

A. JACK BROWN

KATAKANA MAN

I WORKED ONLY FOR GENERALS

THE MOST SECRET OF ALL ALLIED OPERATIONS
IN WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC



WINNER OF THE 2005 RAAF HERITAGE AWARDS

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Dedicated to all Allied Japanese katakana wireless operators
and their backups, alive and deceased,
who served during World War II in the Pacific.

To Greg and Ashlea

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To my knowledge no author has ever written regarding the life of a katakana operator.

This book is written for all operative katakana wireless operators in the field units during World War II.

It is based on my life and my fellow operators. To write the story is to give the character of the person.

I focus on a few lines of my life in the music world, which helped my life in the early Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) days to lead me to the katakana field. My love of adventure and independence also had a big influence. The book is an account of my military life and reflects, to the best of my knowledge, accurate military history; it applies to most of my kana friends and is their story also.

Australian katakana wireless operators together with code breakers supplied information about Japanese movements at a time when we had little to fight with. Our work gave the Allies the means for victory.

A. Jack Brown
Adelaide, 2005

FOREWORD

Early in the morning of 21 October 1944, the cruiser HMAS *Australia* had just weighed anchor off the island of Leyte in the Philippines when a Japanese aircraft, skimming the water, headed for the bridge of the ship. Its cannon raked *Australia's* upper deck before the pilot crashed the plane into the port leg of the tripod mast, where its gas tank exploded, killing thirty-four men and wounding another sixty-four, many of them seriously.

This dramatic attack marked the beginning of Japan's desperate and bizarre attempt to change the course of the war by using its air forces for suicide assaults on Allied ships. Three days later, at the height of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, suicide planes sank an American escort carrier, damaged another so badly that it played no further part in the war, and hit five others.

Ashore on Leyte, a small group of Australians from 1 Wireless Group, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) had been seconded to act as the ears of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). As the Kamikazes took off from their bases in the Philippines to launch their attacks, 1 Wireless group monitored their signals, warning the Americans where and when they were about to be hit. Their work saved countless lives.

More than half a century after Japan capitulated, it would seem unlikely that the Pacific war had not shed all its secrets. But the high degree of secrecy that surrounded 1 Wireless Group, RAAF during the war persisted and its all important story has remained untold.

Jack Brown was one of a highly talented group of young Australians in No. 1 Wireless Unit, RAAF who listened, recorded and transcribed the Japanese signals in the field. Now, for the first time, he tells the story of this highly secret unit which, at vital moments in the war, provided the American commands with critical intelligence of Japanese plans, movements and intentions.

Brown joined the RAAF hoping to become a pilot. But, because of his uncanny skill in morse code, he was assigned instead to No. 1 Wireless Unit, RAAF.

A highly trained morse code operator may handle about twenty-five words a minute. Jack Brown and his fellow members of No. 1 Wireless Unit, RAAF could

cope with forty to fifty words, and the much more complicated Japanese morse code or katakana.

The katakana men were hard at work during the first months of the war, but few paid attention to their product. They forecast that the Japanese were about to land at Buna for their drive for Port Moresby. The message was ignored. When they warned that a landing at Milne Bay was imminent, however, everyone was now paying attention—no one more so than Lieutenant General George Kenney, Commander of the US Fifth Air Force.

They gave advance warning of Japanese air attacks on Australia. Their intercept of Japanese signals even led to the death of Admiral Yamamoto, Commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet. But it was on Leyte that their work reached its highest level of success. One entire convoy of Japanese ships carrying reinforcements from China was sunk as the result of their intercepts. Constant Japanese chattering in their morse code frequently revealed their movements. It was like reading a book, says Brown.

It is all here in this book, which is in part an interesting personalised account of Jack Brown's life as a katakana operator. But the book's real value is the contribution it makes to the history of the time. Jack Brown and his fellow eavesdroppers played a highly important, but never recognised role. It is time they got the recognition they deserve.

Denis Warner
Official War Correspondent

PREFACE

Although this book is non-fiction, it is written mostly from memory. It is a recollection of events and circumstances, honest statements and facts about different people and events. If any errors have inadvertently crept in, they are my responsibility and mine alone.

I do not claim to be an historian and the vast range of the katakana subject has meant that nothing could be treated as fully as I would have wished: just a selection of incidents have been described in detail. I have tried to focus on the people in the story rather than the events. I believe this treatment will not only shed new light on the role of the katakana men but will also complement the books previously published.

A book of this nature could not have been written by anyone other than an operative katakana wireless operator during World War II in the Pacific. You had to have experienced the events and people who came together in those terrible times.

You also had to have experienced the lack of recognition of your efforts after the war to feel strongly enough to write the story with feeling. The frustration of the authorities hiding behind long-expired secrets can truly impact only on a person who has endured the secret events and their aftermath!

The purpose of this book is probably best reflected in a comment from an assessor for the John Treloar Grants:

This project on the breaking of intelligence codes to be told from a personalised point of view seems a useful book to undertake, especially from an Australian working for MacArthur's outfit ... [Jack] ... has an obsession, as attested by one referee, in bringing out the story of the WWII wireless kana operator, which has hitherto remained hidden from public view.

A. Jack Brown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first person I want to thank is my wife Anne for her patience and support during the time we worked together. She challenged me and probed to ensure that my writing was the truth and so in compiling this book we were a team.

My sincere thanks to Rob Schuster, a friend of many years, who although he was only born during World War II, has encouraged me to publish my wartime story and offered to scan electronically my original photographs, documents and original manuscript for use in producing this book. By Rob's own words he admits to the frustration of knowing that I was involved in the war in the Pacific but due to the Top Secret nature of our work and our 'code of silence', he was unable until now, to know some of the full story.

I also sincerely thank Denis Warner for his encouragement, ongoing support that I complete my book, and for his words 'Your story simply must be told'. I thank Denis and his wife Peggy for their reading of the manuscript of my book.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, all photographs are my own. A set has been deposited in the Australian War Memorial and can be recognised by the number P954/.

A. Jack Brown

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. Jack Brown was born and educated in Adelaide, South Australia, and lives there to this day with his wife, Anne.

Jack is a man who helped carve the history and victory in the Pacific. His activity during World War II over the period 1942–46 was as a Japanese Katakana Wireless Operator and this involvement gave him this privilege.

He operated with Nos 1 and 6 Wireless ‘Sigint’ Units and was one of the twenty-four Australians who went ashore with General Douglas MacArthur’s Intelligence Organisation for the invasion and liberation of the Philippines.

Here he speaks frankly about emotions, dissolutions and events which occurred during his Service career.

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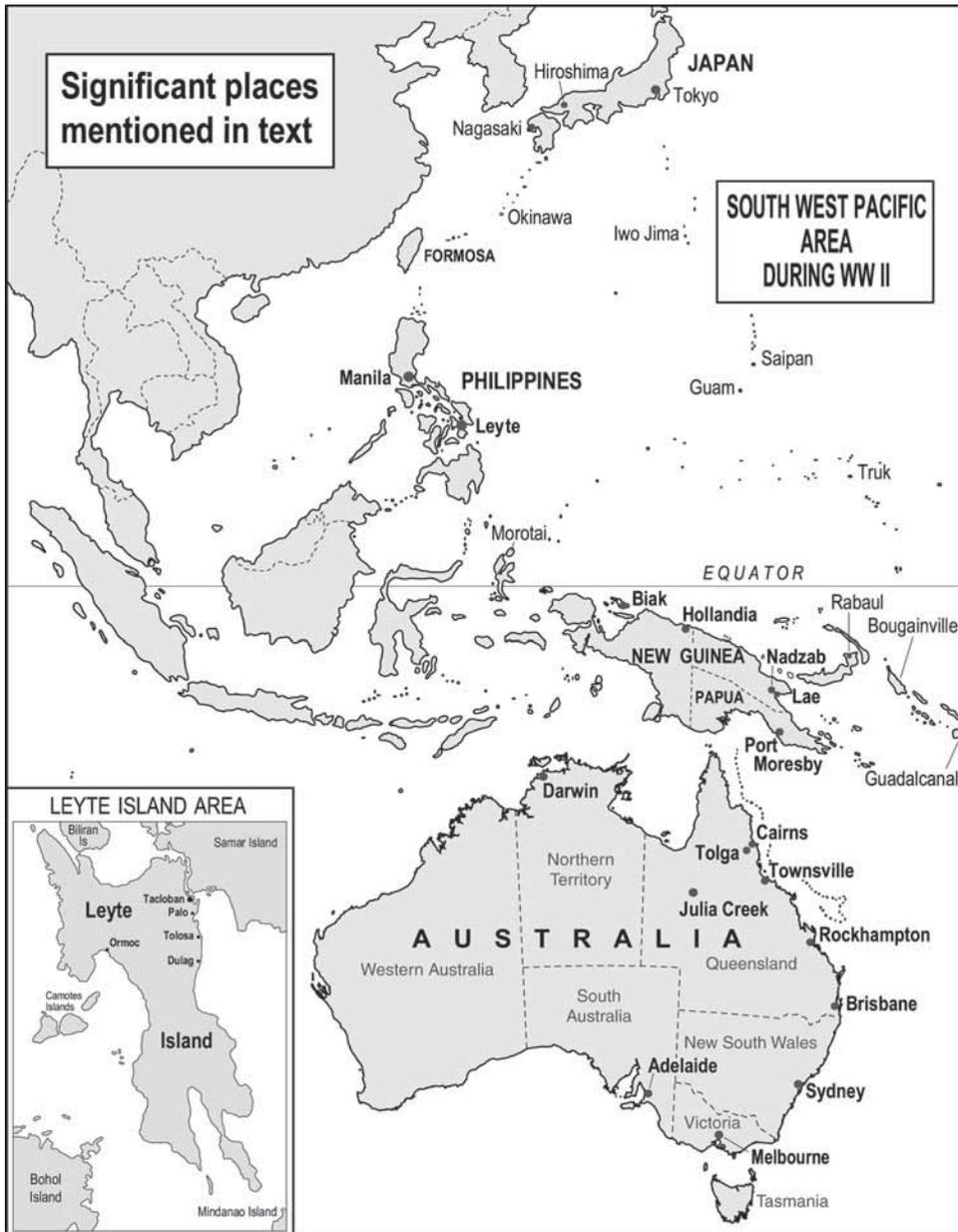
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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
AFC	Air Force Cross
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
ATC	Air Training Corps
AVM	Air Vice-Marshal
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CPL	Corporal
D/F	Direction Finder/Finding
GHQ	General Headquarters
HMAS	His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship
Katakana	A form of Japanese spoken and written language; often referred to as just 'kana'
LAC	Leading Aircraftman
LST	Landing Ship Tank
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives [Australia]
MI6	Military Intelligence Dept 6 [British]
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RN	Royal Navy

SAS	Special Air Service
SGT	Sergeant
Sigint	Signals Intelligence
TNT	Explosive: Trinitrotoluene
Ultra	British security classification for intelligence derived from code breaking
US	United States
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USAF	United States Air Force
USS	United States Ship
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WOFF	Warrant Officer



Map showing significant places mentioned in the text of this book –
South-West Pacific Area during World War II

I

EARLY RAAF DAYS

A katakana man you ask? 'Katakana' (or 'kana' for short) is the word for one of two Japanese writing systems. To say you have never heard the word is understandable because, until 1942, nor had I. To learn about this system was never a dream of mine—my dreams were always of adventure but, strangely, katakana led me to adventure. You will better understand about katakana, which was the most secret of all Allied operations in the Pacific during World War II, as you read this book.

This is the story of my exploits in World War II and my small contribution to the restoration of peace in the Pacific. It describes, in a personal way, my time as a katakana man and the subsequent fight with the Australian authorities to gain recognition for the service and contribution of all katakana men—a recognition acknowledged by our American and Filipino friends but strangely shoved 'under the carpet' by Australia. As a katakana man I became a member of Central Intelligence Bureau and part of one of the best kept secrets of World War II. I was one of only twenty-four Australian land troops to be involved with General Douglas MacArthur in his historic 'I have returned' invasion of the Philippines in October 1944, and we men were dubbed the 'Foreign Legion'.

In October 1941, when I was seventeen, I noticed in a newspaper that the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was to start the South Australian section of the Air Training Corps (ATC), a part of the Empire Air Training Scheme. As I badly wanted to be a pilot, I decided that I would be a member of this Corps. I went to Headquarters and signed up. Early in November the ATC was officially formed and I was called to present myself for a medical examination. Within a few days I was advised that I had been accepted in the Corps and, to my delight, was advised that I had the proud distinction of being the first cadet in the South Australian Air Training Corps.

My main ambition in life was to learn to fly an aircraft and I remember feeling that my aim would eventually be fulfilled. Little did I know what the future was to hold for me.

KATAKANA MAN

The Commanding Officers of the formed squadrons selected their staff from men with high educational standards or special abilities to train boys who aspired to become RAAF aircrew.

The day eventually arrived for the first Wing Parade of No. 4 School of Technical Training, located at the Exhibition Building, North Terrace Adelaide. The parade was held at the Jubilee Oval on Saturday, 29 November 1941 (university buildings now occupy the site). Five hundred youths attended and participated in our first Air Training Corps activity. We marched dressed in civilian clothes because of World War II restrictions on clothing.

Our Squadron Commander was Squadron Leader W.R. Snow, who had been a World War I airman. One interesting point I make in relation to Squadron Leader Snow is that he said, 'The first cadet in No. 70 Squadron who joins the Royal Australian Air Force and is decorated, I will happily give to this airman five thousand pounds [\$10,000.00]'. To my knowledge, no No. 70 Squadron cadet ever claimed this gift.

In Stage 1 of the course we were taught mathematics and morse code symbols. I was receiving extra morse code tuition from Mr Bill James, a World War I signal man who was teaching the mysteries of morse code to local boys joining the RAAF.

In mid-June 1942, when I was eighteen years and one week old, I enlisted in the RAAF. I signed the oath to serve my King and country for the duration of the war and was then sworn in at Adelaide, South Australia, as aircrew on 22 June 1942. I had my medical examination and was passed fit for aircrew.

Then on 9 July 1942, when I was eighteen years and three weeks old, other new RAAF members and I were sent by train to No. 1 Recruit Depot at Shepparton, Victoria to do 'rookies' training. The depot there was actually a ground staff training depot. The rookie course took three or four weeks and was mostly held on the showgrounds. We slept in cow stalls, which only had half doors, and it was pretty cold. I think we were the first aircrew trainees to go to Shepparton. Here we were taught Air Force discipline, rifle drill, shooting and gas drill. To get us fit we were taught to march, and there were many long route marches, regardless of the weather.

The Army was grabbing many eighteen-year-olds, and after three weeks' training sending them to New Guinea to fight. The Air Force did take all the aircrew reserve



**First medical examination of applicants for Air Training Corps,
10 November 1941 – Author seated front row right, the first cadet
enrolled in South Australia
(Photograph courtesy *The Advertiser*)**

men and made them either guards or motor transport drivers as an insurance until they were ready to be put into the initial air training program as aircrew trainees.

After our initial training some of us were posted to No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School at Parafield, South Australia. We acted as aircrew guards for approximately two months.

Early in my Parafield days a US Lockheed Loadstar C-56 Transport plane flew in. It appeared to have engine trouble. I was given the task of guarding it. I came to know the crew of the aircraft, which was there for a couple of days being checked out, and I was told it was going to be test flown. I thought to myself that this was the biggest aircraft that I had ever seen, or been near. Maybe I could get a ride. After some persuasion the pilot took me on a test flight as a passenger. There were no seats, just a flat area behind the crew's area that was closed in. I sat on the floor during take-off and this was perfect. I can still remember the thrill I experienced after take-off. We climbed to fly over the Adelaide hills, and just as we approached them I can remember how thrilled I was to see Adelaide and the suburban area by air. We flew quite near where I lived. Then a continuous bang started up from the starboard engine and the crew shut the motor down. A mechanic had been up in the front and he came out of the cabin door and stood over an area behind the door going into the pilot's cabin. The aircraft was now losing height. The mechanic opened up the inspection hatch and put on a set of headphones or earmuffs to keep

the noise from getting in his ears, or perhaps he was listening to engine noises. We flew toward the sea losing height all the way. I think possibly as we neared the sea we turned north to Parafield, still losing height. I did not feel in any danger but I guess I was the closest to being in a crash as I could ever have been. We flew straight into Parafield and landed hastily in the south-western area of the airfield.

I alighted from the aircraft with the crew and was walking back towards the control tower when an Air Force officer walked up to me. He was Squadron Leader W.J.S. Maddocks and Chief Flying Instructor at Parafield. He said to me, 'Did you just get out of that aircraft?' I answered, 'Yes' and the following conversation transpired:

'How long have you been on this station?'

I answered, 'A week or two.'

'No trainee gets into any aircraft unless I know about it. What is your name?'

'Jack Brown.'

'How old are you?'

'Eighteen years, two months.'

'Why did you go?'

'I could not wait to learn to fly.'

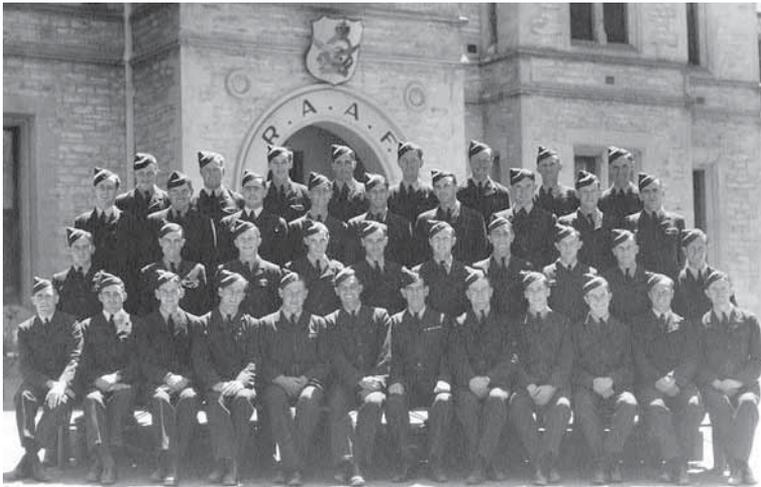
'Well if you do that again I will put you on a charge and we may even lock you up.'

He paused a bit, and said something like, 'I am going up in a Tiger Moth and I want to see whether you like flying'. When we were airborne, he put the plane into all sorts of turns and rolls and I was sick. When we landed he said to me, 'Now go and clean the plane out'. That really took the wind out of me. I felt that if that was flying maybe I did not want to fly. A week or two later when it was blowing a gale, Maddocks came up to me and said, 'I am going to take an aircraft up, would you like to go?' I said, 'Yes please'. I remember getting into the aircraft and we hardly ran forward as the headwind was so strong. We rose almost like a helicopter and were airborne for about ten minutes or so. I think we went across Parafield backwards, if that is possible. When we landed it was virtually like the landing of a helicopter; we rolled forward just a few feet.

While at Parafield I sneaked into the aircrew training morse class a couple of times.

Early in October 1942, I was posted to Mount Breckan in Victor Harbor, South Australia, to start my aircrew training. The first day there I remember the Commanding Officer or the Adjutant addressed all the new trainees. Some were mature Army men who had seen action in the Middle East and who had transferred to the Air Force to become aircrew. As part of aircrew training we were taught magnetism, electricity, law, discipline, administration, organisation, hygiene, sanitation, mathematics, morse code and first aid. Mathematics included logarithms, and magnetism and electricity were included in physics.

Early in my first week in the morse class the instructor, a sergeant, was teaching the recruits the alphabet and numbers. He was sending morse at a speed of about two words a minute, or maybe a little faster, but at a speed where you could count the dots and dashes, and if you had a good memory you could write down the symbol. At this stage I was wearing what we used to call a 'goon suit', which was



**Initial Training School RAAF Mount Breckan,
Victor Harbor, South Australia, 1942**

Back row L-R: J.W. Davenport, L.G. Hall, J.A.B. Russell, V.W. Bonnett, M.E. Holder, J.F. Warnes, R.M. Cramond, L.W.A. Bauer

3rd row: D.V. Allen, C.A. Gray, A.F. Leach, W.W. Forrest, A.B. Hinge, L.C. Redin, R.J. Carpenter, K.D. Claridge, B.G.K. Crouch

2nd row: J.N. Reddie, R.G. Bickford, A.J. Brown (the author), L.J. Byrne, A.M. Andrewartha, H.N. Trowbridge, K.M. Price, F.P. Bulbeck, A.L. McHugh, J.M. Gray

Front row: F.G. Gardner, T.R. Heward, T.J. Glazhrook, G.J. Cheyne, H.G. Rosman, W.G. Moeller, J.A. Houlahan, M.K.G. Roy, A.R. Carthew, J.G. Eaton, T.M. Rilstone, R.M. Paterson

a navy blue overall with my name over the left pocket. On this particular day when the instructor was sending morse I had not put pencil to paper and he noticed this. He rushed up and said, 'Oh Brown, (after reading my name on my goon suit) I see your name is Brown. Brown you are a smart bastard, you have not put a thing on your paper and you are not even paying attention.' For punishment he gave me a task to do after the class was over. My remark to him at that stage was, 'Sergeant, I was just going to write down all the symbols that you have been sending'. He said, 'Yes you are a smart bastard aren't you, write down what I just sent'. I thought for a second or two and then named about five symbols. 'You are right,' he said. 'Have you done morse before?' I told him I had received some earlier instruction from a friend and also while in the Air Training Corps, and I did sneak into the morse room while stationed at Parafield a couple of times, but other than that I did not really know morse. He said he wanted me back in the classroom during the time I was supposed to be doing my punishment.

The sergeant became interested in me and invited me back to the morse classroom where he sent morse to me at ten words a minute. When he read what I had taken down he said, 'You have got it one hundred per cent right'. I did not have to come back for further lessons as I had passed the speed required at Victor Harbor, but he said that he would like me to come back sometimes and let him send more morse to me. Now that I had passed morse I could take up other studies related to aircrew. A few times I went back to the morse room and he sent morse to me at sixteen words a minute and I passed that correctly. That was the top speed of a wireless operator in aircrew.

Another time he sent morse at a speed of approximately twenty-five words per minute. I remember taking it down, he checked it and told me that I had it almost all correct. He then told me that twenty-five words per minute was the speed of a top ground wireless operator.

He said, 'I wonder what speed you can do?'

I said, 'I do not know.'

He said, 'How do you do it?'

I said, 'I don't know that either.'

I can remember going back again some other time and he was sending morse as fast as he could. I took it down and when he was starting to check it I told him that he had made a mistake when sending.

He said, 'What do you mean I made a mistake?'

I said, 'You sent six dits for five.'

'How do you know?' he asked.

I said, 'I can't prove it but I know you did.'

He was dumbfounded because he said that at that stage he was over-sending his speed in morse. I think at this stage the fact that I seemed to have a natural ability to take morse code filtered through to the authorities.

For relaxation at weekends there would be a dance for the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) trainees, also stationed there, and us. There was a station dance band and, because I had my trumpet with me, I played in the dance band once. I was told that if another trumpet player was not found I could be held back from a posting to ensure the band had a trumpet player. When my next weekend leave came up I went home and returned without my trumpet. I told the band leader that I had sold it and had used the money to have a good weekend. From then on I did not take my trumpet with me during my war service.

My interest in music goes back to when I was at school in Grade 4 and I first heard the name J.E. Becker. Becker had become associated in 1932 with big musical presentations when the then famous Adelaide Drum and Fife Band numbering two hundred players was formed from selected recruits from the bands of fifty-three metropolitan schools. In those days nearly all metropolitan schools had a drum and fife band. Following the formation of the Adelaide Drum and Fife band, other combinations followed and, finally, the mammoth project of establishing in Adelaide the world's greatest boy's military band was conceived.

I had always wanted to get into the fife band at Glen Osmond School so that I could be part of a band and either play the fife or beat the drum. I thought that if I was ever good enough I could join the famous Becker band. My parents bought me a fife and I became a member of the school band.

Eventually Mr Becker visited the Glen Osmond School that I attended. One by one, the boys in the band played to him. I was determined to become a member of Becker's band. To play in this band was a privilege and you were held in high esteem. When I was chosen, I was very proud. I had achieved something. I apparently had shown that I had some natural ability to play a musical instrument because Becker chose me and nineteen other young boys to first learn to play a base flute and then a bugle.

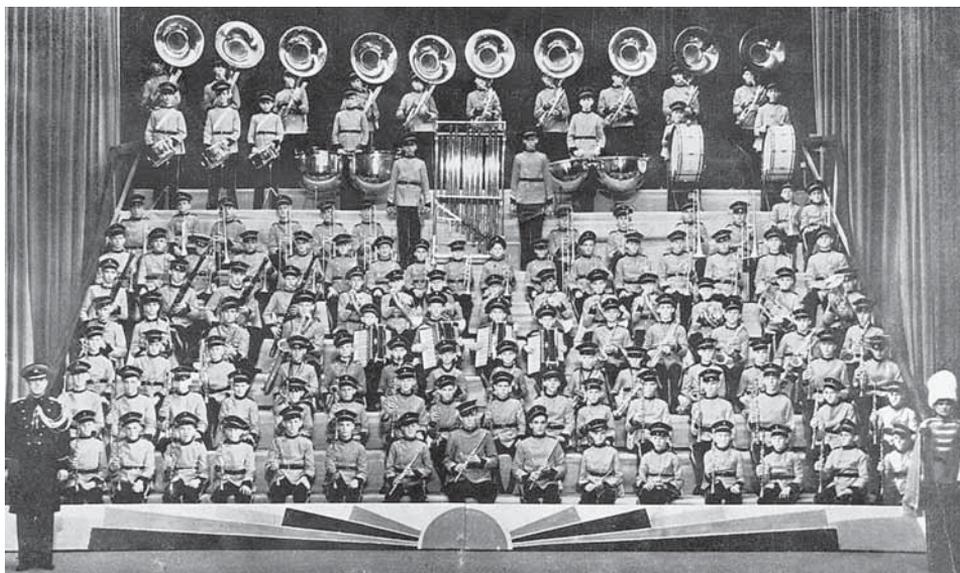
KATAKANA MAN

Later Becker decided to form the Adelaide Boys Military Band and over a period of time he interviewed eighty families (including mine) in his office in Claridge House, Gawler Place. He persuaded them to buy new instruments for their boys.

I can recall that my parents paid thirty-two pounds and ten shillings (\$65.00) for a B flat trumpet that Becker decided was to be my instrument. My first reaction was disappointment because I had told Becker that I wanted to play a saxophone. His reply was that I would be a natural trumpet player because I could play the bugle. His decision proved to be the correct one—after all he had successfully taught me to play the bugle. The military band teachers, all leading players or performers of the time, were the best available in Adelaide. My trumpet teacher was Mr Trenwith, who played in the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

While stationed at Victor Harbor we were occasionally given leave. I was always happy when this time came about to get away from the rigors of training and to enjoy my music. This interest in music probably added in no small way to my ability to take morse at speed.

During our training we were taught to use Aldis. Aldis are the morse lights that ships at sea and aircraft use for communication with other ships and aircraft. The instructors would take an Aldis lamp over to Granite Island (off Victor Harbor) and we trainees were on the beach. Each pupil who was taking Aldis had a writer.



Adelaide Boys Military Band – Theatre Royal Adelaide, 1939
(Author sixth row from front, third in on right)

The taker would call out the symbol and the writer would write it down. Quite a few of the chaps in the group could not take Aldis. They were not very good at morse either, and the ones who were very bad sat around near me and told their writers not to listen to what they were calling out but to listen to what I was calling. I recall that a lot of these men got one hundred per cent for Aldis but could not read morse very well. No examiner caught on to what we were doing. About this time we used to do a lot of running on the beach for fitness. We would have to run from Victor to the Bluff (a pudding-shaped hill on the coast marking the western end of Encounter Bay in which Victor Harbor is situated) and back, a distance of approximately two miles (3.2 kilometres). We had to pick up something and bring it back to prove that we had been there.

I made a deal with the fellows whom I had helped with the Aldis. The deal was that I would run a few hundred yards with them, drop into a hole in the seaweed and the others would continue to run to the Bluff, pick up an extra article for me and drop it off to me on the way back. I would run back with them but was never puffed. Because I was never puffed I was eventually caught out and lost my weekend leave for two weeks and landed other duties.

I can remember one day being ordered to Parafield to receive morse messages sent by Mr Arthur Sheard. I thought this was strange because no other trainee was sent. Mr Sheard, who was one of Australia's top telegraphists, had retired from his civilian job at the Post Master General's Department. He was not a member of the RAAF but was working as a morse instructor for them. After he tested my morse ability he said that I was a natural at taking morse code.

I had been at Mount Breckan for about two and a half months when I was called in to an office there and had the most extraordinary interview. I was told that the Air Force wanted me to volunteer for something else because of my natural aptitude for morse code. They could not tell me anything about the work except that it would be much more interesting than aircrew could ever be; it was Top Secret and could be very dangerous. I did not want to do it because I wanted to be a pilot, and a damned good one at that. I was told to go away and think about it. I can recall going back about two days later and being asked the same question. I said, 'No, I still want to be a pilot'.

They said go and think about it again. I went back a third time and after a bit of pressure I said, 'If it is that good I will take it on'. No one was about to tell me, nor did they know, and I was not familiar with the term 'Top Secret'. This was to become the biggest part of my life for many years to come. At that stage I was

taken off aircrew training and my ambitions to become a pilot went down the drain almost as quickly as filling a basin with water and pulling out the plug. My disappointment was intense.

Not long after I was posted to Point Cook, Victoria. I now know that during the last two or three weeks I was at Victor Harbor and also while I was later at Point Cook, the Australian Military Security people were carrying out a security check on me and my family.

Years later I met a Mr John Glastonbury, who had held the rank of wing commander during the war. Upon hearing my name, he asked if I had served in the RAAF. He volunteered that he had been the security officer who had checked me out when I had volunteered for Top Secret work. People who lived near me, those who attended my church and the local police were also questioned about my character and my family. This was because I was to go into the most secret of all organisations in the Allied forces.

When the time came for my departure from Victor Harbor I felt that somehow I had been badgered and conned because I desperately wanted to fly. I was just over eighteen and my dreams had been to be a pilot. I was loath to leave my friends and could not tell them where I was going or what I was about to do, as I did not then know, nor did the officers know. I was posted to Point Cook, which was the Signals School for ground crew and also an advanced Air Force flying school where Oxfords, a two-engine aircraft, were used. Here I learned ground-to-ground and ground-to-air wireless procedures.

When I first fronted up in late December 1942 to the Adjutant at Point Cook, I was told I was to take that white flash out of my cap. I was not aircrew any more. 'You're a trainee telegraphist.' I thought, *Just a telegraphist, what have I let myself in for?* I took the white flash out of my cap, which had been issued to me under the Empire Air Training Scheme, and this was a big let-down. To be able to wear it made you a bit elite and I thought, *I am not going to like this place very much.* I was put into a class of ground staff chaps who were almost at the end of their course and I stayed there and learnt a bit of procedure. I was stationed there temporarily until I moved on to do my special job.

I was always a loner who took long, solitary, thoughtful walks. At Point Cook I was even more a loner, and while I was there I kept wondering what I had let myself in for. I had met a friend from Adelaide who was doing his advanced flying course and this made me more despondent. I was glad to get out of there and

was posted in February 1943 to the No. 2 Embarkation Depot at Bradfield Park Barracks in Sydney, which was an embarkation depot for fully-trained or trainee aircrew going overseas. When I arrived there I felt confused, 'Here I am, I don't fit into any of the categories for embarkation; what am I doing here?'

I can recall that, while at Bradfield Park Barracks, the wharf labourers would not unload some ships, so we trainees and other men who were going away were sent to the wharves to do the unloading. From memory, we unloaded cargo that might have been gas cylinders, possibly mustard gas, but I know that the wharf labourers would not touch the cargo. I went down to the wharf on at least two occasions. We not only had to fight for these wharf labourers overseas but had to take all the risks at home before we went to fight.

Every morning at Bradfield Park Barracks the names of those who were going away would be called out. I was stuck there for two to three weeks, until one morning the only name that was called out was mine. I was told to catch a train to Brisbane, Queensland, and that I was posted to No. 1 Wireless Unit at Townsville. Townsville was known to be a front line, or jumping-off area to battle fronts. The only skill I knew I had was that I was better than most in taking morse code—well, in a training situation in any case. I thought, *If I am to go to a jumping-off area, where will my next step be and what will I do? What actual training in front-line action have I ever had?* At the Bradfield Park Barracks I was told to leave all my gear, including my Air Force uniforms, and these were to be sent back to Adelaide, to Scotch College, to be picked up and taken to my home. My mother was not told until sometime in 1945 to collect my kit for me.

I was reissued with tropical gear, including a .303 rifle, tin hat and a groundsheet cape.



The author at Bradfield Park Barracks, New South Wales, 1943

II

TOWNSVILLE – WHAT AM I GETTING INTO?

I caught the train to Brisbane in March 1943 and then a troop train going north. There were hundreds of Australian troops on board and many of them were in carriages that were falling apart with age and neglect. I remember getting into an open truck, which had been used to carry pineapples as there was straw on the bottom. This open truck was my accommodation.

From Brisbane to Townsville, the trip took about four days, and I would say that most of the time the train was running at speeds of twenty miles per hour down to possibly three miles per hour. On some of the bends many of the troops, for exercise, would get off and walk across the fields then get back on the other side of the bend; it was that slow. We stopped every morning for breakfast, which consisted of mashed potato and sausages. We stopped again for our evening meal, which was exactly the same food we had had for breakfast. The food was slopped into our mess tins and pannikins that we had with us. This was the only food we received each day on the trip to Townsville. Occasionally there would be a train going south loaded with pineapples or sugar cane. As we passed the slower ones, hundreds of soldiers would jump from the carriages and collect what they could. Anything to vary our diet! Ablution stops were necessary for there were no facilities on the train. There were no washing facilities where we stopped, except for the odd taps at some places. For many of the troops it was not even possible to clean their teeth. By the time we got to Townsville we really stank! The authorities who organised transport should have been reprimanded as the trip was an utter disgrace.

When I arrived in Townsville I was picked up by Air Force military personnel. I do not remember how they picked me out of the crowd, but it was probably because I was in Air Force khaki and the other troops may have been in jungle green. I was taken to a vehicle that looked like a jeep but was much bigger. There were three personnel in this vehicle; one was the driver, and I sat in the middle of the other two in the back seat. When we left Townsville we left the roads completely and went on a track running through the bush. I saw occasional kangaroos or wallabies. We seemed to go a long way into the scrub. While I was being driven to this unknown destination my mind again wondered—what was really in store for me? It was a bit like reading the serial in my weekly boys' paper, *Champion*,

but instead of having to wait for the next issue, I was now about to find out. Out of nowhere a guard stopped the vehicle. The crew showed their passes and we drove on for a few hundred yards further to our destination, Roseneath, which was a bush camp.

On the first night I was provided with a crude tent, a palliasse and some straw, and that was all. I had to sleep on the dirt with some other fellows who had also turned up. We managed to get off the ground by putting the palliasse on some old galvanised iron. I thought, *What a crummy, crude, unkempt defence establishment. Is this part of what I am getting into?*

The second morning the other trainees and I were taken to a training area, which was virtually a lean-to on an iron shed type of building. This was to be our learning area. The benches were made of old wood, clumsily put together with no thought whatsoever. It was almost as though we were unexpected. Added to the inferior sleeping quarters I thought this was the end of the line. But I found out later it was only to be the start. I wondered where my Top Secret job was.

At our first briefing we were told we were to learn Japanese morse code to transpose into katakana syllabary that could be sent over international telegraph circuits, or by radio. (The kana syllabary was used by the Japanese Navy before and during World War II.) I asked my instructor, ‘How many years have I got to learn this?’ The answer was eight weeks.

It is hard to describe katakana to the layman. To most people outside Japan, the Japanese language—which was based on the ninth century ideographs—was totally incomprehensible. There was absolutely no way Japanese writing could be sent over the modern telegraph system. We had to learn shorthand, triangular, or symbols using combinations of Roman letters with other pieces of shorthand to build up the symbol because we could not learn Japanese writing. These writing symbols had been invented for katakana, which expressed the Japanese alphabet or syllabary in seventy-three symbols representing Japanese and Chinese sounds. We then had to translate the shorthand into English symbols so that it could be read by code breakers, linguists and cipher clerks. We called this ‘kana’ for short. In order to express Japanese kana in Roman letters to be printed and used by a telegraph system, these kana ideographs were romanised—that is, transposed into the letters of our alphabet—and known as ‘romanji’. It was not a perfect system because without the sound of the speaker’s voice to show the semi-hard and semi-soft sounds it was difficult. A single kana symbol might have different meanings.

Despite this simplification kana still remained extremely complex, as the meaning of each symbol was altered by the addition of one or two suffixes after each ideograph. Hanigori, sent as a group of five—being two dots, two dashes and one dot—in morse and denoted a soft sound on the preceding character. Nigori, sent as two dots in morse, denoted a semi-hard sound on the preceding character. As a result, the same kana character could be translated with two different meanings, the first as ‘chi’, a hard sound as in ‘china’ if followed by the Nigori suffix, and the second as ‘shi’, a soft sound if followed by the Hanigori suffix, as in ‘ship’.

All international morse code systems were also used, including the International Number Set used by the Japanese Navy, but the Japanese Army used a short-figure Japanese Number Set. After I had learned this short-figure Japanese Number Set I found it to be far superior to the International Number Set. To me the flow was much easier on the ear and the morse itself easier to take down in the shorthand. I do not know the other kana operators’ opinion in relation to this, but I considered it was a better system because it did not need as much concentration, particularly when I received it at top speed.

The biggest shock came when we were told we would be required to take morse at forty to fifty words a minute. That was twice as fast as the very top international morse operators could send and receive. However, we all achieved the goal, helped along by the threat of guard duty for the duration if we failed to achieve the skill level. We were told, ‘If you don’t pass that’s how you will spend the rest of the war. You will never be posted to a RAAF establishment because you will by then know too much!’ I am sure this was the greatest motivation to success.

I was eventually to become part of the Wireless Units Sigint (the Allied term for Signals Intelligence) set up to gain intelligence by intercepting enemy wireless transmissions. It was a massive scheme, eventually extending to the formation of six wireless units operating over the South-West Pacific Area. By the end of the war, seven Sigint units had been formed but only six had become operational.

