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### **Elizabeth Kane (nee Denton)**

Meg Denton, our Mum, was widowed in 1923. I was only 2½ years old at that time and youngest brother, Eddie Denton was three months old.

Eldest sisters, Isabel Norman and Margaret (Peggie) Smithe were fourteen and twelve years old. Then four brothers – Bill, Ernie, Frank and Henry, followed by we two young ones.

This brave and wonderful Mum bought a small house in Wagin W.A. and struggled to give us a good upbringing. We were well clothed and fed on a very meagre income. All but we two youngest left school at fourteen and went to work to help the family budget.

War was declared by England against Germany in 1939, and Australia immediately followed suit. Brothers Ernie and Frank joined up and were in the famous 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Machine Gun Battalion. They did not consider themselves brave young men prepared to give up their lives for their country. To them it spelled adventure. Brother Henry was not old enough to join them as he was only twenty, but as soon as he turned twenty-one he did just that and they claimed him into their Battalion.

So the three Denton brothers, along with various other Wagin boys were all together and sent to fight in Syria. Bill the eldest brother was in a reserved occupation with the W.A. Railways and did three months training with the Home Guard.

Peggie Denton joined the Volunteer Nurses Brigade and went to New Guinea to nurse wounded soldiers after Japan came into the war. Then my youngest brother Ed, was old enough to join the Australian Air Force. He became a navigator and flew a few sorties over the war fields against Japan until it all ended.

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, all Australians in North Africa were sent back to Java. Frank and Henry were both taken as prisoners of war and sent to work on the infamous Burma Railway. Ernie by a lucky stroke of fortune got back to Australia. (Later went to Japan with the occupational forces).

Our brave little Mum seldom had any news of Frank and Henry. Occasionally a few words got through to let her know that they were still alive during their more than three years there.

I have before me a piece published in the Sunday Times when Frank died after taking early retirement. He was 73 and had a severe heart condition (enclosed copy) because of a horrendous beating by Japanese guards. It says that recent pictures we've seen of allied pilots captured by the Iraqis do not compare with what he and others looked like at the end of that fateful day. They were beaten till they were unrecognisable.

I was the fortunate one of the family, as I met Bob Kane and would not have done so had it not been for World War Two. He was a C.P.O. in U.S. Navy and stationed at Honolulu at the Submarine Base there. They watched their ships being bombed and did not know what was going on. That sneak attack by Japan will long be remembered.

The ship he was on was moved to Fremantle to be closer to the war front. Fortunately I met that wonderful man and was happily married to him for 57 years.

Yes that was a tremendous thing to happen. We experienced many shortages and were issued with coupons to buy sugar and tea, ensuring that people got their share and no more. Clothes too were rationed. Gasoline was very hard to get, but few young people owned cars.

In the Union Bank where I worked, there were no young men – all had left to join the war effort. Older men were not allowed to retire and we girls filled in many jobs previously done by men only.

As for the Denton family, we were lucky indeed, as all four of my brothers and sister Peggy came home safely while many families had empty places at their tables.

That Wagin home was the haven Mum created for all to return to.



□ Former POWs, from left, George Parkin, Ken Eckermann, Bill Haskell, Phil Galliot and Horrie Rushton.

# Guards didn't have POW beat

**F**RANK (Rudi) Denton had a special place in the hearts of his mates — members of the famous 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion that served in Syria and Java.

Frank, of Norseman, died last week and was cremated at Karra-katta cemetery after his mates paid their last respects.

The battalion was transferred to Java and captured by the Japanese in 1942.

Keith Flanagan, of Darlington, who served with Mr Denton, gave the oration, reminding the gathering that Mr Denton endured one of the worst beatings of any prisoner compelled by the Japanese to work on the notorious Burma Railway.

"Rudi and a few others were caught wagging work and for this they were beaten until they were unrecognisable," Mr Flanagan said.

But Rudi beat the odds and survived his horrendous mauling.

"Recent pictures we've seen of allied pilots captured by the Iraqis do not compare with what Rudi and the others looked like at the end of that fateful day."

