

Along with Cousin Sam

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## FOREWORD

This is the story of my service with Torpedo Boats of the U.S.N. and, as such, I make no claim that it is a tersely written history of their operations in New Guinea, meticulous in every detail, and covering their many operations in that area and further towards the West.

It is only a personal record in which, though many names will be mentioned, there will be a large number who may search in vain for reference to themselves. To these I offer my apologies and say that I remember so many with whom I was acquainted, but they had their particular jobs which did not bring me into such personal contact with them.

I would assure them that they are by no means forgotten and in the following pages they will no doubt find many places, incidents and persons well known to them. In the full story of the P.T's in New Guinea, they will have their place and their many and various actions set out.

Therefore, I hope they will forgive me for lack of mention.

When the official history is published there will be found a great deal not mentioned in this, and the full story is going to make fine reading, not only for those of us who were there at the time but for the reading public of the U.S.A. and for many in Australia who know of the fine job done by the Torpedo Boats in cooperation with both Australian and U.S. forces on land and in the air along the New Guinea coast.

There have been many stories written about P.T's, most of which I have read, but I will warn readers that this record will not have the dramatic descriptions, and the rolling volleys of adjectives that others have. The job on hand in war seldom impresses the participants with its dramatic value, and though many armchair commandos will want to read something like the following, they will be disappointed. "-- tense helmeted men, crouching behind their death spitting guns, frown into the darkness, while the thunder of powerful motors sends the boats hurtling over the waters toward their prey --." The plain truth is that in such situations the general run of reactions are very different. The boat skipper is more likely wondering why the port engine hasn't the revs. that it usually turns up, while a 50 caliber gunner is thinking how heavy his helmet feels and meanwhile wriggling his big toe in a hole in his sock. The Exec. is hoping there are no half submerged logs ahead, and the engineer is thinking how damned hot it is perched over his engines, and how well a long drink would go. Such mundane things do not make good copy for thrill readers.

The other reason this is written is to set down the impressions of Americans at war, by one who previously, like the majority of Australians, had little or no knowledge of our neighbors across the Pacific. For American readers it may be of some interest to see themselves as others see them, and any criticism that may be made, is done with the realization of the old adage of the mote in the other fellow's eye obscuring the beam in one's own. I have tried to avoid comparisons which are still odious to most people, particularly in the knowledge that in every person, place and country some things are open to criticism. If all were perfect it would be a dull world. And what a lot of fun would be lost in the "bull sessions" that were popular with us all in P.T's. As an Australian I fear I suffer with our usual national faults, but I have tried to keep them out of these pages, and record my impressions with as much objectivity as I could muster. I do not know of any other member of the Australian Imperial force who has spent three years of service with American forces, and although three years is hardly long enough to know one's neighbors perfectly, I think it has allowed me to come to know those of the U.S.N. P.T's as well as any stranger can. After all, one has to live with a person to really know them.

It has been my good fortune to have made many firm friends among them, whom I hope to see again on their native heath among their own folks. Perhaps many incidents will seem trivial to readers, but such small things in war bulk larger than in peace and often have a proportionately larger bearing on later happenings.

I have not placed the date on many occurrences, as in the tropics day succeeds day in a seldom varied pattern and winter and summer are as one, unlike our changing seasons.

Frequently the day of the week and the date were unknown to us, until one brighter than the rest remembered he had written a letter a week before and the date on which he wrote it; then the mystery was solved.

Forewords are tiresome things and frequently go unread, but I hope those who do bother to read this will find the following pages more understandable.

The first chapter is not about P.T. boats, but it seemed necessary to explain the chances and circumstances that led me to them. I wish to add that no names are fictitious and if any of the bearers of them take umbrage at it, I ask their forbearance.

As I enjoy acrimonious letters I shall be happy to hear from them.

Orange, N.S.W.

## CHAPTER ONE

The life of a second in command of an Australian Infantry Battalion is one made up of many jobs - inspecting kitchens, latrines, growling about fly control, keeping Regimental Welfare accounts in order and, probably the worst of all, conducting Courts of Enquiry. In general being a willing stooge to the Colonel, and a buffer between his wrath and the regimental officers at times.

Still it is an interesting job as most 2 i/cs will agree.

Having completed a long and dusty day on the roads of Port Moresby, going about my lawful occasions, interspersed with snatches of gossip with other officers whom I had to see on one thing or another, I had returned to our camp behind Surray Barracks about midnight. This was not out of the ordinary as my last visit had been to the District Finance Officer who had his being and his office almost in the shadow of Hombrom Bluff - that first ripple before the gigantic waves of the Owen Stanley Mountains. Being some seventeen miles away and only to be reached by a road packed with trucks, jeeps, trailers and all the paraphernalia having two, four or six wheels, that an army requires to live on, it was surprising to do the run under two hours and then only at the fear of being caught by the M.P's.

My co-dweller of our canvas home 12x16, being the adjutant, our nightly ritual began. This ceremony for him was to lie on his cot, blow cigarette smoke at the sloping canvas roof and treat me to a recitation of his troubles of the day. These ran the scale from a heavy wrangle with the Staff Captain or his more august superior, the Brigade Major, to wondering what the Hell had become of a file on Pte. Smith that the colonel seemed to want so imperatively just when the damned thing could not be found.

It seemed just the usual sort of night, still and muggy, and I certainly did not think as I struggled under the mosquito net that its implication for me was to be a starting point for the next three years.

At 1:00 a.m. the Duty Officer shook me physically and mentally by telling me that Brigade Major was on the phone to speak with me at once. It was always thought by the battalions in our Brigade that the Brigade Headquarters hibernated during the day and always seemed to start running the war between sunset and sunrise. This caused a deal of blasphemy from the Duty Officer, the Adjutant, the Assistant Adjutant, which ever one happened to be near the telephone. But to want the Second in Command and at 0100 hours was nothing but sheer sacrilege! It was a summons to Brigade H.Q. at once! I must have sounded surprised as he slammed the receiver down in my ear.



Thoughts began to race through my sleepy mind like sheep through a gate. Was it some frightful sin of omission or commission I had done against military regulations? By the time my driver was woken and we were bumping along the track to Brigade H.Q., I could see the frowning faces of a court martial staring at me as I quailed before them! After a slight hesitation on the part of the sentry on guard, who was apparently as much taken aback by such an early visitor as I was to be there, I was ushered into the Brigade Commander's tent. He was still dressed and working at his table. It seemed it was not a Court Martial this time. I was to report with my gear at New Guinea Force Headquarters at 0700 hours. "Take enough gear with you to last you two months, and all I can tell you is the particular job you are to go to has something to do with the sea. That's all that I can tell you as it is all that I have been told myself, but you will be given further details at N.G.F. Good luck and goodbye."

The Brig. got up and shook hands and the next minute I was in the darkness cautiously picking my way down the path to the waiting truck. "What the Hell is this thing I have been pushed into?", I thought.

Packing my valise by the dim light of a smoky hurricane lamp was difficult enough without having to answer the Adjutant's questions at the same time. I had frequent cause to regret various useful articles I left behind.

New Guinea Force was at that time the headquarters of all the troops in New Guinea and approximated an Army command.

Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels were as common as tabby cats in the many native houses constructed to accommodate this very sprawling headquarters. As a temporary Major I was timid and overawed by so much gold braid and scarlet cap bands. This feeling persisted for some time until I realized some of the august wearers went one better than the brazen idol and had definite legs of clay. Not all by any means but sufficient to me to establish my self esteem!

I duly reported to a tent bearing the impressive notice "Staff Duties", and found to my surprise they were expecting me. I was promptly handed a large file, with the Secret and Confidential on its face, and told to read it through. The plot was definitely thickening! I had hardly begun to get some sense out of it when another major appeared, also ordered to read it. This was at least a means of introducing ourselves and it transpired he had also received the same mysterious summons as I had. We were to do the job together and also to become great friends.

Pritchard was his name and he was usually known as "Pritch". He was a gunner from a Field Artillery regiment and had served in the Middle East before coming to New Guinea.



We wrestled with the file, and finally elucidated the fact that we were to act as Liaison Officers with the N.A.F. for the projected move up the East Coast of New Guinea to Oro Bay, Milne Bay being the starting point for this operation.

We were to have a radio set and operators to go along with us, and to keep in touch with N.G.F. for any orders they may send us. We were to transmit only in an Emergency. The N.A.F. was to supply escorts for the merchant shipping that was to move the force and required stores to Oro Bay.

The intention was that Oro Bay, being the only suitable harbor near Buna, it would be the offloading point for the stores and equipment for the construction of air strips, as well as being the supply point for the final investment of the Japanese perimeter in the Buna-Gona area. Having spent a very warm morning reading the file and swatting flies, we decided our next move would be to call on the Naval Officer in charge, Port Moresby. At this time N.O.I.C. Port Moresby was Commander Leigh Hunt, R.A.N. who proved a firm friend and sound adviser to us both in our first approach to the senior service. Being informed there was no particular hurry and that we would not leave Moresby for several days, we arranged for a jeep to take us to visit him that afternoon, and betook ourselves leisurely to lunch at the Junior Officer's mess. Still in a leisurely manner we set off for the port and Navy headquarters there. Both of us having reached that stage of detached view of the Army in general, we were convinced of the truth of the remark of a wise old regular, "that the Army was an institution in which one hurried somewhere to wait for somebody". We flattered ourselves that we were veterans enough to know waiting was part of every soldier's portion and to appear over eager was to find oneself firmly repressed by some senior officer to whom hurry was anathema. Chatting of this and that we arrived at N.O.I.C.'s lair, and looking forward to a mere social call, we were staggered to be seized upon in the hall a wild-eyed naval lieutenant, who fairly rammed us into N.O.I.C.'s office. We were asked so many questions so fast, we must have seemed like two yokels gazing at a sword swallower.

The gist of it all was that we were supposed to be already on the high seas; the corvette H.M.A.S. Lithgow was waiting at the dock for us and our radio station to get aboard, and had been waiting for two hours!

Bad as this was, our hearts fell into our boots to observe the corvette Captain striding up and down the dock and even from that distance obviously in a towering rage at this delay, caused of course by the Army again! This seemed like a definitely bad start, and so to impress the sister service we telephoned N.G.F, and airily asked that our personal gear and the radio and personnel be sent to the dock forthwith. By a strange coincidence all was arranged as we asked and though it looked pretty good on the surface, we were to find ourselves minus about half our clothes and many items we had need of later.

In some fear we approached the corvette captain who appeared even more infuriated the closer we got. He glared over our heads and called down all the fires of Hell on people who were supposed to order other people to do things and the time they should do them, etc. Later I knew the situation very aptly summed up in the famous U.S.N. phrase - "Some S.O.B. never gets the word" - and in this case it certainly seemed to be that we were the ones who had not got the word! We were told all this by the captain who, having blown his steam, became more human again. He became later a friend of ours and was an officer we both admired for his efficient handling of every situation, no matter how odd it was or what difficulties it presented. In fact, Commander Knight, R.A.N.R., known to us behind his back as "Father", was a great assistance to us the whole time we were with him on Lithgow. Finally our goods and chattels, plus radio, batteries and personnel, were bundled aboard, the lines cast off and we had started on what was to be for myself, three years service with naval forces in many places about New Guinea and the adjacent islands.

Of the voyage to Milne Bay there is not a great deal to tell. Pritch made an appearance as a poker player of no mean caliber and drew into his net any of the officers who happened to be off duty. No sea however violent could distract him and he could nearly always be found, wedged behind the wardroom table winning from all and sundry. A fish out of water is in the same predicament as a soldier at sea and I was seasick. Not until we entered the China Straits did I really recover although I had tried to conceal the fact by being much too bright and cheerful with a jade green face and reeling head.