The name Wireless Units Sigint was a name given to mask the true meaning of the work by kana intercept operators, kana direction finder operators, cipher clerks, linguists and code breakers (the vast majority of whom were members of the RAAF) who actually intercepted Japanese military messages and then decoded them. Once the information was received it was passed onto Allied High Command for use by air, land and naval commanders. This enabled the commanders to hear of Japanese intentions, sometimes hours or days or weeks in advance of their actual happenings.

Quite early in the formation of wireless units a decision was made to include WAAAF pre-trained top wireless telegraphist operators and train them as kana operators. There were thirteen WAAAF kana operators who joined the operation nine months or so before I did, and some of them were really masters. I can remember two in particular, Joy Linnane (nicknamed ‘Linnie’) and Joyce Charles (nicknamed ‘Charlie’).

They were wasted in a sense by Central Bureau Intelligence (which was General Douglas MacArthur’s intelligence set-up) because the Australian Government would not let them go any further north than Townsville. Even when we moved right up toward the front they could have manned stations behind us like Port Moresby, Nadzab and maybe Biak and the Philippines later in 1945. It would have been quite safe there for them—their talent was wasted, they were fantastic operators. They remained in Townsville, and after we left had taken over our old Roseneath camp site and kept operating at Stuart Creek, which was the operating base. I believe that we were the only recruits not trained in a technical job to have been posted to an operating unit to be trained. Since this was the most secret work of all in the Allied forces, the authorities must have been pretty certain we were going to pass or they must have been desperately short of kana operators at the time to take this chance with us.

The morse was sent by hand at first, but later we used recorded signals on cylinder-type records. We used to spend four hours at a time, then have a break and then work for another four hours just listening or taking hand-sent Japanese morse signals from the instructor. I thought I would never ever make the grade and would end up being a guard. The first four weeks I found extremely hard but I still had my determination—the same determination that had seen me through when I had wanted to be a pilot. I thought this is something I have an equal chance of doing against everybody else. Education at this stage did not come into it, you either could or you could not do it, but the memorising part was the hardest. I never thought I would make it, but after the first four weeks passed I started to be able to receive at slow speeds—take four symbols, maybe lose three, pick up another four, lose two, pick up five, lose five, pick up five, take five, so it was slowly coming to me and I thought maybe I could do it. I was also having trouble memorising the transposed English letters that matched the anglicised shorthand that I used when I took it down.

At about the six-week mark it all started to come together. Not that I was getting all of it—the receiving was slow. But I would possibly take eight symbols and lose

one, take seven and lose one, take ten and get the lot, and I thought maybe there was something there and I would make it after all.

I thought I was doing as well at this as any other student. There were only a few of us but we were all working to be successful. At the approach of the seven-week mark I thought I would make it. Then the instructor seemed to double the speed and I think some of us lost track. I know I did. I again thought I would end up being a guard. I knew I had better do some serious thinking as to what I must do to be a success. One thing though, I temporarily lost all my cockiness.

I found in the first instance when the morse was sent I was trying to break it up into bits that somehow related to international morse code symbols. I soon realised that this was not the way to go because, although I could work out the symbol, I could never really get any speed. That night I lay awake worrying about the situation and I came up with the answer, which was to stop listening to the dots and dashes as just very fast morse and think of it as my trumpet playing, of big band dance music—a rhythm pattern flow to which I could relate (especially the long symbols of up to ten dots and dashes) and write the matching shorthand after the symbol had passed, but keep the rhythm going in my head. The next day I worked on this system and started to take the morse down without too much trouble. Some of the other chaps asked how I was doing it. I explained my method and some caught on and others worked out their own system. At the approach of the eight-week mark I was again feeling cocky and ready for the twelve-day examination.

The examination firstly consisted of the morse kana, which was sent by hand, then taking the Japanese signals from recorded messages on cylinder-type records and, lastly, from the Air Force high-powered receiver called an AR7 (Kingsley RAAF receiver) directly from one on the spot working directly on Japanese over the air transmissions. I can remember after the twelve days the examiner said, ‘That is it’. I thought I must have passed. A day or two after this I was told that I had passed. I felt pretty proud of myself, but as an eighteen-year-old I suppose you are proud when you succeed in something, especially like taking katakana. I had never been so successful, not at school anyway.

Years later in 1988, I learned that a report showed that the description of my katakana examination over a period of twelve days was referred to as a ‘Signals Refresher Course’ and was a concealment of my true work. The records were numbered as follows:

1. Examination or test results:

Morse – receiving 92 per cent out of 100 per cent

Procedure – 80 per cent out of 100 per cent

2. Recommendation:

Pass with Special Distinction approved.

Signed by C.M. Bain Squadron Leader for Director of Training

In reality this referred to katakana and translating morse shorthand into English symbols.

This would have been the first time in my life I had worked by myself and been so successful. I was now a fully-fledged katakana operator. But one thing that irked all of us was that we did not receive promotion. We retained the rank of AC1 (Aircraftman Class 1)—the lowest rank in the Air Force.

It has been said that people who played musical instruments made very good kana operators, and this was to become my role in the RAAF. I thought I could now be sent overseas and was prepared should this eventuate. I felt confident, gung-ho, and instead of being a youth I had become a man. I felt I was a man for the future and my time was decided for me.

After I had passed I became aware, mostly through the grapevine, of the earlier vital successes of No. 1 Wireless Unit. The early history was that seven wireless operators had been trained in Melbourne to read Japanese katakana morse code. After their training period they were sent to Darwin in the Northern Territory in 1941 and were known as Y Signals by RAAF Headquarters. They had set up operating on the Darwin RAAF station and all other personnel, including the Commanding Officer, were not aware of their activities. All the work there was stamped 'Top Secret Ultra' (the highest security classification), indicating that the information was drawn from decrypted Japanese signals traffic.

Snow Bradshaw, who was one of the first men to learn katakana in Australia, was one of these seven men, and he was the warrant officer in charge of the Headquarters. Other men included G. Davis, C. Hermes, J. Wilson, B. Crosby, T. Cook and A. Towers. Through their interception it was learnt that an air attack

on Darwin by the Japanese was imminent. In fact, the Commander of the RAAF station, Group Captain Frederick Scherger, was given over two hours notice of the forthcoming raid, but no action was taken.

The next important role played by the kana operators of No. 1 Wireless Unit was when they provided valuable input into many of the vital operations, including the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. They also provided information to the American fleet about the safest routes to use to avoid enemy air action.

Following the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Australian kana operators, by intercepting messages, gave nine weeks warning that the Japanese planned to land troops on the north coast of New Guinea at Buna and Gona and make an overland attack on Port Moresby, via the Kokoda Trail in the Owen Stanley Ranges. The warnings went unheeded. The Japanese message referred to a road that began on the north coast of New Guinea and passed through Kokoda and over a range of mountains about 2300 metres in height and then to Port Moresby.

This information had given a priceless insight into Japanese strategic thinking but General Douglas MacArthur, who was Commander of Allied Forces South-West Pacific, and General Thomas Blamey, Australia's senior military commander throughout the 1939–45 war, were slow to respond to the threat in New Guinea. An Australian kana operator recalled, with bitterness, that the commanders had ignored the warnings.

In July 1942 the Japanese landed on the north coast of New Guinea at Buna. The ignored messages intercepted by kana operators resulted in vital strategic miscalculations being made, which cost the lives of many soldiers. Partly trained Australian militia brigades were despatched to New Guinea, even though four combat-tested Australian Imperial Force (AIF) brigades—each of four thousand men—had returned from the Middle East in 1942.

At this time, Lieutenant General George Kenney, Commander of the US Fifth Air Force, landed in Australia. Kenney was a perceptive person who was aware of the vital role the Australian kana operators would be playing in the war. He knew their work was needed in the more important battles to follow. His faith in the work of the kana operators was realised earlier than MacArthur's and Blamey's. His belief had a huge impact on the future of Australian wireless units.

The Japanese captured Kokoda approximately sixty miles (ninety-five kilometres) inland and halfway to Port Moresby. As a result of the Australian determination and against all odds, the Kokoda Trail was retaken. This was the first land defeat

suffered by the Japanese since the beginning of the Pacific War, but it resulted in the loss of many Australian lives—2165 killed, 3533 wounded and 26,000 sick, mainly suffering from malaria. By the time Buna and Gona were also taken it cost the United States forces 2800 casualties and 8200 sick. When the Milne Bay invasion was discovered through interception, the advice was heeded. As a kana operator said, ‘Thank God, this time the Commanders took our advice. We had a reception committee waiting for them.’ Kana interception was then given its proper military recognition. Allied forces would not generally move unless they had a lot of our intelligence.

The east coast of Australia had come under air attack for the first time. Three night raids occurred over Townsville on 26, 28 and 29 July 1942 and a fourth on 31 July 1942 near Cairns. An advance warning of nearly seven hours of the impending raids was given by No. 1 Wireless Unit. Raids occurred on Port Moresby, Oro Bay, Milne Bay and Guadalcanal and, again, No. 1 Wireless Unit gave a few hours notice.

After the Kokoda Trail battle, MacArthur and Blamey accepted the new technology of intelligence gathering. Thereafter the war with Japan changed completely. The kana operators were able to intercept and gain knowledge of the Japanese intentions before their moves; knowledge of their build-up of troops and supplies, aircraft displacements, naval and merchant shipping movements, and lastly their intentions for battle. MacArthur’s island leapfrogging through the Pacific then started. Actually, the strategy of MacArthur’s movements through the Pacific was based mainly on information from kana operators. Following this Kenney realised that by using our intelligence gathering, the war could be won before the battle was fought.

Another success for No. 1 Wireless Unit, operating out of Townsville (together with Central Bureau, Brisbane, and kana operators also operating out of Melbourne), was that they supplied almost one hundred per cent of the information of the Japanese battle plan in relation to the battle of the Bismarck Sea. The Allies had used this information to their advantage. The battle was a victory of aircraft over ships without air cover. The Australians and Americans sank eight transports and four destroyers—a one-sided battle.

About this time I had heard about Richard (Dick) Bong, the US air ace. He operated out of Townsville and then moved to Port Moresby. His air achievements and fame were spreading. I thought to myself, *What a man! If I ever get the opportunity I am definitely going to meet him.*

After I passed the kana examination I was taken to Stuart Creek a few miles away, but was still camped at Roseneath. Stuart Creek was the Headquarters of No. 1 Wireless Unit and this was a remarkable building. It was a secret bombproof bunker, built of metre thick reinforced concrete and disguised as a Queensland-style farmhouse. The outside walls had doors, windows and even a veranda and stilts painted on them. The finishing touches were a false roof, rainwater tanks and a set of stairs leading to a painted door on the veranda.

The camouflage was so effective that in a mock night raid, the leader of the attacking group, who was armed with a pistol, rushed up the stairs to crash into the painted front door and knocked himself out. The bunker was the Headquarters of No. 1 Wireless Unit—the forerunner of a series of other RAAF eavesdropping units that intercepted the signals intelligence—and was to become a major component of the strategic planning of General MacArthur's victorious leapfrogging through the Japanese-held Pacific islands.

Upon entering this building my mind boggled. I thought I was dreaming. The interior was fully airconditioned and was furnished most impressively with all the sophisticated equipment necessary for a first-class intelligence establishment. There were direction finder (D/F) panels but our D/F stations were located at Rockhampton, Julia Creek and Tolga, and were in a 300 mile (480 kilometre) arc around us to enable the D/Fs to get a bearing (to provide a fix) on the kana sender. There was also a teleprinter connected to Brisbane, scrambler phones, plotting tables and dozens of wireless sets. Even though I felt bewildered among this massive array of equipment I started operating immediately. My early worry was using the wireless equipment. I was told in the first instance, 'Just use this and this and it will all work out for you'. Once I mastered the signals I felt I was as good as the Japanese sending the signal. For a while I became blasé and soon fell into the rhythm of taking katakana straight from the box.

We were now significant players doing eight hour shifts, each wireless receiver covering a different frequency. We intercepted air-to-ground and air-to-air messages sent by enemy aircraft, often on their way to bomb our bases. As each message was intercepted, it was quickly passed into the intelligence room. Enemy aircraft positions were fixed by direction finders and warnings forwarded to the targeted areas. It was always a great satisfaction to operators when an enemy aircraft signalled 'I am being attacked', and we knew our warning had got through and Allied squadrons were on the job.

I soon found out that I was in the most secret of all Allied establishments and in stages I picked up the information that the Japanese were using a nine cipher system, and the most important of these was the code for high-level diplomatic traffic. The British, Americans and Australians had broken into the Japanese cipher systems and were reading the Japanese traffic. The Americans gave this code the name 'Purple' and after breaking the various codes the term was given the name 'Magic'. It was the American classification for all intelligence derived from decrypted Japanese signals. The Americans had invented a decoding machine and called it a Purple Machine; this enabled the speed of breaking into the various Japanese codes to be accelerated.



Operations Building at Stuart Creek, 1943
(AWM P0473/12/05)

It was at Stuart Creek that I met Captain Eric Nave during his visit there. Coincidentally, the Nave family and mine were friends. Eric's brother Lionel was dating my mother's youngest sister but until then I had not met Eric. I was very drawn to him. He was a very approachable person, but at the same time I was a little in awe of this great man.

When Nave died in 1993, journalist Denis Warner wrote the following obituary, which appeared in the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*:

[Eric] joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1917 at the age of 18. Two years later, having begun preliminary studies in Japanese he was sent to Japan to study the language there. He studied the hard way—simply by living in a remote area where no one spoke a word of English.

His results were startling; he passed a British Embassy test in Tokyo with the highest marks ever recorded. In 1925 he was seconded by the Royal Navy to organize Japanese wireless interception on the China station. Until this time interception of Japanese codes had been unsuccessful because the Japanese used 73 kana signs and not the English alphabet of 26.

Nave bought some blank phonograph records to study the Japanese intercepts in slow time. This way he worked out the Japanese signal alphabet and was soon able to read the language messages and then their codes.

When the Japanese moved from simple to more sophisticated codes Nave moved with them. 'I grew up with their codes,' he said. 'I came to understand the Japanese methods and where they were going.'

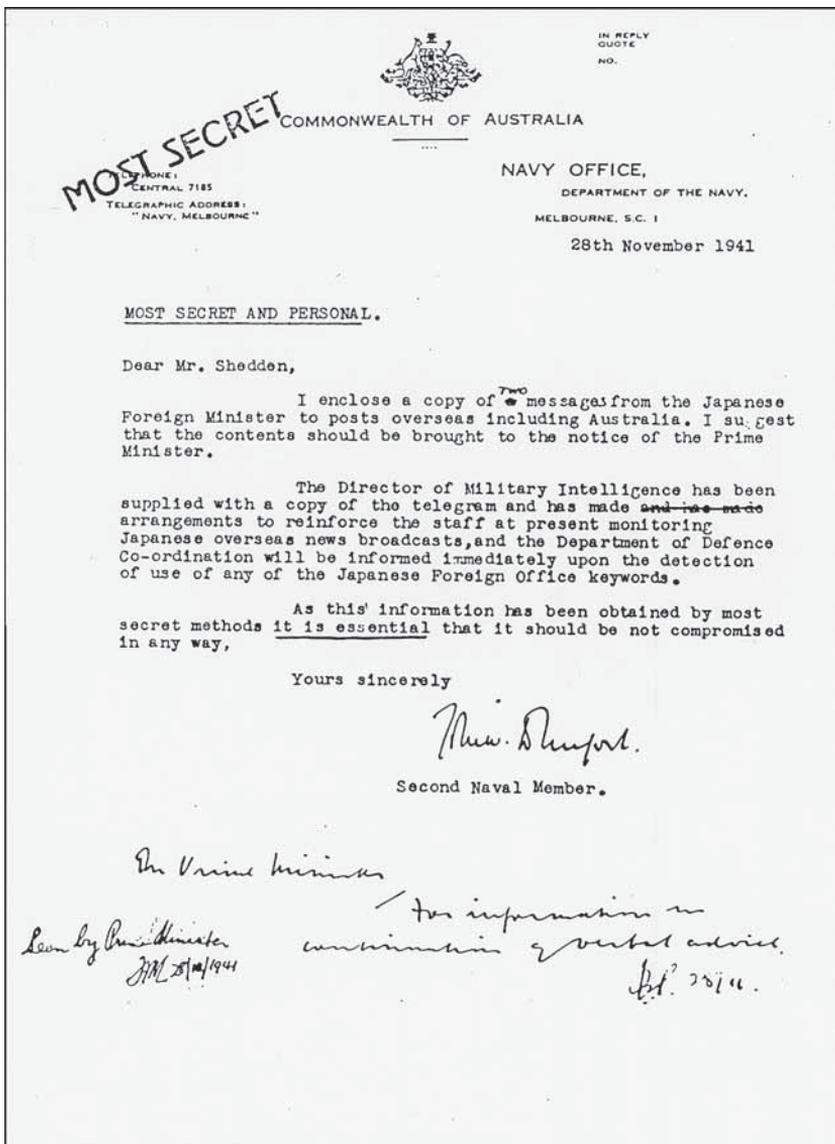
As early as 1926 he had broken the first Japanese naval code, and though the Imperial Japanese Navy switched codes frequently, he had little difficulty adjusting to the changes. He had become so important to Britain that in 1930 by special order of King George V he was transferred from the RAN to the RN. In 1939 he broke the vital Japanese naval code, JN25.

Nave had been at work some years before his death on a book of reminiscences which I was privileged to read in manuscript form. It was full of fascinating insights into his life on the China coast and the intrigue that went on when he was listed as an interpreter on the staff of the British Commander in Chief, Far East, as a cover for his codebreaking activities. ...

Ill-health in 1940 brought him back to Australia where he concentrated initially on Japanese consular messages and naval traffic in the mandated territories in the Central Pacific.

On November 19, 1941, the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo sent a coded message to the consulate in Melbourne indicating that communication with Japan might be severed and that in the event of a crisis with America the consulate would be warned in the form of a weather forecast—'East wind rain'.

On December 4 the second shoe dropped and Nave advised the Australian Government that a Japanese naval force was headed for Pearl Harbor. He predicted that the attack would take place at the weekend of December 7-8, an accuracy that matched that of the Japanese carrier planes when they unleashed their deadly attack. ...



Defence Department 'East wind, Rain' Information Letter (Page 1)

So much of Eric Nave's work was vitally secret and has been bound up ever since under the British Official Secrets Act that we may never know. What we do know is that Nave's brilliance in breaking the Japanese codes led to highly accurate predictions of Tokyo's military moves and intentions.

19th November, 1941.

Owing to the pressure of the International situation we must be faced with a generally bad situation. In that event communication between Japan and the countries opposing her would be severed immediately. Therefore, should we be on the verge of an international crisis we will broadcast twice - during the Japanese news broadcast to overseas and at the end of it, the following in the form of a weather report:-

1. Japanese American crisis:

"East wind, Rain".

2. Japanese Russian crisis:

"North wind, cloudy".

3. Japanese British crisis, including the invasion of Thailand or an attack on Malaya or the Netherlands East Indies:

"West wind, clear".

Action should be taken as regards (? codes) and (?documents) in accordance with the above.

*Advised by Army Staff Officer 8.15 am.
msg had been received & used by
Gen. Staff.*

sted 8.12.

After a little time at Stuart Creek I became a fully qualified Japanese katakana wireless operator, which I found to be a most challenging achievement. The Japanese sometimes would repeat their messages but I would get them the first time. I felt that, being ambitious as I was, I was as good as the Japanese were at taking their own morse code. I had never had complaints from the code breakers or linguists who were using my work so I can be proud of that.

It was exhilarating to be operating there. I can remember taking over the Japanese frequency from another kana operator on the Japanese broadcast station that was working from the island of Truk, broadcasting to Tokyo. At this Truk station, which was situated in the central Pacific, they collated all the most important messages on mostly a daily basis and rebroadcast (transmitted) in kana morse to Tokyo. If for some reason you missed the message because of bad reception or it was on a frequency with which you were not familiar, you found that you could pick them up later because possibly the message would be rebroadcast. The station operated on air for twenty-four hours a day, non-stop. After three or four hours working that frequency you would become tired, and after six hours exhausted. The Japanese were sending their kana morse at a speed of often forty to fifty words per minute.

As I previously stated, a good operator in the Air Force ground staff operated at between twenty and twenty-five words per minute and an aircrew wireless operator would work at speeds of ten to sixteen words per minute. Taking kana was probably twice as fast as the very best operator would have worked at in the armed forces.

Little did I realise from the time I trained as a katakana operator that my intercept work with Central Bureau Intelligence would lead me to serve only with the American forces, and I later learned I would work only for generals. However, all the commanders of the Australian Navy, Army and Air Force used our work.

I spent a lot of time operating. I often used to wonder if the Japanese used a 'bug' to send consistently for so long. It would definitely not have been a morse key with normal wrist movement. A 'bug' was a morse key that clicked dots and dashes automatically by moving sideways instead of the up and down system. The left side clicked out dashes and the right side clicked out dots. The machine could be set at any speed for the receiver, such as five, ten, twenty or twenty-five to fifty words per minute. Although I had never seen nor operated one, the morse dots and dashes were very even in time space. Ninety per cent of the time I could pick the Japanese who were operating with the 'bug'.

TOWNSVILLE – WHAT AM I GETTING INTO?

I soon realised that we were part of Kenney's insurance policy. All of us were responsible for the safety of the United States and RAAF aircraft while on the ground and the intelligence gatherers, for most of their targets. Our work also included gathering information for the Australian and US armies and fleets, and also for the US submarine service patrolling out of Queensland, Western Australia and Pearl Harbor. Time and again during the Pacific war the RAAF kana operators, and the linguists and code breakers of the Central Bureau proved themselves to be just as effective as their bunker's camouflage.

About two weeks after I started operating at Stuart Creek, Joy Linnane and Joyce Charles invited John Hamilton, an American, and I to a picnic on Magnetic Island. I had still not adjusted to my shocking living conditions, which really frustrated me, and the opportunity to get away for a day I hoped would enable me to bring myself back to normality and to be able to see others who were not in our working and living area. The two girls did bring me back to normality. Their company was great. They organised the trip, the food and the drinks, and I have never forgotten this happy day.



Magnetic Island off Townsville, 1943

**L-R: the author, Joyce 'Charlie' Charles, Joy 'Linnie' Linnane, John Hamilton
(the American is sitting behind the group)
(AWM: P123/09/03)**

At Roseneath our living conditions did not improve—they were primitive (I even used my boots as a pillow)—but we did have a great cook named Bagnell who had red hair and whom we called Bluey. I do not remember his first name. He came from Cleve, South Australia. Bluey was a great cook; he could cook food and it tasted as though it came out of a five-star international hotel. Bully beef he could cook in ten ways, and his assistants were also great cooks. He always had a joke to tell and was a good friend to all of us; we enjoyed his company very much. I guess he was ten years older than most of us.

Bluey was with us all the way from Townsville through the Moresby area across the other side of New Guinea to Nadzab and then to Biak. I lost sight of Bluey when I took off to go to Hollandia and then to the Philippines. He was a marvellous fellow, and he had plenty of guts.

The kana operators always did their own thing. Our superiors let us get away with most things because they needed our operating skills. We worked under extreme pressure and a bit of latitude was allowed to compensate for this to ensure the system remained operational.

Some of the men on duty with me were Alf Bobin, Dave Wishart, John Hamilton (who was a pianist), John Moon, John (Buck) Jones (who was a pianist and a great charcoal artist), Eric Hedley (who was a great cartoonist and artist), Wally Mapstone, Erwyn (Dan) McKillop, Jim O'Neill and Brian Stibbard. There were only two South Australians; Les Williams, from Spalding, and me. Some of the men who had trained before me and were still at Roseneath and Stuart Creek included Stan King, Mac Jamieson, Jim Sparks (who had escaped from Nauru Island in the Pacific), Chas McColl, Harry Donahoo, Jack Bleakley, Ron Sims, Noel McCullagh, Ron Patterson, Harry Mills, Keith (Zero) Falconer and Rupe Fisher.

When I was working on an AR7 receiving set, it was quite a thrill to think that I was actually intercepting Japanese signals and transposing them to English for our translators and code breakers to break. The only trouble was I could not brag; I could not tell anybody about it. Over sixty years later I still feel proud of what I did. We were on air twenty-four hours per day. I was not given the job at this early stage of looking for new Japanese frequencies; I was always working on frequencies that had already been found.

A search pattern was employed to look for new Japanese frequencies that were transmitting and had not previously been logged. When a new frequency was found, a frequency meter was used to check the frequency exactly. A frequency

meter was similar to an extremely small transmitter. It could transmit a steady signal that would be picked up by the receiving set that had picked up a new signal. By using the frequency meter, a signal was able to be placed on top of the newly found frequency to give an extremely accurate reading of the frequency. By this method you could set up a direction finder and other receivers on a very accurate setting, whether the station was working or not. Once the direction finding stations obtained bearings on the signal it gave the location of the new Japanese transmitter. By reference to a map you could determine whether it was a ground station, an aircraft or a ship.

Not long after working on the found frequencies, I graduated to work on searching for new Japanese frequencies that were not logged, but I preferred straight operating to this. Some of the transmissions made by Japanese operational aircraft (such as fighters) could be intercepted only within a range of about 400 miles (640 kilometres). Therefore, in operations from Lae against Moresby in which fighters were engaged, no Japanese signals could have been intercepted in Townsville, except under freak conditions. So early in 1943 a forward detachment of twelve kana operators and two direction finder operators went to Port Moresby (see Appendix II). As soon as the detachment arrived and set up operating, the morse signals from the Japanese bases and aircraft could be heard clearly. The information was immediately sent back to Townsville or direct, if possible, to US Fifth Air Force Headquarters in Port Moresby.

Sometimes as the Allies moved to new operations, kana detachments were needed right next to the action, so that immediate information could be given. This was because the Japanese were making an all-out effort to hit the airstrips at Milne Bay, the Guadalcanal Henderson Field, Jackson's Strip and Seven Mile Strip at Port Moresby. These places were being used by the US Fifth Air Force and the RAAF as their main forward bases. Townsville previously had been their main base, but to get a longer range, the Townsville-based aircraft would refuel at Moresby to and from their raids.

In April 1943, through the expertise of our interception and the decoding of the messages, it was revealed that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander of the combined Japanese fleet throughout the first part of World War II and the architect of the Pearl Harbor raid, was to tour Japanese naval bases around the South-West Pacific Area.

Central Bureau Intelligence requested that No. 1 Wireless Unit—whose intercept operator, nineteen-year-old Victorian, Keith R. Falconer, had taken the message—

check its accuracy. The information message was that Admiral Yamamoto's flight, comprising of two Betty bombers escorted by six Zero fighters, was to fly over southern Bougainville, Solomon Islands on 18 April 1943. This intercept message soon proved to be one hundred per cent accurate, right down to the minute of the inspection of Yamamoto's bases. This information gave the US Thirteenth Air Force situated at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, three days to put together an ambush to shoot down Yamamoto's flight.

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz gave the order to attack Yamamoto's flight. The distance from Guadalcanal to the point of contact with Yamamoto was a 435-mile (700-kilometre) flight, which took two hours and forty-five minutes, and this distance required a split-second ambush because of the fuel position.

As the message revealed on 18 April 1943 the US Air Force had eighteen P-38s in readiness, and as the Japanese aircraft appeared two P-38s were the attack aircraft for the bombers and the other sixteen took care of the Zeros. The two Betty bombers were shot down over the jungle, killing Yamamoto, who was a passenger in one of them. The contact was then broken off and the P-38s returned to their Guadalcanal base.

In September 1945, Captain Thomas G. Lanphier, one of the two attack pilots involved in the above event, was awarded hero status, the United States Navy Cross and sole credit for shooting down Yamamoto. In 1973 the United States Government took away Lanphier's sole credit and awarded half of the credit to the other pilot Rex T. Barber.

If recognition can be awarded to these two P-38 pilots, why has no recognition been awarded to Keith R. Falconer, whose interception gave the United States the message regarding Yamamoto's flight? From that time on Keith Falconer was given the name 'Zero' Falconer by his fellow kana operators. To this day he is still known as Keith Zero Falconer.

The first time I went into Townsville I noticed there were thousands of troops there, both Australian and American. The first thing I did was to spend two weeks of my small pay buying a second-hand American stretcher on the black market. This I took back to camp, and that got me off the ground, and from then on it was almost like luxury living in a four-star hotel. On other occasions when I had a day off and a few of the boys were going into town, I would join them and try to get a ride on a truck or jeep. In Townsville there were crude wet canteens for the Australian troops, which were quite the reverse of the sophisticated American canteens. In our canteens there were no glasses, and the beer was served out of old

fruit tins and containers like that. The procedure was that you took your place in the beer line and would be given two tickets for two drinks. I was a non-alcoholic drinker, but I used to get in the line and collect a few of these tickets. When I saw my friends I gave the tickets to them. I would have been around on the line a few times. I might have had ten tickets and my friends used to think it was wonderful. The ticket collecting was something for me to do.

In Townsville there was a red-light district, which I think was called Broadway. The Australian troops never really had any money to spend there, but they would get in these big queues going into the brothels and when they got near the door they would sell their place to an American for perhaps a week's pay—that was the sort of life it was up there. But in all fairness, some Aussies also stayed in the queue and also bought tickets from the Americans. It was a rough, hard area. Once on leave we had lunch at a cafe just off the main street of Townsville called Flinders Street. As a matter of interest all the gardens in the centre of the main street had been removed, but the coconut trees remained and bomb shelters replaced the gardens.

Going back to our camp site one particular night somebody suggested that we borrow a jeep from the Americans. So one of the fellows got hold of an American jeep and we drove out to our camp site in total luxury. We hid the jeep possibly 400 yards (365 metres) away from our camp site and it was there for probably two weeks. When we were next going into Townsville we decided to go in the jeep. The chap who took the jeep said he was going to take it back to the American Military Police and say he had found it out in the scrub. This he did, and when he took it back and said he had found it the Americans gave him bottles of beer and all sorts of things—he thought this made it quite a worthwhile exercise. When he went back into Townsville another day he came back with another American jeep!

About this time in August 1943, equal in significance to the spectacular shooting down of Yamamoto, was the raid on four airstrips at Wewak on the north coast of New Guinea. Interception revealed there were approximately three hundred Japanese planes that were being readied for a morning attack on Allied bases. As the Japanese aircraft were about to take off, US and RAAF aircraft left their bases and pounded the airstrips and half of the Japanese planes were destroyed. Most of the aircrew were killed or injured, including three hundred ground staff. The remaining Japanese aircraft were destroyed during following raids.

During my operating and leave periods I had a feeling our time to leave Australia was drawing near. Before I knew it, the first week in September had arrived and No. 1 Wireless Unit members were told that we were to be posted to Port Moresby, New Guinea. I was just over nineteen years of age.

KATAKANA MAN

III

OVERSEAS ACTION IN NEW GUINEA

My overseas action was now set to begin. It was the start of the most vital role I had ever played, or will play, in my life. We left Townsville early in September 1943 for New Guinea in an American Dakota transport aircraft. It had a flat base with nothing inside and we put our gear in the middle and sat along the sides of the aircraft. When the plane hit air turbulence we moved around like any other unsecured cargo. At times it was like riding on the Big Dipper at Luna Park in Melbourne. I must mention that with my little bit of gear I had my beloved Yankee black market stretcher and my .303 rifle was wrapped in the middle of it.

When we arrived our tents were already erected and were of a good standard. The one I was in housed four kana operators. Our operating area was at Johns Gully about eleven miles (eighteen kilometres) inland from Port Moresby, and it was well camouflaged in the sense that there were a few scrubby trees, including some pawpaw around. If you were lucky you could pick a half-ripe pawpaw.

By this time, the Kokoda Trail and Buna had been retaken. Just after our arrival, Lae, Nadzab and Salamaua were also recovered. On 17 September 1943, a day after Lae was recaptured by the Australian 7th Division, a detachment from No. 1 Wireless Unit disappeared from Port Moresby. We only realised the detachment had gone when some of the men disappeared and the workload changed. The detachment went via Dobadura and Lae to Salamaua on the north coast of New Guinea, to be right on the Japanese and to set up a kana and direction finding station there. The area had only just been secured. The direction finding station was used to get bearings on enemy aircraft flying from the north coast of New Guinea. Later in November, direction finding stations were set up in Nadzab and Dobadura.

One of the men in the Salamaua detachment was Harold Bates. Young Bates returned to us laden with souvenirs he had collected. You name it and he had it! In his haul was Japanese equipment, including a helmet. I do not know how he ever carried it or how much further north he took it. The picture of him returning to camp remains vividly in my memory.



Johns Gully camp, Port Moresby, 1943

Kana operators and code breakers had played a vital role in endeavouring to defeat the Japanese in New Guinea. Some of the kana operators who had been at Roseneath and Stuart Creek with me and who were now in Port Moresby were Stan King, Mac Jamieson, Ron Sims, Harry Mills, Harold Bates, Jack Bleakley, Charles McColl and John Moon.

No. 1 Wireless Unit detachments in the next few months also served in Dobadura, Popondetta, Lae, Salamaua, Kiriwina Island, Goodenough Island, Milne Bay, Cape Gloucester, Hollandia, Merauke and the island of Owi.

I do not recall a lot about Port Moresby, except that the Papua Hotel was used by some of the code breakers and linguists.

It seemed that we were on duty operating a lot of the time. The weather on this side of the Owen Stanley Ranges was quite good. It did not rain much, but it was very hot. Conditions were reasonable. We enjoyed our work here as we were getting stuck into the Japanese and hearing very good results. We were causing the Japanese High Command a lot of trouble.

We were working hard and were pretty proud of our operating skills. I wanted to make sure I became a better operator than the others. I compared it to starting at the kindergarten stage of school but I soon graduated and was the equal of



Papua Hotel, Port Moresby, 1943

any other operator. When I first started operations I felt exhilarated, a different exhilaration from my trumpet playing days, but comparable to the excitement I had known when I first performed publicly.

On many occasions we would be working a frequency and as a Japanese aircraft became airborne, the Japanese would first transmit to their station a request for a signal strength and we would know that an aircraft had taken off on a mission. Often the direction finders would be asked to get a bearing on it so that we would know the direction the aircraft was taking. Sitting on the working frequency you would occasionally receive a signal that the Japanese aircraft had transmitted to its base station. The signal from the aircraft would be sent in a panic and, when transcribed to the English letters of 'Ho Ho Ho', this meant enemy aircraft were attacking and then the Japanese aircraft would not transmit again. Often after this the Japanese base station would send a signal 'CQ', meaning 'Can any station hear the aircraft call sign that was sent out?' When the Japanese did not get any answer from their stations or the aircraft, we would know that it had probably gone down. We were delighted to have helped knock another one off, just like a Special Air Service (SAS) bloke—a dagger in the dark, unseen and unheard.

During my operating time as I went through the Pacific I would have heard the same panic call from Japanese aircraft and the same response hundreds of times from their base stations, and would always think *another Jap aircraft bites the dust*.



No. 1 Wireless Unit operators in front of author's tent at Johns Gully, 1943

L-R: Chas McColl, the author, Ron Patterson, Jim Sparks

In the first few days I was in Moresby there did not seem to be many chaps around, but I did see a Papuan who was working around our camp site and he could understand a bit of English. I asked where everybody was and he told me, 'Over over', and pointed in the direction of a slow flowing but not deep creek. He said, 'Picture, picture', meaning picture show. I asked him if it was all right to walk across the water. 'All right for you boss', he said. I remember that John Hamilton and I each picked up a box to sit on and noted the direction of the picture show. If you went across by a small bridge you had to walk probably three-quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometres) down a track to a bridge and then three-quarters of a

mile back again. Straight across the creek it was only thirty yards (twenty-seven metres) or less, so we just took our boxes, waded through the water, got to the pictures and watched the show.

When it was over we went back the same way. We had been back in our tent for about twenty or thirty minutes before the other two fellows who shared the tent came back.

They asked, 'Where have you been? You are wet.'

'We have been over to the picture show.'

'How did you get over there?'

'Across the creek.'

They remarked, 'You are bloody mad, it is full of crocodiles'.

A day or so later I saw the same Papuan working around the camp. I said to him, 'You said all right to cross water'. He said, 'All right for you boss, no good for me, too many cros!'

Many casualties were being brought back to one of the Army tent hospitals. They were mainly patients suffering from malaria. Some Papuan girls were helping in the hospital. They wore only a grass skirt; tops and feet were bare. One of the nursing sisters gave one of the girls a cotton frock and told her to wear it and not to come topless any more. The Papuan girl turned up the next day with the frock on but with two holes cut in the front to let her breasts through. It caused an uproar. I did not see this, I only heard about it. It may have been just a good story but from my experience could easily have been true.

Chas McColl was one of the most popular and outgoing kana operators. He came to Port Moresby with the first group and on his tent he fixed the number '10'. Chas claimed he was as important as the next man and that even included Winston Churchill, who as British Prime Minister lived at 10 Downing Street in London, and so Chas proudly displayed the same number.

While I was in Moresby I learnt to my disappointment that Dick Bong who had been operating nearby had moved to the northern side of New Guinea. I thought, 'I have missed meeting him but hopefully will meet him later'.

During breaks in operations I would walk. While one is walking alone you can think about things. I used to think that I was doing something worthwhile. Sometimes I cadged a ride in Army vehicles, sometimes I saw wallabies and wild



A modest Chas McColl outside his tent No. '10', Johns Gully, 1943

pigs. There was a beautiful waterfall at the beginning of the Kokoda Trail called Rouna Falls. It was beautiful, wonderful, and I can still recall it clearly. I think it was the biggest waterfall in New Guinea.

I cannot remember the Christmas Days of 1942, 1944 or 1945 but I do recall 1943. For Christmas, Bluey Bagnell the cook and his helpers seemed to make the food very inviting. It was amazing what they could do with bully beef and the tinned fish we called goldfish. Somehow or other he found something that tasted like butter. We usually had an oily spread called tropical spread. Goodness knows what it was made from. I cannot think of anything it tasted like but it was great spread on the tough biscuits issued as rations. After the war the Australian Government could have sold those biscuits for floor tiles they were so hard! Bluey put on a great feast. I guess he might have traded something with the Americans. It was a marvellous Christmas dinner, which I remember to this day. Maybe I was hungry but I thanked him for putting on a wonderful dinner under foul working conditions.



A young Brian Stibbard (on left) and John Hamilton at Johns Gully, 1943

Generally each group or unit had a pin-up girl. Mostly they were Hollywood starlets, although I later found out that the US Sixth Army's 96th 'Deadeyes' Division had as their pin-up girl Marjorie Main, who was Ma Kettle in the film series of that name. It was decided that we would write to Paulette Goddard, a then famous and glamorous Hollywood starlet, and see if we could make her No. 1 Wireless Unit pin-up girl. I won the job to write to Paulette.

