
Harry Hubert Hine

My name is Harry Hubert Hine, I was born on the 19th of March 1921 at Beverley, Western Australia. I attended Beverley school until the family moved to Southern Cross in 1932. I attended Southern Cross district school until I left at thirteen, to work at Nevoria, a mining town South of Southern Cross. My job was at a boarding house, and for seven shillings and sixpence a week I was to chop the wood and fill the carbide lights to go onto the tables.

I had various jobs over the next few years, carting wood, working on the mines until I got a job working for Eagleston the plumber I was there for five years for little pay, my father and brother Charlie were working a mining lease so I worked with them for a while until the war broke out.

In 1941 I enlisted into the AIF, after just coming through the depression and little money the army offered a chance to escape a precarious existence and as there was a war on I wanted to be there. I spent six months training at Northam military camp physical fitness, shooting on the range and bayonet practise.

On the 7 November 1941 aged 20 we sailed out of Fremantle on the ship the "Queen Elizabeth", for the Middle East my service number was WX13519 and served with the 2/28 Battalion, feeling very excited and looking forward to doing my bit for the country. The ship was enormous it had 46 miles of corridor, I didn't try walking it, we had jobs to do, my job was to polish the wooden stair way, it didn't need doing as it was so shiny but we ran the cloths over it.

We were based at Palestine and were there for 3 months training, we did night patrols moving around with the aid of a compass. I enjoyed the manoeuvres, we would also go on a fifty mile route march and as soon as we arrived back somebody would pick up a football and everyone would join in. It was very cold there and there wasn't any wood, on one occasion my friend Ted Coward and I took the wooden sticks out of the beds and were broken up for fire wood and burnt, eventually only two beds were left, mine and Ted's, which reluctantly followed there after. We would have liked to have gone into Cairo but we were only allowed there if we had ten quid, I never had the money.

It was while we were here that the Japanese came into the war and 200 Western Australians were assigned to a Victorian battalion I was with the 2/5th 17th brigade, we didn't like this idea but it turned out all right, they were a great bunch of blokes.

I had just turned 21 when the battalion sailed for Java on the SS Tranto but that had already been taken over, so we went on to Ceylon where we were there three months doing jungle warfare training, before returning to Australia for two weeks leave, then headed to New Guinea.

We arrived at Milne Bay on the ship Musuka then flown into Wau, we were under attack as we landed, men were wounded and put straight back on the plane, our unit was part of Kanga Force and we were to try and repel the Japanese advance in the Markham Valley.

The terrain between Wau and Salamau was inhospitable and treacherous it is hard to explain just like the book says , it was a bastard of a place, we were tracking through mud up to our knees and every now and then we got off the track to scrape the mud of our boots and come night we would just lay down in the mud. We were suffering from malaria, subititus, very little food and the never ending rain day in and day out.

The weather was hot and humid, my grandson asked if we had a blanket or a ground sheet, we threw that away it was too heavy as we had enough to carry , I was carrying a rifle, bren gun 303 bullets, magazine for the bren gun and four grenades as they weighed about 2kg , as there was a shortage of ammunition we were always being told not to waste it.

On the 24th July 1943 I was wounded at Mt Tambu in the thigh, there was a lot of yelling to withdraw and I thought that this was it, but the sergeant called out to pick up the wounded, a few tried picking me up but kept dropping me Alvin Williams (Hungary as we called him) threw me onto his back and carried me to the stretcher. I was carried to a make shift hospital in the jungle, it was just a thatched bough shed where the doctors were taking bullets out of the men. I woke up next morning covered in blood and asked "Where's my pay book?" as we were told not to let it out of our sight, they found it where they had thrown my clothes outside.

I was then carried down the mountain by the Fuzzy Wuzzies but for them I would not have made it.

I was taken to Port Moresby hospital; it was here that I met up with Ted Coward again he brought me a bottle of distilled whiskey he had been making in his spare time, he gave me a drink and next morning the nursing sister said that was the best nights sleep I had for a long time.

After three months I was put on to hospital ship the Murunda bound for Queensland, then transferred to the hospital train bound for Heidelberg hospital. Finally I was sent back to Western Australia and spent time in Hollywood Hospital and the Northam military hospital, a total of fourteen months. I still have trouble with my leg.

The day the it was announced that the war had ended we walked through the streets of Perth pushing our way through 1000s of people, cheering and shouting, it was a relief after 6 years that it was finally over. There was nothing in the shops to buy and the shops were still all sand bagged up.

I went back to Southern Cross, nothing had changed here but I only mixed with other army blokes as we could talk about the war to each other.

I had various jobs but mainly worked on the gold mines around Southern Cross when I met and married Edna Prudence in 1946, we had two children.

In 1954 I applied for a job with the Yilgarn Roads Board and worked there until I retired