

Yolland Morgan Stevens

Service number: SX19217

Part A



Figure 1: Yolland Morgan Stevens 1943. (Laats, 2022)

Yolland Morgan Stevens was an ordinary farmer who made a choice to serve his country. Not for the glory, but because it felt right.

Yolland Morgan Stevens was born on the 8th of October 1920 at Blyth, South Australia (Virtual War Memorial Australia, 2022) to Ruby and Edgar Stevens. At the age of four, Yolland and his family moved to Torrensville, Adelaide and purchased five acres of land where they had a dairy and milk round (Laats, 2022). Four years later the family moved again and purchased a dairy in Jervois, South Australia. At this stage, the family had five children Jean, Beryl, Yolland, Evelyn and Reg. All of the children attended school at the Tailem Bend primary school, but sadly in 1933 when Yolland was thirteen, his father passed away from a blood infection (Laats, 2022). This changed the life of the entire family, and meant that each child had to take on work. Yolland and his sister Evelyn milked the cows and continued the other farm work. Later, Yolland found a job to

help keep the family income flowing in for the necessities as well as to pay for sewing lessons for his sister Jean. He did all this whilst playing football for the Jervois team in 1937 (Laats, 2022).

When World War Two was declared in 1939, Yolland was eighteen and on the 12th of July at Murray Bridge he enlisted in the reserves. As a primary producer he was excused from enlisting as he was required to help on the Homefront. Sadly, at the time Yolland enlisted, his brother Reg became ill with a bone infection in his leg. This infection caused him to have his leg in a plaster for six months and it wouldn't heal for another four years after. During this time, the brothers made an agreement that when Reg was better and turned eighteen, in 1943, they would enlist together, Yolland to the army and Reg to the air force (Laats, 2022). So, they did just that. After selling the farm in early 1943

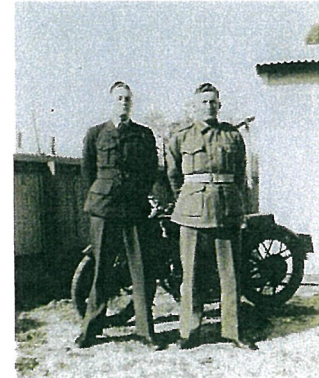


Figure 2: Yolland and younger brother Reg 1943. (Laats, 2022)



Figure 3: This plaque includes the battles and battalion patch of the 2/33rd infantry battalion (Australian War Memorial, 2022)

and moving to Sefton Park, Adelaide. Yolland enlisted in the AIF on the 4th of March 1943 and was transferred to the Tenterfield base in New South Wales (Laats, 2022). On the 27th of October 1943 he was transferred to Canangra, Queensland which was a jungle training centre. On December 21st of the same year he was promoted to acting Corporal and for 20 months after, participated in the training of jungle warfare. On the 6th of June 1944 he was reverted to Private and on the 24th of July he was transferred to the 2/33rd Infantry Battalion which he stayed in until the end of the war (Laats, 2022).

After over a year of training, Yolland and the rest of the 2/33rd Infantry Battalion left Townsville, Queensland on the 9th of June 1945, on the US troop ship 'Lowell Sykes' for their last operation of the War. They landed in Morotai, Indonesia just over a week later on the 18th of June, they then



Figure 4: Yolland (4th from the left) at jungle training centre 1944. (Laats, 2022)

continued to Balikpapan where they arrived on the 1st of July (Australian War Memorial, 2022). The 2/33rd Battalion along with the 2/31st and the 2/32nd Battalions made up the 25th Brigade and, together with the rest of the 7th Division, they participated in the Borneo campaign fighting in the Battle of Balikpapan. The 7th Division fought against the Japanese as they advanced along the Milford Highway. They fought for three weeks as they advanced inland with the 2/33rd Battalion as the last line of defence (Australian War Memorial, 2022). On the 21st of July, the 7th Division found one of the Japanese forward posts abandoned and by the next day they had fully withdrawn (Australian War Memorial, 2022). It was now considered that Balikpapan was secured and there was no need for further pursuit, however there was need though for security patrols and mopping up (Australian War Memorial, 2022). Yolland did not talk much about his time at war but told his grandson that naval ships would fire at the hillsides to flush out the enemy and when cleaning up military bases and battlefields that “You’ve never seen so much stuff pushed into the ocean” (Rowlands, 2022). Yolland was able to save some metal boxes that were used to carry ammunitions which he sent home and continued to use as toolboxes on his farm later in life.

On the 12th of September 1945, Yolland was promoted to Corporal again. Then on the 12th of January 1946, he left Balikpapan on the US troop ship ‘Taos Victory’ which went to Rabaul, Papua New Guinea (Laats, 2022) where he helped supervise the Japanese Prisoners of War in the internment camps. While in Papua New Guinea on the 29th of March, Yolland received a reprimand for “Neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline” (Laats, 2022). His family suggests that he would have spoken his mind if he thought something, whether it be a rule or an order, was ridiculous. On the 21st of June 1946, Yolland Stevens left Rabaul on the Australian ship ‘Canberra’ and landed in Brisbane where he and others on the boat went into Malaria quarantine. Once out, he was discharged on the 31st of July 1946 (Laats, 2022).