I fear I deceived no one, least of all myself, but I secretly felt I had tried to uphold the honor of the Army at least.

"So this is Milne Bay" we thought as Pritch and I scowled into a steady, misty rain that obscured sea and sky in drifting grey curtains. Some breaks now and then disclosed a shore line that appeared to be jungle to the waters edge. Back in the distance considerable ranges reared tree matted crests into the low cloud. It was an enormous bay and seemed to run on for miles. As the Lithgow moved in we began to catch glimpses of the ubiquitous coconut palms and several small jetties. Near the largest of these, a ship of some size lay on her side almost submerged, her masts reaching out almost parallel with the surface of the water.



We discovered later this was the "Anchung" which had been sunk by Japanese destroyers when they had entered the bay in an attempt to cover their own ground forces, and to conduct a bombardment of our units opposing them. The "Anchung" had been in the act of unloading much needed cargo when she was sunk and had settled to the bottom and rolled on her side, fortunately away from the wharf. At the time of her being sunk the hospital ship "Manunda" had been lying close astern of her and of course fully illuminated. The Red Cross was respected and no action was taken by the Japanese ships against her. An Army doctor who was aboard her told us later he was never so scared in his life and expected the worst at any moment. As soon as the Lithgow had anchored, we begged the use of the motor boat to take us ashore where we were to make contact with the Army authorities, and map out the next stage of our work. At this time the Jap had been defeated in his effort to take the port area.

Some of his original force had been evacuated at night from near Cape Killerton, while the remainder had been forced to take to the hills in small parties, which were at this time being hunted down and liquidated by the Australian patrols. We found the projected move, or Lilliput Operation, was a joint one under the command of Colonel Myers, U.S. Army, who had included in his forces Australian Engineers and other units as well as those U.S. Army formations taking part.

Escorting the merchant ships was to be the job of the R.A.N. corvettes who were also to supply the Beachmaster and his staff for Oro Bay. Due to some delays in the required shipping arriving in Milne Bay, we were able to have several days to get ourselves into the picture. Col. Myers was most cooperative and when we did sail we had as full an idea of the operation as possible as he had placed all the available information at our disposal.

Finally the day arrived and Lithgow led the first two ships, Dutchmen both, through the Raven Channel and we turned the corner of New Guinea for the first time.

As we sailed North by West, with the New Guinea coast to the West and Normandy, Furgerson and Goodenough Islands standing along the Eastern skyline with their rugged slopes and cloud capped peaks, the scene made an indelible impression on me. Although I was to pass backwards and forwards on this same stretch of sea and to see it in all sorts of weather conditions, it will always remain in my mind's eye view as I saw it that first time from the bridge of the Lithgow.



There seems a more vivid color of sea and sky, and the green and purple of the mountains once round this corner of New Guinea, and the colors and atmosphere of Port Moresby seemed dimmer and more subdued in comparison. At this time the Japs nearest land forces were hemmed in about Buna, and air cover for our own troops and sea movements had to come either from Milne Bay air strips or once past Cape Nelson from Moresby's many air fields. Often cloud conditions over the Owen Stanleys were such that the air cover allotted could not get through, and unfortunately these conditions did not affect the Japanese planes who had Salamaua, Lae and the Rabaul strips to operate from and no mountains to cross. Naturally air lookouts were always alert and being before the days of I.F.F. interrogator sets every plane was considered potentially hostile until definitely established as otherwise. Also, the air cover that did get across was rather limited as to the length of time it could stay on station.

The Japs were quick to realize this and their favorite times of attack were set at first light or last light, and of course their regular moonlight visitations. This initial voyage to Oro Bay was however without incident but some subsequent visits were not so uneventful. On our third visit to the Port, Pritch and I were just picking our way along the jury-rigged jetty when a R.A.A.F. Hudson came hurrying down the coast with a Zero sitting firmly on his tail. The blister gunner had been killed and the Zero was rather having its own way. The Hudson made a circuit of the bay hoping the A/A defenses would remove or scare away his attacker. However, the said A/A defenses promptly shot at the Hudson instead. As he passed over the jetty it was seen that the plane was on fire and that the Hudson had "had it". The pilot made a really fine landing on the sea and they were able to inflate their rubber dinghy.

This was the first time I was to see a P.T. in action as it were. She was about to come alongside the jetty when the above flap occurred, but her boat captain sized up the situation in a flash and really took off to pick up the Survivors. He did manage to collect several, including the pilot who was rather badly shot up, but who we heard later lived to tell the tale if not to fight again. The Zero made a leisurely turn over the spot where the Hudson had gone down, showing her silver belly and large scarlet roundels, and then streaked away and was a mere spot on the horizon in an incredibly short time. The skipper of the P.T. I was to know very well later and the excellent show he put up that day was just one of many he had on his record. But this is digressing.

The Lilliput Operation went on during the latter part of November and most of December. Pritch and I had by this time organized our movements so that we arrived and departed with each convoy as they came up from Milne Bay. We managed this by changing from the southbound escort vessel to that coming from Milne Bay and our usual point of rendezvous was off Veal Reef just south of Cape Nelson.

This swapping of ships was not always so simple as it sounds, as our radio set and personnel and baggage all had to be conveyed by the motorboat; corvettes' motorboats were in general singularly unreliable. From the said motorboat we had to get our gear and ourselves somehow aboard the next corvette. There were certain delicate points to be observed in this reshuffle. One was to get aboard as quickly as possible as the Captain naturally disliked having his ship lie to while these blasted Army people kept one of His Majesty's Australian ships from going about her lawful occasions. The radio set proved a very mixed blessing as it was usually powered by the ship's transmitters and the majority of signals we received were so mutilated in transmission that Pritch, the cipher Sergeant and I went into a guessing game to try and find some relevant meaning to it. Christmas Day 1942 we spent in Oro Bay and I will long remember the dinner we had aboard the K.P.M. ship Balikpapan. Roast goose being the highlight and Bols gin shedding a rosey glow over the proceedings.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December our radio did the impossible and snatched a message unmutated from the ether. This directed us to report to U.S.N. at Tufi, Cape Nelson. We were to be picked up off Veal Reef by "Poluma" and taken to Tufi.

Actually we did not know the U.S.N. had anything at Tufi but "ours not to reason why". We at once settled down, with paper, our notes, and a borrowed portable to get our report made out for the New Guinea Force Headquarters.

We flattered ourselves we had made some very pertinent criticisms of some things and persons who it seemed to us had hindered more than helped, and it was not till long after I was to hear of it again.

It seemed it stirred up a veritable hornets' nest, and the criticisms of the two lowly Majors were considered grossly impertinent. However, the resulting uproar and arguments made so much noise and dust that we were overlooked in the melee, and went gaily on our way, little knowing we might, be blasted by official wrath at any moment. As our radio was so unreliable and we, on the opposite side of New Guinea, were safer than we knew! The report duly typed in triplicate and signed by us jointly, we gave it our blessing and sent it off by the courier.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WE REPORT TO TUFI



At 0100 hours we sailed from Oro Bay on H.M.A.S. Broome, Lt. Comdr. Ronald Deneven, for our tryst with the Poluma, off Veal Reef. Dyke Ackland Bay was smooth as a mirror as the sun rose among its pillar-like cumulus clouds that seem to be part of all tropical dawn seascapes. Very faintly to the South the outline of Cape Nelson with its twin peaks, Mt. Victory and Mt. Trafalgar, grew more distinct as the morning wore on. Gradually Spear Island came sliding over the horizon and far off the giant cone of Goodenough Island reared itself against the sky to the Southeast. It was mid-afternoon when the "Poluma" could be seen like a small chip on the skyline.

Slowly as we drew nearer she resolved herself, as a small diesel trawler, flying the flag of the Australian Water Transport, with its crossed daggers on a blue ensign. The skipper, Rod Marsland, who had been a plantation owner at Talasea, New Britain, belonged to the Allied Intelligence Bureau or A.I.B. as it was usually known. A unit whose history if it is ever published will make amazing reading.

We said our farewells to Comdr. Deneven and the usual assortment of packs, haversacks, radio set, batteries and whatnot were passed over the side and we drew away from Broome.

It was to be a long time before we would meet her captain and officers again, but we always remembered this particular ship with affection, for the very happy ship she was and the hospitality we had enjoyed aboard her.

It was late in the afternoon as we approached Tufi harbor and the sun had gone down behind the tremendous clouds that always gathered over the peaks of Cape Nelson toward evening.

The harbor of Tufi resembles a Norwegian fiord, and as we entered the narrow entrance the steep cliffs crowned with palms and trees were bathed in a reflected light of grey and gold, while far up the heights the last sun rays glowed on the deep greens of the rain forest.

A small wharf came into view, along side of which two torpedo boats were moored. As the "Poluma" came alongside the outboard boat Pritch and I went ashore to find out to whom we were to report. We were given a most friendly welcome by some of the P.T.'s crew who were working on the deck and our first view of Tufi definitely pleased. A spreading plane tree grew near the wharf and beneath it, sitting on a log was a tall chap wearing Lieutenant's bars. We approached him and enquired where the U.S.N. Headquarters Tufi were. He smiled and said, "Well, I suppose I am U.S.N. HQ at Tufi." Getting to his feet he introduced himself as Lieut. Baughman. We hastened to introduce ourselves in turn and produced the signal which was our *raison d'être* for being there.

Lieut. Baughman, or Chic Baughman as he was always known, had a division of six P.T.s under his command, operating from Tufi as an Advanced Base. He explained that the Task Force Commander was at Milne Bay and it was really to him that we should report. One of the P.T.s was to sail for Milne Bay the following morning, so he suggested we establish ourselves for the night, and proceed to the U.S.S. Hilo by P.T. We arranged to set up our radio at Tufi, leaving personnel there whilst we were at Milne Bay where the tender was located. This seemed the best plan and we instructed our Sergeant in charge of our radio to keep in contact with N.G.F. and any signals for us could be relayed via the U.S.N. radio at Tufi to U.S.S. Hilo. Baughman introduced us to several of his boat captains who had joined the group, no doubt wondering who and what we were doing landing in on them in this fashion. Lieuts. Jim Miller, Skip Dean, Ray Leary and "Demon" DeMoine, all of whom became great friends of ours later. This

was our first meeting with officers of the United States Navy and I was impressed with the fine types they all were. They were most friendly and quickly made us feel at home with them. They were all in the highest spirits as on the night of the 23/24.

P.T. 122 had torpedoed a Japanese submarine off Buna which had started the score off nicely. As the base at Tufi was just being set up, such as it was, a veritable drop in the bucket compared to the large fully equipped bases of later times, we thought it as well to establish our radio station there and then. The District Officer Lieut. French, A.N.G.A. made a native style house for our men, in which they lost no time in installing themselves and the radio. Pritch and I would spend the night aboard two P.T.s, one on each as accommodation was strictly limited on the boats. Lieut. Jim Miller took me aboard his boat where he had a spare bunk.

After supper we settled down and the talk ranged from torpedo boats to our respective homes and folk and it was well past midnight before we decided to call it a day.

I shall always remember my first night aboard a P.T.

As I lay listening to the quiet lap of the water along the chine, I fell to wondering what the future was to hold and how Americans would view Pritch and myself set down in their midst for how long we had no idea. I felt if today's reception of us, with its friendliness was a sample we would be very happy among our cousins from the other side of the Pacific. I was particularly struck by the cordiality of both men and officers and all did their utmost to welcome us aboard.

