Roy Stanley Smales

My Story

I was born on the 23rd of October 1920, on the kitchen table at my parent's house at 6 Kadina Street, North Perth in Western Australia. I grew up in a happy, loving home. I had three sisters and two brothers. One sister and one brother died when still young children. Like all children we did get into mischief sometimes, but we were also good. We would get a whack if we needed it. We had a large extended family, which we would visit often. My family would walk everywhere, my father did not own a motor vehicle and public transport was not like it is today. Buses were few and the trams did not come close to our house.

I attended the North Perth Primary School for my schooling. I went to this school until the 6th standard. I then went on to the Perth Technical School, which was in Perth. I was at this school for just over one year. I was an average student. After leaving school I got a job working at the Drapery Shop close by home. My duties were to deliver parcels to customers and pick up goods to sell in the shop. I rode the shop's pushbike. It had baskets on it to carry the goods. One day while out delivering I had an accident falling off the bike, I broke my collarbone and I was unable to continue with this job.

At the age of fifteen, I worked for a plasterboard company in Newcastle Street, Perth. I helped to make ceilings for houses. In 1936 I applied for an apprenticeship with the Railways. I passed the Selection Board and the Medical Exam requirements. On the 18th January 1937 I was accepted for the apprenticeship. I was going to be a Blacksmith, just like my Grandfather. I joined the Western Australian Government Railways at Midland Junction Workshops. I was sixteen years and nine months old. My weekly wage was eighteen shillings and five pence. My brother was also doing his apprenticeship at the workshops.

It was now 1939, War had started. The British were fighting the Germans along with the Italians. Many men had enlisted into our Military Forces. Volunteers were accepted at eighteen years old, younger men had put their age up to join the Forces. Most of our men who had enlisted were sent to the Middle East for service. We now had a shortage of men to protect our country. The war was getting closer to Australia. The Japanese were already in Malaya, through the islands and Indonesia. I thought the right thing to do was enlist into the Forces.

On the 23rd of April, I took leave from my job at the Midland Workshops to enlist in the Army. The very next day I was in the Australian Imperial Forces. I was Private Smales. My initial training took place at the Showgrounds at Claremont. Here I was taught to march, to learn about rifles and lots more marching. While in the Army, I spent some time at the Fremantle Technical School for lessons to do with my apprenticeship.

After the schooling had finished I was sent to a camp at Northam. At this camp I was to learn all about trucks. I had joined the 4 Reserve Transport Company. I learnt to drive the trucks, change tyres, and to do minor repairs on the trucks. Also while at Northam I did more marching and rifle shooting. I had already learnt about rifles, as both my Grandparents had properties at Wanneroo and some times when I was there I would go out kangaroo shooting with the men.

With my training now finished at Northam I came back to Perth. I was now with the 2/26 Infantry Unit. Before long my Unit was given orders, we were going to Malaya to help with the fighting that was going on there. I was excited to be going to Malaya, I'd never been outside of Australia, I could not wait.

I knew that the British had troops in Malaya as Britain was ruling this country. I felt I would be reasonably safe in this situation. My Unit arrived at the wharf at Fremantle Harbour. There were many other units there also, and ships to take us on the journey. We boarded the ship "Aquitania" for the voyage. It took us a couple of weeks to get to Malaya as we stopped along the way to pick up other troops.

Our ship was now docked in Singapore Harbour. We had arrived at our destination. Everything was unloaded from the ship, troops, vehicles, equipment, food etc. I had not been in Singapore very long when we were all captured by the Japanese soldiers. The British stronghold had been overthrown. All the men from the Units were herded together and marched to a compound. I found out that this was Changi Prison. I was now a P.O.W.

There were two prisons in Singapore, one for the locals and one for the Europeans. The locals had been released, but the Europeans were held as prisoners like us. The prison was a stark, basic place. There weren't any facilities to use. No ablutions for washing, no toilets as such, just a hole in the ground. The only way to wash yourself was under taps that were out in the open, or when the rains came you could have a shower under the downpipes coming off the buildings. The weather was hot and steamy. Steam would rise off objects that the rain had hit.

