrobe each, a table, chairs, electric light, and iron beds with mattress made up of three horse hair biscuits. A Chinese "boy" was also detailed for each two or three rooms and he did all cleaning, sweeping and bed making, and brought a cup of tea in at 5.30 each morning. Our "boy", a Chinese about forty years old, was a boon and many a laugh we got out of him when we tried to teach him English. Our room led out to a lavatory and a bathroom which contained a porcelain bath and wash basin, shaving cabinet and shower. We were also to have a cadets' mess, an anti-room furnished with tables and chairs and a library and canteen at one end run by the N.A.A.F.T., Asiatic cooks and we were waited on table by our "boys". The meals were excellent and made life in this respect very comfortable, in fact the whole course without exception was run on the very best style and the organisation and administration of the whole affair was perfect. It was run by all British officers and N.C.O.'s, and later an officer from the 2/19 Bn. - Captain Thomas - joined the staff. I have never enjoyed soldiering so much in all my life for we were never at a loss to know where or what we would be doing and/or why.

The course itself was very comprehensive in what it taught - organisation, administration, tactics and supply being the main, and subjects such as weapon training, field engineering, map reading, all parts of A.A.S.C. Military law, M.T. etc. etc. helped fill the curriculum, and as well as these we covered lectures and practice, where possible, on all other arms of the services. It meant solid work, but everything was so well organised that it was almost a pleasure. The hours were long, being reveille 5.30, Parade (drill or P.T.) 0615, breakfast 0800, parades 0900 to 1230, lunch 1300, parades 1400 to 1545, tea 1600, free until 1800 when we went on parade again until 2000, dinner 2020 hrs. And then the rest of the day was our own. I found that all spare time was easily filled in keeping notes on our

many lectures up to date, and quite often it took up some of our time Saturday afternoons and Sundays when we were free and could, if desired, obtain leave to Singapore until 0100. I used the privilege on a few occasions only, preferring as a rule to get my letter writing done during these periods. Also, after the long week, it was good to relax at the end and browse around in white shorts and shirt, and pay visits to the bar as desired, and, in the evenings, almost invariably, go to the picture theatre only a quarter of a mile down the road and run by the Garrison Royal Artillery.

This was the No. 3 O.C.T.U., the previous two were run for British units only, so we Australians were unique in the fact that it was for the first time that A.I.F. troops had attended an O.C.T.U. abroad. A school of 42 we were, and thirty were Australians drawn from all units but mainly from Infantry. The English lads also came from various Regiments including Newman from the East Surreys", Grounds and Sharland from R.A.S.C., Calbeck from the "Gordons" and others from the "Loyals" "Argyles" and Pat Jones from the Singapore Volunteers who was down to obtain a commission for the Malay Regt." We were a very happy family and all were generally on good behaviour for we knew that any foolery, drunkenness or the like would mean only one thing, dismissal; and we were all too keen not to chance that. On arrival everybody dropped their rank and became cadets distinguished always by white hat and cap bands, and white shoulder pieces. We were always conspicuous and had more than one tricked as to what we were when we were in town, and one occasion I was asked if we were special police. Our behaviour both in and out of barracks had to be just so and this meant that we were always the temporary gentlemen, could not visit questionable places, (there were plenty of these) dance with taxi girls and such like. In other words we were to act as officers and gentlemen at all times.

After the first couple of weeks, Tuesdays and Thursdays were lightened up considerably. The afternoon periods being given over to free study etc. Usually we took these opportunities to play our sport which took nearly all forms-Water polo, cricket, soccer, rugby and hockey being the main ones. It was marvellous the good teams we were able to field in all spheres out of our small band of forty, and our water polo team in which I had the most interest did very well as we played every British team in the area, and even ran out one night to play the R.A.A.F. at their own pool. This was our first defeat, but it did not deter us for we arranged a match against the Singapore Soccer Club who, next to the Chinese were the best in the country. They gave us a hiding but the day we had was worth it. Usually we had played in the Selarang pool which was within a mile of the barracks, so when the S.S.C. suggested we play at their pool and be their guests for the morning we did not refuse. The Singapore Club was one of the places for Europeans in Singapore and I was very keen to see it. I was not disappointed, and it was my favourite spot in the whole of Singapore later, and many were the wonderful meals I had there.

The pool itself was completely tiled, about 2½ times the size of an Olympic pool, chlorinated salt water with the diving stand at one end. On the water's edge it had spacious lawns and around the pool were scores of tables both in the open and under large shade umbrellas of multi-coloured fabrics. Later when made an Hon. Member I made many a visit when on daily leave for it was ideal to arrive there, have the use of towels and spacious dressing rooms, have a swim and then, after using the high pressure showers on the edge of the pool, sit down at a table, and by the lifting of a finger have a "boy" render excellent service in the way of drinks and sandwiches. At dark another shower, dress and then dinner on the softly lit balconies overlooking the harbour, was to my mind as near perfection as one could wish. I never grew tired of that program, and although I came across other good eating houses, most of them very expensive, I always gave my vote to the swimming club. To finish off a leave we invariably, after dining there, went on to a show at the 9.15 p.m. session. This was also pleasant for the theatres we patronised were all air conditioned.

However, we arrived this morning at the club were duly welcomed and made to feel at home, after which we got on with the match in which they beat us 8 goals to 2. Our usual team comprising:- Cornforth, Grounds, Harvey, Brennan, Quinlan, Lee and myself were there and they beat us on their merits. It was good fun and after, although other scratch matches went on during the morning, we were treated to drinks, eats and smokes, as we sat at tables on the edge of the pool. I was talking to a

man during the morning who was leaving in two days time for Melbourne and Sydney, and I felt a distinct nostalgic pang when he told me. The S.S.C. was by far my favourite spot and I'll never tire of singing its praises.

Other good eating places I found were at the Airport where on favourable nights one dined on the roof under individual softly lit table lamps, and at the Coconut Grove. A meal at the Cathay Cafe cost us \$6.50 per one night, and I think this was the dearest meal I had. Of the picture theatres I preferred the Cathay as it was cold inside, was new and modern in every way, and a bar was open all day on the mezzanine floor.

We settled into the O.C.T.U. very quickly after the opening lecture by Major Denne the Commandant, and we were divided into two platoons of three squads each of six or seven men. This made individual training easy for each squad had it's own instructor sergeant and each platoon an officer. The sergeant major, of the old traditional type even to the waxed moustache, kept us on the jump, and every second morning took us for the before breakfast period of drill on the parade ground. Smartness in drill was most essential, and by the time we marched out in August we were by no means bad. One hours P.T. every day either early morning or after six at night was done on the jump and was of an advanced type. We were soon in good shape but lost a whole lot of sweat in the making; and to get back to a shower after each effort was just what was wanted. In all our subjects we were taken by officers who were especially picked for the job.

Quite a bit of our time was taken up in lectures and sand table exercises, and also later, work out in the country behind Tampines Rd., where we put into practice what we had covered in lectures. This included practical field engineering, and all infantry work such as schemes for advances, retreats, patrols etc., usually working one platoon against the other. We also did quite a lot of night exercises starting with the recognition of sounds, compass bearing marches and platoons in attack etc. I think it was hotter working at night than by day and when doing our bearing marches at night over rough country covered with wire, creeks, jungle growth and mud it was dirty as well as hot. Usually we had three "legs" to cover, contacting an officer at the end of each, and if one got lost then it meant a late tea for we generally had dinner when we got back, and this was usually between 10 and 11 p.m. To get back after these hot sticky exercises to a jug or two was ideal as one felt more like drink than food.

On other occasions we travelled further afield by trucks to see at first hand various places and things of military interest. One such as this was an all day affair in which we saw a shoot by the Hyderabad's of the 3" mortar, went to the grenade range and all had practice at throwing live ammunition, had lunch which was trucked out from the O.C.T.U., carried out a scheme at the "Gap" from which we obtained a wonderful view, and then on to the Base Supply and Ordnance Depot at Alexandra, and this alone was an education. The amount of foodstuffs held in the freezers was colossal; a complete bakery capable of supplying 70,000 daily, meat and bacon by the tons as was the flour. We were shown all over it before going on to the Ordnance section which included the base workshops and lastly to the huge arsenal which comprised several concrete structures built into the hills, and in them we saw every type of ammunition from .303 rifle to the large 15" shells for the coast batteries. It was extremely interesting and the day, which was fully taken up seemed more of a holiday than anything else. Talking of 15" guns (2 naval and 1 land) which were situated not far away from us at Changi, and they are colossal things when one gets alongside them. The land gun intrigued me the most as its arsenal and hydraulic power was all underground some 40'. Everything below the surface was electric or hydraulic and kept a crew of 26 busy when the gun was in action. Automatic grabs place the heavy shells and charges on to trays which are sent by lifts to the surface, where a crew of 13 is used in the operation of the gun. It is wonderful to watch it in operation, and the ease with which the use of hydraulic power can move the giant about. A shoot we watched over 22,000 yards, $\frac{3}{4}$ charge only, as they were good for 28,000, shook the ground, and all atop buildings within a mile of the gun literally shook. They have a tremendous blast, and the shell going away is for all-the-world like thunder receding into the distance.

My birthday, May 20, was one to be remembered, for, in spite of my move from P.D. only twelve days before, every parcel and letter, with, I think, two exceptions, arrived, and were delivered to me on May 19, 20, 21. Excellent staff work I thought, and I was very pleased everybody was so very good, and their choice of gifts was the "pea". Letters, cards and telegrams all arrived and made for me three great days, but did I get a headache when I saw what I had to answer in the way of letters in thanks to all these good people.

The school sailed along nicely, and our first exams came along in the shape of weapon training, which course we finished first. Our written-up notes were withdrawn for examination, and shortly after this a British cadet, Ledman, was quietly sent back to his unit. Everything was kept interesting as possible, our field exercises carried on, we erected an assault bridge over the Changi Creek, played around with wireless telephones after receiving two lectures by an officer of Royal Sigs. We wrote our letters, shopped at Changi village, where we soon became known, and in general were having a great course. Fred Harvie (NX51618) was a character of a man, and anybody less like an officer was hard to imagine. I think, when he was finally passed out, he was more surprised than anybody.

Time was slipping along, and either late July or early August saw the arrival of the 27 Aust. Inf. Bde. Two of its three battalions, the 26th and 30th, were quartered for the earlier days only a few hundred yards along the Changi Road from our line, and it was funny the feeling we had, somehow we felt "old-timers" or veterans seeing them marching in with all their gear and pale faces, which was evidently due to the fact that it was winter when they left home. They landed off the boat with some sort of sickness, so were really in isolation in their camps, but this did not prevent us from asking all the questions of home, etc., that we could think of. The 2/29th were back at Katong, and the 13 A.G.H. was put into the R.C. School. Why in hell they ever sent another A.G.H. to service this small force beat me but as the whole scheme of things in this country, right up to the running away of our commander, was just a joke, and if ever I go away with an army again, it will have to be a whole lot different to what it is now. It is a common saying here now, to anybody running away from anything, that he is going a "Gordon Bennett". What a reputation, thank goodness no one can apply it to me, although I and many others had our opportunity prior to the capitulation. However, let me not get too bitter about this business, for plainly it smells.

This new brigade was a composite show, as each battalion came from a different state. 2/29 were Victorians and were in camp at Bonegilla when we left. 2/15 Regiment R.A.A. from N.S.W., and Tom Smith arrived with this unit. Our corresponding ambulance, 2/10th (Field Ambulance), under Lt. Col. Sheppard, and with whom I was to work during our days in action, were also New South Welshmen.

This country, by the way, can be thoroughly treacherous, as we full know, as far as rain is concerned, and when it rains it does not play at it. I think more water falls here in five minutes of a shower than would in an hour or two at home. I mention this because of a very good laugh we had one day shortly after the 2/26 and 2/30 moved in. After breakfast, all lit up in their full uniform, and including their bands, they set off down the road in column of route, and it appeared obvious they were out to show the English and Indian troops in the area how good they were. It was quite fine when we saw them go out, but within an hour down came the rain, and it was a good one. Sure enough, about half an hour or so later back came the battalions, rifles inverted, band instruments under cover, and the men were the sorriest looking batch of drowned rats I've ever seen. We, up on our balcony, and perfectly dry, gave them quite a barrack as they passed, and it was certainly, to us anyway, a darn good joke. I suppose, like us early ones, they soon learned a thing or two about this "wonderful" country.

We covered one or two more exams before the 8th Aug. When the school, including nearly all the staff and civilian employees, packed up and prepared for a ten day period at Mersing, where we were to finish off the school with the exception of exams and the passing-out parade. Here we were to do jungle warfare and jungle lore, and it was not to be very severe in the way of work; and, indeed we actually did have an easy ten days, nearly every afternoon being free for swimming or beach sports, and this relaxation, after nearly four months of hard work (16 odd hours per day) was a great idea, and greatly appreciated.

To help with the work in the actual jungle were a few Malay foresters, and many were the things we learnt from them. How to cut one's way through on a compass bearing, keeping account of direction and distance, and later on they showed us how to throw up a shelter made entirely from the materials growing about. We built perimeter defences by day and defended them against the other platoon by night, and the jungle can be an eerie place at night, believe me, with phosphorous leaves glowing everywhere, the screeches of birds and animals, and the ceaseless chatter of the monkeys if disturbed. We also did road defences, and defence of various villages, and in general covered a multitude of work, all of it, of course, was putting into practice what we had been lectured on during the course.

Our mess was operating, so many a pleasant evening was spent under the tents, and in spite of the many mosquitoes, mostly of the malarious type, which means malaria. It surprised me, seeing the force in which these mosquitoes attacked, that we did not lose more than one with malaria. But Pat Jones, of the Singapore Volunteers, was the only unfortunate, and he missed the last four or five days of the course. I saw him after the capitulation, and again in the P.O.W. camp, and he has had many relapses since then.

The beach was no use for swimming, that is, the beach in our immediate vicinity, but was ideal for baseball which sport Fred Harvie took in hand. Mersing, although we were only one mile out on the Endau Road, offered no attractions other than a rest house, so we hardly ever went in. Our truck did the 100 odd miles run for rations, laundry and mail each day, so we were kept well posted. It was there I received letters and telegrams from Moira and home offering congratulations on our first wedding anniversary. I felt very lonely that night, a beautiful moonlight one, and would have felt a lot better if I could suddenly have been transported home to my darling wife, whom I've missed very much.

Excitement amongst the native "boys" one morning took us to the road, and there in the soft mud and clay were plenty of fresh tiger paw marks, and we could see where two of them had prowled around our tents and also the "Unique" buses in which the drivers were sleeping. Thank goodness they were not hungry, for by the marks they were full grown, and the stride of one measured about seven feet. Not a very pleasant thought, but all's well that ends well, and it was written down as just another experience.

Our ten days there seemed to fly and in no time we were heading back to Singapore and Changi; and it seemed to me as though we were returning home after a holiday when we arrived back at our comfortable barracks.

On the way back we stopped occasionally to look at road defences and motor vehicle harbours, and I gained the impression that a comparative few men could hold this road against a force, so well was it mined and fortified. Unfortunately the situation on the west coast when the war came was such that this road had to be evacuated to prevent the whole of the 22 Bde. being cut off. We also stopped at Kota Tinggi later to be the war station of the H.Q. 2/9 Field. Ambulance, and carried out a scheme for the defence of the town. We were told then of the plans for this town and the demolition of buildings and the bridge across the Johore River which runs through the town, in case of a Jap attack; but, other than the bridge being blown when the time did come, I do not know.

Having arrived back we only had five or six days left in which to complete the course; and this time was spent mainly at the remainder of the examinations and the final polishing up for the passing out parade. We were examined in every subject that we had covered and it was just hard enough to make one think. This even included P.T. where we had to take a class and put our stuff away in good style. The actual examination, although one had to pass them all, did not mean so very much in the final decision of our work, I'm sure, for we had been very closely watched, and reported upon by both squad N.C.O. and platoon officer every week. The Commandant himself, a very shrewd man, was also always on the watch. This was, I believe, the main reason for his rule that the officers would dress and mess with the cadets every Wednesday night, so that by the time he wrote our confidential

reports, he knew exactly what we were like, and as individuals at that. I received a "B" report, which is what most of us obtained, although a few were down in the "C's", and I was surprised when I read mine, just how true his summing up of myself was. It was not that it was a wonderful report either, for I was never really keen about this Infantry work, and somehow or other he evidently knew of my inner feelings, for it was all down on my papers when I read and signed it.

We knew then that we had passed or failed in the course but would not know what was to become of us, and this as late as the Friday before our passing out, which was the next day Saturday. During the course we had had high ranking officers from the A.I.F. H.Q., Indian Army and British Army; the latter two, without actually asking us, were very keen to obtain our desire to transfer to their respective armies. The A.I.F. even went as far in extreme to state that, as far as they knew, we would not be able to be commissioned immediately but very few really believed that and so applications from the Aussies to transfer were not very many. British pay was terrible, so got one only; eight went to the Indian Army with emergency commissions later, and the remainder of the A.I.F. stood fast.

On the Friday we had a dress rehearsal for the parade on the morrow, when Lt. Gen. Percival and others were to be present. Our spirits were rising as we lowered the other spirits and all were keyed up. Another Englishman was sent back to his unit as unlikely to make an efficient officer and it was bad luck as he was quite a likeable fellow.

Saturday 23 Aug. Dawned as hot as ever and knowing the burning propensities of same, we were not looking forward very much to the parade, for we were all lit up in jackets and long trousers and polished up no end. Our webbing had been scrubbed white and the rifles shone, and being tall I secured No. 1 of the leading platoon which suited me. A large crowd had assembled, including two battalions of our 27 Bde. recently arrived in the country, all the heads of the various units, press photographers and writers, and the cadets were marched onto the parade ground to the band of the 2 Battalion The Gordon Highlanders, brass band, playing *Waltzing Matilda*. Cameras started to click and a lot of them were our own which we had given to the staffs to take for us. I had purchased a camera in Singapore a couple of months earlier and although only five dollars, it took better snaps than some of the expensive affairs that some of the lads had.

We formed up in line on the square, and after an inspection by the Commandant, we awaited the arrival of Gen. Percival. The sun was burning and it was hard work to stand perfectly still as we did. He did arrive, inspected us, and then we did the usual march past in column, in quick and slow time, and once more moving to the centre of the square where he addressed us. The usual talk was put over, complimenting us on making the grade, and warning us of our responsibilities from now on. He was not long winded however, (the sweat was right through our clothes by this time) so he left after we had marched off to our lines led by the full band. I believe we put up quite a good show, but I suppose anyone would after being strictly drilled for four months.

Well it was over at last, and another phase of one's life completed. We shed our wet clothes and got into some nice cold beer. Major Denne came into the ante-room and in a few words he told us what we had all been waiting to hear, that we were all to be commissioned as from that day, and on hearing, great was the joy thereof. Everyone was shaking hands with everyone else and the noggins flowed to no mean order. A great laugh went up when Norm Couch (NX46360 2/20 Bn), on seeing the adjutant, Lt. Smith, going past the window, put his head out and called, "Howdy Smithy"? After four months of strict discipline and respects paid, and the look in Smith's eye when he swung round was anything but placid; but he seemed to realize immediately that we had been told of our rise to his rank and he laughed with us. He was a good fellow as were all the officers, in fact the only one of the staff, of whom we had contact, and whom I had no time for was our squad Sgt. one Kenyon, a Lancashire lad, whose egoism was nobody's business. It was a pity really for I and others found it difficult to learn much under him. He rejoined his Regiment The Loyals, on the outbreak of war, and in spite of what I've just said, I was genuinely sorry to hear later that he had lost his life. Killed in Action.

A lot of the lads went to town on leave for the weekend, but I did not bother and spent a nice quiet weekend in the ante-room, no notes to write up or anything, and it was a great "free" feeling. On the Monday night we had a concert on the lawn outside the mess and it was a good show. Old Vic himself and Blinky Bill Wilson put on a few turns, and Roger Cornforth and Norm Couch put over a couple of good songs, words by themselves and applicable to the personalities and the course. It was a perfect night and drinks were brought out at very frequent intervals. During that day the O.C.T.U. had made available a truck for eight of us who went across to A.I.F. H.Q., which was then situated at Johore Bahru, and there we had our pay books adjusted and the £25 uniform allowance entered. Of this I drew \$150 and came back to Singapore where, with Fred Harvie, we made purchases of trunks and other necessary gear. I bought a decent pair of shoes, and as I had an officer's type cap and other essentials I was saved some expense. We had been measured for uniforms by the regimental tailor of the Gordon Highlanders, and I had \$53 worth of goods, including shirts, shorts and uniforms ordered. I had been instructed to report back to Port Dickson by the Tuesday's train, and the others, with a few exceptions, were to report to General Base Depot on the Wednesday. Couch went to Div. H.Q., Godfrey to Burma, eight others to India, and all the English boys left on the Tuesday morning to the various regiments to which they had been appointed. There was excitement in plenty as we said our adieus and the cameras worked over time. Talking of Burma reminds me that during my time away from the 2/9th, a force known as "Tulip" force had left secretly and quietly for there, and included in it were fourteen of the unmarried men of the unit and Jack Sandell was one of them. I have often wondered since how they have all fared, seeing as how things got rather sticky in that area and our news of them was very limited. We did hear that two or three of them had received injuries and/or diseases of sorts.

I went to town again on the Tuesday but was back early to pack up ready to be run in to catch the K.L./express at 10.10 p.m. Once again the snorts flowed freely as I filled in my last hour, and as I also paid a visit to the O.C.T.U. officers mess and there lowered a few more in the course of having a yarn and saying goodbye to the commandant and others. I was very sorry in one way to be leaving as I had enjoyed the efficiency and comfort which was so typical of the whole school, to no mean order and would willingly have done another four months. Jim Quinlan was to stay on for some reason or other and Stan Illig who had, through sickness, failed in his weapon training exams, and was to be given the opportunity to pass out in this subject during the No. 4 O.C.T.U. which was due to start early in September.

To offset my desire to stay was the keen excitement I felt at going back to the unit at Pt. Dickson (P.D.), and I could hardly wait to get aboard the train and get back among the people I knew and the place I liked so much. What a disappointment I was to receive though; for when I arrived at the station who should I run into but Grant Forsyth Q.M., who had later instructions from the C.O. which were to hold me and transport me to General Base Depot (G.B.D.) there to work for the time with Major Roy Maynard who was down there with a detachment to do the medical work for that unit. What a blow after all my ambitions and desires, but I was told that the unit was in the course of shifting to their war stations which were the H.Q. at Kota Tinggi and A.D.S. in the Mersing area. I never saw P.D. again and have not up to the time of writing, but perhaps, when our turn comes again, as I hope it will, I may have the opportunity of looking over the old stamping ground once again.

It must have been nearly midnight when I arrived at G.B.D. and all were asleep not having been notified of my coming; so with a minimum of delay I put up a stretcher in John Park's tent and went to bed.

What a place this was to land into; I disliked it the first day and was never satisfied until I got our which was not until early December. Having Jack Park as a tent mate made things more enjoyable for he was a great scout and I liked him a lot. I had never got along too well with Roy Maynard but we managed alright now. My job seemed to be nothing in particular and everything in general including work as an Adjutant, Q.M. and permanent orderly officer.

The whole camp in those days was under canvas and of course not to be compared in any way to the concrete buildings we had been housed in for months. It improved later with the construction of atap hutments, but these were not inhabited until after I had left the place.

Lt. Col. W. Jeater (NX34992) was in command of G.B.D. and it seemed as though the country had got him as he was recently out of hospital after having been relieved of his command of the 2/18 Bn., and from all accounts was lucky (or unlucky) to be still in the country. The depot was organized into a hospital and three training companies which were maintained by personnel either arriving in the country as reinforcements, and others coming in from 2 Convalescent Depot on their way back to their units after hospital. I believe there was always a howl from unit commands trying to get their personnel back but somehow or other our Bill hung on to them as long as possible.

The rest of the lads arrived on the 27th from the O.C.T.U. when we were all lined up for a pep talk by Jeater and then we were dispersed to the various companies in the depot.

Our mess was a lifeless affair, Jeater was the boss and he liked to show it in many ways. Evening meal was not until 8.30 and after it, practically everybody left the place because of him. He used to stay on most nights - liked to play liar dice - there being only a few of us who would play with him, and only then because there was little else to do. We occasionally did play cards mainly bridge, when the opportunity offered and these nights I enjoyed. Perhaps it was because I played with him that he offered me a few special jobs at first, but I realized that if I was once caught up in anything of a special nature, I might never get out of the place, and at that time I still had a keen desire to join my old unit where I knew everyone. Lt Col Hedley Summons had told me that he was doing his best in that regard so I was content with that. In those days there was quite a little juggling going on about my outcome, for the original order marching me direct to the 2/9th from the O.C.T.U. had been rescinded because it was contrary to establishments, but I finally did rejoin them at K.T. for a short time as a Q. Learner", but actually I was doing "A" work. When I was transferred to A.A.S.C. as a section Commander of 2/3Moter Ambulance Convoy (M.A.C.), I thought I was finished with the Ambulance, and it was not until the war was over for us, and we were P.O.W. in Changi that I was transferred back to 2/9th at Col. Summons and Col. Derham's request.

However, I'm jumping into the future. The jobs offered me by Col. Jeater were, firstly, to run and be chief instructor of a N.C.O.'s school of forty-five men. I got out of it after he had approached me twice about it. The next was a position of security officer for G.B.D., and although this would not have been a bad job, I stuck to my original plan, and once more got out of it. A Gas school was his next idea, but once more I talked him out of it, and a little later, when he started up all these various special schools, it was practically all O.C.T.U. boys he used.

Jim Rutherford went in as assistant to the assistant Adjutant (very flattering), Roger Cornforth as Amenities Officer, Roger McGee as Mortar officer, Bill Brown on Gas, and the remainder were given platoons of infantry for training in general work. Evidently we had a reputation, but I managed to remain at the Medical Group, and so keep away from the infantry, which game I definitely did not like. I fell for it later, however, when I was transferred over to "C" section, where every arm of the Army was handled other than infantry who went to A or B. Everybody had to learn infantry work and do weapon training, however, so I finally fell for a platoon of (Army Service Corps) A.S.C. and gunners, and helped train them in the use of weapons. Long route marches carrying all kinds of weapons and lying on one's belly pulling triggers leaves me cold, but having the responsibility of a body of men, I just had to do it.

A few changes were made in the Medical Section before I left it, and Roy Maynard was transferred to 10 A.G.H. and Major Harry Phillips took over from him. He was from the 2/4 C.C.S. in those days, later to transfer to 10 A.G.H. as a surgeon, and he I knew from back in 1932 in the militia. Reinforcements were arriving regularly and about mid Sept. Two M.O.'s arrived as reinforcements officers to the 10 A.G.H./ These were Joe Vincent from Frankston and John Oakeshott from Lismore N.S.W. Both were great fellows and although older than myself, we spent many a good days leave in

Singapore. John Park left us to rejoin his unit and took with him all the 2/9th personnel who were replaced by men from 2/4 CCS. At least we had a good four for bridge, but both the M.O.'s were keen to get to their unit, but neither of them ever did. Poor old John, a quiet man, who was particularly keen to get to an A.G.H., was finally taken into G.B.D. Staff as R.M.O., and he liked it not at all. Harry Phillips was the next to go, and a little later Joe Vincent was transferred to Admin. H.Q. where he worked under the Deputy Assistant Director Medical Services (D.A.D.M.S.), Lt. Col. Glyn White, just recently awarded the O.B.E. Glyn was doing a good job, and continued to do so through the scrap.

Things were changing at the Depot as far as the organisation of the place was concerned, and the atap buildings were going up apace. Nearly all the heavy work was done, true to custom here, by the Coolie Chinese women and the loads they carry is marvellous. They use the concrete mixers, carry the bricks and timber and work really hard, and all for 50¢ per day. Many have their infants strapped to their backs and it's really wicked from our standpoint.

By this time I had settled down to the work in C Company and there lived with a very decent crowd of young officers of various units such as Infantry, Sigs., Artillery and most were Lieutenants., and, therefore, not as standoffish and full of ego as most of the A.I.F. Field rankers seemed to be. We had many good nights, both in the mess - if Jeater was absent - and in our tents if he was present. On one particular night we brought the beer over from the mess and had the gramophone going until Alex Hutton's tongue got loose and from there on we had a royal time. He was a gunner from Queensland and a funnier man I've never struck, always good natured and could tell a story better than most. Chas. Chandler had a huge sack of small tinned goods which we got into and the mixture we ate and drank that night should have put us in hospital.

I was still doing very well with mail and parcels and when Babe's beautiful cakes arrived they were always a huge success. Mail days never ceased to be a joy and the way in which they were looked forward to would have repaid any of the good people who wrote to us if only they could have seen us on such days.