Chic Baughman, whose name will always be remembered with admiration and affection by all who served with him, was an officer whose great sense of duty and responsibility was to wear him down in health from the constant patrols he insisted on leading. I think he felt P.T.s were being tested for their worth in this close inshore patrolling, and he was resolved that no detail should be lacking if he could help it. Also he had a keen desire to see his Division 17 do well as a team, not I believe in the idea to overmatch squadrons yet to come, and Div. 17 certainly set a high standard of performance with what little they had in the way of spare parts and repair facilities in those early days of Torpedo Boats in New Guinea.

Baughman was later lost on submarine duty and all those of P.T.s who knew him and had worked with him felt his loss keenly.

Next morning we set off for Milne Bay and the "Hilo" on Ray Leary's boat. It was our first trip on a P.T. and it was one Pritch and I always remembered. After our trudging up and down the coast at eight knots, twenty-five really seemed to be flying. We reached the "Hilo" in the afternoon, where she was lying in Maga Ikarona Bay, in the island of Sariba near China Strait. She was a converted yacht of 2200 tons and to our inexperienced eye looked the last word as a ship and a tender. We were to learn later that she was by no means ideal as a tender, but she was a happy ship. Her captain was then Commander Frank Monroe U.S.N.R. He became a great friend of ours as did many of her other officers, notably Lt. Comdr. Mac Gordon of Savannah, Georgia. On going aboard we reported to Commander Edgar Neale U.S.N. who was the task force commander. His very friendly welcome set our fears at rest that we would be viewed as a pair of excrescences. It appeared we were the first of his staff which was then being formed. Comdr. Neale suggested we remain aboard a few days to get ourselves familiar with his intentions and to discuss the best method to adopt for us to be the link between N.G.F. and the P.T.s. It was a new world that we were in and we set about learning all we could as to naval custom and etiquette. Our previous sojourn with the R.A.N. helped us a lot, but certain customs were different, such as the correct compliments on coming aboard ship. However these learned became as much part of our habit as such compliments customary in our own arms of the service.

On our return to Tufi, we found the new District Officer in residence, a Captain Hall of A.N.G.A.U. He kindly allowed us to set our maps in his office, and with our radio station already established we were ready for work.

We were dismayed to find the Sergeant in charge of our radio set up was having a lot of trouble with the battery charger, which incidentally he knew nothing about.

Pritch disclaimed all knowledge of internal combustion engines so I was our last hope. Having in the piping days of peace been the owner of various motorcycles of doubtful reliability, I had served a greasy apprenticeship in small motors so the battery charger was promptly pulled to pieces and its entrails laid out on a native mat.



Everything seemed to be wrong with it; its bearings were egg-shaped and the valves badly burned. We managed to get a spare crankshaft, and with much fiddling with it finally got it going again.

As there was no anti-aircraft defense of the base at Tufi, it was decided to dig a suitable dugout for the radio set to be operated from in case we received any unwelcome attentions from the air. This project was frowned on by the Sergeant and his boys, but a single visit from a Jap reconnaissance plane, who turned up one morning about lunch time and after having a good look at the place and dropping two sticks of bombs, departed leaving quite a few scared people and some shrapnel holes in our kitchen walls. No further urging was required and it astounded us the speed with which the radio station was dug in.

Patrols were run every night by two P.T.s as far North as Cape Ward Hunt and the mouth of the Mambare River. The distance that had to be covered to get on station meant the boats had to leave early in the afternoon and seldom returned before ten o'clock the following morning.

Fuelling had to be done by the boat crews with some assistance from native labor supplied by A.N.G.A.U. All fuel had to be pumped from fifty gallon drums, which was not only hard work, but presented a fire hazard that made one shudder to contemplate. This was to be demonstrated in a highly spectacular fashion later on!

The fact that the boats were able to continue patrols so constantly was due in a great part to the unending work the engineers put in on their motors and the very skillful way they nursed them. No mean job in an engine room crammed with power in very restricted space and usually in a temperature well over the 100-degree mark. Granted these first boats were not able to reach speeds that they had done in cold waters, but after tropical jets had been fitted their performance was much improved. Div. 17 truly ran on a shoestring! The Hilo at Milne Bay was hard at it overhauling boats and making repairs to those boats that had hit reefs, no uncommon thing in waters where the charts were delightfully vague, and liberally marked with warnings of uncharted waters, etc. We were able to take advantage of boats going and coming from the Hilo to keep contact with Commander Neale, who would visit Tufi when he had the time, or if he was at the Hilo, Pritch or I would make a hurried trip down to see him. As Commander Neale had been with Pat Wing 10 in the Philippines and was due for relief, and his successor, Commander Morton C. Mumma, Jr. took over from him early in February 1943.



Shortly after this Pritch received orders to rejoin his regiment as they were very short of battery commanders, but I was ordered to remain as Liaison. We were all sorry to see Pritch go as he was always good company and had become quite an Acey-Ducey friend, almost a worthy opponent for Commander Monroe. I returned to Tufi after saying good-bye to Pritch, who in his haste left behind his rubber knee boots. They were never found, but no doubt someone was thereby saved from wet feet. Their loss occasioned several letters from Pritch, which I am sure he would not have written otherwise.

In February things began to change and seven boats of Squadron 8 arrived, commanded by Lt. Comdr. Barry K. Atkins, U.S.N. When these P.T.s had been checked over at the Hilo they came to Tufi, which was still the advanced base, and started operations from there. It was good to see the force growing, and by this time the P.T.s had started in on their decimation of Japanese barges in earnest.

Lt. Comdr. Atkins and several of his squadron officers and myself at this period occupied a portion of Capt. Hall's residence. It was a really large house built of native materials, grass roof and all, and was quite a comfortable abode. However, even its thatched walls started to bulge with the increase of residents, so the local native carpenters were put to work to add a wing to it. This, when completed, was known as the Blue Room, and was used as a squadron office, Operations Room and bedroom for Barry Atkins and myself. We even had large iron bedsteads, a legacy from some former resident. The Blue Room was rather inclined to shake as its floor joists rested rather airily on twelve foot stilts, and we were of the opinion that the local carpenters had rather skimped on its foundations. It never fell down while we were there and may be standing yet. I used to derive a certain macabre pleasure in describing to Barry Atkins that any decent earthquake would send us crashing down in a welter of splintering wood and spearing roof beams, iron bedsteads and all!

He maintained I was simply an alarmist to harp on such a disaster. The distance that had to be run by boats to reach the patrol area was becoming greater, and the resulting increase in engine hours not to mention the extra fatigue of crews, made it necessary to establish another Advanced base further up the coast. The final cleaning up of the Jap resistance in the Buna-Gona area was not yet completed, so that Port Harvey, which lies next to Oro Bay, was examined with a view to its use for P.T.s, and just as quickly rejected as it was foul with reefs and the foreshores were mainly mangrove swamp. By the time all other possibilities for a site were exhausted, the Jap had finally been liquidated and Buna was in the process of being tidied up, later to be a large dump area for the further moves along the New Guinea coast.

This allowed a further move forward of the proposed Advance Base, and a small bay just to the SE of Cape Ward Hunt was to be used as a fueling station for the boats. The advance party sent to establish a fuel dump and a radio link there were very glad to be rid of it as it proved to be a spot where, it seemed, all the Jap planes made their rendezvous. It became known as Zero Alley and was shunned in daylight by small ships.



Commander Mumma and some of his staff then made a survey of possible sites further to the North and West and the final choice was Morobe. The place had been previously a Government station and is situated on the border of Papua and New Guinea, previous to 1914 German New Guinea. As this advanced base was so advanced it was felt some place must be found where the P.T. activities could be hidden from enemy observation as far as possible. Morobe offered a natural hideout in the upper reaches of an estuary of the harbor which was flanked by tall trees and had a rather winding course. The main difficulty was to find some area on the shores of this estuary where a campsite could be set up. Comdr. Mumma, Atkins, Lieut. Tebow and I spent a very steamy few hours struggling through dense underbrush and swampy ground, and finally a low but steep hillside was chosen as the only possible place for the base site.

As the mountains rise precipitously round Morobe, the placing of the radio station was quite a problem. In the end it was located well up the ridge, and although the reception was at times rather poor, it gave plenty of exercise to the operators. The site for the proposed base having been selected, the first thing was to move such gear as was wanted with a small advance party, and for this a rather odd looking ship named "Messia" was obtained. She had been an old "four piper destroyer", but had in the course of time undergone radical changes, and had now been taken over for freight work. Her skipper was a redoubtable sea dog, Capt. Mackay-Sims, who although well along in years, with his sons services in the Australian forces, just had to be in it, too.

This ship loaded radio gear, provisions, ammunition for the P.T.s and about a dozen men in the charge of Lieutenant Don Galaway, known as the "Senator" for his dignified bearing. She sailed from Tufi one morning at dawn and in mid-morning was attacked and sunk in Dyke Acland Bay by Japanese dive bombers. There were some casualties among the crew, the Engineer being killed when a bomb exploded in the engineroom. Galaway and his party escaped with several men wounded and the gear for the base was lost. Don did a very good job in this unfortunate business in seeing that the wounded had assistance in the water and keeping things organized when the survivors were picked up. Finally the advance party for Morobe were taken on P.T.s.



The next big event was the Tufi fire, which destroyed in the vicinity of three thousand barrels of 100 octane gas. As the actual shore front in Tufi was strictly limited due to the cliff-like sides to the harbor, it was impossible to disperse these drums. About five hundred barrels escaped destruction, having been set away from the main dump.

The first evil sign of fire was a sudden angry rush of dark smoke from the vicinity of the dock, and by the time we had sprung up from the supper table and raced along the path to where it descended to the dock area, destruction with a capital D was well underway. Two P.T.s that had been fueling at the dock were already on fire and another craft of the Australian Water Transport had got hard on the shore reef and was also burning. Chic Baughman attempted to lower one P.T. by perforating along the water line with a .30 B.A.R. but it was of no avail. The crews had gone over the side when it was seen that the fire had too big a hold to be affected by extinguishers, and all were able to reach safety.

The native hospital, being located on the edge of the cliff overlooking the cove, the base of which was now a roaring inferno, looked as if it would be the next to go, and so "Doc" Gorham, the A.N.G.A.U. medical officer, and I myself ran to get the native patients evacuated from the hospital buildings.

They were enjoying the show and were most reluctant to go back into the plantation. However when six depth charges, which had been in store under the gunners mates' shack, went off with a soul shaking clap of thunder, the patients showed a fine turn of speed, and I doubt that Achilles could have even kept them in sight. Some did not return for several days! It seemed miraculous that there were no casualties from this fire. We heard later the glare was observed in Oro Bay some sixty miles away.

It was said to have been started by a native throwing a cigarette stub into the water where some gas had been run off, but at this time the crews fueling had reached that stage where familiarity had bred contempt, and it may or may not have been the native who started it. It certainly left its mark on Tufi, as for many months afterward no vegetation grew where the fire had destroyed all the humus in the soil.

From this date Tufi began to dwindle in importance for P.T.s and the new base at Morobe was under construction, so that we finally said a rather reluctant farewell (a la travelogue) and though later when en route for Milne Bay we sometimes put in for the night and enjoyed Ben Hall's hospitality and wit.



When the Hilo moved to Buna, Tufi receded into the limbo of past times. It was a beautiful place scenically and I am sure that all those who were there with the P.T.s remember it with a certain affection. It was at Tufi that the famous Tufi Record Book saw the light.