A move to Nadzab, slightly inland from the north coast of New Guinea near Lae, was looming. This was necessary because of the planned US landings in the Admiralty Islands. At this stage the US wanted to invade these islands, situated 200 miles (320 kilometres) north-west of Rabaul in New Britain, which the Japanese held. Here were two good airfields and a good reliable harbour. General Douglas MacArthur and Lieutenant General George Kenney considered the Admiralty Islands operation to be risky at this stage. Originally the islands were to be invaded on 1 April 1944, but the date was advanced to 29 February because of the weakened Japanese position after their Rabaul, New Britain and Bismarck setbacks.

Lieutenant General George Kenney and Major General S.B. Akin (Chief Signal Officer Allied Forces Pacific) wanted No. 1 Wireless Unit kana operators and direction finders near them so that immediate information on enemy aircraft

movements could be received. Our monitoring would enable this to happen. The Japanese aircraft were flying out of the Admiralty Islands and Rabaul. Kenney had stated that No. 1 Wireless Unit kana operators and their intelligence team were the most dedicated and top kana operating unit in the South-West Pacific Area.

In mid-February 1944 half of the kana operators were left in Moresby and the others were put on American Dakota transport planes to fly to Nadzab. I was in the first group to go to Nadzab and we flew through the gap of the Owen Stanley Ranges to get to the Markham Valley. Normally aircraft today would fly over the mountains, but the aircraft moving us were not capable of this and the only way to get there was to fly through the valleys and gaps. Going there was rather hairy because of the twisting and turning. Sometimes it looked as though the aircraft's wingtips would hit the cliffs on the side. If the clouds had dropped there was no way you could get out; you would have to crash.

We arrived in Nadzab ready to give the Japanese hell! Kenney had organised the US Army engineers to clear the camp site and construct an operations building, and this was situated twenty-six miles (forty-two kilometres) north-west of Lae. A road had been built to connect Nadzab and Lae.

We took our tents with us from Moresby and had to erect these. Our camp site was on the edge of the valley, not very far from the jungle edge, but on slightly higher ground near the US Fifth Air Force Headquarters. From here we could look over the valley, which had seven airstrips and parking bays for hundreds, maybe thousands



The author outside his tent at Nadzab, 1944

of aircraft. The valley was very long. I imagine it was at least a couple of miles (3.2 kilometres) wide, maybe wider. It was originally covered mostly with kunai grass, a very coarse grass that grew to six or seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 metres) in height. You could stand up in it and no one would see you. I guess you could get lost.

I took my stretcher with me, but by this time it was falling to pieces. At the first opportunity I decided that I had better borrow or pinch another one from the Yanks. I was lucky, I was given one. We kana men seemed to be neglected by the RAAF. One thing that really annoyed us was the fact that some of us who were not operating were ordered to erect some of the officers' tents. I still remember noticing that they had been issued with good quality tents and yet here we were, the vital link of the whole code breaking organisation, without much of anything. Without us, Ultra intelligence would have come to a standstill.

Working with our intercept kana operations was a communications network radiating from No. 1 Wireless Unit headquarters. This unit was set up to pass information collected immediately it was received by nine direct telephone lines, three direct teleprinter lines and eight wireless telegraphy (W/T) transmitters.

The telephone lines were directed to five points in Nadzab. These were our D/F station, US Fifth Air Force Command, US Fifth Air Force Bomber Command, US Fifth Air Force Fighter Command and US No. 1 Radio Mobile Station. Of the other four lines, two were directed to Port Moresby General Headquarters and No. 10 Operational Group, and two lines went to Finschafen for No. 58 Australian W/T Station and US Sixth Army Command. The teleprinters were directed to three points in Nadzab: the Meteorology Section (MET) US Fifth Air Force, the US Fifth Air Force Headquarters and the US Fifth Air Force Bomber Command. One telegraphy transmitted to General MacArthur's Central Bureau Intelligence Headquarters in Brisbane Australia, one to No. 2 Wireless Unit and one to No. 3 Wireless Unit, which were both in the Darwin, Northern Territory area of Australia. Others transmitted to No. 53 W/T Section, Finschafen, New Guinea, one to our D/F station at Port Moresby, one to our D/F station at Salamaua, New Guinea and one to our D/F station Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

The move to Nadzab seemed to be the beginning of the end of our formal association with the RAAF, as their administration's interest in us had completely evaporated. The US forces, however, seemed to have a complete hold on us. Once we left Port Moresby and arrived in Nadzab our supplies from the Air Force dwindled. I had not noticed or thought much about this until I arrived there. Everything including our tents had deteriorated; we could not get replacements. We had to make do.

If we wanted a new shirt in Port Moresby we could get a replacement by merely taking the old one back. If your boots were worn they would replace them. I was soon to discover the lack of clothing and other supplies at Nadzab. I had only two shirts and both had started to rot and tear across the back. I noticed that my one pair of boots (often the ants would build in them overnight) needed replacing because they had started to crack. I went to get my shirts replaced and there were supposedly none available. If there were any I did not get an issue. Nor could I get any boots.

Once we had become operational at Nadzab, the last of the group from Moresby flew up in the same way we did. The American pilots would gun the motors of the Dakota aircraft to get off as they were usually overloaded.

When we moved here we heard that Queen Wilhelmina of Holland was going to pay Australian and American troops (who were operational in Dutch territory) a guilder a day. This was then worth, to the Australian, three shillings and four pence a day (half the pay the Australian Government was paying a private front-line soldier). We thought, *Wacko, at least if we move to Dutch territory we would get a raise in pay*. Australian troops serving in Aitape, just over the border from us in Dutch New Guinea were the first troops to receive this payment.

While there we were told that two bottles of beer per person each week for overseas serving troops would be available for purchase. We had this privilege only once. It was on other occasions sold on the black market at a very high price to American troops before it got to us (*Barry Report*, Australian Government inquiry approximately 1945–46). On the one occasion I was able to buy it, I gave it to my kana friends to enjoy.

Work had started in earnest. One night about ten of us were extremely busy taking kana, and it was stinking hot and most uncomfortable. We had not eaten for hours. When we left the operating area at about two in the morning I remember Bluey, the cook who had quite a string of adjectives in his repertoire, was called out of bed and told to cook us something. He never knew what we were doing; maybe he thought that we just had an easy time. He exploded and called us 'blue bloods'. Old Blue did cook up some great tucker. We had a mess tent with a trestle table and we would sit around this and eat. When the light went on a thousand cockroaches would be there as a crawling mass. I have never seen so many cockroaches in the one spot, but they did not put us off our meal.



Nadzab camp, 1944

At Nadzab we had a good supply of running water, which we thought was great until we discovered that the stream flowed over two dead Japanese bodies just up the hill.

One of our jobs was to monitor the Japanese response to the landing in the Admiralty Islands and give immediate air raid warnings to the US Fifth Air Force at Nadzab, where most Allied aircraft were based, ready for the assault on the Admiralties.

No. 1 Wireless Unit kept giving updated information of the arrival at Rabaul of Japanese bombers and fighters. Some of these aircraft would have been shipped in by aircraft carriers, others flown in. When large numbers of Japanese aircraft were on the strips, Lieutenant General Kenney, through us, knew just about as much about the Japanese Air Force plane movements and strengths as the Japanese themselves did. At the right time the US Fifth Air Force and the RAAF would go in and clobber them, giving the Japanese terrific losses.

By early 1944 the Japanese were sending decreasing numbers of naval planes to Rabaul and there were fewer enemy air strikes from Rabaul against Allied bases. It was about this time that the Japanese decided to close down Rabaul, which was their biggest air base in the South-West Pacific. The last aircraft left at Rabaul was a Zero fighter unit, and when this unit left 80,000 ground forces were still there. This meant they were cut off from the war, isolated for the duration of hostilities.

Their shipping was unable to continue supply because of the terrific losses the Japanese had sustained from Allied air attacks. The kana operators had done their job again.

The operating of the kana men went on for twenty-four hours each day, every day of the year. Generally there were more wireless receivers available than operators. A receiver was never wasted. The wireless receivers that did not have an operator were set up on frequencies that hardly ever worked but were vital when they did. The frequencies that were not working at the time were switched to loudspeaker and if a transmission commenced an operator who was on a quiet period would take over the then working frequency. At the same time he would switch his wireless receiver, with the frequency he had been sitting on, to the loudspeaker mode so if his wireless receiver started to work again the kana operators who were not then on a working frequency could go and work it. This was ongoing. If you had to leave your receiver for any reason at all, you always switched on the loudspeaker so that other operators would know.

The Allied commanders were constantly receiving information from us on Japanese battle orders of attack, so the Allies could attack quickly. We knew the make-up of convoys, the cargo they were carrying, their routes, sailing days and estimated days to arrival at their destination, the serviceability of aircraft, the numbers of aircraft on Japanese airfields, where their supplies were stored, and what the supplies were. We also advised of sneak raids or full Japanese aircraft air raids almost as soon as they left their bases or just before they left. On the first touch of a morse key from base or aircraft they were thwarted because we were generally aware of them and they would be attacked before they could get to their target. This was part of the breakdown of the Japanese Air Force. We could move quickly, often giving two or three hours notice before the run on their target. The two operational kana units around Darwin were doing the same thing.

One of the troubles with the Japanese was that they talked too much. In a way they were insecure. They passed all their information back to Tokyo; they never acted on their own initiative. The constant chatter was a complete give away and enabled us to learn almost everything in relation to their movements: the weather in the whole of the occupied territories and the names of commanders of various units. Snow Bradshaw even reported that, amazingly, he knew where their 'houses of joy' were set up, when the troops could visit and at what cost.

The effectiveness of the work of the kana operators, direction finders, linguists and code breakers proved to be so successful that the Japanese battle plans were



The author at Nadzab with a B-24 Liberator, 1944

often an open book to the Allies. We operators, who knew so much, had been told in Townsville that if we were ever taken prisoner we had to do away with ourselves.

A few weeks after my move to Nadzab the valley was filled with Allied aircraft. When I say filled, I mean there were literally thousands. Mostly they were American, but there were lots of RAAF planes also. On one of my walks around the valley I came across an American Vultee Vengeance. All of these that I had seen before had belonged to the RAAF. While I was looking at the nose painting, along came an American pilot who was going to take it for a short hop. I did not know if it was a test flight or not. When I realised he was going alone and that it was a two-man aircraft, I talked myself into an invitation for a ride. When we took off we climbed straight up, flew into a valley leading off the Markham Valley and he then put the plane into what I thought was an attack dive because it was very steep. When we pulled out or flattened out we were reasonably high but the valley floor was rising towards the aircraft. Our nose was up and our tail was down, but we were not gaining altitude. We seemed to be suspended in that position, losing altitude in relation to the valley floor. I guess I panicked a bit and it seemed quite a few minutes, but I guess it might have been for only a few seconds or maybe half a minute. All of a sudden we started to climb—steeply. I started to breathe again. When we landed back at the strip I said to the pilot, ‘What happened to the aircraft back in the valley?’ He remarked that Vultee Vengeance sometimes had a tendency to do that, they skipped and he had made allowance for it. I do not know to this day if he was kidding or not but it finished me with Vultee Vengeance dive-bombers. This took me back to Parafield days! Never go for a ride, especially

in test flight aircraft, which I think this one may have been. At least no RAAF officer saw me!

Just after moving to Nadzab, and when I was on a night shift on a search basis looking for Japanese frequencies that were not known, I sometimes picked up a propaganda station that broadcast in perfect English. Top big band music that was being played in the US at that time was being broadcast and some of this music included Duke Ellington's works and tunes such as 'In the Mood'. I would stop and listen maybe for a minute or two and this would bring me back to civilisation. However, once when the music was being played the Japanese cut it short and started giving the names, service numbers and addresses of Army personnel, plus maybe five word messages. The Army personnel were held as prisoners of war and there were a few names and numbers that had a number starting with 'SX'. I knew these men had enlisted in South Australia and volunteered for overseas service.

I wrote this information down for a minute or two and then resumed my job of searching. Sometime after that when I was off duty I thought I would write to the addresses given and advise what I had heard. This I did and passed my letters in to be posted. All letters were censored and whoever censored these letters told me that it could be a propaganda exercise and could raise false hopes to the addressees. The letters were not posted and I did not bother again to write down this type of information.

Since the beginning of the war we were able to break into and crack most of the Japanese Navy code. However, at times it was most difficult as the Japanese did not use the same place names for the places they had captured as we did. But we were able to give information that resulted in Japanese ships being sunk one after the other because the Japanese never thought that a westerner could understand katakana. They relayed information about their departing ships. They were then attacked because we kana operators were reading their messages. The Japanese High Command required the ships to advise by radio their expected location at noon the following day. The efforts of the kana operators and code breakers ensured that US submarines and Allied aircraft could ambush many Japanese ships by supplying information of their stops and their expected locations at noon the following day. The Japanese Army code was quite different, however, as they used a short morse figure number group instead of their katakana code, and this we found most difficult and sometimes impossible to break.

In the following event the Australian Army 9th Division gave us on a plate the whole system to break into the Japanese Army code. Late in January 1944 this

Division had seized the area of Sio on the northern side of New Guinea and were hot on the tail of the Japanese, and they discovered heavy steel trunks that had been sunk into the waters of a newly captured river. The trunks were retrieved then investigated by Central Bureau in Brisbane and it was found that the trunks contained the complete Japanese Army codes. Wireless Units were then able to handle this code with almost continuous success to the end of the war and beyond. From this time on it became almost an open book for us. We had the ability to decipher most Japanese Navy, Army and Air Force messages. Another bonus for us was that the Japanese commander who had tossed the trunks into the water had advised his superiors at the 18th Army Headquarters in Madang that he personally supervised their destruction. The officer's statement was believed and the enemy remained completely unaware that the codes had been captured. Through this discovery the war in the Pacific again changed. From this point on we were able to read almost any Japanese wireless communication.

On 29 February 1944 Major General Akin made a visit to our operating room. He was accompanied by Colonel Pachynski, Senior Signal Officer of the US Fifth Air Force, and General H.G. Ingles, Chief Signal Officer, US Army. They were given the opportunity to listen and observe us at work monitoring the Japanese transmissions. Before leaving, Major General Akin gave us commendations for our contribution to the Allied successes to date. The work of Nos. 2 and 3 Wireless Units operating from the Darwin area was also of very high standard, and these units also received commendations from the American High Command.

I should mention that all administration personnel were barred from setting foot in our operating area, by order of RAAF Command. I am certain they never did learn our function.

While still operating at Nadzab I received a letter from Paulette Goddard, enclosing a signed photograph. The inscription she wrote on the corner of the front of the photograph was, 'To the boys of the Royal Australian Air Force Group 826. Best wishes from Paulette Goddard'. This photograph was then officially the No. 1 Wireless Unit's pin-up. When the photograph first arrived I put it in the operations room. I cannot remember who carried the photograph through Biak, Hollandia and eventually to the Philippines, but I think that I did.

I was a little bit different from most of the kana operators. I used to walk a lot and look around where I was operating, checking things out, checking the area out. It was easy to get lost. Some of the trees would have been two or three hundred feet (sixty-one to ninety-one metres) tall, possibly taller. The root systems on the trees



No. 1 Wireless Unit's pin-up portrait of Hollywood star, Paulette Goddard

were magnificent, some like Moreton Bay fig trees. Think of those about ten times bigger and you will envisage the type of root system that I recall seeing. Some of the trees were so tall and so covered with creepers you could not see the sunlight. In the jungle it was like a sauna bath—damp, humid and as hot as hell! When you walked in there you could feel leeches dropping on you and you had to get them off straight away otherwise they would really give some trouble and nasty sores. I used to walk around in these places with absolute amazement. I always took with me my trusty .303 rifle because we were never very far from the front line and there could have been Japanese stumbling about there. I came across a few unburied Japanese bodies. In the moist part of the jungle, where the humidity was almost unbearable, there were the most beautiful butterflies. One in particular I remember was the Blue Emperor. It was a magnificent butterfly; its iridescent

blue-black wings were so beautiful. I did manage one day to catch one, but I let it go after I had had a close look at it. I explored other places and much of the time I was on my own. Had I got lost or shot I would never have been found.

From the time I went to New Guinea I took Atebrin tablets three times a day, to ward off malaria. Most of the chaps contracted malaria during their tour of duty; I certainly did. At one stage I caught the daddy of all colds and went completely deaf. Almost immediately afterwards I caught dengue fever. One night, when I had the fever, I was found wandering about the camp. I had come off working and did not reach my tent; I must have gone out of my mind. I could have wandered off and gone into the jungle I guess. In our small organisation we did not have a doctor, but we did have a medical orderly, who held the rank of corporal.

The orderly was great. He found me and rushed me off to the RAAF hospital. This hospital was in an extremely large tent right on the edge of the jungle, and there were Air Force medical orderlies in attendance. I was there for quite a few days but I do not really remember how long. I know that one night I wandered off out of my bed, which had mosquito netting around it, but I was brought back and put to bed. After I was well enough to leave I was taken by jeep to our camp site. On leaving the hospital I noticed that both sides of the track were stacked with bombs, artillery shells and other ammunition for miles. It was a bomb depot leading to the hospital and if the Japanese had bombed it and hit the hospital it would have been our fault, not that of the Japanese. This is the sort of thing the Allied forces did. Maybe they thought it was safer there! What a place to put a hospital!

As soon as I arrived back from hospital I was again on duty. I started operating immediately and was able to give the Japanese hell again. Late in March, wireless messages intercepted allowed the Allies to attack Japanese airfields in Hollandia prior to the invasion, to provide more adequate air cover and, in fact, to make the landing in an area that was only lightly defended, as the Japanese did not expect an attack.

At this time, while I was sitting on the wireless receiver taking katakana on the frequency that I was working, three other signals came in very strongly using the same frequency. They were Allied international morse code symbols, and underneath them was the Japanese kana symbol, a very low-power one. I was having difficulty in picking up the Japanese signal and turning my mind off from the very strong Allied signals so as to be able to give complete concentration to the Japanese kana signals. A code breaker came out and said, 'Don't lose him, don't lose him, we want it, we want it'. In my concentration I said, 'Oh shut up', because

I was trying to take this signal and this damned person was trying to tell me not to lose it because it was most important. He must have realised the importance of my messages because of the consistency and transposing of the messages I was receiving off the frequency I had just worked on. My work must have been like plain English to him because he would take my work, and be back and hovering over me for more. Anyway, he did shut up and I concentrated like hell to get the next signal, and in my own mind I got it one hundred per cent right. I was my usual cocky self. The message had finished and the Japanese operator who was receiving the message asked for a repeat—the Japanese must have been getting the same sort of messy stuff that I was putting up with. The code breaker whom I had told to shut up just stood there, and as I took my earphones off and calmly started to compose my shorthand into English symbols he said to me, ‘Aren’t you going to check the repeat?’ I said, ‘What for? It is the Japanese who is asking for a repeat. I’m not.’ At that point I turned on the loudspeaker and the whole garbled group of morse messages came out. I handed the message transcribed into English symbols to the code breaker who had told me not to lose the message. He said to me, ‘You are unbelievable. You must have had a good teacher.’ ‘No’, I said. ‘I had the best.’ He walked away shaking his head.

To me it was not a big deal. To others it may have been. But I had the ability to ignore extraneous sounds and concentrate, and I could cope with the fact that the Japanese occasionally would sometimes change their call signs. They might use the same call sign from specific stations for a month or a week and then change.

As the receiving station continued I noticed that when a Japanese base station was calling up one of its forward stations to make contact about an important message, the Japanese operator would always ask for the signal strength. If this strength was suitable and a message had to be sent it would be transmitted. The first part of the message would be the forward station call sign, and this would be followed by a long dash morse signal, held possibly for a second or two, and then the message would be sent. I worked out their sending priority and also that sometimes the signal changed. If it was urgent or very important the Japanese operator would drop the dash signal and replace it with the international morse letters ‘A H R’, and this would be sent as a complete morse block of nine dots and dashes. As the message ended, two international letters ‘V E’ were sent, but as a block of three dots, one dash and another dot. I had learned their priority set-up and this in itself gave me a personal jump on the Japanese. I now had my receiving down to a fine art and was able to say that I had an important message. This would occasionally irritate odd code breakers who sometimes tried to put me down.

The code breakers were like honeybees around a hive. They could not wait for the next message to be completed. This, however, was distracting. They did not understand the extreme pressure the kana operator was subjected to. At times the static was terrible and the signals underpowered. To add to this, other Allied wireless transmissions were occasionally using the same frequency as the Japanese kana operator. Even though there were times when the morse came in spurts, the code breaker was ever ready, hovering, sweating, off and running with the message sheets into the decoding area. Once a code breaker asked if I was still working the station with the same call sign. It seemed that he wanted to test my capabilities and take the 'micky' out of me. He used the English phonetic sounds as we wrote them. As quick as a flash I called back using the correct Japanese pronunciation, which made him look the foolish one!

Before the Allies moved to Hollandia, the unit intercepted messages directing the Japanese commander of their base there to evacuate all of his planes as the Japanese High Command expected that the Americans would soon attack the base. From this information the Americans and RAAF attacked the base and destroyed in excess of 280 aircraft on the ground. The Allies' planning staff for the Hollandia operation was supplied with a vast amount of information from as far away as Tokyo and Formosa (now Taiwan), including the state of Japanese aircraft production and training schedules.

On the day that the Allied invasion force set sail for Hollandia, our unit received the following message from Lieutenant General Ennis C. Whitehead (US Fifth Air Force):

It is desired to express appreciation and to register Commendation for the superior work which you and the men under your command are doing. The interest displayed and the exemplary promptness with which your interest and your information are transmitted to this office indicate devotion to service which is beyond the strict limitations of, what we know as line of duty.

Sometimes the Japanese call signs would change, and to make sure that we were working the same station we would put our direction finder on it to check the bearing and to make sure that we were monitoring the same station working the same area. I soon knew the sending of lots of the Japanese operators in the same way that you get to know someone's handwriting or shorthand. They would send a symbol and maybe clip the end, or in a group of symbols start a group or end a

group that seemed to be different to other operators. I would say that that was 'Joe Blow' working from the same place or area but using a different call sign. If I was asked, 'How would you know?' I would reply that I was almost one hundred per cent sure. The direction finder would take a bearing on the signal and most times I was right. He would say that it was where you said but we do not know how you do it. It was easy for me, as I said, like reading someone's handwriting.

Once I had worked a Japanese for a little while I could recognise his sending. I guess that was a bit unusual but not necessarily a big deal, as some of the other kana operators probably could do it too. In the eyes of the non-kana operators it was a mystery, but you could not be a kana operator unless you were a good wireless operator to start with. We would have five times as many symbols to remember and translate. It was quite a job. I guess that my record had gone before me and this may have been one of the reasons that I was later chosen in the group to go with General MacArthur back into the Philippines on his return in October 1944.

I would regularly walk around the edge of our operating area near the jungle edge, and on one occasion I came across a New Guinea man and his wife. I remember this so vividly because the man came out of nowhere swinging a stick and looking as though he did not have a care in the world. Following, some 150 yards (137 metres) behind, came his struggling wife. She looked about twenty years older than he did. She was a little person, all bent over, carrying a load of gear. There was stuff tied to her back, she had a band around her head and there was more gear hanging from that. She was only just able to get along. What she carried was most probably all their possessions. Goodness knows how she could walk; she seemed almost ready to collapse.

Her husband looked as though he was going for his morning walk. I tried to speak pidgin English to the native regarding the heavy load his wife carried. His reply was 'Dog Mary', and in English this means bitch. I remember that they skirted the valley to remain hidden. Maybe they thought that the valley was still occupied by the Japanese. One thing I do remember about this poor woman was that her breasts were hanging like old razor strops almost touching the top of her legs. She looked under-nourished and he so fit.

While I was in the Markham Valley I heard that Dick Bong was operating out of there. I was drawn to find and meet him. Our camp was not far away and I walked onto one of the US Fifth Air Force strips, found him, and introduced myself. I was quite at home in his presence; he was so natural. I think he then held the rank of captain, soon to become major, with twenty-seven kills. I held only the

rank of aircraftman but Dick made no attempt to dismiss me. Quite the reverse happened, as we were somehow drawn together, but I could not tell him what work I was doing.

We discovered that we had a lot in common. We both liked big band music and he also played a musical instrument. Dick played a clarinet, which he had with him. Also his upbringing and involvement in the church were similar to mine. As we talked I discovered that he liked doing his own thing, he loved adventure, as I did. When on leave Dick was not interested in hard living, nor was I.



**Major Richard (Dick) Bong's P-38 Lightning fighter, Nadzab 1944 –
Note the 27 kills painted on fuselage**

After hearing some of Dick's adventures it is uncanny that on 28 February 1944 a kana interception by No. 1 Wireless Unit gave Lieutenant General Kenney three hours notice that a Japanese major general, a brigadier and his whole staff of high-ranking officers were going to land on one of the airstrips at Wewak on the coast of New Guinea. Kenney passed this information on to Bong's squadron and Bong, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lynch, just had time to gun their aircraft flat out all the way from Nadzab to Wewak and catch the Japanese aircraft rolling to a stop on the strip. Lynch got in on the Japanese strip first but somehow he had not set up his gunsight and missed. Bong came in after him and destroyed the Japanese aircraft and all its crew and passengers on board. This aircraft did not count in Bong's tally. It was a ruling of Kenney's that to achieve a kill the aircraft had to be flying and seen to be destroyed by a second party. This was sighted by Lynch, but Bong stated that the aircraft's wheels were already on the strip and had stopped.

KATAKANA MAN

Another adventure is told by Alf Humble of Adelaide, an ex-RAAF pilot. Humble had been flying in and out of Nadzab and one day had just landed on a RAAF strip, and was told that he was just a few minutes late to see or hear the following story.

The incredible Dick Bong had just returned from a sortie. Prior to landing, he had dived his P-38 from a high altitude, almost vertical and at full bore, and as he flattened out over the strip he did a half roll to upside down. As he started his run down the strip he cut both motors and at this stage was flying at an estimated five hundred miles per hour (eight hundred kilometres per hour) and said over the radio, 'Look guys, a P-38 with no noise'. He went almost to the end of the strip, at a height of about one hundred feet (thirty metres) from the ground, half rolled back to straight and level, restarted his motors and then landed on the strip.

I followed Dick's achievements throughout the war. I will relate more about him later.

While I was in Nadzab I also became very friendly with three other Americans who were camped next to us. They were Frank Koopman of South Dakota, Herb Gimpl from Connecticut and John Robinson from Michigan. These men from US No. 1 Radio Mobile Station, which was camped next door to us, were, I suspect, doing similar work to us but none of us spoke about our jobs. I really enjoyed their company and actually I enjoyed my life there, even though the days had their moments of worry.



Herb Gimpl with the author's .303 rifle (Photograph taken near camp site at Nadzab)

After being in the RAAF for about one and a half years, the majority of us still held our initial 'Day One' rank. One day, some in our group were told we were now leading aircraftman (LAC). The earlier LACs were made corporal. To become a LAC was not a promotion. This only meant a pass in the final stage of training and so we should have been given this rank back in Roseneath, Queensland. I should have received the rank back in Victor Harbor while in aircrew. The Air Force kept us at the lowest rank of all, even though we were a very vital link in helping to win the Pacific War at that stage. The Air Force for some unknown reason would not or did not want to promote any of us.

Others and I often thought that had we stayed in aircrew another five or six months, we would have at least been sergeants; the top pilots and wireless operators and navigators on course generally had a good chance of getting a commission. Our pay classification was Group Two and that was what a normal wireless operator was receiving, but our work was much more skilled than that, so we were cheated in pay, as we should have been in Group One.

At this stage we were busy helping to secure Biak and around the area for the US Fifth Air Force and their troops. Just prior to my departure to Biak I fell into a rubbish pit. I went on a late afternoon shift and when I came off duty it was night-time and the area was pitch-black. Unbeknown to me, during the afternoon a rubbish pit had been dug alongside our walking track and in the dark I walked into the pit. I badly jarred my body. Next morning the mantrap was hurriedly filled in.

After a few weeks here we felt a heavy earth tremor. We were only under canvas but none of us were concerned to feel the ground shake. I had my dixies (a type of rectangular eating plate with sides about an inch (2.5 centimetres) in height and made of metal) tied together on a rope in my tent, and as the earth moved they clattered together. I guess had we been in a solid building we would have been far more concerned. The tremor did not mean a damn thing to us and yet it would have measured in the five plus zone on the Richter scale.

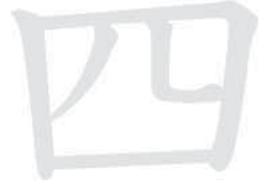
Mice and rats were a problem. The rats were big. They were possibly eating dead bodies and were everywhere. To catch them we used kerosene tins. We would fill the tins with water and sometimes with one hundred octane petrol. We put a bottle over the top of the tin and then put the bait in the end of the bottle. Where the neck was leading into the middle of the tin we would put tropical spread to make it a bit slippery so the rats and mice could run along the top of the bottle and when they got to the neck to get the bait they would fall off into the liquid. We used to catch a lot this way, and some chaps produced traps from forty-four gallon (two hundred litre) drums.

It was a pretty unhealthy place; around the camp there was also kunai grass, with red scrub typhus mites. If you caught scrub typhus you were unlucky because about every other person who caught it died. I do not really remember anyone from our group catching it, but plenty of men did. It was not a good place to live. It used to rain like hell, but we became used to that. It prepared us for other greater rain areas. The rainfall in Nadzab would, in my view, have been about four times heavier than that of Port Moresby's.

I must mention that during our operating time here we were never disrupted by Japanese action, ground or air. The only Japanese activity in the air was a few 'recce' (observation) flights. The reason for this was because the kana operators were aware of all the Japanese aircraft movements. The aircraft were being attacked and destroyed before they could get anywhere near Nadzab. Anything that moved we were onto. We were keeping the huge air base here safe from the enemy attack and doing our job. All my group were firm friends and there was a great feeling of camaraderie: we stuck together like glue. We had to make the unit tick. I think this is why No. 1 Wireless Unit Sigint was the most successful Allied operational unit in the Pacific.

In June 1944 the usual disappearing act took place and some of the kana operators went missing. In fact, these men had gone to the small island of Owi (just south of Biak Island) and operated on the island from a cave. Coincidentally, out of the four operators at Owi, there were three with the Christian name of Harry and their surnames were Atkinson, Donahoo (nicknamed 'Wife'), Mills (nicknamed 'Hank') and Jack Bleakley.

In July the disappearance of operators occurred again — Biak was their destination. We were aware that a small part of Biak had been secured and knew that our time here was coming to an end because Kenney wanted to move his Fifth Air Force to Biak and wanted us to move with him. This meant the required protection through early raid warnings given by us would provide safety for his Air Force.



IV

THE BIAK OPERATION

By this time General MacArthur needed the airfields of Mokmer, Sorido and Borokoe, on the large Dutch coral island of Biak, to enable him to continue his island hopping and begin his conquest of the Philippines. Biak was situated less than one degree from the equator and about 800 miles (1290 kilometres) north-west from Nadzab.

The coastline of Biak was fringed with a large coral reef that extended out into the sea for hundreds of yards. It was a low, flat-topped island. The hills, if you could call them that, supported a thick tangled jungle growth and there were no natural harbours.

Biak was a natural fort. There were ridges, and behind the first ridge there were not only caves and raw up-jutting coral cliffs but also deep ravines and thick tangled jungle. The limestone caves about 1200 yards (1097 metres) north of the western end of the Mokmer airstrip were the key to its defence, and were large enough to hold a thousand men. Another series of caves ran under the main ridge north of the Mokmer village, and a third honeycombed the jungle-covered ridges to the west. It was these caves that gave the Japanese the advantage during the fighting.

The Japanese were also advantaged because they had a commanding view of the ocean from the cliffs. When I landed after the battle and looked at the situation I could see why the Americans had had such a horrendous time establishing a beachhead before eventually taking the airfields.

In late May when the invasion started, we were still operating from Nadzab. It was generally believed by interception of messages that Biak was lightly held by not more than two thousand troops, but in reality there were 11,400 men, including battle-hardened veterans from the China war plus some three-man light tanks. The Japanese had not communicated by radio their intention to reinforce Biak, so no Allied intelligence unit had picked up any messages about their strategy and no sighting of unusual enemy activity was reported. Had the Japanese Army short-figure Number Set code been discovered earlier, the Biak operation could have been quite different as they may have communicated their intentions in Army Air code.

The progress on the first day of the landing went well, but on the second day the Japanese fought back fiercely and fighting by the Americans proved futile as they were vastly outnumbered and outgunned. Following what was to be the first tank attack by the Japanese against the Americans, the US Marines had to partly evacuate by sea and call in reinforcements.

The maze of caves and tunnels under the cliffs and the jungle made it impossible to find the major caverns that hid the main enemy forces and many of their mortar and mountain batteries. The caves had connecting corridors and exits that permitted the defenders literally to disappear from the face of the earth and reappear in the midst of the invaders.

Fierce fighting continued and after setback and counterattack the US infantry seized Mokmer airfield, but the field was still under harassing fire that made its regular use impossible. Days dragged on and the dwindling Japanese garrisons held on with almost inhuman tenacity. The caves had to be reduced one by one, using flamethrowers (ignited petrol) and even electrically fired 500-pound (227 kilogram) charges of TNT. In many cases the only solution was to seal the entrances and exits, leaving the Japanese to suffocate or die of starvation. Stubborn and heroic defence denied the Americans the use of the Mokmer airfield until 20 June 1944, when the engineers were able to restart work. The two other airstrips, Borokoe and Sorido, were captured on the same day and two days later the first fighters landed on Mokmer. On the morning of 22 June, the bitter siege was effectively over. With hindsight, from the Allied point of view, Biak was well



Biak after the landing, 1944 – Note ships off the beach and aircraft on the strip

worth the cost of life as American aircraft were able to use the three airfields in great numbers—the base supporting 70,000 men, including No. 1 Wireless Unit. MacArthur now had his stepping stone.

In mid-August the detachment from Owi and the rest of No. 1 Wireless Unit went to Biak. Our group from Nadzab travelled in a US Dakota, which took approximately seven hours. I was sorry in a way to leave Nadzab because I left the best operating building that I had ever worked in, but I was happy that my fellow kana operators, who had been with me in Townsville, Port Moresby and Nadzab, were still to be with me, as we worked well as a team. It also helped to have Bluey Bagnell along with us as he was able to create a light-hearted atmosphere that kept our spirits up. I also thought we would now be paid the guilder a day because we were operating on Dutch soil, but we never saw this bonus.

As the aircraft approached Biak I had a view of the island, which did not impress me. On the edge of the island there appeared to be lush spots and some coconut trees along the coast. The land seemed to go up onto a plateau, which was flat with sparse, scrubby vegetation. The vastness and space reminded me of some of the inland of Australia, except that the outback colours in Australia are beautiful—red, yellow, brown and orange—but the colour here was a slushy grey; most uninteresting. It also looked hot. I could see why we had been told (in jest) that we were going to a Pacific holiday camp. When the aircraft doors opened and we stepped onto the island the heat was like a blast furnace and this intense heat was also reflected off the coral surface. It was so desolate. My first and lasting impression was that Biak was just a dull hole.

Setting up camp was a problem. Everything, including our tents, had deteriorated and we could not get replacements. We had to make do. During the move to Biak some tent poles were also lost. We needed top and end poles so we went into the scrub and cut poles about eight feet (2.4 metres) long from saplings. Two of these poles were cut with a V-fork end at the right height so that the top pole could be laid in the V. We could not get a centre pole for my tent and we had to patch the tent with strips of canvas. The erection of our worn-out tents proved difficult because of the coral base and there was not much topsoil. It is ironic that we RAAF men had a hard job getting equipment. We did not even have a decent tent. The Americans on the other hand were well equipped. All their men—officers and other ranks—had excellent single centre-pole top tents, all in good condition and all khaki colour. Ours were mouldy looking and scruffy. In our camp a few American tents appeared, but these were not used by kana operators.



**No. 1 Wireless Unit personnel outside the author's tent on Biak, 1944 – Note tent poles
L-R: unknown, unknown, G Blumer, H Bates, unknown, Kel Hocking,
Jack Bleakley, unknown, unknown, the author**

Our Air Force never gave the Wireless Units any consideration and should not be proud of the way they treated us, especially No. 1 Wireless Unit. We were making a valuable contribution to the war effort, which the Americans appreciated, but we did not appear to be recognised by the Australian Forces and are still not. At this stage we were scrounging materials from the Americans. This was, we felt, most undignified. One thing that did make me happy, though, was that I was given a new pair of boots in exchange for my old rotten cracked ones. However, I did not get a new shirt to replace the one that was falling off my back. As it happened it did not really matter about the shirt, because as a result of the continuing heat we were mostly bare chested. But the principle of the non-issue of a new shirt did irk me.

Our primitive operating building was built near the Mokmer airfield by the Americans and was there when we arrived. Consequently, we were immediately operational again as a complete unit. The building had sides like an old-fashioned Australian sleep-out. The bottom section was galvanised iron clad and the top section was flywire. The wire allowed the heat to leave the building and also kept insects out. My first impression was that it had been erected as a temporary measure, just a stop over, and I was to be proved right. It was most uncomfortable; not only was the heat coming from our receiving sets, but the midday heat was around 120–130°F in the shade because we were almost on the equator. There was hardly any breeze. It was very much like a large oven that really never cooled down. Even at night one did not have to wear a shirt, and perspiration poured off us. It was a hole! After

operating all day, we would generally leave the building exhausted. The heat and concentration were taking their toll and we were losing weight.



Ablutions using a discarded Japanese tub at the Biak camp, 1944 – This newly trained operator from Melbourne replaced someone who moved on

By 25 August 1944, all enemy air-ground wireless traffic was being covered from Biak. All of our movements were now dictated by the Americans, who put us as close as possible to the action to enable us to better intercept Japanese messages. We were located right next door to the High Command as they were anxious to get the information we were gathering as soon as possible. I was always elated when I felt I had taken down some good messages. It was uncanny but I could often sense when a message was very important and it gave me an extra sense of achievement to know that I was able to take kana symbols down accurately and quickly.

My natural curiosity prompted me to try to find out what was the result of any action that may have taken place as a result of my intercepting a message, but more often than not the system beat me. One of the reasons would have been that I was too busy with my operating and did not always get time to follow my interception through.

