

HOTEN POW CAMP, MUKDEN, MANCHURIA - INTRODUCTION

There are many areas where POWs of the Japanese were incarcerated during the Second World War. An area which is relatively unknown from an Australian point of view is Hoten Camp Mukden, Manchuria. As early as November 1942 American, British, Australian and New Zealanders were in this camp.

This Camp will be covered by the following articles-

- Australians in Mukden POW Camp.
- Americans in Mukden Camp
- Captain (Doc) Desmond J Brennan ((Australian Medical Officer). Based on an audio tape he made for the widow of one of his boys. Eulogy included.
- Private William (Bill or Dingle) LG Bell. Based on his hand written story which was provided by his son Dale.

I have been assisted by Bobby Shoobridge (the sole surviving Australian member of the 1942 group). Bobby has been a great source of encouragement.

I am also indebted to Maurice Christie who following his father's (Arthur Christie) death published his father's story in a book called "Mission Scapula" ISBN0 9547010-0-3 .The book provides good reading. Maurice also has a great website www.m.a.christie.btinternet.co.uk . I am also indebted to Maurice for the provision of sketches and pictures in the Doc Brennan story.

As a separate matter, a number of Officers arrived in Mukden during 1945. Their experiences are not covered in this story. Detail follows for 29 April 1945 arrivals---

<i>Serial No</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Captured</i>
<i>A67</i>	<i>W/Comdr</i>	<i>Davis RH</i>	<i>RAAF</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>SX9454</i>	<i>Maj</i>	<i>BeaneyHF</i>	<i>2/3 MG Bn</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>NX35033</i>	<i>Maj</i>	<i>Locke WR</i>	<i>HQ 8 Div</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>?</i>	<i>S/ldr</i>	<i>Julien E</i>	<i>RAF</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>NX71086</i>	<i>Capt</i>	<i>Packham CL</i>	<i>GBD AIF</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>A544</i>	<i>F/Lt</i>	<i>Diamond ON</i>	<i>RAAF</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>A569</i>	<i>F/Lt</i>	<i>Spurgeon CH</i>	<i>RAAF</i>	<i>Mersing</i>
<i>61342</i>	<i>F/Lt</i>	<i>Downer SF</i>	<i>RAAF</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>VX46251</i>	<i>Capt</i>	<i>Hammon JDC2/3</i>	<i>MGBn</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>SX9596</i>	<i>Capt</i>	<i>Fraser HL</i>	<i>2/3 MGBn</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>WX11036</i>	<i>Chap</i>	<i>Bindeman TW</i>	<i>Sparrow Force</i>	<i>Timor</i>
<i>VX52061</i>	<i>Chap</i>	<i>Kennedy JP</i>	<i>2/40 Bn</i>	<i>Timor</i>
<i>QX6330</i>	<i>Lieut</i>	<i>Ritherford FD2/10</i>	<i>Fd Regt`</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>VX45741</i>	<i>Lieut</i>	<i>Gibson LA</i>	<i>2/3 MGBn</i>	<i>Java</i>

The Senior AIF officers arrived in May 1945. Their details follow-

<i>Maj Gen</i>	<i>Callaghan CA</i>	<i>GOC</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Brig</i>	<i>Taylor HB</i>	<i>22 Bde</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Brig</i>	<i>Maxwell DS</i>	<i>27 Bde</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Brig</i>	<i>Blackburn AS</i>	<i>Black Force</i>	<i>Java</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Derham AP</i>	<i>ADMS</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Pigdon DC</i>	<i>13 AGH</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Kent Hughes WS</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Thyer JH</i>	<i>8th Div AIF</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>White ER</i>	<i>10 AGH</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>Mr</i>	<i>Webb RB</i>	<i>Red Cross</i>	<i>Singapore</i>

The Senior officers were accompanied by the following orderlies (Surnames only) - Hall, Derham, Retallic and Beaton.-

AUSTRALIANS IN POW CAMP MUKDEN, MANCHURIA NOVEMBER 1942.

During World War 2 a number of prisoners of war of the Japanese were sent to prison camps in Manchuria.

The first group, which arrived in Mudken on Remembrance Day (formerly Armistice Day) 1942, included about 1,400 Americans (from the Philippines and in very poor condition- some being survivors of the Bataan Death March), 81 British, 3 New Zealanders and 16 Australians. In the Australian group there were 5 West Australians. They were Corporal James Clancy 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion, Cpl Jim Scott, L/Cpl RG Mitchell, L/Cpl HG "Judda" Bee all of the 2/4 Reserve Motor Transport Company, Driver R Menzies AASC. In April 1945 another West Australian Chaplain The Rev Thomas Bindeman joined them. The Senior Australian and only Australian officer with the 1942 party was Captain (Medical Officer) Des Brennan.

The British and Australians in the first party (at that stage 900 British and 100 Australians) left Singapore on the Fukkai Maru (the POWs had another name for the ship) in August 1942. They initially landed in Formosa and there spent 2 weeks unloading bauxite from the vessel and reloading rice. In September the ship sailed north into the South China Sea, survived a typhoon, and finally landed at Fusan (Pusan), Korea late September. In Fusan and earlier in Formosa, the Japanese marched the POWs around the area in front of the local population demonstrating their superiority over the imperial forces and, possibly, serving as a warning to the people of those two countries of what could happen to them. Many of the POWs were already sick

From Fusan the Party was moved to Seoul and split into two camps (Keijo and Jinsen) where they remained for some time. Then in November 1942, 50 POWs were taken from each of these camps and sent to Mukden, Manchuria. The sixteen Australians were.

Captain Des Brennan	NSW 2/3 Motor Ambulance Convoy - Doctor.
Sergeant Harry Locke	NSW 8 Division Signals
Corporal Jim Clancy	WA 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion
Corporal Jim (Tiger)Scott	WA 2/4 Reserve Motor Transport Company
L/Cpl H.G.(Judda) Bee	WA 2/4 RMTC
L/Cpl R.G.Mitchell	WA 2/4 RMTC
Private W Dowland	Vic 2/9 Field Ambulance
Pte E.W.V. Johns	Vic 2/2 Motor Ambulance Convoy
Driver Roy Menzies	WA No 2 Aust Army Service Corps
Signaller Ron Anstis	Vic 8 Division Signals
Dvr JJ Groves	NSW No 2 AASC
Pte George Harriss	Vic 2/10 Field Park
Pte H Drexell	NSW 2/19 Battalion
Pte ML Doyle	Vic 2/4 RMTC
Pte WLG (Dingle)Bell	Vic 2/10 Field Workshop
Pte RM (Bobby) Shoobridge	NSW 2/3 MAC

Short comments about some of these prisoners. -

Judda Bee- was well known in Western Australia as the original (1933) Captain/coach of Swan Districts Football Club. He also played with West Perth,

East Fremantle and Claremont. He enlisted in February 1941 and was 38 years of age when taken prisoner. All the 2/4 Reserve Motor Transport Company men were in late 30s or early 40s.

JUDDA BEE IN MANCHUKUO –

Well known League footballer Judda Bee, who became one of the leading members of the East Fremantle and Swan Districts teams before the war, is now a prisoner of war in Manchukuo.

Post card received by his mother on Tuesday, and signed “Love Judda”, reveals that he is in the Hoten prisoners of war camp. Judda writes “Am still hoping for a letter from home. No need to worry as I am O.K. I trust the folks at home are all in the pink. “We are starting to wear shorts, as the weather is warming up now. We have a library in the camp with books from the Red Cross. I am patiently waiting for our reunion. Regards to all my friends.”

The above is a typed copy of a cutting from a Perth newspaper- date unknown.

Roy Menzies -Was a student of Modern School. He enlisted in April 1941 aged 28. Post war was involved with hockey as a player and umpire. He never married and ran the family grocery business in Nedlands. He died when in his mid fifties.

Hoten
No date.
AM still awaiting word from you. Most of our English friends received letters, so suppose we will get ours soon. Am looking forward to a parcel this Christmas. Dr. Brennan, in charge of the Australians here, is a good scout and is very popular with all the others. Tiger, Ron and all the rest of us are all O.K. Remember me to all. Many happy returns, Dad and Beryl, and drink to my health on my birthday. Love to all.

Mukden, Manchukuo
9th Nov, 1942, Mukden, Manchukuo.
HOPE all the family are well. I am in the best of health and have had no sickness. The climate, although cold, is much healthier than Singapore. Con, C. and Ivan W. were well when I recently left. Remember me to Con's wife, Harry, and all the boys and families. How are the shop and staff? Hope Neil is working hard. I received no letters before capitulation, but wrote about four. How is Grandmother? I am looking forward to a letter from you and news of the boys. Love to Edna and Beryl. Best wishes and compliments. Love.

PARACHUTISTS BRING NEWS.
Mr and Mrs E. Menzies, of Viewway, Nedlands, have just received a letter from their son, Roy, indicating that he has been released from a prisoner of war camp in Mukden, Manchuria. He had been a prisoner since the fall of Singapore and was earlier six months in the Changi Camp.
He says that the P.O.W. at Mukden were told of the official surrender news at 10 am on August 17 by six American parachutists. There were at the time about 100 men in the camp which he described as not too bad. Staple food consisted of soya beans, brown bread and corn meal. During his imprisonment he worked in a machine tool factory and a camp farm.
Prior to enlistment Dvr Menzies was at Perth Modern School and played hockey for the Old Modernians team. He expects to arrive home early in October.

Manchukuo (Hoten)
Undated.
WELL, here we are again. I am keeping well, but sometimes get discouraged at writing and not receiving letters but trust you are getting all mine. Ron Anstis, from Mildura, is still with me. I hope you have contacted his mother. A good pal here makes up for a lot of wants. I often think of the family, and wonder how each one of you is doing. Remember me to Harry and the boys. Love to Grandmother and all. Mother, I'll be thinking of your birthday next week.

