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## Geoffrey Noel Pope

### PLEASE NOTE:

This is a transcript of a tape made by Geoffrey Noel Pope. Due to poor quality some of the words are indescribable which will be indicated in the following story with the use of ????

My name is Geoffrey Noel Pope born in Melbourne on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1925. I worked in as a motor ???? for some time. I was educated at the ???? Primary School and then I went to the Technical School.

I was a stretcher-bearer in the Army. Why I enlisted was my father was in Gallipoli and my brother was in the Air Force flying the Lancaster's over Germany. My sister was a telephone exchange operator and I did my training at Cowra and then I went to Darlington to do my medical course and went back to Cowra and when the Japanese POW's broke out at Cowra, I was there.

I was one of ten who went to West Wyalong to supply the soldiers who drove the trucks to Hay, when they shifted them to Hay. From there I went to Eagle Farm, Brisbane, from there I went up to Laving???? To join the ninth division 2<sup>nd</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion. From there we went to Morotai and I went to Borneo in June 1945 and before we landed at Borneo the 'Kathmandu' the ship we were on gave us a chicken breakfast, just to say farewell to us.

While we were in Borneo we did quite a few good and big reccies, I remember one particular one, we went up river in canoes, paddled by the natives and there were about six of us in the canoe, one native in the front and one native in the back and there were rocks everywhere. How they missed those rocks, I don't know. The only thing I could work out was that the bloke in the front knew which way to go. Anyway we got where we were going, we finished up outside a POW camp and we had to find out how many Japs were there, or how many of our boys were there. We got there all right and on our way back we were told that Air Force boys were there also, but we didn't see them. But, when we were back down the river, after the patrol, these natives had a race down the river in these canoes and I tell you what it was rather hairy at times.

When we were guarding an RAAF radar and we and the outer perimeter of this ???? came through our lines, they were wanting some ammunition for their rifles and Bren gun, which were all brand new, so we never let the leader go through to see our Colonel and we got talking to the men and they were very short and ???? all over, but gee they were strong, they were really good men. We found out later that an Australian Captain organised these blokes to fight the Japs and when they were coming back through our lines they left around late evening and during the night about oh I should say about two or three mile away, we heard this terrible noise, this banging and carrying on and all the guns were firing and when the radio back to headquarters, they informed us that the ???? were going back through the Japanese lines.

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When the war finished the radar boys got the news first, anyway our Lieutenant, Lieutenant Neale, told us that the War was over, well we knew the war was over, but they didn't know the war was over, so, we went back digging our fox holes. <sup>2</sup>

Then one day in December 1945, the Army wanted to know who wanted to go to Japan in the Occupation Force, so I volunteered. I went back to Morotai for some time waiting to go to Japan. While we were there, we waited for months we waited and nothing happened. So, we decided that we would do something about it, and we had a big stop work meeting up there, and we finally got to Japan in February 1946. We arrived and we were okay, we stopped at ???? for a while and then I went to Middle Point, then we went to Hero? And we decided to have a visit down to Hiroshima to see what that was like. Unfortunately we were very, very disgusted, it was absolutely ????? there was a brick on the side of the road, you could bend down to pick it up and it was just absolutely dust.

Then I was sent up to a village up in the mountains somewhere, and there was a great big gas bottles, miles and miles of sheds of gas bottles which we had to organise the Japanese to discard them and while we were there they had an old electric train which was in a shed, so we decided to see if it would go. It went all right, we got up the hill and then we couldn't get it back again, there was a bit of trouble about it, but we got over it all right. We went up in trucks, and when we got up there, I had to come back every now and again to get supplies for the Medical.

Well, we weren't allowed to travel in the train, so they had two engines to push it up this hill and when we got up the top of the hill the two engines on the back dropped off and came back to Hiro??? So, I had to travel in the engine with the driver, that was all right going up, but coming back, oh, there was two engines on the same line, narrow track and they were having a lovely time, they were racing each other down this hill and bumping each other and I tell you what I was glad to get off that train.

From there I went up to Tokyo to do guard duty with the Australians, but our Doctor wouldn't let us go on duty, because we were there for a medical reason only, so I got out of guard duty. But, when we were up there I met two Americans, a Scotchman and a New Zealander who we all went to Tokyo and had a lovely time, we went to the Ginjo???? And all over the place.

???? were of a Scotchman wearing a dress, they couldn't understand why they had to wear a dress. The New Zealanders took over from us in Tokyo and when the New Zealanders got there they didn't have any medical supplies, so, I stopped at ???? could let them have a loan of ours. Anyway, they, there supplies came through the next day, but I stopped there for another ten days until the CO wanted to know why I had been there. I explained the matter to him and I was put on the train the next day.

When I arrived back to be in Hiro, I reported to the orderly room to tell them I was back from Tokyo and they informed that I was never in Tokyo at all and I said thanks very much, I could've stopped there. Some of our boys and I we had to go to ???? where the Hospital was, so we set up a little shed there, more or less a room and we looked after the men there and the best part of it was the hospital cook was my brother in law, so I had quiet a good meal out of him.

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We returned home on the Kanimbla in September 1947. My brother in law was on the same boat and when we got to Melbourne we were discharged from Melbourne. When I was in Melbourne I was walking down the street and a Provo pulled me up and said have you got a leave pass? I said no, I have not got a leave pass. He said, why not? So I showed him my discharge and he just said, Good luck soldier and that was that.

I returned to Warrnambool and I saw a great big difference in the place. I was a stranger in my own hometown. I joined the Warrnambool fire brigade, the volunteer brigade, which I enjoyed very much, where I made some friends and got to know everybody again, then after a while, or a couple of months I suppose, or more, I went to Hobart to join their Fire Brigade. So I spent about 12 or more months with them. Then the big day on December 27<sup>th</sup> 1952, I got married, I had two sons, Andrew and Mark.

I left the Hobart Fire Brigade and went to Austral ????<sup>3</sup> and from Austral ???? I went to ???? Steel and I spent about 15 years with them and from there I went to the E.Z inc company in Hobart and I spent 20 years with them as a welder. I come over here (Perth) I have been over here for 17 years and I had two grandsons, Alexander and Spencer.

I am now a member of the RSL North Beach and also the BCOF in Perth and also the ???? Association, also here in Perth.

Lest we Forget.