Right from the start of my kana experience, operators and code breakers were kept apart, probably for security reasons. The concept was that in case of possible capture by the Japanese the less one knew, the better. But the system created relationship problems in the unit.

KATAKANA MAN

It is true that kana operators lived and worked in a different world, but because of their very nature we worked best when not constrained too much. Our job required so much concentration that when we were off duty there was a strong need to unwind and relax, which did not seem to be understood by other members of the unit. Despite the fact that we could take the messages of Japanese in katakana shorthand and then transpose them into English symbols, our accuracy and effort was rarely acknowledged. However, the Americans had nothing but praise for us.

This unfortunate set of circumstances had been evident from Townsville onwards but changed when our group, later known as the 'Australian Foreign Legion', went to the Philippines and we were under direct American control for about twelve weeks. Under their influence, our group worked very well as a team, despite the fact that we were hampered by an ineffectual Australian officer who was usually pushed aside by the Americans.

After I had settled into my new home and into the rhythm of the workload, I started my usual exploring. When I walked I was always armed with my .303 rifle. I liked to explore the caves and Japanese wreckage; occasionally I would ask a friend to walk with me, but mostly I went alone. I enjoyed climbing onto camouflaged Japanese lookouts built in the scrub and examining the view they gave. They always had an outstanding view of some part of the island and surrounding water.



The author standing in front of a Japanese lookout tower at Biak perimeter, 1944

The Americans were not worried about the island as a whole—they just wanted to control the airstrips. Only the airfield and enough surrounding country to make it safe were captured. There was a no-man's-land between what the Americans held and what the Japanese retained, which was safe in relative terms. The fighting was finished and about the only time that fire was directed at the Japanese was when they tried to enter our area to steal food. MacArthur's tactic was to starve the enemy and it was working. Surrender pamphlets had been dropped but to my knowledge not many of the enemy had actually surrendered. Had they done so, they would have been housed and fed.

One day Jim O'Neill and I decided to walk around part of the inside of the perimeter of the safe area. This was the first time that Jim and I had been in this area, but when we found it to be flat and uninteresting we decided to go a little way outside the perimeter, as it had scrub and more caves that would be interesting to explore. Here the stench of decaying bodies was very evident; it is a smell that you never forget. Because of the nature of the island and its coral base, many bodies were left by the Japanese to rot where they fell and this made the island even more unattractive. Had we been souvenir collectors this area would have been a 'Mecca'. We were not really interested in souvenirs, and we could not carry them anyway because our movements were so unpredictable.

On this day we saw an extremely well fed wild pig, which looked terribly vicious. It charged out of the undergrowth like an express train leaving a tunnel and headed straight toward us. We had our rifles slung on our backs and did not have time to unslung them so we scrambled up the nearest tree, which was not much more than twenty feet (six metres) high. In our haste our rifles dropped off our shoulders and fell to the ground, and because the pig snorted and stamped around the base of the tree we were not able to climb down and retrieve them. We were more scared of the pig than we were of the possibility of being shot at by Japanese troops, as they were starving and their only interest would have been looking for food. Apparently our pig was too smart for them.

The pig carried on at the base of the tree for about twenty minutes and then left, but we waited for about another twenty minutes before venturing down. We scurried back to camp with our rifles cocked and at the ready—safe at last.

I never went back to that part of the island.

At this stage most of the 4500 seasoned Japanese crack combat troops had been killed, and this left only the thousands of service and supply unit troops. These

troops were more interested in staying alive and stealing what food they could from us. They were not interested in fighting, which was unusual for the Japanese.

One day Jim O'Neill and I went to the beach and I took photographs of some small wrecked Japanese three-man tanks that had been used to defend the island in one of the first tank battles. I proudly sat on one of these tanks and Jim took my photograph. We also saw undamaged 4.7 inch (120 millimetre) naval dual purpose guns and one six inch (150 millimetre) defence gun.



Author astride a Japanese tank on Biak, with Owi Island in the distance



Jim O'Neill with the same tank, one of the first destroyed in the first tank battle on Biak, 29 May 1944



The author and the six inch defence gun, Biak 1944 (Photograph courtesy of Jim O'Neill)

I do not remember much air action over Biak; our interception was covering most Japanese air movements, and through this information the Allies destroyed many Japanese aircraft that were hammering Allied bases in the vicinity. The enemy was holding back some aircraft, realising that the Allies would be working on another leapfrog—Borneo and the Philippines. This proved to be correct, and the kana operators and their backups soon landed with the Australian troops in Borneo.

We had our moments of mirth and I vividly remember one such an occasion that occurred just after we arrived on Biak. Because of the coral, the Americans had used explosives to make a crude toilet. They had blown a slit trench approximately twenty-five feet (7.6 metres) long by five feet (1.5 metres) wide and about six feet (1.8 metres) deep and over this a twenty-hole toilet had been placed.

A regular task of one of the general hands was to burn out the toilet. Aircraft fuel was readily available for this purpose. The practice was to light some paper and throw it into the hole and burn out the waste. However, on one occasion when this job was done, too much petrol had been poured into the trench. Just after the burning paper was thrown into the trench, an almighty explosion occurred and the twenty-hole seat blew up. The noise was so horrendous that we all thought the Japanese had dropped a bomb on us. Fortunately nobody was hurt. Following the explosion many hands quickly repaired the damage. I doubt whether the general hand poured as much petrol into the trench again.

About 1938 a coin, an English farthing, was released as a gimmick in Australia. I had managed to collect about twenty of these, and when I went into the RAAF I took them with me. One day some of the Americans were talking about our currency and told me they were collecting our coins. These coins were used on bracelets for their girlfriends. I showed them my farthings and they had never seen or heard of them and this prompted me to sell them to get extra cash. I conducted a sort of auction, which was quite hilarious, plus being extremely beneficial to me. This cash came in handy as I moved further north.

On Biak our interception concentrated on a smaller area than we had worked on at Nadzab. We now concentrated more on the Biak to Singapore area, as far north as Japan, and kept a close watch on the Philippines. We also kept a watch on any frequencies that might work in the area from Nadzab to Hollandia, an area that MacArthur had bypassed and where well in excess of 200,000 Japanese troops had been isolated. We only needed to keep an eye on them in case of unusual activity.

Even though the operating was just as endless as we had previously experienced in Nadzab and earlier, I was becoming impatient. I felt that we would be moving on and I was anxious for this to happen. Some of the operators who had been active longer than I were being taken out and sent to Australia for a break. I felt that my next move would take me closer to Japan, maybe to the Philippines, which seemed to be MacArthur's next objective.

Occasionally at night the Japanese were able to send in an intruding aircraft that had escaped our surveillance, but these raids were more of a nuisance than anything else as they dropped only a few random bombs and were possibly reconnoitring. At this time the Americans brought in an aircraft that I had never seen before. It was a night fighter, painted black and about twice the size of a P-38 Lightning, but it had a two-man crew and newly developed automatic firing, radar-controlled guns to counter the night air activity. It was known as the P-61 Black Widow. I did not see this type of aircraft again but they were used on Okinawa at the very end of the war.

One day when I was out walking, an American soldier approached me and asked if it was safe for him to leave his area for an hour or so. He said he did not want to be caught out if the Japanese were to mount any raids. This seemed a bit odd to me as we rarely saw a Japanese plane. No doubt he recognised me from my slouch hat as belonging to the Australian intercept unit and presumed I would know what was going on. I wondered if in fact he was trying to find out what we did. At the time I questioned, to myself, the effectiveness of our security.

Actually, there was not much going on there at all. The Americans had secured the base they wanted and the Japanese were starved; they could not get out of their area and there was nowhere to go. The Americans controlled everything they required.

About a week before I left Biak I was walking around one of the American flight crew areas wanting to have a chat and came across a captain, and in my usual curious form I asked him what type of plane he flew. He told me that he was flying PBY Catalinas, which I thought was unusual as I had not seen that type of plane on the water in Biak in the previous nine or so weeks that I had been on the island.

I asked where his plane was and he told me that it was in the harbour. He mentioned that he was going to take a quick test flight in it the following morning. As we chatted he told me that if I was at his camp site (which was not far from ours) at a certain time the next day that I could accompany him on the flight. I thought, *Whacko, another one!*

The night before the flight I went on duty at about midnight and I knew that I would have plenty of time when I came off duty to have some food and make the rendezvous with the American. The next morning I met the captain and four other Americans, and we were taken by jeep to the jetty where we boarded a small motor boat and were taken out to the only Catalina in the harbour. It was a very windy day and the water outside the harbour was rougher than I had ever seen it before. On the trip out to the plane I wondered if the flight would still go on because of the roughness of the sea. The crew said nothing about the weather, so I assumed that everything was normal.

After we had been aboard for about twenty minutes the engines were started up and we moved away from the mooring out of the harbour and into the open sea. I was sitting behind the pilots in the wireless operator's position and I could hear some conversations between the crew. The motors were opened up and we tried to take off. The water was really rough and we appeared to be unable to get enough speed to lift off. Several times we nearly made it but dropped back in the water. Finally, after a mile or so of trying, we broke free and were airborne.

Shortly after take-off one of the crew called out, 'Goofer, you have done it again, we have popped some rivets and water has come in'. I had not been aware that my friend's nickname was 'Goofer' until this stage.

I thought to myself that it was not Goofer (the captain) who had caused the problem. It was I, Jack Brown, who had goofed as this was the third time I had hitched a ride in an aircraft that had problems, and once again it was without the approval and knowledge of my superiors.

While we were in the air one of the crew carried out repairs to the hull. I suspected this was the reason for the test flight, although I had initially thought that the reason was to test the radio. After some banging and hammering one of the crew made the comment that it was all right to go back to Biak and this made me feel a little more secure.

The water was still rough when we landed, but before we were back into the smoother water in the harbour one of the crew yelled out that we were still taking in some water. Goofer taxied the plane into very shallow water over the reef where it could not sink. After the plane was secured a small boat came out and took us back to the jetty. I was pleased to be back on firm ground again! Goofer told me that if another test flight was required I would be welcome to come. I thought to myself, *this is the end and the last time I am going to ask for a ride in a US aircraft up for testing*. I did not see Goofer again, because a few days later I left the island.

Newly trained kana operators had been sent in to replace the operators on leave. One of these was Norm Tyshing, who was an Australian of Chinese descent. He was a dedicated operator and a breath of fresh air. He was a wonderful, colourful character and he was well liked by every kana operator. He was in everything that was going on.

We kana operators were mostly young with talents that marked us out. Sigint performance relied on our ability to read accurately the Japanese messages. In the Allied Commander's eyes the Australian kana operators were the best in the South-West Pacific, and in fact were used by the American forces ahead of their own people on front-line positions. I believe our intercept system was much more efficient and flexible than the American system, which was based on using a special typewriter. The Australian system did not have mechanical restrictions and relied on each operator's skills, which were highly developed. Australian kana operators were so well trained that this allowed them to change errors and repeats, but more importantly allowed them to get the feeling of the message being taken down. I remember that Norm Tyshing was happy to be posted to our unit because of its reputation.

Australian commanders, just after the commencement of World War II in the Pacific, often did not believe in our 'receiving' abilities and being able to give warning of enemy attacks. It appeared that we committed the unforgivable offence of disagreeing with their lack of action in heeding our warnings. This was made all the more unforgivable on it being proven that we were, more often than not, right; as was demonstrated with the incidents at Darwin, Kokoda Trail and Buna.

I now noticed with interest that the quality of the Japanese operators we were working had rapidly deteriorated. This was possibly because their top operators had been isolated or killed off and their replacements were not as well trained. These newer operators were always asking for repeats.

Early in October 1944, twenty-three of us from No. 1 Wireless Unit, who were later to become the nucleus of the new No. 6 Wireless Unit, were called together and told we were required for a new operation and, by order of General MacArthur, were to be flown to Hollandia. I was one of this group.

The kana members of this group were all RAAF personnel, namely Alf Bobin, Eric Hedley, Mac Jamieson, Stan King, Wally Mapstone, Harry (Hank) Mills, John Moon, Erwyn (Dan) McKillop, Noel McCullagh, Ron Sims, Les Williams, David Wishart and me. We were supported by Colin Gear, Thomas Killingworth, Clifton Moulton, Jim Rouse and Alan Schou of the RAAF; Peter Hall (British Army seconded to the RAAF); and Allen Jones, Harry Rasmussen, Alan Rogers and Archibald Turnley of the AIF. Twenty-four members were required and an officer joined us in Hollandia.

The thirteen kana men in this group had been together since Townsville days. We felt it was a feather in our caps to be chosen for MacArthur's team. We were told by the Adjutant of No. 1 Wireless Unit that we had to leave behind all our Australian arms and were immediately equipped with US Thompson submachine-guns, carbines, .45 revolvers and American jungle knives, but no water bottles. I decided to dump my gas mask at this point as there was just too much to carry and I was well underweight at the time. This re-equipment exercise made me wonder what I was heading into.

Although we were issued with this equipment we were not shown how to pull it down, reassemble it, clean it, load it, nor how to use the weapons. Our commander would have known that we were about to go on a mission, but because he did not insist that we receive some training on this equipment he, in my view, put our lives at risk.

KATAKANA MAN

At the same time I was surprised to find that I was issued with new RAAF clothing, which comprised a pair of new trousers and two new shirts, but no wet weather gear. I hate to sound cynical, but it was strange how this issue suddenly appeared.

On Biak, as always, we had been doing most of the really demanding work. It was just slug, slug, slug. I had become impatient with the happenings there. I had never been so happy as when I left miserable Biak. I had become restless, disenchanted and looking for new adventures. My forthcoming departure to get away from such a dull hellhole was like giving me a million dollars. I again had a new purpose and direction, and that was to help destroy the Japanese. Following our departure, a few more newly trained kana operators were flown in to replace us and this allowed Biak to remain as a full strength Sigint operating post.



L-R: Stan King, Alf Bobin and Brian Stibbard at Biak, 1944 – The fatigue and strain is clearly shown on the faces of these men (Photograph courtesy of Stan King)

The following two pages show a copy of the communiqué from Major General S.B. Akin to Colonel Sinkov to move a detachment of No. 1 Wireless Unit to the Philippines with MacArthur's invasion forces.

SECRET

COPY

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
Office of the Chief Signal Officer

AFO 500 .
10 October 1944

MEMORANDUM:

TO : Colonel Sinkov.

1. Present plans constituting the necessary Wireless Detachment in the K-2 Area to handle Enemy Army and Navy Air commitments are as follows:
 - a. To send immediately 2 officers and 22 enlisted men that have already been withdrawn from No. 1 Wireless Unit to the K-2 Area in conformity with my radio note of 6 October 1944.
 - b. To withdraw from Brisbane at once 27 RAAF personnel with qualifications as indicated in the inclosure herewith. This personnel will be provided air priorities by Colonel Fister from this headquarters just as soon as you advise him of the number and date they will be ready for shipment. Upon arrival of this personnel at Hollandia, they will be embarked not later than A plus 12 for shipment by water to the K-2 Area.
 - c. To withdraw from Biak (as rapidly as the personnel can be moved by air) from No. 1 Wireless Unit at Biak an additional 67. This personnel should be embarked not later than A plus 12 for shipment to the K-2 Area by water.
2. Arrangements are being made to turn over to the 1st Radio Squadron Mobile at Biak the commitments that cannot be carried on by that portion of No. 1 Wireless Unit remaining at Biak. In this way, we will have immediately available in the K-2 Area the experienced personnel necessary to carry out the highly important commitments in that area at once.
3. In order to replenish the No. 1 Wireless Unit of the personnel that has been withdrawn to carry out the above mission, it is recommended that this personnel be assembled at an appropriate location for shipment by furlough boat to this area at the earliest practicable date. Should you have any difficulty in getting this personnel shipped, please contact Colonel Fister here and he will have the necessary orders issued to see that this is done. Upon arrival of this personnel in the New Guinea Area, arrangements will be made by Colonel Fister to insure that this personnel is immediately got to No. 1 Wireless Unit at Biak.

- 1 -
SECRET

Major General S.B. Akin's communiqué to Colonel Sinkov to move a detachment of No. 1 Wireless Unit to the Philippines with MacArthur's invasion forces (Page 1)

SECRET

4. Unless there is some very definite objection to the contrary, this plan is going to be carried out at once. Please advise me by radio note of any objections that may be raised to the plan. With personnel present (that is the Commander of No. 1 Wireless Unit and his assistant, Major Ballard, and Major Brown, and the High Command of GHQ), all agree that this is the only tactical solution to meet this commitment that is of the greatest importance in light of the operation to be undertaken. Please give this matter your immediate personal attention and give me radio clearance just as soon as you receive this note.

5. The only action on your part with respect to equipment is as follows:

a. Ship by air with the 27 men being shipped to this area under the above paragraphs, the following equipment:

R/T Intercept Equipment:	
SX 36	2
SX 28	2
HRO	2
L/F 342	2
Ediphone Recorders	2
Transcriber	1
Shaving Machine	1
Disc Cylinders	200

S. B. A.

THIS ITEM IS DECLASSIFIED BY
AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CAMDEN

SECRET

Major General S.B. Akin's communiqué to Colonel Sinkov to move a detachment of No. 1 Wireless Unit to the Philippines with MacArthur's invasion forces (Page 2)

V

WAR FURY IN THE PHILIPPINES



Early in the morning of 8 October 1944 we boarded our usual form of transport, a US Dakota, and flew back to Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea, some 320 miles (515 kilometres) south-east of Biak. This aircraft had a very lovely young lady painted on the nose. She was topless and wore only a small bikini bottom. The name of the aircraft was 'Hot Pants'. On take-off I thought I heard one of the motors misfiring and I thought the aircraft took longer than it should to become airborne. The other members of my group also noticed this. Apart from my three unauthorised flights, this was the first time that I felt some apprehension during a take-off; maybe my recent Catalina trip was still in my mind.



Dakota aircraft, 'Hot Pants', which flew detachment of No. 1 Wireless Unit from Biak to Hollandia, October 1944 (AWM P954/36/25)

After take-off the problem seemed to disappear, and so I settled down to look at the view. If the centre of Biak Island looked like a desert, the lush green foliage of the New Guinea coast and the brilliant blue waters made this place look like a holiday postcard.

When the anchorage at Hollandia came into view I saw hundreds of ships. I felt certain that this was going to be the start of the Pacific 'D-Day' and the beginning

of the end for Japan. I realised that I was going to be part of a large history-making operation and I had the feeling that it was going to take place in the Philippines. In 1942 MacArthur had promised the people of the Philippines that ‘I will return’. When this came to my mind I felt proud that I would be a part of it.

After we landed we were camped with the elite American Ranger Troops—similar to our SAS troops—in American tents that had been already erected for us. We were accommodated four to a tent, which was great because we were used to a tent about half the size. The tents were fitted out with American Army stretchers complete with mosquito netting and a small table. This was absolute luxury accommodation. It was so much better than what was provided by the Australian Armed Services that it was almost unbelievable. Our camp site was near the top of Leimock Hill, which commanded a view of Humboldt Bay.

I was able to secure from the US Army a lightweight jacket with plenty of pockets and a zip up front, some new gaiters and other clothing that had not been available before. We were also issued with new mess gear and a water bottle. At the same time all of us were given a cholera injection by the US medics (medical orderlies). We now knew that we were bound for a new area of operation because cholera injections had never been given to us previously.

The food was marvellous! Fresh meat, vegetables, ice cream and bread were readily available along with coffee, but no tea! For the first time I tasted Coca-Cola cordial. I did not know it had existed until then and it was there for the taking. When I first heard the song, ‘Drinking Rum and Coca-Cola’, I immediately (and still do to this day) associated it with my Hollandia days. I thought the cordial was great. We were there for only three days and did a lot in that time. We played baseball with the American Rangers and I know they let us win.

Later the twenty-four of us were assembled in a large room, introduced to the top American brass by Major General Akin and then briefed by Naval Intelligence. We were to become the nucleus of No. 6 Wireless Unit (see Appendix III), formed specifically for the purpose of supporting operations in the Philippines. This unit became operational early in October 1944 when our intercept and intelligence detachment, drawn from personnel of No. 1 Wireless Unit at Biak, proceeded from Hollandia to Leyte Island with the invasion forces. We were told that we were to be known as ‘King 2’, K2 for short, and that we had been seconded to the American Armed Forces. Up to this stage we had been working for both the US and Australian forces.

Our mission was to intercept the Japanese Navy, Army and Air Force messages, the enemy reactions to the Leyte landings and the ensuing campaign. Major General Akin introduced the Australian group as the personnel who would be ensuring that no surprise air attacks could be made on the convoy during its journey north. Once landed we would monitor all the Japanese moves on Leyte as well as locate and monitor Japanese convoys trying to sneak along the Indochina coast toward Leyte Gulf. Our fame had spread! We would continue to be Lieutenant General Kenney's insurance policy.

At this time we were advised that all our mail would be forwarded to the US through their system as they would be the only ones who would be aware of our whereabouts. Our address would be through a Group Number, Care of the Post Master, San Francisco, USA.

We were briefed that the operation could be difficult. It was planned to support ground forces with carrier-based aircraft. Air support for ground forces would depend heavily on the Navy aircraft aboard the jeep escort carriers, which were small aircraft carriers holding approximately twenty aircraft and whose pilots were trained specifically to assist Army landings. A naval disaster that reduced the number of carriers would severely imperil the land force's operation, as US land-based aircraft were out of range of Leyte. The success of the land forces therefore depended heavily on the success of the sea forces that comprised bombardment ships and carrier-based naval aircraft. The ability and skill of the naval forces was imperative to the success of the campaign.

I was impressed by the fact that at this briefing the Australians, who were mostly leading aircraftmen and corporals, were being treated as the equal of high-ranking American officers. This had never happened to us before and this American attitude persisted while our group was together.

The briefing included the unveiling of three new mobile intercept trucks that had been made in the US. These carried modern equipment in addition to the usual range of equipment; each of the trucks was fitted with three high-powered wireless receivers with a loudspeaker attachment that would enable duty operators to monitor more than one frequency. Fitted also were two frequency meters and an emergency portable daylight signalling lamp, which was a very small version of the Aldis lamp. This was to be used to call for assistance if we came under attack. Our Nadzab set-up was similar, but this intercept station had wheels. Mobility was a very necessary requirement since we would be operating close to the battle.

Our position could possibly be easily detected and we may have needed to make frequent shifts to avoid annihilation.

The trucks had metal sides that were vented and insect proofed, a vented back door and an inner insect proof wire door that could be closed, thus enabling either door to be open or shut separately. The power for the equipment came from a separate trailer-mounted mobile generator with two high-powered petrol motors fitted to each side of the generator. Each motor could run for twelve hours alternately to generate power. This total generator package was towed by the wireless truck, and when in use was detached and taken approximately fifty metres away and then joined by an electric cable to the operating truck. This helped deaden the noise. Also fitted to the front of the trucks were power-driven winches that could be used to pull the trucks out of a bog.

The lighting in the truck was fitted with dimmer switches to enable us to work with a door open. Under air attack, light could not be seen unless standing directly in front of the door and even then it was almost invisible. An external aerial was fitted to the top of the truck for short distance receiving, and there was a connection to run aerial lines up into trees or high vantage points. The Americans had been spot on with their mobile intercept trucks—they had not missed a trick.

During our short stay in Hollandia we watched the build-up of shipping in the harbour and our briefing had confirmed that we were now part of what was going on. On Friday, 13 October 1944, the huge convoy made up of the US Third and Seventh Fleets, together with units of the Royal Australian Navy including the heavy cruisers HMAS *Australia* and *Shropshire*, the destroyers HMAS *Arunta* and *Warramunga* and the landing ships HMAS *Kanimbla*, *Manoora* and *Westralia*, began to move out of Hollandia on their way to the Philippines. The convoy was so large that it took one and a half days to clear the bay.

I can remember early in the morning of 13 October, under the watchful eye of Major General Akin, we joined the huge American invasion force bound for Leyte—the largest invasion fleet in history. Wireless Unit personnel were divided into two groups. General Akin took six on his personal communications vessel PCEV848, and this group continued to intercept while at sea. The other eighteen of us were assigned to USS *LST-700* (Landing Ship Tank 700), which also carried our three new wireless intercept vehicles.

We were taken out by a barge or troop landing ship to *LST-700*, and I can remember I looked up and saw a rope net had been dropped down the side. I climbed up this damn thing carrying my equipment and that was another new experience for me.

After going aboard I was talking to the ship's Signal Officer who took me to see the ship's wireless room. The American wireless operator was told to leave the wireless room. I vividly remember the wireless operator saying as he left, 'I knew it was going to be a bastard of a day, it is Friday 13th and now some f***ing Aussie thinks he can kick me out'. I can recall thinking, *yes, it is Friday the thirteenth and I hope it is going to be a good day.*

The Signal Officer told me that the frequency meters were not used a lot on water because they could send out a wireless signal that could be picked up by submarines from at least three miles (five kilometres) away. As it happened I do not think this would have mattered much because when we were moving we were positioned among the convoy of approximately eight hundred ships (battleships, cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers, LSTs, troop ships plus many other types).

During the day the heat on the deck was unbearable, but it was quite pleasant at night. Standing on the deck one could look in any direction and see ships close together and stretched to the edge of the horizon. At night I worried a bit that the other ships were too close to us. If these ships slowed or changed course, or if it rained, they may not be seen and we could be rammed. Although a collision did not occur I was never comfortable on board for that reason.

As we ploughed through the water at night I can remember how fascinated I was standing on deck, watching the phosphorescence glow in the water and thinking that if I could see it so could any Japanese aircraft overhead and this would give the game away. We made good progress towards the Philippines. The trip was approximately 1500 miles (2415 kilometres) and it took between six and seven days. The sea remained glassy all the way.

We were quartered on the lower tank deck and were expected to sleep near the three specially built and equipped mobile intercept vehicles, which we were to use as soon as we landed on Leyte. I decided that I would not sleep below, as it was too hot, so I took my chances with the weather up top. It did not matter what I tried I just could not find a suitable place to sleep. It was too hot below decks and the one time I commandeered a jeep on the deck, I received a thorough drenching from a tropical downpour! In the end I was seen staggering about the deck like a zombie through lack of sleep. A Yank sailor took pity on me and offered me his bunk. He said he was not going to need it for the next eighteen or so hours! I just collapsed into a deep, unconscious sleep and knew no more until the next day when I awoke refreshed. I never saw that sailor again.

Some weeks later I was able to repay the favour. This time I spotted an American soldier in much the same condition I had been on USS *LST-700*. I was just going on duty and offered him my stretcher. I warned him that the place stank, as we had not been able to wash for a couple of days. He gratefully took up my offer. When I came off duty, he had gone, leaving me a thank you note. I never saw him again either.

Not long after we sailed we noticed that the Americans were constantly attending to their weapons. The Master-at-Arms asked to see the equipment with which we had been issued. He was horrified to find it all rusted up, and apparently not looked at for a long time. Another thing that amazed the Master-at-Arms was the fact that the magazines given to us were totally inadequate, as they held only ten rounds. The Master-at-Arms took the issued magazines away and replaced them with magazine clips approximately three times as big. His comment was, 'Your Army must have thought you were going out to shoot a pigeon'. He became angry and told us that none of the weapons would fire and were dangerous. When he asked us to strip and clean the guns, he was even more horrified that we did not know how to do this. All of this equipment was taken from us, cleaned, checked and then returned. We were then shown how to strip, clean and re-assemble the equipment and trained to do it in the dark. By the time we left the ship we were experts, except that we had never had the opportunity to fire any of the new weapons. The Master-at-Arms was concerned that we had been issued with faulty equipment and were not trained in its care and use.

Every Australian on the ship was seconded to other duties. I had to take my turn manning a ship's gun. I was a second loader on a Bofors anti-aircraft gun, handing up clips of six shells to the number one loader. At this time I was only about eight and a half stone (fifty-four kilograms) and those clips were heavy!

On board ship I soon became aware of naval instructions. At any time during the day or night, the duty officer would announce information over a loudspeaker. Just after sunrise each morning the first announcement would be, 'Now hear this!' repeated two or three times, followed by, 'The smoking lamp has now been lit', meaning you were now permitted to smoke up on deck. Just before sunset would come the message, 'The smoking lamp is out', forbidding smoking on deck. Any other messages that needed to be communicated to us were given in this manner, as was the call for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

On board many of the American troops played a dice game called craps, and other card games. On one occasion I watched an American soldier playing craps; he was on a winning streak and the other soldiers were trying to knock him off! The first

day I saw it played he would have won well in excess US\$1000. The next day I watched again and more Americans gathered to try their luck. By now the soldier had doubled his stake.

On the third day, as I again watched, his luck seemed to treble. On the fourth day—and by then I was a keen spectator—his luck was holding at the beginning, when over the ship's loudspeaker the duty officer announced that this crap game was in progress and was worth watching. Dozens of extra troops came over to watch and from that point on the winning soldier's luck seemed to change. Within twenty-four hours he not only lost the thousands of dollars he had won, but possibly lost another US\$1000 as well. I spoke to this soldier and asked him why he kept playing, and his comment was that it was all in the fun of the game and the excitement pumped him up. He said resignedly, 'Well we are almost at our destination and I won't have the worry of the money. I may be dead tomorrow.'

Getting near Leyte Island I can remember that when we needed to go to the head (the term used to describe a navy ship's toilet) one had to go through several watertight doors. If we were to go into action, the first thing the crew did was to close these doors. This unfortunately did happen. I was down in the hull and was terrified. I heard noise going through the hull of the ship, which I thought sounded like gun explosions, and I found I had no way of getting out—I was locked in. I then appreciated how terrified submariners must have been, as well as sailors on our own warships, if they had been trapped in the wrong place. I felt I was trapped in a steel box and was never going to get out. It was a new experience for me, something terrifying that I vividly remember. Of course we were never told this could happen, so the shock was greater than it would have been had we known.

Smoking on deck at night was totally forbidden, as was the throwing overboard of rubbish. Japanese submarines could have detected anything thrown overboard. As far as I know, of the thousands of troops and seamen on board the ships, nothing was thrown overboard—not even a matchstick. This in itself was an amazing feat when you consider a fleet of approximately eight hundred ships and the personnel and crews that would have exceeded well over 200,000 men.

In 1989 I was talking to Stan King who had been on the communications ship. He told me that on the last day of the journey he had been working on the frequency that picked up the first Japanese aircraft sighting of our convoy. In relation to this incident I quote his words, 'The Japanese wireless operator was going berserk—transmitting the information time and time again and he would not stop sending. He was so excited that his standard of sending deteriorated and it would have been hard for the Japanese to take correct readings.'

The signal strength Stan received was in the extreme range (signal strength 5, running in a range of 1–5) and for this strength to come from an aircraft meant that it was either positioned above or near the convoy. For Stan this was a very proud moment. He gave this huge invasion fleet the first warning of an enemy sighting. There was also the fact that we were breaking into the inside of enemy-held territory.

While on board my ship I heard about ‘Sad Sack’, the US force’s comic figure. I first heard about Sad Sack during my Townsville days. During my time with the Americans, jokes about Sad Sack were often thrown around. Little did I realise that Sad Sack would make an appearance on board the ship.

Just before one of the wireless trucks was taken off the USS *LST-700* it was noted that Sad Sack had been painted on the side of one of the trucks. Sad Sack was wearing earphones with wireless sparks coming out of them. Underneath Sad Sack the words ‘Through listening we learn’ had been painted. It was painted out before the vehicle went ashore. I did not see this and I never found out who painted it. It was actually the worst advertising we could have had. I guess whoever drew the soldier on our truck did not realise his error.

On about the fourth day of travel an announcement was made over the ship’s loudspeaker system that our destination was Leyte. Although we privileged few already knew this from our briefing, we had been sworn to secrecy and no doubt this was the first most men on board knew of our destination

The convoy arrived at Leyte Island. The invasion was about to start, but before the US Sixth Army landed on 20 October 1944, the beaches had been blasted by American and Australian warships. Then American forces landed on a stretch of beach approximately twenty-two miles (thirty-five kilometres) in length. As the landing was going on, the Navy were raising their gunsights and hitting targets further inland. This convoy was so large it took until approximately 23 October to complete the landing. MacArthur came ashore on the first day of the invasion regardless of the Japanese sniper fire and attacks going on around him and spoke to commanders and troops before returning to his ship, the USS *Nashville*. He continued to do this on every day during the landing.

As the USS *LST-700* nosed into the beach at midday on Sunday 22 October, the shelling continued over the top of us. It was not any trouble for us to get off the ship, except that I remember I could not move fast enough for my liking. As we came ashore at Red Beach, Palo, I heard the air raid signal—three Bofors gun

shots in quick succession—and I raced up the beach like mad, heading towards the tree line. I spotted an enemy aircraft heading along the beach and tried to make myself invisible by hiding under blown up coconut trees. Shells still kept coming from the ships and these were hitting the hills just beyond us. The Japanese planes continued to attack along the beaches.

There were thousands of men around me and I vividly remember thinking, ‘How on earth can the kana men meet up with each other, particularly those who are on the other ship?’ I thought, ‘If we don’t find each other we will be working very short handed’. There must have been great organisation because we quickly found each other.

Off the beach I saw a stack of cotton body bags, piled up ready for the dead. I thought, *who knows who will be in one*. Then I thought, *well, I’ll have one now and use it to sleep in*. I admit I felt quite unique to have one for sleeping purposes, but I later traded it.

Our three mobile intercept trucks were driven straight ashore among devastated palm and coconut trees. Some time later we were taken to a band rotunda in front of the cathedral at Palo, where a medical outpost had been set up and a Filipino medical orderly serving in the US Army gave all of us our second cholera injection. I think the same needle was used on all of us, and when my turn came the needle broke off in my arm. Great laughter came from the medical orderly. He told me he would have to get a new needle and he shot through and left me with the broken needle still sticking out of my arm. This turned my stomach but considering the fighting going around us, I had little to complain about.

The vital airfields at Tacloban and Dulag had to be taken if the Americans were to be successful. Within twenty-four hours, the Army had captured these airstrips and found they were both unserviceable. The engineers’ reconnaissance parties then followed the assault infantry and examined the various sites that had been selected during the planning for airfields. By 22 October they reported that all the proposed aerodrome sites except Tacloban were unfit for use during the rainy season.

Since the Tacloban field was shorter than had been estimated and was in need of resurfacing it was necessary to construct a practically new airfield. The entire Cataisan Peninsula was one huge bog. Other airstrips, Buri, San Pablo, and Bayug were in the same condition and needed reconstruction work. This meant that we were not going to get any ground-based fighter protection until the Army could

reconstruct some of these airstrips. We knew that our work was going to be most demanding and vital to MacArthur if he was to stay on Leyte.

Although bombing attacks still continued to come from the Japanese, General MacArthur, his staff and others went to Tacloban on 23 October. The American and Philippine flags were raised side by side for a victory parade and during a ceremony MacArthur proclaimed the re-establishment of civil government in the Philippines, perhaps a little prematurely. After the ceremony, MacArthur chose a fine concrete house for his residence and headquarters but did not move in permanently until 26 October 1944.

The home that MacArthur chose was the Price family mansion, which had recently been occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army. The mansion belonged to an American businessman, Mr Walter Scott Price. Mr Price had settled on Leyte after the Spanish-American War and married a Filipino lady, Simeona Kalingag. The Japanese had imprisoned and tortured him at Santo Tomaz in Manila. His wife, who remained in Tacloban, the capital of Leyte, was also tortured by them. Mr Price died shortly after Manila was liberated and was buried on his beloved Leyte Island.



Victory parade in Tacloban, 23 October 1944 – Cora Price, 2nd from right, looking at camera (Photograph supplied to author by the late Cora Price) (AWM P954/36/31)

During the nights from day one of the invasion, Japanese snipers infiltrated the US lines, climbed coconut trees and tied themselves to the trees to overlook and observe the US positions. At first light the first man who moved would be a target.

Because the island was a huge bog, runway grading was impossible. Most of the areas taken were complete mud flats. To assist with the building of the airstrips, rock and rubble bases were tried but failed. The island's drainage system was such that the construction crews then attempted to lay a base of coral for steel runway matting; this eventually proved to be successful. In between air raids, the airstrip construction at Tacloban was slow going. The strip was partly graded and needed to be extended from 3000 to 4000 feet (914 to 1219 metres) in length.

A day after our landing, our three mobile trucks were driven approximately two and half miles (four kilometres) inland to the base of some small hills. This position proved to be an excellent spot from which to operate. We set up camp and all shared the job of preparing the trucks for operating.

We were given one jeep, a heavy equipment truck and eight tents. Six tents were to be used for sleeping, one for supplies and the other for the code breakers and cipher clerks to work in. We were treated with great respect by the US and were even given stretchers to sleep on.

Before I started operating I did my usual reconnoitring nearby and saw a Japanese body that had just started to blow up with trapped gases. The body was hidden in



**No. 6 Wireless Unit detachment operating camp site inland from Tacloban, 1944-45
(AWM P954/36/28)**

a small pocket of trees. Nearby were other pockets of trees and other little bits of cover and in these I found recently killed Japanese. I thought at the time that we had better keep a good watch over our area.

Just after we set up camp we noticed on the top of the hill, where our toilet area was to be set up, a 'Woodpecker' Japanese machine-gun. There were two dead Japanese soldiers still lying alongside it. One of the soldiers was wearing a 'belt of a thousand stitches'. This belt was made by Japanese women of the village from where the soldier came, and was supposed to protect him from evil and keep him safe in health. The belt did not help this soldier.



A 'Woodpecker' machine-gun and a dead Japanese soldier wearing a 'belt of a thousand stitches'

I do not remember the bodies being buried or taken away. I guess I was too busy trying to get into the swing of picking up Japanese wireless frequencies that were working nearby. This was the immediate commencement of our operations for the battle for the island.

I really do not remember seeing our RAAF officer when we were in Hollandia. The first time I saw him was at Tacloban, after the landing. He was wearing a fawn coloured pith helmet with a red and blue patch on its side. It would have been a great target for the Japanese snipers sitting in the trees. It struck me that he was drawing attention to our Top Secret operations.

Our operations had started in earnest and air raids were frequent over our area as we were very close to the beaches that were being used to disembark troops and supplies. It seemed that we were forever reporting incoming enemy aircraft. Over the two days, 23 and 24 October 1944, there were twenty separate raids each day

and on the 26th nearly as many. If you turned your wireless sets to full power and you had your earphones on you felt as though your eardrums would be blown out.