This was a book in which the inmates of "Gromet Hall" (Capt. Hall's house) inscribed their likes and dislikes of their fellow men and the living conditions, etc. It even had illustrations but I fear it could never be published and, its wit was definitely low. All the same it made good reading and it was considered of prime importance that the latest scurrilous article should be first read by the person at which it was directed. There were no holds barred!

Lieut. Tebow, our Medical Officer, will remember how his wails were faithfully recorded, and Lieut. Symonds activities toward the neighboring missionary's cook, female local variety, were written for all to read.

## Morobe

From the windy headland at Tufi we were plunged into the jungle proper at Morobe. The living quarters had to be perched against the steep hillsides and an affair like Jacob's Ladder built with log steps led into the upper regions where the Operations and Radio shacks were. The shack where the Intelligence Officers lived was known as 'The Home for Incurables', not a reflection on its occupants' mental abilities but from the amazing amount of sleep they contrived to do therein. It seemed to rain daily and the paths being of a yellow clay, there were many pitfalls for the unwary. To get off the path at night without a flashlight frequently meant slipping and rolling through the underbrush and trees to fetch up in the swampy level ground below. After a deal of work had been put into it the base became very livable.

It was at Morobe that the Task Group was joined by one Lieut. Eric Howitt R.A.N.V.R. He was to become almost a legend in P.T.s and one about whom strange tales were told!

Many P.T. men will remember his very shiny bald head and his passion for beer when he could get it. He was a great asset to the P.T.s' operations as his knowledge of New Guinea and New Britain coasts was most extensive and his night vision remarkable. He was also a great "singer of the blues" and his caustic remarks on things he disliked were always worth listening to if only for the vividness of his language.

Targets for the P.T.s became more plentiful at this stage as the distance to patrol areas was much shorter and as a result the boats could stay on station much longer. It was about this time the Japs developed the habit of arming his barges with fixed weapons instead of relying, as he had done previously, on the personal weapons of his passengers. He also managed his time of moving in order to make use of those hours at dusk and dawn when the P.T.s had returned to base and our air patrols had not yet arrived on station.



He was also much more wary of P.T.s, as was shown from captured diaries and documents. Any reference to P.T.s in such sources of information were sent to me by N.G.F. from which I could pass such information to the boat captains at the daily briefing. However, the scores of barges sunk by the P.T.s was steadily mounting and great hopes were entertained that a submarine might be bagged if fate and conditions were kind. It was known that he ran a shuttle service by submarine to either Lae or Salamaua, and on one occasion P.T.s were able to make a surface attack on one of these submarines. Unfortunately he was able to shake off the attackers by diving and, with no underwater detection the P.T.s were unable to track him.

While at Morobe we were subjected to frequent visits by Jap night flying planes and it seemed obvious that he had an idea there was some activity at Morobe. However, he left the base alone and directed his efforts to bombing the old buildings on the other side of the harbor, much to the discomfort of the troops that lived in that area.

Just after the landing of the 9th Australian Division at Lae he turned on a fair scale attack with dive bombers, on some L.S.T.s that were in the harbor. One L.S.T. received a hit in the stern and caused some casualties. 2/1 Composite Anti-Aircraft Regiment A.I.F. had quite a field day and scored three with a possible fourth plane destroyed.

At Morobe Commander Mumma had undertaken operational command of a squadron of Royal Australian M.L.s.

These Motor Launches were also called Fairmiles and were vessels of 110 feet in length and powered with two Hall-Scott motors. They were capable of 21 knots maximum speed and 16 knots cruising speed. They were fitted with radio and it was hoped that the combination of M.L. and P.T. would prove very useful for anti-submarine sweeps. The M.L. Squadron was commanded by Lt. Cdr. Athol Townley R.A.N.V.R. of Hobart, Tasmania, and he had seen much service in M.L.s in England prior to his arrival in the Pacific. The first patrols raised everyone's hopes as several contacts were made but the attacks could not be developed. Shortly after this favorable start the M.L.s struck mechanical troubles. Their spare parts position was desperate due to some gross blundering on the part of those whose job it was to fit them out and they had great difficulty to keep even half the squadron on the line for operations.

The officers and men of the M.L.s were keen to work with the U.S.N. P.T.'s and got along very well with them, so it was a bitter blow when the combination had to be relinquished and they were sent back to Milne Bay. They were all bursting to do a job and felt they would have been able to get in some good work if their repairs could have been made. The Australian Navy Board must have had very red and ringing ears if they had heard what was said about them.

The next operation the P.T.'s had a hand in was to carry troops of the U.S. 41st Division to the Nassau Bay landing.

By dint of some rapid organizing and a few practice drills it was found each P.T. could carry approximately seventy men with personal equipment - forty distributed below and thirty sitting on deck. As the night of the landing proved extremely dark and rather rough, those below were obliged to pass round the bucket rather often and must have been profoundly glad to get their feet on the ground again.

This landing enabled a link up with the 7th Australian Division which had been gradually fighting its way down toward Salamaua. The strategical intention was to deceive the Jap into the belief that Salamaua was the main objective and to cause him to transfer the bulk of his forces there leaving Lae lightly garrisoned. It succeeded but there was much tough fighting in the ridges round Salamaua before it was finally taken. Lae had been captured about the same time after the landing of the 9th Australian to the east of the town. It had been a great race between the 7th and 9th Divisions to see who would enter Lae first. 7th Division won by a narrow margin, which fact gave rise to some good stories as to why 9th Division was late in arriving. It was said that about El Alamein! Very shortly after the landing at Lae, the 20th Brigade of 9th Division was landed near Finschhafen and it at once became necessary to establish liaison with them and the P.T.'s as the boats were running patrols up Vitiaz Straits to intercept the Jap supply route from Cio to his forces at Finschhafen, who were even at this early stage short of rations due to P.T. activities. It was in this period, October 1943 to February 1944, that the P.T. score of barges sunk went up with a rush and the later squadrons had some excellent scores.

To ensure liaison with the 20th Brigade I was put ashore at their beachhead at first light on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. The Military Landing Officer would not get me any transportation to Brigade Headquarters until well into daylight as Jap snipers were busy on the track. At eight o'clock we set off with the Jeep fairly bristling with arms over a very rough and muddy track that wound through the jungle.



It presented a perfect chance for an ambush, but the snipers must have been having breakfast as we had no untoward encounter. Brigade Headquarters was rather hard to find as it was tucked away in a vast bamboo forest, but once found I proceeded to business. The Brigade Major Bernard Wilson and the Brigadier were very busy as the fight for the lower slopes of Sattelberg Mountain was in full swing. Our conference was constantly interrupted by the bellows of a battery of field guns firing from their position not far away. It did not take long to make the arrangements for an officer from Brigade HQ to contact the leading P.T. both on its outward trip and on its return from the patrol area. This enabled a complete exchange of information at morning and evening, thus giving Brigade all coastwise information as well as keeping us at the P.T. base abreast of how the land situation was developing. It worked quite well and we were able to brief the boat captains as to the position on the coast that had been reached by our-troops.

As soon as the area about Finschhafen had been cleared of the enemy, a reconnaissance was made for the next P.T. advanced base. At first it was thought Finschhafen Harbor would be suitable, but it proved rather shallow and had considerable fringing reef, and so Dreger Harbor some three miles to the south was then selected. This gave more dispersal to the boats, which was required at this time as Jap air activity was still fairly active especially at night.

By this time more P.T. tenders had arrived and the Hilo had gone south to Sydney for overhaul of her engine room and evaporators, so the flagship of the Task Group had been transferred to the converted L.S.T. 201. The tenders had come up from Buna where they had been while Morobe was the advance base and had taken over the base at Morobe as the repair and servicing point for the P.T.'s from Dreger Harbor.

The base at Dreger Harbor started in a small way but by the time the next move forward came it had expanded into a very large setup with warehouses and machine shops where only jungle had been a short time before. Eric Howitt and I had quarters together here and it was then I discovered his distressing habit of throwing the cork away from any liquor we managed to come by. He considered it foolish not to finish the bottle there and then, as he was always fearful a bomb might break it if we left the contents in it. He assured me it was an old New Guinea custom! The result of this old custom was that we seldom had any grog at all.

It was at Dreger Harbor that Captain Mumma handed over the command of the Task Group to Captain S.S. Bowling U.S.N. and returned to the States for other duty. As I had been on Captain Mumma's staff for the whole period of his command of P.T.'s in the Southwest Pacific, I felt it was a parting of friends as he had been most kind and helpful to me and I had come to know him very well, and to respect most highly both himself and his ability.

We were pleased to see Captain Bowling take over the Task Group as he had previously commanded a squadron of P.T.s in it and knew the whole set up from the inside as it were. The party in the P.T. Officers Club being a farewell and a welcoming one was a highlight and everyone was very merry by the time the bar closed for lack of supplies. Howitt's bald head shone with a roseate glow and he was finally prevailed on to tell of his adventures in New Britain and the waters thereabouts during and after the Japanese capture of Rabaul and New Britain., He and Lieut. Ivan Champion R.A.N.V.R. had some hair-raising trips to secretly pick up some of the survivors of the debacle in New Britain and their services were never appropriately recognized. Howitt's later ones were however by the U.S.N. in awarding him the Legion of Merit.

For some reason best known to a parsimonious Government, awards to the Australian services were all too few. The R.A.A.F. seem to fare the best of all the services, but a slightly more liberal attitude would have done a great deal of good in rewarding those who had rendered conspicuous services and as a morale factor. Labor Governments in Australia have always had a horror of rewarding merit as it seems to be felt undemocratic to single individuals for special mention, and also from the popular habit of knocking any head that stands higher than the mob.

Their conception of being democratic is to reduce all to a common denomination; not a very high level unfortunately in Australia.

From Dreger Harbor P.T. operations began to stem out into different areas and, as my particular job led me to those areas where liaison was required between the Australian forces and the P.T.s, I did not work in such fields of P.T. operations such as the North coast of New Britain and Itape.

My next assignment from Captain Bowling was to go to Saidor, where an advanced base under the command of Lt. Comdr. N. Burt Davis U.S.N. had been recently set up.

A junction with the U.S. forces that had established the beachhead and perimeter at Saidor had been made by the 11th Australian Division. This Division had taken over the pursuit of the Japanese from the 9th Australian Division and had pushed the remnants of the Jap forces along the North coast of the Huon Peninsula. To escape being caught between the U.S. perimeter and the Australian pursuers the Japanese had to make a detour inland to get past the U.S. forces. Some thousands succeeded in doing this and it seemed strange that no fighting patrols were sent out from the perimeter to liquidate these tattered and demoralized remnants. However, there must have been some reason, but nobody seemed to know it.



As a matter of interest it is as well to mention here the friendship that had sprung up between the 532 U.S. Engineer Boat Battalion and the 9th Australian Division. This boat battalion had had a heavy job to do in being the supply line for the Division in their advance up the coast from Finschhafen, a job they had done extremely well and the Division appreciated it greatly. The Boat Battalion unofficially called themselves, the 9th Division Boat Battalion.

On arrival at Saidor I was glad to be working again with two U.S.N. Intelligence officers who were old friends from previous bases. They were Lieut. George Vanderbilt and Lieut. Joseph Handlan of Parkersburg, Virginia.

