

Terence Henry James

By Hollie James

Being a member of the 2021–2022 Frank MacDonald Group and researching Terence Henry James, my great grandfather, was an honour. Terence served in the Second World War and was a devout veteran and family man.

Private Terence Henry James, my great grandfather, served in WW2. Born on 28 August 1923 - he was the only surviving and eldest son of a family with five children, as his brother Geoffrey died of a spider bite at the age of three. He grew up in Manly at North Head quarantine station until he moved to Lane Cove. In 1939 he moved to Battery Point. From the many people I spoke to about him he was described as a larrikin and a very loyal family man. He loved art and was the only male in his oil painting class which he attended weekly. He studied with Norman Lloyd at the Julian Ashton art academy in Sydney. He was employed as a clerk prior to his enlistment.



Some of Terence's art:



Terence's time serving in World War two saw him mobilised to New Guinea and Japan. He enlisted on the 25th of September 1942, aged nineteen, his service number was TX11509. He served in New Guinea between 15th July 1943 and 30th April 1945, his unit was the 9th Australian Supply Personnel Company. In New Guinea they employed tens of thousands of troops including Terence, using units of all three Australian services, both in combatant units and in the massive logistic infrastructure that jungle warfare demanded.

Photos of Terence's time in New Guinea:



He served in Japan from 25 May 1946 to 18 November 1947, as part of the 2/162 Australian Supply Depot. Terence served in the Defence Force for a total of 2,162 days, 845 days of active service in Australia and 1199 of active service overseas. He was discharged on 3 December 1947.

When Terence was mobilised to Japan he was sent to Hiroshima, for the clean-up efforts after the bombing that immediately killed an estimated 80,000 people and destroyed approximately 60% of the city. Later tens of thousands more would die due to radiation exposure, Terence lost many mates there. While he was in Hiroshima, he visited his aunty Dor. He spent a week there while it still had much radioactive fallout, which inevitably was not good for him. This later affected his health.

Terence's time in Hiroshima:





Like many of the returned soldiers, he would not speak about his time in the war, but he did open up in his last week of life. His larrikin nature was evident while I reviewed his records of service. An entry I noted on several occasions was of disciplinary action for “Neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline”; to me it painted a picture of such a young man still learning his way in the world, making mistakes and even under these circumstances finding a way to have some fun! Whilst overseas he was evacuated to hospital for medical treatment on a number of occasions for various ailments, including Dengue Fever.

Photos from Terrence in the Second World War:



Terrence and his unit:



He received the Australian service medal (Japan 1945-75), 1939/45 star, Pacific Star, War Medal (1939/45), Returned from active service badge (which you can see in the middle on the second page).

Terrence's medals:



When Terence returned from war at the age of 24, he was a homebody who loved and constantly worked on his garden. Flagstaff gully (also the place I grew up in) was a present from his in-laws and Terence built a home for his family on the land. He loved horse racing and having a bet, he would often be found at his daughter, Jenny's stables as he loved spending time there helping with the horses. He had many friends, including fellow returned soldiers who he would drink beer with often.

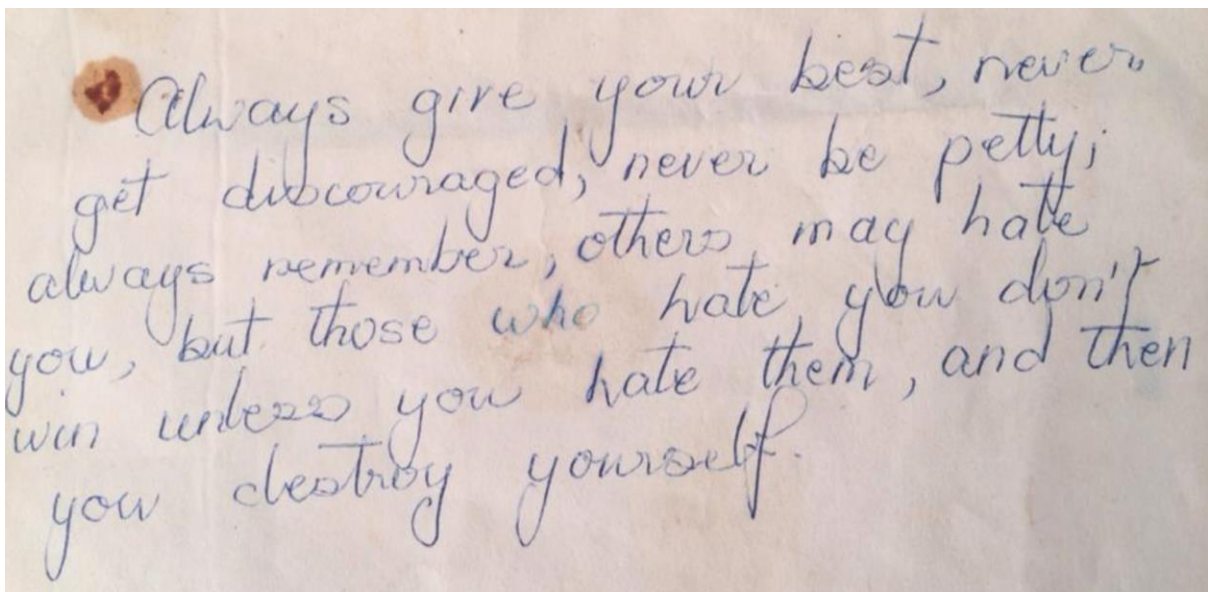
Terence and family in Flagstaff Gully:



