
Harry Stephen Westcott

Born 08th October 1926 at Wellard, Western Australia.

I was educated at Highgate School (Infants) East Victoria Park School and Leederville Technical School.

At the age of 14 years I left school and worked on a farm for 2 years at Mullewa. Leaving the farm at 16 years I came to Perth and enlisted in the Army. I worked in MacKay's Cool Drink Factory in Money Street, Perth before my call up in 1943 at age 16 and a half years.

After training at Northam WA, Bathurst N.S.W. and Canungra Jungle Training Camp Q.L.D. I was sent to New Guinea then later onto New Britain serving 20 months continuous service, from 2 weeks after my 18th Birthday, until returning to W.A. from Rabaul.

After training I spent most of my Army service as a rifleman in an Infantry Battalion. Whilst training at Northam camp I completed and passed a driver maintenance course which has been extremely beneficial to me throughout my life.

I am now 78 years of age. I was discharged after 3 and a half years service, I was then 20 years old. 2 years later I did a 4 years rehabilitation course in Carpentry and Joinery. I then stayed a further 32 years in the building industry. 17 years working physically and 15 years as a building inspector / supervisor.

To me, joining the Army was more of an adventure than a service to Australia (to commence with). It was not long before I found out that it was no adventure.

When we received news of the war ending, via a signal message, a section of us, (10 men in this section) were patrolling the mountains west of Wewak in the Toricelli Mountains. We were told not to change any of our routine, as the enemy did not yet know. It was several weeks before we were withdrawn.

I am not sorry to have been in the Army, even though hardly a day passes that I do not think of something relating to those 3 and a half years. Sometimes sad things, sometimes happy things, sometimes humorous things.

A contingent of troops from the 30th Battalion A.I.F. being one of the Battalions of the 8th Brigade were sent to capture Bosman Village which was occupied by Japanese. Bosman village is in New Guinea, approximately 200km North West of Madang and 25km up the Ramu River and approximately 700 metres in from the west bank.

A very narrow but reasonably deep passage of water runs past Bosman to the Ramu River.

The mission was accomplished with very little resistance and nearly all the Japanese evacuating to the jungle. After occupying the village for a few weeks

and patrolling the surrounding jungle, some landing barges were sent to evacuate us from Bosman to another area.

The barges came up the narrow passage to a spot where we could board. Whilst boarding "all hell broke loose". The Japanese had seen the barges come up the passage and had then set up to stop us getting out.

We made a run for it in the barges and the barge drivers drove absolutely perfectly at full speed. The barge gun crews were excellent. All the Troops were firing over the sides of the barges; sub machine guns, Bren guns, and hand grenades were thrown. We would be sitting ducks if somehow we were stopped.

We made it out to the Ramu River and very soon out of the range of the Japanese weapons. To the best of my knowledge our casualties were wounded only.

Had the Japanese felled a couple of trees across the passage then we were trapped. The Battalion Padre, whom I think came up with the barge escort was heard to say "God praise they have no grenades and they have left there axes in the 'Q' Store." (Quartermasters store)

The above is a brief condensed version of the whole exercise. I often wonder if the Padres words helped.

Ex PTE H. WESTCOTT

30th Battalion A.I.F.