Cuttings from Perth newspapers- Dates unknown

Bill Bell- Originally from Victoria. Enlisted in June 1941 aged 19. In Muken Bill worked at the MKK machinery and tool factory. He was a ventriloquist and on occasion entertained the POWs (mainly the sick). Was lucky to survive the bombing, as POWs on either side of him were hit. Settled in WA in 1970s with his wife Lorna and three sons. He recorded some of his experiences for an

English historian and recorded an oral history which is at the Wanneroo Library and available on order through local libraries in Western Australia.

Desmond Brennan was the sole Medical Officer with the British (they included us) Party. There were 2 or 3 MOs with the Americans. Des' efforts on behalf of the POWs were widely acknowledged. It was a thankless task and achieved in the most difficult of conditions. There were the extremes of temperature from over 100 degrees Fahrenheit in summer to 40degrees minus in winter.

Hoten (Manchukuo)
"Hope you are both well in health and not worrying unduly about me, because I am in good health and just waiting for the time when we will be together again. . . I have delayed writing this for several months, hoping it would be a reply to my two previous communications from here, but so far only one letter from Australia for the whole 16 of us"
This is an extract from a card received by the parents of Captain D. J. Brennan, A.A.M.C., from Hoten Prisoner of War Camp, Monkden, Manchukuo. This card (no date) evidently came via Geneva for it bears the German censor's stamp. Only 16 Australian prisoners are in this camp—1 officer and 15 N.C.O.'s and men.

Hoten
No date.
Am still awaiting word from you. Most of our English friends received letters, so suppose we will get ours soon. Am looking forward to a parcel this Christmas. Dr. Brennan, in charge of the Australians here, is a good scout and is very popular with all the others. Tiger, Ron and all the rest of us are all O.K. Remember me to all. Many happy returns, Dad and Beryl, and drink to my health on my birthday. Love to all.

Cuttings from Perth Newspapers – date unknown

Bobby Shoobridge is the sole survivor (in 2005). (He also drove the last ambulance over the Causeway when the Allies withdrew onto Singapore Island on 31 January 1942. He and another 2/3 MAC man Gordon Nichols were actually after the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders). Bobby is an unashamed fan of Desmond (Doc) Brennan and is in the best position to make a judgment, as he served with him in Malaya, Singapore and Manchuria. Bobby Shoobridge received the following citation from the War Department of the United States of America in acknowledgement of his work for his fellow POWs (clearly including the Americans) in Manchuria.



WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



IF REPLY
REFER TO
ACFD-B 201 Shoobridge, R.
(3 Jan 46)

Subject: Letter of Appreciation

12 April 1946

To: Private R. Shoobridge, A1P

27 MAY 1946

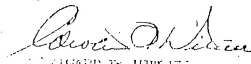
1. It is desired to add the appreciation of the War Department to that of Colonel J. O. Gillespie and Major S. H. Hawkins for the manner in which you conducted yourself at the Mukden, Manchuria, Prisoner of War Camp between November 1942 and September 1945.

2. As a member of the hospital staff, you helped care for fellow-prisoners suffering from the ravages of captivity in the hands of the Japanese and the destruction of an air raid in which fifty-four prisoners were either killed or seriously injured.

3. Your unselfish efforts in behalf of the ill and wounded were admirable.

4. This report has been placed with your personal file in this office.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:


EDWARD F. WINKLER
Major General
The Adjutant General

Bobby Shoobridge provided medical assistance to Colonel Pigdon who died in Mukden camp. He was also involved in assisting Brigadier Duncan Maxwell who at the end of the war took Bobby onto his staff as the Brigadier's batman. This resulted in him riding from the Mukden camp to the railway station in a cart accompanying Brigadier Maxwell. In reality it was a wooden cart being drawn by a donkey. Luxury travel in those days.

Jim Clancy was born in Wagin in 1918 and enlisted on 1 August 1940 into the 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion. He was with that unit when it landed in Singapore on 24 January 1942. During the fighting for Singapore Jim was admitted to hospital on 11 February suffering from shell shock and a leg wound. Jim Clancy was to be wounded again by allied bombing in Manchuria. Des Brennan valued him and regarded him as a stabilizing influence in the camp.

Further groups arrived in Mukden in April and May 1945. The latter group was the Senior Officers (Colonel and above and included General Percival and General Wainwright) who had been moved out of Singapore in 1942

Article written by Lt Col Peter Winstanley RFD (Retired) JP email pgwinstanley@cambraivillage.com.au website www.pows-of-japan.net

The assistance of Eunice Brennan and family, Lorna Bell and son Dale, also Bobby Shoobridge is acknowledged. Books referred to include Never Plan Tomorrow by Joseph A Petak, Mission Scapula by Arthur Christie, Unjust Enrichment by Linda Goetz Holmes, Colour Patch by Murray Ewen. (Quite a number of other books only covered events April to August 1945)

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN MANCHURIA WW2

Did you know that on 11 November (Remembrance Day, formerly Armistice Day) 1942 around 1,400 American Prisoners of War arrived at a Prisoner of War Camp in Mukden, Manchuria. These men, in very poor physical condition, were from the Philippines, many having survived the Bataan March. Another party of 100 had come from Singapore. This group comprised 81 British, 3 New Zealanders and 16 Australians (including one Australian Medical Officer).

Amongst other work, the Prisoners were forced to work at a factory named “Manchu Kikai Kosaku Kabushiki Kaisha”, but usually referred to as MKK. (a machinery and tool factory). The prisoner’s accommodation (initial and subsequent) was adjacent to the factory. The captives experienced extreme climatic conditions, from 40 minus in winter to 100 plus (Fahrenheit) in summer.

Captain Des Brennan the Australian Medical Officer commented on the high death rate amongst the Americans. One report says 300 died in the first winter of 1942-43. On arrival in Mukden, the Americans were in much worse condition than the others, who had come from Singapore. The work may not have been as harsh as for those on the Burma Thailand Railway or in the industrial works (mining, shipbuilding, foundries etc) in Japan. There were many difficulties, not the least being bombed in December 1944 by allied aircraft. A significant number of fatalities and injuries resulted from the bombing.

Parties of officers arrived from other POW camps in Formosa and Japan during April and May 1945. Some of these were the senior officers who had been sent away from Singapore in 1942. They did not experience a Mukden winter. Although many of these people have written about their experiences in Mukden, they really did not experience the worst period.

The prisoners were finally liberated by Americans around 16 August 1945 followed by the Russians 4 or 5 days later.

**By Lt Col Peter Winstanley OAM RFD (Retired) JP
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BRENNAN DESMOND JAMES CAPTAIN AAMC NX71022

2/3 Motor Ambulance Convoy

Desmond Brennan was born in Annandale, New South Wales on 18 July 1916. He studied medicine at Sydney University, graduating with honours in 1939. The Senior Year Book of University of Sydney Medical School had this to say about Des.

“Des” arrived in 1934 from De La Salle College, Ashfield, accompanied by a capacity for work equalled only by his zeal. These two qualities have stood him in good stead through the buffetings of the last five years. In spite of the work he does (or because of it perhaps), he has been seen wielding a very pretty bat in the Interfaculty Cricket. He also plays tennis and “has relations in Emmaville”. “Des” has a love of ophthalmology which, we fear, will make a “specialist” out of him if he is not careful.

It is worth noting that fellow medical graduates of 1939 included other doctors who became Prisoners of War of the Japanese in 1942. Some who have been identified are--LA Atkins, AK (Sandy) Barrett, IL Duncan, DN Gillies, JP Higgin, DCC Hinder, RM Mills, CRR Richards, EJ Robertson, JL Taylor.

Des Brennan enlisted on 13 May 1941 and was commissioned with the rank of Captain into the 2/3 Motor Ambulance Convoy. There were only two Medical Officers in this unit, Des and the Commanding officer Major Robert Dick. Only days later he sailed from Sydney and ultimately arrived in Singapore. The 2/3 MAC was not a part of the 8th Division, but a unit which had been specially raised at the request of the British Government. Its vehicles were provided by the British. From the time of the invasion by the Japanese on 7 December 1941 the unit was closely in support of the allied forces. The unit performed with distinction and this is best covered in the following article written by Des Brennan post war-.



Captain Des Brennan 1941

2/3 MAC (Motor Ambulance Convoy) CITATION

It was in a small, lightly timbered grove on the fringe of Singapore that the entire 2/3 MAC was assembled. It was the last time we were together as a Unit. We were lined up, called to attention, and an official G.O.C.'s and D.M.O.'s Citation to our Unit was read to us. We were congratulated on acting with exemplary brilliance during the entire Malayan Campaign, and were told this was the only Unit Commendation

issued and that we thoroughly deserved it. I stood to attention alongside one of our drivers who was under arrest – on his other side was the armed guard with fixed bayonet. This gentleman had decided that we were doomed, so he sought solace in Lavender Street. He was returned to us by the Red Caps, under arrest, but, having no guardhouse, he was put in an Ambulance with an armed guard, but had to be paraded to hear the Citation. He was rather uncomfortable, because at my mandatory examination a few minutes earlier I found he had the most spectacular, florid attack of acute gonorrhoea I have ever seen.