Later I was to work with Lt. Comdr. Davis at Sansapor, but this was the first time I had come into his sphere of activities. From Saidor the P.T.'s were operating patrols along the coast to the West past Madang and Hansa Bay, and although Japanese barge traffic had greatly diminished, the P.T.'s were snapping up occasional ones along this stretch of the coastline. The P.T.'s were also being worked over rather frequently by Japanese coastal guns when they ventured close in shore, which they did regularly in search of their prey. For Intelligence reasons Lt. Vanderbilt and I made a four-day visit to Madang Harbor and Alexishaven to see if there were any new types of Japanese craft to be found there. At this time the Japanese were thoroughly disorganized in their trek up the coast, and had outdistanced their pursuers who were then close to Madang. We were able to borrow from the U.S. Engineers a light bridging pontoon with an outboard motor and three G.I.s accompanied us to run the craft for us. This we found to be a most suitable arrangement as previous trips of this nature we had had to undertake, we had to paddle a rubber boat with all our gear (not much on these trips), as well as do a thorough investigation of the particular area. An island in Madang Harbor made a good camping place.

There were quite a number of Japanese craft abandoned in both harbors; they were all of known types. We did secure a set of annotated charts from one small vessel, but otherwise there was not much to be found. One thing we did find however was that the Jap had most thoroughly mined the roads and tracks on the foreshores. Later we heard there had been some casualties among the troops who had got into these minefields, one party in a jeep being all killed when it ran over a mine in the track. The targets for the P.T.'s were getting very hard to find as our air strikes had taken great toll of the Jap watercraft before the P.T.'s could get at them, so the value of the advanced base at Saidor evaporated fairly quickly.

I was recalled to Dreger Harbor as the invasion of Biak was scheduled to take place soon and as it seemed no Australian troops would be in it, and so it began to appear my job as Liaison was about to end - or so it seemed.

The 1st Australian Corps Headquarters had been established at Finschhafen by this and I was ordered to report to General F. Berryman who was then the Corps Commander. I received orders from him that subject to Captain Bowling still requiring me, I was to remain attached to his staff. The General pointed out that I would be required later, and he did not consider it of use to train another officer to take my place as I had been with P.T.'s so long. I was glad of this as it looked as if things would become very interesting later on, and I would have been sorry to leave all the good friends I had made in the Task Group. Captain Bowling was kind enough to tell General Berryman he would like me to remain on his staff, so I was able to unpack my belongings again.

## Sansapor and Amsterdam Island

The landing at Biak and the establishing of a base for P.T.s at Mios Woendi was the springboard for the next move forward to Sansapor in Dutch New Guinea. Just prior to the Dreger Harbor base being established the Task Group had made available to its exclusive use a company of a Naval Construction Battalion. These "Sea Bees" were a Godsend for their construction of P.T. or any other sort of bases and were remarkable for the efficient way they went about it. They were also remarkable for their ingenuity, esprit de corps and their habit of "scrounging". Nothing was safe from their hands and they rivaled, if not surpassed, Australian troops in the gentle art of scrounging, wangling and co-opting anything that appealed to them. However, what they could do with what appeared to be an unattractive site or a base was nobody's business, and they worked like men possessed. Lt. Comdr. Foster Straw - Bill to his friends - was given the overall charge of new bases and lay out of them, while the C.B.s were commanded by Lt. Hal Liberty of Stamford, Conn. On the 21 July we sailed from Dreger Harbor on an L.S.T. carrying the material for the base at Sansapor.



The voyage as far as Biak was without incident and the convoy of which our L.S.T. was part, went snoring along over a calm sea, guarded by its attendant destroyers. Biak was passed during the night and, as the convoy stole past, we had a box seat view of an air raid on Biak. The planes had been located on the radar and the ships went to General Quarters, but we were not a target for this night. We were treated to a great display of searchlights fingering the sky and once or twice to streams of tracer shells going up. We never heard what the result of this raid was, but several of the lookouts claimed to have seen a plane pass over the convoy. The P.T.s, two squadrons of them, that were to operate from Sansapor met up with the convoy early in the morning before landing.

From air photos and examination of the charts, it had been thought Sansapor itself would be suitable for the P.T. base, but when it was examined it proved full of "niggerhead" coral and a wide fringing reef that would have required a long dock to be built, so it was discarded for the alternate site on Amsterdam Island. This island lay to the seaward from the beach head and distant from it some three miles. Between it and the mainland lay Middleburg Island on which a strip for fighters was to be constructed. The whole operation at Sansapor was carried out without opposition from the Japanese, who by this time had begun to realize that in New Guinea there was not much future for them. Once the gear and materials for the base were ashore the C.B.s set to with a will and the base grew like a mushroom under their skillful but horny hands. As soon as the fighter strip was finished we began to have regular nightly visits from the Jap planes. One or two of their attacks paid them dividends as they succeeded in damaging some planes and installations on Middleburg Is. For some reason they left us alone on Amsterdam Is., but one could never be sure and shovels began to be drawn from the Bosun's Locker, and fox holes became pitfalls for the nocturnal stroller. George Vanderbilt and I built a fine example of the art which became known as Fox Hole Mark II.

The P.T.s ran inshore patrols to the East and West along the coast, but the game was very thin in these parts. On one Westerly patrol the P.T.s managed to sneak into Sorong and torpedoed a small ship lying at the jetty, but targets were scarce. Commander Davis organized a raiding party and some of the small villages along the coast were visited and a few Japs killed and captured therein. On one of these forays which were carried out in daylight, we were going slowly along the coast examining the shore for signs of Japs when we were accosted by a native in a canoe flying a small Dutch flag. He handed a message aboard by means of a stick split at the end with the folded paper thrust into it.

It proved to be a message from a party of the A.I.B., who had spent the last four months in the jungle spying on any Japanese activity they could find. They were ready to be picked up and this was arranged for a few days later. The party was in the charge of Lieut. Pat Lees who came off the beach sporting a fine red beard and no shirt, as most of their clothes had worn out entirely. The party, five of them, appreciated the very hospitable treatment they had from Comdr. Davis at the P.T. base, and after a shave and bath and fresh clothes looked and felt different persons. They stayed several days at the base and had some most interesting stories of their experiences.

They had been landed by submarine and in the course of their travels had had some narrow squeaks from detection by the Japs. It was realized by this that the object of maintaining the base and two squadrons at Amsterdam Is. was of no further value, so the base personnel and the squadrons were withdrawn to Mios Woendi for overhaul and refitting. Although Amsterdam Is. was a pleasant place, it was not very suitable for P.T.s as it was only an open roadstead and when the Northwest season started, we were treated to some very heavy weather in which the fuel tank barges were constantly carrying away their moorings and either finished up on the beach or drifted away to the East and had to be chased and with much difficulty towed back and reanchored again. While at Amsterdam the taking of the beachhead at Morotai occurred, and as this move had overleapt the Vogel Kopf, or "turkey's head", of New Guinea, there were better fields for P.T. work ahead.

An incident during one of the jaunts ashore by the "Davis Raiders" had an amusing side to it, particularly to the crews of the two P.T.s that were standing by in the mouth of the small cove where we had gone ashore. Just behind the beach stood two native houses, and it had been decided that investigation of them might reveal if the Japs had been in occupation of them recently. The party approached with some caution, half of the party being covered by the rest in case there was any opposition. Everything seemed quiet and the only sounds were the wash of the sea on the beach and the crunching of the sand under foot. Suddenly the figures of four Japs reared up on the veranda at the side of one of the houses. The surprise was mutual, I think, as the advancing party let fly with everything they had, including several grenades, and there was great scrambling for positions from which to fire. The Japs had several rifles but in the resulting uproar we were not sure if they had had time to use them. They were all liquidated. As we drew near to the P.T.s to be taken aboard it was seen everyone was in gales of laughter aboard. The boat captain said it was the funniest sight he had seen in years and described the running and firing as being like a second Battle of Bull Run!

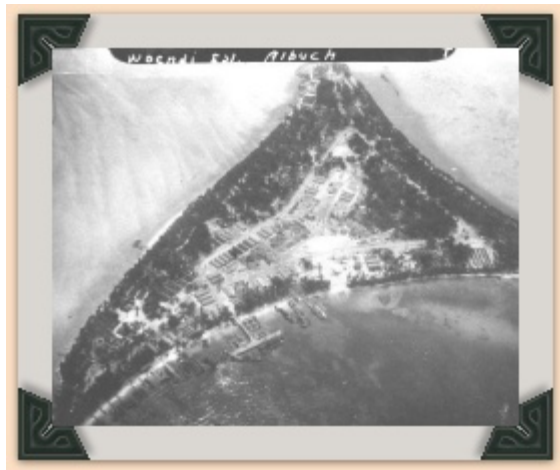
As the squadrons shortly after this were withdrawn to Mios Woendi, I returned there for a short period to find out what the next assignment was to be for me. Woendi had grown at a great pace into a very large base and was well situated as far as the boats went. There were numerous finger piers taking a P.T. each side and the island, being an atoll, the lagoon was usually very calm. Several of the P.T. tenders had arrived and the Hilo was again the flagship.



It was a very busy base we returned to as the invasion of the Philippines was to take place soon and the base force was working at high pressure to ready these squadrons that were scheduled to take part in it. As it was some time since I had seen my lords and masters of the Australian 1<sup>st</sup> Army, as well as to get my pay affairs straightened out, I was given permission by Captain Bowling to fly to Lae for a few days and see them. I was also anxious to find out from 1<sup>st</sup> Army the future moves in which Liaison would be required. While at Army HQ, I was suddenly stricken with malaria, the first time I had had it.

I was forced to spend two weeks in the 2/7 Aust. General Hospital there. Feeling perfectly well after four days I tried to talk my way out but was met with a stern refusal.

As the C.O. was Lt. Col. Bruce Hall and an old acquaintance of mine I could not hide my identity and escape from the clutches of the Medical Corps. Once discharged from hospital I hastened to finish my business with Army HQ and fly back to Biak. It was not a pleasant flight either, as it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the crew of the plane had obviously been celebrating. They seemed quite unaware of the few scared passengers behind them. We did reach Biak and the resulting landing was the worst I have ever sat out, clutching the seat and doing some pretty good cussing at the featherbrained gent up front. How the tyres stood the initial bounce, I can't to this day imagine, but the man who made them deserves the highest praise, and Douglas aircraft went up to the limit in my admiration and thankfulness that we did not "prang"!



## Morotai

Upon my return to Woendi, I received orders from Captain Bowling to proceed to Morotai. The difficulty of getting myself there was complicated by having missed the tender that had sailed some days before from Woendi. My sojourn in hospital at Lae had caused me to miss her, but I finally managed to beg a passage on the corvette H.M.A.S. Broome, still commanded by our old friend Ron Deneven. Broome was escorting two Liberty ships to Morotai. This was a well remembered trip as the weather was perfect and all available time I spent sun bathing on the-flying bridge, overlooked and wondered at by the lookout in the crow's nest above.

It was difficult to realize a war was going on when all around was empty sea except for our two Liberty ships astern pushing up a bone in their teeth from the dead flat surface and not a cloud (or plane) in the whole reach of sky.

Morotai and Halmahera came edging up over the western horizon and after we had entered the harbor and dropped the hook, I was able to have a final pink gin with the old friends of the Broome before the boat from the P.T. base came alongside to collect me and my gear. At the base which was on an island in Morotai harbor, I found some familiar faces, Bob Ewing and Pierce Hunter looking after Intelligence, and Hamilton Wood commanding the base with Ted Macauley as the other Squadron commander. It was a very pleasant place and we had the island to ourselves except for a battery of U.S. Army A/A guns.

There were two squadrons of P.T.s operating from the base and the tender Mobjack lay just off the island. The C.B.s who had built the base had set it out very conveniently.

