
Francis Edwin Thornton x Navy F3850

Born 10.1.1924 Westfield WA.

Finished school Midland Junction age 14, 8th standard.

Worked at Industrial Wood Exstrack Belmont until joining the Navy aged 17 years.

Enlisted because I thought it was the right thing to do.

Trained at HMAS Cerebus Victoria

Returned to HMAS Leeuwin 1942, served on Boom patrol boat HMAS Hiawatha.

Joined armed merchant cruiser HMS Kanimbla in December 1942.

1943 sailed into Sydney where she was transformed into a landing troop ship.

Kanimbla's war record should be well documented so no need for me to go on about it. Stayed on board Kanimbla until June July 1946 bringing troops home from the war.

Demobbed in July 1946.

Started work in Commonwealth Railways August 1946 at Quorn SA, worked at various locations, finished up as an engine driver at Kalgoorlie through industrial deafness after thirty two years.

As to a brief overview of my life since my return, there is no such thing. I'll write it on separate pages and you can decide for yourself.

In World War II MV Kanimbla was transformed into an Armed Merchant Cruiser with seven six-inch guns, two three-inch plus numerous machine guns. Below decks were stored hundreds of sealed empty forty four gallon drums which were to assist in keeping her afloat in case of damage. She became HMS Kanimbla and did her job very capably. Her officer commanding when I joined her was Captain Adams, well liked by all the crew.

In 1943 we steamed into Sydney to refit to a landing craft the HMAS Kanimbla. To make room for troops all drums had to be removed. The wharfies went on strike so the crew plus the army had the job of doing this.

On going into dock to be fitted out with the necessary 25 landing barges plus anti-aircraft armament things began to move ahead. Just before the refit was completed the dock yard workers went on strike. We went to sea with some of the rigging still to be done which was completed by the sailors themselves.

So much for the vaunted war effort. I had no intention of writing about Kanimbla until going aboard HMAS Anzac and finding out how little is known about World War Two vessels.

This may be of interest to you, it may not.

While in the Navy learnt boxing.

While in the Railways fought in Quorn, Port Augusta, Alice Springs.

On returning to Kalgoorlie in the 1950's taught boxing at the Kalgoorlie Police and Citizens youth club. Became involved in athletics and took up running becoming a long distance runner raising funds for various charities including Royal Flying Doctor. Ran from Kalgoorlie to Perth with P Scherini in 1975 raising funds for the Asthmatic heated pool in Kalgoorlie.

Ran from Perth to Kalgoorlie in 1976 raising funds for the Kalgoorlie Equestrian Centre. Previous to these runs organised a relay run with adults and young runners to Kanadah

station, 226 mile out on the Nullarbor, raising funds for the Flying Doctor. Also one from Kalgoorlie to Menzies, athletes against Pony Club for the same purpose.

In 1960's became a first aider in the railways and joined Kalgoorlie Division of St John Ambulance Brigade transporting many patients from Kalgoorlie to Perth before Flying Doctor took over. Served as a volunteer ambulance Officer at most sporting functions.

Was made a Serving Brother by Her Majesty the Queen 17 February 1982.

Moved to Albany in 1987, became involved with the Princess Royal Yacht Club's rescue boat. Also with Yakamia School Kids annual bike ride, riding from Esperance to Bremer Bay as their first aid man with first aid box on the back of my bike. Also the following two years from the Barara tree up down through the Valley of the Giants to Albany and the next one through the Porongorups and the Stirlings.

That is as brief as I can make it.

All stories of my running are in the Kalgoorlie Miner Archives and the West Australian.