

Thank you, Rob and good afternoon, everyone

I am very proud to be here today as the Granddaughter of William, or Bill as he was better known, Epps. As Rob mentioned I am the newest committee member with this being my second year involved with the association in a formal sense. But my involvement with the 2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Commandos goes as far back as I can remember but I will mention that a little later.

Grandpa Bill was an original member of unit and was a Corporal in the engineer's section. He was a demolition bloke and much to my sons delight he got to blow stuff up. Grandpa Bill enlisted into the Australian Military Forces in Perth on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1940 and joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Company in July 1941 where he was promoted to corporal on the 8<sup>th</sup> December that same year, the day the unit sailed for Timor.

When the Japanese landed in Timor on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1942 Bill, being in the Engineers section, was involved in the blowing up of the stone bridge over the Glano River as the Aussies retreated on the first day. Their delight was somewhat half hearted as whilst they stopped the vehicles crossing the river the Japanese simply waded through the not quite waist deep water. Slowed down but not stopped.

Bill left Timor, heading for Australia, with the rest of his unit, in December 1942. After a short leave he headed to New Guinea. But being the Engineer Sergeant in charge of the units stores, he had the luxury of accompanying these aboard US Navy Ship **City of Fort Worth**. Much to the jealousy of his comrades, as they all knew, unlike the bully beef and powdered eggs they would get on their journey Bill was going to be served fresh steaks and real ice cream. Joke was on poor Bill though who donated most of his meals to the fishes as his well known 'lack of sea legs' saw the contents of his stomach overboard for most of the journey.

Whilst in New Guinea the Unit was re-established. Not needing as many engineers, and Bill suffering terribly with malaria, in June of 1944 they sent him back to Australia where he became a demolition instructor at the training establishment in Kappoka in NSW. In December of 1944 he returned to WA and was discharged in October 1945.

Bill met my Nanna Jesse in the mid 1930's, and like many of the other partners or wives waited nervously for his return from war, especially when the unit went missing for several months in Timor. They did not waste any time upon his return and married in late 1944 (with their first born Terry a mere 9 months later).

Nanna was a dedicated veterans wife and each fortnight during the 50's and 60's, with Bill and their two sons Terry and Peter, came and maintained this very spot to continue to honour the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Nanna also helped Grandpa, a printer by trade, to send out the newsletter every quarter with Grandpa printing it and Nanna handwriting all the addresses and posting them. Nanna spent a lot of time helping organise events and hosted many a widow when they came to WA.

Nanna was my link to Grandpa Bill, as he passed away in 1974, 4 years before I was born, so I sadly never got to meet him.

I remember Nanna going on her trips either to the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 'safari's or visiting the veterans and or their widows. One time in particular Nanna told us she was going to go to Adelaide for 3 weeks to visit one of the widows, we got a call to say well whilst I'm here its only a quick trip to Brisbane as the Brissy expo was on, then she ended up in NZ. She came home 3 months later.

Nanna did a lot for the veterans their wives and the association and became the first associate life member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>.

My brother Ryan and I spent a lot of time with Nanna during school holidays and on the weekends and we used to go to many of the old boys houses for catch ups, I remember going to Don Turton's property in Keysbrook and my brother and I running amok. I think these wonderful memories and the stories Nanna and Dad told us about the men has never left me and instilled a deep-rooted connection to our family's rich military history.

The last post on ANZAC Day always brings a tear to my eye and as Rob mentioned earlier, ANZAC Day was extra special for us as it was also Nannas birthday so the dawn service, followed by a bbq breakfast to celebrate, was our family tradition. My own family now continue to mark ANZAC Day and along with many others stood at the bottom of our driveway this year at dawn with the radio on and a candle in our hands.

There is a saying that we all die twice. The first time is when we leave this earth and the second is the last time somebody speaks our name. The men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> may have died once but by us all being here today, and every year here after, these men will live on.

Thank you