In November I had a mild break from the usual routine when I had a week's job, with five 3 ton trucks and twenty men, constructing a vehicle park at the Signals and Engineers camp. The screenings and sand had to be carted some fifteen miles from a quarry out off the Koti Tinggi road and at least I had a little running round as I kept an eye on both ends of the job. On other occasions, other than leave days, I managed to slip up to Kota Tinggi and see Lt Col H.F.Summons and the lads. The first time I went up it was like going home again as it was by invitation by the Sergeants' Mess to Jerry Veitch (also Graduated from O.C.T.U.) and myself. Arriving before dinner, (I had been able to borrow the C.O.'s car for the 25 mile trip) I enjoyed a look around their very comfortable camp which had been recently constructed for them. Mainly timber and atap and set in the rubber trees it was ideal. The messes were comfortable and "cheery" after our dead and alive affair at Base. I received many a cheery word from the boys, whom I had not seen for six months, and I really think a lot would have liked me back as, from what I could gather. Frank was not making much of a hand at it. Not that he does not try, but he is lamentably weak on a parade ground and the men don't really relish weakness in this respect.

Before going up to the Sergeants Mess for dinner I had a drink or two and a yarn in the Officers' Mess and renewed acquaintances. It was a surprise to me to see the alterations in the mess. Sergeants' promotions, etc. had added quite a few new faces, due mainly, I suppose, to the going of myself and Veitch and Jack Sandell. Among the new ones were Frank to A/RSM, Bert Swebbs to Staff Sergeant and Percy Jones, Bob Shelton, Hugh Arthur and Doug Merrie were all Corporals when I saw them last at Port Dickson. Having had a few drinks we went into a very nice dinner. They still had their Asiatic cook, and the usual little speeches took place, after which we adjourned to the ante room and yarned over old times and experiences. It was all very pleasant and I would have liked to stay a few days, but as I was 25 miles from home we had to leave fairly early.

This is a peculiar country as far as climate is concerned. We are supposed to have our rainy season and dry season, hot season and cool, but from experience over nearly two years now it's all bull, and rain comes thick and fast at any old time, and it is always hot and sticky. Early November, and whilst still at this Base Depot, I was in the middle of the worst storm I've ever encountered, and for the first time in my life had feelings more of fear than pleasure. We could see it coming like a black veil, and when the wind hit us I wondered if any tent would be left standing. This wind preceded the rain which, with thunder and lightning, I've never in all my life seen it's equal or anything like it. The lightning seemed to shoot along the ground and quite a few were struck and we had them in hospital for a while. The rain fell in sheets, and in no time the deep channels around our tents had no hope of coping with it. Putting everything up on beds, some half dozen of my fellow officers and myself stripped off to a pair of canvas shoes, and diving out into it, and armed with picks and shovels, we had the time of our lives trying to stem the young rivers flowing through our lines. One experience I'll never forget was as we were frantically digging, I was suddenly flung about three yards and flat in the mud by a flash of lightning evidently catching the shovels. I felt a bit dazed, and looking around, saw the rest in a similar position, and all had a most surprised look on their faces. We realized what had happened, and had a good laugh over it, but we must have looked funny, naked as we were, all sitting in the mud, which was soon washed off by the heavy rain. As a storm, it was a pippin and much as I enjoy a good thunder storm, I never want another like this one. True to form, though, it was spent in an hour, so we settled down to putting our house in order.

For leave, I could generally manage one day per week, and usually J.B. Oakeshott (Capt (MO) NX51618 - **Executed by the Japanese** Borneo 27 August 1945 (after the war was over)), Joe and myself, taxied into Singapore later in the afternoon where we nearly always did the same things, namely, a spot of shopping, on to Raffles for a drink, then to the Swimming Club, where we were honorary members, and stayed long enough to enjoy a good swim, drinks and chicken sandwiches on the edge of the pool, and later a first-class dinner in the upstairs dining room. It was generally 9 p.m. before we finished dinner, so after booking seats at a show, we would taxi into town and enjoy the air conditioned theatres, and, we hoped, the show as well. To finish off the day we invariably ran into Raffles Hotel for a drink before going home, which we would do about 12.30 a.m., by hiring an open tourer type of taxi, and so enjoy the cool night breeze on the 20 mile run back to Base Depot. They were most pleasant days, and looked forward to no end, although they usually set me back anything up to 50 or 60 dollars, depending whether I made many purchases.

On one occasion, I did a leave with Theo Lee and had my first studio portrait taken. Personally I was very satisfied with them (they must have flattered me surely), and sent them home to various members of the family, and, of course, one for my dear wife, who has always wanted one. It was here I also got the idea of the Xmas card with photo attached that I sent home.

I regretted never getting along to any of the Sultan's Sunday night parties, but somehow always seemed to miss. He was a gay old spark, liked the women and his drink, and was actually a D.O.M. His parties were lively affairs, and always had plenty of refreshment and usually ran pretty late.

We had a sweep on the Melbourne Cup, run by the mess for a dollar in, but although I drew a horse, I had no luck. On November 11th, the local ladies from Johore Bahru (J.B.) and Singapore came out and sold poppies to all and sundry who were all lined up in their own company areas. As they had lunch in the mess before starting out, I found myself detailed off to entertain one of them, a really live wire of a girl, which was just as well, for I felt quite strange talking to a female European, the first I had spoken to in ten months, and I had a horror of letting slip a wrong word or two, as one does get careless when living solely with men for a long period.

About this time leave was granted to officers who were due for it, and it amounted to seven days. Len Denney, a Queenslander from the 2/10 Field Artillery, was coming away with me, and our turn on the roster was from Sunday 7th December to 14th. I was looking forward to this no end, for I had had no leave, except daily leave, and to think of seven days at Frazer's Hill was most enticing. It was always to Frazer's Hill or Cameron Highlands that Europeans went for holidays, for they were the two resorts

especially made for the tourist, much the same as Mt. Buffalo is at home. Both places are in high altitudes, and therefore cool, and capable of growing vegetables, etc., on the same scale as could in Sydney. Camerons would be the better place, but it was at the other end of the range and meant travelling up as far as Ipoh instead of K.L., and so would take up extra time. We had wired for reservations, and a few days before we were due to leave, booked a seat and sleeper on the Sunday's train from J.B. I was holding about 60 dollars, so drew out a further \$200, and was prepared to spend the lot in a really good time. On the Saturday I packed, although the first rumours of leave being cancelled were abroad. What a blow this would be, for I was as excited as a schoolboy by this time. Sunday 7th dawned, and we were all ready for the train at 10.30 that night, when the disappointment of disappointments came in the fact that all leave had been cancelled, and those away were to be recalled. In a way it was as well we had not just got away for we would have paid out all initial costs in the first couple of days, so at least it cost us nothing. I felt like having a real good bender in the mess that night with the \$200, but it all found its way back into the pay-book a couple of days later.

The reason of course was obvious; the little yellow man had decided to play and in fact at 1.15 a.m. that night, Monday 8th December. He made his first attack up north at Kota Bahru. At 0430 hrs. he was dropping his first bombs on Singapore and Seletar which was the main airfield on the Island.

I was wild at having to miss this leave for I had been looking forward to it for a long time, but of course it was unavoidable and just another Sunday which I mentioned at the start of this story.

However, at last peace days were over and all the bluff and baloney put over about our wonderful defences etc. had failed to deter them. What a laugh they must have had, for I'm convinced that they knew more about this country than we knew ourselves. Gone now were all the days of wondering if and when and how he was to do things. The war was on for us although it was a few weeks later that we were to do our first actual war work and see some of the horrors of it.

A series of air-raid alarms were immediately put into use and were usually telephoned through to units who would put the alarm into effect as it were by the various gadgets they had at their disposal – the wailing sirens being the most used. According to the type of warning received, so the drill varied to the extent of being down in a slit trench. Personally I found the system rather useless for more often than not we would receive the warning after the planes had gone over. Anyway I could always hear the cows and that was plenty of time to run for a hole if necessary. I never used slit trenches myself, and was never in one until they started dropping them thick and fast on the Island here. At G.B.D. we had many tryouts both day and night and quite often they were genuine, for the course taken by their bombers on the way to Singapore seemed to be right over our heads.

To my great relief I was sent to the 2/9th a couple of days after the outbreak and it did please me well. The 2/2 M.A.C. were clearing their A.D.S. to 2/4 C.C.S. which was in the same area as the base depot, so I used a returning vehicle to transport me and my gear to Kota Tinggi (K.T.). I felt if there was a war on, then I would sooner be with a field unit than stick back at the base, which was just a dumping ground at best.

One could now take on a new lease of life, and it was a grand feeling I had when I arrived at K.T. Geoff Middleton was one of the first I saw, and he also had received his commission when he was promoted to take the place of Bill Dixon, the old Toc.O(Transport Officer)., who had been promoted to captain and transferred to A.A.S.C. I noticed a big change in the officers' mess, for there had been various promotions and transfers other than Bill Dixon's. Cpts. Cade, Searby and Cameron were now Majors, Maj. Webster had gone to take over 2 Convalescent Depot as Lt. Col. Marsh Henderson had gone home and Roy Maynard to 10 A.G.H. Capt. John Park was still on deck, and new captains in Frank Cahill, Colin Juttner, Frank Mills and Dave Hinder had been attached to fill the vacancies. Rosson, the dental captain, had been promoted Major, for some reason, and a new dental unit was now with the unit. Rosson, Max Street, S. Sgt., Cpl. Rossiter and Ford later transferred to 13 A.G.H. Ken Burnside, with his Mobile Bacterial Laboratories, was also in the area, and he also had been promoted to Major. Capt. Greville and his 2/5 Hygiene Section, were still with us.

Col. H.F. Summons had been trying to get me back as an adjutant, but the powers that be did not feel disposed to alter the establishment, so I actually came back as a "Q. learner," and Jerry Veitch went to 2/10 Field Ambulance in the same capacity. I did very little of the "Q" work, however, and carried on establishing myself as acting adjutant. Life was going to be good here, amenities were many, and the comfort of the quarters and mess were O.K., although I had to sleep near the phone each night as all messages were now coming through in code, the key to which, being secret, was held only by myself and John Cade who was now 2 I.C. The concealed addresses idea was a wash out, and on more than one occasion, generally after midnight, one would set up the key to decipher a long message only to find half way through that we were not included as an addressee, and so were not interested. We were seeing quite a few planes and even in those early days, it was more often theirs than ours, but had not been troubled.

The disposition of the unit at this time was, B Company at Mersing, a small detachment under John Park also at Mersing and the balance with H.Q. were at Kota Tinggi where an M.D.S. (Main Dressing Station) was well established just out of the town. Mersing area was fast being turned into a strong Perimeter defence to prevent an attack either by air or down the road from the north there being only one. The area occupied was considerable, and into it was put the 22 Aust. Infantry Brigade Group, less one battalion in reserve, 2/19th, and one company at Endau. A large A.D.S. (Advanced Dressing Station) was under construction by digging into the side of the hill, and "B" company were in at this time. Each R.M.O., of course, had his R.A.P. well covered and John Catchlove, R.M.O. 2/20th Bn. was a very good effort.

I had been back with the M.D.S. only a few days when the C.O. sent me up to Mersing to step up the work that "B" Coy were doing in the way of building a road into their area from the main road. Time was getting short, and this stretch of road was nowhere near ready, and it was the only means of entry or exit from the A.D.S., situated as it was in the rubber and just beyond some coolie lines, the buildings of which were in a clearing and therefore of no use to us as far as living in them was concerned. It was a nasty bit of ground, very flat and very wet and soft, which meant vehicles being bogged as soon as they left the narrow track road. This road had been made by the sappers of 2/10 Field Coy and was an absolute wash-out and was so bad and boggy when I got up there that it was practically unusable.

I was given control of all the men I needed, and the company transport of a 3 ton and various 30 cwts, which I had running continuously with loading parties, carting in first large brown rock, and later blue metal, and when this ran out, bricks from the demolitions being carried out in Mersing itself, where the R.A.E. were doing a good job, flattening the whole town to the ground. Thus I put in a full week working hard every day, and we completely relaid the road and ran a corduroy road off it to a good vehicle park under the heavy rubber, with a turn-table at the end of the road. It was a good road, cars could not travel up at the reasonable speed, and it stood up to its job until the unit moved out some time later, when the whole scheme at Mersing had to be dropped and the Bde. moved back, when we continually met trouble on the west coast.

During the job up there, one L/Cpl. Laurie Larson (maybe VX21370) a great strong fellow, had the misfortune to fall from the roof of one of the coolie buildings from which I had him taking iron. From the roof to the floor was about 10 feet and he landed very heavily. His spine was injured and it is doubtful even if he lives, whether he will walk again. I saw him some time later whilst he was at the 13 A.G.H., and he looked terrible; but at least he got away from here by hospital ship so I hope he is alright. It is bad luck to go out like that for after all one more or less expects a bullet or two and not an accident to lay one out.

During the week up at Mersing we had our moments receiving mail and even parcels including a cake or two, and as the town was being flattened (not a building was left standing when the Engineers had finished) we were getting any amount of goods out such as clothing, toilet requisites, beer by the bags full and even such things as money, jewellery, typewriters, papers, book etc. etc. A lot of this stuff

found its way back to Kota Tinggi as our supply vehicles went down. I never got to see the main defences, but the artillery were at least allowed to fire practice rounds and this they did for hours, and we would hear the rumble as the 25 pounders went over. On one occasion when I was down on the beach trying to find more metal for our road, I saw a shoot of our 75 mm guns mounted there as beach defence, and a role of stopping any landing parties from the sea, and for they would have made a mess if required, for they were using them for point blank work and their hitting power was tremendous, as their range was in the vicinity of 8000 yards.

About this time we were supplied with a Tommy Gun per company, and I carried out a few lectures and demonstrations with the one sent up to us, so, with the permission of Brigade Headquarters we fired practice rounds. It was here I first met Capts. J & M & H., as soldiers, I've never met a more useless batch of egotistical men. M. was really a good surgeon and did good work later, I believe. Generally speaking, though, my eyes were being opened, as far as a majority of these medicos were concerned, and later, when in contact and living with a few choice specimens of A.G.H. reinforcements, then I swore I would never associate myself with this branch of the service again. How vastly different they can be when there is no half guinea about. Thank goodness, we had some of the other type, and men such as Col. Derham, Glyn White, Col. White, A.G.H., and later Major Carl Gunther, who arrived here later in the piece as D.A.D of H., for these men did wonderful jobs, and with others had my full respect.

I was withdrawn to K.T. again, after a full week at the A.D.S., and once more attempted to settle down to the job. I took on the training of our guards and piquets ran through the sub-machine gun with them, and impressed on the men the necessity of proper challenge by night etc. and now that the war was definitely on, so their job was of more importance. Evidently they took me at my word, for so keen were they in their challenge, when the Orderly Officer did his rounds at night, that Fred Finch (WX11179) the Dental Officer almost refused to do his round for fear of being shot up which of course was ridiculous. I was only too pleased to see that they were keen, and a couple of nights later one of them put a couple of rounds into a native who was prowling around our vehicles and who refused to stop when challenged. His action was upheld by the civil authorities after the post mortem.

Well it was getting near Xmas the officers mess was all teed up for a slap up dinner including poultry which had been sent from Australia and was being kept in cold storage, and I was looking forward to the day with pleasure and anticipation. Dec. 20 and 21 saw the arrival of many parcels and about sixteen letters and cards for me and great was my joy, although for some reason or other they were the last I received and to this day I have never received parcels from Avon, Llew, Dot Taylor and mother which I knew must have been on the way. Parcels from my never failing wife and also from her family, Lesley, Shirl were some I did get however so, I did rather well, and I was looking forward more than ever to Xmas Day, and I had also received the hamper from the A.C.F.

On the morning of Dec. 23 the C.O. came in to me with the news that another shift was ordered for me, and I was to report to Lt Col Glyn White at Base in Johore Bahru at 2 p.m. that day taking all my gear for I would not be back. It was one of the worst set -backs I had received and would have given pounds to get out of it. After waiting all these months to get back to my unit, and then only remaining for so short a period, to say nothing of the Xmas festivities made me feel very disappointed.

Saying my adieus after lunch I travelled by utility to J.B. and there learned from Glyn that I had to transfer to Malacca, there to take over a section of the 2/3 M.A.C. (Motor Ambulance Convoy) stationed there as the Lieut. who had been running it had drunk himself silly and was in hospital, and so had been relieved of his job. This section, "C" section, was detached from the 2/3 M.A.C., who were further north, working under Command of 3 Indian Corps, and directly responsible to Administration H.Q. I was to command the show which was, as I found out later, a decent little unit in which I was the only officer and had under me 52 O.R's, 25 motor ambulances, 6 motor cycles. I got to like the job very much for I was more or less my own boss and made my own decisions in most cases, and his is a whole lot better than being messed about by various others of superior rank, but not necessarily superior in military lore.

In conversation with Colonel Glyn White, he told me I was the only one he could think of for the job, although I had done nothing in that line before and it meant my being transferred to A.A.S.C. (Australian Army Service Corps) as a combatant. However, this had already been arranged and I went through the war as an A.A.S.C. officer and not A.A.M.C. to which I had been trained for many years. We had a long yarn during which he gave me all the information he could and also quite a few instructions re reports and correspondence once I got there. A sleeper had been booked for me on the train that night, so, as I had plenty of time, I walked around G.B.D., which was in the same area, having a yarn with people I knew, including J.B. Oakeshott, who was R.M.O. and not liking it a bit.

Dinner I had at Adm. H.Q. and a nice mess they had too with Asiatic cooks. Joe Vincent was there of course and I yarned with him until time to leave to catch the train at 11 p.m. I went in a big car and once aboard the train, which was late, I had a couple of whiskies and went to bed for, with the nearly blacked-out conditions, it was a dreary looking train. The sleeping compartment was a two berth affair and a British civilian was already in. As it turned out, he was also going to Malacca, so he left the train with me at Tampin from which the Branch line to Malacca runs. More often than not there is no train running, so as I had an ambulance in to pick me up was able to give him a lift. It was still quite early in the morning, and after dropping my guest we drove to my new quarters, met Lieut. Jim Kelleher of 10 A.G.H. who had been looking after the section awaiting my arrival. As I was to mess at the hospital and it was only quarter of a mile away, he took me up and we had breakfast in their really first-class mess.

I enjoyed the breakfast and had a long yarn with Kelleher who was able to give me a lot of information in regard to the work in which the section was then engaged. Mainly the work was the clearing of patients from hospital to 2 Con. Depot, which was nicely situated practically on the beach the other end of Malacca, and from Con. Depot to train either at Malacca or Tampin. These latter moves were largely convoys of anything up to 20 vehicles and to catch the train with them we always had to be up at 4.30 a.m. and have breakfast when we returned, which was usually about 8 a.m. The Con. Depot were always very good indeed the way they always had their men all teed up and ready to load, the direct opposite to the A.G.H. where one would always be a great deal longer chasing up the patients one was to transport.

After our talk, he showed me over my unit area and quarters, and introduced to the sergeants. Actually I was pleased with everything as the area was completely enclosed by a tall iron fence and had a garage to hold 16 vehicles, workshops, full store, other rooms for stores, sleeping huts for the men, a small NAAFI canteen, mess and kitchen, and three small 2 room houses of concrete each with a shower room and lavatory, one of which I used for an office for myself, and the other for the transport Sergeant and Medical Sgt. – both good men. The lean-to's were there, one of these to house the motor cycles and the other my little car, an Austin 8, to which I was to become very attached, for although I used it hardly at all or personal trips, I still covered about 8,000 miles in it during the seven or eight weeks to the capitulation. As a matter of fact, that car finished its career in a blaze of fire, if not glory, for we stopped a shell, at least the car did, for I had just left it thank goodness, and it was burnt completely out including practically everything – all of my personal belongings, suitcase, kit bags and clothes. However, that is another story.

It was Wednesday 24th the day I arrived, and I was surprised to hear that, being a Wednesday, it was formal mess night which meant jackets and ties. I had to go right to the bottom of my trunk to get them as I had placed them there long before never expecting to be dressing for dinner again until the Japs had gone. I met many officers that night, a lot I knew, but had not met Col. Teddy White the C.O., and of course many others.

Xmas dinner the next day was a grand success, for all ranks, excluding the nurses, sat down to a huge dinner in a large hall and we had plenty of pork, ham, beer, nuts, fruit cakes, and more beer. Many were the speeches, but the lads were a little merry and being a long way from the head of the table could not hear very much. Met once again the sergeants and W.O.'s, including Osborne and Gus

Mayberry from the Queen Mary. Os was all set for a trip home as he had never been fit in this country. After dinner I suddenly thought of Avon's friend Dot Paske, who was matron here, so thought it a good time to say 'Hullo' to her. Avon had suggested I do so early and I'm very glad I did for I found her a most charming person and one whom I, like countless others, held in deepest respect. A wonderful personality and always very well spoken of by her girls, the doctors and the patients. We had a great yarn and I was to see more of her later on, before and during their evacuation of Malacca.

My lads had arranged their own dinner for 1700 hours in our own lines and had asked me to be present. They turned on a wonderful show, a beautiful meal of all the usual things, and in the speeches later made me welcome to the unit. With two Xmas dinners under my belt I think I did exceptionally well on my first full day with a new show, and then with Xmas day over, I settled down to putting the section into better shape. It had been badly managed and nothing was being done in the way of war diary, returns, etc., and stores, supplies, clothing and necessaries were also wanted. In fact they were hardly recognized at H.Q. unit until I went down and asked for everything I wanted, and by the time I left was on the distribution list of all the various departments.

The lads I had were not a bad lot, just the usual one or two trouble makers who were not too bad after my first talk to them. The senior N.C.O., a Sgt. Reid, was a particular rat, not tolerated by the men, or by myself after 12 hours, so within the first week I had outed him to the H.Q. of his unit then at Ipoh.

Things ran along very smoothly then and at that time I had seven vehicles at Kluang, servicing the 2/4 C.C.S. in the Mekabol Estate, and one or two always with the Con. Depot, and a similar number up at the A.G.H. One car had been written off due to it going off the road and into the river just prior to my arriving there, so that I had 24 cars in various places to be looked after. So one day with Norm Gray (NX66410) my batman driver, we ran down to Kluang so that I could get a line up on the work being done down there. It was a long run from Malacca, 132 miles, but we were to get quite used to this run in the New Year for we travelled that distance and more each day as we shifted the Con. Depot to Batu Bahat, and later the 10 A.G.H. to Kluang and Tampoi. During all these trips the lads did a great job and I think they enjoyed the long runs in spite of the fact that in most cases, we were up at 4.30 or 5 a.m. and were lucky if we arrived back by 9 p.m. We usually made Batu Bahat by lunch time being 140 miles, so we seldom had more than an hour's rest. I enjoyed the runs myself, the convoy work of the men was very good and I always used 2 or 3 Don R's who always kept me posted with the rear of the convoy which I could seldom see owing to the dispersal of the vehicles. During these days we saw quite a bit of Jap. Aircraft and we watched them pretty closely for a while but seldom had cause for worry although it was about this time that Tampin and Segamet received their first few bombs. Our almost daily trips to the South had had, of necessity, to be made via Jasin, Tangkak, Segamet, Labis, Yong Peng to Ayer Hitham, where we branched one way for Kluang to the left, Tampoi straight on, and Batu Bahat to the right. If we had been able to use the ferries at Muar and Batu Bahat, we could have cut down the distance by half, but other than one or two times when I was in a hurry, and on my own, I never used this way. The roads were very good, and we could do an average m.p.h. 40 with safety in a lot of places, and some of the scenery, especially between Malacca and Segamet, was very pretty. Of course, there were always the rubber trees in their millions, but we were well used to the endless orderly planted rows.

On our return trips it was always a race against the light to make Jasin before dark, for the last five miles before reaching Jasin the road is very narrow and winding, and to drive through with only black-out lights, and have the responsibility of the convoy, was something I did not like very much, for a lot of this area is under water, and planted in padi, and to miss the road meant possibly the loss of a car.

Things were starting to move a bit now. It was the first week of the New Year (1942), the Con. Depot was gone, and the A.G.H. had started their move, for the Japs were travelling fairly quickly. A batch of nurses were sent down to 13 A.G.H., and they were followed from time to time by doctors and

more of the staff and patients, and by Saturday the 10th, the move was completed, and I followed them out with my section, we being the last unit out of Malacca.

The A.G.H. had worked hard, using every vehicle they could, including impressed trucks and cars. I did most of the shifting of the patients who went to 13 A.G.H., and on the last day of the functioning of the 10 A.G.H., I had the balance of the sisters and the matron in a mixed convoy of patients to Con. Depot and Tampoi. The nurses were put in at the Menkabol Estate, and as it was just on dark when we arrived, I told the drivers to stay at their respective destinations for the night, sooner than drive back under black-out conditions the 150 miles.

Dot Paske was greatly taken with my little car, and asked for a ride in it on the way down, so Norm, with a large blush, took his place among an ambulance full of girls and the matron rode with me until we reached Segamet, where we made a brief halt at the rest house. The girls were a darn nuisance actually, for on every ten minute halt on the way down, they would go along the road, and expect to be picked up further along. However, they and the lads had a lot of fun that day, for the girls looked on it as a day out or holiday, and they all enjoyed the run down.

On the Thursday morning we returned to Malacca, picking up the rest of the convoy at Ayer Hitham at 0830 hrs, and that night after mess I put my foot down a rather deep narrow drain or gutter that runs round the road, and received rather a bad sprain. I stayed in a bed at the hospital that night and the next, and it was just my luck to have no pretty nurse to dress it. However, our work at Malacca was finished, and I was only awaiting orders to move, so the laying up for a day or two did not matter much.

Anticipating the move, I had my transport sergeant getting things fixed up and loading our 30cwt wioth all surplus stoes and kitchen gear. We were always very mobile, and after loading the 30cwt, at Kluang, we were even more so, as all gear that could be carried in the ambulance boxes I issued, and left the rest. I hated to leave Malacca for I got to like the town very much in the three short weeks there, although I had had very little time actually to do much in the way of pleasure. On one occasion Jim Kelleher and I took two of the girls into town for a dance and a drink, but this sort of night was hardly worthwhile for 10.30 was their lights-out, and they had to be in. New Year's Eve must get a mention, for we really had a grand night, commencing as it did with a fine cocktail party in the mess at 5 p.m., to which the matron and the sisters were invited. A few of the girls being particularly live sparks commenced to enjoy themselves, and as the drinks were many, and the savories, etc., also very tasty and in plenty, nobody thought of stopping for dinner at 8 p.m., and so it continued on. A few drifted away, and as the "lights-out" had more or less gone by the board for the night, I suggested to Sister Singleton (VX48842), with whom I had scratched up an acquaintance, that, as I had my car there, we might go in search of some fun elsewhere. The town, of course, was blacked out, so we ran out of town to Palm Beach, where a dance and supper house used to run pre-war. It was a perfect night, and I wished very much that night that it was Moira with me in the little bus. Arriving at Palm Beach and driving in, it looked as though the house was closed, and we were about to drive out again when a stream of cars drove up, and who should get out but the rest of the gang we had left at the mess. We interviewed the proprietor, who opened up, and although could not supply much in the way of food, soon had some "boys" in to run the bar, and the wireless-gramophone to which we danced.

We soon got going and had a lot of fun, and were able to cool off out on the lawns were small tables and chairs were available at which to have our drinks. It was as near perfect as one could wish for so far away from home. The moon was up, the lawns were bordered by some of the tallest coco-palms I have seen, and to add to this, we could hear the almost still waters of the Straits gently lapping on the beach which was only a matter of yards away. I think I danced with most, and really enjoyed a couple I had with Dot Paske, who, to add to other talents, was a beautiful dancer. A great night, but was still able to drive the "Moira Helen" home again about 1 a.m.

On the Friday, Col. Maxwell, who was commandant of Malacca area, incidentally an Australian, who had been living in Malaya for some years, and a brother of Brig. Maxwell, 27 Aust. Inf. Bde., came

up to see me re the transport of official papers, etc., out of Malacca. These I took with me the following morning, Saturday 10th, when, having received orders to move back to Kluang, the batman-driver brought the car up to the hospital, where I could hobble out with the aid of a stick and climb aboard.

This was my farewell to Malacca, and we had an uneventful trip down, and apparently only just in time, for, as I found out later, from an Ordnance W.O. who was there a couple of days longer, on Sunday 11th, no less than three big bombs had been dropped directly on the buildings of our little camp in Mata Katching Road, and made a terrible mess, so I was thankful we had got away in time, for it is certain that our casualties would have been very heavy, both in men and vehicles. However, we were not there, and that's the main thing in these wars I have found, i.e. not to be where the bombs and shells are landing.

