

King Richard Abbott

Preface

I attach herewith my husband's piece of "Tell Us Your Story". When I read it, it sounds rather dry and uninteresting and on several occasions I have asked him why he doesn't put in interesting anecdotes of happenings. His answer is always "I don't want to talk about it". I have found this, the reply from several others who had the misfortune to serve in the forces during World War II. He spent time in New Guinea and Borneo and I think some of the experiences were so horrible he, like so many others, wants to put them behind him and try and forget them. We must remember that after the war there was no counselling or trying to find out what went on. They just came back and went back into the workforce. In those days, we were always told to forget about it and get on with life. Whether this was good or bad I don't know but I have found a reticence amongst those who served in these places, to speak about the suffering except maybe amongst themselves. I do know that one of his friends was beheaded by the Japanese for trying to escape from the Prisoner of War Camp.

Some of my friends were prisoners of war on the Burma Railway and they too never speak about their suffering or the terrible things they had to experience. Perhaps that is their way of dealing with the horrors too terrible to even think about.

Barbara G Abbott

Name - King Richard Abbott

Born - 7.3.1923

Birthplace - Brisbane, Queensland

Prior to WW II - resided with parents in their home Coorparoo, Brisbane. Educated at Coorparoo State School Brisbane. Obtained leaving Standard, updated education under CRTS after war. Obtained matriculation, Professional Quantity Surveyor. Also qualified as a carpenter and joiner. Employed at Gollin and Co. Brisbane as a clerk and salesman. Actively engaged spare time as a surf lifesaver, Bilinga, Coolangatta, South Coast Queensland.

War experience - I was an instrument operator in 2/1 AA Rgt. AIF.

War service - active service in Buna, Oro Bay etc. New Guinea, Balikpapan Borneo, and Celebes.

Reason for enlistment - patriotic. Could not get into the war quick enough - adventure. Tried to enlist in the Air Force but too slow to be accepted.

Training - Brisbane, Queensland. Atherton Tableland, North Queensland.

Learnt about anti aircraft equipment as an instrument operator.

Machine gun operator, Bribie Island, Queensland.

Based - Queensland, Australia, New Guinea, Borneo at Balikpapan and Celebes.

Overseas service - 1943 - 1944 New Guinea

1944 - 1946 Borneo

1944 - Celebes

Feelings about going overseas - looked forward to the adventure and experience going overseas in preference to serving full time in Australia. Tried to get transferred when it did not look as if we could get away any quicker.

War experiences - on site expecting enemy action from experienced Japanese attack which we had, but at that part of the war, although hundreds of Japanese about, they realised they were losing the war and the action was very spasmodic.

Life changing experiences - contracted Multiple Sclerosis in New Guinea. This disease was little known at this time. The attack incapacitated me at different times. Later it was diagnosed in 1953 as Disseminating Sclerosis and then the name changed in later years to Multiple Sclerosis. Have had several severe attacks over the years, which has left me with disabilities and in need of care. Have eyesight trouble, balance, swallowing, and some memory loss.

Malaria, which I contracted in New Guinea but was transferred back to Australia where I was hospitalised in Atherton.

Deafness.

Operations on my foot from coral poisoning, the aftermath still troubling me.

I was not a P.O.W.

I learnt the war had ended by telephone. I felt glad to be going home although I didn't get sent back straight away. I did arrive home in 1946 from Balikpapan in Borneo.

On return, there was little fanfare and we were expected to get back to work and normal life. There was no counselling regarding what we had faced. I had lost a good friend who was decapitated by the Japanese in a Prisoner of War camp in Singapore because he tried to escape.

Life seemed more secure on return although there was a lot of unrest and sadness.

I was married in July 1950 to a Brisbane girl.

What I did on return - I was stirred with ambition to do more with my life and qualified as a carpenter, and worked for some years in Brisbane and Melbourne while studying at night school updating my general education. Attended Melbourne Technical College, qualifying at the Brisbane Technical College with a Diploma of Quantity Surveying, to become a Quantities Surveyor where I worked, firstly as a Building Estimator in the Government in Brisbane, Sydney, and finally Melbourne from where I retired. I was not involved in other conflicts. I had one son who went into the Australian Army as a Dental Officer, rising to the rank of Major. He transferred to Perth as C.O. in a dental unit.

When I retired, I went back to Brisbane but when my son came to W.A. my wife and I moved there too. Here my wife died in 1994 leaving me alone once more. However, I was fortunate to meet a West Australian girl and married her in 1996 and we have led a very happy life together.