We now constantly used all our three trucks and these proved to be a priceless asset on Leyte. The equipment in our wireless trucks was so good and the signals we were getting were so strong that we could sometimes leave our headphones off and hang them around our necks. Sometimes even very faint signals could be easily isolated from stronger ones and this made reading easier. At times we operators could stand back from the entrance door and read the signals coming from the earphones; it was almost like having loudspeakers working. As all signal strengths are normally classed in a range of 1–5, these signals would have been classed as 10 if there was such a class.

I think that another reason the signals were so strong was because of our close proximity to the actions of the Japanese Army/Air Force, which were virtually right next door to us. Air-to-air engagements overhead or nearby, ship-to-ship actions at sea or to the base nearby were happening all the time. The broadcast frequencies did not stop day or night, requiring constant twenty-four hour monitoring. This exhausted all of us—kana intercept operators, kana direction finders, linguists, translators, cipher clerks and code breakers alike! One of our kana operators, Alf Bobin, was also our jeep driver taking information to the hierarchy, and he was struggling. Speaking for myself, it was the hardest and most demanding work I had ever done in the kana organisation, but at the same time I found it all quite exhilarating. On occasions when I was so involved in operations, I wondered whether being a pilot would have exhilarated me as much—but I will never know.

Another new experience for us was to be completely shut off in our minds from any noise or information that we picked up. All we could do was to give our complete concentration to the job at hand. We had never operated so close to front-line action before and we knew we must not miss one dit. We had to ignore the noise of the ack-ack guns and the air attacks.

During an air attack when I was not operating, I watched as four dive-bombers flew in. They were so low I thought the Japanese pilots were taking photographs. However, it soon dawned on me that they were Kamikaze suicide planes; the Japanese gave these pilots the name 'Divine Wind'. As I watched, two of them flew behind a hill and out of view. I immediately heard explosions and saw smoke. The other two, which were apparently target spotters, flew for altitude, changing direction to escape from the ack-ack and other fire. These Kamikazes were the first I had witnessed in action. I have since discovered that we kana men had

probably been their target. There were only a few tents in the area and they had us for their targets but missed. During this period the Japanese planes were around our area most nights.

Within three days of landing we had located all the Japanese strike frequencies. It was then possible to pass frequent warnings of the approach of enemy air formations to Advanced Echelon General Headquarters, including information for the first time of Japanese Kamikaze aircraft on suicide missions directed at Allied naval ships and ground targets. We also discovered the air routes taken by replacement enemy aircraft, including Kamikaze, from Japan via Formosa to Manila, which gave a movement pattern of the aircraft, and many were shot down before they even reached their air base.

During my time in the Philippines, the Kamikaze sank a total of 22 ships and badly damaged 152 others. Some ships were hit more than once. The heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia* was hit on at least five occasions before withdrawing from action. The intercepts picked up at this time about Kamikaze attacks possibly saved many more targets from being hit as the information enabled US aircraft either to destroy them at their bases before take-off or when they were en route to their targets.

It was about this time that we noticed a difference in the style of Japanese message sending: it seemed now to have a greater degree of urgency and concern. Their sending did not have their usual rhythm and flow, and seemed to be clipped as though messages were being sent in a panic. I guess this reflected the fact that the Japanese had not expected an invasion of Leyte. They may have had a suspicion of the impending landing but were unaware of the exact location.

This invasion was opening the first door in the final attacks and the defeat of Japan. We were under stress from many Japanese air raids and likely to be attacked by ground forces. We knew that the operation of our mobile intercept trucks was vital. We also knew that possibly this would be the only Allied invasion that could be mounted for many months and would be very costly in lives and equipment if it was not successful.

On 24 October, even though the air raids were continuing, I had my first break from operating so I decided to hitch a ride to Tacloban. Coming along the beach road from Palo, just before entering the City of Tacloban, which is called the 'City of Destiny', there were three roads meeting at a centre round point. In the centre of this point stood a statue of a Boy Scout holding a staff and the wording printed

beneath the Boy Scout was 'To the Youth of Leyte'. This statue would have been a landmark to every soldier who came by road from Palo to Tacloban.

As I was walking along one of these roads sniper fire started. I had previously been told that the area was clear of Japanese. I quickly took cover, crawled into a dirt gutter to escape being hit, then quickly headed back to our camp.

The landings on Leyte had sparked the biggest naval battle the world had ever seen. Nimitz wrote, 'for sheer size and complexity, it was without parallel in navy history'. This was the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

The Japanese aircraft came over our area in great waves. They had returned for more blood! The most ominous were the Japanese 'Special Attack Unit' of Kamikaze suicide pilots who were based at Clark Air Base on Luzon Island, the main northern island of the Philippines. Our tension increased because we knew we were playing a vital role.

At about this time it was reported that MacArthur appeared to be accompanied by a small 'Foreign Legion' group. An American war correspondent gave us the name 'Foreign Legion' because we were the only Australians here at this time, among well over 100,000 Americans.

On 31 October 1944, an article appeared in the *Courier Mail* in Brisbane. The article gave our names, the State of Australia we came from and the branch of the Services to which we belonged. At the same time articles appeared in the Melbourne and Sydney newspapers, *Herald*, *Sun* and *Telegraph* stating that we, as specially trained Australian signal personnel, were operating on Leyte Island.

These newspaper articles obviously broke the secrecy of our movements. The Central Bureau was distraught because of the highly secretive nature of our work, and no one was to be aware of our names or of our existence on Leyte Island in the Philippines.

Later in this book I will write briefly about 'Tokyo Rose' who would broadcast from a Japanese propaganda radio station in Tokyo. She also listed us all by name, Service and our home towns. We believe this information may have come from a double agent or spy in the Philippines. No wonder that we were all issued with cyanide capsules and advised that we must never be captured alive. As a young twenty-year-old at war I was able to put this out of my mind and only think about it should the necessity arise.

Brisbane "Courier Mail" Newspaper
30th, October, 1944.

AUST. 'FOREIGN LEGION' ON PHILIPPINES JOB

From REG HARRIS, Courier-Mail War Correspondent

LEYTE, Oct. 25 (Delayed).—A "Foreign Legion" of one R.A.A.F. officer, 19 R.A.A.F. other ranks, and four A.I.F. men provided a welcome and surprising sight for Australian war correspondents in Tacloban, capital of Leyte.

The R.A.A.F. men include L.A.C. Noel McCullough, of Brisbane.

We had believed Americans and Filipinos were the only ground troops participating in the Philippines campaign, with officer observers drawn from the English, Canadian, and Australian armies.

The party of 24 is retaining its Australian identity by wearing slouch hats and jungle greens. None has had leave for 14 months, during which they have been attached to the United-States Fifth Air Force in Australia and New Guinea as signal specialists. All are in high spirits and proud of the very responsible roles they have to fill in this campaign.

Members Of 'Legion'

New South Wales men in the party are: Flt.-Lieut. Mick Richardson (Sydney), Cpl. Harry Mills (Bondi), Cpl. Stan King (Manly), L.A.C. Alf Bobin (Woolahra), L.A.C. Walter Mapstone (Boxley), John Boon (Mosman), and Sgt. Thomas Killingsworth (Sydney).

Victorians are: Cpl. Max Jamieson (Melbourne), Cpl. Alan Schou (Melbourne), L.A.C. Dave Wishart (Pascoe Vale), L.A.C. Colin Gear (Fitzroy), L.A.C. Clifton Moulton (Melbourne), and L.A.C. Eric Hedley (Caulfield). Other R.A.A.F. men are Warrant-Officer Rouse (Perth), Cpl. Ron Sims (Mt. Gambier, S.A.), L.A.C. Jack Brown (Adelaide), L.A.C. Les Williams (Spalding, S.A.), and L.A.C. Irwin McKillop (Hobart).

The A.I.F. members are Warrant-Officer Peter Hall (British Army, attached to the A.I.F.), Sgt. Archibald Turnley (Melbourne), Sgt. Harry Rasmussen (Melbourne), and Cpl. Alan Rodgers (Sydney).

Squadron-Leader F. C. Bibby, R.A.A.F. (Camberwell, V.), is also here as a signal officer. He was a wireless operator in Lockheed-Hudsons, and escaped from Singapore shortly before the surrender. Later he was an instructor at an officers' training school in Victoria.

"Telegraph" Oct. 30 1944

Australian Group In Philippines

From REG HARRIS

LEYTE, Sunday.—A "foreign legion," consisting of one R.A.A.F. officer, 19 members of the R.A.A.F., and four A.I.F., provided a welcome and a surprise for Australian correspondents in Tacloban (Philippines).

We believed that Americans and Filipinos were the only ground troops participating in the Philippines campaign, with officer-observers drawn from English, Canadian, and Australian armies.

The party of 24 Australians is retaining its Australian identity by wearing slouch hats and jungle greens.

Not one of the party has had leave for 14 months, during which time they have been attached to the United States 5th Air Force in Australia and New Guinea as signal specialists.

AUSTRALIANS AT LEYTE

20th 1944
"Telegraph"

OUR WAR CORRESPONDENT,
DENNIS DUGAN.

TACLOBAN, Oct. 29.—Specially-trained Australian signal personnel from both the R.A.A.F. and the A.I.F. took part in the landing on Leyte Island in the Philippines.

One group of 24 Australians travelled with the invasion force for special communications work with General Headquarters. The officer in command is Flight-Lieutenant M. Richardson, of Sydney, and Warrant-Officer Peter Brown, of the British Army, attached to the A.I.F., is senior among the Army men.

Sydney Men At Leyte Landing

From M. C. WARREN, "Sun" War Correspondent

A small party of Australian servicemen in the Leyte invasion call themselves "the foreign legion."

They comprise 20 RAAF and four AIF men, and are signal specialists attached to the American Fifth Air Force. RAAF men from NSW are: Flt.-Lt. Mick Richardson (Sydney), Sgt. Walter Jones (Sydney), Sgt. Thomas Killingsworth (Sydney), Cpl. Harry Mills (Bondi), Cpl. Stan. A. King (Manly), LAC Alf. Bobin (Woolahra), Walter Mapstone (Boxley), John Moon (Mosman). The AIF men include Cpl. Allen Rodgers (Sydney).

"Sun" Oct. 30th 1944

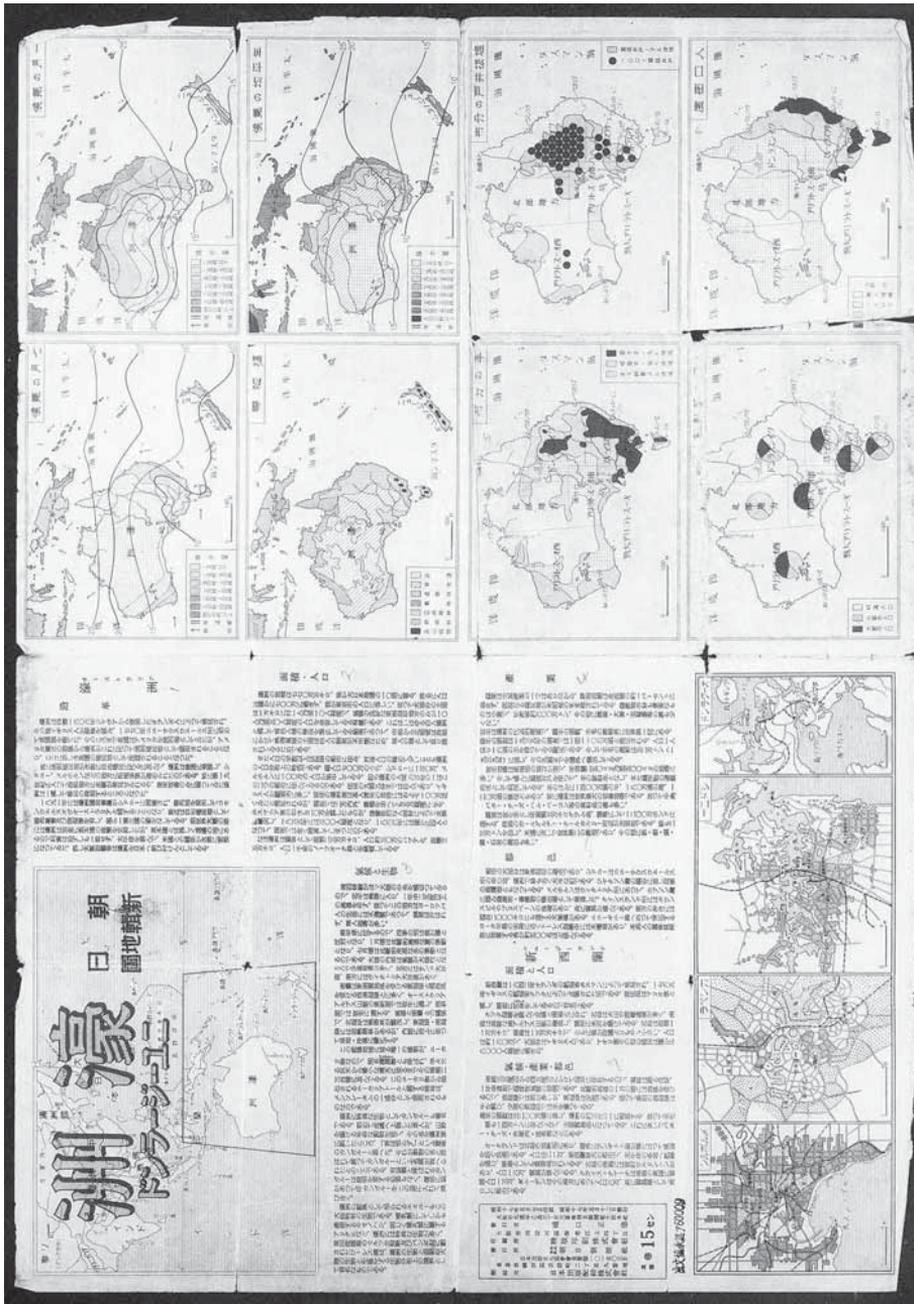
Newspaper cuttings relating to Australians at Leyte, 1944

The US Third and Seventh Fleets together with some Australian warships, including the Australian heavy cruisers HMAS *Australia* and *Shropshire* and the destroyers HMAS *Arunta* and *Warramunga*, were in the thick of it. Four of the US escort carriers were hit by Kamikaze planes and HMAS *Australia* was also hit by one and put out of action temporarily. Also in this battle HMAS *Shropshire* and HMAS *Arunta* played vital roles in the sinking of the Japanese battleship *Yamashiro*.

We witnessed US Navy planes from aircraft carriers making emergency landings in the direction of the Tacloban airstrip. About one hundred aircraft used the field on 25 October and twenty-five of these were destroyed in crashlandings. In spite of the enemy air raids and the landing and crashing of naval aircraft, the airstrip construction continued. It was virtually useless to try to use the strip other than in an emergency but it was better than ditching into the sea.

We did not have much action over us while the sea battle raged and a small group of us went reconnoitring just a short way from camp. We searched in buildings to see if they were occupied. Some of the boys found Japanese sake and whisky, and I found some postcards made in Japan. These cards depicted drawings of Philippine villages, workers and young ladies. I was amused to watch some of the boys trying the alcohol. They said it was like drinking one hundred per cent proof. On entering another building I met a Filipino freedom fighter, whose name was Francisio Franko. He had found a map of Australia on a wall of one of the buildings. This coloured map had been printed in Japanese. The writing on the map was of almost every important place in Australia. I was anxious to have this map. Francisio was reluctant to part with it, but I later bartered my body bag, which I was loathe to part with, and the map was mine. Before giving the map to me he signed and dated it. I still have the map and the postcards.

After the Americans had liberated a small portion on the east coast area of Leyte Island around Tacloban City, the area had become relatively safe except for constant harassment of Japanese aircraft trying to seek military targets. By this time we had met lots of the local people and they were intrigued by our cowboy hats. There were now over 200,000 US troops on the island and so naturally our group, with our different hats, appeared strange to the locals.



Reverse side of Japanese map of Australia given to author by Francisio Franko



One of the postcards salvaged from a building near the camp on Leyte Island, 1944

The Filipinos were friendly people and I found the majority of them spoke good English and this was an asset. To show their appreciation of being liberated from the Japanese many of the local people insisted on giving us gifts, mainly animals and birds.

In 1944 thousands of monkeys lived on the island and were actually a nuisance. They were everywhere and on many occasions would ransack our tents and steal cigarettes and food items. Alf Bobin fixed his problem. He baited his tent with a wax-covered cyanide capsule, which he broke in two. The monkey ate the capsules and was found dead just outside Alf's tent.

On 25 October most work was stopped on the airstrips captured from the Japanese because the water table was too near the surface and this made progress too slow. The exception was Tacloban, which was ready for use, and work was begun at Tanauan. However, the Americans actually never had enough aircraft up there and always felt threatened. In October, November and a good part of December the Japanese would come over at will. During that time the Japanese hammered our area with hundreds of air raids. Sometimes I prayed for bad weather so the Japanese would not come, then we would not have had as many worries.

On 27 October the Tacloban airstrip came into use and the US Fifth Air Force (USAAF) began to fly ground support missions, thus easing some of the burden from the carrier pilots. Because of the poor condition of most of the former Japanese airfields, only a token force of Fifth Air Force aircraft was able to come in. These aircraft comprised thirty-four P-38 Lightnings, which were the first Allied aircraft to land officially on Philippine soil since April 1942. They were able to fly the distance from Morotai to Leyte non-stop. This was because Charles A. Lindbergh, later Colonel—the same man who had earlier flown the Atlantic solo—had developed a system of engine control which, when coupled with additional wing-mounted fuel tanks, increased the range of the P-38s by as much as fifty per cent. At this stage there was little American air cover to speak of and if not for the arrival of these aircraft it would have been difficult to have held the ground that had been taken.

One of the first to land was Major Richard (Dick) Bong whom I had met at Nadzab and with whom I had become friendly. MacArthur and Kenney were there to greet the incoming planes. A red alert was sounded shortly after their arrival. The pilots were scrambled back into the air, each aircraft with just a little fuel to keep them up and away from the strip. Later they landed again, rearmed and refuelled, and were in the air again about four hours later, which made it a busy afternoon for them.

By 30 October, only twenty P-38s of the thirty-four that had arrived on 27 October remained operational. On 31 October replacement aircraft arrived. Tacloban airstrip now had nearly 4000 feet (1219 metres) of steel matting, but the strip was still small and could accommodate only thirty-six or thirty-seven aircraft.

On 31 October the US Seventh Fleet escort carriers, which gave air cover for the landings, withdrew to replenish and refuel and the Japanese took advantage of this situation and started pouring reinforcements into the port of Ormoc on Leyte's west coast. Kenney then used 'pocket handkerchief' air reinforcements and stacked as many replacement aircraft on the Tacloban airstrip as it could hold, because of the constant shortage of air support. Some of the US Third Fleet were engaged elsewhere and could not provide the air cover that MacArthur needed on Leyte. Several of the Fleet's carriers stayed in the area for a few weeks longer than the original plan to give extra protection from Japanese air attack.

We were always short of food and we knew there was a Seabee storage camp built on the beach. Seabees were American Navy ground personnel who did construction work ashore. These personnel had a big depot stacked with supplies and covered with canvas. There were a couple of guards posted outside the stores. We thought there must be some food that we could get at because we were hungry!

I remember three or four men distracted the guards by talking to them, while the rest of us got in under the canvas and scrounged what we could. We picked out a few items of goodies (so we thought), sneaked out and hurried back to camp. Included in the food we pinched were tins of flour, sugar, US Army K rations and a carton of tropical chocolate. The chocolate was so hard it would only melt when you put it under extreme heat. I do not know if it was ever eaten.

A US Army K ration was a pack of supplies that was carried into action. Included in the pack were five different types of food and some cigarettes. There were small cans of ham and eggs, sweet corn and grapefruit, and a key included to open the cans. A fruit bar, some instant coffee, a stick or two of chewing gum, a little pack of Chelsea smokes, some sugar and two packets of hard biscuits completed the pack. Just a little pack really and if you lived on this sort of food for a week or two you just about starved.

Well, in the supposed goodies we had grabbed, we definitely did not want K rations as we were sick of these, and the tropical chocolate we could not give away. As a matter of interest I did take a piece of the chocolate home to give to my mother. She was intrigued with it but no way would she try and eat it. No soldier would eat it either unless he wanted to break his teeth.

We wondered what the devil we were going to do with the flour and sugar. I remembered that in Tacloban there was a tiny store that had a grass-thatched roof and a little counter outside. There was a little old lady working in the store and I wondered whether I could trade her the flour and sugar for other food. The Filipinos were desperately short of food also and she needed flour and sugar to make her doughnuts. I suggested to her that if I gave her some flour and sugar she could make doughnuts for herself and also give some to me. So a deal was made. I gave her the flour and sugar, she made the doughnuts and back I went to camp with the doughnuts, which quickly disappeared.

As we did not have a cook this was the sort of thing we had to do to survive, and survive we did. I can remember I grew up very quickly by doing things like this and I guess part of being a kana operator was that you had to learn to exist on what you had available when you were in hard places.

A day or so after the Battle of Leyte Gulf, one of our group on walkabout noticed a Liberty ship anchored off the beach. I do not know why this ship had not moved off as all the shipping nearby had gone. It was about 100 yards (91 metres) offshore and as the tide was low probably some 40 yards (37 metres) of that distance was shallow water. Some of us who were off duty went to the beach, and we could



The doughnut shop in Tacloban, 1944

smell bread. It was suggested that we swim out to the ship and try to get some. I could not swim very well and so I was reluctant to go. The others volunteered to assist me and off we went. A crew member helped us to climb up the side of the ship and we enjoyed a feed of fresh bread and butter. It was a treat, as we had not tasted butter for at least eighteen months. While we were on board the tide came in and the 100 yards (91 metres) we had covered to get out to the ship had grown to 200 yards (183 metres), and the tide had started to run. I wondered how I was going to get back, but with some frantic dog paddling and the help of my friends I made it, but I was exhausted.

Because of the limited and uninteresting food rations, we really became expert scroungers. This occupation not only provided a welcome change to our menu but also gave us a pleasant diversion from the stress of the job. One day a real food find and a new taste treat for me turned up. About four of us were down on the beach and we thought that maybe a ship would be anchored and we might be lucky again and get some bread. While we were wandering over some rocks protruding from the water one of the boys yelled out, 'I've found the find of the month, some small rock oysters'. With our jungle knives we prised the oysters off the rocks. The others ate them with relish. I had never tasted an oyster and was loath to try one. After I was told I was a mug not to try one, I did taste one and then one more, and so on. What a welcome change to our diet!

A week or two after we landed, my fondness to walk again attracted me and in a break I decided to investigate some of the area further inland. I realised I could still be in a hazardous area, but hoped by now it would be reasonably clear of

lurking Japanese. So, with my trusty Thompson submachine gun (just in case I needed it) I set off. Incidentally, at this stage I had never fired a shot out of the Thompson.

My walk covered approximately two miles (3.2 kilometres) and the ground was a mass of shell holes and destroyed trees and foliage was strewn everywhere. Then to my surprise I came across an area of approximately 450 yards (410 metres), which miraculously had been left untouched by the shelling. The area was covered with low bushes and tall grass ranging from three to six feet (0.9 to 1.8 metres) in height. The ground had a very slight downslope and there was a rough track between the bushes approximately 250 yards (229 metres) long.

I had a very good view of most of the area but decided to move into the bushes. This was a fortunate move, because to my surprise twelve Japanese soldiers appeared. They were walking in line along the track. Eleven of the Japanese were close together, but there was a straggler who was at least sixty feet (eighteen metres) behind. All bar the straggler disappeared from my view. As I watched this soldier, a Filipino guerrilla carrying a bolo knife stepped out from behind some bushes. He stepped in complete unison behind the soldier and was holding his bolo knife ready for use. I stood transfixed and watched as the guerrilla made one quick swipe with his knife and the Japanese lost his head. The Filipino quickly disappeared from my view. A quick getaway was my reaction and needless to say I could not return to camp quickly enough. This experience did deter me from any other walks.

To describe a bolo knife: it has a blade approximately two feet (sixty-one centimetres) long, and a handle made out of carabao horn (Asian water buffalo) with a hand grip. This is fitted into a scabbard, which is tied with a very thick cord to the waist and down to either the right or left leg. The knife is easy to pull out of the scabbard when ready for use. Its general use is as a work knife for cutting cane and grass and to cut steps into trees to assist with a climb.

The memory of this beheading still haunts me to this day.

VI

THE FURY CONTINUES



The most hectic time for air raids started on 2 November 1944. Enemy aircraft dropped bombs or strafed practically every ten to fifteen minutes all day and night. This put more pressure on us to monitor every Japanese strike frequency and to not miss one block of morse. We had well over a hundred raids during a period of two days and nights. On one of these two night raids the enemy dropped bombs near and around us about every ten minutes. Some Japanese planes were bombing conventionally, and at the same time Japanese Kamikaze planes bombed and strafed when the pilot considered he did not have to use Kamikaze tactics (in other words getting two bites at the cherry). This period was a constant red alert. The signal for incoming enemy aircraft was always three rounds from a Bofors anti-aircraft gun and the 'all clear' was one round. We did not seem to hear many one round signals during this period. Every hour in the Tacloban area, whether day or night, we were vulnerable to air attack. There was no time for relaxation. The kana men were operating under extreme pressure and just had to switch off to the action around us.

By this time the GIs had captured five airfields and Tacloban airfield was virtually reconstructed, but Lieutenant General Kenney could not use the rest until the island dried out and the old ones were repaired or new ones built. Later the strips at Buri, San Pablo, Burauen and Bayug could take a limited number of planes. What MacArthur needed, however, was a large air base for the Leyte operation. The Japanese held very good, all-weather, firm bases on islands surrounding us and could attack and bomb at will. They flew in low over the hills so that radar could not pick them up. Because of this, the information regarding these attacks came from us. Although there were hundreds of Japanese aircraft stationed on the islands around us, they also brought in approximately another thousand from Japan, Formosa and surrounding distant bases to use in attacking Leyte.

It looked at the time as though our stay on Leyte might be short and that we could be pushed off the island. It was the first time MacArthur had moved without adequate land-based air support and we were taking a hammering. We were a large distance from big land-held bases and the situation did not get much better, even when the Tacloban airstrip was workable, as this strip could not support many aircraft.

The fact that the main part of the US Fifth Air Force was unable to move forward on Leyte made it possible for the Japanese to reinforce their Leyte garrison, thus prolonging the campaign. The Japanese began to reinforce the Ormoc area and because the majority of available Allied aircraft was needed to protect the beachhead and surrounding areas, it was not possible to stop them effectively. Enemy air activity from bases within close range was constant, making it possible for us to gather and pass a large volume of intelligence material.

As a result of this situation the kana group was heavily relied upon to provide information on enemy movements. Our task now was to determine total enemy strategy. This information included air raid warnings, the location and composition of enemy convoys moving along the Indochina coast, enemy sightings of Allied shipping and task forces operating in the area, air bases' activity and movement of enemy aircraft. Information was also required about the movement of high-ranking officers, movements of enemy air formations and the serviceability reports of enemy airfields at more remote areas. Further, we had to provide weather reports, which were taken from Japanese transmissions and related to potential Allied targets. We also attempted to monitor Japanese messages describing our own activities, as well as Japanese Army movements on Leyte.

As our operating area was virtually unprotected and out in the open, we had to protect ourselves from the air raids and so we built a shelter around our truck. On each of the four sides we stacked equipment and supplies. We found this shelter to be invaluable, even if only for our morale. If an air raid occurred and we were not operating, we would bolt for this cover and climb over the barricade. We looked like mice scurrying for shelter. Our stacked sides were not too high and we were able to look out over our area.

During one raid, all of us who were not on duty, with the exception of Colin (Curly) Gear, took shelter under the truck. On the side of the hill next to our operating area we had made our toilet. We had dug a pit and placed two coconut tree trunks over the trench. Most of us by this time were suffering on and off from diarrhoea and bad stomachs. When this particular raid started Curly Gear was sitting on the toilet. On sighting a Japanese plane, Curly took off at full speed down the slope and fell over some old Japanese telephone wires. At the same time he lost his pants. As he picked himself up, still going at full speed it looked as though his feet were working before they touched the ground. On reaching the truck he seemed to float over the stacked equipment and supplies and slip under the truck. To relieve the tension Alf Bobin remarked, 'Curly thinks he is still back in Hollandia with the Yankee Rangers and playing baseball

because he is still getting the runs'. This was a typical example of the humour we engaged in to relieve the stress of such a crisis. The way that Curly floated under the truck was virtually an impossible feat because later most of us tried to re-enact this movement without success. Mac Jamieson recalls that he also made the same dash for safety as Curly and he also seemed to float over the stacked equipment and supplies and slide under the truck. Unfortunately, he hit his head on the truck and almost knocked himself out.

During another air raid in our immediate area, there were two or three of us in the muddy stream alongside our operating trucks when it seemed that every ack-ack gun and anything that would shoot started firing. The hot metal from flak started to fall like hailstones, hissing as they fell in the water around us. For some reason, we all crouched down in the water and held our towels above our heads. I am not sure whether we thought we were hiding or trying to keep the flak off us, but it is one of those things that you do on the spur of the moment.

At this time the Americans began to express concern about a suspected spy group operating in Australia. While in Biak I mentioned the ineffectiveness of our security. This was a feeling that kept coming back to me. In my demanding work I was now fully involved in the Battle of the Philippines. But years later, after there was a release of documents in 1992 from the then Prime Minister and the Director of Security, it came to my notice that our lives were certainly at risk. The Government must obviously have thought it was time to release secret information relative to World War II and let the story be told. It was revealed that in 1944, when the kana operators thought they were only fighting the Japanese, there were approximately ten spies working in the Commonwealth Federal Government.

In 1945 in Sydney, in the office of Dr H.V. Evatt, who was both Foreign Minister and Attorney General, it was discovered that there was a Miss Frances Bernie, in her early twenties, working in his office. While we were in the front-line field unit doing our Japanese intercepting, Miss Bernie was doing similar—taking copies of Dr Evatt's secret correspondence and passing it on to a Mr Walter Seddon Clayton, who was the coordinator of a Russian spy ring. From Clayton the secret documents were passed to the Russians and in turn to the Japanese.

This spy ring was so effective that when Australian soldiers landed at Tarakan and Balikpapan in Borneo in 1945, the Japanese Commander had been alerted to their coming and had taken measures to prepare for it. Consequently, hundreds of Australians were killed.

Printed below are the contents of a letter dated 6 January 1945 from General Sir Thomas Blamey to the Acting Minister for the Army about the leakages of information from Australia. It was this letter that first informed the Government of this matter.

ULTRA
TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

6 January 195

My dear Acting Minister,

As you know, the Allied Intelligence Organisation is now world wide and operates through many various channels, some of which are so secret that as little as possible in regard to them is set out on paper.

One of its functions is to counter, as far as possible, the collection of Intelligence by the enemy. In the course of this service it has been definitely proved that there are leakages of information from Australia which have their origin apparently in Canberra.

As examples of this, the following are brought to notice

(i) A Special Spy Report from HARBIN on 24th November, 1944 gave details concerning General MacArthur's plans for certain operations in the Philippines.

The source of this report was given as the Soviet Ambassador in Australia.

(ii) Another HARBIN Special Intelligence Report dated 2nd December gave information of a similr nature.

The source given in this case was Soviet Minister in Australia.

(iii) A news background sheet, which was distributed to Newspaper Editors by the Department of Information, contained certain information. This information dealt with the utilisation of Australian Forces. The matter has already been dealt with in correspondence between the acting Minister for Defence and the Minister for Information. This item of news was also the

subject of a HARBIN Intelligence Report in practically identical terms with those of the background news sheet.

(iv) Details of the Army Intelligence Service estimate of Japanese strength in the Philippines, issued in the AMF Weekly Intelligence Summary on 4th November, 1944, were known in full in TOKIO on 11th November.

This information is believed to have been transmitted from Sydney.

Action is being taken to restrict the dissemination of information that may be published in the Army Intelligence Summary by limiting the information contained therein and by limiting further the number of recipients.

It is suggested that you might consider it desirable that such action as can be taken at Canberra, to limit the association of official personnel with foreign representatives, is put in train.

The matter is recognised as one of great delicacy since, apparently, allied official channels play an important part in the transmission of information.

The cases given above are samples of many that have recently come to notice.

Yours faithfully

General
Commander-in-Chief
Australian Military Forces

Senator J M Fraser
Acting Minister for the Army

**Contents of letter from General Sir Thomas Blamey to the Acting Minister for the Army,
6 January 1945 (AWM: 3DRL 6643, item 2/59)**

In between a lull in operations at Tacloban we sometimes tuned in to the Japanese propaganda station in Tokyo. A Japanese-American traitor known as 'Tokyo Rose' was one of the announcers and to our surprise during a broadcast she announced that a small force of Australian servicemen, assisted by the Americans, had landed on Leyte Island. Tokyo Rose then proceeded to announced all of our group by name, the Service we belonged to and our home town—Jack Brown of the Royal Australian Air Force hails from Adelaide, Stan King and John Moon of the RAAF hail from Sydney, Mac Jamieson of the RAAF and Harry Rasmussen of the 2nd AIF hail from Melbourne and so on. Tokyo Rose might have known our names and even that we were a mixed detachment of airmen and soldiers, but she did not broadcast why we were in the Philippines. Only a handful of the American 'top brass' knew our full duties. The role of the Australians was one of the most highly guarded secrets of the war against Japan, but the activities of enemy spies must never be underestimated.

When Tokyo Rose was broadcasting she used all the latest big band hits and music. If you wanted to hear good music you just had to tune into Tokyo Radio. At the same time, however, you also had to listen to their propaganda. Since our group was involved in classified and highly secret work, the announcement of our names had an upsetting influence. Added to this was the fact that Tokyo Rose promised a swift death to all members of the Australian 'Foreign Legion' if we were captured. This triggered in my mind a statement that had been made to us in our early kana operating training days; that it was better not to be captured—just take your own life. Cyanide capsules had been issued to us.

Sometimes at night when I was on a search pattern listening for any new Japanese frequencies, I occasionally stumbled upon the frequency of a Tokyo propaganda station playing big band music. If the normal Japanese traffic was light I would linger just a little on that frequency. My favourite tune, 'In the Mood', was often played by the station and I used to think, 'I would have played in a big band if it had not been for the war'. In all fairness, I admit that sometimes the chatter from the announcer was often witty, clever and entertaining, but news items about Australia were always propaganda.

There was probably not one Serviceman in the South-West Pacific who had not heard of Tokyo Rose. I thought as I listened to Tokyo Rose over a period of two years that there may have been two announcers, as the voice was sometimes different. It was not until some five years after my discharge from the RAAF that I learned that there were, in fact, three Tokyo Roses. One was an American citizen who was apprehended, charged and found guilty of treason but later discharged and given a pardon.

On the lighter side of kana operating, as a very small foreign unit attached to the US forces but operating separately, we were often subjected to bragging by the Yanks and a lot of ragging went on about Aussies and our accent. We, in turn, similarly bragged and ragged. Each group pushed its own cause. Generally, although we were outnumbered, each group respected the other. However, there were occasions when we Aussies were loners among the Yanks. Often on such occasions, when I was a loner, I would let the Yanks get stuck into me for a minute or two and then go in for my chop. Lots of stories changed hands and many of us had a favourite story. Mine I told many times and often after telling my story and giving my punch line I would hurriedly leave the tent. After a few minutes I would reappear, rather sheepishly, but I was always treated with respect and given a cigarette or something as a token of friendship. My favourite story was this one:

A big American soldier called Tex was smoking a big cigar and walking down Pitt Street, Sydney (and I would always ask if everyone knew where Sydney was and the answer was generally 'yes'), when he came across a small Aussie boy playing with horse manure on the pavement. The boy had heaps of manure of all different sizes ranging from very big to very small. The smallest one resembled a marble. Looking down at the lad Tex, speaking with a real drawl said, 'What are you playin' at boy?' and the boy answered, 'Navies, Yank'. Tex looked at the largest bit of manure and said, 'This must be the US Navy, boy'. But the boy answered, 'No, it's the Pommie Navy, Yank'. Tex then looked at the next biggest bit that the boy kept pushing around the pavement and said, 'Well boy, this must be the Yankee Navy'. But the quick answer was, 'No Yank, it's the Jap Navy'. Tex noticed that the pieces of manure were getting smaller all the time. After many more questions Tex asked, 'Well which navies are these?' and he was told the German, French, Russian and Canadian. There was now only the smallest piece of manure left and Tex, feeling exasperated said, 'Surely this must be the American Navy?' but the boy answered in a cocky Aussie accent, 'No Yank, the Aussie Navy!' and Tex angrily said, 'Well, where's the bloody American Navy?' and the quick reply was, 'Yank, I'm playing with horseshit not bullshit'.

Sometimes there would be a deathly silence and with this I would quickly do my disappearing act with tin hats, boots, swearing and abuse often too colourful to describe, following me. I still tell this story today and the reaction is always one of great mirth. I visited the USA in 1991 to attend a Sixth Army 96th Division 'Deadeyes' reunion, as we had landed on Leyte with this division, and told this

story many times. I was continually asked to tell this story. Apart from the joke itself, I believe the Yanks wanted to hear my Aussie accent.

The Japanese, almost from day one, were reinforcing Leyte through the Port of Ormoc, which was situated on the west coast of Leyte Island, a mere sixteen miles (twenty-six kilometres) from our camp. The Japanese chatted continuously back to their base, never realising that their strategy was an open book. We were thus able to obtain valuable ship convoy information and their progress in relation to departures, estimated time of arrival and the routes to be taken, together with knowledge of what troops and what was the make-up of the cargo they carried. This information also enabled the limited US air power to attack their ships and cargo. The only time this situation temporarily stopped was during the naval Battle of Leyte Gulf, but as soon as this battle ended the Japanese began to reinforce the Ormoc area again and day by day gradually built up their forces.

Usually, we were the only source of information of enemy activity. Because we had already located most of the Japanese strike frequencies we locked ourselves onto these naval and air force frequencies. As the Japanese always seemed to broadcast their movements on leaving air bases or naval ports, we were kept extremely busy supplying information to keep them off our backs. The US air forces were busy destroying their aircraft operating with naval units attempting to reinforce the air defences at the Port of Ormoc. As usual the Japanese Navy would broadcast their progress back to base every twenty-four hours. This also kept us busy, passing the information on to the US Fifth Air Force and Navy air support, so that they could strafe, bomb and often destroy a large part of the convoys. On one occasion we failed to lock on to a seventeen ship convoy, which departed from the Japanese held port of Manila carrying a troop reinforcement, and it was the radio signals from their aircraft that we intercepted that sealed the convoy's fate. A mile (1.6 kilometres) from Ormoc the convoy was attacked, starting at dawn, by 347 US aircraft from aircraft carriers. Among the troop transports and escorting destroyers sunk was the *Shimakaze*, the fastest ship in the Japanese fleet—it had been clocked at a top speed of 40.9 knots. The only Japanese survivors were those few who swam to shore.

