

## **William Lawrence (Bill) Tate**

My name is William Lawrence Tate, born on the 5th July 1928 at Victoria Park, WA. Later we moved to Lawler Street, South Perth, where we lived two doors away from my grandfather, Henry George Tate.

My father, Henry George Lawrence Tate was a telegraphist at the General Post Office, Perth. In 1935 he was transferred, at his own request, to Albany where my mother had grown up as she disliked the summer weather in Perth.

When W W II was declared on the 3rd September 1939, I was a patient in the Albany Hospital, recovering from an accident. My father brought a copy of The West Australian newspaper to show me the large black headlines when he and my mother visited me. Although only eleven years old, I could sense the seriousness of the occasion.

Prior to that date my father had sat for a Commonwealth Government examination for a promotion to a more senior position in the Customs Department, which he passed. As there were no vacancies in Customs in Albany he was transferred to Fremantle Customs Department at the beginning of 1940 and then we lived in East Fremantle. Having been a member of the Cubs and Scouts in Albany, I joined the East Fremantle Boy Scouts Troop.

By ANZAC Eve, I was a patrol leader and several of us were chosen to mount a vigil around the war memorial. Other local troops may have been involved but I cannot recall seeing any others. What I do remember is the freezing cold in the early hours of ANZAC Day before and during the Dawn Service. Again in 1941 I was one of the members of the East Fremantle Troop honoured to mount a vigil and as I had been promoted to Troop Leader I was in charge of our team as our Scout Master had joined the services.

Fears of Japanese bombing Fremantle after they entered the war prompted my father to persuade my mother to take my younger sister and me to her parent's farm at Mt Barker. A year later we returned to the metropolitan area but lived in Cottesloe.

When I lived in East Fremantle people were asked to leave scrap metal out the front of their homes, including old saucepans etc, and we Scouts wheeled our carts around the streets collecting it and taking it to the scout hall. From there a truck collected the pile and took it to a central depot and it was eventually melted down to make items needed for the war effort.

My father, having been a telegraphist in the PMG Dept, was a signals instructor in the East Fremantle platoon of the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) [Dad's Army]. I attended several night parades with him and being a Scout was made a "runner", which involved taking messages from point 'A' to point 'B' on my bike. Perhaps the fact that the platoon captain, Les Charlton, a WWI veteran, was my school teacher and may have helped my appointment.

While we were at Mt Barker I enquired about joining the boy scouts but was told they did not have a troop. So I organised a few of my school-mates to join me in collecting scrap metal to help the war effort. One boy's father loaned us a horse and cart and I donned my scout uniform and we drove around the town streets collecting the scrap metal, plus getting

some from the local rubbish tip.

One of my former friends at East Fremantle had put his age up and joined the Army. Preferring the Navy I applied at an RAN office in Fremantle in 1944, saying I was 18, but who should be there but a friend of my parents from Albany who was a Chief Petty Officer. The following year I tried again at the Claremont Show Grounds, which was then an Army base, but the seemingly old recruiting sergeant said, "Go home, son, the war's nearly over".

In 1948 I joined the CMF at Karrakatta and served for five years in a transport unit, 10 Transport Company, AASC later renamed 10 Company RAASC after the corps were granted the prefix "Royal" for their WWII service. After the Korean War was declared I, and many others in my company volunteered to serve in Korea, but the Army had transferred transport troops from the Occupation Army in Japan and did not require any more. Some of my friends transferred to the infantry and served in Korea but when I tried to do the same I failed the medical.

At my own request I was discharged with the rank of Staff-Sergeant in 1953 as my manager at work in the office of an oil company thought I should do some part-time study to improve my chances of promotion, which I did.