

NEW GUINEA VOLUNTARY RIFLES—NGVR

By Jim Kennedy

The war was fought on distant land –
our Aussie soldiers there at hand.
But should war's cloud come to our door,
No way could we defend our shore.
We'd need NGVR.

Some cloth was sent, then cut and sewn
for uniforms - they made their own.
The Army sent them boots and guns.
Those fathers, brothers, uncles, sons
became NGVR.

Five hundred signed to take up arms,
from shops, plantations, mines and farms.
A week-end soldiering career -
their pay was just one pound a year.

When soldiers of the Rising Sun
came to Rabaul with bomb and gun,
they tried to stop that rolling tide,
but eighty of their number died.

At Salamaua, Wau and Lae,
They'd need to fight a different way.
Our only troops to guard this ground –
they vowed to spread their men around.

"Delay the foe!" The order came.
They were so few, but they were game.
This was their home - they knew this land.
They'd fight to win ... this dogged band.
This bold NGVR.

They trekked the islands day and night.
Chose when to hide and when to fight.
Destroying bridges, spotting planes.
They'd strike, regroup, then strike again.
Alone NGVR.

They held the line, then late in May
Australia sent more men their way.
As Kanga Force, they hit and ran.
Denied the foe their conquest plan.

An ambush force, three score and ten.
The sons of Nippon sought those men.
Attacked by those they couldn't find,
they left one hundred dead behind.

They couldn't cross that mountain track -
Four months, that small group held-them back!-
Through Coral Sea as well they'd fail,
then tried the Buna-Moresby Trail

The time they'd bought had slowed the tide.
Returning troops now by their side.
They'd stalled the enemy's advance, -
then Seventh Divvie kicked their pants.

Their gallant front-line actions cost
disease and wounded, many lost.
Civilians who once formed their base,
no longer there to take their place
reduced NGVR.

By '43 that job was done.
The battle for Port Moresby won.
And when their sick and hurt were healed,
new plans for transfer were revealed
"Disband NGVR."

They joined with US Army ranks
to help in jungle warfare - thanks!
Received The President's award.
Their brav'ry earned them just reward.

Post-war they're joined by younger men,
who follow their tradition. Then
on Anzac Day their heads un-bowed,
march proudly through the city's crowd.

We laud our heroes without fail.
Gallipoli, Kokoda Trail,
the Special Units – 'M' and 'Z'.
But scarce a word of praise is said
about NGVR.

Today those heroes, now so few
deserve a place in hist'ry too.
They'd faced the enemy alone.
Their deeds ... their story ... barely known
...Let's hail NGVR.