Our Unit, the 2/3 MAC was part NSW and part Tasmanian, and was raised in Australia specifically for Malaya Command. The 2/3 Res MT was likewise an Australian Unit similarly raised for Command and so we were all in action from Day One of the campaign. In fact “B” Coy crossed the Thai border and went with the Punjabis to about 40km inside Thailand. Eventually we had withdrawn to the south of Keroh and learned that we were cut off from the allied forces by the Japanese advance along the West coast. Our escape was a brilliant piece of skilful driving, carrying wounded along rubber estate tracks, native pathways and river beds. This was a valuable experience for our next job – rescuing the Argyll and Sutherlanders from Grik. The audacity of our drivers picking up casualties from RAPs extended to the fringes of the action at times – it was superb! When the 2/19 was cut off near Muar and had many casualties our CO Major Bob Dick offered to go in with some ambulances to bring out the wounded and he was swamped with volunteers – but the Japs refused. Later several of our vehicles just dashed across the Causeway as it was being blown up – they had been scouting around Jahore looking for any Aussies who had been cut off or wounded, and were almost left behind themselves.

*Yes! The drivers, mechanics and the medical orderlies deserved every bit of that Citation. They were as fine a bunch of young Australians that you could ever find. They certainly showed the true Anzac spirit. It was this spirit of mateship and care of the weaker man which got so many of them through to the last months of the War – because so many of them then marched out of Sandakan towards Ranau – never to return. **DES BRENNAN – RMO 2/3 MAC***

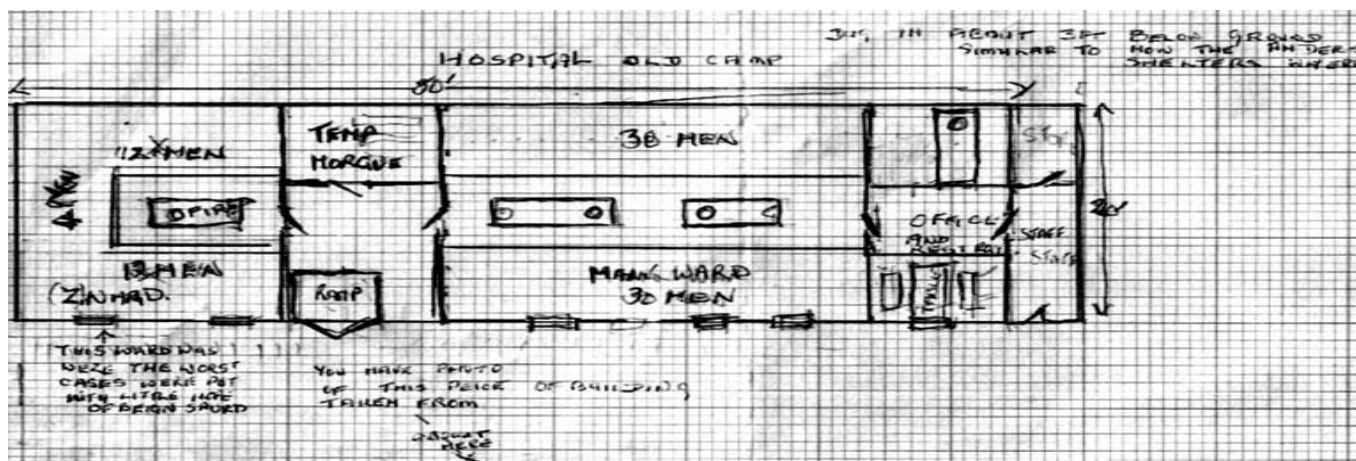
Captain Des Brennan formed part of a party of a 1,000 POWs who left Singapore mid August 1942 on the Fukkai Maru. The vessel travelled north stopping at Cape St Jacques, French Indo-China (Vietnam) initially, then on to Takao Formosa (Taiwan). The party was in Takao for some weeks and in September left for Fusan Chosen (Korea) mid September arriving at Fusan on 22 September 1942. Subsequent movement was by train to Keijo (Seoul) then finally through to Mukden where the POWs arrived on 11 November 1942.

Excerpts from Captain (Doctor) Des Brennan’s story which was recorded on audio tape for the widow of Corporal Jim Clancy 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion follows-

- **Prior to departure from Singapore, all of the party were “glass rodded” and bathed and their clothing fumigated. This included General Percival who was forced to drop his trousers and have the “glass rod” treatment in front of the men. The Fukkai Maru was an old freighter. It carried a cargo of Malayan bauxite and wooden platforms where constructed ’tween decks. This area was for the POWs and provided a space of about 6 feet by 2 feet with sufficient head room to sit up only.**
- **On arrival at Takoa the group was forced to unload the bauxite and then reload rice for Japan. It was here that Bobby Shoobridge TX6281 2/3**

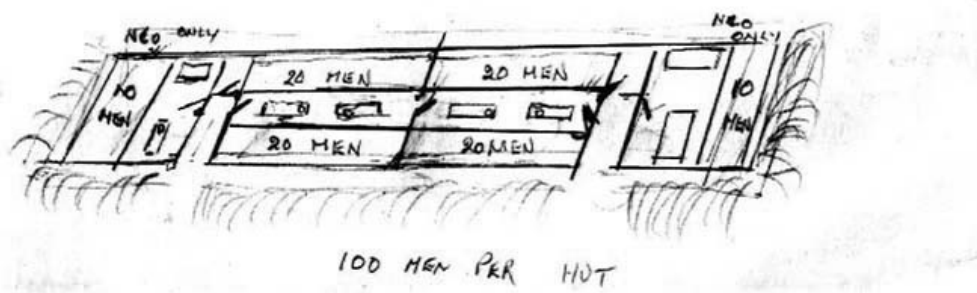
MAC was required to work on the ships engines. Judda Bee WX10940 4 Res Motor Transport Company worked the winches lifting the rice on board. He managed to drag many of the rice bags over sharp objects and consign some of the rice to the harbour floor. There were Korean women who were called “sew-sew girls”. Their task was to repair rice bag when they split.

- A large number of Loyal North Lancashire Fusiliers were in the party. The Aussies had trouble understanding them. Despite that, they got along well.
- Food was cooked on the deck in copper type stoves.
- When the POWs arrived in Fusan, the Japs marched them around the city on their way to the Railway Station. It is felt this was a display/warning to the Koreans how the Japanese had conquered the Imperialists and a warning to them of what could happen if they did not toe the line. Although many of the POWs were in poor shape during the march, not one fell out.
- The train journey from Fusan to Keijo (Seoul) was in 3rd class carriages on quite a reasonable train. The meal provided was the best they had for quite a long time.
- On arrival at Keijo (Seoul) The Singapore party was split into two different camps. One at Keijo and the other at Jinsen about 30 Kms away. The accommodation at Keijo was in 3 storey barrack type blocks. A couple of the POWs (Corporal Vince Mahboub NX31538 2/18 Bn and Sergeant Bill Pyke NX67851 2/19 Bn) were comics who helped keep their spirits up at Fusan and at Keijo.
- In November 1942 they were advised that 100 men were to be sent to a beautiful Camp. The party subsequently comprised 81 British, 3 New Zealanders and 16 Australians. Of the 16 Australians Captain Des Brennan was the only officer and of the 16 Australians 5 were from Western Australia.
- When the train pulled in at the Railway Station at Keijo it was full of white faces. Only later did Des discover that 1,400 Americans were on the train. They were from the Philippines (possibly survivors of the Bataan March and were in poor shape and unlike the Singapore party had no opportunity to acclimatise.
- On 11 November 1942 around noon the train arrived at Mukden. Where was this beautiful camp? There were low huts sunk into the ground and on a flood plain. The camp was a real dump.



This Plan and the following sketch was drawn by the late Arthur Christie (Mukden No 1210) and provided by his son Maurice. See references to Arthur Christie's book "Mission Scapula" and Maurice Christie's website.

4 HOTS IN A ROW BRITISH IN HUT 2
OF ROW FROM BOTTOM



v

- There were 2 American doctors with their group and it was decided that Des would look after the Infectious Diseases hut/ward. His Hospital hut was suitable for 40 patients, but, there were about 90 in it. Many were extremely ill. He had a number of British and American medical orderlies, of whom the senior orderly was a British Sergeant Russell. The Hospital Hut had a wood Russian heater (called a "Pitchca"). However, there was a shortage of wood. What wood they got was stolen by the chaps.
- Des Brennan kept a diary which he hid from the Japs by putting it under/in the mattress of the sickest patient.
- The outside temperature went as low as minus 40°F and the temperature in the hospital hut was minus 20°F.
- Des Brennan notes the Yanks in poor shape with no clothing worthy of the name, no heating, no medicines, no bed pans- the toilet was out in the snow.
- On the tape the following words spoken by Des Brennan say a lot about the desperate nature of things, without explanation.
 - "Oh, Dear"
 - "How the hell could we cope!"
 - "You would have no idea."
 - "Heart breaking to tally up the dead."
 - "Wonderful work done by the orderlies."
 - "Don't be silly. Don't give up."
 - "Oh Dear! What a place".