Our sleeping arrangements were no better, you slept on the ground, no coverings to lie on or put over you. Some tents had been erected for shelter from the elements. There was very little to eat. The Japanese gave use rice to eat, plain rice, no meat or vegetables to go with it, just plain rice. Every Unit had their own Cooks but even they could not do anything with the rice. If any scraps of food were found, this was added to the rice to give it some taste. The rice was far different from the food back home. Sometimes the Japanese would allow a group of us to collect seawater for cooking the rice. They would just take us down to the ocean with containers to gather the water. We would splash about in the water, wash yourself and just play about. The Japanese soldiers would laugh at us as we did this. It was time to go back to the camp, always looking for morsels along the way so they could go with the rice. We

were watched very closely while out of the prison. The soldiers would not hesitate to hit you with a rifle butt or bamboo poles that they carried.

The Japanese dealt out some horrendous punishments to you. You were beaten by these poles, some were tortured by other means. Slivers of bamboo were forced under your fingernails, or worse your fingernails would be wrenched from your body. The screams that you heard would send chills up your back as someone was being tortured. Another punishment would be to place you in a hole in the ground, water was poured over you, and then you were beaten with the bamboo poles. The Japanese soldiers were the most brutal, barbaric race of people to come across.

We had to makeshift hospital at the camp for our Doctors, with scant supplies for them to work with should you need any treatment. Weary Dunlop was in charge of this hospital and the Doctors. Weary would stand up to the Japanese Officers in charge, complaining of the inhumane treatment and conditions we all had to endure. He was very lucky that he was not shot. I had an operation at the hospital. Many of us went BLIND from malnutrition. This in turn caused irreversible damage to our eyes, myself included. We were unable to work like this so you would stay close to the hospital. We did eventually regain back some eyesight.

Our uniforms did not last very long in the conditions, soon you were down to your underwear, or rags when these also disintegrated. We had a fellow soldier in the camp who was a Tailor by trade. If you could find any scraps of material he would make you some shorts, the shorts did not last either.

We had a concert party with us in Changi. Sometimes the Japanese Officers would allow a concert to take place. The Japanese seemed to like the concert as well from all their laughter. All too soon it was over, or the Officers didn't like all the banter going on and put a stop to it. It was good to have a sing song, it helped you forget your troubles for awhile.

I learnt some of the Japanese language, I could count to ten, address an Officer, say good morning or evening, and other words I cannot recall at the moment.

Gradually we were put into work camps. Each camp had a set task to do. My camp had to clean up rubble and other debris lying around and to tidy up that area we were assigned. The Japanese paid you for doing this work. It wasn't much, maybe a shilling a day. The money was Japanese, they made and printed their own money. The soldiers were still beating us, for not working hard enough, fast enough, or for nothing.

You would leave Changi in the morning and we did not return to the camp until evening. On one of these evenings as going back to camp, we came across the most atrocious thing I have ever seen. On top of bamboo poles that were placed in the ground, were human heads, a line of them. You had to walk past this evil place to get back to camp. It was a timely warning, you could be next. These were awful times, poor souls.

Our boots could no longer hold together and soon you were barefooted. There was a Workshop in Changi with our Unit. They made us up clogs for our feet. The clogs were shaped at the front and had a strap fastened over it to slip your feet into. They were made out of scrap wood. You would buy these clogs with money you had been paid.

Some men who were too ill for the work camps helped in the Workshop or around the hospital cleaning and tidying up.

While out on the work camps you were always looking for any food scraps, but you had to be ever so careful as eyes were constantly watching you. Some of my mates could not go on from the heavy work, falling down. We tried to do extra work but this did not always help. Some of my mates were shot or they died from all the beatings.

Time passed by, an organisation like the Red Cross was allowed into the Changi Camp. They gave us rations for our meals. They were also helping the Japanese as they weren't getting much food either. The Organisation set some conditions for the Japanese Officers to abide by. They had to treat all the prisoners better. If the Japanese did not do as such then the Organisation would withdraw their help to them.

Finally we started to get mail. These letters were from family and friends. The mail was sometimes twelve months old by the time you got it. It was terrific to read about what had been happening outside our situation. Some letters had words blackened out. It was difficult to read, but you got the general idea. If you didn't receive any mail, others would read theirs out to you. You did feel homesick.

We had all gone to bed one evening as usual, but in the morning all the Japanese had gone. No officers, no soldiers, nobody anywhere, they had all vanished. The Organisation came into Changi telling all of us that the WAR WAS OVER. What joy there was. We were going HOME. We were given a good meal, it was so delicious, so different from the rice. The group went from camp to camp feeding everyone a meal.

The Allied Troops gathered all the camps together. They took us away from Changi, our only home while in Malaya. The Allies took us to a disused schoolyard. We had films to watch, a screen had been set up in the open, and you sat on the ground to watch these films. Each Unit was allotted their times for watching the films. I think it was a diversion to take your mind off the only question asked, when are we going home.

