

JUNE 24, 1994

DEAR Rachel,

I AM ANSWERING YOUR REQUEST RESEARCHING THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WHO WERE STATIONED IN WARTIME VICTORIA.

I SERVED WITH A BATTERY, 11TH MARINES 1ST MARINE DIVISION FLEET MARINE FORCE. THE 11TH REGIMENT WAS STATIONED IN BALLART, VICTORIA. MY IMPRESSION OF THE AUSTRALIANS WAS WELCOME AND KINDNESS. THEIR WELCOME INTO THEIR HEARTS AND HOMES WILL ALWAYS REMAIN AS ONE OF THE THE TOP MOST WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF MY LIFE TIME. FIFTY SOMEWHAT YEARS LATER WHEN I THINK OF AUSTRALIA - (AND THAT IS OFTEN) I CAN STILL FEEL THE WARMTH.

WHEN WE ARRIVED IN BALLARAT AFTER THE BITTER GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN, IT WAS VERY COMFORTING TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE AUSTRALIANS AS HUMAN BEINGS AND REWARDING TO HAVE THEM OVERLOOK OUR MISGIVINGS AFTER HAVING BEEN IN THE FIELD FOR SO LONG A TIME.

I ENJOYED THE PEACE AND "NORMALANCY" OF THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE. OUR LANGUAGE WAS A BIT ON THE "ROUGH" SIDE - BUT IN A SHORT TIME WE HAD PICKED UP PHRASES LIKE "FAIR DINKIM" - "GOOD ON YOU YANK" - AND EVERYTHING IS "DINKY DYE".

WE WERE INVITED TO TEA WITH PEOPLE LIKE THE BURRITTS AND THE PREBBLES. WE MET OUR DATES ON STURT STREET. ENJOYED

many pleasant walks through the Botanical Gardens. This was a far cry from the naval bombardments, aerial attacks and general mayhem of trying to destroy the Japanese.

We were all very young back then (I am 74 years) and sometimes our behavior left a lot to be desired. Needless to say - our Australian hosts always justified our behavior by saying "He is just a Yank". We could do no wrong.

I spent a lot of time with Mom and Pop Berritt and their young son Robert who lived at 3 Eddy Street, Ballarat. They were my Australian parents who welcomed me into their family as one of their own. Their son Robert is grown man with a family and lives in Highett Victoria. We exchange some correspondence during the year and holiday greetings.

I even remember the time when the Berritts wanted so to make me feel at home that they cooked spaghetti (I am an Italian) using Ketchup as the sauce - instead of what I am accustomed to eating - sauce made from tomato with seasoning. I was so impressed with the thought that I actually enjoyed it.

Also remember the Ballarat Bitter Beer we drank which came directly into our camp by horse

DRAWN WAGONS. THE SUPPLY NEVER RAN OUT.

My regret is that I have never been back to Australia and - never did see the Berrith again before they died.

In closing - I can honestly say that next to coming home alive - my short stay in BALLARAT WAS A happy time in my life time.

Best wishes for your success in obtaining the information you need for your thesis. Our son received his PhD in Sociology several years ago and I know how much time and research went into his thesis.

Semper Fidelis.

MIKE

VETERAN -

United States Marine Corps.