

May 6, 1994

Dear Rachell Jenzen,

Re: Experiences in wartime Victoria.

Who would have thought that after 50 years the memories of Melbourne would be so vivid?

I was a young Marine with the First Marine Division when they brought the First Division from Guadalcanal for a well needed rest.

We were so tired and full of Malaria (after six months on the Canal) What we did not expect so far away from home (Texas-USA) was the wonderful reception in Melbourne and the lovely people who were so kind to us for eight months or so.

Every time I hear "waltzing Matilda" (which is played at all of our reunions annually,) the chills run up and down my spine--and I'M not alone-- Many of the ex-Marines feel likewise.

From Camp Martha, which was a few miles South of Melbourne I believe, they sent us to the Melbourne Cricket Grounds where we lived in pitched tents. We were there to operate the radio connection to ships at sea and communications from all over the globe.

This downtown Radio Operator duty was considered to be the cream of the crop as far as duty was concerned. All of the civilians whom I met were most courteous and friendly and seemed to be glad that someone who could take care of the Japanese was nearby and willing to do so. By the way, we Marines were very proud of our combat efforts throughout the islands, but we had to confess that the Aussie Jungle fighters we met in New Guinea and other islands were probably the world's best jungle fighters. We did feel that we had lots in common with those "Robbers"

Having been raised on a ranch in Texas, I was very much in sympathy with the Aussies I met--Outdoorsman, lean, tough, and down to earth.

When we went on liberty (three or four days in town), we stayed at the downtown Y.M.C.A. which seemed to be run by a Philipino group showers, cots, good hamburgers, etc.

It was a pleasure just to ride your trams and visit your beautiful parks

The girls seemed so shy and beautiful--We were in love with the land and the people.

It seemed that even though I was only a Corporal in the Marine Corps at the time, I had more cash to spend than the average business worker downtown so entertaining our Aussie friends was no problem at all as far as finances were concerned.

Marines are supposed to be pretty tough, but on the day ~~which~~ we left Melbourne and hundreds of people came down to see us off at the docks (We were going in to combat at Cape Gloucester, New Britain) there were plenty of tears and lumpy throats--We knew that we would probably never return and so did the crowd of civilians.

A group of girls in the crowd (and there were hundreds of them) started to sing the "Maori Farewell Song" Hundreds of civilians in the crowd joined in --What a beautiful sentiment---

*THE SONG* ~~It~~ was supposed to be our farewell to New Zealand, but it also became our farewell to you beautiful Aussie people.

Lots of Marines had tears in their eyes and I am sure that the crowd on the docks felt the same.

Rachel: See attached item from the First Marine Division Association publication "The Old Breed News" *ON BACK OF THIS SHEET*

We knew that we did not have much choice in where we were going--whether we were going to live or die, and whether or not we could return to rest again in Australia. Of course, they never brought us back to Melbourne, We spent the next two years recuperating on an island close to Guadalcanal called Pavuvu. Perhaps you know of this island. It became our second home for a long time. --till we knocked off Okinawa and then ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> atom bomb and we were all taken home (USA)

memory of  
of land, small "P"

What amazed us Marines in the beginning days in Melbourne was the fact that Australia was as big as or even bigger than the U.S.A. and only had around 7,000,000. people at the time. What a lot of land and room for future expansion.

I believe that our lives were permanently influenced by our stay with you nice people.

The only really nice part of World War II was our stay in Aussieland.

Your Coastwatchers were magnificent. And we know what the Aussie Military people did all over the world. May we always be good friends!

If you have any specific questions to ask, Rachel, just write to

Joe

Please excuse the fouled up typing--haven't used a typewriter for a while.

THANKS FOR BEING CONCERNED & THANKS FOR  
THE MEMORIES  
- Joe