We were now back in the Menkabol Estate and messing now with 2/4 C.C.S., clearing them back to 13 A.G.H., and 10 A.G.H., who had re-established back on the Island or were establishing. The nurses I had convoyed down were still in the Estate as were a number of their Officers. My ankle was getting pretty right again although still swollen, so I enjoyed the let up which we had over the next few days. One or two other 2nd and 3rd line units were also in the vicinity including a work shop, so was able to have my vehicle serviced, also my ear? was overhauled. Air raids were common for we were only a short distance from the Kluang airdrome where we had a few Brewster Buffaloes, not that they were much good against the superior Jap planes. True to form though they were soon bombed out and I withdrew the vehicle I had stationed there. I now had 23 cars, having lost one when it turned over on return from Johore Baru to Malacca some days before, and had all these at Kluang with the exception of two operating from the Con. Depot to A.G.H. On getting the car back I decided to spend a day by running to Kluang then on to Jemaluang where I'd heard John Park was with his detachment, having taken over the 2/10 Field Ambulance then on to Kota Tinggi to see Colonel H.F.Summons and having had lunch there to run on to Johore to see Glyn White about various matters.

It would be a long trip and Norm had the car running O.K. but I never did the trip for at 10 p.m. that night I was ordered to get my section together and move to Segamet as they were expecting heavy casualties through the 2/10 that night or the next, namely Sat. or Sun. 17th, 18th, by this time the rest of the 2/3 M.A.C. had come back to Kluang less a section under Bob Weller who was still working with an Indian Fd. Amb. round Muar way. This was the first time I had seen the rest of the show as they had been under 3 Corps until this time. They had come back from the north loaded with everything from extra motor cars, trucks, food and drinks etc., and a very talkative lot they were the heroes of the northern show, and I think most of the section were glad to get away from them after a couple of days.

Having received instructions re Segamet, I left all the heavy gear with H.Q. M.A.C. and now completely mobile we pulled out in convoy to travel the 65 miles soon after midnight. I had been up to Segamet to contact Col. Sheppard two days earlier so knew where to find him. He had moved up with 27 Bde. a week or so earlier with a role to clear the forward battalions when they met the Japs. A good ambush had been arranged by the 2/30 Bn at Gemas area and it was there that the Australians, as a force first made contact, and though the ambush was fairly successful the Japs arrived two days earlier than expected, and our lads went into action on the 14th-15th Jan. and bagged about 800 killed in their first show. Unfortunately, our communications from artillery in rear to forward company at bridge were cut, and the gunners did not go into action as planned, and so we lost the chance of probably cleaning up a lot more at that first ambush.

It was on Sunday 15th they expected a large number of casualties, as they dropped back nearer Segamet, which was the reason for my hurried trip with the section to that area, and within a few hours of arrival we were seeing our first war wounded, some bad, some not so bad. I was given two more cars to make up my number of vehicles, and early on the morning we arrived there, I reconnoitered the road some miles to the rear to Labis, and established a car post on the Line of

Communication (L. of C.), where I kept ten cars to replace the 15 up forward, as they moved back with patients. The cars leaving on the evacuation back to Kluang reported into car post, and another vehicle would come forward to replace it. When the vehicle had discharged its load, it would return to the car post, and await its turn to go forward again. Thus I had a complete shuttle system working, and a practice I maintained throughout the operations. It invariably worked well, although on one or two occasions when the casualties were very heavy, I had to keep vehicles up all the time and so more or less suspend the shuttle system for the time being.

As the troops were dropping back toward us the work got heavier, and we were evacuating 24 hours per day, and I was very pleased with the work my men were doing. They were getting plenty of work, as each trip meant 120 miles, and they never seemed to tire. It meant for me being up and down at all hours day and night, but soon got used to it, for it was the same for all nights until the end. Aerial activity became increasingly severe, although on one or two occasions we actually saw a couple of our own, but these times were, I'm sorry to say, few and far between. The rattle of the Beaufors and other A/a fire, plus the scream and explosions of the bombs and machine gun fire soon became part of the programme, and the lads soon found out that it did not pay to be far from a trench depression when these bombers came over.

Many were the stories brought in by the wounded of experiences seen and felt, and one of the first lads I saw was George Makisack, a Lieut. I shared a tent with at G.B.D., and who was with his unit 4 Anti Tank. He had a minor wound in the arm and face, but was quite happy and excited. Another lad had a lucky escape when a bullet pierced his tin hat, and parted his hair beautifully down the middle, but one of the best was the lad who was treated for lip laceration, and burnt tongue, received when he caught a Jap bullet in his mouth. Evidently it was practically spent, for he spat it out again, and all he suffered was the above, plus two chipped teeth. These were typical of the things that happened all through, and I daresay every man had at least one experience he placed above all others.

Well the Japs were coming on in their superior numbers and aircraft, and having also free sea movement, were using this to advantage all the way down the west coast by running their troops in place after place and always in the rear of our thin line. Having once forced us to retreat to save being cut off, in would go another landing further down and cause us to drop back again. This went on down the coast until the end and we could not prevent them apparently. A line was established from Muar to Gemas with only one British Bde. on the coast or right flank, 11 Indian Div. in the centre, and the 27 Aust. Inf. Bde. plus the 19 Bn. brought over in a hurry from the 22 Bde. front at Mersing, on the right. The main road south, which was about the only one, had most of the fighting and as the road ran through Segamet shortly after Gemas, it was not long before we were sent packing and I moved back to Labis with the 2/10 when they were ordered to do so. From then on our moves were almost daily affairs, for either something was wrong with our tactics or we were unable to check their infiltrating, for they seemed to gain momentum as they came. To keep our line intact was essential, and as their sea borne troops were continually coming in to the south there was only one thing to do; and that was to retire. Our boys were doing a magnificent job up front and the Jap casualties were very heavy. The 2/19 Bn. made themselves during these days and suffered severe losses when one day they were cut off.

We established at Labis, and once more I set up the shuttle system moving the car post back only about 2 m this time, and spent a little time carrying out reconnaissance still further back. We remained at Labis not many days and once more had to move. We never saw a plane of our own these days, they were a complete washout and the Japs were having it all their own way in the air; the morale effect as well as the material must have been as great for their men as it was injurious to ours. I'm certain that if only we could have seen one of our planes, it would have heartened the men no end, and would have definitely given them some feeling of security.

From Labis we once more established some ten miles back in the Johore-Labses palm oil estate "Socfin", which was a tremendous place, over a million palms, which, in normal circumstances, employed a small colony which necessitated their having a complete little hospital of their own. It

was into these buildings Colonel Max Shepherd put his M.D.S.(Main Dressing Station), so I had plenty of cover and dispersion for my vehicles, all of which I had with me at this stage.

Water and facilities here were in plenty, so I removed my clothes for the first time in days, had a shave and instead of sleeping in the front seat (she had two bucket seats) of the car, as I had been, I had Norm put up the stretcher and mosquito net, and after a shower and a quiet sing-song and a yarn with my men, I went to bed, hoping for a good night's rest. I was not to get it, however, for I had hardly got to sleep when I was hauled out to a conference with the C.O. of the Ambulances, who had received instructions from Bde. H.Q. to be ready to move by 2 a.m. Quite a short stay in this very nice spot, I thought, but such was life. Our move this time was to be a big one back to Kluang, in fact, and all transport forward was brigaded that night and convoyed back before dawn. What a haul our friends could have got that night with a little road bombing.

If it is at all possible to enjoy oneself at a war, then I was enjoying myself these days. Everything was beautifully unexpected these days. I never knew where we would be each night, where the next meal would be, or what was around the corner, everything was so "exciting", and having once worked up to the pitch at which we were all now living, it was definitely a good life. We were all on suppressive quinine these days, and it must have done a power of good, for it was nearly impossible to use a net, yet our malaria figures were not very high. To add to my "joy", everything was sailing along nicely with the section, every man doing a great job, and worries about movement were practically nil, for I was so completely mobile; all spare personnel were allotted a car, and they, with the driver, always slept in their vehicles, so that at any minute, day or night, all I had to do was wake the drivers, who then only had to get into the front seat, and we would be gone, stock and barrel within a few minutes.

Norm Gray was invaluable to me, and worked well, always having the car and my belongings ready whenever we had to make quick moves. I think we both got a fright the day before, in the back of the "Socfin" estate when, well out to the rear of it in the bus, we rounded a corner of the track we were on, and there about 20 or 30 yards ahead of us were six strange uniforms, and from that distance the faces were definitely Asiatic. I instantly pulled my .45, and Norm his rifle, which was always in clips between the two front seats. Lord knows what I had in mind, but it was too late to stop, so was prepared for anything, but on getting closer, I saw a big fat smile, and to my relief it was not Japanese, so I pulled up, and it turned out they were a few of the Dutch troops from Java, of which I had heard there was a small number of jungle fighters working here.

An experience I had about this area was a day or so earlier. Norm and I had been back along the road some miles doing further reconnaissance should it be necessary to move (this, of course, before we were brigaded back), and on return he spotted a plane coming up behind, but fairly high. I stopped and was ready to go for the ditch should I hear that ominous scream, but he passed over, so getting Norm in again, he had dived for the ditch as he always did, we started on again watching the plane. Shortly after passing us I saw him dive down and level out, and the climb again. I speeded up, as it looked as though he had done something on that dive down, and when we came to the place a couple of moments later, we could see where he had straddled the road with bombs and hit it only on the edge in one place in six bombs. Whether he was having a shot at any road transport, I know not, but when I saw the size of the holes and ground littered with huge pieces of jagged edged and razor sharp bomb splinters, I was glad I had been that mile or two back and not in the act of passing this particular spot. But definitely, it was these things and the unexpected happening all the time that made life good for me, and I don't mean by this that I am any hero, because I wasn't, and I'm sure it was only the tension of the moments in which we lived that made it seem so.

The cause for our big move back was on account of the success of the Jap at Muar and Batu Bahat. Col. Webster and his Con. Depot had been shifted back in time, and the rate the Jap was advancing on Yong Peng would have cut off the whole of the forces north of Y.P. had we not been pulled out. In fact, the 2/19th, who were the rear Battalion, were cut off, and attacks by the 29th and 30th Bns. Driving in to clear them, was only partly successful. I had had to send a sub-section of my cars to the 198th Indian Field Ambulance at Yong Peng, and I was a bit anxious for them, but they came back and were

once more at the Menkabol estate, and the 2/4 C.C.S. were moving out to establish themselves about the 23 mile post, Johore-Bahru-Ayer Hitham road.

The 2/10 Field Ambulance was taking over their spot helped by a light section of the C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Station) who had been left to operate until their show was established. All other units had left the estate including the H.Q. 2/3 M.A.C. who had gone back to a spot near the C.C.S. and I was beginning to feel at home in this place having been in and out of it so often. I was now clearing back to the C.C.S. and A.G.H. with British and Australians, and to 5 Indian C.C.S. with Indian patients. We were seeing any amount of work these days and all classes of men of all colours and creeds not excluding a few Japanese on occasions; but why they sent these back I do not know. One lot I know were the victims of a provost, who, when shot in both thighs off his motor cycle by these Japs, retained his tommy-gun and got two of them and wounded a third who got away. I had a good look at these Japs and the holes in them were typical of the .45 calibre sub-machine gun. One was an officer, spoke good English and was very grateful for water which he asked for before he died. I guess I'm hardly cut out for this war work, for I always had the same feeling on seeing the dead no matter who they were; the utter uselessness of men killing one another because some stupid fanatical cow started something that please God he can never finish. On one occasion I forced myself to stay and watch an operation necessitating the amputation of an arm among other things and this was the first time I had been able to do so in all my years with medical units.

From this point on, due mainly to our shortened L-of C., I seldom used the shuttle system, preferring when possible, and dispersion and cover was available, to have all the vehicles together as we could in this estate. We stayed here some days. Most days we were well in the forward areas trying to get men out. I had definite orders not to operate forward of M.D.S. but when the pressure was on and I had vehicles to spare it seemed wrong not to use them and the actual fighting was not far in front of us these days. We always seemed to be only one jump in front of the Jap.

One day before we had to move on from Kluang I was in the township, which was fast being evacuated, and in a small cold storage room there I was able to pick up all the fresh butter, game, poultry, meats and fish I wanted to feed every man in the section and then some. Even in those times one could see no apparent alarm in some of these Malays and Indians and these were possibly only a few of the multitudinous 5th column in this lousy country.

I cannot recall now how long we were operating from Menkabol, but while we were there the usual work went on, interspersed with plenty of air alarms, but although they knew we were there, we were never troubled, but of course one never knew at the time whether we were going to stop anything or not. All outward appearances the Jap had shown to date made it appear that he was respecting the Red Cross, and one time I know of, his planes actually levelled off over some of my vehicles on the road, and went on machine gunning vehicles in front somewhere. On only one occasion that I can recall that we received a deliberate attack was on a single vehicle which by good luck or good fortune was empty of patients, for the back was riddled and the roof, and the driver miraculously unhurt.

We left Kluang and moved out through Rengam to the 51 mile post Johore Baru – Ayer Hitam road, and there we were well forward, so far in fact that rather than risk all vehicles in one place, I resorted to the shuttle system and after picking a spot for them some 5 miles back, I left 2 Corporals with 10 vehicles and kept 15 up with me. It was a hot spot and there was plenty of activity, we even had the big guns behind us, and the infantry even were in our park. They were relief men of 2 Bns., 5th and 6th Norfolks, and it was not hard to see that they had not been in the country long. They looked very pale and uncomfortable, and in fact they had only landed a few days before and were shot straight into the line. I didn't like the way the Indians were clearing out, but they were always first to run, as I took no notice. It was here that we picked up a lot of 2/19th lads who had split up in small parties and made their way back after being cut off. They looked terrible, whiskers over a fortnight old, no boots or socks in a lot of cases, old wounds still with the original shell dressing, and all were matted of hair and caked with mud, where they had had to crawl and swim. In spite of their very bad time, it did one good to see the spirit of them, their tails, after a hot drink and cigarettes, were well up, and I felt

definitely proud to be part of the same force as some of these fellows. They deserved anything they may ever get for their job in this losing campaign. I made vehicles available and we took them right back to base, in spite of the fact that we were very busy. I did not sleep or have a wash for two nights, and the two cars I had left at Kluang to help out the rear party turned up, just when I was up against it for vehicles, and was thinking of sending the Dispatch Rider (D.R.) back to H.Q. for more Ambulance cars. However, came a lull, and we were ordered back once more, this time to 41¼ mile post.

These moves were done at night, and it was not always easy to get vehicles into the rubber without lights. On this particular move, we were all worn out after the last few days. I succeeded in telling the 2nd I/C of the 2/10 Field Ambulance what I thought of him, his boss, and his unit, although the unit was doing a wonderful job. I had wanted to leave a sub-section at the 51 mile post. Boy, was I wild, I almost refused him the cars, and take the consequences, but that would not help the patients, so I let my tongue go a little. Poor old Major Rayson nearly fell off his seat, but recovered himself, to say I could not talk to him like that, so I had a damn good try instead. I hated to rouse the men again, but I sent a Corporal and his section back and then tried to get some sleep.

I was not very successful however, for they sent me up more vehicles which had to be fitted in and two messages for me during the remainder of the night did not tend to let me sleep too soundly.

We were soon on the move again, and this time we dropped back to about 20 m. from Johore Bahru, the road which we have travelled over had received a few bombs and the Indian sappers were very busy laying road blocks and preparing demolitions. We had now started to advertise our position, i.e. the M.O.S. of the ambulances, by laying out on open ground in the vicinity a Red Cross. We actually stayed in this place for some days and although news of show outside our own particular job was practically nil, I was hoping all the time now that the line way be established and so hold these Japs. It seemed feasible to me, seeing we were all dropping back to the narrower base of the mainland, but of course they still had the sea and we never a plane of own, worse luck. It would have bucked the men no end at this stage. The boys of my show and the Ambulance were doing excellent work these days, as were the M.O's and one Dick Parker in particular worked long hours day and night in the M.O.S.

On one night whilst here, I saw and had a quick talk with Tom Smith who was with 2/15 Field Regiment and was going back with malaria. He seemed very pleased to see me, and asked Moira, etc., and what news I had of home, but the latter was beyond me, as I had received nothing in line since leaving Kota Tinggi? to go to Malacca. I would have given pounds around this time to have even a few of the letters that must have been around somewhere.

I had, on two or three occasions, whilst at this point, to run back to J.B. to see about matters of evacuation etc. so one day, after hearing that the 2/9 Field Ambulance were only eight miles up the K.T. road, I ran up to say hello and see how they were faring. They all seemed quite happy; after all had had very little of the fighting on their side compared to the west coast who had been continually under fire and what is worse without relief since 14 January (1942); and it was now nearing the end of the month. Our trucks were busy these days carting back to Singapore, thousands of cases of tinned foods ? the Johore factories, and every time I passed the place I pulled in and put on a couple of cases for the boys. We ate tinned pineapple till we looked like it these days and I for one enjoyed it. I lost another car about this time when another car ran into him on his return from a trip.

The main fighting was this side of Ayer Hitam, but we never knew just how things were in any other part of the country than our own immediate vicinity and it was nearing the end of January. We were down as far as the 16 m stone and from there we received orders to move back to the Island, all troops to be across the causeway by midnight Jan. 31st. This was certainly the beginning of the end and the move was one I never expected, for surely, I thought a stand would be made from Johore Bahru. However it was not to be and I contacted the H.Q. 2/3 M.A.C. and reported back to them on reaching the Island. On the night of Jan. 30 therefore I bought my section down and across the causeway so saying goodbye to the mainland for some time at any rate.

The other two sections of the M.A.C. were already back and were established at the 9/8 mile post from Singapore, at a place called Bukit Panjang, and in the rubber just off the Bukit Timor Rd. We could not go very much farther now; only nine miles of land left, and then -- what? Within a small area around the town we now had beside ourselves, 2/2 M.A.C., 2/9 Field Ambulance., 2/10 Field Ambulance, 2/4 C.C.S., the 9th having come down the east coast road with 22 Bde.

The only vehicles I now had out were five with the 2/10 and these I changed about thus giving the men as much rest as possible which all deserved and we actually did have a good rest for this arrangement went on until Sunday 8th Feb. Our forward troops had gone into defensive positions on the Island overlooking the Johore Straits, and the causeway had been blown up. The 22 Bde. had been given the task on the left of the causeway and the 27 Bde. with whom I had been all along were on the right. Their planes were, constantly over us as they had no opposition, and field and heavy artillery shells were coming and going continually. The let up from work and continual moves was greatly appreciated, and during the eight days I had plenty of time for everything, and spent a lot of time writing, especially to Moira, for it was clear that we were getting near the end, and the Lord only knew how things would be in a few days. I received only one letter here, my first for weeks, so goodness knows where they all went to, and I would have given pounds for them these days.

We employed natives to dig holes for us to shelter in from the planes, and Bob Weller and I had our spot marked out, but because the boongs wanted too much money, we went without for a few days, and sheltered in another occupied by Major Dick (NX70970), Ken Parsons, Des Brennan (NX71022) and Hamilton (NX70505). In not having this hole dug, we undoubtedly saved our lives, for on Sunday 8th, that very spot received a direct hit by a 1000 lb. bomb, and left a hole in which we could have buried easily eight cars, and if we had gone on with our scheme, we would certainly have been in it when that particular bomb arrived, and it is certain also that we would have been blown into very small pieces.

During these days, though, I did a little running about with a daily run up to the 2/10th to get a report from the vehicles there, also to renew acquaintance with 2/9th and hear their stories, and on two or three occasions went with Robert Weller to Singapore and to 13th A.G.H. to see a few sisters we knew who, I am sorry to say, were still with us. They should have been evacuated home long before this, but they were a wonderful log of girls, no praise can be too high for them, and even when the last were put on the boat only three days before the capitulation, they tried all they knew to be allowed to remain. Goodness knows, they were needed, for by that time things were very sticky and every hospital, army and civilian, was overcrowded, but it was horrible to think of the position we were slowly being pushed into, and it was no place for a woman, no matter what her calling. I also ran out to see Jack (John) Park (referred to earlier), who had an A.D.S. well forward near the Tengah aerodrome, now untenable. We made arrangements that if he could get away for a day, we would use my car and run into town for a dinner, but it never eventuated, for within a couple of days, the Japs crossed to the island, and poor old John lost his life with Harold Ball, young Woodman, and another, a reinforcement to the ambulance who had only just arrived. I did not know of this until a lot later, and it was sad news, for a better man one could not wish to meet. He was always so popular, and a number of people, other than his family, will mourn his loss when they hear. I believe Hedley Summons later recommended him for a V.C., for the great job he was actually on at the time, which was shortly after Feb. 8th.

February 8th, a Sunday, and one I will never forget, for by all laws of life we in the 2 M.A.C. should nearly all have been killed, but although we lost any amount of vehicles, our casualties were only two wounded and a few shell shocked or, as it is called in this war, bomb-happy. We were about to sit down for breakfast when we heard the planes, and dived for Bob Dick's hole. They passed over and came back, but at last we came out and made another attempt to eat our eggs, but the lads were just cooking them when down we had to go again. I grabbed a sandwich, but never ate it, for this time down came the bombs, and it was impossible not to think they were for us. The scream of these big fellows was the most horribly fascinating noise I have ever heard, and many was the time I said

goodbye under my breath. We lost quite a few vehicles on this first raid, and the blast punctured many others, and smaller pieces of shrapnel went right through the cars. What a din, and by this time no one felt like breakfast! As soon as the smoke had cleared, and before the smell of cordite had floated away, Major Campbell, our O.C. transport wing, was in his car and out of the area in double quick time, presumably, according to him anyway, to arrange for our next spot if we had to retreat again. He was a colossal beer drinker, the best I have seen, and would drink all day until late at night, and even then take a couple of bottles to bed with him to keep him going during the night, yet one never saw him drunk, a hell of a man to have as a boss, and how his men knew him.

The raid had been so severe, they had got the road where we drove in, trees were down, motor cycles on fire, that I took the opportunity of the lull to get in my car and slip up to the 2/10th to see if any of my vehicles there had caught much of it, (they were only 1/8th mile away), but all were OK. Had only just arrived there when over they came again. Having no hole I flattened out on the ground, and boy, how I hugged it. Once again, I thought it was all over, but just before one of the planes passed overhead, all was quiet again. They had been very close, and returning to our area, when they passed over, I found things in a shambles once more, and they had received their second going over for the day. Our third and last bomb raid for the morning came shortly after, and by rights we should have all been killed. The nearest to we officers, who were all in the one big hole, landed only a few yards away, and the edge of the huge crater it made just reached the corner of our dug-out. It was too close for my liking and this was the shell that had landed exactly where Bob and I had marked out our shelter. Thank goodness, it was never dug. The smell of cordite almost stifled us, so we came out for air, and we were all a bit white on it when we saw how close it had come. Speaking for myself, I never at any time experienced actual fear, although I was convinced on more than one occasion that it was the end, but I suppose that was accounted for by the high nervous pitch at which one was living in and was to be living in for the last nerve shattering week.

After this third lot, we sent all our men who were not actually working, back into the hills about half mile and the two bottles of Johnny Walker that Ken Parsons produced did a lot of good work and were soon emptied. Shortly after lunch, their artillery, which for two days had been ranging on a hill behind us, started up and in place of the planes we started to bet shells into the area. It was certainly our sad day; and when we were told to gather what vehicles we could and get out, we did not need a second telling. Major Dick had to go on and I waited till last, in case we have forgotten anyone. One of my lads was completely bomb-happy running all over the place and falling in the mud, but I got him onto the last vehicle, poor devil, and then I got an officer who decided
When I ran out to the road where he was waiting (indecipherable for a number of lines)

We left quite a lot of stuff behind there and went back after midnight to get out what we could. We had moved back to the corner of Holland Road about six miles out from town. What we were going to do when we could retreat no further I wondered, for it could not be long now. I was up all night of Monday February 9th/⁻ 10th. Reinforcements were going forward all night, and it was about this time, it looked as though all we A.A.S.C. were to leave our vehicles and go into the line as infantry too. That was as it should be, and although some were sent up we were taken out at the last minute and ordered on with our own job. The Japs were still coming through though. The 10 A.G.H. had moved some of its people back to the Cathy Theatre right in the city. On the Wednesday we were slammed again; I was losing a man or two now with nearly every bomb and the tension was great. Personally I was thankful to have the responsibility of men and vehicles for it helped me keep a hold on myself, for I felt it was up to me to set an example for them to follow.

We were forced to move again in the afternoon and were to proceed to the St. Andrews Cathedral, down North Bridge Rd. Practically on to the beach. As I was the only one of the three section officers who knew the route, I led the convoy of all the cars we had left and did not mind going at all although I knew that this would be our last move, as we were back to the

water and there was no navy. The Prince of Wales and Repulse had gone off course so that was that.

The next day I had to use my section and get the nurses out, and as Glyn White told me things were bad at the 10 A.G.H. and because of the shells we could not get in the quickest way (they were at Manor House, on the Dunearn Road) I took 8 cars there and sent the transport Sgt. Dave Griffin (NX65235), with 8 more to 13 A.G.H. at Katong to pick up their nurses.

I ran out through Serangoon Road and came into the A.G.H. the back way, and loaded on the 34 sisters, including Matron Paske, who were left. Even then they did not want to go and by the look of their eyes most had had a weep, and Paske did her best to be allowed to remain. They were a great lot and I only hope they arrived home, but if accounts one hears are true then there are not many of them alive today for they are supposed to have been captured in Sumatra and badly treated. However, I got them out as fast as I could and returned to the Cathedral, and shortly after the 13 A.G.H. convoy arrived. After a check over by Glyn, I then had to run on with all of them aboard a boat at H.M.S. Laburnam. There were hundreds trying to get away, everybody travelling as light as possible, and I thought at one moment that we were to have a raid for 9 planes sailed over, but were kept high by the A/A batteries on the wharves.

Letter dropped at Malaya Command HQ on 10 Feb. 42.

Lt.Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita.
High Com. of the Nippon Army.
10 Feb. 42.

To - The High Com. of the British
Army in Malaya.

Your Excellency,
I, the High Com of the Nippon Army based on the spirit of Japanese chivalry have the honour of presenting this note to your Excellency advising you to surrender the whole force in Malaya.

My sincere respect is due to your Army which true to the traditional spirit of Great Britain is bravely defending Singapore which now stands isolated and unaided.

Many fierce and gallant fights have been fought by your gallant men and officers, to the honour of British warriors.

But the development of the general war situation has already sealed the fate of Singapore and continuation of futile resistance would not only serve to inflict direct harms and injuries to thousands of non-combatants living in the city, throwing them into further miseries and horrors of war, but also would not certainly add anything to the honour of your army.

I expect that your Excellency, accepting my advice, will give up this meaningless and desperate resistance and promptly order the entire front to cease hostilities and will despatch at the same time your Parliementaire according to the procedure shown at the end of this note. If, on the contrary, your Excellency should reject my advice, and the present resistance be continued, I shall be obliged, though reluctantly from humanitarian considerations, to order my Army to make annihilating attacks upon Singapore.

In closing this note of advice I pay again my sincere respects to your Excellency.

Sd. Tomoyuki Yamashita.

- (1) The Parliementaire should proceed to Bukit Timah Rd.
- (2) The Parliementaire should bear a large white flag and the Union Jack.

The above letter is requesting surrender of the Allies from the Japanese General Yamashita

I was glad to see those girls on board for at least it seemed they would get away. I had given Shirley Gardham and Dot Paske, Babe's address and phone number in case they got home, for Dot Paske lives in Melbourne. They were all at the end of the River boat that was to take them out to their ships and did their best in song as the boat pulled away. Singleton sang out to me that there was something particularly good in the drink line under the stairs at Manor House but I never got back for it.

So passed Thursday 12th. I had sent a cable to Babe but never knew whether it got away or not. Our work was still going on but very much disorganized, and we were nearly finished for the strain had been and was terrific, and I hated like hell to have to send them out. All other medical units were coming in to the Cathedral grounds and the 2/9th and 2/10th Field Ambulances opened up the building for a hospital, and for the last few days treated thousands of cases, many dying, and they included all soldiers of any colour and civilians, many horribly shattered by the serial bombs which were being rained down on the town and wharves. It was terrible to see some of the poor little native kids, some still babies in arms, with shrapnel wounds and parts of their little bodies blown away.