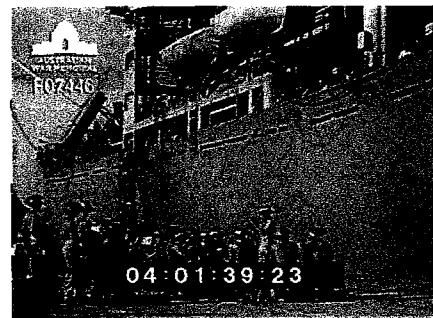


Figure 5: Solders boarding the Taos Victory to Kure Japan 1946. (Australian War Memorial, 2022)

After being discharged Yolland lived with his older sister Beryl and her husband Max Edwards on their property in Seaview, South Australia where they had a sizable dairy. Yolland started to play tennis at the church with a woman named Edna Humphrys who lived around the corner from Beryl and Max (Laats, 2022). From here, they began courting before marrying in the April of 1950 and together purchased a dairy farm at Finnis, South Australia. The two stayed there for five years and had two daughters, Joy and Anne (Laats, 2022). The family then purchased a block of land in Parawa, South Australia, where there was no house and large parts of the land were uncleared. For one year, while Yolland built a house, established a dairy, and cleared the land, the family lived, in a shed at the Parawa church (Laats, 2022). After the family had moved into the home and started farming on the land, Yolland and Edna had a son named Kevin. Yolland worked extremely hard and wanted to have a better life, so he would go out to work the farm before the sun had risen and came home after the sun had set (Rowlands, 2022). It was evident that he wanted to improve all that he could

and give help in different ways to all sorts of people. He allowed the Department of Agriculture to do biomedical trials on his farm to improve the health of his animals. When he could, he would also attend battalion reunions in Sydney. But Yolland did not speak much of the war to anyone, he was very private about his involvement. "If you asked him and in the right moment, he would tell you something, but it was rare" (Rowlands, 2022).



Figure 6: These are Yolland's war metals. The front line service metal is not an Australian recognised metal and the other three pins would have been worn on his hat. (Rowlands, 2022)

Yolland displayed much of the ANZAC spirit throughout his life, not just his time in military service and after when he would attend battalion reunions in Sydney. He displayed mateship when he made an agreement with his brother Reg to enlist together when Reg was old enough and well enough. This may not have been an easy decision to make as he would have had much pressure from the community to enlist as well as pressure from his family to stay. He also would have become close to some of the soldiers that he worked with, trained with, and fought with. He embodied the characteristics of perseverance when his father passed away, he and his siblings had to work the farm and keep income flowing. This was also shown when Reg fell ill and did not fully recover for four years, which would have made it hard for him to work and would have potentially meant the family needed more money for doctors' appointments and ongoing care. In later life his perseverance and resourcefulness was

shown when he took up uncleared land at Parawa and built a house, dairy and mixed-use farm which was later taken up by his daughter and granddaughter's families and continues to be farmed today. He also showed courage through the war, especially when he enlisted in the military reserves, even though as a Primary Producer and he was exempt from military service and had a role to play in the welfare of the country. Courage was also shown in Yolland's story when he took on uncleared land with a young family and when he was torn to go to war or stay with his family. In the end he chose service to his country and thankfully came home to support his loving family until his death in January 1994.

(Part A: 1486 words)

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Part B

The ANZAC Spirit prize was introduced to my class in 2021 but unfortunately, we were not allowed to enter. This year our teacher asked who wanted to participate and I put my hand up straight away. I had already chosen who I wanted to write about and committed to them. My great grandfather Yolland Morgan Stevens fought in World War Two and I was excited to be able to research his contribution to the war.

I gathered a range of primary and secondary sources to contribute to my work. Sadly, there was not much about my great grandfather on secondary sources like the Virtual War Memorial site or the National Australian Archives (NAA). This was not too bad as my dad, and I contacted my aunt who had the main components of information from cousins, and things her father had left behind for her, as well as photographs that I needed and she emailed them to me. Furthermore, I was able to use some secondary sources that gave me general information on the battles he was in, the places he went and the ships he took. This all helped shape my great grandfather's story into what is written above.

It was interesting to learn about the battle of Balikpapan and the Milford Highway operations. Not only this, but there was so much more to the Brigades and Divisions than I thought. This as well as what lead up to the events, even though I did not write much about it, none the less it was good for my background knowledge.

I wanted people to understand what Yolland had gone through and how his life changed so many times. I want people to think about if this was them and what they would have done. They should know that he was kind and would do what he felt was right even if he was being pushed in so many directions.

Thank you for reading about my great grandfather and giving me the opportunity to enter this competition. I feel closer to my great grandfather knowing what kind of things he had to face and the life that he chose. I am grateful that I will be able to share this with my family and share the life of Yolland Morgan Stevens a brother, father, grandfather, and friend. Yolland Morgan Stevens was an ordinary farmer who made a choice to serve his country. Not for the glory, just because it felt right.

(Part B: 410 words)

(Part A and B: 1896)