

Extracts form the Memoirs of NX24041 Pte. L.P.Huon,

2/5 Australian General Hospital -- POW 27-04-1941 --- 25-10- 1943

I joined up in May or June 1940 and went to camp at Greta, west of Newcastle. We were well looked after there and were toughened up by route marches every couple of days. We would be on the road for about 6 hours a day marching, marching, marching.

Greta rail station was about 2 miles from camp but the line skirted the camp before the station so the Sunday night train was always stopped by the passengers near the camp by pulling the emergency brake and we all jumped off, a short walk to the camp. After three months at Greta we were moved to the Sydney Showgrounds where we were looked after for a few weeks before moving out.

The main activity here was practicing bussing and de-bussing this took up a lot of our time, there would be a bus drawn on the ground with the seats also to make sure we got on correctly, we would line up beside the drawing and march into the seats and when we were all aboard we de-bussed in a regular manner to satisfy the officer in charge.

Come October we got on the real busses and went to Darling Harbour and onto a ferry to the Queen Mary.

We stopped outside Freemantle and took on more men from Western Australia.

From here we went to Bombay, we got off the Queen Mary and spent some time in this great Indian city.

Went to the Taj Mahal and had a curry dinner, we were a party of six or so, and everyone had their own waiter, the service was great and we all enjoyed the evening.

Bombay was a greatly over crowded city of beggars living and sleeping on the streets.

It is hard to remember the events of fifty years or so ago, so all facts are hazy.

Transferred to smaller ships and went up the Suez Canal, a channel built through the deserts of Egypt. It consists of channels through the sand joining lakes and a number of locks to lift or lower the ships to another level.

When on the lakes the ships propelled itself, but in the canals it was pulled along by engines running on rails at the edge of the canal.

We moved to Palestine and camped among the citrus groves of Rehovot a town about thirty minutes from Tel Aviv. Arabs were friendly, Jews were friendly, Christians were friendly. Sunday was the day for the Christians to worship, Friday and Saturday for Jews and Arabs. So there were some shops closed on each of these days.

While on leave in Palestine I visited Gaza, Haifa, Tel Aviv Jaffa and went on a tour conducted by the Franciscan Fathers who are the custodians of the Holy Places in Palestine.

The way of the cross wanders through the narrow streets of the old walled city and the stopping places are marked on the walls. Where Christ ascended into heaven we were shown a footprint on a rock on top of a hill.

The supper room where the last supper was held, and the room where the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles is the top floor of a two story building. There are most likely not authentic places but they show you what things were like in the time of Christ.

The Garden of Gethsemane is outside the walled city about half a mile away. The olive trees in this garden are very, very old and knarled and have very large trunks.

These trees look as if they could have been there for two thousand years. The site of the crucifixion is in a beautiful church, as are many other holy places.

You can see excavations where one church has been built on the old church that has crumbled down. Houses can also be seen two or three on each other where excavations are taking place.

Nearly all the churches are decorated with Holy Pictures done in mosaic tiles and you would have to go to see them to appreciate them fully.

In April 1941 we went to Alexandria in Egypt and sailed for Piraeus the port of Athens.

After unloading equipment for a large hospital we went about six miles outside Athens and sat around with our hospitals equipment for a fortnight.

The German army was coming from the north and all the troops Aussies, New Zealanders and British were being evacuated from Southern Greece.

The authorities evacuated all the female nurses and half the unit.

The rest of us stayed on and we became Prisoners of war on April 27- 1941.

In a short time, about a fortnight, we and the equipment were moved to a building near the port of Piraeus and the hospital was established there. A wire fence was run around the building and we worked and played there for six months.

Any injured allied prisoners were sent to us by the Germans, and when Crete was invaded all allied prisoners who were injured were flown back to Athens on the German transports that had delivered their paratroopers and other to Crete. They were all delivered to our hospital and we were very busy for quite a few months when we had hundreds of patients some very badly wounded. We had Australian doctors, radiologists, male nurses, all that was necessary to run the hospital successfully.

About November 1941 the Greece and Crete campaign was well over and as the patients recovered they were sent up to Germany.

The hospital was closed down and we went to Piraeus and boarded a small ship that sailed up the Greek coast to Salonika, where we got into railway cattle trucks that travelled north through Yugoslavia, Austria, Germany and Poland. This trip I think lasted about ten days. In Poland we were near an old medieval town called Torun on the Vistula River about 100 miles south of Danzig a port on the Baltic Sea.

For a full account of this journey see the 2 nd Edition Book –“Proudly We Served,” The Train Story – Page 216.

We lived in one of the many underground forts that surrounded this old city.

Conditions were primitive but we could keep warm in winter underground and exercise above in the fresh air.

We played cricket, rugby, basketball in the summer months and in winter we could always find some old furniture for toboggans. There were some very good amateur actors and many concerts were performed which were very well patronized.

Musical instruments were available and band concerts were popular.

School teachers from the British regular army were also amongst the prisoners so school lessons were also well attended. A priest came to say mass three or four times a year.