The Artillery, also driven back now to the beaches, were operating all around us, anti aircraft batteries were in S.C.C. (Singapore Cricket Club?) padang just across the road and how we missed being hit more than twice in the church grounds is more than I could understand. With our A/A and artillery going out, and theirs coming in, life was a nightmare, and the continued whine of their shells as they landed all around us, to say nothing of the pom poms after planes, the bombs screaming down and their machine guns when they dived down on our guns, life was just one roar and rattle. The first shell to land in the ground landed in an Ambulance and got a couple of 2/2 M.A.C. boys, and on the Saturday one set fire to four or five 2/9 vehicles and killed Roy Kelly who was a very decent lad. A shell also got my car and others of the M.A.C. that day setting them all on fire and here again I missed getting mine by a fluke. I had left my car less than five minutes when it was hit. As I stepped from the car I saw Roy K. leaning on his truck and as I had not seen him for a long time I was walking over to fill in a bit of time yarning to him when Bob Weller called out from the opposite direction, wanting to know if I was coming back to the building where we were housed for safety when not actually on a job. I hesitated then and decided to go with Bob, so telling Roy I would see him later, I left the spot. We had only gone 50 yards when we heard one coming so flattened on the ground, as it seemed to explode in our ears. It had landed only three yards from my car and Roy Kelly who, still conscious, had his stomach practically shot away and he died shortly after. The car with all my belongings was well on fire, so I lost everything I had with one or two exceptions, one being my writing case and a few clothes I had out in a pack. I lost many a thing I valued in that car but I had my life which I would not have had if I had been a half minute or so later in leaving the thing. When it cooled down and I was looking over it later, and had I still been sitting in it when the shell landed, I would have received at least six pieces of shrapnel in the legs, one through the stomach and two in the chest, for I would clearly see the holes in the body and through the back of the seat which would have assuredly got me. It only goes to show how useless it is to worry and just how lucky one can be, and I suppose every man could tell of a similar time when some small thing has cropped up to make him do something different to what he intended and so just missed trouble.

The Adelphi Hotel was narrowly missed and in there was 2/9 and 2/10 Field Ambulances personnel not on duty. The M.A.C. was in the municipal building in rear and here we were safe for it was all concrete and some floors high with us on the bottom. It was like an inferno outside and things could not keep going on at this rate for long. The last perimeter was put up round the town and all troops were inside, but over on the other side of the town the 13 A.G.H. being full up and no chance of moving, was actually outside but as the whole show was over by the next day, it mattered little.

The Jap aircraft was playing merry hell on the Sunday, Bob Dick was almost refusing to send men out with vehicles, and one could hardly blame him when one saw the state the men were in; for even some of the stronger ones were going bomb happy. True to form, our Major and his precious S/Sgt whom I had shifted from Malacca never showed their faces on the job but stayed strictly indoors and safety while, in the case of the Major anyway, his junior officers, of which I was one worst luck, and

his men carried on with the job. What apologies for men I thank goodness nobody can say this about me, no matter what I might have felt.

Glyn (White) whispered to me that a cease fire would be ordered for 4 p.m. but by five it was still as bad as ever but by 8 o'clock it was all over; and after the unceasing din of the last few days the quietness was particularly strange. I can only talk for myself, but the relief I felt was my first thought and then a little later, evidently then realizing the end had come, it struck me forcibly, the uselessness of all this bloodshed and tears, that a reaction of the strain got hold of me, and I felt I had to get away from everyone for I felt like sitting down and crying like a kid. I fought the feeling all I knew but it persisted and got the better of me in the end. It was a strange feeling indeed but I felt better afterwards, and that night went to sleep without the music of explosives and airplane drones.

The following morning Jap guards were placed round the town, and my humiliation grew as I realized fully how everything had finished and these little fellows had charge of things. Although the fighting had finished, the medical services were still going flat out and the row of graves in the Cathedral grounds grew as time went on. The Major and the S/Sgt. were now out in all their glory, but if they had only known what was being said about them, they would have in all probability have gone back to their holes.

The Jap had taken over the municipal buildings, so we moved back to the Cathedral grounds opposite, and the officers moved to rooms in the Adelphi Hotel for the night, and the following morning, I was wakened to the sound of marching and on looking out, saw the first long column of British commencing the long march out in Changi, where our concentration was to be, and they appeared in good spirits.

The 9th and 10th Field Ambulances moved from the Cathedral on the Tuesday, 17th, and opened a hospital at Barrack Square, where six triple storied buildings, the late property of the Gordon Highlanders, were. Back in town we saw practically nothing of Jap troops. They were evidently being kept outside, but on the Tuesday afternoon a column of their tanks drove through. Column after column of our troops were marching out to Changi, and a few were being used for the cleaning up of the city and the filling in of bomb and shell craters in the roads. Our hospitals were being established out at Changi, and the M.A.C.'s, who were operating from the Cathedral grounds still, were flat out from morning to dark.

Thursday and Friday Bob Weller and I, using anything up to 50 vehicles, started clearing the Singapore General Civil Hospital, and what a job it was too. The place was a huge affair, great long corridors, and wards, crammed full of soldiers and civilians of all colours and creeds. The Japs wanted the place for their own wounded apparently, so it had to be emptied. All the native labour in the Hospital had cleared out, and very few doctors and nurses seemed to be about, which meant that all the drivers had to carry stretchers to the wards, load patients and carry them back to the vehicles. Some of the sights I saw there, I'll never forget, and the smell of blood and unattended wounds never left my nose for days. We shifted the Australians first, then British, Indian, Malays, and then the civilians, finishing up with the children, who were all orthopedic cases or idiots. We got them out last thing on Friday evening, thus completing the job, and when Bob and I went back to the main building where we had two cases of Whitbread's Ale hidden away, we found the Jap had taken over. Hating to miss out on this, I said to Bob "Wait until I try it anyway", and then, putting on a bold front, went to pass the sentry they had on the place, but he greeted me with "Ugh", and a bayonet point, so I said "Damn the beer, I didn't really want it anyway". Much!

Anyway, we were at last shot of the place, and it had been a couple of days' hard work. The next day, by I.J.A.(Imperial Japanese Army) order, the numbers working had to be cut down to about 50, so Perc Watson and I came out in Changi the following day in charge of nearly 100 of our men. We were being allowed practically no transport, so the amount of gear taken was a minimum. We had to march the 14 miles and it was a very hot day. I had many memories on the way out, for I had often done this route by taxi whilst at the O.C.T.U., and I would have given quite a bit for a taxi then. The

truck that had taken our gear doubled back after unloading, and commenced to ferry the men a few at a time. It was certainly welcome, but I was as far as Bedok by the time I was picked up. It was a relief to arrive and take up our new quarters in the buildings formerly occupied by the Gordons. The A.I.F. area was fairly extensive and contained, beside the six three-storied barrack blocks in the square, 44 other smaller buildings which had been used for various things, including officers' married quarters, NCO's quarters, N.A.A.F.I. etc. etc. Wire barricades were erected round our boundary, but we had all the room inside to move about, which must have been nearly a mile by half a mile.

The British were in the areas further along the Changi road, and separated from us. 11 Ind. Div. was on the right of the road, and nearly opposite us, 18 Div. round further in parts of the old Indian camp opposite the old O.C.T.U., and the R.A. (Royal Artillery) lines; 13 Ind. Corps at R.A. Officers Mess area, and Southern area opposite and down to Link Road. Later on the combined general hospital was formed, and all patients were housed there in the barrack buildings of the R.A. in the area of the cinema. Arriving here was a relief in one way, but once in, we never knew when we would ever get out again, but hoped I would not be as far away as ever, the popular saying now being, "You'll never get off the Island", but let's hope it is wrong and that the time is not far distant.

It was now just over a year since we landed in this country, in fact, the capitulation on the 15th was very nearly the anniversary being only three days too soon.

On my arrival here in Changi, I found that the troops who had arrived before us had been allotted the buildings, and all units were being kept separate under their own officers so it did not look as though we were to be segregated from the men as is usually the case. In fact by the time we settled down, it was hard to tell we were P's O.W., for the various divisional staffs were operating and, under orders from the I.J.A. we were doing our own administration. Church parades were started, impromptu concerts and popular talks also for the passing away of time in the evenings. We needed something like this at night for the electric light like the water had been cut off. Lamps of a sort were available but the fuel was practically non-existent. Water had to be drawn from the water carts that were allowed in these early days, by units and rationed accordingly.

The men's ingenuity was given wide scope too, for in a number of cases the men could not all fit in to the accommodation allotted, so humpies sprung up like mushrooms and were made of anything and/or anything. Beds also were put together and in fact anything that would add to comfort was done, for we had nothing except what we had been able to carry out with us.

Without the water the lavatories could not be used and we started the trench digging. These were not very successful owing to flies, but were improved upon a lot later, when we obtained earth augers and could sink holes up to 20 feet deep. There was certainly plenty of work to be done, but it was not long before things took shape and we started to settle down to the life of P's O.W.

I saw plenty of people I knew as I moved around, and was now able to check up on particular friends from other units whom I had not seen since before hostilities started. It was as good to see those that were here as I was sad to hear of the losses, for out of the O.C.T.U. lads Bill Brown, Pidg. Homer, Roger McGee, Lennon, Quinlan were some who had paid in full. I saw the 2/9th one day and they were busy running their hospital.

Wednesday 25th saw everybody on a full parade lining the roads of the camp for a Jap inspection, and somehow or other I did not feel very proud when I saw them, for there were thousands of us three deep on both sides of the roads everywhere one looked. They drove past in cars and even had a large camera photographing one side of the road as they drove through. On Sunday 1st March I was transferred back to the 2/9th from the A.A.S.C. and started up again as an adjutant with them, and was doubly glad of the move, and secondly because it got me away from that fat pig-mannered Major.

Our diet was not too plentiful nor good, and after the personal stocks held by the men ran out, we had to settle down to what they allowed us and this was rice, salt and sugar in minute quantities, meat

once and later twice per week (and then only a few ounces) and biscuits and very little else. The rice was the main item and varied from 16 to 18 oz. per day, which meant we had it for three meals a day and we have had rice thrice a day every day since, and it is now nearly eight months since we arrived.

Amenities were very few, there was a bit of sports gear, and classes were started up by an Education Centre, and after a while there was hardly a subject that could not be tackled. In an Army there seems to be men of every calling, and so good teachers were found for every subject from primary education to Higher Maths, Commerce, Book-keeping, Languages, Agriculture, Architecture, etc. etc. On March 12, I started on shorthand and commerce, but after a couple of months I let the former go and spent more time on the book-keeping.

It was decided about this time to concentrate all hospital cases at Roberts Barracks, so we had a busy couple of days transferring our two floors, which were then occupied by 2/15 Field Regt. who had been brought over from across the road. Our men were then in tents and humpies outside, but later, when the Regiment were moved out on working parties in Singapore and overseas, we moved them into the building. I was seeing a fair bit of Tom Smith, and he, like everybody else, was getting very homesick, and wondering how long it would be.

On Sunday 15th, we held a memorial service for the 2/9th and 2/10th losses, and the wreaths made by the boys were wonderful. It was a good service officiated by Padre Jones.

We were starting to get browned off as regards the diet, for rice three times a day, and with cooks that had no initiative, can get very monotonous. Milk was a thing of the past, and sugar getting very scarce. Diarrhoea was becoming a serious problem as was the dysentery, and for week around mid-March I had an attack, but it was not very serious. Later we were to become well and truly accustomed to the diet. Meat days, which were once and sometimes twice a week, were something to look forward to, although it was only a few ounces per head. We were receiving no pay in these days, but the money brought in by individuals originally was still hanging out, although petering out fast as the "black market" got under way. The "black market" was our only means of obtaining extra food and flavouring agents, and the goods were smuggled into the camp by the more venturesome who went out through the wire at night and did their buying from the natives who came out also under cover of darkness. The prices were terrible, for we paid as high as \$3 for condensed milk (8/9), 12 oz. tins of jam, cheese, bully beef, meat and veg., etc. I was in the unfortunate position of having next to no money when I came out, and only managed to borrow \$10 from Joe Vincent. A few months later when the canteen, run by our own people, started up, prices dropped considerably, and the black market slowly died out. We were able to purchase now with pay allowed us by the I.J.A., and although it was very little, it was certainly acceptable. This started about June, and rates were – Officers, 25 cents per day, N.C.O.'s 15¢, and men 10¢, out of which we paid over to the hospital one day's pay, and to regimental funds two day's pay, and this was used by the Q.M. for the purchase of extra foods.

The days were passing with remarkable rapidity, but the nights always had me properly homesick, and I did a lot of thinking of all those dear to me at home. The lack of lights made them very long, and often I spent the time out on the lawn in front of the M.I.R. (Medical Inspection Room) with Lofty and Frank and many and varied were the subjects and discussions we had. On the nights of the full moon we played cards to its light. Rumour was rife as to what was going on, and when we would be relieved, but none had any foundation so all we could do was hope for the best.

Work was very light, and I played a fair amount of chess and cards, particularly in the evenings, and an occasional challenge would be issued or received to or from other officers' messes for teams to play these two games, and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. For quite a long time we had talks by various interesting people on practically every subject, from sports, as Mavor on golf, he himself being a plus one player, to travel trips to all parts of the world. I enjoyed these evenings quite a lot, as I did the "concert nights" in which our lads, i.e., A.I.F., entertained us with a full hour's programme

of really good variety, and a change of programme every week. These were outside concerts and were fully appreciated by the men.

Days were nearly all alike and taken up by “trailer parties”, working parties and education and/or sport. Cricket competitions were started up, new classes on all kinds of subjects, and in fact, anything that would help to keep the men doing something that was interesting.

So the time slipped by; we were always hopeful about getting home, but time was flying, and my birthday followed quickly on our engagement day, which in turn was just as quickly followed by my darling's birthday and our 2nd anniversary. Poor Babe, she has certainly had a rotten married life up to date, two wedding anniversaries, and I have not been home for either.

Around Good Friday we heard that the rolls had left here for Australia, and later the I.J.A. let us send a card, which, though brief, we all hoped would not be long in arriving, and so relieve those people at home who were, we felt sure, worrying about us.

Towards June our numbers in Changi Camp were decreasing rapidly for all the Singapore working parties were in full swing, and they accounted for a few thousand, working on various jobs from road making to work on the wharves and go-downs. An overseas party, ‘A’ force, had gone we knew not where and on July 8th another similar force, ‘B’, left for an unknown destination overseas. Captain Greville of the 2/5 Field Hygiene Sect. went with ‘A’ force and I did not regret his departure. Frank Mills (Medical Officer NX70671) and Jim Kelleher left to go with ‘B’ force. Later on again we were to lose our third party when a force, which included all senior officers from the Generals down to and including full Colonels, left for Japan. This, of course, necessitated a big change round, and Lt. Colonel (Blackjack) Galleghan of 2/30 Battalion. took command A.I.F. and Lt. Colonel Holmes was O.C. British and Australian troops.

June 13th we received our first Jap amenities pay and it was very welcome though small. Working parties in Syonan-To, as they had renamed Singapore, had been receiving pay for some time, and ours was for work done in the camp area. Officers were paid at the rate of 25 cents, N.C.O's 15 cents and men 10 cents per day, and out of this we made compulsory donations of one day's pay to the hospital and two to regimental funds. The former was to buy extras for the patients and the latter to give the unit Q.M.'s a chance to purchase and so liven up our diet which, by this time, was certainly in need of it.

A canteen had been started, and with its cheaper prices the black market slowly went out of business. Prices were still very high, however, and our pay did not go very far. We were all becoming vitamin-minded, and eggs, coconuts, oils, etc. were in greatest demand. We were paid in ten day periods and the deductions took place at every pay.

On Monday June 15th I started what, I suppose, was something unique in a P.O.W. camp, and that was an N.C.O's school. Had forty men to start with, actually finished with thirty-four owing to sickness and transferring of a batch of 2/9 personnel to A.G.H. for duty, and these included nearly all the N.C.O's and a few keen privates. It was a huge success and all enjoyed it for I made the hour's drill each day very strict and in full detail. Lectures were mainly by the M.O's – John Cade, Frank Cahill and the C.O. I gave a few lectures on military law and orderly room procedure. It ran for nearly five weeks when we turned on a parade and a march past for the ADMS. The General was to have taken the salute but he was ill and could not get along. Colonel Derham was very impressed and he congratulated me on getting them so efficient in their bearing. They were all examined and all passed fairly well. I had Dave Milne (could be VX53415) handprint certificates for them for which they were grateful, and later presented me with a copy signed by all the class they could contact. I think it was Jack Lardner's idea and I was pleased to get it.

Friday 19th June was a good day for we were all given a card on which we could write a simple message to home and do you think we were excited and keen. This was our first opportunity and we

all hoped they would get home quickly, for as far as we knew our people still did not know what had happened to us. I had taken on contract bridge and we played almost daily and/or nightly and found it a good game and streets ahead of auction. Life was getting very monotonous, our fifth month of captivity, but the education centre was a boon for one could put one's mind to something practical. Ron Churches took over our commerce class when Les Coates went to the A.G.H.

On July 6th I went to bed with dengue for a week which is very prevalent these days. The diarrhoea and dysentery were not quite so bad as they were. Sickness in this country is so easy to get and hard to get rid of and it is very hot in bed that I was very glad to get up after a week.

Mid-July saw a party of Dutch prisoners arrive in camp from Sumatra and Java on their way to Japan with our party when they leave.

A new Major-General arrived as C. in C. P's O.W. and a huge parade of all troops took place on the 11th Indian Div. padang. As a matter of fact it was on Moira's birthday and I thought of her quite a lot that day. I was very sorry I could do nothing about it. Perhaps next year.

The end of July and we had lost Hedley Summons to A.G.H. as C.O. and he promptly proceeded to disorganize his old unit by taking thirty of the best N.C.O's and men and replacing them with thirty of the worst from the A.G.H. Certainly a great thing to do. Somehow I did not expect it of him. The rest of his unit, which he had gone to such pains in the past to hold together, have been dumped and the incapable Burnside has been given acting command.

Early August and a celebrity concert was staged at the Con. Depot being men from 18 Div. It was a marvelous turnout, and the performers were absolutely first-class. By October I had seen three concerts by them, and each seemed better than the last. Frank Cartledge was not too good these days, in fact, he is becoming quite anaemic, and was sent to hospital for a week or so for observation.

A few more prisoners were brought in to the camp, this time two naval men who had been picked up in the Indian Ocean. One was able to put on an eagerly awaited lecture or talk on events in Australia up till June, 1942. How we lapped it up, for all were in the same boat when it came to news from home. As far as he knew, no news of ourselves had reached home, and I hated to hear that, for it meant that all at home would still be worrying as to our safety, etc. Poor old Ma, I wonder how she is?

The evenings are very long and drawn out, and I hate them, most nights being filled in by sitting out in the evening breeze, yarning with Cannon and Cartledge and Winzer, or a game of cards up in the mess where we have a few small lights of mosquito cream. Saturday evenings I usually listen to classical recordings at Con. Depot. August 10 came and went, our second wedding anniversary, and how lonely I was for you that night, Babe. Had a rotten meal of rice, which was worse than ever when I remembered our breakfast of two years before.

Sunday, 16th August, we lost all our high ranking officers, i.e., all of rank of Colonel and above, of both A.I.F. and British, who left the barrack square amid many a handshake and cheer at 7.30 a.m., their destination being Japan. Our forces here are very much split up now, and rumour has it that this party is to be put into an International Red Cross camp in Japan, where I daresay their treatment will be good, and the Nippon can show them off to the world as an example of how his prisoners are being treated. If so, how different the treatment of the main bulk which we at Changi, and working parties in Singapore, are receiving. All officers were assembled at Con. Depot to say au revoir to General Callegan and others who were leaving us from A.I.F., and the day they left was exactly a year since the 27 Aust. Inf. Bde. arrived in the country, and six months of being prisoners of war.

A Red Cross shipment had arrived, our first extras, and how welcome the food was, for it contained mainly food such as maize meal, flour, jams, caramels, etc. A later ship arriving early in October was

well loaded, and besides tons of food stuffs, there was also boots and clothing, things which were becoming very necessary.

Lieut. Col. Galleghan was given command of all A.I.F. troops, and I wondered how we would fare at the hands of the Japs under his control, as he is a bit of a tartar and goes after what he wants. He slowly built up his staff until he had about twice as many at H.Q. administering our command, than the General had at any time either during or after the show. August 22, and the party that had left for Mersing as a working party returned to Changi after being away for some months. Not hearing from them whilst they were away, we were all wondering how they were and how they had fared; but we need not have worried as they had had quite a good time. Mainly, their job up there was the delousing of all our mine fields, and during this work, three were killed by exploding mines. I knew only one, Wally Manning of the 2/10 Field Company (Engineers). It was bad luck losing one's life after going through the main stoush and I felt very sorry for them as I do for all these fellows dying off these days in hospital. At the moment the trouble mainly is diphtheria and dysentery, and the British cemetery, in particular is growing in bounds.

Time I am glad to say is flying and I notice large gaps in my diary in no time, but usually there is so very little of interest to put in it these days. Lofty bet me one night that I would be nearer 14 stone than 13, so I weighed at the supply scales and was surprised to find that I was 13st. 6 and so just won the bet. (5 cigs). He was very unlucky though, for during the next few weeks I kept increasing and went to 13.11, where I remained for some time. I'd never been so heavy in all my life.

Our first serious clash with the Nip had its commencement on Sunday 30 (another Sunday), when they wanted us all to sign a certificate stating that under no circumstances would be attempt escape and placing us on our honour. It was turned down flat by commands British and A.I.F., and although offered to individuals, nobody signed it. What the repercussions would be we did not know but felt he would do something, and sure enough he did and quickly too, for on Sept. 2 all troops, both British and Australian, were given until 1800 hours to move to the barrack square and be prepared to stay there. It was a most hopeless position, for it meant that close on 15,000 troops were to live in an area some 250 yd. by 150 yd. It is impossible for us to describe the chaos that took place; the Black Hole of Calcutta was not in it. The men were pouring in bringing all their gear and rations on trailers and personal carry. Maj. Carl Gunther started immediately with working parties working night and day on huge pit latrines in the centre of the square, for they wired us in, mounted machine gun posts, and no man was allowed to set foot on the road that bordered the square. We were so crowded that it was estimated that at least half the force would be dead or dying of disease inside two weeks, and I will hand it to all officers and men for the way it was tackled, and never a moan was to be heard. Our unit was given a small area of the square to live in, and we were very lucky in that we did not have far to carry all our goods. A small party of recaptured escapees were shot on the beach that morning, and we were told that that would be the future penalty for anyone attempting escape. Poor devils!

On the fourth day, after numerous negotiations with the Japs, our confinement was lifted, and we slowly moved back to our areas, when Col. Holmes, in a special order, instructed all ranks to sign the sheet, which had been altered slightly. All signed, but I doubt very much if anyone will take any notice of it if, and when, our turn comes, for it was certainly signed under duress. Our food supply had been cut two-thirds, to say nothing of the conditions in which we were living. It was like returning home from a trip to go back to our building, and I slept like a log the first night back. So ended one of the most sticky positions we had ever been in. We soon settled down to our old routine again, although it took a few days to clean up the square and fill in all these trenches that had been dug, and which smelt so badly.

3 Ind. Corps moved into a building on the square on the 7th September 1942 so the area had lost its appearance of desertion, that it had had since nearly all the 6th Battalion who had occupied it earlier had moved to Singapore and overseas parties during the previous few months. The tattoo roll call at 1900 hours daily was quite enough, and all ranks had to appear, the threat by the Japs being the death of not only the man, but all officers concerned if someone was absent and not reported. Tom Mitchell

(may be VX43577), whom I'm sure is not too sound in the head these days, made a complete fool of himself and the unit, by making the platoon, for which he was responsible, appear in hats and salute him as their names were called. Lord knows how he came to be attached to us at all, but he was a friend of Burnside's, which accounts for it, and to see men in all stages of dress, some wearing only a towel, wearing hats, was too absurd.

Mid September I started this book, and spent many hours on and off in its writing. Life continued in its usual style, plenty of cricket, lectures and schooling filled in days, and yarning, cards, chess or what have you at night. An interesting two-day lecture by General Heath on the Eritrean campaign, in which he served with a division with some success, was well worth the listening. Sept. 18 saw 25 Australians, taken prisoner in Timor, arrive here from Java. They were of the 2/40 Bn. (they arrived at Bonegilla as we were leaving), and were followed a few days later by 500 British also from Java.

Men were still receiving pay as usual, but an alteration took place with officers. We were from now on to be paid at the rate of 15 dollars per month after various deductions had been made for hospital and extra food for the men. This meant a big lift for us and vastly better than the 5 dollars odd that we were getting. Owing to some tie-up though, we did not see any for over a month, and it was sadly missed. We were advanced 3 dollars per officer, however on Sept. 22.

On Sept. 30 the Japs inspected all our private gear. In the evening eight of us from the unit visited the Con. Depot and beat them at contract, and whilst there all officers had to sign yet another form for pay.

October 1st saw me transferred to No. 2 Coy. A.A.S.C. for duty, and although I did not mind the change (life at the 2/9, especially the meals, was pretty bad these days) I did not relish the way in which it was done by that fellow Burnside; whose excuse for having me shifted was that his nature clashed with mine and he could not work with me. This I found hard to understand as he was never in the office although he was in command, he did little but sleep upstairs. I think the mad Mitchell was at the back of it somehow, and it was only being put out of my old unit by an outsider and in an underhand way that I objected at all.

I had quite an easy life for a while then, doing the ferry one day and a few walks with the trailer. We were a small unit of three officers and about 90 men, and a few days after my arrival a Capt. Collins from A.G.H. came in with us building our small mess up to five. Our pay was well overdue so we were unable to purchase many extras in the food line. Lieuts. Tweedy, Gray and Horden were the other officers.

October 6 and we saw the arrival of all Aust. Prisoners from K.L. who were mainly men from the Muar show and they were glad to be back with us, for sickness had hit them pretty hard. At K.L. they had had next to no medical attention, resulting in the loss of quite a few as well as a lot of British. The Red Cross goods were now at Fairy Point and parties with trailers were many in bringing the A.I.F. portion up to the supply store. It certainly boosted up the rations and we enjoyed the extras no end.

On Thursday 8th a large Singapore working party marched into Changi from town. They had to March all the way as a punishment for the stealing of cement whilst on the job. The racket was to sell it to the Chinese who were only too keen to be able to buy, so the boys were making a good thing out of it.

Once more a Sunday was to alter my life a little, for on Sunday 11th I formed part of a working party of 1,000 for Singapore. I was not very keen about leaving Changi, but having no option I left with the advance party of 300 after a talk by Blackjack. We came in my transport, and I spent some time before we left the square in farewells, for when one leaves for town on a working party, it is very doubtful if one will ever get back to Changi. Glyn White, with his usual good nature, slipped me a dollar before we left, and it was an action I will not forget in a hurry, for money these days was nearly

non-existent, although it was expected daily. We were run direct to the wharves and set to work before even seeing our camp, and this surprised more than a few, and it was 6 o'clock before we arrived at our camp off Havelock Road.

We were organised as an infantry battalion, and quartered in atap huts which were in only fair repair, having been built pre-war as evacuation areas for the native population of Singapore. I was placed in charge of 11 Platoon in C Coy. under Capt. Linscott, whom I knew from G.B.D., and 36 men comprised a platoon. Straight away I appreciated the better diet which, with the Red Cross comforts, made a big difference from Changi, and for days following I ate next to no rice, seeing how we were getting plenty of vegetables, stews, and a few roast dinners. Will I ever forget my first roast dinner of mutton and various types of vegetables, my first for over eight months. Although work was plentiful, I quickly came to the conclusion that this was far better than Changi, and now that I had got started on the new life I was glad to have been sent in, and my early objections were soon wiped out.

The working parties that went out daily were many and varied. Mainly we were round and about the wharves and go-downs, and it was vastly different from Changi's prison life, and the feeling of freedom and moving around the town and seeing the sights again was very different. Not that we could ever move about at leisure, for we were always under the Nips, but generally speaking on all working parties we had with us ordinary Jap soldiers who, if worked properly, were not too bad, although an occasional one or two were inclined to use their hands a bit in face-slapping if the lads did not do just the right thing. Goodness only knows what will happen to them, and particularly the Sikhs, if we ever get the chance, for it is most humiliating to us as a race to be slapped and have to take it, from these fellows.

After a week or so on the ordinary work jobs around the town, Bill Smith and I were given a job with 50 drivers and mechanics at a garage close handy to the camp. It was a good job and personally I had little to do for the men were out driving the trucks all day, and the mechanics worked on the trucks that needed it, in the garage. On a few occasions whilst on this work I made it my business to be on good terms with one or two of the Nips, and was able to obtain extras for myself and the lads in the way of sweetened coffee two or three times a day. One Jap in particular, when he decided that I was a good driver often called for a truck and off we would go for a drive somewhere and he would buy me coffee and cigarettes. On these trips I often got the opportunity to purchase various things including eats and smokes. Generally speaking though we were forbidden to speak, or have any contact with civilians, so to be able to get a few things through the Nips was very handy, and for this reason it paid to keep on the right side of them. On one occasion I was able to get a tin of Murray's Scottish pipe tobacco and do you think I was popular among the officers that night when they found out; for it was a gift of the gods after all this boong tobacco that was all we had had for months.

