

Raymond Krakouer

In 1941 my eldest brother in the R.A.N. for 2 years, my father a W.W.1 Vet, had rejoined the army. Myself at 17 years of age joined the V.D.C. in Busselton, WA, where I helped to build the R.A.A.F. airstrip. At the ripe old age of 18 I left my job and joined the army. From 1942 until 1946, the army was my life. What a lot of memories keep coming back. One such story, my platoon was occupying a hill previously occupied by the Japs. The hill was named Cake Hill, I don't know why. A very unhygienic place with bits and pieces of the previous occupants laying around. Other than the odd angry shot, grenade or mortar round, the place was quiet. My shift on sentry with my mate Sprilly was from midnight until 2.am. Sitting in the foxhole, wide awake, fingers on the triggers, waiting for something to happen. Right below our position the Japs had dug a tunnel and would you believe there was someone in there that night digging away in a hurry. We could hear the pick hitting the dirt. The night was a black a pitch. I woke the sergeant who alerted the whole platoon. We sat the night out. At daybreak, I went down and saw footprints of the Japs 3 toed shoes but no Japs. We blew the tunnel in. My late uncle, a miner from Kalgoorlie was a tunneller in W.W.1 and he and his mates were responsible for Hill 60 detonation so I had heard the tales of Hill 60. I thought it ironic that something like Cake Hill in W.W.2. could duplicate from W.W.1.

Memories of a Mate.

I remember Sam like it was yesterday. It was at the Swanbourne Coastal Artillery that I saw him last. The year was 1942. I was an 18yr old gunner. Sam was a good soldier in his own way. He was always up before the bugle sounded, first in the mess line, first on parade, always well groomed and smart off the mark. On sentry duty he was the best. He was a step ahead of everybody, officers and men alike.

We were being instructed about poison gas. There were a couple of experts who knew all about mustard gas and they gave us the whole bit on its use. After two days of instruction the climax of the exercise was the bursting of a mustard gas bomb at the back of our camp in a bushy hollow. We all dressed up in our gear, gas masks, capes and boots and began to delouse the area with chloride of lime. The course finished and we all went back to our normal duties.

I looked for Sam, having missed him for some time. I found him lying under our barrack room hut. His tongue was blistered and bleeding, his eyes were closed and running. He must have been in agony but do you know he did not make a sound. He just took it like a brave soldier.

Out of the whole Unit, Sam was the only one that did not receive instruction in gas warfare. We had to take him out and shoot him and bury him deep in the sandhills at Swanbourne.

I am now 81 years old and I still remember Sam. He was the best Border Collie dog that I have ever seen.