

Rowland Parker's VJ day

From his wartime letters:-

Aug. 15th.

V.J. Day! The war is really over now! Not that it makes much difference. They might even decide to send us to Singapore! But no. I have spent most of the morning filling in forms relating to my transfer from C.M.F. to M.E.F. The rest of the day I spent perspiring on my bed. The thermometer registers 120 degrees in the sun; and not very much less in the shade.

Aug. 16th.

John and I determined to see something of Cairo, despite the heat which makes movement a torment. This morning we walked to the main gate of the camp, a few yards beyond which is the terminus of the electric tramway which runs from Heliopolis into Cairo; a very fast 25-minute run, fairly comfortable, very cheap, and not too crowded. In the city we boarded another tram which took us, with only one change, across the Nile, along the west bank, then out about six miles to Giseh (or Giza) where the famous Pyramids are located. First things first. We successfully repulsed the attacks of relays of guides persistently offering their services, by being downright rude or by playing tricks with languages, and just walked around and gaped without their help. There are three large pyramids here, the "great" one being the tomb of Cheops, and the Sphinx is close alongside. We did not climb to the top of any of them - not in that heat! - but got high enough to see the astonishing spectacle of the green valley ending abruptly where the grim desert begins. There is no zone of transition; you can stand with one foot in the fertile area, the other foot in the desert. There can be few places in the world where history and geography are more vividly illustrated. In the evening we had our "V.J. Dinner". Sweet water-melon; cold cream of tomato soup; turkey, stuffing, roast and chip potatoes, cauliflower au gratin; ice cream; grapes, bananas, oranges, mangoes; coffee. A couple of beers on top of that lot, and my view of life changed considerably for the better.