Many of my family members agreed that he was always putting others before himself, even when he died his money earned by service to Australia provided for his wife and their kids. He was constantly in hospital because of the effects of the war. He had many skin cancers cut out. Anytime he was in hospital the nurses would ask “are you allergic to anything Mr James” and he would say every time, without hesitation “yes! Women!” which always got a laugh. My cousin told me he was always teaching the grandkids his rude war rhymes which were, as you can imagine, totally inappropriate for children to hear. He was married to my great grandmother, Gwendoline, for 55 years and loved her very much. They had four children and many grandchildren. Terence died in 2008 aged 84, in Hobart, surrounded by his loved ones.



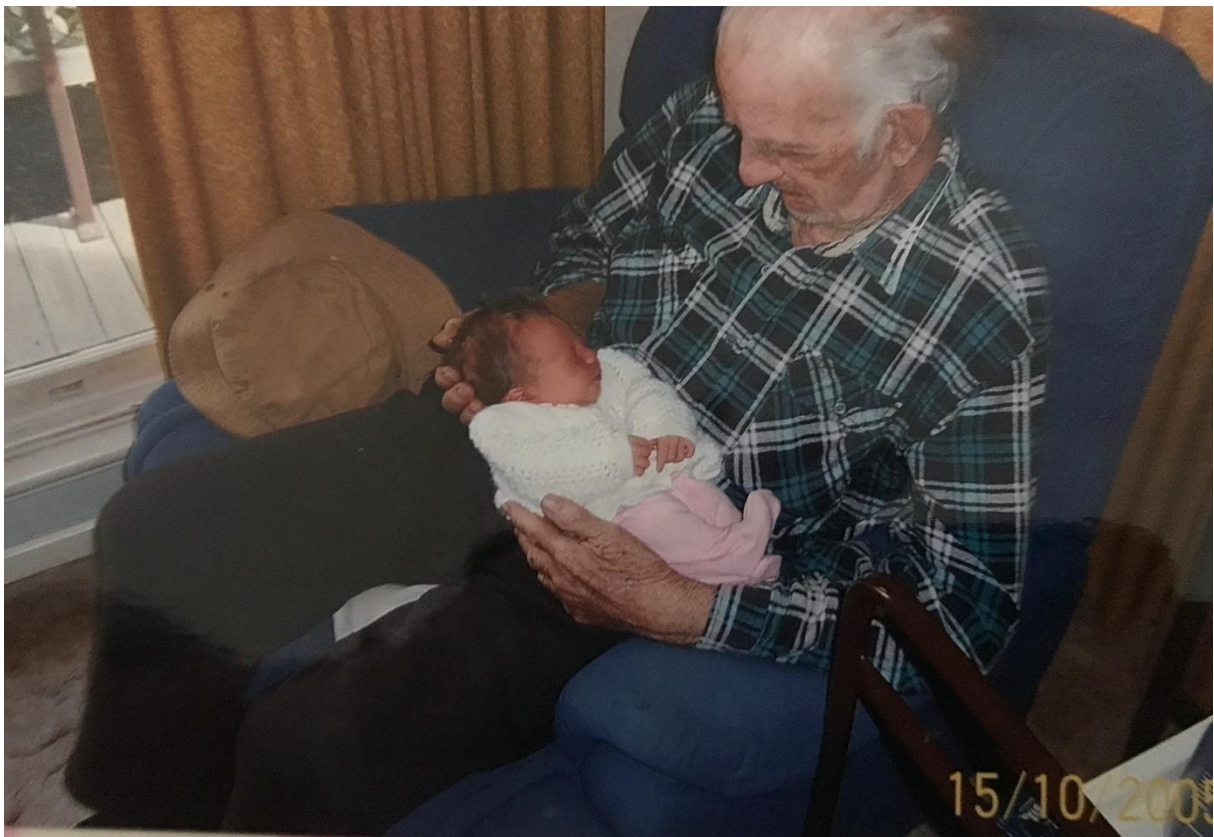
Lastly, I'm going to end with a quote he wrote in his journal. I'm not sure if he made it or if it found it but either way it is quite powerful. “Always give your best, never get discouraged, never be petty, always remember, others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself.”



I am extremely proud of the service and sacrifice that Terence and my family provided to Australia as one of his great grandchildren. My understanding of the value of family and the sacrifices that not only the men and women who bravely served had to face, but their families waiting for their return, has increased as a result of researching his story. Through researching him it has made me feel more connected to him and my family. It has demonstrated his true character through honour and loyalty in the face of adversity. Maintaining the authenticity of tales like Terence's is everyone's responsibility and that is why the Frank Macdonald Memorial Prize is so important.

I am grateful and honoured to be Terence's great granddaughter and to be able to honour his life through this project.

Terence and I:





- **Hollie James**