We were now eating good food. But our stomachs were not used to this food and it now was causing us other health problems, we were just skin and bones. The Doctors were examining us all the time, treating our complaints that we had. Our bodies had been through a lot of trauma. It was weeks later, the Doctors finally telling us we had the all clear and we could go home. This was the BEST NEWS EVER.

We were put into trucks and taken to Singapore Harbour to board ships to take us home. I came home the long way. First I went to Queensland, then onto Melbourne, then on to a train across the Nullabor, and onto Perth, finally HOME.

I thought many times that I would not survive to see my family or this day ever. My family was there to greet me from the train. It was so very emotional seeing my family for the first time in three years. Three long, awful, dreadful years. There were many tears, much happiness and everyone all trying to speak at the same time. I felt like a young child again, my Mother had hold of my hand just in case I ran off. At last I was home, it was good to be home.

The house was full, relatives, friends and neighbours all there to greet me. We talked and talked until we could not say another word. There was so much to catch up on, all the news, what the family had been doing while I was away. It was the wee small hours, the house was quiet, everyone had gone to bed, but who could sleep, my head was swimming from all the news. I was so thankful that my family had been kept safe and free from this awful ordeal. People everywhere were so excited, they would shake your hand, hug and kiss you and thank you.

Families were still recovering from food shortages and other basic needs for their households. They would make do with that they had. There seemed to be lots of people out and about, more motorcars on the roads and the tram now run close to home. Life was getting back to normal or as normal as could be. I was having nightmares. I couldn't get some images out of my mind. My family was there for me throughout this time. It was hard to adjust to my new way of life.

It was now time to go back to the Army. I was still an enlisted soldier. I was discharged from the Army on the 6th February 1946. I had spent 1,750 days away from home, 120 of these days in Perth and Northam, and 1,630 days as a guest of the Japanese Government.

I was twelve stone in weight when I enlisted into the services. I came home only five stone in weight. I was getting used to all the foods, the roasts on Sundays, the chops and stews and all the vegetables.

It was time to look to the future, go back and finish my apprenticeship, maybe get married and have a family of my own. I had met a young woman while doing lessons at the Fremantle Tech. She had kept in contact with my family during my time away. I got in touch with her and I asked her to marry me. I asked her father's permission to marry his daughter and his answer was yes. So on the 2nd March 1946, we were married in her Church in Fremantle. Our married life together had begun.

We moved into my parent's home. We shared this home with my parents, my elder sister, her husband, their young daughter and my young sister. Don't

ask me how all of us occupied this two bedroom house with a sleepout on the veranda. But we did.

I resumed my apprenticeship on the 15th of April 1946. I had one year left to complete my time. On the 10th of June 1947 was now a fully qualified Blacksmith. I was twenty-six years old, and my wages were now twenty-five shillings a week.Our first child, a daughter, was born this year, 1947. We continued to live with my parents for the next three years.

We now decided that we needed a home of our own. We started looking. We found a cosy and comfortable 'tin shack' made from corrugated iron. I paid one hundred pounds for it. It was not far from my parents place.

In 1950 I resigned from the Midland Workshops and took up a position at the Perth City Council. In the same year our son was born, followed two years later by another daughter. Our family was complete.

We decided to demolish the 'tin shack' and build a modern brick and tile house. While this took place we moved into an old Aunt's place. I was granted a War Service Loan. It took years to build, I worked on it after work and on the weekends with the help of family and friends. Finally the house was finished, and the family moved in.

Years on, our children had grown up, the girls were married and my son now lived in N.S.W. My wife and I lived in this house until 1972. My eldest daughter's husband died in a work accident, so she and her family had come back home to live with us. The house was not big enough for us all. We sold the house and moved to Embleton. This area was a young growing place for my Grandsons to grow up in.

My son was home on holidays and my other daughter lived nearby with her family. By 1978 my wife and I had retired from the workforce. We were enjoying ourselves. No alarm clocks, no time schedule to meet. Life was really good.

In April 1989 my son died in a traffic accident in Sydney, N.S.W. Slowly we have picked ourselves up after these tragedies. These days I look forward to enjoying the company of my family when they come to visit. I love to see the Great Grandchildren as they grow up. So young and innocent. Overall I have had a good life, I have the love and support from all my family. I still have some health problems that were caused by the war. I am now eighty-four years old.