The P.T. role here was to intercept any barge traffic the Japs might try to run across to Morotai from Halmahera to supply the Japanese forces on the island. As the perimeter gained had forced the Japs into the hills and into very rough country where they were already near starvation. The job of the P.T.s sounds rather easier than it proved to be, as the distance from the northern tip of Halmahera to Morotai is no more than eight to ten miles and the Jap was smart at picking the nights of worst visibility in which to attempt the crossing. However, not too many got through, but the P.T.s had some lively times with them as the barges were well armed, often having dual 25mm guns mounted in them. Some P.T.s were damaged and there were some casualties, but the final result was usually the same and those Japs still able to swim had to try and get back to Halmahera or finish the crossing that way. Although the Jap had had such a rough handling as far as his air strength was concerned, he still seemed able to send over small numbers of planes at night. One or two of these raids paid handsome profits as he caught a newly arrived squadron of Beau Fighters on the small strip where they had little room to disperse the planes and the whole of this squadron's planes were destroyed. On another occasion he planted his bombs among a number of Liberators that were fully fueled and bombed up in readiness for a dawn takeoff. This caused some very spectacular fires and a hideous uproar as the bombs detonated. It seemed to us watchers on

Soemi Soemi Island that the damage he had done was much greater than it later turned out to be. He had his nuisance value too and for awhile there was seldom a night passed without an alert.



I had to fly up to Tacloban on Leyte to report to Captain Bowling. He had transferred from the Hilo to U.S.S. Cyrene AGP 13, which had just arrived from the States, commanded by Captain Frank Munroe who had had the Hilo in the early days of the New Guinea war. The Cyrene was the last word in P.T. tenders and really seemed to have everything that was required for tending P.T.s. It was very nice to resume associations with Captain Munroe, who had his sense of humor going as well as ever and I even managed to beat him once at Acey-Deucey. The Task Group had grown to a tremendous size in comparison with its beginnings and Captain Bowling was an extremely busy man, with a hundred and one things to attend to.

It was a long way from those early days of Div. 17 and Milne Bay and Tufi. I was able to discuss the projected operations that the Australian forces had been assigned to with Captain Bowling and he suggested I remain at Morotai for the arrival of the 7th and 9th Australian Divisions that were to stage at Morotai before the Borneo landings. By this time the P.T.s at Morotai were having very poor hunting as all the Jap water traffic about the northern end of Halmahera had ceased.

On the arrival of 7th Australian Division I started my old Liaison routine again and found that I knew quite a few of the Divisional staff which made my dealings with them so much easier.



## Tarakan, Borneo

I had received dispatch orders from Captain Bowling to go to Tarakan with the assault echelon and there join Lt. Comdr. Francis Tapaan who was going to direct P.T. activities there. There was to be no shore base established as the area was not suitable and the capture of Tarakan was not thought to be an operation that would be of long duration. It was plenty long enough for those who had to do the business and I consider the climate of Tarakan was certainly the worst I had experienced in four years in the tropics. The tender U.S.S. Wachapreague was to tend the P.T.s and Operations and Intelligence were run from her. As the P.T.s and the tender were coming from Zamboanga to Tarakan, and I from Morotai, I had to find some means of getting there. I finally secured a passage on the assault ship, H.M.A.S. Westralia that carried one battalion of the Brigade which was to be the force to take Tarakan. The Australian Army was by this time having some difficulty in maintaining its manpower, as after four and a half years of war, a population of only seven million did not leave any sort of reserve to draw from to keep its ranks full. As it was the great majority of the two divisions that were to do the Borneo operations were veterans of the Middle East and the early campaigns in New Guinea. They had had reinforcements after the New Guinea show but the men had begun to see no end to times they were to be put into the fight again. Nevertheless these two divisions were full of vigor. At Tarakan it did seem as if the command had almost sent a boy on a man's errand, and as it turned out the Brigade that finally took the island had a longer struggle to do so than was estimated.

The voyage was uneventful and on arrival at Tarakan we were treated to a front seat of the prelanding bombardment of the beachhead and what had once been the oil storage tank farm, by this time a mere battered wreck. The tanks were crumpled down like a giant dilapidated opera hat, several still burning fiercely with the remains of their contents. During the shelling of the beach a dump of some sort was touched off, causing a horrific explosion and a great mushroom of smoke that shot to the clouds. I was never able to find out what this dump might have contained, but whatever caused it must have been something pretty potent. Two days before the arrival of the assault force the R.A.N. had managed to blow gaps in the obstacle along the beach. This fence-like structure had been constructed of steel rails driven deep into the mud and formed a respectable barrier to the approach of any landing craft, as it was situated some fifty yards out in the water.

To call it a beach is flattering in the extreme as it was composed of mud - mud so slimy and soft that for a man carrying equipment to step off a landing craft, L.C.I. or L.S.T. was to sink up to the knees at once. The landing had been timed to take place at the top of a particularly high tide, with a result the L.S.T.s had gone well up on the gentle slope of the shore. So well up in fact it seemed for some days that they might well become part of the scenery and it was only by pumping out the greater part of their fresh water and assisted by another high tide and the wash created by four P.T.s running at speed up and down the beachhead that they finally came unstuck and afloat once more.

After the initial landing and as soon as Brigade had been established ashore, I made contact with them and was glad to find Major Harry Katecher, whom I had last seen at Saidor, was the Brigade Major. We arranged exchange of information daily and from then on things ran quite smoothly. The P.T.s were running patrols to the North and South along the Borneo coast and into many of the great estuaries that lay to the north of Tarakan Island. By this time the air strikes had taken such a toll of the Japanese shipping and small craft in the area where the P.T.s were going that there was little to hunt and it was a lean time for the boats.



They were able to destroy a tug that the Japs were using for river transport and it later appeared as the mail boat, as a great stock of letters and documents were recovered from her. The Japs had a mine field in the channel to the north of Tarakan Island, which they had well covered with guns and it was found to be impracticable for the mine sweepers to clear the area, so the P.T.s were restricted from using it at all. Some of the Jap garrison escaped to the mainland across this channel on rafts. On Tarakan the Japs fought with their stubborn capacity and had well prepared defenses which he had used his usual skill in camouflaging. All roads were heavily mined and he had even placed naval depth charges in the roads.

A Matilda tank that ran over one of these looked like a well opened sardine can! The air strip had been systematically bombed by Allied air attack for some time prior to the landing and the Jap had purposely neglected to drain it with the results that it was more of a bog than an air strip. The R.A.A.F. engineers struggled to get it into operation but it took far longer than had been calculated, and even when it became operational was subject to flooding after heavy rain and was thus unusable.

As there were negative patrols by the P.T.s and the machinery of liaison was running smoothly I received further orders to return to Morotai and arrange for the liaison in the next operation which was the landing at Brunei Bay on the West coast of Borneo, by the 9th Division. I made the return trip by L.S.T. and rejoined the P.T. base on Soemi Soemi to find Lt. Ham Wood had returned to the States and Ted Macauley was commanding the base. It was a busy time for me as I found the Divisional HQ was a long way from the port and the ferry service to and from Soemi Soemi was not the best. To miss one boat meant at least a two-hour wait on the dock for the next one. I was anxious to avoid having to go to Labuan (Brunei Bay) on an Army transport, as on the Westralia I had fallen for various duties such as ships orderly officer, etc., and I failed to see why I should have to work my passage that way. Through the kindness of Commander Robinson of the destroyer U.S.S. Caldwell, which was one of the escorting ships, I was able to make the trip in her. The Captain and his Executive Officer, Lt. Evers, were hospitality itself.

Commander Robinson and I spent much time on the bridge trying to hit flying fish with a .22 pistol. The fish never had a casualty but it made good practice. Before we entered the China Sea the Caldwell made a fast run to Zamboanga to collect safe hand mail for the command ship and rejoined the convoy as the entrance to China Sea was reached. The convoy was also joined here by the P.T. tender U.S.S. Willoughby and her attendant brood of P.T.s. I was able to signal Commander Fargo who was in command of P.T.s and who was aboard the Willoughby, as to my whereabouts.

The afternoon before Brunei Bay was reached he sent a P.T. across to collect me and take me to the tender. The convoy being under way the transfer to the P.T. and then to the Willoughby took some maneuvering but was finally accomplished without losing anything but a fair area of skin from my knuckles on the guard rail of the Willoughby.

As I had orders to be at Balikpapan with the assault echelon I had requested an assistant as I would not be able to stay at Labuan for more than three weeks. My request was granted and Lieut. Allan Nock A.I.F. had been sent to me, to take over the business of Liaison after I had left for the next operation. He had thoroughly enjoyed the voyage over from Morotai, it being a considerable change from his former duties there, as he belonged to an Anti-Tank Artillery regiment who had very little to do in Morotai, with the result they were all sick of the place and welcomed anything that was a change in their rather boring routine jobs. After our arrival at Labuan we saw the U.S.S. Caldwell several times but did not have a chance to call on Commander Robinson and his merry men before he left Brunei Bay.

## Labuan

The convoy entered Brunei Bay before dawn on the day of the landing, and in the darkness little could be distinguished of the shore. At first light the initial bombardment started, its target being the beachhead at Victoria Harbor. The orange gun flashes made a lurid glow over the water and the environs of the beach resounded to a continuous rolling thunder as the salvos of shells and rockets landed, throwing up great fountains of earth and trees and smoke. Nock and I leaning on the rail loudly and publicly thanked God we were not on the receiving end of it. As well as the U.S. ships there were the Australian heavy cruisers Hobart and Shropshire as well as the destroyers H.M.A.S. Arunta and Waramunga. The preliminary survey of the harbor and the entrance channels had been done by the survey frigate, H.M.A.S. Barcoo which was commanded by Commander Tancred, R.A.N., an old acquaintance of the Tufi days where he had been conducting surveys of the New Guinea coast thereabouts. In the face of this rain of high explosive the Jap retired inland and the assaulting troops reached the beach with small loss. When the daylight had strengthened and the shore bombardment had lifted the range, the remains of Victoria Harbor township could be seen standing in stark ruins by the shore. The Willoughby and the P.T.s remained out in Brunei Bay till the area about Victoria Harbor was cleared, when she and her brood moved in and anchored off the remains of the town.

Brunei Bay is a vast area of water, so large in fact that the southern shore of the bay could not be seen from Victoria Harbor but only the mountains to the south towards the oilfields of Miri. Once Divisional Headquarters had moved ashore and we had visited them there, they had set up on a high piece of cleared ground overlooking the bay. Major General Wooten, G.O.C. 9th Aust. Div., requested that the P.T.s should be represented at his daily conference of all arms at 0900 hrs. daily, when a complete summary of each branch's activities was given. Usually Lieut. Nock and I attended these conferences, both to collect any intelligence that was relevant to P.T. operations and also to give a brief summary of the preceding night's patrols and the intentions for patrols for that night. I was able to get a small radio set, through which we were able to talk to Division from Willoughby which gave us a fairly close line with them. Commander Fargo had not had previous dealings with the A.I.F. before this and was not sure that they would not be too exacting in their demands on the P.T.s, but I am glad to think he was quite reassured shortly after the show got going and the associations were very happy ones. I know various officers from Division had very pleasant times aboard the Willoughby, and certainly enjoyed her hospitality. The P.T. patrols ran north toward Jesselton and another pair of boats would go South down the coast toward Miri, while in the early stages another patrol was run in Brunei Bay itself, along the Eastern side of the bay. On one of the Northern patrols a contact was made with a submarine which promptly dived and was depth charged by the boats with no visible results. Other than this there was very little coastal movement by Japanese water craft, although there were constant reports that he had quite a number of barges in use up several rivers.