- On many occasions the only thing which could be given was encouragement.
- In 30 days 115 died. Because the permafrost went down 6 feet the dead could not be buried. They were stored in an outside shed to await the thaw. (The only Australian who died in Mukden was Colonel Pigdon, former CO of the 13 Australian General Hospital in Singapore and part of the Senior Officers Party which arrived at Mukden in April 1945. Bobby Shoobridge actually nursed Col Pigdon in his last days)
- It has been alleged that the Jap Unit 731 did experiments on the POWs. Des refutes this. He notes that Post Mortems were done on the bodies, in a proper manner, by a Japanese Medical Team. A report was done by a Japanese Medical Officer Tamagoochie, which Des regarded as a good report. Tamagoochie gave Des a copy and Des has provided a copy of this report to a number of people.
- Des relates a couple of amusing incidents-
 - A Jap, who was proud of his ability to speak English, advised him of an inspection by “very big Japanese genitals” (should have been Generals). Subsequently Des was told that the inspection had been done by Poo Yee, the Last Emperor of Manchukuo.
 - A Jap doctor, proud of his English language skills asked a patient “Have you cow?” He mispronounced “Cough”
- Des Brennan’s weight had dropped from around 12.5 stone to around 7 stone whilst in Mukden.
- Apart from praising his British Medical Orderlies, Des singled out a British NCO Sergeant Nicholson for praise. Nicholson was a pharmacist who the Japs used in their medical store. When possible Nicholson stole drugs and passed them to Des.
- Des mentioned out some particular incidents/events-
 - One night an American in terrible condition said to Des “God dam Doc, can you get me some French Fries”. Des was not familiar with French Fries, but obtained some from the kitchen. Next morning the American was dead. He had his last wish.
 - One of his Scottish orderlies Jack Scobie came to attention when a Jap came through the ward on an inspection. Unfortunately, one foot was in an improvised bed pan which had not been emptied.
 - With the shortage of bed pans, a Japanese doctor, with his own money, bought them 6 soup bowls, to be used as bed pans.
 - The Camp received a grant of money from a “Vatican Fund”. The Japs bought them clocks with the money.
 - Des managed to have a piano accordion bought for their entertainment.
 - A Japanese announced that the cause of the poor health of the POWs was because “They were sleeping with nudity”.
 - A momentous day. Issued with a cake of soap, 2 packets of biscuits and some eggs (issue amounted to 7 eggs between 9 men).
 - There was a short growing season in Manchuria. The locals managed to produce 3 crops in that time. The crop was fertilised with human manure.
 - At some stage the POWs moved to a new permanent barracks near the factories. By this time there had been hundreds of deaths and numbers were down to around 1,200. On the march to the new barracks, the Loyals marched and sang “My love is like a red, red rose.”

- At the new barracks Des had little contact with his boys, but, was assisted by Sgt Herb Lock (NX26656 8 Div Signals), Cpl Jim Clancy (WX 7122 2/4 MG Bn) and “Tiger” Scott (WX 6729 4 Res Motor Transport Coy).
- One Aussie POW George Harriss (VX 63990 2/10 Field Park) spent time in the “Jug”(gaol). Apparently he was both the first and the last inmate who spent time in the “Jug”.
- The Japanese brought a propaganda unit into the camp on occasions. The POWs were ordered to play sport and were permitted to have a concert.
- At one concert the men were punished for producing a drawing of the then Australian flag.
- On 8 December 1944 the camp was bombed by the allied aircraft. There were 12 killed and many wounded, including chaps who lost limbs. One American Bumgardner suffered a through and through head wound, from which he recovered.

Around 11 August 1945 a Red Cross inspector by the name of Dr Marcel Junod (a Swiss) accompanied by his wife Margherita visited the camp. It seems that Des may have had contact with Junod. (see www.mitsubishisucks.com/slave-labour/linda-holmes/)

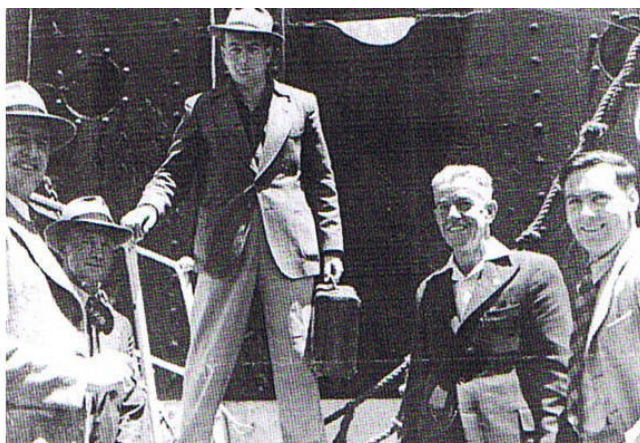


This picture reproduced with the kind permission of Maurice Christie shows from left to right John Horner, Jack Russell, John Hicks and Dr Brennan (my best effort at identifying these men is as follows- John Horner seems to be Captain RB Horner Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces (Muken no 30), Sergeant Jack Russell (RAMC (No1164), Lance Corporal JN Hicks (RAMC (No 1162) and Captain Desmond J Brennan (AAMC (No 25)).

A further account of the experiences of William LG Bell as a POW in Mukden will follow this article in due course. It is a matter of typing his hand written record.

Other information can also be obtained by reference to links on my website- Special Operations Executive- Far East- Mission Scapula. www.m.a.christie.btinternet.co.uk

The war for Des as a POW finished when the Japanese capitulated in August 1945. However, he then spent some time as a member of the Russian Army before being repatriated to Australia. On return to Australia he weighed 42 kg and spent many months in hospital recovering. In 1947 he travelled to England where he gained specialist qualifications as a member of the Royal College of Physicians. He set up his medical practice in a suburb of Sydney. Des had many other achievements which are too numerous to list here.



When Dr Des Brennan passed through Fremantle on his way to England in 1947 he was met at the Harbour by his Perth boys. From left Jim Clancy, "Judda" Bee, Des Brennan, "Tiger" Scott and Roy Menzies.

In 1996 The Royal Australian College of Physicians had this to say about Dr Des Brennan MBE MB BS Syd 1939 MRCP (1947) FRACP (1977)

After graduating with Honours and residency at St Vincent's Hospital, he enlisted in December 1940 and as Captain Brennan arrived in Malaya in 1941 with the 2/3 Motor Ambulance Convoy. After capture by the Japanese he was sent first to Korea and shortly after to Mukden in Manchuria. There he was faced with the clinical problem of the painful feet syndrome, which had already been common amongst the prisoners during their brief spell in Changi, but it was exacerbated by the freezing temperatures in Manchuria. Following his release and return home, he became a registrar at St Vincent's Hospital. Awarded an Australian Red Cross/Nuffield scholarship to study in London, he did postgraduate training at the Hammersmith Hospital, gained his MRCP and married. He has devoted himself since then to the Western Suburbs Hospital, where he was senior physician and Chairman of the board, and is still emeritus consultant physician to the Masonic Hospital at Ashfield. He is president of the Western Suburbs Medical Association, and a Fellow of the AMA. After the war he wrote two articles on his captivity in the Medical Journal of Australia, and an interview was published in the New South Wales Doctor

Dr Desmond James Brennan passed away in 2003 and his widow Eunice (Toots) in 2006,

I was encouraged to write this article by Pte Bobby Shoobridge (TX 4281 2/3 MAC and Mukden, Manchuria). I was assisted by having access to material provided by his widow Eunice. Copy of the eulogy written by Des' son Richard follows.

**Lt Col Peter Winstanley OAM RFD (Ret'd) JP
Email pgwinstanley@cambraivillage.com.au**

EULOGY - DESMOND JAMES BRENNAN

1916-2003

Written by Richard Brennan

The Jesuits say "Give me the boy until he is 7 and I will show you the man". I can't tell you much about Des up to the age of 7, except that he was brought up an only child, or as my sister Jane would say, a lonely child, in a very strong Catholic family. All of his children have vivid memories of family Rosaries, Church attendances at every possible occasion and discussions of the various Eucharistic conferences that had been attended in the past.

The Jesuits, had they had Des to the age of 7, might have been given a few surprises when they met the man. My rugby playing friends and I were completely amazed to learn that not only did he know the tune and words of what we euphemistically called "rugby songs", but that his words were much more risqué than ours, and that while we knew 1 or 2 verses, Des knew the lot. He euphemistically called them "army songs".

The Jesuits may also have been surprised by Des' inevitable response to an unexpected loud noise. "What? Shot himself?" he'd say to the bemusement of whoever the audience was. As far as his rendition of "Susan was a funny woman" is concerned, I won't even attempt it.

Des didn't shoot himself although there were probably many times in his last few weeks when he would have been tempted, had he been able. In the end, Merkel's Cell Carcinoma did the job which the Imperial Japanese Army failed to achieve over the years 1942 to 1945.

Both Des' parents were of complete Irish extraction and I remember him telling me that in a survey carried out in his year at University, he was the only student whose ancestry was 100% of anything.

The Irish believe in signs and signals and towards the end of Des' life I was convinced I would receive one as his death approached. On Tuesday morning at about 2 o'clock Tim and Edwina, two of my children, both of whom consider sleeping for 14 hours to be a catnap, and both of whom have the ability to sleep through World War 3, woke up at about 2.00a.m. Tim looked for something to read and came across a book which included a section about Des. It seems the signal in which the Irish believe skipped a generation.

To understand the man however, you shouldn't ask the Jesuits.

He attended De La Salle College in Ashfield where he excelled academically and in sport. He was an athlete, a rugby player, a cricketer and a tennis player apparently blessed with very good looks. Three weeks ago I introduced myself as his son to Pam Newton, one of his tennis playing partners. Pam is well into her 80's but her memories were vivid "Des Brennan" she said "Devastatingly handsome with an equally devastating backhand topspin lob".

Des completed his Leaving Certificate in 1933 in the middle of the Depression; he matriculated to Sydney University and studied medicine. He

graduated with Honours in 1939. He did his residency at St. Vincent's Hospital in 1940 and at the end of that year enlisted in the A.I.F.

Des was captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore in December, 1942. He spent the day that Singapore fell operating on the injured in the Cathedral and giving anaesthetics in the Baptismal Font. He was sent to Changi and later to Mukden in Manchuria.

Like many of his generation Des didn't tell us much of what happened to him as a prisoner and it wasn't until later years when he wrote of his experiences that we found out a little of what went on.

His early medical exploits weren't all that successful. When he arrived in Changi he found a supply of Syrup of Ginger in the dispensary which he thought would improve the flavour of the small rice ration the prisoners were given. Unfortunately the ginger burned on the bottom of the cooking utensil and the rice was declared terrible by all the workers when they returned in the evening. Des readily agreed with them in an attempt to hide his guilt but that didn't stop a deputation to the Senior Officer asking him to prevent the doctor from "mucking up our meal".

