

# Tasmanian Nurse Tells Of Grim, Harrowing Experience As Jap Captive

**"THERE** were things you couldn't imagine, and I wouldn't want you to know," Sister J. E. Simons said yesterday at Launceston, when speaking of her experiences as a prisoner of war in Jap hands.

**S**ISTER SIMONS, who is the daughter of Mr and Mrs J. P. Simons, of Nunamara (T), and who was on the nursing staff of the Launceston General Hospital before she joined the AIF, returned on Saturday after more than three years on Sumatra and Banka Island.

"It seems 1,000 years since I left Launceston," she said yesterday.

With other nurses, including the late Sister Shirley Garden, of Launceston, and many refugees, Sister Simons left Singapore in February, 1942.

On Friday, Feb. 13, the ship was machine-gunned, and most of the lifeboats holed. On the following day the ship was bombed and sunk.

Many, including some of the nurses, were drowned. There were not sufficient lifeboats, as most of them had been machine-gunned the previous day.

Some of the nurses were placed in the few boats with sick and wounded, and it was these sisters who were later on Banka Island, lined up on the beach by the Japs, and shot.

With others, Sister Simons swam ashore to a different part of Banka Island, after being in the water from 2.15 pm on Saturday until 9.30 the following morning.

A fortnight later they were taken to Sumatra.

"The transport wasn't too good," she said grimly. "The conditions were extremely crowded, with men and women together.

"We were put into little cottages large enough for a married couple; there were 32 of us in one."

The food was appalling all through. Although she received no bodily harm

from her captors, she was subjected to face slapping from time to time.

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Loevoek Lingar camp in Sumatra was the worst of the lot, Sister Simons said. Conditions were frightful.

It was there news of peace came. They were flown by Australian airmen to Singapore, where they had nearly three weeks' rest.

Sister Simons spent the weekend with her sister, Mrs T. Calver, Trevallyn, and later will go to her home at Nunamara.