

BURMA POW'S PRAISE RAMC DOCTOR

"Deserves VC"

From AXEL OLSEN

MANILA

Australian Army doctors in Burma, working under appalling conditions and often using primitive instruments made from razor blades and pieces of bamboo, saved the lives of hundreds of prisoners by amputating arms and legs affected beyond recovery by tropical ulcers.

The work of one RAMC colonel especially evoked enduring admiration, according to Lance-Sgt A. F. Caddy, of Tyiden, V.

Using an anaesthetic made by a Dutch chemist from jungle herbs and the meagre supply of chloroform doled out by the Japanese, the colonel gave spinal injections which, although deepening pain, did not make the patient completely unconscious. The patient was given a cigar before an operation, and one of the colonel's tricks for distracting the patient was to let his own cigar go out so that he could divert the patient's attention by asking him for a light.

The colonel could do an amputation in seven minutes, and so bad were ulcerous affections that it was sometimes necessary to cut off seven or eight legs in one day.

Although he later obtained surgical instruments, the colonel at one stage removed an appendix with a razor blade and spoons. The doctor deserves the VC, said Driver T. C. W. Jones, of Stanthorpe, Q., who saw the appendix operation.

Malaria and dysentery took horrible toll of men working on the Burma railway, said Cpl S. E. Attwell, of Murrumbidgee who described living skeletons carried on stretchers to work. There they were left in pouring rain all day, too weak to move. Sometimes such men were ordered by the guards to lie on their stomachs and raise their bodies on their arms 10 or 20 times. Very few were ever able to do it, and collapsed unconscious after three or four attempts. The only time the

collapsed unconscious after three or four attempts. The only time the men were not hungry was when they managed to kill a native cow first by trading with the owner, then by bribing guards to be allowed to keep part of it. Anything and everything was used for trade.

Two Australians caught trading with the natives were condemned to death, according to Cpl W. G. Nutt, of Malvern, who was captured in Java. The death sentence was read to them before the assembled camp, and they were taken into the bush and shot. Their comrades had then to carry the bodies out before grinning guards, dig graves, and bury them.

BARBER FROM DONCASTER

For more than four years of Army life and the vicissitudes of prison camps in Singapore, Burma, and Japan, Pte G. Beavis, of Doncaster, and Pte Jack Campbell, of Port Pirie, SA, have acted as barbers for thousands of their mates.

Beavis, who was formerly a fruit-grower, bought clippers and scissors before he joined the Army, and despite every effort by the Japanese to steal or buy them, he has kept them with him. "In Burma we used to give an ordinary haircut," he said yesterday. "It was better to trim round the back and sides and leave it long on top as protection against the sun. But when we got to Japan the Nips made us cut it short all over. It is only just beginning to grow again on top now."