

*January 7, 2012*

*Captain Valma Keylar died on December 24*  
**Did this angel tend to your wounds at  
the Commonwealth Hospital in Kure?**



Veterans who were hospitalized at the Commonwealth Military Hospital in Kure, Japan may remember one of the nurses, Valma Keylar, from Australia, who was on duty there. She was a lieutenant in the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps.

Many Canadian veterans with serious wounds were treated at the hospital during the year, including some who had been hurt in the infamous enemy attack of October 23 on the Hill 355 position that was being held by the 1st Battalion of The Royal Canadian Regiment. Others had participated in the November 19 Battle of the Hook in which C Company of the 3rd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was seconded to the Black Watch and participated in the counterattack, and subsequently held the Hook position for the next three months.

One soldier who was wounded on the Hook and spent a protracted period in the Kure hospital was Corporal Charles Pond of Ottawa, who lost both legs when hit by a mortar bomb. His condition was so serious that he could not be moved and he nearly succumbed to massive hemorrhage on New Year's Eve, 1952. One of the other soldiers from the PPCLI in the same ward with Chuck had lost one eye and one hand in the Hook action.

We have now received word from Australia that Captain Valma Lillian Keylar passed away the day before Christmas, 2011, at age 86. She had been 22 when she served at the hospital in Kure.



**Australian nursing veteran Captain Val Keylar visits the grave of her brother in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Busan, in October, 2011, one of the last things that she did on this Earth. Private Harry Keylar, 24, was killed in action on August 25, 1952, while serving with the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment. Captain Valma Keylar died a few weeks after the photograph was taken, on December 24, 2011.**



During her service in the Korean theatre her brother, Harold Clyde Keylar was killed in action, on August 25, at age 24, serving with the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment.

Her brother had encouraged her to volunteer to serve in Korea and joked with her that if he was wounded, she might wind up caring for him in a military hospital.

But he was killed at the front in Korea when she was on duty in Japan.



Lieutenant Keylar remained on service in the theatre and did not return to Australia until the latter part of 1953.

In May and June, 1953, she served at the military hospital in Seoul, then returned to Kure to complete her tour of duty.



**Captain Valma Keylar shown during the wreath-laying ceremony at the Commonwealth Missing in Action Memorial in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Busan, October, 2011. She died a few weeks later on December 24, 2011. Photographs by Corporal Chris Dickson, 1st Joint Public Affairs Unit**

After her return from service in Japan, Nursing Sister Valma Keylar remained in service for five years and attained the rank of captain. She then returned to her specialty of obstetric nursing

She spent the remainder of her career at the Redcliffe Hospital in Queensland. Following her retirement she settled in Margate on Brisbane's coastal outskirts, where she enjoyed a quiet life, growing organic vegetables.

Her biography quotes her as saying of her time in Korea that, "It was jolly hard work looking after the product of war."

Of the troops she remarked, "An Aussie at war is a fine fighting unit – the boys were wonderful, they did their best."

In a report about her November 2011 visit to the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea she is quoted as saying that she had been pleased to meet a

number of dedicated and selfless people in Korea who had made the visit well worthwhile.

She was also quoted as saying that the November visit to her brother's grave finally gave her acceptance of his loss and would enable her to return to Australia in peace. She had visited his grave during the war and again in 2001.

She felt that she had suffered through the years from his tragic loss, as well as from working with the many badly wounded young men who were sent to Kure for treatment, many with amputations, some with terrible abdominal wounds and others with burns that often became infected. She said that counselling was not available in those days for those who suffered the mental trauma of the war.

She told the reporter never to forget that the women suffer just as much as the men. She had celebrated her 86th birthday in Korea while on the commemoration visit.



**Captain Valma Lilian Keylar – October 21, 1925 – December 24, 2011**