This convoy was carrying battle-hardened troops from China among the 8000 men on board, plus 2500 tonnes of equipment and supplies (see Appendix VII). If they had landed at Ormoc they would have given the Americans quite a lot of trouble because at that stage the Army was fighting with their backs to the wall. Our intercept had assisted in a notable victory; not a bad effort for twenty-four chaps. The US operating bomb wing gave 'Foreign Legion' men complete credit

for this ‘sinking’ operation. The reason was always the same—Japanese air cover reporting to base the progress of the convoys, particularly in the final dash in and out of Ormoc Bay.

Section 14.c.(6), of the four-page ‘Extracts from Central Bureau Technical Records – Part B. Naval Air-Ground Communications’, printed below makes reference to the work of No. 6 Wireless Unit, giving it credit for the destruction of seventeen ships. The entire document appears at Appendix IV.

(6) Ormoc Operations - Convoys

During the early part of the battle for the Philippines when enemy reinforcements were being rushed to Ormoc, a great deal of valuable convoy information was obtained. Indeed, this was probably the peak of the Naval-Air Section's usefulness. The operating bomb wing gave 6 Wireless Unit the credit for 17 ships destroyed. The reason was the same - air cover reporting to base the progress of the convoys, particularly in the final dash in and out of Ormoc Bay.

**Section 14.c.(6), ‘Extracts from Central Bureau Technical Records –
Part B. Naval Air-Ground Communications’**

US submarines would wait on the Japanese routes and US aircraft could attack almost at will. Our intercept work was possibly the reason that General Nishimura, who had been on the staff of the 14th Japanese Area Army, made the amazing statement soon after the Pacific war had ended that nearly eighty per cent of the vessels sent to Ormoc were sunk en route.

We noticed a difference between Biak and Leyte in regard to the weather. Biak had been dry with extremely high temperatures. It had been unbearable. On Leyte the heat was different. The temperature was lower but the humidity was extreme. It was so damned hot with natural heat, plus the heat coming from the wireless equipment, that these two combined made it almost impossible to concentrate. Quite a few days after the landing the weather turned sour and a typhoon struck the island. There was torrential rain and this completely stopped activity on the ground so far as the Americans were concerned. Every piece of equipment that was not secured or tied down either blew away or was covered in mud. All of the land around us turned into a sea of mud. The wind could have been over 200 miles per hour (320 kilometres per hour) and by the end of it we were knee-deep in mud. It was almost impossible to walk. Our tents were blown down into the mud and some of the equipment was destroyed, including the direction finder. It was fortunate that the wireless trucks and generator trailers remained operational.

Everything was buffeted by the high winds. This was the first time I had experienced a typhoon and I was surprised at the way the wind blew off the tops of the coconut palms. It looked as though someone had taken a large saw and cut them off. Others were blown over as though they had no hold on the ground. Some heavy trucks suffered the same fate.

Because of the thickness of the mud it was impossible to re-erect our tents. This was a real problem because our code breakers and other support staff operated from the tents, and we all needed somewhere to sleep and eat as we were all dropping from exhaustion. It was John Moon who had the bright idea. John suggested cutting some of the blown down coconut trees into the length of a tent and using them as floor joists. By placing small diameter trees on top of the joists and laying them together you could form a floor. This idea was adopted and the coconut and small diameter trees were lashed together and this brought us up approximately twelve inches (thirty centimetres) above the mud or water. After making the platforms, we re-erected our tents on these to give us a place to rest and work. Les Williams, Ron Sims and I formed a line to cut and collect trees and Jim Rouse and Arch Turnley acted as foremen, while some others were working in the wireless trucks.

This typhoon put us partially out of action for a short while, but we still operated out of our trucks. This was the only occasion that the direction finder was lost, despite experiencing two more typhoons. On top of the three typhoons, we also experienced an earthquake during our stay.

Every night Kenney prayed for sunshine and no rain so that the airfields could be made operational, and every morning he was disappointed. The total rainfall for November was 23.5 inches (597 millimetres), and 34 inches (864 millimetres) fell in a total of forty days. Because of the mud it was difficult to walk or move between the three wireless trucks and the support vehicles, and the situation was not helped by the fact that the small stream that ran past our camp site, which we used as our bathroom and laundry, was now totally flooded.

One day, not realising a typhoon was about to blow, I had gone for a short walk and consequently I was caught in its midst. I could not get back to camp and as I went looking for cover I came across a Chinese mausoleum. I crawled into the vault. It was eerie, but at least I was safe and away from the wind, rain and mud.

As the weeks went by the roads became sliding mud tracks, which turned green with slime and the more the roads were used, the deeper and larger the bogs

became. Even trying to walk on the edges of some of the roads was extremely difficult. Feet disappeared into the mud. The heat was relentless for twenty-four hours of every day. It was like living in the hottest sauna you could imagine. It was almost impossible for Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, Commander of the US Sixth Army, to conduct a war under such conditions.

During this period some American officers visited us. We were all exhausted and Alf Bobin had put his ground sheet down in the mud and was lying on it. He had his Aussie hat over his eyes when one of the Americans said, 'Soldier get up out of the mud'.

The remark given back was, 'Go and get f***ed!'

The American's reply was, 'Oh well, you are an Aussie and Aussies can look after themselves'.

All but one of the American group moved on and the remaining American said to Alf, 'You have just told an American general to go and get f***ed!' The American was Major General Akin. I guess the Major General and the other officers would have repeated the incident and I think Alf spoke in jest for all of us.

After a while, essential food supplies and cigarettes became extremely hard to obtain. As most of us smoked, our major need was for cigarettes. We were considered by Major General Akin to be his white-haired boys who could do no wrong and, normally, just by asking were given as many cartons of cigarettes as we wanted. At this time of acute shortage we had given most of our spare supplies of cigarettes to Filipino people. We then found we could not get more supplies because most of the shipping, that could move, had left the Leyte Island area for safety from the terrible weather conditions. This allowed the Japanese aircraft to come in at will and therefore supplies stopped completely.

Somehow Major General Akin heard we were dying for cigarettes and some cartons of 'Lucky Strike' were sent to us, with his compliments. I am certain that we had the only cartons of cigarettes in our area and could have made a fortune on the black market. The cigarette slogan, 'So round, so firm, so fully packed, so free and easy on the draw, they are Lucky Strike cigarettes', was printed on the packets and this slogan has remained in my memory to this day.

As the bombing and torrential rain continued, we worked under extreme tension because the Japanese wireless traffic was heavy, and we were becoming tired. We

smoked like chimneys despite the fact that most of the group, including myself, had been non-smokers before joining the kana organisation. Cigarettes seemed to be more important to us than food. Because we were isolated for quite a time, our food was supplemented with K rations.

One day, in between my operating duties, I decided to check on the aerial lines strung up in the trees along the side of the hill near our truck. Just as I reached the top of the hill I heard the air raid warning shots. Knowing that I did not have a lot of time to reach cover I raced down the hill, stumbled, fell and badly cut both legs and knees, took the skin off both elbows and also severely sprained my back and neck. I patched myself up with a first aid kit and went back to work. After a few days I became concerned with the state of my legs and knees, which were very swollen and sore, so I arranged to visit an improvised American hospital set up in the Palo Cathedral some fifteen miles (twenty-four kilometres) away. I was told by a doctor that I should not return to my duties but I did, despite the fact that I was warned that gangrene could set in. I knew it was important that I return to my post as soon as possible and I did so at my own risk.

On several occasions it was my old mate, Alf Bobin, who drove me to Palo for treatment and we laughed about it when we met again in 1983. Of the twelve kana operators in the group, two were doubling as drivers. Besides Alf the only other driver was Les Williams. Alf's main driving job was to take some of our interception work to Major General Akin at Headquarters in Tacloban and also to the Provisional Capitol Building where some of our work was quickly decoded. There were also instances when he was required to drive the Major General to various locations with intercept information.

On one occasion Mac Jamieson relates that Alf Bobin and Les Williams took our truck into Tacloban to get our water supply. When they arrived there was a long queue of Americans also waiting, so they got on the end. Fortunately they were easily picked out with their slouch hats. Major General Akin came along and said, 'What are you two doing at the end of the line?' and then added, 'Come with me'. He went to the head of the queue with them and the Yanks were quite vocal and abusive to them. Akin looked at one of the Americans and said, 'Did you say something soldier?' The American answered 'NO SIR!' Happily, Alf and Les left with their water.

On their way back to camp they came across a lot of armed Americans and they asked what was going on. One Yank said there was a 'dammed Jap' under a house and they could not flush him out. Alf asked one of them, 'Are you going under

the house?’ and the reply was ‘No’. Alf said, ‘Give me your gun’, which was a Colt .45, and he went under the house. Next thing a Filipino boy streaked out, and that was the American’s ‘Jap’.



Provisional Capitol Building, Tacloban, Leyte, 1944 – The US had men working from this building, one of the best in Tacloban – It was also a decoding centre for our work

The cathedral at Palo was constructed in 1598 under the direction of the Jesuits who founded the city and used it for some time as their residence. This cathedral had a magnificent altar and beautiful silver religious figures prior to the Japanese invasion. The figures were so big that they fitted onto four-wheeled trolley cart frames approximately ten feet (three metres) by four feet (1.2 metres) and were used during religious festivals. When the Japanese invaded Leyte Island the people of Palo dug huge pits and completely buried the altar and ornaments. In 1946 they were dug up and restored and placed back in the cathedral.

As my knees were not healing, it was necessary to keep returning to Palo every four or five days. I was repeatedly told not to return to duty because my knees were not healing properly and needed proper treatment. Again I ignored this advice. I felt compelled to keep operating because our work was so vital. On one of the trips, one of the doctors told me I had been recommended for a decoration for my dedication to duty. After several more visits to the hospital I was told I would receive my decoration after the war. I applied to the US Department of Army regarding this decoration in 1984 and was told, ‘The prerogative to recognise your

service during World War II rightly belongs to the Royal Australian Air Force'. In 1985 I reapplied and was told, 'In your case, because you waited almost forty years to check into this matter, most of the records pertaining to World War II are no longer available. That is the main reason why we are unable to confirm your entitlement to any decoration. Additionally, it appears that Major General Akin may have chosen to recognise your fine work with the photograph he signed.' Then again in 1993 I approached the US Department of Army and was advised, 'We regret we cannot be more helpful in fulfilling your request. The fact that you and other members of your unit were not awarded any US decorations does not detract from your record of credible service in a time of great need.' In relation to applying forty years after the war, I wonder how I could have applied earlier when I was under the Official Secrets Act. Sixty years later I am still waiting for this decoration!

In my Air Training Corps days, our Squadron Commander, Squadron Leader W.R. Snow, had said in 1941 he would happily give five thousand pounds (\$10,000) to the first cadet who joined the Air Force and was decorated. Had I been rightfully given my decoration I would have been entitled to this reward. In 1948 this money would have bought two solid brick houses in an up-market area of Adelaide.

Following my legs, back and neck injuries, I was never physically comfortable on Leyte, but this did not hamper my operating. The constant Japanese morse chattering frequently gave us their movements. It was like reading an open book. I remember on one occasion I had taken a message and given it to Curly Gear, our cipher clerk, for translating. He soon returned to the intercept truck for more messages and related that the last message I had given him had been from a flight of Japanese aircraft and from memory had read, 'Have so many lunches ready for the flight's return'. I queried Curly's translation and his reply was that the message had been in very plain language. Later he put his nose into my truck and said, 'Well the Japs would just about be getting ready to have lunch'. My reply was, 'I don't think they will be getting any lunch because on my frequency there have been many calls for help saying they were being attacked by enemy aircraft'. These messages had come in from different aircraft; I could tell by the different style of their morse sending. The Japanese home station had gone berserk calling 'CQ CQ', which meant 'can any other station hear me, and if so, please respond'. Curly and I had a chuckle over my interception. More aircraft had hit the dust!

In the 1980s I read articles about the Leyte landings, and both American and Japanese war historians had no explanation for the loss of so many Japanese aircraft, which had just disappeared. In fact, there was one flight of nineteen

Japanese aircraft from Luzon that had all completely disappeared. Should these historians ever read this book they will now be made aware of what happened to those aircraft. This incident was similar to the Yamamoto action—it was just we Australian kana operators working with Kenney's fighter pilots and giving them the timetable and track of the targets. Naturally, only Kenney and his staff knew where the information had come from. Now the record can be put straight.

If the Americans could have taken Ormoc earlier, they could have stopped the Japanese reinforcements and supplies coming in. The job on hand of destroying their shipping and aircraft was the major factor in holding onto Leyte and the start of MacArthur's leapfrogging into Japan proper. It was a desperate situation at this stage and our intercept work was vital in sinking many Japanese ships.

The Americans did not capture Ormoc until 10 December 1944.

During another lull, Dan McKillop, for devilment, tried out his Thompson submachine gun. The Americans, thinking it was a Japanese attack, came running to give assistance. Carrying my Thompson I shot out of my tent and bailed up a Filipino man who was wearing a white suit and sent him running. However, it was soon realised that the firing was not by the Japanese.

After the 'Thompson' incident, Dan McKillop, Dave Wishart and I were in Tacloban and we met the man in the white suit; his name was Joe Price. We three and other members of our unit became friendly with him. During the Japanese occupation Joe had acted as a negotiator between the Philippine guerrilla forces and the townspeople of Tacloban. He also helped the US forces after the invasion.

Joe, who was the eldest child of Mr and Mrs Walter Price, took us to his wartime home and introduced us to his wife, Socorro (known as Cora), his son Joe Price II aged about eighteen, Aida, aged about sixteen and young Cora, who was about ten. Prior to the Japanese occupation, Joe Price and his family had lived in the mansion that MacArthur had now adopted for his Headquarters, but they did not move back after the liberation because his mother thought the Americans must use the home as their Headquarters. I doubt whether the Price family would have had much option—MacArthur had simply moved in!

Joe took it upon himself to foster and give friendship to all or any of our detachment. We were at liberty to visit his new home, have a cup of coffee, a talk or a smoke. This offer was taken up by many of our detachment. Mac Jamieson and Stan King, together with other members, always left the Price home with fond memories. As

Joe was welcome at MacArthur's Headquarters he took it upon himself to take me there. I felt privileged.

Joe and I developed a father-son relationship and during my visits I would be invited upstairs and always asked to sit in Joe's special chair. Joe had been educated in both the Philippines and the USA. One of his greatest loves was to play the piano. His father had sent him to America to study engineering, but Joe chose to join the famous Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians Big Band orchestra as the pianist. He also helped Waring write some of the musical scores. Joe still loved to play the piano. His piano, which was in the mansion during the Japanese occupation, had had many of the tops of the white keys broken, but Joe took the piano to this new home and the broken keys did not deter him from playing. He was aware of my love of big band music and I only had to whistle an old tune and he would play it. Then I would whistle the tune of a new piece of music and within seconds he could play it.

During my visits with Joe I met a young Catholic priest, Julio Rosales, who was born in Tacloban. His mother was very poor and she helped the Price family with their sewing in order to earn extra pesos. I also met a colourful young lady who was Imelda Romualdez (now Imelda Marcos). I was introduced to Imelda as 'Meldy' and neither of us had any inkling that she would one day become the wife of the President of the Philippines and that Julio Rosales would later be a Cardinal.



Major Richard (Dick) Bong, 1945
(Photograph courtesy the late Marge Bong Drucker)

US troops were also made welcome to the Price home. Dick Bong was often a visitor and always had a good story to tell. On one occasion, when I was present, Dick's story was that the only way he could down a much more manoeuvrable Jap fighter was to fly up its arse and let go with all guns. Joe and I had a good laugh about this.

About this time I was sick of waiting for the RAAF both to recognise and promote the kana boys. So I promoted myself to 'lieutenant'. When I had first met Joe I introduced myself as LAC Brown and he asked me what LAC stood for. Being a typical very cocky young person just twenty years old, I jokingly said, 'In the Australian Air Force it stands for Lieutenant Air Corps'.

As time permitted I regularly visited Joe and Cora's home. One day he asked me if I could spare an hour or two and have lunch with him and others in his home. I accepted and hoped I could get there. I later went to lunch wearing my slouch hat to which an Australian officer's Air Force metal eagle and crown badge was attached. This badge came from an Air Force officer's forage cap. When I entered the dining room I found it and other parts of the house full of high-ranking officers. There was a very long table in the dining room with fourteen chairs. Six Americans sat along each side with Joe at one end and me at the other. I looked for a door to escape but when I heard Joe say, 'Here is my special guest Lieutenant Jack Brown, an Australian', I had to stay and virtually bluff my way through this. I felt very much outranked and uncomfortable and after eating I excused myself. When Joe took me to the door he invited me to come back whenever I could and said that he would like me to be his friend.

As I was leaving I told him the truth that I held the lowest of Air Force rank and that LAC stood for Leading Aircraftman. He thought this was a great joke and laughed his head off. I also told him that if I had been an American I thought I would have held a much higher rank.

Whenever time permitted I went, as a friend, to the Price home and spent many happy hours there with Joe and his family. I remember on one occasion I told Joe about a day when Eric Hedley and I were in the City of Tacloban and the town was hit by Japanese dive-bombers. I think they were Judys (single-engine bombers). One of the planes was heading in our direction and seemed to be diving straight toward us. We saw the two bombs leave the aircraft and they appeared to be lined up onto us. We both thought that we were their target. The only cover we could find was in the gutter and so down we went. However, our fears were unfounded as the bombs landed about seventy-five yards (sixty-nine metres) away on some buildings.



**Photograph of Eric Hedley with local children in Tacloban –
Note the Japanese truck in the background
(AWM P954/36/30)**

There was not any alcohol available for lower ranks. Some of my group were anxious to have a drink and so a couple of days after my lunch with the hierarchy at Joe's, I decided to visit the officer's canteen in my lieutenant role and buy some drink for my friends. The canteen was situated in a building opposite the Price mansion. I was wearing my slouch hat with 'the badge' and while chatting with many of the men, hoped I would not run into our own officer wearing his '1939 issue' tropical pith helmet (refer to photograph on page 127 of 'Foreign Legion' men). I still had my Yankee dollars from my auction of farthings on Biak and I bought a couple of bottles of liquor. I felt good to be able to buy the drink for my friends and went back to camp to give the boys my gift. I told them it had been given to me by the Americans.

Another time when visiting the Price family with David Wishart and Dan McKillop, Cora offered us coffee or tea. I remember that I was sick of coffee and asked for tea. Dave and Dan both asked for coffee. Cora had a maid who was directed to make the coffee but Cora said she would make the tea. In due course the maid gave the coffee to David and Dan. Then Cora brought in just a cup of tea (not the pot). I thanked her and started to drink it. Being in good spirits I thought I would have a little fun. After a while she asked me how I liked my tea. I replied, 'It's not bad but you did something wrong, you have put the tea in the cup first and then added milk (American tinned milk). An Aussie can always tell his tea. You should have put the milk in first and then added the tea.'

Cora picked up my cup and said, 'I will make you another one'. A minute or two later she returned with two cups and put them down in front of me and said, 'In one cup I have put the milk in first and in the other I put the milk in last. Which is which?' I had put my foot in it at the Price's home again but thought I had better guess. I had a fifty per cent chance of being correct. I picked up the first cup and sipped it and said, 'This is the one you put the milk in after pouring the tea'. She was amazed and wanted to know how I could tell. My reply was, 'An Aussie can always tell his tea', and from then on the tea was always poured in front of me, milk going in first. In 1979 I visited the Philippines for three months and saw Cora (this being the first time I had seen her since 1945) and told her the truth. She laughed, said she remembered the incident and said, 'I always thought you may have been pulling my leg'.

During happy hours with Joe he often related stories. One was about Santo Niño who was the Miraculous Holy Infant Jesus, Patron Saint of Tacloban, Leyte Island. The statue of Santo Niño was brought from Spain to the island in the 15th century. Leyte Island was originally called Tandaya and was the first island in the Philippines to receive the name Filipinas.

Santo Niño performed many miracles for the people of the Philippines and, according to Joe, one such miracle occurred on 20 October 1944. Very early on the morning of the invasion, Australian and American warships commenced shelling miles of beaches either side of Tacloban. The shelling took place on the shore and inland. Many of the people who were still in Tacloban when the shelling started took refuge in the church of Santo Niño. In the church the statue had its back to the warships that were shelling the coastline. During the explosions and concussions the people were praying to Santo Niño for safety. To their amazement the statue started to move as the shelling increased and very slowly completely turned around, and when fully facing the sea in the direction from which the shells were coming, it stopped and so did the shelling. The invasion of the island then commenced. This, to the people of Tacloban, was indeed a miracle—Santo Niño had saved them.

Late one afternoon while at the Price's home, I was upstairs on the balcony with Aida and an air raid started. I told her to go downstairs and stay under the house for protection. She would not move and remarked, 'I am not scared of Japs and anyway I want to stay and watch the fireworks'. We saw plenty of fireworks from the tracers and explosions, and as we watched I told Aida about another air attack that had occurred in November. Approximately twenty-five Japanese twin-engine Betty medium bombers were flying in perfect formation when ack-ack and

P-38 US fighters attacked them. Within seconds the first Betty began to fall in flames. The whole Japanese force then broke up and flew to lower altitudes, or 'the deck' as termed by the fliers. It was a one-sided contest. But there was danger for the P-38s from the ground fire that was directed at the Japanese planes. It seemed everyone was trigger-happy. From my grandstand position on the hill beside our receiving truck I watched with delight, and stunned disbelief, that the Japanese were being shot down so easily—coming down three and four together. The last two in formation were hit and burst into flame. I watched as the crews of these aircraft left the planes without parachutes and they fell alongside the burning aircraft all the way to the ground. Unfortunately, this is another wartime memory that stays with me to this day.

I believe Bong also watched this particular raid with disbelief, and my thoughts of Bong are that if Kenney had let him loose he possibly would have shot down ten of the Japanese aircraft, as they were sitting ducks. At that particular time Bong had been actively involved in the defence of the island since 27 October, but had been grounded by order from Lieutenant General Kenney because he felt that Bong had done more than his fair share—more than any other pilot—and needed a rest.

Up to this time I had witnessed many Japanese aircraft go down in smoke or flames. We were told to remember that all Japanese fighter aircraft had been given boys' names—they were predictable—whereas Japanese bomber aircraft were given girls' names—watch them more closely as they were unpredictable!

As the weeks went by our hair grew longer and longer and we found an old Filipino man to cut our hair for a few pesos. He would visit the camp and bring with him just an open type razor. He did not own a comb. When my turn came I was rather apprehensive because I had never had my hair cut with a razor. It is general practice now, but this was over sixty years ago. I used to carefully watch the barber wielding his razor. These haircuts remain vividly in my memory.

In the muddy stream near our camp, we used to wash ourselves and some of our clothes and swim. Alf Bobin, caught dermatitis or ringworm around his private parts. The Americans gave him some gentian violet to paint the affected parts and told him to lie in the sun. We also employed Filipino girls who would collect and do some of our washing. One day they came when Alf was lying in the sun on his ground sheet. His member was lying completely exposed to allow the sun to help with the healing of his infection. I was lying in my tent under my mosquito net with the tent sides rolled up and could clearly see the outside activity but nobody could see me. I watched the girls go from tent to tent collecting washing. As they

walked past Alf they almost stopped and stared. He was lying there stark naked except for his slouch hat over his face. He did not take any notice of the girls and pretended he did not know they were there. They moved along and picked up some more washing and on their way back had to pass him again. They stopped and he took his hat off his face saying to them, 'Yeah, technicolour balls!' With that the girls took off and we never saw them again, nor did we get our washing back.

Once, after another typhoon had blown itself out, I was working an extended shift into the night. The three wireless receivers were very hot because they had been working day and night for some time, but were now unusually quiet. I was dog-tired because I had not had much sleep during the past thirty-six hours. This particular night I noticed I had a visitor, a praying mantis, which must have come into the truck during the day when the insect door was open. It was the biggest of the species I had ever seen, at least six inches (fifteen centimetres) long and two and a half inches (6.3 centimetres) high. Its feelers and legs were stretched out. The mantis' head kept moving as it stared at me and then it started eating insects that were around the receivers. After having its fill of insects it looked at me and moved its head as if asking for something. I forgot my tiredness and my imagination ran wild. *What can I give my friend?* Nearby was a drinking container with some fluid in it that another operator had left behind. I proceeded to dip my pencil into the liquid and put a drop or two on the end of the mantis' claws. It immediately put the liquid to its mouth. This went on a few times and then the mantis tried to walk away, but after a few inches it fell on its back with all legs extended upwards. My first reaction was that it was dead. I suspect though it was drunk and the drinking container may have had something else other than water in it, because after an hour or two it stood up and started the procedure again of catching insects and then standing back, moving its head and looking at me as if asking for more liquid, so I repeated the exercise. Again the same thing happened; the mantis fell over and slept. This not only amused me but it stopped me from dropping off to sleep. When I was finally relieved by another kana operator I told him of my amusement and asked him to take care of my friend because I wanted it to be there when I returned for my next shift, and it was. I remember that it kept me company for at least five days.

The days went by and during our hours off duty from the wireless truck we were each required to take our share of the general work of the camp. Every twelve hours the petrol motors and generators needed attention. Each of the three wireless trucks had a generator with two petrol V8 motors attached and each motor ran for twelve hours straight, then was shut down as the other motor was started to take over. The shut down motor then had to be allowed to cool down, be checked for oil

and water and be refuelled ready for its next twelve hour stint. We had to check the aeriels, boil water, tidy the area and our weapons needed to be cleaned and made ready for use. Our domestic duties also needed attention. We had no support staff and the whole twenty-three of us had to do everything. Our officer (with the pith helmet) spent most of his time in Tacloban.

When I had been injured and could not walk properly I could not do any of this work, but I was required to sit for much longer stretches of time working the receiving monitors. I did have the ability to sit at a wireless receiver for long periods. If it went quiet for any length of time I could 'catnap'; that is, take a brief light sleep but be wide awake at the first 'dit' of morse that came from the receiver and with pencil in hand, could still write it down. When the group realised I had acquired this skill, I was given, for a short period of time, the nick name of 'cat'.

I had just come off duty one night and as I left the operating truck an eerie incident occurred. The night sky was still pitch-black and there was no moon, the sky was covered with high clouds and there was hardly any wind. The interceptors who had just come on duty were extremely busy working in our intercept vehicles and not thinking of anything but the job at hand. Without any warning, and within a second, the sky changed from pitch-black to a light brighter than the sun. I stopped dead in my tracks. I did not move an inch or move a muscle. Japanese aircraft had brought us all back to reality. We could hear the aircraft directly overhead.

The Japanese had dropped a parachute with flares at about 800 feet (244 metres) right over the top of our camp site. We expected bombs to fall at any moment but for some reason this did not occur. The flares had lit up the area like daylight and one could have read the small print of a newspaper from up to three feet (0.9 metres) away. I remember that there were no shadows on the ground as the flares were dropped directly overhead. The aircraft kept circling overhead for quite a while before we heard the noise of it leaving.

The Japanese appeared to be trying to attack us at night as they had not had much luck during the day. At this stage they were mounting dozens of air attacks a day on our area. The Americans had some tents a few hundred yards away from us on the other side of the hill but we did not know what they were doing or why they were there. On one occasion a bomb fell on a tent and killed all the American occupants and injured others in nearby tents.

Following the parachute flare incident, the Japanese tried to take the initiative away from the Americans. Starting from 26 November the Japanese Army plan was to launch a counterattack and retake control of both the useable and unusable

airfields, plus the big airfield being built at Dulag and the surrounding land. On the night of 27 November an unusual attempt was made by three enemy transport aircraft loaded with troops. The aircraft flew over the Leyte Gulf at an altitude of fifty feet (fifteen metres) with their lights on hoping to confuse the Americans and make them think that it was a group of friendly aircraft coming in. One of these planes crash-landed some twenty-five yards (twenty-three metres) offshore and a guard on the beach, assuming the plane to be friendly, waded out to it, climbed onto a wing and offered assistance. The Japanese troops emerged from the plane and threw grenades at the guard. Two Japanese were killed in the resulting skirmish and the others escaped into the swamp. The second plane crashed on an airstrip killing all aboard, and the third crashed on the beach with most occupants escaping.

The Japanese then tried to infiltrate with approximately two thousand ground troops fighting in areas nearby and to destroy material, ammunition dumps, bridges and barracks. Just after this infiltration the Japanese brought in paratroopers. They were to destroy aircraft on any of the airstrips and blow up the installations.

Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita issued the following orders to General Sosaka Suzuki, 25th Army Commander at Ormoc:

If the construction of air bases on Leyte is permitted to continue the communications between the southern areas and the homeland will be cut and this would be a serious situation. Therefore, we must occupy Burauen airfield as soon as possible and at the same time neutralise Tacloban and Dulag airfields. Moreover we must annihilate the enemy's air power.

At the time of this enemy infiltration attempt, our intercept work became even more important. We were required to find out the Japanese intentions and this put a great deal more tension on us because the troops were almost in our backyard. It was not only our intercept work at risk but the security of our area as well. With only twenty-three of us, it would have been virtually impossible to hold our area and remain on air. We were very concerned that we could not defend ourselves.

We were told that if the need arose we were to shift our equipment to a safer area. If unable to do so we were to wreck the motors of our trucks and jeep, and the motors on each side of our wireless generators by breaking up the radiators and jamming down the accelerators and starting the motors. We also had to make our wireless equipment unserviceable and, if necessary, fight our way out.

What the Americans did not realise was that our Australian officers had never given us one minute of training in the use of the firearms that had been issued to us back on Biak. Had we kana men been forced out at this critical period, the situation would have been desperate because a good part of the intelligence information was coming from our small group. MacArthur was loathe to break our vital group up and join us with our parent group, who were then operating out of Tolosa possibly only seventeen miles (twenty-seven kilometres) away.

The detachments from wireless units that moved away from the parent body to take over a front-line role, as we had done, maintained a close line back to the main base. The detachment would always go back and rejoin if the parent body moved up. However, in our case this did not happen. We stayed as a separate operating group for at least twelve weeks before we went back to the parent unit. This was because MacArthur thought we were a war winning group. If he pulled us out, the system could have broken up. Akin reiterated to us that we were in the elite inner circle of intelligence gathering.

I am happy to say we did not have to fight our way out. The Japanese plan failed because of the Japanese transports used, twenty were sent to Buri airstrip, nine to San Pablo, six to Bayug, two to Tacloban and two to Dulag. Each transport carried between fifteen and twenty men. The last major effort was against the Buraen airstrip on 10 December. Nearly all the Japanese were lost and they failed to achieve any major objective. The Japanese attempt to take the initiative from the Americans had failed—the Japanese air transports allotted Tacloban airstrip were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire, and those destined for the Dulag airstrip crash-landed and all were killed. During this offensive the Japanese did destroy some minor field dumps and a few US aircraft on the ground, delayed airfield construction and isolated the Fifth Air Force Headquarters for five days, but they did not appreciatively delay the Leyte operation.

During this period the Japanese kana symbol I heard most of the time was a block of ten dashes and dots. Written in shorthand and transcribed into English symbols, this was 'HO', meaning enemy aircraft attacking. The Japanese would keep sending the same signal hoping that their base or another station would hear them and give them some help. If their own base or bases heard this call they would transmit out in two international morse code symbols written as just 'CQ CQ', meaning 'Calling all stations'. It was preceding the messages sent by the Japanese naval bases and meant, 'Seek you'. The Japanese would keep sending the same message 'CQ CQ', hoping to get an answer.

They would often use the same timetable and pattern on many of their aircraft flights. They might leave at a certain time from a certain base to fly to a destination on a specific day of the week. If they kept the same pattern up consistently they were actually giving us a message—come and shoot me down, I am going to be in such and such a place at a certain time. They lost hundreds of aircraft because they did not believe a westerner could understand their katakana morse code. It was not until years after the war had ended that the Japanese realised that the Allies had broken into their code system. As the war progressed their help messages became more frequent and I would have heard the same message regularly, not once but perhaps five times a day.

One day in December 1944, when looking at Joe Price's photograph album, I noticed some folded confectionery papers about three inches (7.6 centimetres) long pressed into some of the pages. They were from candy that had been made with printed wrappers in Australia, then smuggled into the Philippines by submarine to be distributed by guerrillas and Filipino underground men. The inside of the wrapper was similar to a small two-page newspaper, which bore a photograph of General MacArthur and an inscription that read, 'I shall return'. After the candy had been eaten the wrappers were passed onto others. Joe said these messages were like a ray of sunshine.

Joe Price told me that there had been two Japanese prisoner of war camps in the vicinity of Tacloban. One was situated nearby and the other slightly north. This amazed me and I asked, 'Why two?' Joe told me that one had been for military personnel and the other for civilians, and that he thought the military camp held approximately two hundred British and Australians. He thought they had been brought to Leyte from other Pacific war zones. I decided that on my next walk I would try to find the camps.



Newspaper article about the 'Candy News' in Tacloban

I found the military camp not far from Tacloban, and at that stage it was housing some Japanese prisoners. I did not find the civilian camp. I asked various people about the camp, but the answers were always negative.

By 7 December 1944, Dick Bong was flying again and destroyed two more aircraft making his tally thirty-eight kills. On 12 December he was awarded the US Congressional Medal of Honor by General MacArthur. In the presence of Lieutenant General Kenney, all US hierarchy who were nearby and Dick's fellow friends, MacArthur said, 'Major Richard Ira Bong who has ruled the air from New Guinea to the Philippines I now induct you into the Society of the Bravest of the Brave, the wearers of the Congressional Medal of Honor of the United States'. It would have given me great pleasure to have witnessed this emotional award presentation.

On 10 December, Ormoc Bay was taken from the Japanese and on the next day 77th Division beach units observed a Japanese convoy, which was transporting a Special Naval Landing Force, steaming into Ormoc Bay with the apparent intention of landing at Ormoc. The Japanese evidently thought that Ormoc was still in their hands. In the dark, at approximately 2330 hours, the US forces withheld their fire until the first barge was within fifty yards (forty-six metres) of the pier and then all weapons converged their fire upon the craft which immediately burst into flames. The Japanese were reported to have screamed 'Don't shoot', under the mistaken notion that their forces still occupied Ormoc.

The harbour was lit up by the burning barge and 60mm illuminating shells. During the night the Americans discovered that another vessel, about the size of a LST, had pulled into shore north-west of the town and was busily engaged in discharging troops and equipment. This ship was also destroyed less than fifty yards (forty-six metres) from shore, bursting into flames and sinking.

The early dawn on 12 December revealed another ship of the same type farther west. American artillery, mortars and tank destroyer guns opened up against this vessel as it fled along the shores of Ormoc Bay and continued until it was out of range. Heavy clouds of smoke were observed billowing from the vessel as it moved at a snail's pace. During the night the American fire had been closely coordinated, since their vessels, including a resupply convoy, were in the bay. Not a single US craft was damaged. Ormoc was taken and the battle now moved into the Ormoc Valley.

On 16 December Tanauan airfield became fully operational, and on 17 December Dick Bong shot down his fortieth kill, becoming the highest scoring Allied ace in the Pacific. On hearing of this kill, Kenney sent word that Bong was to fly his P-38 from the Tanauan strip to the Tacloban strip and leave it there. Kenney had decided that forty kills was high enough and it was time for Bong to go home. Bong was then sent back to the USA, only to die as a test pilot flying a Lockheed P-80 revolutionary jet plane on 6 August 1945, eight days before war ended.

I think MacArthur had so much feeling for Dick Bong that he may have had him in mind when he wrote the following poem. Incidentally this is the only known published poem written by MacArthur.

Build me a son

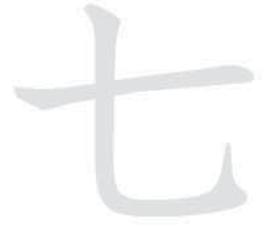
Build me a son who will be strong enough to know when he is weak,
And brave enough to face himself when he is afraid,
A son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds,
Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high;
A son who will master himself before he seeks to master others,
One who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.
And after all these things are his, he may have
Enough of a sense of humour, so that
He may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously
Give him humility, so that he may always remember
The simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom,
And the meekness of true strength.
Then, I, his father, will dare to whisper,
'I have not lived in vain'.

(With permission – MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, Virginia, USA)

KATAKANA MAN

VII

THE TIDE TURNS



Christmas Day 1944 came and the following day MacArthur announced, probably prematurely, that the Leyte campaign would be regarded as closed. There were still thousands of Japanese troops fighting in the Ormoc Valley and surrounding areas but they were no longer considered a threat. At this stage over 50,000 Japanese troops had been killed, injured or taken prisoner. Despite the heavy losses, Japanese Air Force activity continued from their many other bases in the Philippines and in fine weather we were still subjected to air raids. Our monitoring had to continue non-stop.

Lieutenant General Robert Eichelberger's Eighth Army relieved Lieutenant General Krueger's Sixth Army so that MacArthur and Krueger could plan an invasion of Japan. In the weeks ahead Eichelberger's men killed over 27,000 enemy soldiers. The fighting was rugged, exhausting, bitter and terrible for both armies, but much more so for the Japanese. When the Leyte operation fully came to a close in April 1945, and final mopping up was complete, the Allied casualties stood at 15,500 with 3500 dead. I had a feeling that my time in Tacloban was also coming to an end and I casually said to Joe Price, 'If I'm shipped out in a hurry, I'll always keep in touch'.

Prior to our joining the parent unit, Major General Akin asked the RAAF authorities if he could give us a furlough in the United States. We would have been put on one of their Air Transport Command C-54 aircraft bound for the USA for a week or two. This would have given us a good break and we would have been refreshed. The RAAF denied Akin's request even though we were stressed and in need of a rest. Most of our group had been operational for approximately twenty months without a break. Many of us weighed a mere eight to nine stone (fifty-one to fifty-seven kilograms). Just to get away from the tension, heat and humidity would have been wonderful; but there was never to be any break. It was always to be go, go, go with continual interception work.

In mid-January 1945 we joined No. 6 Wireless Unit at Tolosa and our small detachment was swallowed up again by the main body. Our little camp site was closed down and the mobile trucks were left behind in readiness for the next invasion if one was to occur. We just took with us our personal belongings and

equipment. While our ‘Foreign Legion’ group worked in the Tacloban area, rank hardly mattered. Our understanding and respect for each other was based on the concept of mutual dependence and cooperation. We worked well as a team. Sadly, when we went to Tolosa this closeness was lost.