Unfortunately this transport job only lasted a week when Bill and I were taken off, the men still carrying on daily under N.C.O's, whilst Smithy and I went back to ordinary work parties.

Roughly speaking about 800 men were asked for daily to work, officers being sent out in charge of them but under the Nip just the same, in the proportion of about one officer to 50 men. This meant that we were fairly well off for generally we could expect a fair share of days when we did not have to go out. These days were generally spent with a fair amount of O.T.B.D. and card playing or in fact anything that one desired. We had free movement round the camp but of course not outside and we had deck tennis courts and a football ground for those that felt that way. Soccer also was played quite a lot.

I wrote to Lt Col Glyn White on Oct. 30 enclosing the one dollar he had given me when we left Changi, but I knew not when it would be delivered for our connection with Changi was practically cut off and our only hope was that the doctors would be able to run in for supplies or some such thing. With this in view I gave the letter to Major Kevin Fagin and hope he can get in before long. John Oakeshott is with Kevin as M.O's for the camp.

Our sick parades are pretty heavy, mainly skin troubles due to lack of vitamins, so the Japs, I suppose to keep up the numbers of working men, had another 200 sent in from Changi on Oct. 30. C Coy. only received one officer from these, one Bill Clack, but we don't mine for it means more days in camp as he will be able to take his turn.

Today is 1942 Dec. 1, another month has slipped away remarkably quickly, Xmas will be on us before we know it and one wonders what Xmas will be like as a P.O.W. If it could be half as good as last year in Malacca even I would be satisfied, but what I would give to be home for it.

November 1942 was not uneventful although as far as working parties are concerned, they are still the same monotonous days as ever, with jobs of all descriptions at the wharves loading and off-loading ships, road building at Kings Rd., at oil dumps, food and clothing go-downs at Alexandra, and the "specialist" party at a Jap H.Q. at the corner of Anson & Robinsons Rds, being but a few of them.

Saturday 7 saw a further 200 men arrive in from Changi so our camp is getting to be quite a large one, and on 26th the two camps here were reorganized, so that all personnel as far as possible were moved around so that men from each unit were together in the one company. This meant that changes took place both within our own camp here and the River Valley Road camp across the way. The Great World had closed down, and all men from there had moved to River Valley so they also were in the re-organization.

I left C Coy and joined 5 Coy. under Capt. Soloman, which company was now all A.A.S.C. I also had to move to a hut across the "Yarra" which is the tidal creek that runs through the centre of the camp. The quarters are not quite so good but the meals are better and I am settled in now and sharing a bay with one Aubrey Yeo, who is to come over from A camp in a day or so.

Friday 13 far from being unlucky was one of my best days in one respect, for I had a party of only 20 at Syme Darby & Co. go-down, and all men were treated fairly well with presents in the way of eats. A tin of cocoa, 2 tins of milk, 5 tins herrings, Cadbury chocolate, and good Craven A tobacco being amongst the hand outs. It would be a great place to be turned loose in for it is well stocked with good tobacco and edibles of all descriptions. Hand-outs these days are becoming few and far between, so, when they do appear, they are very welcome.

I had a pleasant surprise on return from a job on Wednesday 25th, to find that our long overdue October pay was available and in addition the outstanding pay from August, thus making a total of \$27.91. It was very welcome for I had no money left and the rations as issued were far from adequate for my big appetite, and usually I purchased such things as sweet potatoes, eggs, bananas, peanuts, etc. to help the plain rice meals on their way. The formation of a Bn. Mess was a good idea and at present we are paying \$5 month for extra messing and the meals are greatly improved thereby.

Social amenities are improved by way of boxing and wrestling every Saturday night in our new ring, and we have had one concert. Every night between tea and check parade, there is a game of football on the padang, and although it is usually Soccer, a few games of Rugby and Australian Rules have been played. As regards the Soccer there have been two excellent matches played between the A.I.F. and the Dutch from A Camp, which were well worth watching.

The "north, east, west & south" is particularly good, and seems to improve daily, particularly in North Africa and U.S.S.R. Perhaps this is the beginning of the end, and no one hopes that it is more than I.

1943

Jan 1st, 1943, and all are in good spirits still, although I think we all hope or believe we will not be here this time next year.

Once again the month just passed was not without event, for, among other things it saw our return to Changi and this did not please me very much. I was very content with Singapore working party life, and was loathe to leave the excellent good fellowship and conditions of Havelock Rd.

Working parties ran smoothly until 13th, and then we heard the first rumours of the cessation of them by P's.O.W. in Singapore. One reason was that the civilians were complaining of the lack of work open to them as long as we were doing it, although it was little better than coolie labour, but I am hoping that their reason for massing us all at Changi again (some 6000 of us all told return from Syme Rd., Adam Park, River Valley and Havelock Rd) was on account of the military situation.

Around the period 10-15 Dec 1942. various officers with working parties were receiving the attentions of some Japanese and bashings took place. On a lime job on the 12th a Jap got himself into such a temper because Johnny Gray could not find rope for the Jap to tie up a Chinese whom he caught stealing, that he drew his bayonet. Saying, "This is no place for Gray". John went for his life down Havelock Rd. toward camp with the Nip chasing him on a push bike. Trying to get through the wire he was caught by the Korean guard and held until the Jap arrived when they proceeded to do him over. He was returned to the job, and about an hour later, the same Jap brought him a feed of Mah-mee eggs etc. which only goes to show that one never knows what they are going to do next. My turn came the next day whilst I had a party at Patterson, Symonds go-down. A particular little hate merchant let fly at me for absolutely no reason, and when he found that he could not reach my face with his hands, produced a round pole some 4'6" long by 1½" diam. and proceeded to do me up. Luckily I was able to protect my head and face but took a few on the shoulders and legs. It is a terrible experience to have to stand there and take it from a little rat that one could smash through the floor, but it would be disastrous if one did anything. Perhaps I may see him again when things are running our way and it would be a very pleasant meeting.

We in 5 Coy. were having a fairly easy time, for our quota of officers for working parties was only one per day which meant with five of us, we were inside a lot more than we were out. Pontoon was a favourite pass time and my usual luck held. A bridge tournament was held, Lloyd Boreham and I winning only seven of our eleven games. Football of all brands was a daily event on the Padang and some of the soccer games were really good, between the Aust. British and Dutch.

Aub. Yeo came over from River Valley, and he and I shared a bay and lived and ate pretty well one way and another. The canteen got better and a fair variety of goods including fruit was plentiful. Altogether I was enjoying myself more than I ever had since becoming a P.O.W., so that when on the 19th we were told to prepare to move back to Changi on the 20th I was not pleased. The move however was put back to the 21st and as no food stuffs were to be taken with us, we all lived very highly, even to prawn suppers on the last two days.

Luckily our gear was being transported and personnel were carried to Geylang cutting which saved half our distance and we then marched the remaining 7 or 8 miles, arriving on the square shortly after lunch. The usual excitement, the cheerios and meeting of friends took place but after a day or so the novelty wore off, and so once again we settled down to the uninteresting life of Changi. I remained with the A.A.S.C. for a week or so quartered in house 17 with Capt. Solomon, Lloyd Boreham and personnel of 8 Div. Ammo. Sub Park, M.A.C. and Field Bakery. The organization was foul; we were put into this empty building and spent days in a vain attempt to procure essentials in the way of cooking gear, firewood, furniture etc. Our Xmas dinner was a pleasant surprise for the lack of rations and gear was hardly conducive of a first class meal, and we finished up with fish rissoles, baked vegetables, rice, plum pudding without plums, and cake. The officers served the meal and ate with

the men, and in the evening we had a decent meal of tinned curried chicken, vegies., coconut and tinned fruit which I purchased at the Roberts Barracks canteen the previous day.

25 December 1942 - Xmas day was a holiday and a very pleasant day too. Everyone was in good spirits and a real carnival spirit prevailed in and around the Con. Depot where a sports program was carried out, where events such as wood chopping, running, jumping, kicking of football etc. etc. were decided on the west and they even had a coconut shy. Altogether a great day and it was hard to realize that we were in a prisoner of war camp. Lights out was extended to 1 a.m. Midnight church services were held as well as carol singing in various places including the square. On my way home at 11.45pm I dropped into the Engineering mess and played pontoon until 12.30.

Football and cricket are still in vogue but rather seriously challenged for popularity by the introduction of baseball, evidently started up by the Americans (gunners and sailors, the latter survivors from the Houston) who arrived here during our absence in Singapore. With them also are men from H.M.A.S. Perth which ship did such a great job before being sunk. I heard a talk by "Tiger" Lyons of the Perth a few nights ago which was very interesting and bore out some of the remarks mentioned by Maj. Smidt and Capt. Carpentier-Alting, two Dutch officers, who gave us an account of the fighting in Sumatra and Java whilst we were in Havelock Rd.

I had seen Glyn White and let him know I was keen on an "A" job somewhere, and although I did not expect anything until the New Year, I got rather a surprise on Dec. 28th when I was transferred to 2 Con. Depot as Assistant Adjutant to Reg. Farndon. This suited me, as the quarters are good, handy to everything and above all have electric light, which at the present time is only on to a very few buildings outside the hospital area.

New Year's Eve was, of course, fairly quiet, lights out being at ordinary time (10.45), but singing, etc. was kept up in the square until midnight. It was in bed by 11 p.m., and, I suppose, like many others, my thoughts were of home and how I missed everyone, for a long time before I went to sleep. How I hope we will all be together this time next year.

Feb. 1943

Feb. 4th, and a long two years since we left Australia, and almost 12 months as prisoners of war. Everyone is properly fed up, and the common desire is to see the finish and get back home once more. The news these days is very good, and the general opinion centres on the hope of being home at the latest this time next year. With our second anniversary of leaving, my thoughts have been more than ever of all at home, and the bouts of real homesickness have been very acute. With January gone we are well into 1943, and, in spite of it all, time is slipping past fairly quickly. As I have very little work to do at the Con. Depot, I took on the voluntary job of putting our lawn and garden in order, and as it was sadly neglected, and the tools at our disposal leave much to be desired, it has taken a few weeks of hard work to make a show, but it is now looking well, and we are starting to see the fruits of our labour. I spend nearly every afternoon at it, dressed only in a very abbreviated pair of underpants, so if I keep it up, I should very soon become browned "practically" all over.

Also to help pass the time, I started attending French classed under Capt. Les Greener (NX15946), and on Wednesdays and Saturdays, we have an hour's lesson. I thought of Lesley on the 15th, and wondered what kind of a birthday she had and how she was getting along with the W.A.A.F's.

During the month we once again, the second time actually, sent a message home, but this time, we are told, the messages of 20 words are to be broadcast over the air, so we all hope they keep to their word. It is a terrible thought to be here, and, having heard nothing of home, to think that our people have not had their minds put at rest as to whether we are even alive or not. As far as I am concerned, I know I could more willingly endure this life if only I could be sure they had received one message from me. How great is going to be the reunion one day, and, believe me it can't come too soon.

The training of all men is going on apace, and the barrack square is a hive of industry. The 27th Bde. put on a very good ceremonial parade last month, and a competition between companies of the various battalions is in progress.

My evenings are spent in various ways from concerts, boxing, talks, lectures and music recitals. Spend a bit of time on the roof of 2/26 Battalion where we pass the time after mess in yarning, etc.

Meals are still bad, and even getting worse for we now see no meat, and only occasionally an ounce of fish. All stocks of the last Red Cross ship are finished, as far as the individual is concerned, and even the supplies kept for hospital are now nearly finished. Perhaps there is another on the way so here's hoping. I see quite a bit of Ron Campbell although not particularly friendly with him. He, of course, remembers Moira and Jean, and, in fact, the family, and he told me Jean was practically his first customer.

March 1943

Yet another month behind us, and time is still slipping by with remarkable rapidity in spite of the fact that I spend many an hour, especially after lights out, in thoughts of home and all whom I love. Particularly so this last month, as we had more than one anniversary date to remind us of the past. The 4th saw the passing of two years of our leaving home; the 15th one year as P's.O.W., and the 18th our first two years in this country. Certainly we never felt like wishing one another "many happy returns", but hope that by next February we are either home, or back on the job once more driving the Nips out of this country.

It has been the policy of Command to get a mail service of some kind under way, but the I.J.A. do not seem over-keen to play. In fact, they refused again this month to allow us another card home, and then quite suddenly granted permission for a 20-word message to next-of-kin. They are certainly funny customers. However, the opportunity was taken eagerly enough, so once more I'm full of hope that they eventually reach home. We wrote them on Feb. 21st.

Rations are still particularly light, in fact lighter than ever, as even the rice, which forms 98% of our diet, has been cut down. A few vegetables, an occasional few ounces of fish or prawns, and no meat whatever, is our diet from our friends, the enemy, these days, and the remainder is made up by the individual from the canteen providing he has money. As from this month our autocratic B.J. has decided that subalterns will receive only \$14, a reduction of \$1, and an increase of \$1.50 for officers of his own rank and under. It does not seem to count with him that the Lieutenants are doing nearly **all** the work that an officer is required to do in the way of wood and ration trailers, and long walks, etc. with all other kinds of parties, and, if anything, are more in need of the extra food that that money could buy. He seems to thrive on unpopularity, and is certainly causing discontent amongst the "sniffing subalterns" one way and another.

As far as work is concerned I am doing very little indeed, and spend a lot of time during the day in the garden which is now looking fairly respectable. Gabb and I have done a lot of transplanting of bushes, shrubs and lawn. The gardenias are flowering in profusion at present. All I wear on this job is an abbreviated pair of underpants with the result that the body is practically brown all over, and I'm feeling pretty well and don't seem to be losing much weight in spite of the fact that the sweat literally pours off. Some mornings I spend on Alan Carrick's (NX71121 - Captured Timor- Post War Member of Parliament) balcony where I get a little sun whilst talking and reading.

I have taken up French and do an hour's class every Wednesday and Saturday. It helps pass the time. Evenings are the worst to fill in, but generally something turns up to go and see or listen to. Tuesdays are filled with lectures and talks on "Government", with Sgt. Downer (father of Liberal MP Alexander Downer) in the chair, and I find these interesting and instructive. I have not been playing very much bridge but last week had a game at the Engineers with Bob Strawbridge, Chapple and John Brindley, and another night at the Ambulance with Carl Gunther?, Alan Rogers and Frank Cahill. The A.I.F.

concert party also fills in a night, and so time passes. In spite of it all though, I have some bad bouts of homesickness, especially at nights, but I, like most others here, are full of hopes for this year.

April 1943

I guess March must go down as the most important month we have had as P's.O.W. for, at long last, that all important "letter from home" feeling has been realized and great has been the excitement. On March 5, we first heard that some 40,000 odd letters were at the jail for the A.I.F. and no time was lost in sending down sorters with nominal rolls to separate them into units. The Japanese then stated that they would be censoring them all, and our hopes dropped a little for that would mean a long tie-up. I think they actually did do some, but must have given it up, for, by the end of the month it had nearly all been delivered. My big moment arrived at lunch-time on the 24th, some 8 months after they were written, but that did not detract from the thrill and enjoyment of receiving word for the first time in 14 months. Two from Moira Helen (July 2 and 31), two from other, and one from Avon, completed my pile and life did not seem so bad after all although I lost my appetite for the meal I had just started, and ate up those letters through the meal, the news, and a meeting which followed. Although letters were restricted to one page, it was certainly a long way better than the miserable 25-word messages we were allowed to send. Lindsay Orr's (VX39029) people evidently did not stick strictly to instructions for he did the best of anybody in receiving 21 letters (lucky fellow).

"D" force of 5,000, including 2,500 A.I.F. left here for places north by 18th, and their mail was mostly through before they left so they were lucky. That split the force practically in half, so things are getting a little quieter around these parts with the going of these parties, and the 22 Brigade is now practically non-existent. The 2th saw a further 500 leave here for overseas, and there is talk of a further lot going in the near future. If this keeps up there will be very few left before long, and I have mixed feelings about being moved. At times it would be very welcome if only to change the monotony, but is doubtful if living conditions would be as good as here. Certainly the food could not be much worse.

On the night I received my letters I went across to A.G.H. with Scotty Uroe (QX12576 "F"Force Thailand) who was lecturing there, so was able to look up Ted Jones and tell him that Thelma was doing well, He had not heard at that time so was grateful. Frank C.(maybe Cahill) received a letter from Dot the same day.

One of the main medical troubles these days is the eyes, mainly due to lack of essential vitamins in our food, and on the 23rd I reported to Robin Orr about mine and was placed on no duties and treatment which consists of the taking of yeast, rice polishing (vile things) and a little marmite, and no smoking reading or sweating. It makes it hard to fill in the day.

With the going of the last parties from here a surplus of officers is now offering, so they have been gathered in House 20, and although B.J. likes to think of them as an officers' training coy., it is more popularly called other names such as, Old Men's Home, The Waxworks, etc.

So much for the outstanding events for the month. It is marvellous how something always seems to happen although if one spoke in broad terms it would seem as though nothing was happening to relieve the monotonous life which is the lot of a P.O.W. The usual entertainments are still offering in talks, lectures and concert parties, and this week I re-started book-keeping with Lindsay Orr, and I'm on the look-out for someone to run through some Maths with me, for after a talk I had with Harry Gibson this month about a job at some Government office, I am going to try the Repatriation Dept. on return, and it is with this in view that I want to do some studying if possible. I feel that browned off to the army that the A.I.C. does not hold so much for me these days.

Was glad to hear from the letters that Les is doing well and that Llew is in it again, and would like to know what unit. Guess Mother is feeling proud.

May Day, and Joe S. is promising all kinds of good cheer in the next six months. Hope he can carry them out.

My thoughts this last month have been very much at home for it saw the passing of our engagement day whether it be April 1st or 5th (the way I feel now I'm almost inclined to give in to Moira Helen and call it the first), and then Mother's birthday on the 5th.

Things in general have quietened down considerably for on the 18th a further party of 7,600 left here for places unknown, half of them being Australians, and it practically cleared the 27th Bde. from the square. Gus Kappie i/c. I was very sorry not to have gone too for a number of very good friends of mine from the 26th Bn. went, and as I had been spending a lot of time with them, I'll certainly miss them. Scotty left on the 20th, fully intending to "go thru" so I hope he succeeds. Towards the end of the month the square commenced to refill with English and Dutch from Southern area, and quite a few changes in the housing and organization took place. 2/9th had now come under the Con. Depot, and now, after nearly three months doing nothing I have a company of 120 men to look after, but as most are on special jobs, I still have very little to do. I was very glad to shift my quarters from No. 1 building to Alan Carrick's and Charles Huxtable's (QX22801) room, and feel a different being away from the Bagman & Co. We now have a proper mess, and the food is a lot better although our friends have not bettered our rations much. From 20th to 27th I was attending a series of D.C.M's (maybe District Court Marshalls) at House 36, and learnt quite a bit of procedure. Two of them pulled 120 days each for trading in M. & B. 693.

Rumours were flying around re our future movements, the main one being that the Jap navy had taken over the Island, and that we would all be moved shortly. Another that the hospital is to absorb most of the Con. Depot, so I suppose we will know before long.

22nd saw the last concert by the celebrity artists who left for the north next day, and I was sorry to see them go, for their concerts were way above the average. We gave them supper afterwards, and had a few farewell speeches by B.J., Col. Webster and Padre Foster Haig, Dennis East (he was No. 1 violinist London Symphony Orchestra) Reg Renison (pianist) George Wall (baritone).

I have spent a lot of spare time, nude sun bathing on the roof (quite the fashion), and have a good tan these days, but how I wish I was getting the tan on a good old Melbourne beach, even Middle Brighton. My eyes have improved a lot, and at present am deciding on an operation to remove my tonsils. The risk is far greater here than at home according to M.O.'s, and as ether is running out and chloroform being used, it is hard to decide what to do. I would like to have them done so may decide in a few days.

June 1st, and I little thought I would be writing this month's doings in Thailand. I am though, having finally arrived at our destination, Lord knows where, in company with 67 other Aust. Officers and about 200 British and some Dutch which comprise "E" force, party 6.

"J" force was also formed about the same time as ours and left before we did for overseas. In view of the rotten time we have had getting here, I wish I had copped that one. There was quite a little shuffling of Con. Depot before I left, and I took over Alan Carrick's Coy when he left with "J", so I was very surprised when nominated to go away. After thinking it over for a day or so, I decided not to try and get off the force, but if I had only known what this trip was to be like, I would have.

May 1943

We were to leave Changi on May 15, and were glass-rodged, inoculated for plague, and tested for malaria by that time. We actually left on Monday 17th, at midday, and were transported to the station to be packed into closed iron trucks 17' x 7' x 6'6", 26 officers and baggage per truck. This was our home for just on four days, and three nights, and believe me, 26 mighty sore tails detrained at Banpong, Siam. It was as hot as hell all the time, and sleep was nearly impossible, and any time the train halted we made the most of it.

Fortunately we were able to trade at some stops with the natives and the fruit we purchased was colossal, it is a wonder we were not all sick. We arrived at Gemas at dead of night, and had a meal on the station. This was to be the general arrangement for the trip, although we had to carry a meal of rice and fish now and then.

North of K.L. the natives seemed more open in their greetings to us and traded on better terms than in the south. We had many halts but only at some were we allowed to alight, and finally reached Padang Besar, the border town. We changed engines and were soon in Thailand and straight away one would notice the difference. The country became more fertile and padi was being grown extensively, but the people seemed more primitive, and as we were to find later, the biggest thieves ever.

It was a pleasure to leave the train, and after a line up and count (this went on interminably), we marched about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to a rest camp where we stayed for two days. The camp and site were shocking being under mud, but as we were able to purchase food and fruit and so get away from the endless rice, we did not mind. Big fresh hard boiled eggs (8 for 50 cents) were popular as were the mah-meets, etc. They would only allow 50 cents for each Malayan \$. We lost no time in trading our surplus gear to the Nips or natives who would buy anything from gold to clothing. I sold a fountain pen for \$10 or "Tickles" and so Alan de-Little, Vic Mentiplay and myself ate like lords. A mah-mee of four eggs, tomatoes, meat, paste, onions and spices was very tasty, and much appreciated after 15 months of Changi fare. Our heavy gear was transported from there, but we had to march 30 miles in two nights, resting during the day. I will never forget those days and nights as long as I live. I still had a fair bit of gear and my back and hip joint went on me, which together with the poor state we were in physically, caused me to collapse the first night about day break. There were many others in the same boat, and the following night we could not see it out and slept on the road. There never was such a sorry bunch.

We rested three days at the next camp and were able to swim each day. At this camp were odds and ends of various other parties that had left Changi earlier and here I learned of the deaths of Ellis Follbig and two other M.A.C. boys through dysentery and cholera. The natives here were expert thieves and even took kits from under the heads of sleeping men. Laurie West lost all his. On our second day there we were marched to the hospital and all treated to another glass rod, malaria slide, inoculation and vaccination.

Leaving there on the afternoon of the fourth day we were loaded on a train again, only this time on flat cars, and the weather being good, we have a scenic tour. For traction they used a large diesel motor car which, by removing the wheels, can run on railroad. We were soon in the hills, and on the railway built by our chaps. It was a character of a line too, all ups and downs, but we arrived safely. The scenery in places was beautiful. It was dark when we reached our end and, loaded with gear, heavy as well as light, we had to walk about a mile along a so-called road deep with mud, and it was a nightmare. My leg gave out again. We slept in the open by a fire that night, and the following morning walked again about five miles to our present destination, which is well up in the hills and where we are to work.

The ground is terrible, under mud, with the first shower, and as the monsoons are starting now, we are in for a picnic. The I.J.A. here confirmed Blackjack's farewell speech to us that we were only to be away for three months and then return to Changi, and I, like all others on this job, will be mighty glad to be back there again.

We received the usual messing about when we arrived and moved in to two positions before settling in where we are now. Under canvas and no flies on the tents, water supply is good with a wide creek flowing through the camp, but the good up to date is terrible, being plain rice, and if we are lucky a little jungle stew. Perhaps it will improve. On Monday, 31st, we started work, being a fortnight since we left Changi. I did not go out on account of my back and leg.

July 1943

I was not going to write up June's doings, as there has hardly been a single feature to redeem it from being the worst yet. The call now is "You will never get out of Thailand".

Food for the greater part of the month was absolutely foul, rice and thin stews, breakfast, lunch and dinner. Later we were issued with a thin small piece of dried fish. No pay arrived, so things were very tough, especially as the work was heavy, and hours long. Mainly we were clearing cuttings for the railway, and felling and cutting timber for bridges. Speedo was practically always the order of the day with face slappings and heads beaten with sticks thrown in for full measure. Our "shoko" party was certainly the outlet of Japanese hate, specially "Monkey Brand". I would not like to be him if ever we catch him up at a later date.

Sickness was rife, bad food and conditions being mainly to blame for complaints, as debility, tropical ulcers, diarrhoea, dysentery, etc. It was terrible to hear of all who died from the latter, but worst was the cholera which claimed some hundreds, mainly Tamils, but a few British O.R.'s and A.I.F. Heard later that Roly Oakes' party further up is having a rotten time with cholera, having nearly 300 cases and 82 deaths at the start of early July. I certainly hope I miss that, and we are taking all precautions.

Towards the end of June I returned to camp with a fever and throat. The throat was the worst, being a bad tonsillitis which the Dr. thought may develop into quinsy. Thank God it did not, for at Tonchin South here we are many kilos from any hospital. It is nearly right again now, as are my ulcers.

If talk is correct, we will be back in Changi by the end of August, and nobody hopes that more than we do. This living amongst death and disease is not my idea of living.

August 1943

Well, we are still in Tonchan, but due to many being transferred to other places, we are very few these days. About 33 to be exact, and we are not doing so badly as earlier. The main bulk of H.6 have gone further north, and I would have been with them had it not been for tonsillitis. Only the fit went up, and the last party to go had their baggage transported by river barge. This suited them for they had about 25 kilos to march, but unfortunately, the barge over-turned and all gear was lost. Some of them will be in a bad way for clothes these days, as a result.

Later in the month nearly all the sick (or the worst cases anyhow) went south to Camburi (Kanchanaburi). In a way I would have liked to go for, if nothing else, it would have meant getting away from this cholera infested place, but for other reasons I was as well pleased to stay, for rations had improved, and we were at last, and for the first time, getting meat. We had seven cows in a corral, later increased to thirteen, and as we killed twice weekly, we were not doing too badly. Vegetables were practically non-existent. Local purchase also was fair, so we were doing well, particularly as June's pay quickly followed May's.

Diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera were still with us, and amongst others. We lost two of our four Lt. Cols, (British). Among the lads who went north we lost Hec. Davidson, 2/29, a very nice chap, from cholera. We had a letter from Bill Harrison at Hintock, and they have lost 130 out of 600, so it looks as though the boongs have taken the disease up with them. We are almost free of them here now, thank goodness.

I have done very little work this month, three days I think, after my throat cleared up, but as the ulcer on the leg broke down again, I got the Dr. to treat it with M. & B., and I have been spelling it ever since. A little cow herding at night was my only occupation.

July 21st I did not forget, and by way by celebration I had a tin of herrings for dinner, and a hope that next year would see us having a real treat.

The railway is down and well north of us now, and although we are sending out small parties each day, it is fairly easy, generally speaking being maintenance work, as packing the sleepers and raising the line, etc.

September 1943

August, up to the 24th, was a good month, for I laid up most of the month to allow the ulcer to heal, and in the meantime we ate like lords. Plenty of meat and sugar, and even had a sing-song cum concert on two occasions. Local purchase is good, and I now have sold all my spare clothes, and belongings, so as to buy extra food. On the 16th we received a surprise gift from the I.J.A. in the shape of 60 cigarettes per man, white P.T. shorts, and a quantity of milk, sugar and Vit. B tablets. On the 17th the Nips found a deer staggering down the road, which had been mauled, I suppose by a tiger, and killed it. I was fortunate in acquiring quite a bit of it when cooked, and it was an absolute treat, for all the world like poultry.

Unfortunately, these good times came to an end on the 24th when nearly all the fit moved north to Lord know where. We were supposed to be travelling by train and/or barge but, true to form, all arrangements fell thru' and we walked for five out of the six days we were in reaching our destination. On the other day we travelled some 60 kilos by train.

The walk was an absolute nightmare, and never do I want to experience anything like it again. For the most part the road up was up to knee depth in mud and slush, cut through jungle, and the result was either very hot sun and no wind, or rain, and I do not know which was the worst. Water was the big problem, as all had to be boiled before use, and it was always around midnight before we received water and food at the end of a day's solid march.

The day's train travel was a relief, and we trained from Hintock to the end of the line. At Hintock we picked up two other parties of H force, including the men we sent up from Tonchin some time earlier. They had had a rough time, and all had lost weight. Alec Hutton had died (18 Aug 43). Bart Richardson had a rotten ulcer, and Maurie Felsch was a shadow of his former self.