His attempt to relieve a most irritable form of scrotal dermatitis met with a similar fate. The lotion he prepared from the few supplies available provided initial relief followed shortly by screams of agony from the patients declaring their nether regions were on fire. To convince the disbelievers Des applied the lotion to himself. It was then his turn to dance and complain. Relief was only gained by turning on the dilapidated overhead fan and the assembled patients and their doctor lay on their backs with their nether regions pointed skywards, being mindful to carefully watch the fan which was rocking dangerously above them at full speed.

It was also in Changi that Des discovered a stockpile of goods in a Storeroom. He and a fellow prisoner broke in by climbing along the ceiling and rafters and then down a rope they had brought with them.

They heard keys rattling in the door and Des swears he broke the world record for rope climbing to get back onto the rafters before 2 Japanese guards entered the room. Fortunately neither guard discovered them. Des revisited the gaol with Toots in 1984 and was able to show Toots the place where his life was saved due to 2 Japanese who didn't look up.

From Changi he was assigned as Medical Officer to a party of prisoners ostensibly bound for Japan. A nightmare sea voyage followed where dysentery prevailed and the troops were kept below decks throughout the voyage through the tropics.

They landed in Korea and were force-marched through the streets where they were jeered by the local Japanese. A 3 day train journey followed to Mukden in Manchuria where he spent the rest of the war looking after the mainly English and American prisoners.

They were given 2 meals a day, both soup made from millet seeds and sorghum. This was supplemented every few days by half a slice of bread and once a week by a slice of cornpone.

The temperature at night was -40C and Des said it warmed up in the day to about -20C.

There was no heating and their clothes were tropical. There were no medical supplies, no bedpans and most of the patients were incontinent. Des was helped by a number of medical orderlies who lived with and nursed the patients through the first winter when 200 of the patients died. He said later that if he ever learned about compassion for the sick and dying and urging and encouragement to stay alive through sheer willpower, this was the time.

The ground was frozen and the deceased were stored in barracks until Spring.

In the second year neurological illnesses appeared due to vitamin and mineral deficiencies and cases of TB became prevalent.

Des developed a system of bringing news into the camp. Newspapers were obtained by one of the prisoners who bribed his guard. Des and a New Zealand friend were able to pick up a bit of the written Japanese language and attempted to decipher the papers. They were caught one day doing this by a guard but the New Zealander whipped the paper off the desk onto his knee. The guard wanted to see it and walked around the desk and while he did so Des grabbed it and sat on it. The guard scratched his head and couldn't work out where the paper had gone. This time he owed his life to a Japanese guard who didn't look down.

In late 1944 Mukden was bombed by the Americans. There were no air raid shelters and the men had to lie flat on the ground and hope for the best.

In the Spring of 1945 the Japanese had the local Chinese dig a large hole outside the Camp and set up machine guns. The prisoners feared the hole would be their grave and made plans to escape. Fortunately for Des the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Russian planes appeared in the sky. The camp was liberated by the Russians and Des spent a brief time as a member of the Russian Army before he was repatriated to Australia. He was 6½ stone when he arrived (42kgs) and was taken to Concord Hospital where his parents were waiting for him.

Des spent many months in hospital recovering from his ordeal.

His parents received a letter from J.A. Scott from Perth, Western Australia dated 25th October, 1945. I will read from it:-

"On behalf of the 5 West Australian POW's returned from Mukden, Manchuria I cannot too highly praise the wonderful work done by your son Dr. Brennan during our 3 years as prisoners. Dr. Brennan was absolutely loved by all for untiring attention to the sick. His efforts were responsible for saving the lives of many of us. At times when medical supplies were practically nil his winning smile and personality was a wonderful tonic.

Many times he gave to the sick his own meagre food ration and many other acts of kindness to all, irrespective of nationality.

We sincerely hope the Military Authorities recognise the gallant service rendered by your son and award him accordingly."

His gallant service was recognised and shortly afterwards Des was awarded the MBE.

The Jesuits at this stage therefore would have had to deal with a 29 years old child of the Depression, with a medical degree who had recently spent 3½ years as a prisoner involving the most extreme deprivations. How would their man have dealt with that?

Many would have packed it in. Not Des. He emerged with his Catholic faith intact, knowing how to survive, knowing he wanted to dedicate his professional life to the ill and dying and knowing exactly how to do it.

He did fight his demons on a nightly basis as evidenced by 55 years worth of bruises which Toots received by virtue of sleeping next to him, but the demons never ever defeated him although they were with him until he died.

He emerged from the war with a set of values which he carried with him to his death. To Des, money had no importance. He rarely carried any. Ambition was limited to whatever he could do to improve the lot of others or his qualifications to do so. Whatever adversity he struck was quickly placed into perspective and dealt with accordingly. His patience was endless and his optimism unlimited. He found fault with very few people (Health Ministers excepted) and he forgave his enemies.

After the war Des was also awarded one of the first Nuffield Scholarships. After he recuperated he travelled to London where he gained his specialist qualifications; a Member of the Royal College of Physicians. When he arrived in London he got in touch with a certain young lady whom he had apparently driven somewhat mad with his persistent courting to the extent that she initially found it necessary to go to the loo to escape his attentions, only to emerge with Des still standing there undeterred, blithely continuing the conversation. This was of course the love of his life, my mother Toots who, for someone brought up as a strict Convent girl had little hesitation travelling to London alone where they were married in 1947.

The love and devotion that each had for the other was unsurpassed. Many of my friends often referred to Toots and Des' love for each other as the benchmark for a perfect relationship. Everybody here today has seen it themselves and in the last months of Des' illness Toots devotion to him has been tireless and enduring and an example to us all. Des spent a lot of the last few weeks of his life asleep, waking only for brief moments or minutes. He always knew Toots was there and his first instinct was to call her close so that he could kiss her.

Des returned to Australia in time to ensure I was an Australian citizen and set up his medical practice at 1 Miller Avenue, Ashfield. At the same time he bought 19 David Street, Croydon. He didn't move from either.

He joined Western Suburbs Hospital as Honorary Physician, a position he held from 1950 to 1981. He then became Consultant Emeritus Physician from 1981 to 1994 and then became Consultant Emeritus Physician at the

Masonic Hospital in Ashfield and, knowing Des, probably did this to show that the age of ill feeling between the Catholics and the Masons was a thing of the past.

Des practised at Ashfield until just before last Christmas. His rationale was that as he hadn't killed anyone yet, there was no reason to give up medicine.

He was President of the Western Suburbs Medical Association for 14 years and in 1996 was made a Fellow of the Australian Medical Association having some time before been awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of Physicians.

For his services to the community in Medicine he was awarded the Order of Australia in May, 2002.

Toots and Des were married for 55 years. I was the first of 4 children and our existence put a severe handbrake on one of his loves - travel. Any travel. We seemed to spend every school holidays away somewhere in Australia, most often to Narrandera or Emmaville.

It was at Emmaville, his ancestral home, that Des and his cousin Norm Lennon along with another mate Jack Lewitz indulged their whim of becoming Publicans. They purchased the Tattersalls Hotel and consequently ran it at a loss for several years, always due to having picked the wrong Manager. They constructed the economic model subsequently known as "negative gearing".

Tattersalls Hotel was so negatively geared that it only stopped going backwards a few years ago and is now located half way to Tenterfield.

Des was a devout Catholic all his life. His faith was unswerving. It must have been severely tested in his life, not only during wartime but in some of his peace time experiences involving his children. His belief in Faith, Hope and Charity were clearly on display when I informed him of my decision to leave the study of medicine to those who could actually stand the sight of blood. He asked "What do you think you might do Rich?" I told him I didn't have a clue. He replied "Don't worry. I am sure it will come you to you eventually."

Family life took on a seachange in 1969 when Des bought the house at Palm Beach. The residence at 292 Whale Beach road was essentially a perpetual open house from then until it was sold a few years ago. On hearing of Des' death the most common reminiscences of my friends have been about the days and nights we spent with Mum and Dad at the beach house. Des faith in the promise of youth was severely tested by some of the antics we got up to in our attempts to display as much immaturity as possible before we had to become adults.

Des and Toots took great pride in all their grandchildren and Des went to great trouble to imbue them with specific elements of our family culture. Each knows the story of Herbie, Esmerelda and the Colliwobbles as do myself and my sisters. I am sure Des' greatgrandchildren will know the story as well. The grandchildren have also had their lives enriched by another of his foibles..... to do with the alphabet. Young Maggie was so keen

to show Sister Veronica in Kindy what Des had taught her that she put her hand up when volunteers were called to say the alphabet. She was told by Sister that while she had said it perfectly, she had also said it backwards.

Des loved cryptic crosswords and his humour was what I always considered to be quirky, amusing and intelligent. The fact that people say mine is similar has no bearing on this comment.

Des was optimistic. Libby called him her paternal optimist, a description which shows that she too is a chip off the old block.

Des, to his dying day, was convinced that he would one day win the lottery which would enable him to take all his grandchildren overseas.

Mind you, this wish started out as cars for his own children and as time passed without the winning ticket developed into a trip for Disneyland for his grandchildren. When the majority of the grandchildren reached the stage where Mr. Disney's attractions faded against those of Paris and New York his wish was to take them all overseas, to wherever they wanted to go.

Des was also convinced he would win the Readers Digest Sweepstakes. I submitted his most recent entry only 2 weeks ago. I'm sure the first thing he checked out when he got to Heaven was who was running the Sweepstakes and what was necessary to pre-qualify for the second round draw.

Des's optimism also extended to his hobby of photography. He was certain the next camera he bought would produce better photos than the last. To us non-believers this didn't appear to happen much, but his optimism in a string of cameras over the years probably numbering in the hundreds was unbounded.

Libby's theory is that Des must have seen a sign somewhere in a museum which read "No flash photography". Des' only possible response to such a sign would have been to observe that he was only allowed to take ordinary photographs. That he did in abundance.