These, of course, could not be got at by the P.T.s much to their disgust and he never ventured to sea with them as far as could be found out. At one of the General's conferences the D.A.D.M.S., or to give him his full title, Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services, a man with a very serious turn of mind, stated that a Japanese woman was a patient in one of the Casualty Clearing Stations having been captured the previous day when a pocket of Japanese troops had been overrun. The General enquired what unit she belonged to, whereupon the D.A.D.M.S. without a sign of a smile stated that she was a member of the Consolation Platoon! The General's remark to this was that he trusted the D.A.D.M.S. was not inferring that there were any men in the Platoon.



It was at Labuan that the R.A.A.F. Spitfire pilots and P.T. lads got together in quite a big way, to their mutual enjoyment, though the slang used by the R.A.A.F. boys rather mystified everyone but, although its meanings were not clear, at times it amused, and there was much visiting to and fro when off duty. It became a frequent sight to see the P.T.s pull out for patrol with several blue R.A.A.F. caps showing aboard. As time was going by and Allan Nock had taken over the liaison duties, I looked about for some way to get to Balikpapan direct instead of going all the way back to Morotai again. While in Morotai I had made all the preliminary arrangements with 7th Div. HQ for the method of liaison and contact at Balikpapan, and it now remained for me to get myself there on the D day. Fortunately there was an L.C.I. going direct, carrying the war correspondents and I was able to obtain permission to travel on her.

I was sorry to say goodbye to the Willoughby and those aboard her as it had been a pleasant time working aboard her. I did not see Allan Nock again until we were both civilians, when we met in Sydney and he told me all the news of what had gone on after I had left. The United States Navy certainly has a staunch admirer in him.



## Balikpapan

The LCI with its cargo of minions of the Press finally sailed and as there were quite a number of correspondents, who were fresh from the States, there were some pretty steep stories handed out by those of the company who had been out some time.

However, the full stream of these tales died away to a mere trickle when the water became rough which it did the second day out. The Wardroom became almost deserted and below could be heard at times low groans and other disturbing noises! Fine weather and calmer seas brought the inmates out on deck again and a Crossing the Line ceremony was put on with much gusto. The Royal Dentist had fun administering a mouth wash made from a saturated solution of Atebrin tablets, several times with drastic effect and some dinners were lost overboard in short order. It was taken in good part and I wished ardently that I had a camera to record some of the incidents. The voyage progressed well and two days before D-day (actually called H-day in this operation), we met the second echelon of the convoy for Balikpapan and joined company with them. The sea seemed to be covered with ships as far as one could see. For some days prior to the landing date strong naval forces had been hammering the place. It was later said that the concentration of gunfire on the area was the heaviest of the whole war in proportion to the target area. At first light on the day the whole shoreline of Balikpapan was wreathed in smoke and flames, but only when one got ashore was it possible to visualize the terrific pounding that had been dealt out to the area.

Outside the harbor the mine sweepers were hard at work clearing mine fields and as the harbor itself was not yet clear of mines, the two P.T. tenders and the two squadrons of P.T.s were obliged to anchor off shore for the time being. The trade winds were blowing steadily up the Malacca Straits and although the sea was not rough, the short chop made it uncomfortable for the P.T.s and the business of coming alongside the tenders for fuel and provisioning proved most difficult. The gunwales of the boats received a heavy pounding, and after the shore base was set up the carpenters had to spend some time repairing the damage to the boats. The plan of the Balikpapan operation was an interesting one from the tactical point of view. It was a complete change from the previous operations in New Guinea, as in these the landing had been made where the opposition was lightest and once established ashore the forces fanned out from the beachhead and where possible enveloped the Japanese strong points by lateral movement along the coast.

In this case, however, the weight of naval gunfire available was in such a scale it was considered that after a heavy and prolonged bombardment the landing force should strike at main defenses. It was considered improbable that the Jap would be able to man his defenses effectively after the bombardment had done with them. And so it proved as the initial landing was made almost without a casualty and it was only when the attack had reached some two miles inland that the Japanese started to hit back with any effect. There was to be later some stiff fighting along a road named for the operation, "Milford Highway". It was some days before the P.T. tenders could enter the harbor, but prior to this several places off the foreshores of it had been detected as possible sites for the base to be set up.

LT. Liberty was again present with his Sea Bees, and the material for the construction of the base was aboard two L.S.T.s which were standing by ready to unload. Commander Tappaan who had been with the P.T.s at Tarakan was in charge of the Task Unit of P.T.s for Balikpapan. It was no novelty to be on his staff as "Tap" was the answer to any Liaison officers prayer, being one with whom it was more than a pleasure to work.



The site finally chosen was well inside the harbor, being a space of reclaimed land on which the original Dutch owners had a large installation for some process to do with oil. The installation was a shambles and the area had been thoroughly mined into the bargain by the Japs who had buried aerial bombs nose up in the ground with a suitable arrangement to detonate them if trodden on by the unwary.

About eighty of these had to be removed before the base could be started. Once the L.S.T.s had found a place to offload the material for the base, Hal Liberty and his boys set to and in a very short time living quarters, galleys, showers and mess halls seemed to spring up overnight. I think it was one of the best bases I had been at, even to having flush toilets - the first I had seen ashore since I had left Australia!

The chinaware was most kindly supplied by the Japanese who must have had some ideas in that direction themselves, for they had left several cases of them lying about which were quickly seized on by the Sea Bees and put to their correct use. Japanese air reaction had been surprisingly quiet after one abortive attack on the naval bombardment group, but a few days after some of us had moved ashore from the U.S.S. Mobjack, we were jerked out of our sleep about three o'clock one morning, by a monstrous uproar.

It seemed one of our "feathered friends" let go a stick of bombs which had landed in a mud flat not far from the base. No harm was done but we were vexed at such a sudden awakening. During the time the base grew in size and convenience there was quite a lot of activity along the "Milford Highway" where the Jap was showing tenacious opposition and making good use of the thick country for slowing down the rate of advance.

By this time he had only the inland jungles to retire to and his food supplies were short. One thing the Jap never lacked was ammunition and it seemed as if food supplies were of secondary importance in his scheme of things. The P.T. patrols were very negative from the start, but they were able to glean some useful information as to the situation in the Celebes by questioning the crews of native boats that were met with in the Malacca Straits on the Celebes side.

They also destroyed a Jap post on the Little Paternoster Islands that was thought to contain a Japanese radar. About this time came the first indications that the Japanese will to war was starting to crumble, and as usual there were a spate of rumors that sped through the base at an amazing speed. As they traveled each one gained on the one before until they became the wildest exaggerations and finally expired in loud and derisive laughter from the unbelievers. The atomic bomb started another run of them and I think everyone gave ear to them in the hopes that there may be a grain of truth in them after all.

Naturally it was the sole topic of conversation for days until the official announcement of Japan's surrender. This was not believed either for a short space, but on its rebroadcast there was no further doubt about it.

Everyone had a sense of anti-climax. After years of being keyed up -- never quite knowing if one would survive to see the end of hostilities, it seemed as if there was an empty space in which it was hard to readjust oneself.

Not peace -- I am sure nearly all of us knew that peace in the old meaning of the word would be many years in coming back if it ever did, which in this year of Grace seems highly unlikely in our time.

I suppose in all there was a feeling of elation, but it seemed strange after such a long time wherein one was a microscopic thing that was regimented, moved here or there as events directed, fed, clothed and paid by almost unseen agencies until one's ego became so bound up in the mass that a private life of one's own seemed remote and dim. Soon the machine which had gathered us in for war would reverse itself and we would be spilled out again as civilians. Civilians, yes, but not the same men who had gone in with high hopes and aspirations. There would always be that difference in all men who had been in their country's services. It was the years that the locust had eaten that made the difference. Many saw some of the world for the first time, and how other peoples of the globe lived and had their being, but withal it was years taken out of their lives that they would otherwise have lived so differently.

C'est la guerre comme a la guerre!

## AFTERMATH

All patrols being cancelled, everyone settled down to argue endlessly over the length of time it would take to put the war machine in reverse and allow us to throw off the trappings of Mars. No one of course had the answer but it enlivened the time and the debate could be heard going on in many tents far into the night.

With the end of hostilities my particular job came to an end and the signal for my detachment from the P.T.s finally came and I started to pack my belongings and scout for some means of returning to Morotai where 1st Aust. Corps had their headquarters. Of all the various movements I had to make in five years, this one took the most organizing as most of the shipping in and out of Balikpapan had been diverted or cancelled for the time being. Air passage could only be secured if one had a high priority, which I had no hope of having. Lt. Comdr. "Stilly" Taylor managed to get dispatch orders for me and I was finally able to get passage on a Fleet Supply ship that had brought supplies for the P.T. base. Lt. Pardue Geren was captain of the ship and very kindly made the arrangements for me to travel on her. After several false alarms as to the date of departure, I was able to live aboard and thus be relieved from the danger of missing her.

Finally came the day of departure and I went round saying goodbye to my friends of the P.T. It would be a long time before we met again, if ever, and having lived so long among them our parting had a grim finality about it. In fact I had come to think of myself as belonging to the P.T.s despite the different uniform I wore. I had actually been with the Torpedo Boat Task Group in the Southwest Pacific longer than anyone else in it. It was the breaking up of many good companionships, but they go on unfading in memory.

I had a lot to remember since I had spent my first night on Jim Miller's boat at Tufi.

F.S. 167 sailed in the afternoon and as we stood out of the harbor I saw for the last time the base, U.S.S. Mobjack and the P.T.s at anchor. As we changed course and the harbor slid out of view, the sun was setting behind the dark silhouette of the Borneo mountains. A lone P.T. came around the headland and rapidly overhauled us, throwing wide wings of spray and the white "rooster tail" of her wake curving up gracefully behind her. She came bowling past and the old familiar note sounded for the last time in my ears -- the grumbling roar of tier motors. I shall always remember the picture she made with her green painted hull, white spray and her colours whipping out straight in the wind of her passage.



## HAIL AND FAREWELL!

Times and navies will change but the history of the P.T.s in the Southwest Pacific will remain a unique page in the annals of the U.S. Navy. They will be remembered by many Australians who had seen them prowling the New Guinea coasts, and by this Australian they will never be forgotten for the valuable work

they did, the splendid fellows who manned them and, last but not least, the base and technical staffs who worked so hard to keep them on the operating line, and to me so many value friendships.

Had I been able to foresee the future and been offered the choice of a branch of another service with which to work, I would have had one answer then, as now, the P.T.s.

## CONCLUSION

It was an education to me to be so closely associated with men of the United States Navy, and the following comments and opinions were reached only after I had weighed the matter for some time as a civilian, in order that proximity would not be so likely to distort my views. There will be some who will not like some of my comments and will be ready to point out how sensitive to criticism so many Australians are. I agree, and in this same sensitiveness is due largely to the isolation of the sixth continent, lack of education and the obvious parochial outlook of a population of only seven million scattered over an area approximately the same size as the U.S.A. Any criticism is intended to be purely constructive. There is much that is open to criticism in all people and nations, but it must surely be to advantage to know the weaknesses and recognize our shortcomings. Only then can one set about correcting them.

To typify any race of men is only to generalize, as probably no man on earth is truly typical of his town, state or nation and my remarks are made bearing this in mind. Although I happened to live amongst U.S.N. officers, I had the good fortune to be friends with many enlisted men, so I am not speaking of officers alone, and the shape of the head gear he wears does not basically change the real man under the outward trappings. As Robert Burns wrote:

The rank is but the guinea's stamp  
The man's the gowd for a' that


I found the American at all times most generous, sometimes to the point of embarrassment to we Australians who, coming from a country whose production was strained to breaking point, simply did not have the amenities such as came from the States. Naturally I do not refer to equipment, of which a large proportion was supplied to Australia by Lend-Lease arrangements. He has a most enquiring mind, and it was a surprise to many Australians the amount of information he had acquired about Australia in general. He has a taste for comparing the governmental systems of other countries with his own, sometimes to their disadvantage, but always with the underlying desire to know just what makes them tick.

