

Dear Rachel

This is an answer to your letter in the Feb. 1994 issue of THE OLD BREED NEWS.

We, the 1st Division of U.S. Marines were in terrible condition when we left Guadalcanal in Dec. (23rd) 1942. 4 1/2 months of combat, malaria etc. and short rations took its toll on us. I lost 45 lbs. in that time.

We landed at Melbourne near the end of JAN. 1943. There was an Australian army sergeant to greet us and help us get into the truck. His remark was, you'll be right in a fortnight mates. I took a lot longer than that.

The people greeted us with open arms. We had stopped the JAPS!

My outfit, the 1st REGIMENT, was sent to the Melbourne Cricket Grounds. We had steel bunks with straw mattresses and had liberty every day.

About 10 days later they carried me off to the 4th GENERAL ARMY Hospital. I had chills and fever so badly I could not even get up.

After a week there I was sent to a rest camp and spent almost 5 weeks there. They tested me and I still had malaria so I spent 6 more weeks there and was finally cured.

During that time I could go out on liberty

all the people I met were very nice to me.

About a week after our arrival in Melbourne we were seeing, or dating, girls on a regular basis.

The girl (woman) I was going out with was "Billie". She showed (in time) the city West-East and out to St Kilda Beach.

Did you know that there was a "SLY GROG SHOP" there? If you rode the merry-go-round you could buy a pint or 1/2 pint of whiskey after regular store hours.

Most of my free time was spent with Billie. I had gone for over a year without female companionship and I guess I was trying to make up for lost time. We had met at a dance and I was impressed!

A few weeks later I was visiting at her home at noon time, when I had another attack of malaria and could not stop shaking and was very cold. There was a narrow bed in Billie's room, and she put me in that, shoes on all, and then got in with me fully dressed trying to warm me up.

Next thing I knew an older man, 45 or so, came into the room and ordered us out of the house. I had to have help doing so but not

yard he would not listen to any explanation.
He even tried to hit me with his fists even
though I could hardly stand up.

Billie told me later that he owned the
house and was her uncle. Also, that she was
married but seperated from her husband
because he was 'cheating' on her, and was
still doing so and that her 5 year old
nephew was really her son, RICHARD

Billie had an impact on me for sure!
I would have married her if it was possible.

These are the first of my experiences.
I will continue with more if you wish.

Wishing you well with your project.
Sincerely
Leonard