These days the Jesuits try and instil in their students a striving to be "Men for Others". I suggest that motto exemplifies Des' life.

If is a measure of success in life that the world is a better place for your having been there, then Des' life was a raging success. One thing is certain - the world is a poorer place for his passing.

His Death Notice appeared in the paper on Wednesday. In the same paper was the Death Notice of Ern Toshack, a Test Cricketer in 1940's and 50's. His notice started with the words "One of the 1948 Invincibles".

Des was our Invincible and that makes his loss all the harder to suffer. We all loved him and we will all miss him terribly. End

Richard Brennan –son of Desmond James Brennan

AN “AUSTRALIAN EYE VIEW” OF HOTEN LIFE

By William Lawrence George (Bill) Bell VX58668 Private

2/10 Australian Ordnance Field Workshops –

Know as “Dingle” Bell by his fellow Manchuria POWs- Born North Melbourne 23 June 1922- Enlisted in the AIF 30 June 1941 aged 19-Became POW 15 February 1942. Moved to Manchuria via Formosa and Korea 1942- Arrived Mukden , Manchuria 11 November 1942-. Liberated September 1945. - Repatriated to Australia and Discharged 14 February 1946.

I must go back to Korea where we were getting used to the colder weather, and I saw my first snow falling, then we were told that we were going to be divided up with some men going on a train with a lot of Americans and heading north to another place and I was among those selected to go. We got to the railway station and eventually the train pulled in with a cargo of very sorry looking sunken-eyed men who seemed as though they might not survive the train trip. Some of them didn't. When the train eventually stopped (at noon on the 11th Nov) there were stretchers taken off the train with dead bodies on them.

I have forgotten how we got to the camp, but eventually we started to settle in our Barracks, this was to be our temporary home until the new camp had been built and fenced only about ¾ mile from our work place. I know it was very cold there and was going to get a great deal colder. Our coldest day in that place was -40°.

I don't know how anyone else felt – all I know is that I was bewildered. I didn't really know anybody there and had to put up with frightful cold weather that was unbelievable, strange sounding dialects of different countries and places from England, Wales and Ireland. I found out that I was the youngest person in the British section, having turned 19 on 23rd June 42. We soon settled in and got to know each other reasonably well.

This camp was a very spread-out place with long huts, partly buried in the ground acting as Barracks. There were about 1,200 or 1,300 Americans here, and, within 3 or 4 months there would be over 300 Americans die as a result of beri-beri, malaria, pneumonia, you name it – they died of it, strange though – not one American Officer died in that place. While the “other ranks” died of malnutrition, the “Officers” got fat. They couldn't eat all that they got, the “other ranks” couldn't get what they could eat. In the British section, we had a better distribution of the rations and if we got thin, so did our officers, but no one died.

We started marching to our work place – about 3-5 kilometres from the camp. At about half way everybody was busting so the Japs called a “Banjo” stop and everybody stood at the side of the road and eased their bladders, up to “700 MEN” each man a fountain.

At one stop we saw a dead body about 30 ft off to the side of the road with the dogs of the area feeding happily off his feet. It took about 3 days for the dogs to demolish the frozen corpse, all that was left was the head, the crows picked it clean. Another time I saw a child's body receiving the same treatment and within fifty feet of a house. The old man first mentioned was over one hundred yards from the nearest house.

We saw a number of unhappy sights during these marches, old women scratching amongst rotten refuse searching for food to feed the family, picking up scraps wherever they could, tottering along on feet that had been deformed at birth by bandaging, the younger women had normal feet.

In this camp we became acquainted with “mechanised dandruff”, grey body lice that made life a bit more miserable, about 3/16” long, and like computers, multiplied rapidly, every night you could see men patiently cracking these things between their thumb-nails, picking them out of the seams of their underwear. We had to keep these pets until

we moved to the new camp, and had all of our gear fumigated and our bedding sprayed, until this was done anyone who didn't scratch himself constantly, was considered a bit of a freak.

The factory where we worked was a branch of "Ford" and was comprised of a number of buildings, stores, tool shop, workshop, assembly and finished products, plus another six or seven buildings with various uses. The factory was called MANCHU KOSAKU KIKAI KABUSHIKI KAISHA and was shortened down to M.K.K. – it meant Manchu Tool and Die Factory. We had Chinese and Japanese civilian guards patrolling the buildings and grounds, also, our escort from camp had to "do the rounds" and see we didn't get into any mischief, there was always someone being caught sleeping, stealing, smoking, anything that could be got away with, someone tried.

We had a grave digging detail to attend to as the thaw started; you see, there was a large building stacked with frozen American corpses, already over 300 and these would need to be buried before they thawed out or the smell would pollute the whole countryside. There were quite a few working parties went out to dig these graves. I went on one but the ground was still frozen, so not much progress was made this day. When the burials were started, there was quite a procession of people carrying coffins on shoulders; very flimsy coffins which were occasionally losing an end and letting a head and shoulders slide out and giving a shock of horror to the carriers. Those in the boxes didn't complain about the rough trip, just knocked occasionally on the sides or end of the boxes as they slid around during their ride.

Bath day was an event not very well attended during the colder months. We were allotted one day per week for 2 hours or so for the whole barracks. We had to walk about 250 yards to the "Bath Room". There was no system of heating for the premises just the steam rising from the hot wooden tubs of water. You had to stand on duckboards and soap up, then pour hot water over yourself to get rid of the lather. There did not seem to be any lighting around, so usually the door had to be left open – otherwise you couldn't even see the tubs. The air coming through that open door was very cold and you had to be quick to avoid being frozen solid. Needless to say there were not too many who braved the cold regularly every week for this miserable operation. One man who was notorious for his lack of attendance said one warm day, "anyone for the bath house", slung his towel around his neck and headed in the wrong direction. I still did not see him in the bath house, tho' he did look a little cleaner when he arrived back at the barracks. This man was always first out of bed and dressed in the mornings and always last to go to bed at night. It took me quite a while to find out how he did it. One morning I was in time to see him dressing – all he had to don was his boots, he slept fully clothed. Everyone else slept in their underwear.

One man from our hut worked as an orderly in the camp hospital, cheerful type. Everyday when he came back to his bunk he had a smile on his face, "Another four (or five or six) of them died today – hope they all go soon, it'll clean up the camp". He didn't have too much affection for the Americans and never did change his attitude during our entire stay in Manchuria.

A group of Americans in one hut decided to supplement their diet with extra meat so they looked around and found enough rope to fashion a noose with a piece of bread in the centre and carefully set in a deep enough hole to accommodate a dog's head, then hid in the hut with the rope at the ready. The dog came cautiously sniffing around the bread, then ducked his head in the hole, the rope pulled tight and the dog was dragged struggling madly up to the crack between the door and the jamb. One man with a wooden club went up to the dog and beat it over the head until all was a soft soggy mess. They didn't waste any time. They tied the limp form to a post and slit its belly open, all its innards fell out and the dog gave a shudder, then bit savagely at the post, taking a great mouthful out of it. The fellows realised they had been a little hasty, so they stepped back and let the dog have a little time to die in peace. Then they set to and continued the skinning etc. Those few fellows fed well for a couple of days. I was

offered a taste, but couldn't face the thought of dog meat. It looked like boiled beef, but, just knowing was enough to put me off.

One day, after returning to camp from the factory, we saw that the orderly officer was standing on a little platform with a piece of wood in his hand about 3ft long of 2"x1". He explained (through the interpreter) that whenever he was "Officer of the Day"(O.D. (Jap)), he was not going to send anyone to the guardhouse for any misdeeds, but, instead he was going to punish them himself. He then proceeded to give a demonstration of how he would do it. He called out the numbers of two men who had been caught in some small misdemeanour at the factory. They had to stand one at a time in front of him, then he lashed out with his club and hit them on the head until they fell, then he jumped down from his platform and beat them about the body. He was quite proud of himself. Need I say that whenever Lieutenant Miki was O.D. everyone was a little more careful not to get caught, in any venture, not to stop – just be more careful. You were not allowed to go to the R.A.P. after your punishment, so you could be in trouble if he broke any bones.

Incidentally the first man to be put in the guard house was also the last man to be in the guard house at the end of our confinement. His name was George Harriss – an Australian who will get a mention later on in this drawn out epistle.

You notice I still haven't got to the new camp. Other things just seem to crop up like cess pools and fields of maybe 40 or 50 acres covered to a depth of about six feet with frozen excreta. The Chinese collectors went with open carts crowbars and long handled shovels and emptied the toilets then carried it back to the fields to wait for the thaw. As it started to thaw it was dumped into these ponds and stirred until nicely mixed, then it was taken in covered wagons to be used as fertilizer in the fields. They got good crops in Manchuria in a very short growing season. Three crops of onions is usual but I don't know about any other vegetables. During the summer the collectors used tank-like containers on their carts and delivered the liquid manure direct to the cess pools, to be used immediately. You didn't dare breathe too deeply during spring and summer, the air was a bit thick.

One day just after leaving the factory, marching through a populated area, a Chinese man who didn't want to wait for the whole column to pass him, foolishly broke through the column. The sergeant in charge of the guards caught him and proceeded to yell at him. The man went down on his knees to beg forgiveness. The sergeant was then taller than the Chinese. This encouraged him to unhook the sabre and scabbard from his belt and he made a chopping motion and hit the Chinese on top of his head. He hit him again a little harder this time, there was a noise like a pumpkin dropped onto concrete and the man's head split open and blood rushed out of the split. He rolled over onto his side. The sergeant calmly hooked the sabre back in place and walked on. No one raced over to the stricken man. He just lay there and quietly expired.

Came the day we moved to the new camp, new two storey buildings as barracks, a big hospital building, large kitchen, a bath room with showers, hot and cold water. They didn't spoil us though. There wasn't any hot water in the washrooms.