Quoits and darts competitions were on all the time. Red Cross parcels came regularly sometimes fortnightly.

Most of the parcels received were from Canada, they contained powdered milk, tea, coffee, chocolate, cigarettes, meat loaf, and a variety of other goodies.

We could write mail home and receive mail, these came through Switzerland and England.

We had mostly stews with very little meat, some vegetables mostly turnips with plenty of barley.

We were here until about October 1943 when we were exchanged for German prisoners of war from North Africa. We had a better trip this time, we had carriages and travelled through Germany and France to Marseilles where we changed places with the Germans and got on the boat.

The boat took us to Alexandria and we spent about three months recuperating and waiting for the hospital ship “Manunda” to come and take us home so we had plenty of free time and got to know Alexandria pretty well.

After travelling through the Suez Canal we called at Colombo in Ceylon and Perth in Western Australia and then we were back in Sydney.

The greatest thrill in coming to Sydney is sailing up the coast covered in fog and as we got near the heads the fog lifted and we sailed into bright sunshine, and after getting near Watsons Bay the Harbour Bridge and the city skyline came into view. It brought tears to my eyes. I will never forget that sight – coming home.

We were met at Sydney Showground by families and friends where more tears were shed.

After a couple of weeks at home I found it very hard to settle down – having been away for so long.

We went to Ballarat for some months I had to get home from there to get married on March 17th 1944. My rail ticket was wrongly dated so I came from Ballarat to Sydney without a ticket but everything turned out OK.

After wedding went to Lake Conjola for honeymoon then back to showground and shipped out to Morotai, an island in the Celebes group near Borneo. I was cooking again but was only there about 2 month, then all the ex prisoners of war were sent back to Sydney to be discharged.

This was my first trip on an airplane; we flew in a Dakota from Morotai to Biak an American base near New Guinea, and in a larger plane, a Constellation four engine back to Brisbane in 10 hours

We sat in canvass slings down each side of the plane; you could see the land all the way, roads, jungles, river, coastline etc.

Caught train from Brisbane to Sydney and was met at station by Monica and our first born Philip. What a great welcome out of the army and back to work.

Notes from the Diary of Paul Huon:

DER KRIEGSGEFANGENEN LAZARETT

SPORTS REVIEW

Vol.1 No. 5

Tuesday Evening 4-11-41

Ed. P. Hauer

GRAND PARADE HEADS CUP DAY SPORTS AT KOKKINIA.

The weather was not all that was to be expected, but nevertheless the day was a great success for everybody

The grand parade was lead by the C3 team followed by the C4 team. After marching around the oval they gave their special C 3 War-cry. Then they sang the Maori's Farewell and I feel sure that if there any Maoris present they left the oval. The C4 team were dressed as athletes and looked very well indeed. Non-paying spectators gathered outside the oval and had an excellent view, the stewards are looking into the matter of getting a hessian fence put up.

The first event on the program was the high jump, from which there were a considerable number of scratchings. The first jump was four feet and two entrants failed. The bar was then lifted to four feet three. Several more were out. The bar was raised to 4'5". There were only two left in, Leake and Prince, who has a very nice style. Prince, our tip, won by jumping 4'7" in grand style. In the first heat of the Mimosa Stakes, Gray was first with Neate second, the time was 7 seconds.

The next event was the first heat of the Melbourne Cup. Nicholls and Johnson and Myer and Spence both fell, allowing Horto and Uhr an easy victor. The second heat was more exciting, Bishop and Cragg narrowly beating Webb and Foster, the time being 20 seconds. In the third heat, it was a walkover for Gamble and Bryant. Davison and Rose having had a nasty accident. The favorites Huon and Fleming won the next heat, the time was 25 seconds. The second heat of the Mimosa was held up for 85 seconds while the stewards were waiting for Douglas. It was a no run owing to a false start. The heat was re-run immediately and the President, also known as Sutcliffe won the race in 6 seconds.

TUNNEL BALL HEATS: The sergeants had a bye in this event The unattached – C4 No 1 was the first heat and was won in grand style by C4, the time being 52 seconds. Heslop of the unattached fell and gave the event to -----. Next was C4 No2 V C3, won by C4 who had it all over their opponents. Time 46 seconds

In the final heat, C2 V Officers, the C2 team evidently thought they were playing for the Officers, who won in 52 seconds. Len Baker won the 2 nd heat of the Mimosa Stakes in the record time of 5 1/2 seconds.

Heavy spots of rain began to fall as the first heat of the potato race was being run, which was won by Barling in 28 seconds.

FLASH** It has just come to hand that Heslop suffered extensive flesh wounds to the legs and hands when he fell in the first heat of the tunnel ball. Tich Foster won the next heat of the spud race in 26 1/2 seconds. The 3 rd heat was won by Bishop at the same as Foster. The 4th heat was a dead heat between Bush and Leake, time 27 seconds. In the 5th heat Maxwell won, the time being 27 seconds. The sixth and final heat Neil Hinks won in 27 1/2 seconds.