Jo. a. J. Smales 9. 7.1912 W. X. 11755. 6/Kadina F. Nil Porth 18th Jeft. 17/15 Private P. S. Smales Dear. Jon I am writing this letter hoping with all my heart that you get it, and that you are well and able to stick your chin up and smile. We are all well here our only worry is to know something about you but now The (God 6 2000 are getting through we may be able to send parcelo later on. We' all have confidence Est you are alright and are not worrying yourself. that you are meeting all conditions with as much a smile as you are able, tout ch soy" are we looteing, how are is the day toe can class your land. Things are much the same here as shen you the. The girls are all working wen Enion. Ho is staying with they are thing in Charles of her sister & her and the kiddies low see he now a vol again and of course thelma sus her every day 4 she is keyping well. Hum wrote swerd letters to you when you were in Hosketab. we don't Irnow it you got them, the last in had from you was 5th Library. Well son I will close with love from all a co I said key somling There are better days coming your Loving Had

WX.11755 Pte R.S. Smales 4th Reserve Meter Transport A.I.F. Singapore.

Mrs A. Smales 6Kadina St. North Perth.

My Dear Roy,

Just a few lines hoping you are well, as it

leaves us all at home.
Melville is still away and well and wishes to be remembered to you. Flo was out the other day to see us, she is well and sends you her love. Knid is a big girl now, I do'nt think you would know her now. Tem Towns end was married last Tuesday 6th July. Stan was married last Saturday 10th July Dad and I went to the breakfast and it was very nice. We are having a lot of rain and cold weather but I think it will start finingup a bit now.

Herb is in the same place as Melville but about 53 miles further out. He has been in to see Mel a few times . We think Mervin has gone up to the same place

as them.

Ken Steels is back from the East, and has passed all his exams to be a Pilot. He is being married next Wednesday to Deris Duffy.

Dad has quite a nice vegetable garden in, and I still have my leve-birds and now a smoker parret is

added to my collection.

Did Dad tell you in his last letter that Phyllis is working on the tramsand loves it. She has had a bad

toothache but will not go and have them out.

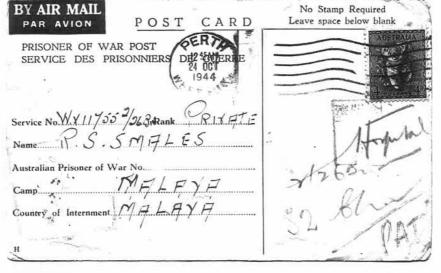
I have had a letter from Mrs Pike today , they are all well and Peg and Eva want to know when I am

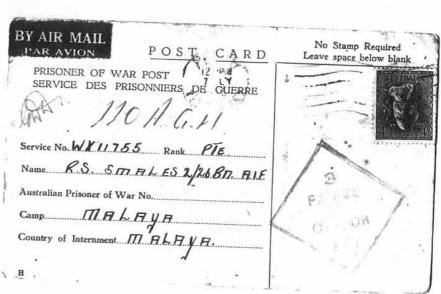
going up to see them again. Phyllis is on nightshift this week and Dad dees at finish till twenty minutes past nine PM. and its now half past eight PM, and I am alone waiting for Enid to some home from nightschool , she will be in any minute now. She goes to the Tee on a Menday night for dresmaking and Tuesday night for Millinary .

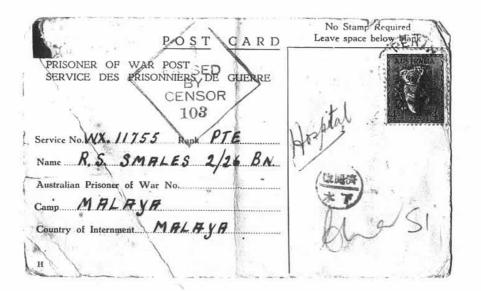
She has passed her first aid, and is now going to home-nursing Well son I will have to close now as I don't think we are allowed to write very much, so I will close now with lost of love from all at home and keep looking on the bright side.

I remain,

Your ever loving







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Name A. M. S.M. A. L. E. State Pown PEPTH

Street B. ITADINAL ST State WEST AUSTRALIA

DEAR. POY Date 22 Oct 1941

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OH COMMENTS.

Name Miss Enid & M. H. LES. Town

Street & K. H. din H. State W. ESTERM AND MISTRALIA

Date 7th July 1945.