Possibly you know a fair amount about the layout of this camp from Major Peaty's diary, so I won't try too hard to recollect the precise details regarding positioning of the buildings. I will just continue with outstanding events that concerned me or someone I was associated with in some manner.

Of all the guards from the camp or factory there is only one that I would cheerfully go up to and extend the hand of friendship. I don't know his name. We all called him "Frog". He knew we were in enough trouble without him adding to it, so he was always friendly whenever his superiors were not around. With reference to the "Death Railway" one of my friends from my unit (another Bell) died there. It was reported back to Australia with the wrong initials, so my superiors got the idea that I had died. One Lieut was quite indignant when I went up to speak to him. He just said "What's

the use of reporting you dead, you won't lie down, just make me out to be a liar. He did admit that I didn't look very dead, so he forgave me.

We got settled in to our new camp and eventually got rid of our fleas and lice, even got to putting on some extra weight with such a short distance to walk to work and also not so much scratching.

I was friendly with an American sailor and we both got started on learning to speak "Spanish". We even got a number of lessons from an American Officer from Texas who not only spoke the language fluently but had a text book for beginners. We were able to assimilate a reasonable amount. We were to be seen walking around together earnestly trying our newly learned words on each other, until we were game enough to try talking to the Mexicans in the camp. As our teacher was a Texan we had the right accent so most of the Mexicans could understand what little we had learned and as it was usually a standard sentence such as "Good morning, how are you today, fine weather etc." we sounded as though we knew the language well. They replied with what sounded like machine gun fire. We couldn't understand a word. After about 12 months of study we were starting to sound as though we knew our business. We both became quite proficient before we left the place. Needless to say what with speaking some Chinese and Japanese and Spanish we began to think of ourselves as linguists. I tried to help out as an interpreter when a Jap guard was questioning an American, then found that I had to do some fancy talking when the Jap thought that I was the guilty party. It doesn't pay to open your mouth on some days.

When winter came around again I was working outside, at the factory, there was a section where a lot of timber had been dumped higgledy-piggledy and it was our job (about 10 of us) to make the mess into a series of tidy stacks. As it was heavy work we were allowed to work two hours then rest two hours and so we had an excuse for someone to be always in the "shed" where we were allowed to rest. It was a two room building with a fireplace in one of the rooms. We kept the fire going all the time during winter and we were assured of a constant stream of grateful visitors coming into our warm shed to get out of the shocking cold. We were constantly having to explain to Japanese or Chinese guards why there were men in the shed all the time. So we got onto a Japanese-American Interpreter (he was an American who was in Japan for the free University training, when the war started. He was press-ganged into service as an interpreter in the factory). We explained exactly what we wanted, so he had a sign printed setting out our working hours and resting hours and we nailed it on our door, so any complaint and we pointed to the door. Some of the guards saw the sign then left, then left, others couldn't read, so we read it to them, others would not believe what they had read nor what we said was written, so we had to go to get our interpreter friend and explain to him the trouble. So he would try and convince the guard that everything was OK.

My American friend Frank Driver was walking through the factory one day when a uniformed Jap came up to him and spoke He was from Oregon USA and had lived about 1000 yards from Frank's home., His father had a fish shop there. He had been in Hong Kong when the war broke out and had volunteered to interpret in Manchuria. Frank was always kept fully informed of anything that needed to be known and never ran out of cigarettes, nor other necessities as long as his friend was available.

When spring was starting to get into action we were actually working outside stacking timber when a couple of guards came around our timber yard. A couple of fellows had been sleeping in the shed. We had warned them that the guards were coming but they couldn't disguise the marks on their backs. (They had been leaning up against a car seat which was not covered, the wires had left marks all over their backs) as everyone was stripped to the waist any marks showed clearly. The guards took all our numbers and left. That night we were called out from work parade and when everyone had gone back into camp we were interrogated then had to get into the "Push up" position and stay that way for about 45 minutes. Sergeant Lee of the Loyals was one our group. He was told to stand up and explain. I heard the Jap Sgt. tell the Interpreter to tell Sgt. Lee to

stand. All I heard was “stand” in Japanese. I stood and promptly got knocked back do again. I had missed out on the other words in between. Oh well, that’s life. Still I had had a little break from the push up position. After a little while we were all told to stand up, then allowed to go back into camp to our respective quarters.

Our next brush with guards we were not so lucky, we finished up inside the guard house with our own individual rooms. The bars of our cells were 3”x3” softwood. These were safer in the sub-zero temperatures sometimes felt in the guardhouse. Your flesh could not freeze onto them.

We were supposed to stand to attention all the time and a guard patrolled up and down all the time to make sure, but the wooden bars on our cages meant that he couldn’t see us until he was level with us. We weren’t allowed to talk to each other, but I could be seen from three cells so I taught these three to “talk” the deaf and dumb alphabet on their hands. They taught the others that could see them and so a silent message could be passed from one end to the other without the guard being any the wiser. We had a weeks stay in this hotel but none of us could recommend it as a tourist attraction. One day there was a loud report at one end of the cell block as someone broke wind. The guard hurried down to abuse the offender. He asked an English Sgt. If he had done it. The Sgt. Said “No, if I did it, it would smell sweet, it stinks, so it must have been a private, all privates stink. The guard (a private) realising he was being had,. Got mad and punched him on the nose. When our week was finished we had to all stand up in front of the orderly officer and say we were sorry and would not be naughty again. We were allowed to go back to our quarters. We returned to work next day.

There must have been another brush with the camp guards (at the factory). This episode is a little confused in my mind. A little Jap Sergeant. was being transferred to another place and wanted to have a last bit of fun before going away and, as our gang at the timber yard was so easy to get at, he chose us. It must have been during colder weather as we have overcoats on during his fun time. He chose me to be a recipient and proceeded to hit me about the face with a bamboo practice sword. I had my coat collar turned up against the cold also a blanket hat with the ear flaps down, so apart from the noise made by the bamboo, I was quite unhurt and he got a little upset because I just looked straight ahead and didn’t show any fear of this little man who didn’t even come up to my shoulder. Be causae he had to knock me down and hitting didn’t work he just put his foot behind mine and pushed me over. This helped his ego enough for him to move away to somebody else. Somehow I think his little fling did not really turn out to be the ego boost he had hoped for. This “Sergeant” was the one previously referred to in the killing of the Chinese civilian.

One evening back at camp we were treated to the sight of a bonfire at the factory. It was a very pleasing sight. It burnt out completely one of the factory buildings - the provision tools store. It was work as usual next day. Everyone was anxious to get there to see the damage. A lot of other work was delayed while cleaning was done. All the burnt up remains shovelled up and carted away. Anything not damaged in the fire was broken and carried away too. As long as the guards did not see, everyone had a wonderful time breaking up everything in sight (vandalism in a good cause).

Then there was a new interpreter introduced to the factory. We did not quite understand this bloke for a long time. He was to be seen hiding around corners spying on the prisoners and watching them working. Everyone knew he was here, so did a little better work until he left to spy on someone else. The secret came out later. He had devised a scheme to improve the output of the factory by incentive colouring of our factory numbers. The best workers were given RED numbers as workers to be trusted. Not as many guards were needed. The moderate workers wore BLUE numbers which said they were just run of the mill workers, and, needed the same amount of guards as everyone was likely to goof off sometime so still needed control. The slackers, or to use American terminology which inspired the colour “Gold Bricks” had YELLOW number plates and needed to be watched at all times because they were likely to do the wrong thing at any time of any day.

The minimum time that a yellow number could be worn was one week. Then a further week of “good” work with a blue number allowed you a red number and more freedom to pursue your nefarious schemes. Of course, you only had to get caught and you got an immediate yellow number for your reward. There was about a 60% group Red numbers, 30% Blue and 10% yellow and about 0% improvement in factory output.

The “Bongo Kid” as he was called (Bongo means number) could not understand where he had failed, instead of an improvement it had actually cost money because of all the work involved in the three colour number plates.

Then there was the time when a railway truck full of food wrongly found itself in the factory siding. No one knew where it had come from nor where it should have gone. But it was a very happy time for a lot of people. Even the guards took turns to steal food from the truck. They were to be seen trying to hide suspicious bulges under their coats until they could find somewhere to hide, and get their stolen food into them. The food consisted of pork and all the derivatives, namely ham, chittlings (intestines), salami, trotters and bacon. The only thing missing was the pigs squeal. Just about everyone got his belly filled as a result of this slight error in delivery. In a little over two days about ten tons of food just disappeared and there was no official knowledge of a truck load of food.

Came the time when we were issued with Red Cross clothing to help keep us warm during the winter months (This was during 1944). What a conglomeration. Most of the clothes would be suitable for a temperate climate. Golfing hats, plus fours, linen and cotton jackets, civilian overcoats, cotton peaked hats. Of course we were grateful but just a little disappointed as there was nothing that looked like Arctic wear which was required wear during the colder of the winter months where a bucket of water left outside became a bucket of solid ice within 15 minutes. The ground was frozen solid for six feet of depth for the whole winter. Water pipes going into new buildings had to be at a depth of over six feet and guarded by lagging for the entire length.

This winter our gang at the factory had to erect a barbed wire fence so that others could not get into the timber yard and steal timber. We had a good system which allowed four men to stay in the warm shed while four men went out to put up one fence post in the morning, then vice versa for the afternoon. We would take it in turn to dig with a crow bar for about five minutes at a time. We did not want to work too long at a time as over exertion caused deep breathing and frost bitten lungs – no thanks. When the hole was about 15” deep the seven foot post was rammed into place with rocks around the bottom then loosely packed soil up to ground level. Then we all four eased our bladders onto the loose packed soil, held the post for another minute until frozen solid into position then piled up loose soil around the ice to cover it. It would have taken an elephant to move that post before the thaw.