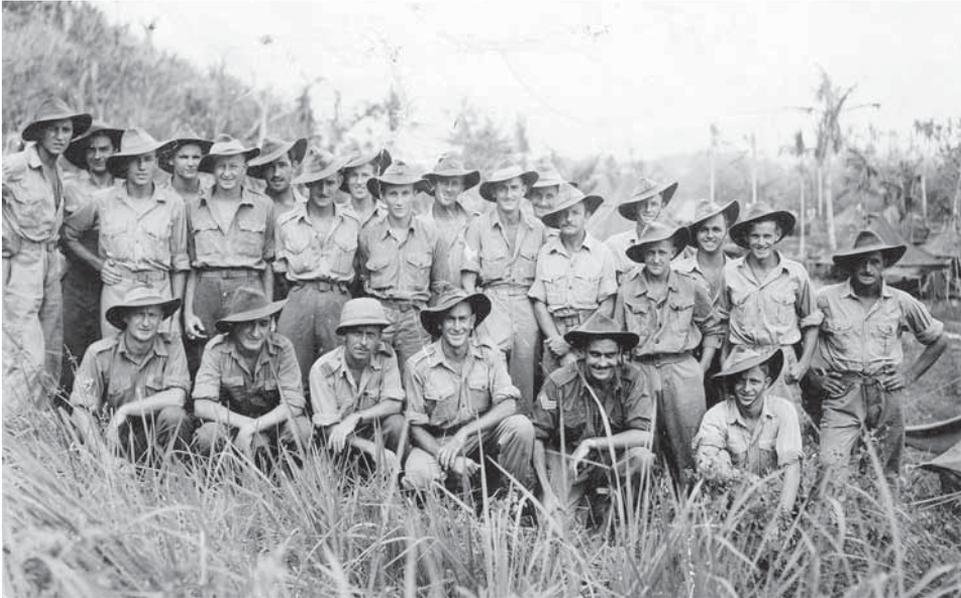
**Tolosa – The two storey building used for a short time as a decoding centre, 1944–45
(AWM P954/36/33)**

When we arrived at Tolosa we were surprised to be allocated American tents, which had already been erected for us. As we had our own stretchers with us, moving in took just five minutes—how about that for once!

Prior to our departure from Tacloban to Tolosa, seventeen miles (twenty-seven kilometres) south, a photograph of the ‘Foreign Legion’ group was taken by General MacArthur’s personal photographer. Each member was given a copy and Major General Akin wrote on the back of each member’s photograph the words:

In appreciation of your fine work.
S.B. Akin, Major General
U.S. Army

I am not sure how many of these photographs survive to this day but I still have the one I was given. It has the inscription by Major General Atkin on the back and is also signed by twenty-two of the twenty-four-man 'Foreign Legion' group. A copy of my photograph is also held by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. A couple of crease lines, just visible, on the front of my photograph verifies that any copies are from my original photograph.



'Foreign Legion' men, Leyte Island, January 1945.

**Photograph presented by Major General S.B. Akin to each member of No. 6 Wireless Unit
whose names appear on the following page (Author is front row right)
(US Military photographer)**

Back Row, Standing, Left to Right (Nos 1–18):

1. LAC Erwyn McKILLOP (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
2. CPL Allen JONES, 2nd AIF
3. LAC David WISHART (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
4. CPL Harry MILLS (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
5. CPL Alan ROGERS, 2nd AIF
6. LAC Noel McCULLAGH (Japanese Kana Direction Finder Operator), RAAF
7. CPL Alan SCHOU, RAAF
8. LAC Eric HEDLEY (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
9. CPL Ron SIMS (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
10. SGT Thomas KILLINGSWORTH, RAAF
11. CPL Stan KING (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
12. LAC Alfred BOBIN (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
13. LAC Clifton MOULTON, RAAF
14. LAC Leslie WILLIAMS (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
15. LAC Colin GEAR, RAAF
16. LAC John MOON (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
17. LAC Wally MAPSTONE (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF
18. CPL Mac JAMIESON (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF

Front Row, Squatting, Left to Right (Nos 19–24):

19. SGT Harry RASMUSSEN, 2nd AIF
20. WOFF Peter HALL, British Army (Seconded to the RAAF)
21. FLTLT Mick RICHARDSON, RAAF
22. WOFF Jim ROUSE, RAAF
23. SGT Archibald TURNLEY, 2nd AIF
24. LAC A Jack BROWN (Japanese Wireless Kana Operator), RAAF

group with a US decoration. But because of the Australian Government's policy regarding foreign decorations, which was not always adhered to, he was not allowed to do so. We had to settle for a commendation for devotion to duty.

However, we did seem to go unnoticed by the Australian High Command. The system of rewards for people in the katakana intelligence field was nonexistent. Luckily for Australia and the whole war effort, we were young, enthusiastic and we loved our work and this is probably why we were so good at it.

Our interceptions had helped make it possible for MacArthur to make the huge jump to Leyte Island. The distances to the nearest Allied air bases were indeed large. We were 650 miles (1046 kilometres) from Morotai, 1150 miles (1850 kilometres) from Biak and 1500 miles (2414 kilometres) from Hollandia. Initially the Japanese were able to bomb the hell out of the landing troops and the only thing going for MacArthur was the work of the kana operators, who gave him immediate intelligence. This Leyte landing or leapfrog had been the most risky of all MacArthur's landings; this was the opening of the first door in the forthcoming battle for Japan. MacArthur won the Philippines and the Australian kana operators felt very proud that they had been a significant part of it.

Nos. 1 and 6 Wireless Units to which I belonged received six commendations. Three were given to us by Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, two by Major General S.B. Akin and one from Major General Ennis C. Whitehead of the US Fifth Air Force. The second commendation given to us by Major General Akin was to the members of the 'Australian Foreign Legion' in late December 1944 at Leyte Island. Obviously the Americans appreciated all the Australian wireless units' work, but Australia has never, to my knowledge, given us any acknowledgment in the field, nor has it done so to this day, more than sixty years after the end of World War II.



**Four men from No. 6 Wireless Unit in Tolosa, 1945 –
John Hamilton on left and Stan King on right (Photograph courtesy Stan King)**



**Men from No. 6 Wireless Unit at a shoe shop in Tolosa, 1945 –
John Hamilton on left and Stan King on right (Photograph courtesy Stan King)**



Unit members at Tolosa camp, 1945

Back Row L-R: Eric Hedley, John Moon, Jim O'Neill

Front Row: The author, Les Williams

(AWM P954/36/34)



View of Tolosa from nearby hill, 1945

In Tolosa, I was pleased to meet up again with all my old kana operators and also to be with Norm Tyshing again. When off duty some of the kana boys would make for the cockfighting arena in the village market place. It became a centre of interest in off-duty hours. Several hundred Filipinos, Americans, and a handful of Australians crammed into the galleries to witness one of the Philippines' national sports. I was told that on one occasion Burke Stanmore of No. 6 Wireless Unit spent about an hour talking to the cockfight promoter getting 'the good oil'. He passed this information on to Norm Tyshing. They both went early into the arena and put the equivalent of twelve pounds (\$24.00)—approximately twenty-two day's pay—on the favourite. Just as the birds started to fight, Japanese Zeros began strafing nearby and ack-ack shell splinters crashed into the grass-thatched roof. The owners grabbed their birds and the two Philippine bookmakers fled with the money and the place was emptied within a few minutes. That was the end of Norm and Burke's money. (As a matter of interest, I lost contact with Norm for almost fifty years, but eventually found him living in Victoria. He was just the same Norm as I had remembered him during the war.)

Near the cockfighting ring Alf Bobin, who enjoyed involvement with people, organised a game of 'two-up' at the request of the kana boys. ('Two-up' is a gambling game played with two Australian pennies. The coins are placed on a wooden platter called a kip and tossed in the air. As the coins are flung up they spin and the bet is whether they land odds or evens—two heads or tails is even, one of each is odds.)



The cockfighting ring at Tolosa, 1945

As soon as the game started there were many Yank onlookers; they had not seen this game before. In due course Alf was running a school for the Yanks and us, but the Aussies were vastly outnumbered. Alf really got the Yanks warmed up on this game and you would often see it in progress. A lighter side to our operations.

By April 1945 the battle of Leyte Island was over; it cost the Japanese Army four divisions and several separate combat units. I believe the Japanese Navy lost twenty-six major warships, forty-six large transports and merchantmen. The battle of Leyte also reduced Japanese land-based air capability in the Philippines by over fifty per cent.

From a postwar interrogation of Japanese officers in the defence of the Philippines came this statement by a Japanese General Officer: 'American intelligence was so far superior that a comparison is useless. It seemed to me we were fighting our battles blindfolded, while the enemy seemed to have ten times the intelligence we had.' Because of lack of air cover, the Japanese could not counter the destructive American aerial attacks.

The Island of Luzon was invaded by American forces on 9 January 1945 and the battle lasted until 30 June 1945. However, it still took until mid-August 1945 to round up the last Japanese stragglers hiding in the island's mountains. The American forces on Luzon comprised seventeen divisions. The Japanese ground and naval forces had a total strength of 450,000 men. Their air losses ran into many thousands and this seriously crippled their air potential. The three American Services working in complete unison inflicted the greatest disaster ever sustained by Japanese armed forces.

The campaign in the Philippines that MacArthur had promised Washington would only take six weeks, with light losses, and would cause the Japanese to end the war, instead took six months and cost almost 50,000 American Servicemen killed or wounded. Japanese casualties were estimated to be almost 200,000 killed or wounded, and it was estimated that well over 100,000 Philippine people died, mostly in the city of Manila.

However, in April 1945 the kana operators of the 'Foreign Legion' and other operators from my time back in Townsville were still working like hell. One morning we were called together and told that the powers that be had decided we were to have a rest in Australia. I thought, *Whacko, at last someone has remembered us*. We were told to be packed up and ready by 0300 to go to the Tacloban airstrip where we would board an aircraft and be taken back to Australia.

It did not take us long to pack because we had so little gear, but I did dismantle my Thompson submachine gun and packed it. I thought at least I would get that back to Australia. In relation to our pin-up photograph of Paulette Goddard, it was decided that a toss of a coin was the best way to determine who would keep it and I was the lucky winner. Mac Jamieson, one of the original kana group who served with me from Townsville to the Philippines, reported in the Queensland Newsletter known as *Ex-RAAF Wireless Units Association* that he wondered if my win was rigged. I honestly do not remember, but I still have the well-worn photograph to this day.

When the evening approached, some of the chaps decided they were going to have a party. They managed to get some Yankee beer and scrounged other items from the US Seabees stores on the beach. Coca-Cola cordial was available and I can remember drinking several pannikins of the stuff. What I did not know was that it was laced with gin or something but I do remember enjoying my Coca-Cola and the party. The next thing I vaguely remember was the chaps pouring cold water over me. It was time to leave for the Tacloban airstrip. I was so drunk and still have no recollection of much of this. I can remember the cold water, but little else.



Eric Hedley's cartoon farewelling the 'Foreign Legion', 1945

I do remember being on the truck going to the airfield and the next thing I knew I was airborne. I guess an hour or two later I started to take notice that I was on a much bigger aircraft than the Dakota that we used to hop around in. This aircraft was a US Air Transport Command C-54. When I really started to take an interest in my surroundings I said, 'Where in the hell am I?' and was told I was probably somewhere over Mindanao Island in the Philippines and bound for Darwin. I asked how long I had been airborne and was told it was probably an hour or two. Most of Mindanao at that stage was still occupied by the Japanese. We were flying pretty high and because we were wearing only light clothes, we were getting cold. We were sitting on the side of the aircraft facing each other and all our gear was in the middle. We flew from Tacloban right through to Darwin and I can remember thinking, 'At last I'm bound for home, Australia'.

On this particular trip the cold got to my legs, back and neck, and I was most uncomfortable, but the thought of returning to Australia was very welcome. My return coincided with the death of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 12 April 1945. As we approached Australia I thought about our secondment in Townsville to the US forces, our work and adventures. The RAAF's apparent lack of interest in our welfare continued to plague my mind. It was not until September 1992 that a form of explanation of what had occurred in RAAF Command circles at the time was forthcoming. In the September 1992 issue of the *Central Bureau Intelligence Corps Association Inc Newsletter* a report appeared of an interview by the Association's publicity officer, Dennis Moore, with Squadron Leader William J. Clarke, MBE.

Denis Moore explained that:

When the wireless units were being formed Bill was concerned about the training of intercept operators and used his friendship with Wing Commander O'Neill in Melbourne to ensure that the Officer-in-Charge of the Sigs [Signals] School selected only the top graduates from the wireless operators course to be sent to Brisbane for Kana training. ... If they had not been chosen for intercept duties they would have proceeded on aircrew courses to become Navs. [Navigators] or A.G's. [Air Gunners] or both. We were pleased when they agreed to become 'Intercept' ops. [operators] with the Wireless Units.

There is evidence that the MacArthur style of command and the demands of a war unlike any other in the experience of Australia's

ageing military establishment with its very British roots caused grave problems when the MacArthur command became very closely involved with Australian forces as it certainly did in the area of signals intelligence. It is not surprising, therefore, that RAAF Command had to steer a very difficult course to prevent the Americans coming into collision with RAAF Headquarters.

Squadron Leader Clarke related:

I got carpeted when the Leyte invasion took place! The Americans worked fast. MacArthur would say what he wanted and expected to get it. Woe betide anyone who said something like 'no ... you can't have RAAF personnel until their postings are approved!'. So, as we all know, Wireless Unit personnel did join the Leyte invasion fleet without any delay. Group Captain Wiggins sent for those two chaps from C.B. [Central Bureau], Roy Booth and myself. 'We have an adverse signal from Headquarters signed by Air Vice Marshal Jones', he announced. 'RAAF personnel are aboard the ships for the Philippines and there is no official posting.' They were identified as sigs [signals] personnel so I was given use of the AVM's Beaufort bomber to go north in a hurry to sort things out.

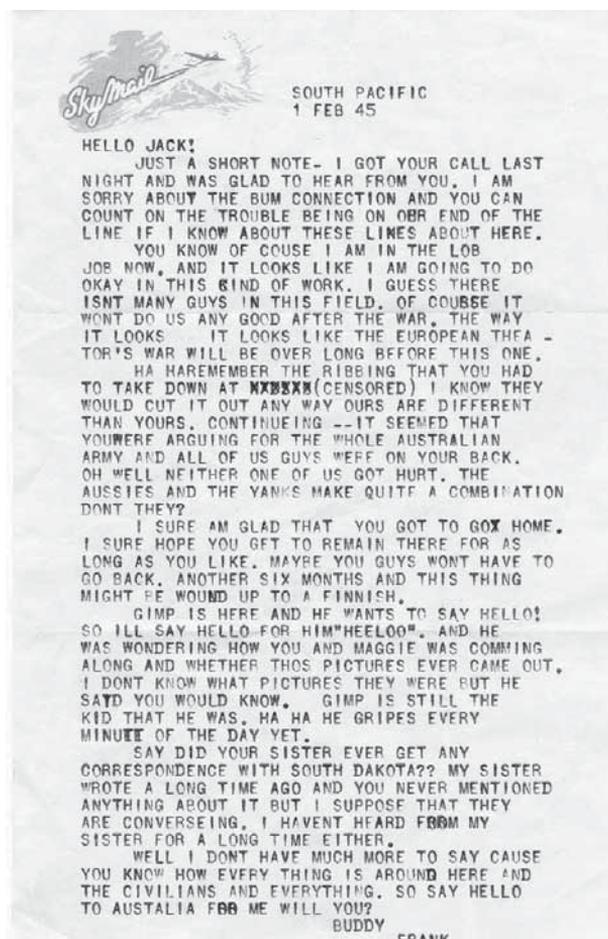
We got to Townsville and were fuelled up ready for the next hop to Merauke. ... At Hollandia no-one knew who we were nor did they want to know so we proceeded to Biak and spoke with 1 W.U. C.O. [the commanding officer of No. 1 Wireless Unit] Cliff Hattam. You see the trouble was that we hadn't got any information at all from 1 W.U. as to what personnel had moved to Hollandia to go on the ships and the L.S.T. [Landing Ship Tank] and that's what Melbourne was upset about.

So we flew on the remaining few miles to Noemfoor. With some trepidation I knocked on the door. 'Come in, what do you want', said Air Commodore Cobby. 'I am from RAAF Command compliments of AVM Bostock.' His eyes shot up, 'You're from the crowd that put those boys on the Headquarters ship without postings.' I had collected the list of names from Cliff Hattam at Biak. As I handed him the list and he handed it to his Sergeant his ranting was ceaseless. 'Don't ever let this happen again.'

Dennis Moore concluded with:

As Bill's mind still muses about those events almost half a century ago he recalls how the then Minister of State for Air, Mr. Drakeford, was too slow in making decisions himself or having decisions made. He wonders how, in the circumstances that existed at the time, the Wireless Units operated as efficiently as they did.

The above interview bears out my opinion that we were the forgotten men of the RAAF. On reflection, I think that MacArthur certainly had hijacked us from RAAF Command in Townsville. He hid us few Australian intelligence personnel away and thus his enormous public relations set-up did not mention us.



Letter from Frank Koopman at 1st Radio Squadron Mobile Station – Koopman remained in Nadzab and thought the author had gone home to Adelaide when in fact he had moved to the Philippines – The author did not receive the letter until he arrived home in late 1945

VIII

HOME IN AUSTRALIA



We arrived in Darwin wearing light tropical trousers, a shirt, a slouch hat and boots with no underwear or socks. Our hair had not been cut for a couple of months. We were a dishevelled lot. Our aircraft had a nose painting on it, but this was quickly painted out; it must have been rude! We stayed one night and I saw the quaintest little train I had ever seen. It must have been built a hundred years ago. The next day we boarded the same aircraft for Brisbane and landed at Archerfield airstrip. Our new camp was at Strathpine, a few miles from Brisbane. Thankfully we were issued with new pants and shirts.

Strathpine camp was to be the Headquarters of No. 7 Wireless Unit, which was still in the process of being formed. It was also a staging camp area for veteran kana operators coming back from front-line field units.



Strathpine base buildings, 1945
(AWM P954/36/35)

There were fighter strips and hangars disguised with wire camouflage but not waterproofed. This camp was a good rest centre but the urinals were very crude. They were just pieces of four-inch (ten-centimetre) diameter pipe driven into the ground in an open area and a funnel added to the top. Surely some better arrangements could have been made? This was to be our base until our next

posting. We still slept in tents and there were very few comforts, but at least we could leave the camp and go into Brisbane.

The time came for us to go into the city for a haircut. We went on the back of a truck to the Army's barber shop and as we walked in, the barbers started to laugh and said, 'Good God, have they come from the Wild West, get out the lawnmowers'. I left with almost a shaven head. That haircut cost me about one shilling (ten cents). After a few weeks I was given two weeks leave—my first since joining the RAAF in 1942, other than for eight days compassionate leave in my early days at Stuart Creek. It was, therefore, a period of approximately thirty-four without leave.

I decided to go home to Adelaide and conned a ride in an aircraft to Sydney where I boarded a troop train for Melbourne. When I arrived at Flinders Street Station I rang my sister, Betty. She was living in Melbourne because this was where her husband Norm (AIF) was stationed. They came to the station to see me. I had not been issued with any cold weather gear although it was late autumn. I was standing, shivering with aching legs when Betty and Norm arrived. They walked straight past me—they did not recognise me because I had lost so much weight. I called out, 'Hey, where are you going?' They turned and immediately Norm said, 'Are you crazy, you are bloody mad. You will die, where are your clothes?' With that he took off his greatcoat and put it on me. I was then able to get warm. I later left for Adelaide and there was great excitement when I arrived home. The next day my first concern was to get some warm clothes and so I went to the RAAF Stores Depot at Daw Park. I was asked to what unit I was attached, what did I do and where was my Clothing Card. I could not answer the second part because of the Official Secrets Act and I did not possess a Clothing Card; all I had was a Leave Card. I was told, 'No answers, no clothes' and so while I was in Adelaide I was forced to wear my civilian clothes. Surely the RAAF could have given me some special identification to allow me a warm clothing issue!

My leave expired and I returned to Strathpine taking Norm's Army greatcoat back to camp with me. He never did get it back. On my return I did not immediately report the problem with my legs, neck and back, but my situation quickly deteriorated and I was taken to Sandgate RAAF hospital. I was told to rest as much as possible.

To keep our skills up we sat with other kana operators in a little galvanised iron shed. We had two high-powered Air Force AR7 wireless receivers that were the same as we had used on operations. We kept a log, taking the broadcast from the Japanese Island of Truk in the Central Pacific. From there the Japanese were

sending to their stations in Tokyo. If we could find any music we eagerly listened; I know the work was not looked at.

In the camp we found a round four-gallon (eighteen-litre) oil drum, which we placed on a tin tray in our shed. We punched holes in the sides of the drum and at night we would fill it with coke or coal to keep ourselves warm. We were all skinny and trying to get good extra food to increase our weight. Somehow eggs and tomatoes found their way into camp and another purpose of our drum was to cook this food. We also had bread and potatoes, which we obtained from the camp supplies, and all this scrounged food made great midnight feasts. It was good that all the 'Foreign Legion' boys, plus my other friends from Nos. 1 and 6 Wireless Units were together again.

I was now regularly being taken to Sandgate Hospital for check-ups. In between working and hospital check-ups I would go into Brisbane with the others. Once when some of the kana men were going into Brisbane in the back of a truck there was an accident, and Chas McColl was killed. Many others including John Hamilton were injured. Chas' death was a loss to all of us because he was a great person with a huge personality. We had all been together from Townsville to the Philippines and back.

A short time after my return from leave I was told by the Adjutant of No. 7 Wireless Unit that I must go to the Headquarters of MacArthur's Central Bureau Intelligence in Henry Street, Brisbane. I had to see Wing Commander H.R. Booth, who was the highest-ranking RAAF officer at Headquarters. Before I left I was told to put on clean clothes and to have my boots blackened and to look respectable. I had no idea why a lowly twenty-year-old LAC (leading aircraftman) was wanted at Headquarters. It may have been because I was always outspoken and gave honest and direct answers, where I could. I wondered whether this knowledge had filtered through to Central Bureau Intelligence and I was being called in because it was thought I would speak openly about my group. We had been much more than just successful when we operated in the Philippines.

At Henry Street I was taken into Booth's office. Here I felt uncomfortable. I was actually more at home with a United States Colonel or Major General than I was with Booth. Booth's first statement gave me the impression that he wanted me to talk freely and off the record. My immediate thought was to wonder what he wanted to talk about. Since he had indicated that he wanted me to talk about the Philippines operation, I told him frankly how we had operated non-stop and how we worked as a close-knit team. Each of us worked together under extreme

pressure, without getting in each other's way. We each knew what we had to do; we did it and were patted on the back by the Americans. They appreciated us so much that Major General Akin wanted to give us a furlough in the United States, but the RAAF vetoed this. Akin and other Americans wanted to decorate each of us, but this too was stopped. I also said that we kana operators had not been given a rank and this was a continual topic of discussion among the men, especially when we were in the 'Foreign Legion' detachment at Tacloban. Suddenly I knew I was probably not saying what he wanted to hear and I began to omit things.

Booth was furious. He carpeted me and I remember that he verbally thumped me through the floorboards almost down to my ears and he insinuated he would have me sent back into operations straight away. So much for being honest. I wondered whether he actually knew very much about the stress of our interception work. I was then taken back to camp and I remember telling the blokes about what went on. They could hardly believe this type of querying had actually transpired after all we had been through and achieved.

Near our camp there was an Australian Army staging camp where many thousands of troops were camped before moving north to fight. The only difference in appearance between them and us was that they wore brown boots and ours were black. Nearby was the Strathpine River, which contained a large number of trout and other fish. As we were getting sick of camp food we decided to do a spot of fishing but not with rods. Someone had been able to get hold of explosives. A spot in the river was chosen and the explosives were thrown into the river. We put ourselves into two groups—a large and a small. I was with the larger group of men in the catching field downstream and we bagged dozens of fish. These we took back to camp and told the cook we had bought them. No questions were asked; everyone shared them and agreed we had bought the best fish anyone had eaten for years. Shortly after this we were again down by the river and some local fishermen told us about the 'Army bastards' who had blown up the river. Apparently the fishermen had put the trout into the river five years previously and they had now grown to a good size. Unfortunately, they had been virtually wiped out. We felt like real bastards and shamefully said, 'Fancy the Army doing that! We Air Force men would never think of doing such a thing.' We were sorry we had ruined their trout stock. We heard later that the police had been to the Army camp looking for the culprits. No one questioned the men at our camp. Someone had apparently seen the activity but had, fortunately, not noticed the colour of our boots.

Another of our escapades was egg and chicken stealing from the local farmers. In between our misdeeds we still did a little operating in the galvanised iron shed,

but we did not work too hard. Half the time we would say there was nothing to be heard. Kana morse code would be coming out, but we would not take it down because we knew it was not being used and the work was being covered by others.

To my surprise, an Adelaide school friend of mine, Don Phillips, turned up unannounced and I learned that he was a driver in the RAAF posted to No. 7 Wireless Unit. His driving job then was to go to Melbourne and bring back trucks. Coincidentally, both Alf Bobin and Les Williams were also involved in this job. When the trucks arrived I noted they were actually mobile wireless trucks, but were not fitted out with wireless equipment, nor were the trucks as good as the ones we had used on Leyte.

After Don's arrival he would drive us on our trips into Brisbane and we became a bit noisy when singing our bawdy Air Force songs. Civilians complained and we were told to tone it down. We were enjoying our freedom and I guess we were a bit wild, but we had to let go. We had been harnessed and under extreme pressure for so long and our escapades were perhaps hard for an outsider to understand.

Some chaps were caught by a farmer while stealing tomatoes, and they were told that he was going to report them. Petrol was hard to get, and the farmer was told that if he kept quiet he would get a forty-four gallon (two hundred litre) drum of petrol, which would have come from Don Philip's motor pool. To the poor



The author and Don Phillips at Strathpine, Brisbane, 1945

locals, we were a terrible lot of thieves. Even though my trips to Sandgate RAAF Hospital became more regular, I was still a participant in the escapades most of the time.

On two occasions I was told I was to be posted to Nos. 4 and 5 Wireless Units, which were then operating in an area north of Manila on Luzon Island, Philippines. I wondered if this was because of my interview with Wing Commander Booth. I also thought I was being kept in readiness for a stint with No. 7 Wireless Unit, which was soon to come into operation. Experienced kana operators were required when a new wireless unit became operative. Some old ones were needed to teach and set the tone. I did not make it back to the Philippines because I think my physical condition was not good enough. However, some chaps kept disappearing and went back for another stint.

Just before I left Leyte, on 1 April 1945, the last great battle of World War II started on the island of Okinawa. This operation was called *Iceberg* and here the fiercest attacks by Kamikazes in the entire Pacific theatre of war took place. In this operation, from 1 April through to 30 June, the US Navy suffered a loss of 36 ships sunk and 368 damaged, 4907 sailors killed or missing and 5000 wounded. The Japanese lost about 7600 planes, more than half being suicide planes. The Americans lost 763 aircraft. More destruction and death would have occurred, but the Kamikaze attackers had the problem of the distance they had to fly. Even experienced pilots flying from Japan became lost, ran out of fuel, were shot down or did not have sufficient flying time to pick out a suitable target. Furthermore, early in the Okinawa campaign, the Americans had established a land-based fighter command which, together with the carrier aircraft, provided an effective umbrella of protection against Kamikaze attacks. The following is a letter written by a Kamikaze pilot to his mother:

You are the suicide pilot's mother
So please don't cry
Laugh as you send us off
We'll show you how to die
Mother, oh Mother!

(The Philippine Star, 11 September 1989)

Okinawa was the bloodiest land battle of all the Pacific War and resulted in 12,520 Americans from the three Services being killed and 36,631 wounded, with non-battle casualties of more than 26,000. The Japanese suffered over 110,000 military dead with 7400 captured. The Okinawan civilian deaths are listed as between 75,000 and 140,000. A scant eight weeks later the Japanese surrendered on VJ Day.

A US 96th Division squadron leader friend of mine, Leonard (Laz) Lazarick from Philadelphia, USA, who landed on Leyte with me and who also served in Okinawa, wrote to me years after the war had finished saying, ‘I believe if we had kana operators working with us the Battle of Okinawa would not have been so bloody’.

The air bases and naval bases on Okinawa brought the Americans considerably nearer to their next objective—Japan itself. I have since learned that every village in Japan had some type of aircraft manufacturing activity. Hidden in mines, railway tunnels, under viaducts and in basements of department stores, work was being done to construct new planes. The Japanese knew the effectiveness of Kamikaze suicide planes so developed the Yokosuka ‘Ohka’ (Cherry Blossom), a piloted glide bomb, called ‘Baka’ (Japanese for idiot or fool) by the Allies. The Ohka piloted glide bombs were carried by a medium bomber to within twelve miles (nineteen kilometres) of the target, then released. It would glide towards the target then activate rockets to dive at high speed into its target and explode its one tonne (nine hundred kilogram) warhead. The Ohka was difficult to stop, although the mother plane was extremely vulnerable especially when carrying the Ohka.

The Ohka had its first successes on 1 April 1945, D-Day for the American invasion of Okinawa, by hitting the battleship USS *West Virginia* and three transports. On 12 April the destroyer USS *Mannert L. Abele* was sunk, the first sinking by an Ohka. It is not known how many hits or sinkings the Ohka actually achieved but it was the most feared and hated of all types of Kamikazes. A number of Ohkas were captured on Okinawa itself as the Americans had total air supremacy over the island before they landed, denying the Japanese the use of their airfield and their stockpiled Ohkas. Most of the surviving Ohkas in museums today came from Okinawa.

Additionally, the Japanese had been working on building new and more effective models of the Ohka and another called a ‘Baika’, which was a pulse jet propelled bomb much like the German V-1, but piloted to its final destination by a suicide pilot. In March of 1945, in readiness, had there been an invasion of Japan, the

Japanese had ordered 750 of the earlier models of the Ohka to be produced. These aircraft were to be launched from other aircraft. By the summer of 1945, the Japanese were building the newer models, which were to be catapulted out of caves in Kyushu, a Japanese home island, to be used against the invasion ships that would be only minutes away.

Then came 6 August 1945, and the US dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On 9 August 1945 another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, thus the war against Japan was virtually over. After the signing of the surrender on 2 September 1945 on the USS *Missouri*, it was revealed that Allied intelligence had completely underestimated the strength of Japanese forces. Allied intelligence had established that the Japanese had no more than 2500 aircraft, of which they guessed only 300 would be deployed in suicide attacks. However, in August of 1945, unknown to our intelligence, the Japanese still had 5651 Army and 7074 Navy aircraft, for a total of 12,725 planes of all types. During July alone, 1131 new planes were built and almost 100 new underground aircraft plants were in various stages of construction.

During Operation *Olympic*, which was the name given to the first stage of the invasion of Japan, the situation would be reversed. Kamikaze pilots would have little distance from Japan to travel to their targets and would have considerable staying time over the invasion fleet. Conversely, the American land-based aircraft would be able to provide only minimal protection against suicide attacks, since these American aircraft would have little flying time over Japan before they would be forced to return to their bases on Okinawa and elsewhere to refuel.

The work of the kana operators did not end. They were still kept operative and extremely busy checking on Japanese armed forces (both inside and outside Japan) and their reaction to the surrender. Were they going to continue fighting or not? Through their interceptions the kana operators found odd pockets of Japanese who planned to carry on. Once identified, the Allies demanded surrender or destruction. Had the surrender not occurred the new No. 7 Wireless Unit may have become operational together with Nos. 4, 5 and 6 Wireless Units and all qualified battle-trained operators would have been sent as reinforcements to these RAAF Sigint units, which would have been operating on the Japanese mainland.

The only initial Australian land troops that would have been used had the invasion of Japan transpired would have been members of No. 6 Wireless Unit, who were to land with the US forces on the island of Kyushu. No other foreign troops were to have been used. Nos. 4, 5 and 7 Wireless Units would have followed, I feel, not

long after. At that stage Nos. 4, 5 and 6 Wireless Units had been brought together on Luzon Island. This was the first time they had worked in the same area. They were the closest Australian units to Tokyo.

Selfishly, I was glad that the war had ended, because there was a chance that I would have been involved in the Japanese invasion. At least I was still alive; I doubt whether too many of us would have lived had the attack gone ahead.

Just after the war ended a couple of aircraft incidents occurred at Strathpine. In front of the No. 7 Wireless Unit Headquarters building was an airstrip, which had been built for fighter aircraft but was not long enough for larger aircraft to land. One day a Beaufighter tried to land and the pilot miscalculated the length. He finished up in some small scrubby trees at the end of the strip. Luckily the plane was not badly damaged. There were two people on board, a pilot and a WAAAF. The pilot was doing an illegal flight—showing off—on a victory ride. Next morning another Beaufighter flew in and ended up in a worse situation. This time the aircraft went further into the scrub and the plane caught fire. Luckily both the pilot and mechanic escaped unhurt because the fire was a small one and had started slowly in the starboard motor. Maybe the pilot could have put the fire out with the engine fire extinguisher, but he and the passenger chose to leave the aircraft. Mac Jamieson and I grabbed a couple of the base fire extinguishers and had almost extinguished the fire when we were ordered away by a couple of our officers. We then watched the plane burn to a molten mass of metal.

About this time my old problems were really giving me trouble, and one night when I left the operations room my right leg gave way and I fell over a wire basket, which had been left outside the shed. As I fell the basket rolled and I went with it. I was taken to Sandgate RAAF Hospital with a broken left ankle. My leg was put in plaster up to my knee. While in hospital I was given a physical check-up and told that I was not very fit and was kept there for a few days. All the nurses were kind to us and three WAAAF girls from the telephone pool were particularly caring. They were Jessie Wilson, June Barrett and Jean Craig. Unfortunately, June Barrett died from a brain tumour just after the war ended.

A doctor visited me daily and I asked him if I could go home to an Adelaide hospital. He said this could only be possible if I had a helper as he considered I was unfit to travel alone. I arranged for Don Phillips to be my helper. An iron heel was fitted to my plaster and strapped onto my plastered leg. This enabled me to walk with the aid of a walking stick. I was happy to be going home, but sad to leave my kana operator friends and especially my closest friends, John Moon, Eric

KATAKANA MAN

Hedley, John Hamilton, David Wishart, Mac Jamieson, Stan King, John (Buck) Jones, Les Williams, Alf Bobin, Ron Sims, Dan McKillop and Harry Mills.

Before I left for Adelaide I was warned to keep my wartime activities secret.

Don and I boarded a troop train that had two carriages converted for hospital patients. The carriages were fitted out with wire-framed double-decker beds. I was allotted one of these beds but Don, not being a patient, had to sit elsewhere. We eventually arrived in Adelaide on a Friday. I had to report to No. 7 RAAF Hospital in Frome Road. My leg was replastered and I was told I could go home provided I did not walk around too much. About fourteen days later I was posted to No. 14 Stores Unit, Waymouth Street, Adelaide. Even though I still had severe leg problems, I was discharged on 13 February 1946.



WAAAF girls from the telephone pool, Sandgate Hospital, early 1945

L-R: Jessie Wilson, June Barrett, Jean Craig

IX

THE FIGHT FOR RECOGNITION STARTS

On the day I was discharged I went straight home and was met at the door by my mother. A happy occasion. However, my exuberance at being home was deflated when I discovered that my trumpet, mutes, music stand, big band records, military band uniforms and opera cloak, school cadet uniform, school decker (straw hat) and other boyhood treasured articles had disappeared. What further surprised me was that some of my personal belongings, apart from my civilian clothes, including a Crimean war sword that had been given to me by a very special elderly lady had also disappeared. I wanted to bring back memories with my treasures and give myself a kick-start but I was deprived of this. I still do not know why my parents disposed of my personal belongings.

In April 1946 I had an exceptionally pleasant surprise. My ex-kana operator friend John (Buck) Jones visited me. He came 4000 miles (6437 kilometres) by car from El Arish in northern Queensland. During the war and for some time afterwards, petrol was rationed and people were allocated only four gallons (eighteen litres) a month. Buck's father's occupation exempted him from this restriction and so Buck was able to obtain extra petrol ration tickets. My father, a builder, was not restricted either and was able to give Buck petrol tickets to assist with his drive home. Buck had to travel at night because of the severe restrictions and Queensland cars, in those days, only had a number plate on the back and this single number plate was a give away. Buck and I shared several happy days together.

During the years of 1946, 1947 and 1948, my health continued to be very poor. The ankle had mended but I was still having leg, back and neck problems. My right leg would grab and when I would lift my leg to walk it would cause me to fall over. I went to the Repatriation Hospital at Daw Park. The doctors told me that my legs were all right; my problem was all in my mind and I did not want to walk properly because, for some reason, I did not want to work! Unfortunately, kana operators' records of service and injuries were hidden, changed or not listed and are still not listed to this day. Because none of my injuries were shown on my records, this led the doctors to believe that I was malingering.

Eventually I went to see our family doctor, who x-rayed my right leg and discovered a moving piece of bone in my knee. It was this, he said, that was causing my

problem and he decided to operate. Although my left leg also ached, it was not as bad as the right one so all the attention was directed to my right leg. After the operation I was shown a piece of bone that had been removed. I still could not walk properly and a second operation was required. Again bone was removed, but the operation was not successful and a third operation was necessary, with more bone being removed. These operations covered a period of two years.

During this period I had spent all of my Service pay—which had been paid into my account in the Savings Bank of SA (South Australia) by the RAAF for approximately four years—all my deferred pay and my savings on doctors' bills, hospital bills and physiotherapists, all because the Repatriation Commission (now known as the Department of Veterans' Affairs) diagnosed my condition as malingering. It was not until 1983 that a tribunal reversed this decision and decided that my condition was war-related.

I was unable to work because I could not walk very well, and was scarcely able to go out. I did not really have any social life then and did not want to mix with people either. I had withdrawn into my shell and was only interested in people I knew. I did not want to meet new people. I suppose it was a bit like coming back to the real world. Even though I was happy to be home, I was a wreck both physically and mentally. I could still continually hear morse signals in my head. In the wireless units I had been isolated. When I came back people would question me about my war service and I would say 'I cannot tell you anything because I am not allowed to'. This was one of the reasons why I did not have much to do with people.