BROAD JUMP: The rules for the Broad jump were three jumps, all to measure and the best jump wins. The entrants were not as large as was expected, owing to the large number of last minute scratchings. -- 1. Bush 2. Leake 13-3; 14-11; 15-6 12-10; 14-8; 14-6.

Bill Bush from the Raynor Stables won this in grand style. Several participants in this event retired with pulled muscles.

RESULTS CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE

.Tues. Evening Nov. 4-11-41
PAGE 2

SPORTS REVIEW

WHACO THE FIFTH:

Our Captain Barling, is a Surgeon you see,
Went right through college and earned his
degree.

He started to practice, on prisoners of war,
To make his name famous, like
Major Brooke Moore.

Our Major's a teacher, a man to speculate,
If he sees a bad limb, he must amputate.
The orderlies cheered, and cried out for more,
And, to please the orderlies, he did an encore.

"It's time we did business," said he with a grin,
"Get out the razor, and prepare his fore-skin,"
He takes out a scalpel, with care and precision
With plenty of nerve, does a neat circumcision.
The next was a femur, an ease for a master,
Our Capt's a great Doc, soon had him in plaster.
With pulleys and sandbags they set him at ease,
But he looked like the man on the flying trapeze.
They are both great surgeons, they both love
the game
The 5 th AGH., to old AUSSIE's shore

And when they reach Aussie, they'll be covered

in fame

The whole staff's a credit to Major Brooke Moore

CANTEEN NOTICE:

Don't forget that tomorrow is the last day that requisite will be available, so hop in and buy now The canteen wishes to inform it's customers, that no more cigarettes will be available after the present stock has been sold out. So buy your smokes now if you have some money left, which the bookies did not take from you

SPECIAL !!!

NASTY INCIDENT: The sporting public of KOKKINIA will be shocked to learn that an attempt was made to interfere with the horse the officer's stables last night. Each stall had been interfered with and the straw bedding short sheeted. Rose, who was bedded down with McNamara spent a particularly restless night and was stiff and sore this morning. Leake also seemed fretful this morning and rather restive. All the horses are receiving special treatment from Bill Lowe The Athenian Veterinary Surgeon. When asked his opinion, George the Greek Stable boy said--POOFTA --- (Regret cannot print, Ed.) The stipendiary stewards and the Kokinnia police are investigating the matter.

SPECIAL STOP PRESS

By arrangement with the German Command we print the 1941 result of the Melbourne Cup, ran at Flemington today.

1. Pantler 50 / 1
2. Lucrative 5 / 2 fav.
3. Tidal Wave 20 / 1
2. Lucrative 5 / 2 fav.
3. Tidal Wave 20 / 1

Mortuary Maud (Gordon Jones) is in strict training for next Saturday's Events. This will be his first performance on this course. Tom Tovey, who scratched from all events upset the punters, is believed to be suffering from today, a probable fracture of a rib. It is all baloney about Bert Peet, being an amateur walking champion, according to his own admission this morning.

Tues. Evening 4-11-41 SPORTS REVIEW

Page 3

CHALLENGE WALK

At last Pebbles made one boast wish he proved and we hand it to him. The time for event is not available.

.

FINAL OF THE TUNNEL BALL

This event was between C4 – Nos. 1 & 2 teams. The teams were very well matched, but the No. 2 team was slightly better and won in the record time of 44 Seconds

RELAY !! The officers team won the first heat of the relay from c4, Time 27 secs. dead.

FINAL EVENT OF THE DAY -- THE RELAY

This was the final event of a very successful day. The unattached team, (A.W.Dexter's Special) won easily from C4 in 26 seconds, dead. Entries for Saturday's meeting close at 1300 hours tomorrow. The meeting commences at 1345 hours sharp. The next physical culture class will be held on B Block roof at 1400 hours

SEMI-FINALS OF TUNNEL BALL

.

Sergeants V C4:- Resulted in an easy victory for C4 No.1 team, time 50 seconds.

C4 No2, V Officers:- The C4 N0 2 team won with the record time of 45 seconds

FINAL OF THE CUP

.

Bishop and Cragg; Gamble and Bryant; Huon and Fleming; Uhr and Horton were the participants. It was a very exciting race, Bishop and Cragg won from Huon and Fleming. The time being 20 seconds dead.

1/4 MILE WALK

In this event there were quite a lot of entrants and the course was rather crowded. Owing to the building not being made of glass we were not able to see the race, but our special representative will write an article on the walk for our next edition.

Barling won from Constable. Time 1 min. 37 secs. Nobody else was in the race

FINAL OF THE SPUD RACE

There was a lot of controversy as to who won this event, the judges decision is final whether we agree or not. The decision of the judges was in favour of Barling.

MIMOSA FINAL

1. Sutcliff 2. Baker -- time 6 seconds

Sutcliff ran an excellent race and was cheered on by his team mates, who chaired him and took him to the bookies to collect, who paid with a smile (?)

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THIS PAPER WILL BE FRIDAY EVENING