Our next job after erection of all posts was to go to a warehouse and pick up barbed wire to nail to the posts. The Jap storeman was a little apologetic about the barbed wire which had been imported from Japan and due to the war it was not as good as it might be. We found out what he meant when we took each reel of wire out and unwound it. It had been cunningly wound so that it looked like a complete reel of galvanised barbed wire, when in fact less than 30% had been coated and 70% was rusty, part of it was not even barbed. Also for the Japanese war effort, our fence took just short of three months to erect. At least we had finished it before it started sagging all over the place and before the rusty parts had rusted completely through.

Tragedy was to strike in the camp before this winter was through. We had been having an occasional air raid practice during the summer. Everyone was alerted by a siren and had to run to the search shed then after searching we were counted, then run back to the camp and lay on the parade ground until given the all-clear. But this day was in winter (November/December). I think it was December 7th or 8th. (I have almost completely forgotten this episode but will give my impression). Something seemed different. The

guards weren't laughing as much as they had during the other runs back to camp. They were shouting "Speedo" all the time to urge us to hurry. We got back to the barracks and got any extra clothes needed then out onto the frozen parade ground. After a short while we saw the vapour trails then heard the engines of the bombers overhead. There were smaller trails around them as Jap fighters had a go at them. We heard bombs falling, saw a great gush of flame as a bomber exploded from collision with a fighter. Then pieces fell from it, turning over and over in the air. All of the time sounds of bombs falling some distance away from us. Another bomber mortally wounded falling while laying fleecy looking eggs which turned out to be its crew parachuting to the ground, the smoke pouring out of smudge pots to protect the factory and the camp, the smoke pouring out of the city from bomb damage or more smudge pots, who knows? The delighted Americans saluting the waves of American bombers flying over, the change to horror when one plane left the formation and "shook" itself to loosen two stick bombs and two silver eggs of doom streaking like lightning flashes towards twelve hundred men strewn all over the parade ground, each one thinking, "This is it".

I heard the scream building up to a crescendo as the bomb fell madly towards me and following the rules I took a deep breath then started letting the air out slowly and closed my eyes. There was an ear-splitting explosion and all the rest of the breath was forced out of me. I slowly opened my eyes. It was dark. I closed my eyes again, waited for a few moments and tried again. It was light again. I looked around and saw chaos. Piles of clothing all over the place, even a pair of trousers draped over the barbed wire nearby but with shoes hanging from the cuffs, a great hole in the brick fence with a Jap Guard looking thru it, then panic as people realised that others had been killed by their sides or at their feet or mortally wounded; men screaming for stretcher bearers at the sight of a dear friend torn to pieces by bomb fragments.

I was still shocked by the explosion and still not comprehending. In front of my face I saw a hat peak and thought, "That looks like an old hat" yet these hats were only issued in June or July. I turned it over. It had brain tissue spread all over it, then it dawned on me, somebody had died in that explosion. I looked around me again. That pile of clothes was a pile of dead bodies. Those trousers were the lower half of a body. That coat did not have a head coming out of the top. That man "Bumgardner" was saluting did not have his saluting arm now and he also had a hole in his head and brains from his head were over Jim Clancy's coat. Bumgardner survived this duo of injuries, apparently those brains weren't needed. It was the peak of his hat I had found.

One man in the centre of the parade ground and about 70 or 80 yards from the bomb was killed by a piece of shrapnel which went up then came down on the middle of his back leaving a hole about 6" across. Two Englishmen, one each side of their American friend, got slight shrapnel wounds on their backs. The American was decapitated. I might mention that the bomb became literally a Daisy cutter as it only penetrated about 18" before exploding (due to the frozen ground). I did get a little scratch on my back as a piece of shrapnel took the high spots from my shoulder blade muscles.

Meanwhile what about the other bomb? It fell on the toilet of our barracks, demolishing half of the wall and setting fire to the timber partitions. A New Zealand Captain picked up one of the fire buckets and raced up to the fire getting the bucket at the ready for discharging its "water" contents on the fire. As he aimed and let fly he didn't lessen the weight in the bucket as the ice wouldn't let go. It dragged him forward and he slithered forward on the icy ground twisted his foot and dipped his other foot into the excreta. You can imagine he got a few joking remarks hurled in his direction after this little episode.

The result of the bombing was twenty two killed and about 50 or 60 injured, including a lost leg and two men each losing an arm, plus for our barracks a very cold visit to the toilet until some repairs were made.

Digging tools were issued out immediately after the all-clear and a start was made on slit trenches for any future bombing raids. Three of us on one job worked solidly for half an hour to produce a trench 2" deep 10" wide and 2 feet long and blunted crow bars

It has been a little sickening recalling some of these events so I'll ask you to pardon the style of random speech adopted for the telling but as the 500 lb bomb landed about 30 feet away from my feet I was in a slight state of shock and things seemed a little unreal for a short while.

The events following the bombing were not very conspicuous, digging slit trenches and putting lids on them, levelling out the soil to disguise the trenches.

We were to have a concert at Christmas and I had the carpenter make me a ventriloquist doll to perform for the "Captive" audience. We also were putting on a play. I was the horrible hunchback. Our temporary stage for rehearsal was in the boiler room. A large pile of coal dust was in the corner. Some of the cast stubbed their cigarettes out in the "Coal" heap. I must inform you that this coal would not burn without the forced draught of the boiler fire, so what chance was there for the cigarette butts to ignite it? The officer of the day saw the butts in the "Coal" heap, said it was a clear case of sabotage and called off the concert. My ventriloquist doll was confiscated and all musical instruments recalled. There was a great pow-wow between Major Peaty and the Jap commandant. Eventually it was granted that the show could go on, for the patients in the hospital only. The other fellows just had to go without. This was a boon perhaps. The only place where the whole camp could congregate would have been too cold, as there seemed to be no available heating there. This was the place we had to pass through to be searched on our way to work in the mornings and evenings – about eight foot ceilings and rows and rows of supports for the ceilings.

Well I got my doll back and the concert went on. Some of the patients could not be moved, so I walked around with my doll after the show and said a few words to them. The show itself was fairly successful. The Horrible Hunchback was shot in the act of killing another victim. Act followed act until (Dingle and Freddy), self and doll went on. I got a few laughs then this fellow dressed as a girl walked past. Freddie (my doll) said "It has been so long" and appeared to have a wet dream on my knee. This bought the house down. Claps and cheers and made my performance very gratifying. My best audience ever. It might not go over too well nowadays. The permissive society would say it was too weak – not enough body to it. The concert was the talk of the camp for quite some time, though Freddy had to go back to jail, so he could not be re-used for further performances.

Winter froze on with no serious problems, well, nothing very serious. George Harriss figured in an episode which seemed funny, but was not so for George. At the factory George got hold of some alcohol, drank well, but not wisely. The cold weather got to him. He realized he would never get through two searches without being discovered, so he hid in the toilet, behind the guardhouse, near where we lined up to be counted before leaving for camp. The guards lined us up and counted. Got the wrong answer, tried again, still wrong. They started looking around, and then found George Harriss, rotten drunk and unable to walk. They put him in one of the ration boxes and four men had to carry him back to camp straight to the guard house. He told me later (in Australia) that it almost killed him. He had to walk around all night to stay awake or he would have frozen to death. The guard house was not centrally heated, just remained at 0° Celsius during winter. George had the dubious honour of being the first into the guard house in the old camp and the last out of the guard house. When the war ended he was in there. He had the record for the number of days spent there, more than 120. He did tell me how many but I have since forgotten.

The next event was when the senior officers were moved into the camp. They had been brought up from Taiwan and immediately our lives changed for the worse. These blokes had been accustomed to bowing to each and every Jap they saw. We had gradually worn the guards down until only non-coms were being saluted. Now Generals

were saluting and bowing to privates, so we had to fall in to line. If it was good enough for a General to bow, it was good enough for us. Our officers had to re-educate the new arrivals. We found that there were some others also who had survived when their prison ship had been sunk by the yanks. They told us of those that had died in the sinking. One of my friends was among them – Ron Plant from Trentham in Victoria. He had survived the Burma Railway only to drown in the China Sea on his way to Japan. There was to be a sad note, an Australian Colonel had a tumour growing in his head. This had developed until an operation was imperative. None of the doctors had sufficient expertise and the Colonel died. He was the only Australian to die in our three years in the camp and he had only been there for a few months.

Then our informant at the factory told of a bomb that was exploded on Japan with shocking results. Something like science fiction. We started to worry about OUR future. We had heard long ago of the Jap's plan to kill all prisoners of war when, or if, Japan looked like losing the war. Then, another bomb, then great aeroplanes and American officers, new ones, in the camp. Our Jap guards now our prisoners. Now we had "Biscuit Bombers" dropping food for us. We were lucky nobody got hit by flying food. Apparently a Chinese outside the camp died when crushed by a falling carton. The Americans showed us movies in colour of "In the Field" operations – surgeons sewing up stomachs and whatever needed sewing. No matter what they showed, we lapped it up. We had been starved of entertainment for a long time.

Then the Russians arrived, they had fought the Japs all the way. Now they were the conquerors of Manchuria and gave us the freedom of the city. We were allowed to roam all over town and explore. A lot of fellows sampled the local girls and took an extra couple of weeks longer to get home. The Japs had spread a lot of V.D. around and now it was travelling a bit further. Pity the poor girls. There wasn't much doctoring available and they had no way of being cured. Maybe they then gave it to the Russians, who knows.

Then onto a train to the coast. We were going home. A long way to go, but at last we were going home.

Hand written notes of Bill Bell provided to Lt Col Peter Winstanley OAM RFD JP by Dale Bell the son of Bill Bell in 2005. The notes were typed by Helen Winstanley and subsequently lightly edited.