



CHARLES T. (Chuck)



17 March, 1994

Dear Rachel,

In your letter to the 1st. Marine Div. Assn., you asked for answers from anyone who had spent time in Melbourne during WW II.

Well, I think I can qualify as one who was there, but may not be used on your thesis because you will, probably, receive so many replies that I probably will be lost in the shuffle.

First, let me tell you how I got to Melbourne. Leaving the States on May 20 aboard the USS Wakefield, ending up in Wellington, N.Z. on June 14, Our outfit boarded the USS American Legion on July 18 and made practice landings in the Fiji Islands from July 25 to 28 and then left for landing on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands on Aug. 7, 1942. The 1st. Marine Div. was relieved on Dec. 9, with the 5th Regiment, my outfit, leaving first and the balance of the division left the next two and three days. Most of the division was shipped to Brisbane, Australia, however, due to the increase of Malaria, the entire division left Brisbane on January 9 on board the USS West Point and arrived in Melbourne on the 11th and a cooler climate.

When we arrived in Melbourne, there were no bands or people to greet us, but that made little difference to us. All we wanted was a little rest and recuperation. Many, many of us had malaria and we knew that it would be a hard task to clean up our division and move north again.

But now, we were in Melbourne and it did not take long to make friends with the friendly people of Melbourne. Melbourne was all the fellows of the division would hope it would be, and much more. It became the symbolic civilian environment - and it remained so until the end of the war simply because the division would never again see what they would call civilization - thus, Melbourne became a home away from home to the Marines from Guadalcanal.

In your contact with the Old Breed News, you asked what it is that the servicemen remember about their wartime experiences in Melbourne and what impact these experiences made upon them. Rachel, I can only speak for myself in answer to your two questions above, however, for the next two years, the most talked about subject was "Melbourne", period.



**CHARLES T. (Chuck)**



First, about my wartime experiences in Melbourne. It would take pages to tell you how little it took from the friendly people everywhere in the city, to make you forget the horrible time we spent on Guadalcanal.

I picked the Franklin Hotel to spend my nights while in Melbourne with my buddies. It did not take long to remember that the Pubs opened at 10 AM and closed at 12 noon. Then, opened again at 2 PM and closed at 4 PM.

Americans at home drank beer cooled or cold and it did not take long for us to find a pub at the docks who would serve cold beer every Saturday from 10 AM until about 11 AM. ( the ice ran out or melted ) Next door to the pub was a Fish & Chip place who always got our business.

When the pubs closed at 4 PM, we would usually end up in some Lounge at one of the nice hotels, meet some pretty girls, have some nice conversation and, later, meet them for a party or a dance somewhere in the confines of your wonderful city. One Saturday night, a buddy and myself went to a party with two pretty girls whom we had met that afternoon. There must have been at least fifteen Marines and their girlfriends there when we arrived. The party had already started and we just joined in. We took two or three quart type bottles of drinks, but the other Marines who came must have brought twice as much. After a couple or three hours of dancing etc. seems like most of the Marines were getting crocked - except for me. I had only three or four or five, maybe six, when this girl came up to me and said "I think the Marine I came with is drunk, would you mind taking me home?" Well, I think a little bit and then I say " Sorry, I don't have a car." She says, sort of pleading, "There's a Tram station just down the road." I say, "How far do you live from here?" "Just a short ways, she says". I won't tell you what I was thinking, but we go to the station and the Tram gets there in about fifteen minutes. We get on and start rolling- and rolling-and rolling etc. Finally, I said "where in the hell did you say you lived". She was looking at the floor and finally she looked up at me with those shiny blue eyes, and with a sweet smile, she says, "just down the tracks". Since I was sixteen and in high school, my weakness has always been pretty blue-eyed blondes.

We finally make the station. She lived about four blocks from the stop. We started walking and came to a street on my right. She said "This is it". She opened her pocketbook, wrote something on a piece of paper, stuck it in my hand, kissed me quickly and said " call me next week."

Now Rachel, everything would have been alright, except that I had no idea where I was, the Tram station was closed, it was after midnight and only me and a streetlight was alive in nowhere. I did not know which way to go, so I just sat down against the streetlight post and dropped off to sleep. I had some better nights on Guadalcanal.



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The next morning, about 5 AM, I felt something shaking me on the shoulder. It was a young boy who was going to work with his father and he was asking me if I was alright. After waking, I told him that I was OK and what had happened. He told me to come on over and get in the car - they would take me to a carstop which would take me right to the hotel. About 5:30 AM, the streetcar picked me up and, although I was a good ways from the hotel, the car's route came up Flinders St. and turned left, then let me off in front of the hotel. That was some luck for me, but my mother always taught me not to leave a damsel in despair. What a nice thing those two fellows did for me. I even offered to pay for their trouble - No way, Hoseh .

Let me back up a few steps - when I arrived in Melbourne, maybe two weeks after, I was sent to Dandenong, Australia to a hospital for a bout of Malaria. I was there for thirty days. The hospital was a large, one story church, made over to a hospital and the entire area was filled with army type cots. It was run by Catholic Nuns and let me tell you, Rachel, it was so nice to be waked up at 6 AM by Sister Favalora, a beautiful, young Italian girl, who usually had the overnight watch when I was there. She would give every patient, and it was full of Marines, a shot of liquid quinine, a bitter, crystalline, alkaloid extracted from cinchona bark and used especially for treating Malaria. We, also, had a shot at 6 PM, but it was not as nice as the AM shot because Sister Favalora was off duty. After over fifty years, I can still see Sister Favalora and the wonderful people at the Dandenong hospital. May God bless them all, wherever they are.

One more shot at Malaria - I was sent to the 4th. General Hospital ( Your main hospital, then ) three times while I was in Melbourne for two weeks a stay. No problem, except it took some of my liberty time. Let me slip this piece of luck in. After we left Melbourne and a stay at Milne Bay, we landed on Cape Gloucester, New Britain on 29 December. In March, 1943, a buddy and myself were on patrol and ran into a Jap medical dump and after checking for booby traps we checked it. Only a wooden shack about three feet by six feet, but I found a bottle of sugar coated quinine and it was like finding a piece of gold. I never had to turn into a hospital or medical tent while overseas. I was my doctor then. I was in the Pacific area for thirty four months. I had Malaria seventeen times. I have had it several times since 1946, but quinine is available in all drug stores now and I keep a dozen on hand.

I didn't tell you about my best girl friend, but I will conclude on this page. If you would like additional information, please let me know.

Semper Fidelis to my friend "Downunder",

C. T.



-USMC-  
DRAWN BY PVT. DUFAY

Copy of charcoal drawing made of the writer on New Britain where we landed after leaving Melbourne. March, 1944.