His sense of humor is well developed, good and broad, but without the tinge of bitterness that characterizes the Australian humor at times. In general the American is even-tempered and amiable and as an associate to work with cannot be bettered.

As for love of gadgets, it is a consuming passion but some times the multiplicity of the gadgets obscures the simple operation required to be done. His ingeniousness is undoubted, but it seemed at times that having always such a variety of equipment to handle a job, if the said equipment is not to hand he has lost some of the ability to "make do".

To most Americans education is a thing he is very likely to be keen on, but paradoxically herein lies one of his main difficulties in dealing with other countries. This is that knowledge of history of other than American history is very limited and his knowledge of that of Western Europe is almost nil.

History is the reflection of the Present in the mirror of the Past, and the study of history simply for its own sake is of little assistance in gauging and estimating the trends of thought and behavior of other countries in the present.

 England has been presented in American history as the villain of the piece, no doubt to heighten the effect of the teachings of the Revolutionary War. But it usually caused some surprise in many with whom I discussed it to hear there were many in England and in the English Government of the day who bitterly attacked the way in which the American colonies were being treated. Apart from this there is much resentment of England, but when I asked for the reason for this I found some trouble in defining its root and cause. I came to think it was a tradition that had ingrained itself in the American mind.

I was frequently asked why Australia remained in the British Commonwealth of Nations and had not severed the ties that bound her to the crown. It was hinted darkly that it was a conspiracy of Britain that kept Australia tagging along.

The Statute of Westminster probably owes its existence as much to the loss of the American colonies as to the more liberal and sane thinking of a later day. I would like to say here that although I admire many estimable virtues in the English I can see their faults as well. To Americans and to many Australians the patronizing attitude of some Englishmen infuriates us and for Australians to be called "Colonials" will buy a fight at once.

As over ninety percent of Australians are descended from English stock, there is still a tendency to regard England as home, and it is constantly referred to thus when speaking of going abroad to visit England. This caused a deal of wonder and comment from my American friends. It is sad to relate, but due to this inherited influence we have not yet developed a national spirit in Australia, who geographically speaking is not to think of itself as an appendage of Europe rather than what it is in reality, a continuation of Asia.

The Far East is the Near East to us.

The politeness of Americans especially- to the opposite sex is a very pleasant feature and in this they provide a pattern that many in Australia could well afford to copy. After all there is still truth in William of Wykeham's famous words, "Manners maketh man". There is a section in Australia who consider that good manners do not go with masculinity and their boorishness has brought some very acid comments from visitors from abroad. Although it has been said that Latins make lousy lovers, the American custom of making love in public is somewhat shocking to a lot of people in Australia as the opinion is still held in our rustic corner of the world that love making is essentially a private affair and embarrasses an audience. This is I suppose a matter of taste.

In his drinking habits the American exhibits a purely practical outlook and drinks not because he enjoys the taste of it but for the effect it has on him. This leads him to be at times rather over-hearty with the bottle with the result he is frequently overtaken in his cups before he realizes he has reached his capacity. Not that Australians are the ones to cast the first stone in this matter as God knows we have enough "boozers" rum pots and bar flies as anyone, largely brought about through the antiquated laws governing the sale of liquor, laws that we are hoping to change as soon as possible. Perhaps the American style of drinking is due to the Prohibition era with its bath tub gins and other horrors.

At least it does not seem to have entirely spoiled the palate as there are some mighty fine rye whiskeys that come from the States.

Best of all, Americans are cheerful people and nothing can be more devastating to the morale of a country's armed services than a gloomy outlook. He is an optimist and even when things go wrong, as they frequently do in wartime, he always had the happy knack of coining a wise crack about it, which took more than half the sting out of it. He has one strange feature in his makeup and this is that a large percentage of Americans react to emotionalism more than to reason



It was surprising in a race that has such an amount of horse sense. Its cause I think is the tremendous amount of propaganda put out by radio, press and movies, which seem to play more on the emotions than on reasoning or logic. Emotion has a better sales appeal than reason which can be cold and as such does not appeal to the masses of any country.

Reason makes superlative and oft repeated adjectives an object for laughter, and a wealth of high powered adjectives is essential for emotional appeal. Even Hitler knew this! So many movies do a disservice to the land of their production as their portrayal of the American way of life makes people in other countries build up a completely false idea of it. This false picture is built up in the minds of people who have never visited the U.S.A., of which I am one, but from the descriptions and photographs of so many of my American friends of their homes and folks it is not the bizarre and garish place Hollywood would have us believe. It is an infinitely more pleasant place than that, and one I am resolved to visit someday.

As part of most Australian officers military education requires study of the Civil War, particularly General Jackson's Valley Campaigns, it was often a subject for discussion in the long evenings and as the company present usually included "Yankees" and "Rebels" some highly diverting arguments ensued. It was then I discovered that the war is still fought -- verbally, of course -- and when that subject failed, the nearest Texan came in for a deal of teasing. The Texans could hold their own in that, too, I discovered, and very ably to boot.

I know many will denounce me for some of these words of criticism, and point out that here is a man writing about Americans who has never even visited the United States; in consequence I shall be condemned as talking about that of which I know nothing.

I believe a country is represented by its people -- and in war by the men of its armed forces -- undoubtedly a very fair cross section of its people. More so, I am convinced, than by its travelling public in days of peace. I know I have dodged around a block in London to avoid several fellow countrymen who were about the worst advertisement for Australia I have ever seen, although they loudly proclaimed themselves as typical Australians -- God help us! So I feel secure in saying the cross section of Americans I knew and served with made me intensely keen to see more of them and ultimately the land they live in.

When that day does come I hope to meet many of my friends again and I hope they will not think me an ingrate for uttering some words other than praise, when I have enjoyed their company so much during my service with them.

As far as Australia in relation to the U.S.A. is concerned there is such a vast amount of current ideas being published and spoken on the subject in this year of grace I am in hopes some benefit will accrue. In Australia where conditions for visitors are still in a primitive state, where absurd liquor laws hold sway and transport facilities are uncertain and uncomfortable, we can derive a tremendous amount of benefit in studying the ways and methods of our Trans Pacific cousins.

With our very small population we could not do things in the grand manner such as a population of one hundred and forty million can do them, but there is plenty of room for improvement in a smaller way in Australia. Sufficient attention to accommodation, entertainment and transportation would go a long way to display us in a better light than that in which we are now regarded by visitors from the U.S.A. and other countries.



Unfortunately visitors are so often treated churlishly by petty officialdom in Australia that their natural reactions are surprise and vexation. The underlying reason for this seems to be the extreme provincialism and humble-like attitude of such Jack-in-office. For all the swaggering arid cockiness of many Australians they are inclined to be conservative and reactionary at heart, and when this is forced into narrow channels nothing can be so one-eyed and self-righteous.

This was forcibly impressed on me by criticism of United States service men by some whose real cause for carping was envy -- either of dress, difference in pay or more success with the gals.

Every time I found when I taxed the growler as to how many Americans he knew, if he had ever served with them or had anything other than visual contact with them, the answer was invariably negative. Nearly all the griping came from those who did not know Americans. I was constantly reminded of Dr. Samuel Johnson's remark to Boswell about a man whom Dr. Johnson maintained he hated. To Boswell's expostulation that the worthy doctor did not know the man, Johnson's reply was, "No Sir, that is the reason I hate him." Sometimes it seems this might be as well remembered by nations as men.

Some civilians in Australia complained of the wild behavior of U.S. service men, apparently forgetting that Australian service men made just as big a nuisance of themselves but being on their own home ground did not come in for such adverse comment. Let us be fair about it; in every branch of the services there are a small portion -- and from my personal experience it is a very small one -- of men who will always be in trouble and bring down a hail of recriminations on themselves, their service and their country. To condemn all for the behavior of one is like rejecting a laden apple tree because one apple has a blemish.

These same civilians would have done better to thank God that America saved Australia from invasion; without her assistance we should have been all but helpless in the face of the Japanese threat, and it was a poor way to show gratitude in any case.

I believe Americans think well of us as a people, at least I hope so. Despite our small numbers there have been and still are Australians who can see objectively and clearly Lt. Col. Hodson of UNO being one whose sterling worth is not sufficiently recognized by his fellow countrymen. We also seem to have achieved a second Marco Polo in Dr. Hyatt who must wonder at times just what Australia is like since he has been so long away from it! However, politicians as opposed to statesmen rarely reach any lasting prominence fortunately or we as a country might be judged by their diminutive stature!

Sometimes the press in the U.S. has caused some heartburn in Australia. This occurred when a section of the American press reported the early New Guinea fighting as involving only American troops, and in the battles in the Owen Stanleys Australian troops were not mentioned at all. This was certainly a great shock to the Australian troops who had been fighting and dying in this incredibly difficult country. However, in more reliable papers credit was given where it was due and the Australian army received its portion of praise both for the operations in the Owen Stanley Mountains and at Milne Bay. Even in Australia there has been too little written and remembered of the 55 Battalion which took the first shock of the powerful Japanese thrust at Kakoda, and for untried troops under adverse conditions they put up a stiff fight.

In war the final test is battle and all the training in the world cannot simulate exactly the real thing when it comes. All troops, whoever they are or from what country have to learn war the hard way at the start, and to grasp the lesson learned -- sometimes at heavy cost -- and apply it and keep on learning and applying them in the later stages. The U.S.N. in this was a good example. The rapidity with which new equipment was tried and brought out for the P.T.s was amazing, particularly when it must be realized that P.T.s were a mere trouser button compared with the tremendous size and scope of other branches of the naval arm. This is a lesson for Australia, the American readiness to try something new and different. Admitted a certain conservativeness is required as it would be retrograde to discard a piece of equipment that has been tried and performs to satisfaction for another that cannot do the job.

In Australia the delay in adopting the Owen Sub-Machine gun has not been explained to this day, but it is generally thought to have been due to overcaution to try a design of weapon that was radical for its simplicity and cost so little to manufacture.

We can learn if we will so much from America that will be of tremendous value to Australia's future, and if I know Americans they will be glad enough to have a small neighbor across the Pacific who lives and thinks much in the same way as they do themselves.

America should be glad to know that its "ambassadors in uniform" have made for it a large number of friends and admirers in Australia. Their friendliness and ease of manner gained for the U.S. a firm respect and liking on this side of the Pacific.

The Australian wives of Americans now in the States will help to bring a closer bond between the two countries. Even though some of these marriages went on the rocks, these were the ones that received the publicity, while those who have found their happiness in the States will go on perhaps unknown to themselves forging another link between us, unnoticed and unremarked but there just the same. Even I have a cousin in Pittsburgh now -- a personal link with America I did not have before.

Despite our small differences we have the common heritage of language, similar view of life, and a great deal better understanding of one another than before the Japanese started on their short lived conquests.

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## GLOSSARY

A.I.F. Australian Imperial Forces

A.N.G.U.A. Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit

A/A Anti-Aircraft

D.A.D.M.S. Deputy Assistant Director Medical Service

H.M.A.S. His Majesty's Australian Ship

N.O.I.C. Naval Officer in Charge

M.L. Motor Launch

N.G.F. New Guinea Force

R.A.A.F. Royal Australian Air Force

R.A.N. Royal Australian Navy

R.A.N.R. Royal Australian Naval Reserve

R.A.N.V.R. Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve

2 i/c Second in command

"To prang" To crash