

# SPILLING James Arthur

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**Name:** James Arthur Spilling

**Born:** 6 July 1918

**Rank:** Private

**Service Number:** 13056296

**Unit/Regiment:** Pioneer Corps

**Died:** Not provided

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Margaret Hall remembers - in her own words:-

My first memories of my uncle Jim, James Arthur Spilling, of Warrington, Cheshire. Every time we visited my Grandmother, when I was a toddler, my Uncle Jim would take me to the corner shop to buy me Chocolate Malteser's. He was my dad's youngest brother.

I can remember, when I was 5 years old, all the family were very upset as this wonderful Uncle of mine, who had been enlisted into the armed forces, was missing, presumed to be a prisoner of the Japanese. The shock of this news sent my Grandmother 'stone deaf'.

3 years later, on the 1 September 1945, when I was 8 years old, there was great jubilation, my grandparents received a telegram with these words "Safe in Allied hands, hope to be home soon". Writing an address, letter and telegram to LIBERATED POW % AUSTRALIAN ARMY BASE POT OFFICE, MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA "RECEIVED YOUR NICE LETTER, LOVE TO ALL THE FAMILY, J SPILLING".

This was followed shortly afterwards by a letter, written from the ship HMS Speaker:-

*"Dear Mom and Father,  
Just to let you know I'm fine and in good health. I am aboard the ship that is to take me on my first part of the voyage home. I'm having a good time, putting on weight. The ship I am on is an aircraft carrier. We were set free by the American Marines and taken straight to the hospital ship in Tokyo Bay, then to a Yankee Destroyer and brought to this aircraft carrier. I think we are coming home via Australia and will be home in good time for Christmas.  
Give everyone at home my love, your ever-loving son Jim".*



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I can remember other people getting similar messages and soon all the streets were being decked with banners and flags with names of the loved ones who were coming home at last.

Uncle Jim was due to arrive on The Empress of Australia and I remember going to the docks at Liverpool to greet him. We waited all day at the dock gates but because the weather was very rough the ship couldn't dock. It was very frustrating because we could see the ship at anchor out at sea. Eventually we were all advised to go home and come back the next morning. The weather had improved the next day and we were all there again waiting for the dock gates to be opened. Everyone was getting impatient. When the man came to open the gates he said, "no running, everybody walk in an orderly manner". When at last the gates were finally opened, we all started to walk but before long we started to walk a bit faster until we were all running to get to the dock railing first. Some folk had banners with the name of loved ones, some didn't even know if their loved ones were on the ship. Then we saw him, stood on a deckchair behind some others and we were crying and laughing at the same time. Eventually we were told they would be going to Red Cross centres and would be home with us the next day.

The next day was Sunday, I couldn't wait for my mum and dad to get ready I was so excited, so I set off to my grandparents on my own. As I turned the corner into Forster Street the sight of the bunting which stretched the whole length of the street with "Welcome Home Jim" on them was amazing. As I walked towards the house a Red Cross car pulled up outside my grandparents and out stepped my Uncle Jim. I rushed forward and he grabbed me in a big hug. Everyone who had been waiting came out and there were hugs and kisses galore. It was hard for my Uncle to adjust to my grandmother's deafness. We were all keen to hear of his experiences, but he was not happy recalling them. He did let us read what he had written in his notebook. This is in his own words.

'August the 1st 1945: SUMIDIGAWA TOKYO JAPAN, coal yard loading barges. Lunch time, marched back to camp for a meal of rice and soup, then back to the coal yard. 2pm, all men back to camp, where we were told 'THE WAR IS OVER, ALL MEN ARE FREE, NO ENEMIES'. We received an issue of tangerines and cigarettes and a good meal that night. The next day we we had we had an extra issue of rations and lazed about.

Next day, a Yankee plane flew over and we waved to it, he dipped his wings and flew off, back to shore. We then marked the roof of our shelter with P.O.W and Stars and Stripes and a Union Jack. The next day a squadron of B29's flew over and dropped medical supplies, clothes, cigarettes and candies. The clothes were Yankee summer drill, slacks, shoes and stockings.

August 26<sup>th</sup> 1945: The Yanks came up the river to the back of our camp and we climbed aboard the barges and made our way to Tokyo Bay, which was packed with navy boats. We boarded the US Hospital ship and had a medical and injections. We then had a meal and got an issue of toiletries and uniforms. We spent that night on a US Navy Frigate. The next morning, we went aboard the British Aircraft Carrier HMS Speaker and sailed on the 2 of September 1945 to Manilla in the Philippines and to camp. The canteen at the camp was full of cigarettes and coke machines.



After a couple of weeks of being well looked after, we were taken to the docks to board the ship that was to take us home, back to Blighty. Surprise, Surprise, the ship was the 'Empress of Australia'. Down below deck we slung our hammocks and steamed away, calling at Ceylon for a day ashore. Then back again to the Suez Canal and then docked at Port Tifick, where again we went ashore this time for an issue of winter uniforms. Then we sailed out to the Mediterranean and sailed passed Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean and on to Liverpool and home, at last'.

*The above information has been provided by Margaret Hall (niece), in her own words about her experiences at the time and by James Spilling's own words in his letter and diary.*

The following information has been taken from James's Liberation Questionnaire

James was captured by the Japanese on 18 March 1942 at Garoet, Java.

He was in the following camps:-

18 June 1942 - Glodock

10 October 1942 – Mojji

8 September 1943 – Tokyo HQ

22 June 1945 - Sumidigawa



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