On the second last day we came over (straight over) a mountain and it nearly laid the lot of us out; for with all our kit on we were practically exhausted. One of the B.O.R's died on the track from cholera, and his was not the only dead body to be seen just off the track these days. Human life is as cheap as it possibly can be especially among the coolies who are coming up in their thousands.

On 29th we arrived at our destination and had to hop in straight away to clear the jungle and undergrowth to make a camp. It was solid after what we had been through but it was done, and for the following few days it was gradually improved upon. There was plenty of rain and mud, the meals practically all rice, but this should improve as time goes on. I have a touch of beri-beri in the arms and legs and also on the last few days a bout of malaria. Plenty of quinine keeps it down however.

September 1943

On about 15th of the month, John Tidby, an English lieutenant and I, moved in with our gear to a Jap kitchen of all places, and for a time I was glad to have had the chance, for the beri-beri was rather bad and I think would have been worse, if I had had to go out on the bridge building. The job itself kept us going for at least 16 hrs. a day and the Nip was anything but decent. He had his moments however, and a few presentos in the way of pomelo, cigs, biscuits etc. came our way once in a while. The food was worse than we were receiving in camp, and in the five weeks that we were there, had fresh meat but three times. The No. 2 Nip cook was a mental case and one had to watch him when he had his moments. Each day we had half a dozen Indian coolies in to do the gathering of wood and water, but on 17th they contracted cholera in their camp and so were replaced by P's.O.W. On that day we also had our first burial from this camp; an English lad with cerebral malaria.

Towards mid-September rumour was rife that we were all to travel south inside a month so I hope it is right, even Camburi would be welcome and Changi would seem like home. They can have this place Thailand all to themselves. A batch of sick was evacuated to Camburi toward the end of the month.

October 1943

On October 3 the second sick batch went south and 70 odd replaced them on the 7th. On the same day I noticed my Omega was missing and felt certain which Nip had it. I kicked up a fuss and let it be known that I would see their Officer if it did not turn up, and later that day this same fellow very conveniently found it in a spot that I had searched well. I said no more about it for I was glad to get it back at all.

The monsoons seem to have finished and have had no rain. It is very hot and the river is so low that the barges cannot get up or down with supplies. This is bad luck for we received a well needed pay on 11th of \$30, a rise of \$15, and now there is practically nothing to buy. On the 5th, the railway went through for the first time, so perhaps the stories of us going south are true, for they will not need us here much longer now. Work on the railway has been rather speedo, but now has quietened down considerably. By 22nd Jack and I were fed up and were replaced in the kitchen by O.R's when we moved back to the camp. We enjoyed a two day rest before going out on the road again and it was lovely to just lie around and do nothing.

After this Tidby stayed in with bad legs and I joined Dowie's (Don Dowie RAAF and post war to graduate as a doctor) parties out on the bridge. It was a real break and I almost enjoyed it. Work was not too hard, the weather not too hot, and by 31st we had only half day to finish the thing off. We were able to have a swim after work each day and that was a boon.

The 25th saw the arrival of Sept. pay, so I now have about \$70 but there is nothing to buy; and am hoping for the trip to Camburi in the near future. Rumours of a move are very strong but I doubt if anyone knows when we are to move. On the same night a Dutch lad with his guitar, came into our tent, and we had quite a musical evening.

November- 1943

As all the work on the line was now finished it was only a matter of when we moved; and on the 5th the first party left. We, the last party, left on 8th and had five kilos to walk to the siding, to which we had to walk first with the heavy baggage and then return for our own. Train arrangements were bad (as usual) we finished up sleeping on the siding that night, and left the following day after fuelling and watering a steam engine that had been lying there for weeks. Travelled slowly all the way down due to danger of derailling, spent the first night at Consio (could be Kinsaiyok - about 170 Km from Banpong), left shortly after daybreak and arrived at Camburi at 1 a.m. the following morning, hungry, as we had only the one meal in the three days. We were met by trucks and run to the fit camp where we stayed until 19th, and gorged ourselves on canteen goods. George Mansfield (could be VX63707 Lieutenant 8 Division Signals) and I spent \$63 in that time, and to be able to eat plenty of fish, eggs and fruit again was great. We received October pay.

On the 19th 500 of us left by train for Singapore, and great was the joy to be leaving Thailand. The casualties had been tremendous, a list of "H" force dead at Camburi totalled nearly 900, which was about one-third of the force. "F". force casualties will be close to 2,000. For five days we lived on the train, but it was a little more comfortable than the trip up as the weather was cool, and we had a lot less kit. Eats became dearer as we came south, and the misery and lack of activity in Malaya was most apparent – no traffic on the roads, and the villages and kampongs very dead. A lot of new ground had been opened up for the growing of padi and vegetables, but otherwise the country looked the same.

Arrived Singapore at 6 p.m. Nov. 24th, transported by truck, not to Changi as we expected, but to the camp at Syme Road which was quite good in spite of the bugs. Plenty of huts and well spaced, we

could move rather freely. We now had Italian prisoners quite close to us but, of course, had no communication with them.

After two days the second 500 arrived from Camburi, and on that day, 26th, all officers were segregated from the men, and we moved over to other huts about ¼ mile from the troops. This compliance to International Law, after all this time, seemed strange, but it should be better. A canteen, run by the Malays, came into being, but the prices were terrible, and I kicked myself hard for not bringing more foodstuffs from Thailand. Eggs were 40 cents each instead of 10 or 8 cents. Bananas 7 cents – 1 cent. Sugar \$1.20 per lb. and Guala M. \$1.60.

At the present time it looks as though we will not be working except for ourselves, we have to run a pig farm, fowl run and vegetable gardens, so here's hoping. It's about time anyway. Sunday 28th we had Church parades, and we are settling down to yet another phase of P.O.W. life.

January, 1944

Another year has passed, and one wonders just how much longer it will be. I feel my poor old mother must be feeling it, to say nothing of my Moira Helen. It is a lot harder for them.

Quite early this month mail arrived out from Changi, and I received only three, one each from Mother, Babe and Avon. They had taken up to 15 months to arrive, but were none the less welcome. All were written August and Sept. 1942, but some were more fortunate than I, for some letters were dated as late as Jan. 1943.

The month has passed very quickly, and we are settled down nicely. The camp is now a few thousand strong, due to more parties arriving down from Thailand. Some have gone straight to Changi, a lot are still sick, but it appears all P's.O.W. are to be out of Thailand by early New Year. I am having a lot of trouble with inflammations on the body, due to blood disorder, but I suppose it will clear up one of these days.

Early in the month we received 500 ducklings (day old) from the I.J.A. but they all died within a few days. The chickens which arrived later are doing alright however. The garden also is taking shape.

On the 8th, the anniversary of the outbreak of war, all officers were paraded and listened to a talk by the Japanese officer in charge of the camp. He appears to be not a bad sort, and has shown his willingness to help us in many ways since we arrived. We also received our Nov. pay, \$30, the same day.

The following day, 9th, we were once more allowed a 24-word message to our next-of-kin, and one wonders if they are arriving home O.K., and, if so, if they are any quicker than home letters to us. It is hard to write 24 words when one could easily write as many thousands.

Things went smoothly and quietly, every p.m. free, until Xmas, and on the 25th we had a really good day. Tim Keagan and I had been brewing our liquor during the month, and had some good pineapple wine during the day. We have a really first class cook in Lt. Cameron-Smith, and he and the cooks did a great job. Xmas dinner at 6 p.m. was a revelation, considering our conditions. We had soup, fish, meat, sweets (2), savouries and sweet coffee and milk. Ronnie Horner turned on a concert during the afternoon which was quite good, and in the a.m. we went to church.

After our dinner, which was set outside and at which we were waited on by the batmen, we waited on the boys while they had theirs, and as there was plenty over, they had a royal feed, and then started a sing-song which continued for a few hours. Altogether a successful day, the rain, which is almost a daily affair, having held off.

My thoughts were very much of home during the day, especially early morning when I pictured the scene in the Wenborn's front bedroom, and I would have given £'s to have been there. As for the midday dinner, well!!

On the 28th we received Dec. pay, which is very prompt, let's hope they keep it up. A Red Cross ship is in, so in the New Year we are hoping for all kinds of good things in the edible line, to say nothing of drugs and hospital gear, which is badly needed.

Feb. 1st, 1944

Three years now since we left Bonegilla and said goodbye to everyone. Poor old Moira, it must be a darn sight longer for her than for me, for although it is very monotonous these days, at least I've had experiences that helped pass the time earlier.

Well, our Red Cross ship did not turn up, or if it did, they are a long time getting goods to us, for we have had nothing yet. Something must have arrived, however, for the Americans received their second parcel a week or so ago. (As yet we have received no parcels).

The camp seems to be running fairly smoothly now in spite of it being very much over-organized. Prices are very high in the canteen for the goods that we can buy, and when the Chinese New Year came round last month prices soared even higher. Ronnie Horner has a concert party under way and we have a variety show every Saturday night. Props are the main trouble, but these will come I have no doubt. Last Monday we had a musical with two very good pianists. Last night, Jan. 31 being Princess Julianna's birthday, the Dutch put on a concert after having had the day off. The "Flying Dutchman" our cafeteria cum snack-bar, is well patronized and it is very pleasant to wander down after check parade for coffee and what have you.

For the first couple of weeks I was working the mornings in the garden, but a double cyst that was worrying me sent me over to Kevin Fagan (Medical Officer NX70643). He gave me a local and cut them out at the same time opening a nasty boil in the middle of my back. Since then I have had a series of boils and with the lack of supplies to dress them with, they are taking their time in healing. I think they are on the mend now however and I won't be sorry when all these small troubles come to an end. It is nearly all a matter of the blood being in such a filthy condition, which a run of good food would, I feel sure, clear up in no time.

The weather is very good, and in spite of the last two months being the wettest of the year normally, we have had next to no rain. At the present time the moon is on the make, so each night after lights out, Bob Bowman, Wally Cliff, Mick Waters, Sam Olsen and myself sit out on the veranda and yarn till all hours. Every night I travel home and wonder how everyone is; and sometimes wish that "M" could be here with me. Tropical nights certainly take a lot of beating, and now after nearly three years even the climate generally seems really very good.

Lesley and Jean were both in my mind last month when their respective birthdays came round, and with an ounce of luck I hope to be home for their next. What an experience it will be to get back. I never get tired of thinking about it.

Rumours are rife in the camp re affairs in Europe. But it is very hard to know how much credence to put on them. There is more mail in, however, which we should get shortly, and they are certainly worth the waiting for, in spite of the fact that they take so long in arriving. Let's hope these are more recent.

Our pay arrived on the 28th, and very welcome too. A change this month, for we received the full \$40 with no deductions for C.M.F., that source being now derived from officers' bank balances. It is a very good idea, good for Col. Newey, for not only do we receive more as individuals, but the C.M.F. receives nearly twice as much (some \$8,000).

Educational classes are also starting up, languages mainly, and occasional evenings popular talks take place in various huts. Have had a good lecture by Wally Cliff on his P.O.W. experiences in Germany 1917-18, and Ron Wait last Wednesday on Japan. I personally have been filling in a lot of time playing chess. Opponents are plenty for the Dutch are keen players.

Feb. 15th, 1944

Two years P.O.W. , and it certainly does not seem so long. There is a great feeling of optimism throughout the camp, due to all kinds of good tidings from the other side. Furphies are rife, and seem to emulate from things said and done from the Green House. Lord only knows if they are true. The main thing to happen this month so far is a letter from Moira (No. 4). I was very pleased to see that it was fairly recent, being written June 30, 1943, but why had they still not heard officially that I am here? There is now a big gap in the letters, for none of my others were written later than Sept. 1942, but they may yet turn up.

At long last I contacted Hector Cowell (a nephew of Mrs. Gillham), his cousin being at Blacka Mati. H.C. is quite well, and we had quite a yarn one afternoon.

On the 8th I went down with malaria again, and this time had a proper go. Seven full days of a burning fever, sweats, rigors, and what have you, so that yesterday, when I could get up without nearly passing, I felt I was made. As it happened, yesterday was the day the eye specialists came over from Changi, so in the hopes of seeing Joe Vincent, I strolled over. He had not come out, however. Called in at the M.I.R.(Medical Inspection Room) on the way back and had my back dressed, and it is coming along no end. The Dr. also gave me 15 Atebrin to take for the malaria.

On 13th we signed the pay mandate for Feb., and were also given orders by the I.J.A. that all ranks had to write an essay on one of various subjects, viz.,

Britain's aim in the war

Experiences on first meeting the Japanese.

Point of view of war

Any battle in which a comrade was killed. And one or two others.

They are funny people. One never knows what to expect next. Some of these essays will be funny, I bet.

Feb. 16th

Have just finished a beautiful meal – very tasty. Due, no doubt, to the percentage of meat that we seem to be getting these days – even a few ounces per person makes all the difference. Feeling a whole lot better today, the fever seems to be gone, and my back is just about right again. Bought some sugar, \$2 lb. Prices are terribly high. Last night I received a note from Major Glyn White at Changi. I would like to get out there for a few days and see a few of my friends again.

Today I took delivery of an oil colouring picture of Moira which I had done by one of the boys, and which he took from a couple of snaps which I have had all along. It is very good considering. At first I thought it rather severe, and made you look a little old, Babe dear, but after a while it did not seem so bad at all.

Thurs. 17th

Listened to a very interesting lecture last night by Ken Luke, a F.M.S.V.F.(Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces), on an experience he had when a ship on which he was travelling to England on leave last Feb., 1941, was sunk in the Atlantic. Canteen prices are getting worse, and today had to pay 50 cents lb. for bananas and 45 cents pipe tobacco. Our pay will not be much good to us shortly.

Sunday 20th

A wet Sunday afternoon, and doing little else but sleep. I spent the a.m. making up a frame to take Babe's picture, using the celluloid from my cap as a glass front. It really looks very good now, and I like it a lot. Yesterday I had my shorts and jacket repaired and patched so am set up for clothes once

again. Have just finished reading "Insanity Fair"; but much prefer "Inside Europe". After reading such books there is no doubt that our own country is something to fight and stick up for. Hungry as a lion these days, and the appetite never seems to be satisfied.

Monday 21st

Today I went down to the garden to do a little work, this being the first time for some five weeks. I was cleared from the Dr., and I'm hoping it will be the last time I have to see him. Still receiving dressings for my back, however. Was so hungry by 4 p.m. that I went down to the Flying Dutchman and spent a half dollar on myself. So nearly broke now that I'm dwelling on pay day. Ralph Spark approached me today re taking the job of welfare officer for No. 6 Area, but after thinking it over, I refused it. I don't feel like going back to living with the medical profession again. The nights under these black-out conditions are terrible, there being little else to do but think of home and when we are to get out of this, and although this is pleasant in some respects, it makes one very discontented, and time seems to hang so.

Wed. 23rd

It has been raining most of the afternoon and evening, and so the check roll-call was cancelled. Spent the evening listening to a very interesting talk by Lt. Kompe on a trip he did through the Sikkim Himalayas. He is a geologist in civil life. Had a great feed tonight as I got among the lags, and for the first time in days felt satisfied after a meal. It appears from the Shonan Shimbun of recent date, seen by one of the Dutch officers, that activity is now around the Carolines as well as the Marshalls so that is good. Prof. Roberts' show, "Cinderella and the Magic Soy Bean", commenced last night at the new Barn Theatre and is quite successful. I will see it before Saturday, as that is the last day.

Friday 25th

Nothing out of the ordinary the last few days. Very wet, rain every afternoon and night. Was stranded at the Flying Dutchman this afternoon on account of rain, and it cost me 45 cents for eats. Purchased a season ticket for the theatre (1 dol. for ten shows). Unfounded rumours are flying thick and fast, dealing mainly with a move of P's.O.W. to various places such as Japan, Africa, South America, etc. The funny thing is that people believe them. Walked up with Tim Keegan, and had a yarn with Harry Bowell of the Indian Army Ordnance Corps.

Sunday 27th

Last night being the last night of "Cinderella" I went along and enjoyed it. An absolute burlesque, the main theme being the same, but characters such as the King of Camburi, Groucho Marx, Hitler's Brown shirts, etc., being brought into it. It filled in the night very well. Today I went to church, the first time for weeks (Moirra will be very surprised when she hears of all these church-goings, I guess), and after lunch passed down to the Flying Dutchman to take part in a simultaneous chess match. Two Dutchmen, Lts. Smitts and Van Koorst, each took on twelve players and they did fairly well, Smitts being the better. I was one of the 12 playing Smitts, and forcing him to resign quite early. I sat on for a couple of hours watching the other games. An interesting afternoon. Went down after mess again to see the drawing of a raffle that was run for a set of chess pieces and which were hand-carved by one of our sappers. I was not the lucky winner, however. Had a snack, and returned to the hut to read. Pay day tomorrow, I hope.

Tues. 29th

Another month gone, and time going very quickly. Yesterday, by way of a surprise, a quantity of American Red Cross supplies arrived in camp, and was distributed today. The Americans here were given one parcel each, and the rest divided. It was mainly food stuffs, milk and Vitamin C tabs and a few other items went direct to the hospital, and most of the rest we voted to our cook-houses so that we should have more tasty meals for the next few days. Such items as cigarettes, chocolate and butter, we took as individual issues. The taste of a good cigarette again, oh boy! Have smoked half already. This evening our pay arrived, so if anything comes into the canteen, will be OK again for a few weeks. Unluckily, due to lack of firewood, the Dutchman cannot make anything to eat. All we can get now is coffee without sugar, and tea. This, we hope, is only temporary.

Wed. 1st March 1944

After tiffin we drew our individual ration of chocolate and soap from the Red Cross, and the excitement it caused was rather strange. Everyone laughing and talking, and perhaps an outsider would consider it childish to become excited over such a small thing. It was, I suppose, a psychological reaction on coming in contact once again with the outside world. Anyhow, the taste of chocolate once more was a pleasant experience. Being Wednesday, we had a lecture in the hut, this time by a Dutch Dr. Betes. This afternoon I went down to the canteen to purchase sugar and peanuts - prices are terrible.

Friday 3rd

Getting plenty of rain, usually every afternoon, and the garden is looking well. Played solo last evening, and all finished fairly even, lost only 8 cents.

A big squabble is in progress at present. Although we, as officers, increased our donations to CM.F. by some \$4,000, it is being spent in a little over half the month, and it looks now as though they are going to come on us for at least another \$4,000 per month, Roly Oakes taking a dictatorial attitude, which quite a lot do not appreciate. Big meeting of representative officers due on Sunday. Personally, I hope to see quite a few changes, both in the purchasing and administrative directions. The best thing for the whole camp would be if all these spare Lieutenant Colonels were sent off to Changi, and left Col. Newey to administer the camp without the underlying enmity of the others. It is rather amusing to see how these so-called seniors carry on. The day brightened at our evening meal, however, when Bob Hughes did a really good job, and we had a particularly tasty meal. Two or three of our Red Cross items had been included and it made all the difference, (cheese, coffee, bully beef). Yesterday I played my first game of chess against Smits in a small tournament we arranged between six of us, and he beat me after a fairly good game. They are all good players so I do not expect to get very far.

Sunday 5th

A quiet afternoon – have just finished reading a book and as they are as scarce as anything else, it is hard to find something to read. Food supplies are also getting worse, and one has to queue up these days if one expects to get anything. This morning I took along a book and waited an hour before opening and all I could buy was one packet of cigars and 1 lb. of bananas. Spent last night at the “Barn” and saw a really first class show in “Man of Destiny” a short play written by G.B.S. Once again the moon is on the make, so we are often up till all hours yarning in the white moon light.

Wednesday 8th

Have done very little since Sunday. The weather is beautiful and I really enjoy the couple of hours work in the garden. Played solo on Monday and Tuesday nights – having a bad night on Monday, but last eve took Ben Olson’s place at 10 o’clock, and by lights out had most of it back. The lecture tonight is on the Battle of Britain by some Flt. Sgt. so should be interesting. Today I finished reading a book “Love in the Sun”, and enjoyed it no end, probably because it reminded me so much of Moira Helen. A better book than the title suggests.

Saturday 11th

To the “Barn” last night for the Variety Show, but most of it was old stuff and not too good. Played chess on different days during the week, beating Alan Carthew and Sweep (Dutch), and being beaten by Peter Brotchie. The camp is a hive of industry these days for, beside the main gardens, everybody, including O.R’s, are hard at work on private ones. Personally I’m too lazy, or is it that I think we may not be here by the time they are ready to crop. Have been thinking of investing in a couple of ducks (an egg or two would be very welcome), but \$15 to \$20 is a little steep, even week old chicks are at \$2.50.

Sunday 12th

Well, I spent a very pleasant, although expensive, day today. Morning quiet, but in the p.m. played in a “gong” chess match at the “Dutchman”. We had 24 players, knock-out and ten seconds a move. Smits won eventually from Van Voorst, and so won a bottle of camp brewed gin and a tart. Second prize was a bottle of ditto wine, and Brochie, third, won ten free cups of coffee at the “Dutchman”. I got as far as the second round only. Played solo in the evening, trying to win back the money I had spent in eats during the afternoon. The Syme Road Turf Club ran a book on the tournament, and the fellow I booked would have paid \$7.60 if he had won.

Thursday 16th

We have had no rain for days now, and the garden soil, being mainly clay, is now set hard, and a fair terror to work. Have had the electricians in, so now have the fans working as well as lights. Light is still a problem though, as globes (if obtainable) are \$15 to \$20 per. I came up from the garden on Tuesday feeling OK, but within ¼ hour went down with another bout of malaria (6th attack). It certainly takes on suddenly. Ran a temp for the rest of the day, and sweated nearly all night, and all the time had a vicious headache. Don't feel so bad today, but still light-headed. Ferguson was to have given a lecture last night on the bagpipe, but nobody turned up, so we had a discussion on post-war problems until lights out. Orchids are in full bloom again, and there is a large bunch on the table in front of me now.

Saturday 18th

The fever is on the wane once more, but have had headaches and light-headedness still. Yesterday a large parade was called for a new Japanese General who came to inspect the camp. Gave the usual short speech about mutual co-operation. The lads had 3½ hours standing in a very hot sun, but, lucky Ronald, my waning fever prevented me from making a personal appearance. Tonight I'll be off to see “Journey's End”, at the “Barn”, and, by all accounts, it is very good. Sugar has gone up to \$3.20 per lb., and weed to 75 cents. It won't be long now.

Tuesday 21st

One week to pay day, thank goodness. I'm nearly broke. Last Saturday's show was really good. Spent all Sunday afternoon and night playing solo – lost \$1.30. Played again tonight with Ralph Spark, Micky and Le Vine and lost another \$1. I'm getting as bad as Moira H. at gambling. Played Peter chess (ladder) and he won.

Thursday 22nd

Tonight I went for a walk to No. 6 Area to see Alex Galvin. He is set for Changi within the next few days. Called in at the “Dutchman” going, and coming, and spent a few of my last cents. Last night listened to a lecture on oil by Lt. Kompe, but as he tried to cover too much ground, it was not so interesting.

Sunday 26th

Went on weekly visit to the “Barn” and saw a first-class vaudeville show, “Rag Bag Revue”. Today we signed pay sheets because of the new idea of the I.J.A. Apparently the fact that we officers are paying some \$8,000 per month to C.M.F. is considered an insult to the normal rations, so that now it seems we will not be allowed to pay anything in this respect. Also Hut 44 has to be vacated to allow more I.J.A. guards in. Perhaps this is a good sign. I'm playing rotten chess lately – lost a ladder game to Vern Carn on Friday and only just managed to win from Judge Bidulph ce soir.

Friday 31st

Pay arrived promptly on the 28th, and as usual was very welcome. True to form our “seniors” deducted \$10 and \$5. This time for canteen capital. However, this time it is only on loan. Went down to the “Dutchman” with “Taffy” Jones in the evening, and succeeded in lowering quite a few trilets (cakes). Yesterday we had another visit from the I.J.A. General i/c when everybody had to be working, etc. A few of us were in the hut, however, when he came in. Questioned Willie Easen and

the Judge about our rations and treatment in Thailand, etc. etc. During the afternoon I went down with another dose of Malaria, but this morning I feel not too bad.

The digging of beds for the planting of castor oil seeds has started. (Every man has to plant 2 seeds and maintain them). At 2 p.m. we are expecting a batch of Italian prisoners in, and this time they will be close to us, and a mingling of the clans will be permitted.

April, Saturday 1st

Five years ago tonight, and somehow or other I seem to recall a nice warm evening on the bench at Middle Brighton, and if I could only be suddenly transported there again, I guess I'd do exactly the same again. This year though I'll be sitting in the "Barn" seeing a play called "Hope".

Yesterday some 16 Italians moved in to Hut 2, and this time were allowed to mix with us and appear on our roll-call parades. They are all naval people and looked quite smart and clean in their "whites". So very different from our lads after two years and Thailand thrown in for good measure. They are joining our Mess and have already contributed a supply of their tinned rations. N.S.B.

Tuesday 4th

After five days my 7th Malaria attack seems to be broken –have lost quite a little weight again, but will soon put it back I hope. I was disappointed at having to miss last Saturday's play "Rope". Was rotten with fever instead, so had a pleasant anniversary of our engagement. Yesterday we had another collect for the kids in the jail, and raised quite a few dollars. I hope it does them some good, poor devils! It is bad enough us being shut away for years, but why it is necessary to lock children (new born and otherwise) up in a jail is beyond me. There is something wrong with the world when things like that are allowed to happen. A new work party of 6 officers and 200 men went out for the first time day.

Good Friday, 7th

I was thinking a lot of all at home on Wednesday, being the birthday of the Omega, Mother's birthday and Avon's wedding anniversary. Listened to a lecture in the evening on "Tibet" by Maj. Cable I.A.O.C.(probably Indian Army Ordnance Corps). Yesterday Bob Bowmen had an audition for one of our shows and will play the hostess of an In, in a play now in rehearsal. He is being barracked no end. All work parties are having a holiday today, and there are no roll calls. Of the two work parties that go out daily, one lot is working at Krangi off loading stores, and the other is at the station, handling tin and other metals, so evidently the I.J.A. is getting as much from the country as they can still.

Sunday 9th

Easter is over one again for us. Work parties are out again tomorrow after a holiday on Friday and today. I went to Kirk both days, and tomorrow will start in the garden after my last malaria. On Saturday we had a proper "Sumatra", and boy, it was cold! Spent most of the day under my net. In the evening saw another good show at the "Barn" in "Music Thro' the Years". Bruno brought in some good stuff last night. Finns finished? Ninety thousand?

Wednesday 12th

Another Sumatra today – cold as the devil. Yesterday saw the segregation of the various areas, and we now parade at the "Dutchman", and orders and numbers are in Japanese. In the near future a party of 1,000 is supposed to be leaving here to work somewhere or other, and the "bore-hole" is that when the men are gone the officers will be shifted "Somewhere overlooking the Sea". Wally Cliff's birthday.

Monday 17th

Beautiful thunderstorm at present. Have been a daily event for the last few days. More rain falls in one shower than would in 6 months at home. Went to the "Barn" on Saturday to see "Nuts and Wine", and liked it not very much. The rumours of 1,000 party a week or so ago appears to be true although it is not known for what or where. The O.R.'s appear to be for Changi, and the Officers

(200) sometime after, but our destination is as yet unknown. Personally I don't mind whether I go or stay, but as only the fit are to go, it makes one wonder if it be a work party or not.

Thursday 20th

On Tuesday I went down with another dose of malaria (my 9th). Was playing Dr. Bates a ladder game of chess when it came on. Dr. Dixon came up after roll call and decided the best thing was for me to go to hospital and receive a proper treatment course. Moved over to hospital on Wednesday morning, and on Thursday received an intramuscular injection of quinine. In the same ward was Judge Bidulph, Tony Trench, Bowring, Wisdom, Dudgeon, Bateman and Maj. Davis, so we were quite happy. A party of 700 for Changi was to leave today, but was cancelled, and as far as we know there is a similar number due in from Thailand with some infectious disease.

Saturday 22nd

A party of 700 other ranks left for Changi today and were replaced by a similar number of light duty personnel. Officers had to go out on wood trailers to make up the numbers. Yesterday we had our first meal of maize meal which is to take the place of soya bean. Meals here in the hospital leave much to be desired, and I'll be glad to get back to the lines again, which should be in a day or so now. Will go to the show tonight to see "Bird in Hand", where Bob Bowman and Doug Forbes make their debut.