DEHR. Roy,

NEVERY body WELL, hope you The

SAME. MELVILLE'S SON NAMED GRAHAM

MELVILLE, ENA SMITH LIVES AT GERALATON. SPENT

THREE WEEKS WITH HER. ALL MY LOVE.

ENID.

Name MRS. A. SMALES Town. NORTH PERTH.

Street 6 KADINA State WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DEAR ROY,

ALL GOOD HEALTH, HAPPY

RECEIVING CARD, ANXIOUS YOUR RETURN,

ARE YOU RECEIVING NEWS FROM FLO,

MELVILLE WORKS NEAR HOME, DAD HAS

LOVE MOTHER

NICE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

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Dad

These have been the groval days of our life receiving new o that you well safe and then a letter from you has to pped all, we only the day when you are home and we will count them all toum is getting your Ewils Leady. You say you don't le nors your new Tister she was etavis Whetchwast (Twast Lell) they have a son o' 17th da great leia too Whil & Hesto girt 10 Maths is ite life of our place she gets in to well thing west is home on leave from New Boltian but expects discharge any day obelville is at Fremantle and Think will bemain there until discharge Emid has grown up since you left a Woman now, the have not seen much of Flo she foined the A. W.7.5 and has Havelled a tox, dum + Jara about the same, and you for we hopereyou you have not farea to badly, but as it is part now just think of the future and when you get back we will see to the sect, Will son thing a stealout the same here, there has been a lot of americans but they Low mearly all gone now, and we use coupon for nearly everything, but it has been sufficient till Son. I will close hoping to sury on before you have a chance to get another letter Love from all

6 % Kaolina St co of Berth Sept 2 2/4 5

My Dear Son We are all very pleased & happy to hear from you again of known you are well fafe, every one home are well I hope you are the save; The time want come quick enough , for me to have you back has again the last cand Inclaved from you. was wrote on the 10 Dec 43, & I receased if in Get, that year It has been a toying time but Stank God it has come to an end at last of told you in one of my letters that fem has two Girls & Mervin a Girl & boy that is auticlies; first Grandon to the is very hand of him chos chaves is still the same of sends her lave to You also all your aunties & Incles dite same Thank not been shalie or thel for about too years I beleave shoulie is manned, but reather of them come to one me but that done not wannie me as long as you get home safe, that is all I am waiting for & the time wort come to Laon I suppose Dead told you Melvell manneed Mavis Whiteherot of they have a fine for Melville Gotan they come every sunday night for tea test is ant of the army of is starting back at his old for monday

Phyllis lette girls mare is Lynette & she is a louly nip of quite a lette trick she known every think you say to her, Ened word to you about a forenigh ago. Pe, & Eva are well also thes Mothe & Father they have five firs & one bay not doing bad for I feat has anothe little bay he is three years of they wish to heremembed to you to done all around Lear, Joy steel is gitting married on Now to. so I am hoping you will he happy for that of your get home for your hertholay for that I hope your have the luck to get have fefore then, you will be have in plenty of time for the wedding I kept you a pion of Phyllis wedding caker it they looks good that is three of half years on go Talso have a being Melicia Well my Dear I hope you can under the yours Mothers for scrible but I am that escited waiting for the day when will have you with me a gain I hardly know what I am turiling about will my for Mel, chave, fint, phyl, 6 mid, Dad & mysell Lend you all our love & hope to see on the very being boom again sooned remain your even lovering & Escritical Mum

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Date: 23.9.1945



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AUSTRALIAN AILITARY FORCES

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1232.—C.M.E. 3. W.A.G.R.-MECHANICAL BRANCH. STATEMENT OF SERVICE. Roy Stauley Date of Birth. Married or Single. Salary or Rate. Reference No. Designation. 18 1 37 app Blacksmith Shops. 18/5 25352 1st year. 26 7 37 18/9 26/1427 27 1 1 2 2 2 28 27 1 38 22/6 227 1 7 38 24/-239 30 7 38 24 11 39 28 439 24/4 / 239 36/6 230 11 5 40 53/5 230 1 7 40 53/9 239 31 740 55/6 56/6 57/2 58/9 8 8 42 61/8 8 11 42 01/0 64/2 1 7 43 64/5 1 8 43 65/8 28 2 44 64/9 Basic Wage Dec. 1 7 44 " Inc. 64/11 1 7 45 65/1 BASIC WASE INCREAD 85/1 12 5 46 19 5 46 85/11

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W.A.G.R.-MECHANICAL BRANCH.

STATEMENT OF SERVICE.

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