

Now, a Non Commissioned Officer, as Bud was, is not allowed to strike a private, which he did. A charge was immediately laid against him which meant a Court Martial. However, before matters went too far I got Bud into my dugout and explained the trouble to him. "Well", said my friend Bud, "I did not want that stripe but the bugger cheeked me so I cracked him". Naturally a Magistrate is not used to such treatment. I got the other chap in, offered him a cigarette and after a short chat the whole matter was settled and the two became pals once more.

Our next move was from Mariopilis to Alemain where we were to prepare defence positions in what were known in the desert as 'Boxes' (Strong points). Before going further I will quote a song or poem known by all. "The Dragaman" who was a Gippo always turning up to help you in making purchases or acting as guide. You would say no, no, but he was a sticker.

"Yes Sir it's the Dragaman speaking, I guess you all know me by sight for you all have been West of Suez where there ain't no wrong from right. I've met you on many a quay side, I've seen you on many a train. You thought you'd shake me off Sir. You're wrong Sir I've turned up again Chorus. Ship me somewhere East of Suez where there ain't no ten commandments and a man can raise a thirst.

I'm after the same old thing Sir. Money. Don't call it such. Call it Akkers, not pounds or shillings, then it don't sound so much. Akkers is all I want Sir. A hundred, fifty, ten? You won't. I'll see you again tomorrow you may feel different then.

What do I give in exchange? Sir? That depends on what you are. You're a gentleman, a soldier you'd like to see the bazaar? You want to buy a present for Missy? A carpet, a jewel, a ring? Follow me I'll make the bargain. I know the identical thing".

In referring to General Brabant's memoirs I have time and time again said "I do wish the old man would give dates sometimes and units engaged". I will now try and keep you advised of the dates of our moves. Let me start at the beginning, excluding training in the Union.

We embarked in the Nieuwe Holland in Durban and sailed that day the 23rd July, 1941 for Egypt and arrived on the 6th August sailing again on the 8th August through the Red Sea for Tufick where we arrived on the 11th August. We left the same day by train for Amarya, near Alex arriving there the following morning the 12th. After some weeks we were moved to Alemain, where we were to assist with digging various strong points in this 'Box' as these fortifications were called. The site was very well chosen but at the time we all said who is going to fight here in the Nile Delta. It proved later, however, as we all know, the saviour of our North African Army. It was here that the advancing German Africa Corps and Ities under Rommel, who were sweeping all before them, were arrested and from where Montgomery later set out his attack on the enemy, eventually, driving them out of Africa. Yes, that Alemain line was a very strong defence line which we helped to build.

The Alemain 'Box' was well sited and well planned. These boxes are strong points within a fortress. The perimeter of the Alemain 'Box' was five miles, with the Northern end protected by the Med. And then the outer perimeter in a semicircle back to the Med. Inside the perimeter were a number of small fortifications, well-sited, as one overlooked and protected the next. Outside the perimeter was a barbed wire entanglement, deep anti-tank ditch and the whole area protected by well-sited mine fields. The Tabruk "Box" was about 25 miles in perimeter, very well protected by mine fields, tank ditches etc but these had nearly disappeared, the mines taken up for the Gazala line.

The position was well chosen for between the Med. And the Quatara depression 20 miles South there were two more 'boxes', smaller built. The first protection was the Med. And in the South the Quatara depression or sea of sand through which no troops or tanks etc. could move.

So that the front /