Tuesday 25th

Anzac Day and the Japs have given the A.I.F. a half holiday. This day last year in Changi, Blackjack all but promised the boys that they would be home by this time this year. Returned to hut 8 from hospital yesterday and glad to be back to the better cooking. I feel OK but the treatment there was little better than if I had not gone in. Rumour last night (and it seems it may be true) is that within fourteen days we will be changing places with the civilians in the Changi Gaol. Not a very bright prospect but if it is the only means of the women and kids there getting even to here, where there is more freedom, then I won't mind so much. Two years in a place like that must be warping those kids' minds no end. We are led to believe there are twenty bags of mail for the A.I.F. in Changi – hope it is true.

Thursday 27th

Preparations are in full swing for our change over. Tents are being erected in '6' area and high fences are going up throughout the camp separating the various areas. Pleasant weather and I am feeling fit again, but as we are expecting to have to give up the garden in a day or so I decided not to go down and work but to have a rest in the hope that the malaria will not return. Last night listened to an interesting talk by Major Harrison, British M.P., on "Twenty one years of British Politics". Pay due tomorrow, and as usual am broke to the wide.

Monday May 1st

Another month and the air is alive. It has just come in that we are to be ready to move at a moment's notice to Curran Camp as a prelude to going to Japan. Actually everything was teed up for us to move on the 28th April, and we actually did move from our huts to another area, but no sooner had we moved than the order was rescinded, and we dragged everything back to our hut 8 again where we are at the moment. Civilian internees arrived here from the jail this a.m. so it really looks as though a move for us is imminent. Pay arrived on time, and once again we had a subscription for the kids at the jail. I have had a nasty cold for the last few days. Today it is a little better, but I still have a nasty sore on my heel to keep me going. Sometimes I wonder if there is any end to all these complaints, as I seem to have had a moan practically continuous for 11 months now. I am properly fed up and will be darn glad when it is all over, and even that seems as far away as ever.

Wednesday 3rd

We moved on the afternoon of the 1st, but only to another Hut 41, where we are now cooped up like fowls. The male civilians have arrived, but as yet no women. We are due to go to Changi any day, so our cramped quarters are only temporary.

Friday 5th

We moved from Syme Road this morning, and by 11 a.m. we were in our new quarters, this time right into the Changi jail, behind the bars. The civilians are still coming into Syme Road, the women and kids being still here. I have a berth in one of the hospital blocks, and it is N.T.B. We believe that this is also temporary, as the officers will probably be housed just outside the jail wall shortly, leaving this to the O.R.'s. Guess if one is here for long a short stretch once in a while when one gets home will be child's play.

Sunday 7th

Things are still at sixes and sevens, but slowly settling down. The women and kids in the other half of the jail began moving yesterday, and from one second floor building in our block, we can look over into their yard. It was good to be able to just see them for none of us had as much as seen white people for so long. They looked well, but it is hell to think of them having been cooped up here for over two years. Our messing is sadly lacking in bulk, the meals to date being a pap for breakfast, a very watery stew or soup and rice for the other two meals. A little meat in the soup makes it tasty, however. Blackjack and others from Changi were in for a look around yesterday, as all the people from there are supposed to be moving in before the 20th. Officers went out into the gardens for the first time yesterday, and also a canteen was started up. Only cigars and smokes are available, and prices are scandalous. I played a modified game of pontoon on Friday night, and won \$5.

Wednesday 10th

At 10 a.m. yesterday we were suddenly told to be ready to leave for Selarang by 2.30 p.m., and about 3.30 p.m. 180 officers moved over and a large number of O.R.'s replaced us. It was for all the world like returning home to be able, after just on 12 months, to see and speak to all again. I returned to the Con. Depot, and all is altered here now, as everybody is in this area together. I saw Joe Vincent for a few minutes, and after a good meal saw quite a lot of the 2/9th N.C.O's. Walked with Harold, and listened to the music at the Con. Depot for a while.

Thursday 11th

A bright day today, a letter and a photo from Babe. The fact that the letter was 20 months old did not seem to matter much, and never was I so pleased about a photo. Just to see familiar faces was a tonic, and I could not stop looking at it. I like the new swim suit. Spent yesterday looking up old friends, including a few in hospital, and after the evening meal walked over to 2/26 Bn. and said "Hello" to the boys there. All of them came through Thailand OK. Listened to music at the Y.M.C.A. later, but can 't say I am over keen on the latest jazz stuff from America.

Sunday 14th

Spending a nice, quiet lazy life here at the Con. Depot. Up on the roof sun bathing quite a lot, and still meeting old friends. Max Winchester (NX76610 Dentist) and I went for a long walk last night, saw Scotty Uroe, and then went up to the A.G.H. mess, listened to some gramophone music, and had a yarn to Charles Huxtable (Medical Officer).

Wednesday 17th

One year today since we left for Thailand, and it is good to think that that is behind us. In the meantime I am having a good old rest, spending a lot of time on the roof sub-bathing and feeling very fit. Meals are a bit light, and I am always hungry, so if I had the cash I would be into some of these fowls and ducks that the people who remained here seem to have plenty of, and boy, did they stick to them. Weighed myself yesterday, 13½ stone, so I am keeping much the same. A further 18 bags of mail in, and distribution has commenced. As yet have had no luck. Have seen Ted a few times, and am going over to their quarters to listen to a lecture tonight. He is going to Krangi when the hospital moves next week.

Sunday 21st

I had a very quiet birthday yesterday, being without money could not even have a cigar. There are certain to be some big celebrations made up when we get out of this mess. Spent most of the day on

the roof, and after dinner went up and had a yarn with Bernie Quirk. He looked well and just the same. I just missed two birthday presents, which, however, arrived today. No. It was Babe's January '43 letter, and a very bright spot it was too. She had just heard after 11 months that we were OK which possibly made her write in a more light-hearted vein. My second present was another dose of this blasted malaria, after I thought I had tossed it.

Monday 22nd

Received another letter from Moira Helen today, my seventh, dated August '43, and glad to know all is still well especially as Max Winchester, after waiting over two years, had word that his child was stillborn, and nearly lost his wife. I am glad now that we decided the way we did. Malaria not too bad today, but sweated gently all day, and had the usual vicious headache.

Thursday 25th

As Moira says in her last few letters, time is flying, and nearly another month is gone. All Selarang is a hive of industry these days, buildings being pulled down and carted piecemeal by trailers to the jail area, there to be rebuilt. Permanent buildings are slowly emptying of furniture, beds, etc., and being dumped at the jail. Personnel are starting their packing in preparation for our move back there, and some of those officers and men who have never left Changi had everything but the kitchen sink. My bout of malaria seems to be OK today, thank goodness. Had a good day yesterday, received another two letters from M.H. (her Feb. and March '43 letters), and like her January one were very bright. Reading between the lines of those three letters it is easy for me to see a very relieved mind, after having had to wait for so long for news of my whereabouts, etc. I only hope that it is not true that news arrived home re the horrible thing that was Thailand, for that would start the anxiety over again. I have been toying with the idea for a holiday for us both when I get home, and, Moira willing, had decided on the Barrier Reef. Speaking to Ted yesterday, he happened to mention a holiday for himself and Thel and he has the same idea for a holiday as I have.

Friday 26th

Col. Webster left today for Krangi as C.O. of the hospital to be established there. I received what I think will be the last letter of this batch, a very nice Dec. '42 letter from Moira. Strange that all letters received this time were from her, and none from either Mother or Avon.

Saturday 27th

Contrary to my forecast of yesterday, I received two more letters from Moira today. These were Oct. and Nov. '42, and so filled another two gaps, a photograph (they are worth a whole letter). I have never seen a better photo of Babe, it is great to see familiar faces. A nice hot day and I spent a few hours on the roof sunning the body. Later in the day we received May pay, \$24, compared to \$40 in Syme Road last pay. Further movement to Krangi has ceased until further notice. These fellows are the limit, they never seem to know what they are doing from one moment to the next.

Monday 29th

Things are all upside down, the whole place is disintegrating. During the last couple of days about 100 truck loads of personnel and gear have gone to Krangi, a whole heap move to the jail, and it looks as though only the A.M.C. details will be left here in a few days. I was given a job today by Col H.F. Summons., who is o/c, as Coy. Cond. to move 150 unfit British O.R.'s. This means I will not be going to the jail until the hospital moves, and that suits me.

June 2nd

All who are going to the jail have now gone, and we who are left (i.e. the hospital and non-comb s. 1600) are now in the barrack square, and wired in. Things generally are very quiet after all the movement.

June 3rd

Our now small mess of nine is functioning very well and new cooks in makes all the difference. Tonight, it being a meat day, we had what very nearly approached a civilized meal. Soup, a slice of

roast meat, baked vegs., boiled greens, boiled rice pudding and sauce, pineapple and tart. I had not seen a slice of roast meat since July last in Thailand. In the evening listened to recorded music.

Friday 9th

Everything sliding along nicely these days – very quiet and nothing much doing, but that is just how I like it. We were beginning to think that we would not be moved to the jail by the 15th, but yesterday the Japs reaffirmed it. As yet they are far from being ready down there though. Have played a few games of bridge lately with Reg. Hill R.A.O.C. and last evening played him chess. Had a hot bath yesterday (scabies) my first since 1941. Today we heard what we have been waiting three years to hear. Published in the Shimbun a brief account of the invasion forces in France. God speed them. I hope it means the shortening of our stay here, and that we may be home again in the not too far distant future. Another bout of malaria.

Monday 12th

I have had a lousy three days with the fever, and as I have not had a rigor today it seems as though I may be finished with it for another couple of weeks. Feel very weak at the moment though. Joe Vincent took the first batch of sick to the jail today so it looks as though the move is on. Have had no further news of Europe, but I would give £'s for the Melbourne Herald for the next week or so. I certainly hope they are doing alright. Since hearing of the landing Helen darling, you seem nearer to me than you have for a few years.

Tuesday 13th

Received word that I move with most of the Coy of B.O.R's to the jail tomorrow a.m. Reg. Farndon goes as well. Guess I don't mind very much but I would have liked a couple more days to get over this bout of malaria. Swallowed one of my gold fillings yesterday, hope it is not too rich for me.

Thursday 15th

At last now everyone is out of Selarang and either settled or settling in the jail area. Once again I've fallen on my feet and have quarters in a room of a concrete building, electric light, tiled floors and all mod. cons. There only three such buildings, the rest being long atap roofed huts. Went back to the square today to fetch down 250 O.R's. Everyone working flat out to get the job of moving finished by tonight. Everything is upside down here of course but will soon straighten out.

Tuesday 20th

All are settling in nicely and things are pretty quiet. The drome parties are going out each day but otherwise all men are at work about the camp. Have played a couple of games of bridge. Saw Maj. Clarke (QX22806) yesterday re my skin trouble and he said that he would put me into hospital for proper treatment when he gets his ward going. I certainly hope the M. & B's and violet ray treatment has the desired effect.

Saturday 24th

Work around the camp is progressing slowly these days, otherwise it is very quiet. On Thursday eve Joe V., Bill Scollin, Reg Farndon and I went and listened to a talk by Lt. Col. Dillon (British Officer) on the Official Escape Party, and their experiences, and it was very interesting. Last night played Mahjong with the lads over in the lines. The mess here is terrible, I doubt if I've been in a worse, and I have been hungry for days. Let's hope it improves soon.

Wednesday 28th

For the first time since we became P's.O.W. we today had some excitement and it gave us our first concrete evidence that there is a war on, for this afternoon a party (mainly Dutch) were brought in suffering from various types of wounds, etc. They were part of a boat load of P's.O.W. being transported from Madang, Sumatra, to here, and had the misfortune to be torpedoed by one of our submarines. It was darn bad luck, but at least we know that our boats are on the job in these waters. At the moment Bert Nairn (WX11168) and Kev Fagan are flat out in the operating theatre. Pay day

tomorrow, and once again not before it is wanted. Our mess is still a minus number, but is a little improved in the bulk line.

July 44– Sunday 22nd

Well, Llew's and Avon's birthdays have come and gone once more, and I celebrated Avon's by getting another relapse of this cursed malaria. I had a terrific sweat last night, but today feel a little better although washed out.

Monday 3rd

I heard today that there was another large batch of mail in again, which is very good news indeed. Wish I had them now, as I feel I need something cheering, as I've felt lousy all day with the fever. Tinea and other skin trouble has been worrying me for some days, so tomorrow I go to hospital where I hope to get some better treatment. God knows it is long overdue – in the form of marmite and perhaps if Maj. Clark is prepared to give me his promised treatment, then a course of sulphanilamide may also be forthcoming. Reg Hill was up to see me tonight, and he is kept busy with the boiler at the jail.

Thursday 6th

Have been in hospital for a couple of days, and the fever has gone again, and I'm on marmite and rice polishing for the S. It is very sore at nights for some reason, and the last two nights I've slept but little. They have started to sort the mail, whacco!

Monday 10th

Still in hospital, and the tinea is not much better, so I'm spending a very quiet life just lying about.

Thursday 13th

Had the sirens wailing last night, so we were left in the dark from 9.30 p.m. We don't know whether it was a try-out or genuine, but hope for the latter. After a week in hospital, am beginning to get used to the lazy life. Played chess nearly all afternoon with Alan Collins, 5th Norfolks.

Sunday 16th

Life these days is very quiet, just lying in hospital, but had a slight diversion last night when first McIntyre R.A.F., who is very weak with fever, fainted whilst using the bottle and spread-eagled himself on the floor spilling the contents of the bottle over the patient in the next bed. Meanwhile, an asthmatic was causing the Dr. a certain amount of anxiety, and was wheezing like a broken down horse. Quite a little excitement! Last Thursday night I sneaked out to a concert and enjoyed it. Mail is being distributed daily after Jap censoring, but as yet have received none. It looks very much as though Avon and Mother had ceased writing. I guess the family is too keen to do the right thing, as others have received around 100 letters.

Tuesday 18th

For two days now I have been receiving ultra-violet rays on the skin, and should see improvement in a day or so. We were to have received a visit from the Jap general today but he did not turn up. Instead I received a very pleasant surprise by getting a letter from Auntie Vone, undated, but as she mentioned Babe's holiday at Macedon, I guess it was written late in 1942. Incidentally, it was the first I knew of Moira being at Macedon for, although she told me of her holiday, I did not know where. Plenty of optimism amongst the crowd these days again, probably all false though.

Wednesday 19th

Two very pleasant surprises in the form of two more letters, both from Moira Helen, her April and May 1943 letters, and they fill up the gaps to August 1943, with the exception of July. How I could use the hamper mentioned in the May letter. Have been continually hungry for weeks.

Sunday 23rd

For the life of me I cannot remember whether Babe's birthday is today or the 21st, but Many Happies whichever the day, dear. How I wish I was home to do something about it! Will be next year though. Believe there has been a change in the Jap cabinet, which is possibly a good sign. Yesterday I moved upstairs to allow Bob Kelsey (QX6461) to take my bed. He is back again with his leg. Played Mahjong with Bowman, Collins and Morelles, and then went down with yet another bout of malaria, which was not so bad this time although the temperature was 103. Had a good meal too, which I had to give away. Col. Newey has taken over representative officer from B.J., which I think may be a good move. He inspected the hospital today. Had a swine of a day – malaria.

Wednesday 26th

At last this attack of malaria has lifted, left me as weak as a kitten, a really bad relapse this time. Had a yarn to Maj. Cameron this morning, however, and this time he is going to give me an extended progressive course of atebtrin. Perhaps that will fix this thing until I get home which, we believe, may not be too long.

Later – Have just received Moira's July '43 letter, and Dec. '43 card. They certainly lift one out of the dumps. The letter was the only one I required to complete the sequence, so now have all letters from July '43 to Aug. '43, when, as far as we can gather, letters were replaced by cards. I echo your hope, dear, that I am home for all next year's birthdays and anniversaries.

Saturday 29th

Boy, am I happy, have just received another 30-word letter from the one and only dated Nov. '43, and it contained a wonderful snap. They are worth ten times their weight in gold. I liked it a lot, so much so that I showed it round the ward and Maj. Arthur Home (WX11151) made the remark "How funny it was that girl like that could marry a fellow like me". I quite agree, it certainly is one of the world's wonders. Am going down to listen to a debate tonight. W.O. Williams, 2 Con. Depot, died yesterday and was buried today. Dysentery, poor fellow, and it is bad luck to go out now that things seem to be looking up, as they are.

Monday 31st

Left hospital yesterday and we moved to a hut. It is quite a fair billet. Received 32 tabs Atebrin today to last me for two months. Went for a swim, was in charge of 300 men. Received a message from H.F.Summons (H.H.S.) just now to take charge again tomorrow. Not so good.

Wednesday August 2nd

I wonder where Dud had his birthday this year. Hope it was not New Guinea. I went swimming again yesterday, and it was quite good in spite of the mud bottom and tepid water. Having no swim suit it makes quite a sight to see the first rush for the water of some 400 to 500 bare tails. Saw Maj. Clark when I returned, and he has given me pills to take for my back. Mess meeting after lunch, and Lieutenants. now pay \$5 mess fees in lieu of \$6.20. This will help a lot. With a few others I have speculated in a sitting of eggs, and hope to hatch out a few birds. It means six months before we reap eggs, so I hope we are not too pessimistic, or optimistic as the case may be.

Friday 4th

I have fallen for the job of O.C. bathing parades for officers and O.R.'s of this group. Was definitely detailed this morning by H.F.S. and Glyn White, so it looks like a daily swim, except Wednesday and Sunday, for me. Today we caught countless whitebait at the water's edge, so will have quite a feed tonight. Played contract last night with Capts. Fonk, Wilkinson and Hill. Do a spot of gardening each day and feel rather fit again.

Tuesday 8th

Listened to an orchestral concert last night, and it was an excellent performance, just on 30 pieces and they are good. The weather is very hot these days, and am making the most of them by almost living in the sun, either gardening or swimming, and am feeling the benefit.

Thursday 10th

Celebrated our 4th anniversary today by sending off my fourth card home. Would not be at all surprised if I am home before it. It rained nearly all day, cancelling the swim parade, our first good rain for weeks. I went to the Road Show last night, and tonight Reg Hill will be up for bridge.

Sunday 13th

Have had a sore throat the last few days, and by yesterday it developed into a beautiful cold. Stayed in bed today and feel a lot better for it. Tonight I received a 30-word card from Avon dated Dec. '43, and more or less surprised to hear that Shirley was to be married in the New Year. I hope not too many more decide the same way, as I would like to be home for them. Really thought I would have heard of Les before Shirl. Making another effort to give up smoking as everything is getting so dear, and one just can't afford it – cigars 20 cents each, Java tobacco \$2 an ounce.

Thursday 17th

The no-smoking idea is working well, and I don't miss them so much. Played McIntyre chess in his quarters the other night, and last night listened to a quiz between a team of British and one of Australians. The rain drove us out before it was finished. During the afternoon a cricket match between England and Australia was held on the padang, and the Australians won by a few wickets. Was to collect a hen from Joe Vincent to sit on eggs for us last night, but she had gone off the brood apparently. They are very hard to get.

Saturday 19th

George Marsh secured another hen, and we should set hen with 15 tonight. In the meantime our first brood have hatched, and this morning the first seven chicks were there. Even hatching chickens is excitement these days. Am still taking the swimming parades, and do gardening for exercise and worms in the meantime. Jerry Veitch and five O.R's of the anti-malarial squad poisoned themselves a couple of days ago by eating a type of castor-oil nut, but luckily they got over it O.K.

Monday 21st

Last Saturday night went to a very good entertainment in "News of the World Magazine", in which six speakers gave graphic descriptions of some experience or happening of interest in their lives. Before going down played "Housey" for half an hour, and won \$2.50. N.S.B. Also last night I had another T.B. injection and have a dysentery to come. I should like a pound for every needle I have had since Nov. 1939. Swimming parades continue, and this week are in the afternoons. Our area for swimming has been fenced in with poles thus restricting the distance out, and it is no good in these shallow waters.

Wednesday 23rd

Well, I am 12 days overdue with my usual three-weekly attack of malaria, and I am feeling particularly well these last few days. Bed has no fascination for me at all, so my usual day of late has been all gardening and swimming. Yesterday I started to lay out a deck-tennis court and may finish it today seeing that there is no swim. Played "Housey" last night, won \$1.80, and then bridge as on the previous night. A sudden Sumatra last night ended all entertainment outside.

Friday 25th

I finished the court yesterday and obtained a ring from Ferguson. The swim in the p.m. was terrible, the weather being extremely hot, the water following suit, and it was not the least bit refreshing. We hatched out another 7 chicks yesterday, and last night I borrowed another hen from Joe to sit on a third setting. It is damned hard to raise chickens here.

Monday 28th

Joe's hen did not sit, so we are rather in a hole at present. Anyway it is beginning to look as though we will not need hens. We have had extremely hot days lately, and, as a result, I am as brown as can be, as I am out in it nearly all day, dressed only in a G string. Went to church yesterday for the first time to hear Padre Duckworth in his new chapel, and he gave a very good sermon. He is only a small

man, cox of Cambridge crew for a few years, but has a very strong voice, and he thinks very quickly. Actually I went twice, both morning and evening. A beautiful moonlight when I went to bed, but a very heavy rain storm blew up during the night.

September 3rd

Five years of war, let us hope it is the last full year. What I would give to be back where I was five years ago. It is a day very similar too. I have had another cold the last few days, but it is N.T.B. today. Yesterday the Java party, who were torpedoed arriving here some weeks ago, were warned to be ready to leave for Sumatra again at any time. Listened to a very interesting talk at night by a C.P.O. of H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" on the ship's activity and its sinking.

Wednesday 8th

Had an excellent swim yesterday, a very high tide, probably the best we have had. Actually, everything was of the best yesterday, the Dutch particularly were in fine fettle. It would appear that the setting of eggs we put down a few days ago will not net as much. I hope they don't. My own small garden is coming along slowly, and I am endeavouring to bring it along as fast as possible.

Friday 8th

Spent yesterday and today in bed trying to shake off a bad cold. As well as that the mouth and throat are very sore, due to lack of vitamins and tonsillitis. Started taking some grass extract today to help make up the lack of vitamins.

Tuesday 12th

Went to Coconut Grove last night for the weekly band concert, and as usual, it was good entertainment. The night before there was the usual road show. Was thinking, as I listened to the music, that if we were only receiving food of a more nutriment value, we would have little to complain of these days. There seems to be more freedom outside the wire, for every day one may see, down on the padang the boys playing either cricket, baseball, hockey, basketball, golf etc. Swimming parades are still to be had almost daily, and last night we in the wards here got together and had a laugh over the telling of a few shaggy dog stories.

Tuesday 19th

Still in hospital, but really not very bad, should be out soon. Went down to the Grove last night, and reheard Wally Cliff's lecture, and when I returned, after having supper of two doovers and tea, with Reg Hill, I found a letter-card waiting me from Dudley. I was pleased to hear from him, and should get a couple more, as I believe there is quite a lot of mail in. We heard a story last night of allied bombings of Camburi, Siam, and such is the irony of war, a lot of our lads, who escaped death by disease up there, have now been killed and wounded by our own bombs. It would appear that somewhere between 70 and 90 were killed, and a similar number injured. Our last batch of chickens are due out on Thursday, so should add a few more to the eight we have already.

Thursday 21st

Another red letter day yesterday, for I received another card and photo from Moira. She certainly looks good to homesick me, so I showed it round as usual, and felt a proud boy. Plenty of rain these days, but sitting up here in hospital worries me but little. Reg Wilkinson came in yesterday, and is in the next bed.

Friday 22nd

The mail is coming through nicely, and I received another card dated Dec. 14, 1943, from Moira Helen. Played "Housey" on Thursday night and collected \$3.

Tuesday 26th

Discharged from hospital today after 17 days. Looking forward to more mail and photos, as I believe there is still a good number to come. Later – have just received two more letters from Helen, both dated January, 1944, and containing a snap of Ronald and Jennifer – how the kid has grown, and

Jennifer looks as though there is nothing wrong with her. I am getting quite a collection of photos these days, thanks to Moira, and quite the envy of a number of people who are not so fortunate.

Sunday, 1st October 1944

Yet another month has passed, and it is marvellous how we keep on hoping and wishing it will be the last. The moon is coming to the full again, and it is always a hopeful time, in spite of the fact that nothing ever eventuates. Still spend a lot of time in the garden, and do the various forms of entertainment round about. Had a mock trial Friday at the Coconut Grove, and last night went to see the first show at the new theatre in the jail. They have been a long time in the making and rehearsals, and it is quite an elaborate affair considering what we have to work with. Unfortunately, last night it poured with rain after the first set, and had to be postponed. Mail is finished again for time being.

Thursday 5th

To save a lot of work in the garden carrying water, I dug a large sump hole, which filled within a few minutes with a shower this morning. I went down to the oval in the afternoon to see a ball game, and the way the Americans play it, it certainly is a rowdy game the way they chatter. Last night we went up to the jail to see the concert and enjoyed it as usual. Judy Garland's effort at aerobic dancing was exceptional. He should do well.

Monday 9th

Went to church last night to hear Padre Duckworth. Last week, like all the rest, went like one thing, possibly because these days I am in the garden nearly all day. The latter is becoming more interesting each day, and we are getting quite a lot from it, which is probably just as well, for the rations these days are very light, and canteen is getting more hopeless. I would like to raise a loan from somewhere and buy half a dozen hens, for I think they will be worth their weight in gold before we get out of this place. I would give a lot to know when that will be, for it seems so hopeless just wasting time hanging around and knowing next to nothing.

Friday 13th

Something was bound to happen today, and it did. My 13th attack of malaria hit me before lunch, and here I am back in the hospital. Have been playing a fair amount of bridge lately with Reg Wilkinson with medium success, and last eve we played in a competitive game on set hands to see which four sets of teams are to play 18 Div. next Sunday. The garden is coming along nicely these days, and Moira would be quite pleased if she only knew.

Sunday 15th

The fever seems to be on the wane once more, but still feel sick and light-headed, as a result of each dose of quinine. The church outside is having a harvest festival today, but it is a sad affair only having green shrubs and flowers in place of vegetables and fruit. The Japs have cut out all forms of entertainment until further notice, and no one seems to know just for what reason. It does make things rather dull at night though.

Sunday 22nd

How the weeks slip by! It seems only a day or two since I last wrote in this. Came out of hospital yesterday, but as supplies of Atebrin are so low, all suppressive treatment is cut out, so I daresay I shall be back here again early next month. Everything is very quiet these days as far as entertainment is concerned, but it is hoped that it will start up again in a modified form soon. Air raid practices are quite frequent; at least we think they are practices.

Tuesday 24th

We are well into the monsoons, and for the last few afternoons it has done nothing but rain. Today is no exception, and we have all been in bed since tiffin. Talk about a lazy existence, this P.O.W. life has got everything beaten to a frazzle. The rain is excellent for the garden, however, and saves many hours' work. Harry Silman, R.A.M.C. Northumberland Fusiliers, and I planted out another small patch this morning with Ceylon spinach, tomatoes and mint. As a green vegetable this Ceylon

spinach is O.K., one of the few things I would not mind when I get out, and today when Max Winchester decided to uproot his, I had it cooked and enjoyed a big lunch, but what I would give for just the normal meals of home. A Wenborn Sunday tea is an unbelievable luxury, and almost a myth from the past. Last night I attended a performance of "Autumn Crocus" at the jail theatre. It was the opening night, and a command performance by the I.J.A. and seems 120 or so Jap officers attended. It was very well acted, and the scenery was also very good. Received Babe's early March letter with snap of Noel. It was a very pleasant surprise, for there is only one bag of mixed mail in, so I hardly thought I would be one of the lucky ones.

Saturday 28th

Pay day once more, and the usual thought arises "How many more"? Another 70 bags of mail in, but unfortunately only about 10 are A.I.F. as far as I can make out. Have been busy in the garden, and yesterday finished off another sump-hole and channel to carry the water. Played bridge once or twice this week, and playing with Harry Wiley F.M.S.V.F. took 30 cents off the Northumberland Fusiliers on one occasion. Should be issued with tobacco, soap and paper today.

Wednesday, 1st November 1944

Well, there is very little of this year left, and once more we seem doomed to spend Xmas as P's.O.W. On Sunday we had our usual mess meeting, and a few fireworks took place. We now have a new cookhouse, officers and staff, and we should be better off. I was voted into the job of Canteen Rep. Officer vice Capt. Snell, so am quite a busy boy these days with the book-keeping it demands, and also the gardening. I completed my third large water tong on Sunday. It was hard work. I believe that members of "A" Force who have been in River Valley Road Camp awaiting transport to Japan are now likely to be returned to Thailand under whose administration they still seem to be. Things generally are still quiet in the entertainment line. Harry Wiley and I took 3 pts. off the North. Fusiliers last night.

Sunday 5th

I suppose yesterday saw the result of the V.R.C. Derby, and a possible new favourite for the Melbourne Cup. At one time I thought I might be home to see it but – instead, however, I spent an awful day in bed with malaria. Do not feel so bad this morning, but the last three days have been rather bad. With the possible exception of a couple of hours each morning, the temp. has hardly been below 100 deg and it has been very trying. I must have sweated pints each night. At 11 a.m. we had our first real excitement, and something that we have been waiting nearly three years to see, and that was nothing less than our own planes overhead. The sirens started, and in no time sounds and sight of A.A. bursts on the west of the island came to us. We counted some 20 or 30 large planes, and as a morale booster, it was terrific. Everyone ducked promptly when we heard the ominous whine of a shell or bomb. It landed 3 or 4 huts away from us, and did no damage, but it was only a nosecap of an A.A. shell. Great stuff! Perhaps we are not forgotten after all?

Wednesday 8th

Just as I start to write this (12 noon) the sirens are wailing, and A.A. fire is heard. Looks like our second raid is coming. We all get very excited, and although under cover, take up vantage points to see what goes on. It's a great feeling to think after all this time that our lads are somewhere near. This a.m. received a radio message from Moira undated, but as she mentioned Shirl's marriage, I take it, it is fairly old, as I had received this good news in letters months ago. I replied, so hope it gets home quickly. Have just got over my 14th attack of malaria, and once again B.T. plus, but this time Archie Barbour has ordered me suppressive quinine for a month, so I hope it will do some good.

Saturday 11th

Armistice Day, and 1000 days as prisoners of war for us. They say the first 1000 are the worst, but if I thought we would have to do another, it would be enough to send one silly, that is if one survived it, which I doubt. Received our paper, soap and tobacco, and the last-named was more than welcome, as tobacco is fast becoming extinct, in the canteen, and when there is some in, it is almost too dear to

buy. Things in the food and luxury (??) line are going to be mighty though before long, so I hope if anyone is going to get us out of here, they will not be too long.

Sunday 12th

Received a rather belated letter from Babe today dated Sept. '43, and she was pleased to receive a card from me. A combined church parade is being held at the jail tonight, a commemoration service for Armistice Day. There have been no further air raids since our first a few days ago much to everyone's disgust. In our ever hopeful state of mind, I think we more or less expected one per day, possibly followed up by a landing somewhere or other. God, how fed up I am!

Thursday 16th

Received yet another short letter from Babe dated exactly one year ago. I was glad to get it, for I've never been so miserable in all my life as I am now, and have been for weeks, due mainly to lack of food, have been hungry day in and out, and even after a meal am never satisfied. Lord, how much longer, even if only to a Red Cross ship with decent food.

Tuesday 21st

I thought I was in for more malaria yesterday, but OK today. Had a hectic 3 hours last eve, as, after a long spell without anything to smoke, a load came in to the canteen, and as they decided to issue pro rata to units and groups, I had the job, as canteen officer, to draw and disburse nearly \$400 worth of smokes. Talk about a rush, and in the middle of it, about 6.30 p.m., an Allied B24 came over for a look round. The A.A. let off a little steam, but no result. In fact, the plane had come and gone before the first siren went off. It's a great sight to see them, and gives us more heart.

Sunday 26th

Have just had another 4 or 5 days with malaria. A bad lot this time, and dragged me down quite a bit. After all this time, and relapses still occurring every 20 days, I am at last getting a little sympathy from the Medical Profession, and thanks to Bruce Hunt (*Major WX11177*), Col. Huston and Archie Barbour, it looks like a bit of decent treatment this time for a change. This morning I had to see Bill Bye (senior physician) (*Major NX70581*), and he has ordered me a month of prophylactic Atebrin, and Archie says he can get a little plasmoquin, so with all that, plus my own few Atebrin, I should give it a good kick in the pants this time. Entertainment, etc., still very few, and things generally are quiet – starting to prepare for Xmas dinner, and if rumour of Red Cross ships are true, then it may not be so bad. Food at the moment is getting less and less, the bulk of it beside rice, is in the greens from our own gardens. May we soon be relieved, if only to get a square meal again and lose this perpetual hunger.

December 1944, Friday 1st

Another month, and we are very close to yet another year of captivity. The treatment for malaria turned up this time, and after a week of quinine, five days Atebrin, five days plasmoquin, and then a month of prophylactic Atebrin, it should make a difference. This job of canteen officer is developing into a full time job, and in two days have handled over \$1000 in individual purchases besides purchases for the cook-house.

Thursday 7th

Yesterday took over the job of messing officer at our point, and have started straightening out a few things that should have been done months ago. We had a practice black-out last night, and what with one thing and another, there seems to be a definite flap on at the present time. Everyone is wondering if we will see our planes again tomorrow, as the anniversary of the war out here seems to us as good a time as any to let off a few fireworks.

Sunday 10th

All our hopes for the 8th went for nothing, as it was just the same as any other day. In the evening I drew a ticket for our Xmas pantomime, "Twinkletoes", and it was a first-rate show. The principal parts were played by Australians, and Stan Garland, as a girl, is improving with each performance.

Played bridge last night, and lost only five cents. Had a very pleasant surprise today for I received a card from Moira H., which she had written on my birthday this year, thus showing that mail is being considerably speeded up these days. Instead of 18 months or so, six months seems to be the usual now. LATER – just received a card from Avon dated May 20th, 1944, and all the talk of roosters and fatted calves, made my mouth water for, over the past few years, these things have been unheard of luxuries.

Friday 22nd

It is some days since I last wrote, but there is practically nothing worth recording. Xmas is nearly on us, everyone is in good spirits, and looking forward to the day. All messes have contributed extra money for Xmas dinner, so in these days of our perverted taste for good food, we should do alright. I guess none of the food that we will get, however, would be tolerated at home. Last Monday went to see “Twinkletoes” again, but rain washed it out so went last night. As it was a command performance some 30 or 40 Japanese were there, and we had an hour’s vaudeville before the main show. A very good night. It was Harry Silman’s birthday, and I returned in time to join in a party of a dozen or so, and we had a beautiful, big vegetable pie, plus cigars and coffee. Prices are so high these days, and rising higher, that the night must have cost him a month’s pay, which is a big item these days. I have slung my bed from the roof, and now enjoy a little more room in the hut. Being the time of year it is, my thoughts are more than ever with all at home, and I can well imagine the hurry and bustle going on, and my one wish is that I could be at home to join in. Next year looks a good bet.

Tuesday 26th

Well, we’ve had it, and what a day was yesterday! A beautiful day, everyone is cheerful, high spirits, which was good to see after three years, and by the time the last meal of the day was served, all were as full as boots. Food for the first time in my P.O.W. existence was to spare and could not be given away. Harry Todd and his boys did us proud, five meals during the day, and altogether we had 19 efforts (doovers), mostly fried, besides rice, whitebait, greens, sauces, sweets, etc. A beautiful large cake was made for tea at 4 p.m., and was a winner. At 3 p.m. I had Reg Hill, Bob Bowman, Alan Collins and Winters up for a cup of coffee and cigars, and in the evening went over to “Suburbia” to friends and had a sing-song and a few bottles of home-brew. Altogether a delightful day, never a complaint, and all I wished was that I could have shared the day with someone else.

January 2nd 1945

We started another year, and pray God it is the last. Everybody is full of hopes, and the spirit displayed by practically all is something to wonder at. That this is the last Xmas and New Year to spend as P’s.O.W., seems to be the accepted thing, and all, in spite of nearly three years, are happy. Yesterday we had another fairly big day in the eating line, and it is good to have that full tummy feeling again, although some paid the penalty during last night and this morning. I saw Bert Nairn today re a few nasty cysts active on the body, and he has decided not to cut them, but to have a serum cultivated from them. I certainly hope I can clean up this skin of mine before we get out of here.

Thursday 11th

We had the first big day’s bombing of the Island today, and it has livened us up no end. We saw three planes come down, and it appears that one of them was ours. It lasted nearly an hour, and was very encouraging. Had my first injection of the vaccine, and finished the course of atebtrin that I have been on for over a month.

Friday 12th

Yesterday we were to have held a swimming carnival of sorts during the usual swimming parade, but owing to the air raid, it was cancelled. Held it today however, and I swam in one of the A.A.M.C. teams of four, being beaten very narrowly in our heat. We had backed ourselves, so went out for a win on the 26th Bn. in the final, and they won easily. It was a great morning, and all enjoyed it. Great activity round the drome today, with I.J.A. bombers, it looks as though they have been bombed out of their usual place, probably Seletar.

Wednesday 24th

The air raids have not been kept up as we all more or less thought they would, although we have had one or two more alarms. Over the last week or so, I have been out to dinner in two occasions, once to Scotty Uroe at the 2/26, and once to Reg. Hill. Last Sunday had Reg up here, and had a good meal. Still filing in the days with gardening when not busy with the canteen, and the latter looks like being very slack for a week or two if the stories one hears of Takahashi closing it down for that period is true. Things are heading along nicely, and everyone is in good spirits.

Sunday 26th February

It does not seem anything like a month since I wrote anything here, time passes so quickly. Things generally are getting a lot more interesting these days, for quite often now we see our own planes overhead. On the 15th a widespread formation were over, presumably for photographs, as we heard no bombing, and yesterday it was followed by approximately 105 large bombers, which did Singapore over, mainly with incendiaries. It is all a good sign as far as we are concerned. Played in a chess match yesterday, and then on to see the play "Pygmalion" at the Coconut Grove. Personally, am doing nothing these days, for Bob Dick (NX70970), the M.O., has ordered me a complete rest in an effort to beat the malaria. It still lays me low every three weeks.

March 10th

The third month of the year well under way, and things are tightening up somewhat. A couple of weeks ago we had a 10% cut in the rations, meagre as they were, and now today we are cut down again by half, and it's pretty grim. To offset this, however, there is a food ship in Singapore, and although it is now unloaded, we have not seen any of it's contents as yet. Let's hope it won't be long. They have also closed down the theatre, and we are beginning to think that perhaps things are going our way at last. Commodities in the canteen are still rising in price, and it is impossible to buy anything worthwhile. We, as individuals, are still paid the same amount in spite of prices being raised nearly 250%. The sooner we get out of this mess the better. Have had one or two good air raids, but the last week or so has been rather quiet in that respect. On the last raid a few of the boys in the huts just up from us received minor wounds, nothing serious, thank goodness.

March 29th

Things are all agog again. Working parties are once more on the move, and no one seems to know their destination. Word has it that some 5,000 will be gone before the end of the month, 500 Australians left yesterday, and a further 400 and 600 British were to leave today. This was knocked on the head at 7.30 a.m. today, possibly due to our first night raid, which happened last night (a full moon). I am fed up with work parties, so hope I can dodge this one. Food is very scarce, always hungry, and as yet we have seen nothing of the Red Cross supplies which we know have been in Singapore for two or three weeks.

April 1st

Another month, and six years since one of the big days of my life. Once again my thoughts were very much of home, and hope was running high for today was an excellent day, and I celebrated with our first issue of Red Cross food. It was beautiful, and Harry Todd once again did a very good job. Although each man's issue of everything amounted to only 4½ ounces of extras, it was unbelievable the difference it made. I will certainly be easy to please when we get out of this hell. Have been having a little trouble with an abscess on one of my front teeth, and J.O. Rosson is doing his best to save the tooth at the moment, and am having daily treatment. Sold out my interest in the chickens yesterday, and drew \$40 as my share.

April 11th

Last Sunday saw another issue of 6½ ounces Red Cross food, and once again the difference was most welcome and noticeable. Unfortunately for me, my 17th attack of malaria hit me in the morning, and although most of the good food makes its appearance at the evening meal, I did not enjoy it as I should.

April 14th

Today being Wednesday we will receive another small dose of Red Cross food, and this, we believe, will be continued each Wednesday and Sunday. That, believe me, is good news.

April 17th

Another good meal of Red Cross food yesterday, great stuff! Feeling OK again after the malaria, saw Bob Dick yester after a week's quinine, and as we now have some Atebrin via the Red Cross, and I am now on another course, so should go nearly two months before my next attack. Everything is very quiet these days next to no entertainment, and only an odd reconnaissance plane over now and again. How much longer is it going to be, I am fast losing hope of being home for our anniversary.

May 10th

Life these days is so very much brighter and interesting in all respects. Shirley's birthday in particular. Red X food once again is making a great difference and is something to look forward to twice a week. Last night we had a change of food from Canadian parcels, and for the first time tasted bacon and tomatoes. It is unbelievable the difference these flavours make. Also I have been lucky with the mail, for over the last week or so, have received six cards and one letter including Avon's card dated Aug. 10 1944, and Babes letter containing Ian's photo. We have also had three draws of Red X necessities and I drew firstly a pencil, then a handkerchief and lastly a cake of good soap which was more than handy, as soap like most everything else these days is almost unprocurable. Prices are just ridiculous.

May 22nd

Another birthday has slipped away and time is flying. How mad I get when I think of it – all this waste of time. On the 20th Stewart Phillips and I had quite a fair meal for it was a Red X day and therefore a tasty meal; but in addition I fried tap-root, a pan of brinjels, and a sludge. The belly was full for the first time in many a long day. That is the one big trouble – trying to get enough to eat, as I am always hungry. Three weeks since my last malaria, but as Doc. Phillips is getting me a few Atebrin tabs I should hold it off for a little longer this time. Suffering a little with ber-beri these days – not badly, but a couple of days running around swells the feet and ankles no end. The sooner we get out of here the better for everyone is fed up to the back teeth. My hopes for Aug. 10th have practically faded now I'm afraid.

June 10th

We are reaching the end of our Red X food now, for as far as we know there is now only two more meals left at the usual rate of 6 oz. per. It has been very nice though and has given us something to look forward to twice each week. A couple of weeks ago two parties of Dutch and British arrived here from Palembang. They were in pretty bad shape and had done it tough for some time. One of the Dutch M.O's living in our hut created a diversion last Sunday by committing suicide. Quite a decent looking fellow too, but from all accounts was guilty of some shady business in Sumatra. I was able to send a wireless message to Moira yesterday so I hope it will not be delayed. Life in general is much the same; damned monotonous and with only one thought i.e. when are they going to get us out of this place. Play chess once per week as a member of the area team and having moderate success. Yesterday played in a simultaneous match with nineteen others against a champion of the N.E.I. He won 16 games lost two and drew two. I was lucky enough to get a draw with him. We have also entered a darts competition running in the officers' area, and play our third game today. Roy Mannion (*QX25481 Dental Officer*), Jock Emery, Alan Bush, Pat Moss, Murray Griffin, Fred Parke, R.A.F., making up the team. Stewart Phillips celebrated his wedding anniversary a few days ago, and we had a small supper and a yarn in the evening. Harry Witherford, Fitzgerald, a B.O.R., and Padre Sandys being present. I have definitely given up all hope of being for our this year.

June 26th

Have been well down in the dumps for the last week or so, due mainly, I suppose, to yet another malaria attack. Things that we want to happen seem to be as far away as ever, and a more boring and useless waste of time than this life is hard to imagine. However, yesterday I received three cards from

Moira, and was cheered up considerably. Surprised to hear of Avon's second daughter, and will have a lot to see when I get home again.

July 1st

Yet another month, and once again am in high hopes for the next thirty days. Surely something must break shortly. All manner of events are taking place which, we hope, are pointers. Parties are leaving for other camps, presumably round the Island and J.B., and there is rumour of others, including an officer's party of 500. It is also rumoured that Lt. Takahashi is to go, and that may be so good. One of our O.R's decided to make a break a few days ago, and as a result all entertainments are closed down once more. If he even had a slight chance of getting away, it would not be so bad, but as it is, it is next to hopeless, so it looks as though we have to pay the price of his foolishness. Since the arrival of the recent Java and Sumatra parties, we have been inundated by these blasted Dutchmen and if ever I have been fed up with anything before, this language of theirs and the way they chatter when they get together beats it hollow. I'll certainly be glad to get away from it all. It is almost impossible to buy anything unless one is in a racket of some kind, tobacco is just on \$10 an ounce and anything edible costs more than a month's pay. Whitebait \$28, sugar \$33, and even cigars are now \$1.40 each.

July 21st

Well, I think today is Moira's birthday (Changi memory is a terrible thing), so last night celebrated with a very tasty supper of tapioca root and curried whitebait. Roy Mannion's wife's birthday was yesterday, so we turned on the supper between us and invited four or five others. Raised \$100 the other day so am eating a little better as a result, although, with prices as they are, it does not go very far at all. Have had a bad attack of rheumatism the last couple of days, but it seems a lot easier today. A couple more small parties left today, so we are gradually being split up, good sign maybe. Looking forward very much to getting out of here and back home before long.

Monday, 31st July

Down again with my 25th bout of malaria, and until a few moments ago was feeling terrible. However, a letter from Moira dated Feb. 1945, and enclosing a snap of Shirley's wedding, arrived and cheered me up no end. It is great to get them, and know that someone still loves one and is thinking of one, as it seems to us, rotting away in this dump, that we have been well and truly forgotten and let down even worse than we were in the actual campaign. Great will be the day of release and reunion, although, if they don't hurry, there will be a lot more who will never get out owing to disease and malnutrition. The walking skeletons around here these days is terrific.

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The following was written in the form of a letter to Moira, in the hope that it may be able to be forwarded home at short notice:-

August 12th

Changi P.O.W. Camp,
Singapore. S.S.

What wonderful NEWS! What joy!! After all these years, months, and days of waiting, hoping and despairing, at last we can now consider our souls our own, and at last look forward with a large degree of certainty to a speedy reunion with all our loved ones at home. What a time we have been through, just as you have, darling, only with us all through, the past we have lived on rumour and hope, never knowing what we could believe or not believe. Now at long last we know it is all over, and our old enemy of space and time has now been reduced to space along, i.e., the space that separated us from home.

I was thinking of you all day on the 10th, as you may guess, and reliving through every minute of the day. That night over the air we heard of Stalin's declaration of war, and that the Japanese people were told to stand by for a special announcement. I could not have had a better present. On awakening on the morning of the 11th, the first news of the end of the war filtered through, and the strain of having to suppress our feelings was tremendous. We, of course, had to do this, as the Japs had not said

anything, and as officially we had not a wireless, it would have been the height of folly to have kicked over the traces, and so possibly have created some nasty incidents.

We have always had this underground wireless, but as the penalty always has been death if found out, or at least a long term of imprisonment, we have always had to be careful. However, it is impossible to suppress our spirits altogether, and the satisfied smiles on all the faces, the handshaking, and above all, the talk of theories and ideas of when we would be released, and how soon we would start for home, spoke for themselves.

To me it was unbelievable. Although I believed the news we had received, the thought that it **was** really over seemed somehow too good to be true, and when I got down to thinking of you in particular, and home in general, I experienced what I guess your bubbly feeling used to be at certain times. I guess perhaps you may have had a similar feeling when you heard the good tidings, darling.

By breakfast time we all knew, and I would not have minded if I had not eaten at all, and many others felt the same way. All through the day news kept filtering through, it kept on getting better all the time, and for once the days seemed interminably long. Analogously the days in the past have passed very quickly. We received stories of the terms, and stories of more food being issued, and all has come true today, the 12th, when extra rice was issued, and we went to town properly on our mess garden. I only hope that we still have sufficient reserves of proper food for issue to some of the poor fellows in hospital, some of whom are so sick that they are starving and wasting away for want of enough of this type of food.

In the p.m. I was so excited internally that I could not rest, read or do anything, but let the mind run riot, it being useless to try and control it. The evening meal was a real filler, due to our garden, and most acceptable. The news which was given out immediately after was awaited with rare impatience, for of late, with the exception of the Japan bombings, it was most disheartening to us rotting away here with only one thought in our minds. We were not disappointed, for we received officially what we had heard during the day, and when we heard of the rejoicing in England and Australia, we knew then that the finish was on.

That night, like many others, I could not settle my mind to sleep, and so spent a truly awful night.

It is now afternoon of the 12th, and we are still getting news through of instructions to the Japs that concentration of our troops was to be proceeded with, and that our Navy was on its way, etc. etc. In the meantime all are pulling up their private gardens and parties are the order of the day, comprising of their proceeds, bolstered up with tins of fish, milk, bully beef, and so forth, that many individuals have miraculously kept all these years. Don't ask me how! If some of them had been in Thailand with us, I am sure they would not still have them. Lindsay Orr was in today with sugar and a tin of milk, and we all had a cup of hot, sweet milk for afternoon tea, and thought we were made. This will be hard for you to understand, darling, but after feeding on rice, rice, rice, for over three years, three meals a day, believe me we knew it for a treat. That has been the main thing detrimental to our life here, for all other commodities were always issued ounces or parts of ounces per man. However, all that is now in the past, tomorrow we are expecting to see something concrete in the way of relieving operations.



Issue of new clean clothes. 12 September 1945

How I am longing to see you again, sweet, in the past there has hardly been a single night passed that I have not gone home in thought to you, and wished you goodnight, and now just to think that I'll soon be seeing and holding you, and telling you some of the many things I've felt and wanted to over these three and a half years. They have been terrible, darling, just as they have for you, but I have planned such a wonderful time from now on. I am terribly impatient, but it won't be long now. My only thoughts which are contrary to happy ones, is my anxiety over Mother. I received a horrible premonition nearly two years ago that all was not well, and in subsequent letters from your dear self, you have never mentioned her personally, and this has led me to imagine all manner of things. I do hope I am wrong, for I am so longing to see everyone fit and well, that any disappointment in that respect would be terrible.

After a good sleep, my first for a couple of nights, I awoke to what, after the talk and expectations of the two previous days, turned out to be very quiet and orderly, expecting almost hourly to hear of the final decision. We are eating a whole lot better now, that is as far as bulk is concerned, and it is a strange feeling to feel the tummy full again. Our friends blew the air raid siren early in the p.m., and it created a little mirth, but, of course, our pessimists immediately took it up as a point in their favour. The news we received after tea was what I more or less expected, and it would appear the world is just awaiting the word. The Japanese rather ludicrously informed us that in the near future we would be able to send another of their wonderful cards home to next-of-kin. This created great laughs, as you might imagine.

Our news on the night of the 14th savoured of an anti-climax, but on the 15th we heard officially that the "Cease fire" order had been given, and that is what I was waiting for anyhow. I expected to see signs of our people any time from then on, and then --?? We expected to be moved almost immediately, but where we did not know. There are many stories, all rumour, some say India, some Kandy, others straight to Australia, and speaking personally, I hope for the latter, for Asia for the Asiatics is my motto from now on.

Everyone is outwardly very calm, our usual two hours sleep each afternoon from 2 to 4 is still going on, and one would hardly think that the news for which we had so longed to hear for 3½ years exactly, had only been received only a matter of hours before. I suppose the fact that we had been getting it piecemeal since the 10th rather prepared us for the ultimate.

On the 19th we were still waiting for the relieving force, but the Japs, true to form, were still messing around with the actual signing. Yester, the 18th, the Koreans and Japs were told by their people for the first time that the show was over, and Gen. Shito informed our people of the fact, and promised us anything we wanted within his jurisdiction. Red Cross food, which had been withheld, is, we believe, to be issued, and all working parties are arriving back in the camp. We expect to see things in a day or so now, so perhaps that will put an end to all this wild speculation as to what is to happen to us in the immediate future. I hope it is straight home, but I guess it won't be.

From 20th to 24th the general situation had not changed, the handing-over had not taken place, but during those days nearly all work parties were back, (and great was the joy thereof and meeting each other again), also food stuffs, stores of clothing and smokes were pouring into the jail. We have had some excellent meals, the usual hunger has dropped right into the past, but the pity of it all was that we have been going round half-clothed, and others have died by the dozens, when all the time this food, etc., that they have been storing in town would have saved their lives. The same applies to drugs. I hope they are made to pay for it one of these days.

On the 28th we had the thrill of seeing for the first time one of our planes, and great was the excitement, especially when he flew low over the camp and dropped leaflets. That, to most of us, was the end of the war, and very shortly now we expect to see further activities in the way of landings and the taking over of the place, and we finalize our release.

As it has turned out, I will not now be sending this, as we have received proper air-mail letters.

Sunday, Aug. 26th

Combined commemoration service, which was most impressive. 17 padres, headed by the A.C.G., who gave the address.

Monday, 27th

Entertainments are all on again, lights on, cigarettes, and good food.

Tuesday, 28th

Our first sight of an allied plane, a Liberator, which dropped pamphlets. Great Thrill!

Thursday, 30th

Planes over again today, dropped half a dozen personnel, etc. Nightly concerts and broadcasts, mainly All-India wireless, New Delhi.

Monday, Sept. 3rd

At 12 noon the Union Jack was broken and flown at the masthead of the jail. It was a great sight after the Jap flag of the past.

Tuesday 4th

Fleets in Singapore. Had a walk over the cemeteries, the 'drome and the Barrack Square.

Friday 7th

R.A.P.W.I. still invading us. Wrote first letter home on the 6th. Yanks left for home yesterday and today.

Sunday 9th

Malaria again. All Australians fed up absolutely. No sign of us moving yet. New meaning for R.A.P.W.I. "Retain all prisoners of war indefinitely", and S.E.A.C. "Supreme example of Allied confusion".

Monday 10th

Second letter home, plus a cable. Visit from a Flt. Lt. Watson, of Mary St., Brighton.

Wednesday 12th

Another letter home. For the last two days have been aboard H.M. ship in the harbour. Grand time. Surrender ceremony at the municipal building was a good show.

Tuesday 18th

Expect to leave shortly, but took a chance and went to town with Mick Woodruff. Wrote to Moira.

Wednesday 19th

Went on board "H.T. Arawa" at 3 p.m. Wrote Babe in a.m. Slept and ate like human beings for the first time in 3½ years, clean sheets and civilised food, boy, oh boy!

Thursday 20th

Said goodbye to Singapore at 1 p.m. Picked up the "Duntroon" and escort, and away. What a thrill!

Thursday 27th

Arrived Darwin after lunch, good welcome. Left "Arawa", and spent the night at a P.O.W. reception camp.

Friday 28th

Rang Moira last night. Will never forget the great thrill of hearing her voice for the first time. Went on board the "Duntroon". Spent previous night at Major Jones' mess with Arch Landells.

Saturday 29th

Sent wire home. Left Darwin aboard "Duntroon" at 8 a.m. bound for Sydney and Home, Sweet Home.

This is the end of the diary as kindly provided to me

The following images are relevant to this story -





Certificate No 18711

Australian Military Forces
 Certificate of Service of an Officer

This is to Certify that

-- VX48828 Lieutenant Gillon Ronald GRIFFITH --
 -- 2/3 Aust Motor Ambulance Convoy --

Served on Continuous Full Time War Service in the
 - AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE from 19 AUG 1940 to 26 NOV 1945

for a Total Effective Period*
 of -- One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty Six -- Days
 which included Active Service

In Australia† for 50 days Outside Australia† for 1709 days
 Service in the Ranks (included in above) was
 from 19 AUG 1940 to 22 AUG 1941

Honours, Decorations and Awards* during that Service

- N I L -

War Badge R.A.S. A186481
 Full Time War Service as an Officer in the
 AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE ceased on 26 NOV 1945

Place ROYAL PARK
 Date 26/11/45
 Officer in Charge *McIntosh Majr* VIC Ech. & Rtg.

Description of Officer on Completion of Service

Height 6 ft. 3 ins. Eyes Green Complexion Fair Hair Brown
 Marks or Scars

Specimen Signature of Officer *G. R. Griffith*

EFFECTIVE PERIOD MEANS THE PERIOD OF SERVICE, LESS ANY CONSECUTIVE 21 DAYS OR MORE FOR WHICH THE OFFICER WAS NOT ENTITLED TO PAY.
 † "AUSTRALIA" MEANS THE MAINLAND OF AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA. * DOES NOT INCLUDE WAR MEDALS.



Gillon Ronald Griffith 1909 - 1997

On the 10th August, 1940 Gillon Ronald (known as Ron) married Moira Helen Wenborn at St.Cuthbert's Church in Brighton. At this time Ron's occupation was with the Permanent Defence Forces. Shortly after their marriage, Ron who was enlisted left Australia to assist his country in World War 2. He was captured by the Japanese in Singapore and spent over 4 years in Changi and worked on the Burma Railway.

Post War Years....

After his return from Singapore, Ron worked at the Wool Exchange in Melbourne, and trained as an accountant at night school. His work continued as an accountant until his retirement. He and Moira set up home in Brighton, building a house on the block of land Moira had purchased whilst Ron was away. They had 3 children, Susan Helen b. 13/8/1946, David William Tracy b. 1/8/1959 and Geoffrey Ronald b. 20/5/1952, on Ron's Birthday. They lived in Brighton all their lives, moving only once from the family home to a smaller unit. Ron and Moira had interests in square dancing, playing cards with friends and a passionate involvement in lawn bowls. Ron was a Carlton football supporter as are one of his sons, grandsons and great greatson. Ron died peacefully at home just prior to his 88th birthday, leaving his wife Moira, 3 children and 8 grandchildren. He was a great man, loved and who loved and inspired his family and friends.

LEST WE FORGET