On Anzac Day, 1948, I thought I would give my legs a good test and join the march. I managed to walk quite well but, to my amazement, some supposed Air Force aircrew friends, who had enlisted with me and had received rank, referred to me as an 'erk' and said, 'Just an LAC'. This name erk had been given to RAAF ground staff. Little did these rude friends realise how vital my work had been and, of course, I did not tell them what I had done. Following the march we went to the Returned Services League clubrooms in Adelaide and one of the guys grabbed my tie and bit it off at the knot and said, 'Now you have been operational'. What an insult! It was fifty years before I went into an Anzac Day march again.

I resumed seeing Anne Morgan, whom I had first met during my Victor Harbor training days. We were married in 1949. I started to think hard about what I would do and decided I wanted to continue with my skills in the wireless field and obtain a Marconi Ticket in radio. I could then join an airline, the Department

of Civil Aviation or possibly the Merchant Marine. At this stage there were many options open to me. I applied to the Commonwealth Reconstruction and Training Scheme (CRTS) and was told that to get my Marconi Ticket in radio I must have Intermediate physics and mathematics. Therefore, I enrolled at Muirden Business College, Adelaide, studied and passed the required subjects and others. I returned to the CRTS and to my amazement was told that I could not do the Marconi Radio Course because that course had been closed for a couple of years. Also, had the course still been open, I would have had to go to Melbourne. Apart from the fact that I had passed the subjects taken, another wasted year had gone by since my discharge. I was disgusted.

I was in a quandary; I did not know what was the best possible way for me to earn a living. I spoke to a Repatriation Department doctor and he suggested that a job that involved walking would help me. I was given a very small disability pension from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, but just prior to Christmas 1948 I took a temporary (three week) selling job at Harris Scarfe Ltd. This eventually extended into a number of years of employment, following which I was employed in the plastics business and then had a successful career in the wholesale jewellery business.



X

PHILIPPINES REVISITED

Even though I was still experiencing trouble walking, I was determined to revisit the Philippines. Eventually in January 1979, together with my wife Anne, I returned to the Philippines. It was to be Anne's first visit.

I had contacted friends living in Manila, Cleve and Shirley Jose, to try to find the Price family for me. This Cleve did. The last contact I had with them was by post in the late 1950s.

Anne and I arrived at the Manila International Airport and I cannot explain my feelings to be setting foot on Philippine soil again. We were booked in at the Manila Hotel which, incidentally, had been MacArthur's home before the Japanese invasion.

As we drove round that first day I kept thinking, *Tonight I am going to see my friend Cora Price again.* When we re-met there was great emotion and our memories of long ago were very vivid. It was as though I had never left the Philippines. One of the first things she told us was that Joe was living part-time in San Francisco and that when he learnt of our visit he would be disappointed. I told Cora that I wanted to visit Leyte Island and I wanted to explore my haunts of thirty-five years before. Her immediate response was, 'Well, I will take you to Leyte, we will go everywhere, and had Joe been here he would have accompanied us'.

A visit to City Hall was one of the first introductions to Cora's many friends. She had made arrangements for us to be officially welcomed by the Mayor of Manila, Ramon Bagatsing and his wife Annie.

During our days with Cora she told us of the hardships experienced in Manila during the Japanese occupation. She and her three children had escaped by boat back to Leyte Island where Joe was working with the guerrillas. She also remembered that I had known Imelda Marcos and realised that I would like to see her again, but we did not meet her on this occasion, as she was overseas. However, we did see her during later visits to the Philippines.



The late Cora Price and the author at her 70th birthday party, Manila, February 1979

Eventually the time to return to Leyte Island arrived and our seats had been booked to fly. This made me happy because I knew I wanted to walk my old haunts of 1944 and 1945. As we came in to land, I recognised Tolosa by the hill near the beach, where the ruins of an old Spanish fort stood. I also noticed the small river that ran into the nearby sea. This hill was near the area where our No. 6 Wireless Unit had been operating in 1945. We landed at Tacloban airport where Cora's daughter, also named Cora, and her husband Milo Quintero met us. Milo drove us toward Tacloban and as we went through the streets I felt quite overcome. Near the side of the airport road stood the electricity power plant station, which I immediately recognised. I learned that the plant was so old that it regularly broke down and power failures would be experienced almost daily for hours on end.

As we approached the forks in the road where the Boy Scout statue had stood the first thing I noticed was that the statue was missing and an extra road had been added. This statue had been a vivid landmark to every Serviceman who had gone into Tacloban. It was a symbol and I made up my mind then that I would try to find it and, if possible, would try to get it replaced in its rightful spot.

As we drove on I remembered streets and many landmarks. We booked into the peaceful Village Inn and then went to the Quintero's home. Here emotion welled in me because sitting in the centre of the living room was Joe Price's grand piano,



The author sitting in Joe Price's chair, Tacloban, March 1979

which had still not been repaired. Next to the piano was Joe's favourite chair that in 1944 I had always been invited to sit in.

Milo arranged for his friend Asis Liding to drive me wherever I wanted to go and the next day I decided to try to find our original camp site. As Liding drove around some spots would look familiar, but on reflection I would say, 'No, it's not the spot'. Poor Liding (as he liked to be called) spent his time stopping and starting the car. Both Anne and Cora were very interested and tried to help me. We roamed extensively in the area where I had hoped to find my camp site, but it had changed considerably. Words cannot express my disappointment. I had thought that to find the camp site would be easy, but during my earlier period here the old undergrowth had been destroyed and now there was lush growth, which made finding the location impossible. I had actually pumped myself up in readiness to find the camp but, like a hard bicycle tyre that gets a puncture, there came the let down. My hunt for the camp site had taken a whole day.

Next day we drove to Red Beach, near Palo, where we had landed. On this spot General MacArthur, accompanied by the Philippine President Sergio Osmeña, American generals and others had waded toward the shore. A mobile broadcasting unit had been set up and MacArthur made his famous statement, 'People of the Philippines, I have returned'. On this spot a larger than life-size bronze statue of MacArthur, Romulo and the others had been erected. All the statues of the men stood in water. This memorial is virtually a replica of the now famous MacArthur photograph of his wading through the water on 20 October 1944.

Walking along Red Beach was an eerie experience and far too emotional. I had heard that there were US Sixth Army and Seventh Fleet markers on the shore line stretching between Palo and Tolosa and I was determined to find them. My camera now worked overtime.



The author standing in front of the MacArthur statue, Palo, March 1979



US Sixth Army campaign marker, Tolosa, 1979

Cora kept us interested with her stories of Philippine history, her family, the Price family, and her wartime experiences. She told about a special group called ‘An Taclobanon’, which she herself had formed. Imelda Marcos, who was born at Olot, Leyte, was a member. Annie Bagatsing, who was born in Tacloban, was the President. Membership to this closed club was by invitation only and the members were people who had given outstanding services to the people of Leyte.

Cora told us of the honour for Joe and her, when MacArthur made a return journey to the Philippines in 1961, and stayed with them. She showed us many photographs of this occasion. She also told us about the victory march in Tacloban on 23 October 1944, in which she had taken part. I was spoiled because she gave me the photograph of herself in the march (this photograph appears in Chapter 5 on page 82) together with other historical photographs.



**MacArthur at the Price home in 1961, surrounded by members of the family
Cora to the left and her mother-in-law, Mrs Price, to the right.
(Photograph courtesy of the late Cora Price)**



MacArthur at the Price home, 1961 (Photograph courtesy of the late Cora Price)

I then returned to Tacloban because I wanted to find the Boy Scout statue. I spoke to many people including Cora and they all told me that they had never heard of the statue. This did not deter me and I spoke to government officials, the Mayor, Artemio Maté whom I had met a few days earlier, and Council staff. While I was talking to Maté, Liding was talking to a man who worked in the Engineer's Department and he told Liding that the statue was in an old galvanised shed.

We hurried to the old shed and there was my statue. It was in a very bad state of repair. The hand that had held the staff was missing and there was need for comprehensive repair. The thing that really surprised me was that it was not very tall. It stood only about six feet six inches (1.98 metres). The reason I had thought it was much larger was that the first time I had seen it, in 1944, I was lying in the gutter and looking up at it. I also remembered that the statue had stood on a five-foot (1.5 metre) high stepped-up concrete flat base. For a week I tried to get some government officials, the Lions Club members or interested citizens to arrange to have it restored and placed back on its original position but, unfortunately, I did not have any success. I decided I would follow up this quest on my return to Australia.



The author when he found the Boy Scout statue, March 1979

In my wanderings I wanted to visit the Price mansion, but Cora warned me not to be too disappointed and her warning proved to be wise. The visit was indeed sad, as a few years previously the family had sold the property to a Chinese person. The home had been left unattended and squatters had moved in and were living amid squalor. Some of the walls were crumbling, the roof leaked and everywhere there was evidence of a heritage about to collapse. The room that had been General MacArthur's bedroom was in a very bad state of decay and a hole where a small bomb had gone through the roof near his bed was still evident. Wherever I walked I had to watch my step because of the rotting timber. I remembered that a wooden historical plaque had been erected on one of the outside walls near the front door and I asked Cora to show this to me. We were unable to find it—obviously it had been stolen. To me, the condition of the mansion and the stolen plaque was sacrilege.

I temporarily put the thoughts of the condition of the mansion out of my mind, but I was determined that I was going to act on this piece of history. As we were leaving the mansion I heard morse code signals. I was immediately interested and followed the signals, which came from a building opposite the mansion. This building had been an officers' canteen in 1944. The morse came from an upstairs room and I went to this room, introduced myself, and was told that the building was now used as a Wireless School. Coincidentally the room was the one in which I had made my illegal alcohol purchase many years previously!

Travelling around Tacloban I recalled that kana men had camped one night in a tent that was erected opposite the Tacloban Boys and Girls High School. I also recalled the High School had been used for a short period by General MacArthur's intelligence staff in 1944. I wanted to find this spot, so Liding drove around an area where school buildings stood. I was confused and said, 'There was a square-like park here with the school facing an open area and the buildings had been painted white'. Cora then told me that I was right because the old school used to be white, but a new one had been built and a wall erected around it. I stood at the gateway of the school and tried to visualise the area as it had been. Apart from the new school, the open area had been built on and this had confused me; however, in my mind's eye I was able to piece the location together.



No. 6 Wireless Unit camp at Tacloban Boys and Girls High School, 1944
(AWM P954/36/29)

As we drove around, landmarks became familiar and I realised that this was the area in which I had roamed when I had looked for the prisoner of war camps. As we drove around more of the area was recognisable. This find was an added bonus.

A visit to Palo was on the agenda for the next day. The road to Palo was familiar and when we arrived in the town square where the cathedral stood, the first thing I noticed was that the rotunda was missing. This was a disappointment because I had wanted to see where I had had my cholera injection! We went inside the cathedral and were able to see the beautiful silver statues, the magnificent altar and the silver four-wheeled trolleys. Religious figures stood on these trolleys and were used during religious festivals. These were the treasures that had been buried by the townspeople before and during the Japanese occupation.

Along the road to Tolosa I had vivid memories of my past. We stopped at Tanauan. I found where the airstrip had been built and sections of this were still visible. When we left this area I saw a familiar hill and river. Since my days there, a small wooden walkway had been built across the river. I wanted to see the old Spanish fort that was on the top of the hill, but this hill was now thickly covered with lush coconut palms. When I had first seen it in 1945 all the coconut trees had been destroyed, the old fort was exposed and the ruins were visible from the base of the hill. Even had my legs let me walk up the hill I do not think access would have been possible.

I found where our camp site and buildings had stood, but now a school had been built in the area. Here again, even though I had found the spot, I was disappointed that there was nothing left of my time there. However, I wandered around the area because I wanted to find the Tolosa Municipal Building. This two-storey wooden structure was the best building in Tolosa in 1944–45 and had housed the personnel carrying on the work from our interception. The kana men's makeshift work area had been very substandard compared to it. Unfortunately I could not find the building—it apparently had been demolished.

My sentimental journey was coming to an end and I vowed that we would return to see our friends and participate in the 40th anniversary and re-enactment of MacArthur's landing, which was to be held in October 1984. However, our next visit, unexpectedly, was to be much earlier than I planned.

The state of the Price mansion on Leyte Island was vivid in my mind. I wanted to drum up support to have the mansion restored to its original condition as this building is a place of historic importance to the Philippines. In relation to getting the building restored, my first call was to the Philippine Army Headquarters and here I was given a fair hearing, but the personnel did not think the Army could help. I next visited my friend Ramon Bagatsing, who agreed to discuss the situation with the President. I then saw a congressman, but he did not think anything could be done at this stage. I was undecided as to what my next move would be.

In the meantime we were invited to a lunch at City Hall, which was attended by the members of the 'An Taclobanon' Club, and after lunch to our great surprise we were made adopted members of the Club. What an honour that was for us. Annie Bagatsing, the President, said that this honour was bestowed upon us because of my service to the people of the Philippines during World War II and our show of care and friendship to the Filipino people.

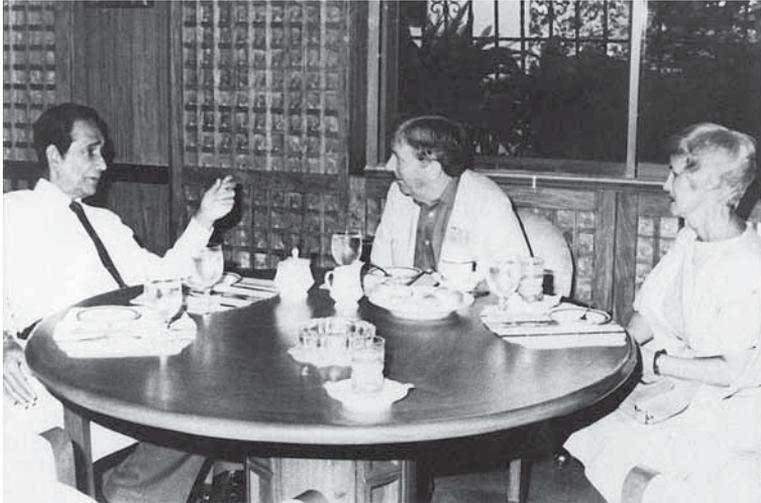
My next move regarding the restoration of the mansion was to arrange an interview with Ben Rodriguez, the editor of the Manila-based newspaper *Bulletin Today*, regarding the mansion. He agreed that it should be restored and suggested I write a letter to the paper and he would print it. I wrote a letter, but it was never printed. My decision then was to follow up this cause back in Australia.

As I was returning home to Adelaide, I decided to go via the Philippine Consul General at Philippine House in Sydney, to talk to him about the Price mansion and the Boy Scout statue. I went to Philippine House and met Ambassador Nicasio Valderrama and told him of my association with the Philippines during World War II and my recent visit to the country. From there on we became firm friends and remain so today. I showed him the photographs. He was amazed at the poor condition of the mansion and said that immediate steps must be taken to restore this historic building. He agreed with me that within a couple of years the cost could be too prohibitive to restore it. In relation to the Boy Scout statue he said he would act and try to get it put back in its rightful position. His attitude was the same as mine. He said both projects would be given his immediate attention. True to his word he kept me informed of his attempts on both issues. He did not have any success regarding the Boy Scout statue. He left me in the dark regarding the mansion, but I later discovered that it had been restored.

Out of the blue a letter came from Cora Price telling me that Joe was to visit Manila in January 1982 and he desperately wanted to see me. I wanted Anne to meet him too. Cora had written that Joe, their daughter Aida, son Joe II and his children Joe III and Mary-Jewel were also coming from the United States to attend a nine-day Catholic religious occasion known as the Novena. During this occasion a young man of Leyte connection and family origin was always chosen to be the Hermano Mayor at the Novena and one of his duties was to carry the figure image of the Santo Niño to the altar and around the church. Joe III, grandson of Cora and Joe, was given the honour for this Novena. Apart from seeing Joe again, Cora felt it important for Anne and me to take part in the Novena and offer prayers because of my involvement with the Philippine liberation, our closeness to the Price family and because we were now an adopted son and daughter of 'An Taclobanon'. I was still experiencing severe leg problems but decided to again visit the Philippines. We visited Nick Valderrama and his wife Mila in Sydney on our way. I asked Nick about the Price mansion, but his reply was negative.

We flew off to Manila and on the way there decided to go to Tacloban before Joe and his family arrived. There had not been any mention by Cora that we would visit Leyte and I felt I could not revisit the Philippines without going down to the island. I also had a sneaking feeling that the Price mansion had been restored.

Before we flew to Tacloban we had lunch with Annie and Ramon Bagatsing and Ramon, on hearing that we were to fly to Tacloban said, ‘You will see a few changes there since your last visit’, but he would not elaborate. I was also able to see Imelda Marcos and introduced her to Anne. Imelda remembered me from 1944 and was happy to see me and hear that we were going to Tacloban the next day. Before we left for Tacloban, Imelda introduced us to President Ferdinand Marcos.



The Mayor of Manila, Ramon Bagatsing, the author and Anne Brown, City Hall, Manila, January 1982 (City Hall Official Photographer)

On arrival at Tacloban we went straight to the mansion and to my delight I found it had been fully restored and furnished to its original beauty as Joe Price had described it to me in 1944. MacArthur’s bedroom had been completely restored except for the gaping holes in the ceiling and wall, which were left untouched as a reminder of where a Japanese unexploded bomb had fallen after MacArthur’s possession. A new plaque had been fitted on the outside front wall, near the main entrance, the underneath area had been restored and there was a helicopter pad adjacent to the house. The plaque inscription read as follows:

Provisional Capitol

Constructed, 1910, and enlarged, 1936. This edifice, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Walter S. Price, sheltered Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who escaped injury, 20 October 1944, when a Japanese bomb penetrated the roof over his room. Served as a Provisional Capitol 20–23 October 1944, upon the reconstitution of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, for President Sergio Osmeña

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The surprise of the mansion restoration had indeed been a great one and now I appreciated why both Nick and Ramon had not told me about it.



Price mansion before restoration, March 1979



Price mansion restored, January 1982



Helipad at restored Price Mansion, January 1982

The next morning, back in Manila, we went to the Price's home and it was one of the happiest days of my life when I saw my beloved friend Joe—a reunion after thirty-seven years. We were both very emotional and could hardly believe that we were together again. We both agreed that we felt as though we had never been apart. A real father-son relationship still existed. As we talked, Aida, who had been out, arrived home and this was another happy reunion. We chatted away and she asked how David Wishart and Dan McKillop were. I had to admit that I had not seen them since the war. Joe and I spent hours reminiscing and were just happy to be together. Much of the talk, naturally, was about Leyte Island and Tacloban, and Joe invited us to go with him to Tacloban after the Novena.



The author meets Joe Price after thirty-seven years, Manila, January 1982

On the last day a morning mass took place and to my surprise this was officiated by my friend, Julio Rosales, now a cardinal, who had been a priest in Tacloban in 1944. After the mass Julio beckoned to me, embraced me and his first words were, 'Welcome back, and do you still play the trumpet?' I was overwhelmed that he had remembered me and I introduced Anne to him.



The author and Anne Brown with Cardinal Julio Rosales after the Novena

I reminded Joe that he had been a wonderful person to me and my fellow kana operators and the American troops who had been guests in his house in 1944. As we continued to talk about our earlier days Joe asked me if I had remembered the story he had told me in 1944 about the shelling and the Santo Niño in the church. I told him that I had never forgotten.

Following the Novena celebrations, we flew to Leyte Island and were taken to the mansion where Joe, who had caught an earlier plane, was waiting for us. We then met Imelda's brother, Governor Benjamin Romualdez, and we were invited to stay at the mansion for a few days, which we did. During my talks with Ben he intimated that I had been the instigator of the restoration of the mansion. I felt and still feel proud that I had played this role.

In the mansion was a new grand piano and Joe spent many hours playing 1930s and 1940s music. He sure could still rattle those keys and at the same time would keep talking to us and we would sit either side of him. Such happy times. The numerous staff were always attentive and drinks and food were always at hand. The time spent at the mansion was indeed memorable.



**Anne Brown, Joe Price and author in front of plaque on Price mansion,
Leyte, February 1982**

As I had promised myself a return to the Philippines in 1984 for the 40th anniversary of MacArthur's Leyte landing, I decided to make arrangements to participate in the re-enactment as a representative of the 'Foreign Legion'. It was Alf Bobin who had suggested that the 'Foreign Legion' group attend the 40th anniversary of the Leyte landing. Alf was to organise the men while I tended to the Philippine side of things. In the end, I was the only one who went!

On our way, as usual, we visited the Valderramas at their Elizabeth Bay home in Sydney. My Philippine friend, Rafael Toda (who was also a friend of the Valderramas), had been aware of my Philippine involvement and had, with Nick, arranged a surprise for me. On the given day, Anne, Greg (our son) and I arrived and found there were other guests present. The first thing Nick said to me was, 'I am going to present you with the Philippine Liberation Medal which is long overdue to you and I have invited the captain and some of the officers of HMAS *Hobart* [which was in port in Sydney at the time] to be present because of the Australian Navy's involvement in the Battle of Leyte Gulf'.

I was overwhelmed and felt very emotional. What a surprise and how great it was that Anne and Greg were present to share my honour. I felt very proud when Nick pinned the medal onto my coat.

The next day we flew off to Manila. I had learned through Tacloban friends that US 24th and 96th Divisions ex-Servicemen were to also attend the anniversary re-enactment. On arrival at the Manila Airport we were greeted by government



**Ambassador Nicasio Valderrama pinning Philippine Liberation Medal on the author,
Philippine House, Sydney, 10 October 1984**

officials and garlands of sampaguita (the Philippine national flower) were placed around our necks. This greeting was followed by a police escort to our hotel. At the hotel we telephoned Cora and the next morning she accompanied us to an official welcome at City Hall, which had been arranged for us by our friends Annie and Ramon Bagatsing. Ramon expressed regret that my 'Foreign Legion' group was not able to participate in the forthcoming 40th anniversary and re-enactment of MacArthur's landing.

We were invited to go to the Philippine Women's University and I was introduced to General Fabian Ver, Philippine Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and I also met again The Honourable Helena Benitez. I had met Helena many times but now I discovered that she was the Chairperson of the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Foundation Inc. Members of the Foundation were present at the University's activities and Helena introduced us to them. To my surprise I was invited to become the first overseas member of the Foundation, which was indeed an honour. Fabian presented me with my certificate of membership.

Even though I knew that Japan was to have been represented at the re-enactment, I had not stopped to think that they would be present en masse. When we boarded the aircraft to go to Leyte I became aware that Japan would be strongly represented because Anne and I were the only Australians seated among one hundred or more Japanese.

It was great to meet men of the US 96th 'Deadeyes' Division who had landed on Red Beach, the same area as our kana group had landed in October 1944. Talk was non-stop and we made friends immediately with almost every man and his partner. We became particularly friendly with Tony Pavell, who was the leader of the group, and his wife Mary, Ruth and Roy Herbert, and Colonel Harvey Short (retired). These Americans each came from a different US state. As our arrival was a couple of days before the actual re-enactment we travelled with the '96'ers' to some of my old haunts—Palo, Tanauan, Tolosa and Dulag—and then onto some of the battle areas where these men had fought. Some of the towns held special parades and we were given rousing welcomes. We were honoured with luncheons, dinners and balls. To visit the 96th Division battle areas was particularly sad and I vividly remember one beach area where we stopped. My friend Roy Herbert wanted to walk the beach. As I had walked Red Beach in 1979 I knew how he was drawn to do this. We walked together, both silent with our memories.

On the morning of 20 October—Re-enactment Day—it was revealed that the celebrations had been put back one day because bad weather had prevented President Marcos and the First Lady's departure from Manila. However, we soon discovered that there could have been another reason, because during 1984 there was some unrest in the Philippines. Just after the cancellation announcement, another was made and we were told that if there was any trouble at all, we were to take our passports and go to the beach, where a US warship was standing by to take us off the island.

Stands had been erected for dignitaries and guests to be seated to watch the march, which was to follow the re-enactment activities. As I wanted to go to the beach and watch the activities, Anne waited in the stand and saved me a seat. To start the re-enactment there was a helicopter paradrop, which represented the Japanese parachute landings during the Battle of Leyte. As these mock paratroopers landed in the water, a fast boat recovery was made. This paratroop display was followed by men of the present day Philippine Army who came ashore in landing craft. Parts of the beach area, where explosives had been placed, had been fenced off. As the men landed the explosives started to go off, and this gave the effect of a naval bombardment. Overhead flew old 1944 fighter aircraft, flown by Philippine Air Force men.

During the event I met three Australian ex-naval personnel. One of them, John Ducksbury, now lives in Tacloban. Later he was to help me with the Boy Scout statue restoration.

Before the start of the march a welcoming speech was made, followed by prayers and then the introduction of the guest of honour, President Marcos. He made a commemorative speech after which some visiting ambassadors, including the Australian Ambassador, spoke.

Then the march began. Flag bearers from the Philippines, United States of America, Australia and Japan led the march. Men from the US 24th Division followed the flag bearers, then a group of Philippine Army veterans marched. Two Philippine Army men carried the White Ensign from HMAS *Australia* and behind the Ensign marched the three Australian naval men I had met on the beach.

Then followed the US 96th Division, a small group of serving Philippine Army personnel and a group of Japanese veterans. Thousands of Filipino people and visitors were watching the march. The marchers were given rousing welcomes. After the march, General Fabian Ver came up to us and we then spoke to President Marcos who shortly afterwards returned to Manila.



Ambassador and Governor of Leyte Island, Benjamin and Mrs Romualdez with the author and Anne Brown, Palo, October 1984

The activities were followed by a luncheon given by Governor Ben Romualdez and his wife. There were approximately six hundred invited guests present and we, together with the US ex-Servicemen, were among the visiting dignitaries. The lunch was held in a specially built open-sided mess hall. A menu had been printed and eight courses of food were served. Each course was given either the name of a battle area, the divisions involved in the liberation, or the names of US

and Philippine generals. The main course was aptly named MacArthur's, 'I have returned'. During lunch, which was very happy and noisy, a Philippine military band entertained us.

After lunch Ben Romualdez spotted Anne and I. He beckoned to us to come forward and as we hesitated, he went to a microphone and said, 'Would Anne and Jack Brown please come to the dais?' This we reluctantly did and as Ben greeted us he said, 'I welcome you back again, firstly as my friends, Jack you as a Philippine liberator and also as an instigator'. Then, to our horror, over the microphone he announced that he would join us and the three of us would sing 'Waltzing Matilda'. This we did, but felt most embarrassed.

After the lunch we returned to the resort and, as the men of the 96th prepared to return to Manila and to visit Baguio, a unanimous decision was made that I was to become an honorary member of their 96th Division 'Deadeyes' Association. What an honour for me! These men and I shared many memories.

Further activities came to a halt when news filtered in from Manila that the US veterans were on a hit list and that seventeen of our friends had died at Baguio in a hotel fire that had been lit by terrorists. The survivors had been flown out by the United States Air Force (USAF) to Clark Air Base north of Manila. Officially, we were then told that we were in danger. We had planned to visit Zamboanga, Mindanao, but it was in our best interest not to go there and to return to Manila as soon as possible. I decided that it would be wise not to fly directly to Manila because of this warning and to come in from another direction.

Acting on official advice, we said sad goodbyes to our friends. We then flew to Manila via Cebu and Iloilo islands. After our arrival six hotels in Manila were burnt and we were given fire drill procedure. Advice came to us that it would be best for us to leave Manila at an early date. We stayed for a few days and left the hotel on only three occasions. We visited Cora and the US Embassy because we wanted to know the full story of the Baguio fire, who had died, and where the survivors were.

The second occasion was for me to attend Malacanang Palace officially, where President Marcos presented me with a Presidential Unit Citation ribbon bar, a Philippine Defense Medal and a Philippine Independence Medal ribbon bar. The medal and ribbon bars were given to me as a member of the 'Foreign Legion' who had landed with MacArthur. When we next left the hotel it was to go to the airport, escorted by officials, to fly home to Australia.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo
Quezon City, Philippines

CERTIFICATE OF AWARD

In recognition of the Military services of

Alfred Jack Brown

during World War II, and pursuant to Armed Forces of the Philippines
Regulations G 131-053, dated July 1, 1986, he is awarded
and authorized to wear the

**PHILIPPINE LIBERATION MEDAL
PHILIPPINE DEFENSE MEDAL
PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE MEDAL
PHILIPPINE REPUBLIC PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION BADGE
WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL
ASIATIC-PACIFIC CAMPAIGN MEDAL**

Given this 17th day of June 2000
at the Embassy of the Philippines
1600 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

By Order of the Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines:




BONIFACIO B RAMOS
Colonel PA (GSC)
Defense Attache

Certificate from the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the author, June 2000

XI

AUSTRALIA FORGETS



In early 1980 my medical condition had deteriorated rapidly and I was forced to work part-time for four half-days a week. I had to restrict my leisure time. I continued to write to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and it was not until July 1980 that I was called to a Repatriation Review Tribunal, but no action was taken to allow me a full disability pension.

I continued to be ignored. In desperation I then applied to my Federal Member of Parliament, the Honourable John McLeay MHR, who had served in World War II, for an interview. In July 1980, I saw Mr McLeay and gave him all my copies of letters to the Repatriation Commission and their replies to me. Mr McLeay did take up my cause with the Department of Defence, Air Force Records and with the Minister of Veterans' Affairs.

I then received a telephone call from Group Captain P.M. Grigg of the Department of Defence (Air Force Office), Canberra, and I was asked questions relating to my war service. I later wrote to the Group Captain regarding my Service career and enclosed copies of newspaper cuttings that I had earlier forwarded to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and other documents relative to the authenticity of both my service and injuries.

My leg problems worsened. The Repatriation doctors wanted to break my legs and reset them. I was loath for this to happen and consulted Dr Gregory C.R. Keene, an orthopaedic specialist, who did not agree with this and he advised me that he would contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

In 1981 I made contact with the Returned Services League and was interviewed by a Mr Colin Reincke. Then in early 1982 I was forced to retire and Mr Reincke advised that he was working on my behalf in conjunction with my specialist. I still continued to make numerous applications to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, but I did not hear a word regarding a pension.

Depression had overcome me. For at least a year there was no positive communication from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. My case seemed to be in limbo. Then in April 1983 I was called to a new Repatriation Review Tribunal and Mr Reincke accompanied me on this occasion. Following a very brief interview

with three Tribunal members we left. Approximately one month later I received a full disability pension.

Also in April 1983 I had a surprise visit from my old kana friend Alf Bobin and his wife Daisy. They had come from Gympie in Queensland. It was great to see Alf again and he mentioned that on the way to see me, he and Daisy had visited our old cook Bluey Bagnell.

During Alf's visit he had told me that a photograph of the 'Foreign Legion' men was held at the Australian War Memorial, but that the men who appeared in the photograph had not been named. I felt that the names of the men should be included and this prompted me to make a visit to Canberra. I suggested that I would provide the appropriate names to the photograph and was able to supply them with many of the photographs featured in this book. I visited Stan King, who lived in Sydney, and he gave me photographs that he had. I then passed these on to the Australian War Memorial for him. Over the next few years I visited the Australian War Memorial regularly and gave them other Wireless Unit information.

Following Alf's visit in 1983, we corresponded regularly. He was still having difficulty with the Department of Veterans' Affairs in relation to a war pension and he asked if he could use me as a witness in relation to his application. He had written to the Defence Department and the RAAF for a copy of his war records and found them to be incomplete and incorrect. He suggested I write for a copy of my records and we would compare them. Alf also wrote in the *Ex-RAAF Wireless Units Association Newsletter* and suggested that every field operative kana man similarly apply, particularly the 'Foreign Legion' men. Alf died before he gained full recognition from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Through Alf's initiative, Bluey Bagnell, No. 1 Wireless Unit cook, obtained my address and made a surprise visit in 1983 from Cleve, South Australia. We reminisced for many hours.

In late 1988 I made application to the Defence Department (Air Force Office), Canberra, for a copy of my Service records. Upon receipt I discovered that the administrative staff of Wireless Units, similarly to Alf's records, had not fully recorded my Service career. Moreover, I strongly objected to the following that had been recorded:

- I was classified as a telegraphist.

- From February 1944 to April 1945 my postings were either not recorded or were incorrect. No record of my time on Biak, in Dutch territory, was shown. The dates for my operational time at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, were incorrect. The same for my time in the Philippines and my return to Australia. No record whatsoever was shown of my field operations in the Battle of Leyte.
- I also discovered that the administrative staff had not recorded our movements in Dutch territory, which was the reason why none of the kana operators ever received their Dutch guilders. An instance of division between administration and us.

My incorrect records prompted me to write to the Department of Defence (Air Force Office) and I requested that my classification be altered to read 'Japanese Katakana Intercept Wireless Operator and Translator'. I also enclosed a copy of Group Captain Grigg's memorandum, which substantiated my request that my records be corrected, and I took the liberty of making the necessary alterations as to my whereabouts from February 1944 to April 1945. Incidentally, it took three years after this memorandum by Grigg in July 1980 to a Federal Minister before I received a war pension.

In January 1989 I was advised that it was not possible to make the amendments as I had requested, but a note of action had been placed at the top enclosure of my file. However, the nature of my classification, as requested, had been correctly noted.

It was at about this time that I had news from Cora that Joe was not well and he had returned from San Francisco to Manila. To my great sorrow he died in 1989 and was buried in the Price family vault in Tacloban. I felt I had lost a great friend.

That year more Philippine news came from John Ducksbury in Tacloban. He advised me that he had followed up my Boy Scout statue challenge and with the help of a Service club and Philippine war veterans, the statue had been fully restored and now stood upright and proud in its rightful position. I felt I had helped to achieved something significant.

To my knowledge I am the only surviving field operative kana man in South Australia and I am rather out on a limb. To keep in touch with my wireless unit friends I belong to two interstate associations, namely the Ex-RAAF Wireless Units Association and the Central Bureau Intelligence Corps Association Inc.

MINREP 37041 - MR A.J. BROWN

PEOPSS (F-G-12) (through: DGPS-AF, ASP-AF)

1. The units to which Mr Brown belonged carried out highly classified tasks, often in the front line and sometimes beyond it. In the interests of security, unit records and histories were vague, cryptic and frequently incomplete. Mr Brown's case is further complicated by the fact that in the period in question his group's actual movements were not recorded on his records and that he was operating in support of US, not Australian, forces.
2. Following my discussion with Mr Brown (Folio 9), RAAF records were re-examined. These records, which cover material which is not public knowledge, have confirmed in every respect Mr Brown's recollections of his movements and associated events. It is confirmed that he participated in the invasion of Leyte and served in the Philippines, in support of US forces, in October and November 1944. However, from Mr Brown's description of his medical treatment, it is my opinion that he was treated by a field dressing station or a casualty clearing station. Intense fighting, including heavy bombing and shelling, was taking place at the time and it is most unlikely that any records of treatment given to casualties who immediately returned to duty would have been kept. In the absence of any accurate identification of the medical unit concerned, and given the secrecy which shrouded Mr Brown's unit and its whereabouts, an approach to the US authorities would seem pointless and merely serve to prolong the matter.
3. In the circumstances, as Mr Brown has proved reliable on those matters which can be checked, I consider he should be given the benefit of any doubt that exists. It is recommended that the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence consider advising his colleague the Minister for Veteran's Affairs that the RAAF, because of the special security conditions applying to Mr Brown's war service, is unable to confirm his claimed injury. However, he has been shown to be a reliable and truthful informant and because of this and the shortcomings in records due to the nature of his service, his claim should be treated sympathetically.



(P.M. GRIGG)
GPCAPT
DPSA-AF

23 Jul 80

Group Captain Grigg's memorandum, 23 July 1980



**Restored Boy Scout statue back in its 1944 position, unveiled 18 October 1989
(Photograph courtesy the late John Ducksbury, Tacloban)**

I attended the US 96th Infantry Division Association reunion in July 1991 to be with the US men I had served alongside in the Philippines. When we arrived at Spokane, Washington State for the reunion I was overwhelmed by the welcome. I was happy to meet again my old 96th friends and to meet new men.



**Colonel J. Harvey Short (Rtd) of 'Deadeyes' Division and author at 'Deadeyes' Reunion
Spokane, Washington, USA July 1991**

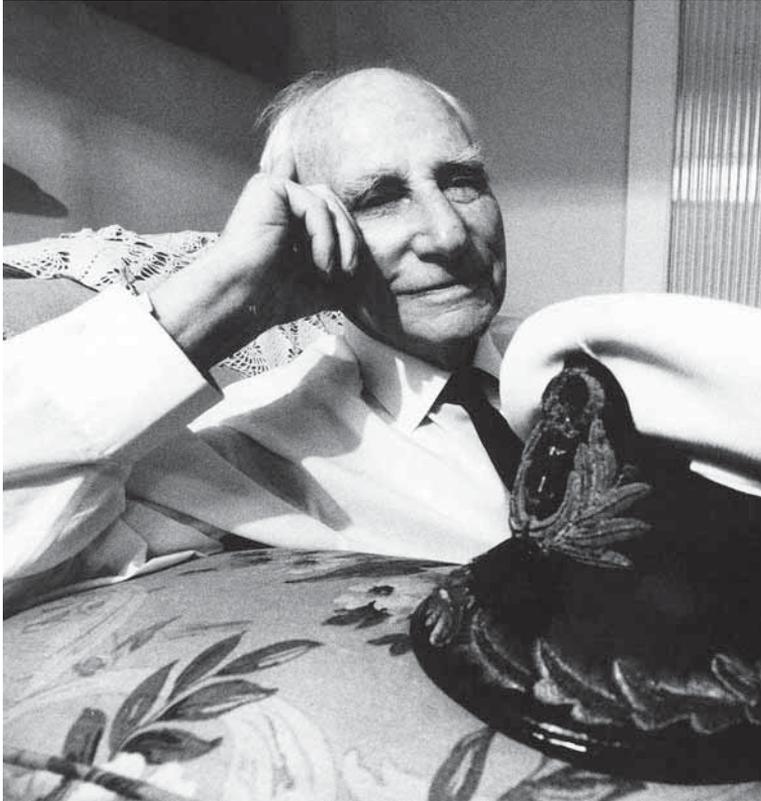
About this time an article, written by David Jenkins, appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper headed 'Kokoda Blunder Costs Thousands of Lives'. As a result, I was sought out to speak on a local radio station. On the morning the article appeared I had not listened to any radio news. My telephone rang and I was asked by the secretary of Keith Conlon of ABC Radio 5AN if I would be willing (within the next couple of minutes) to talk on air in relation to the Kokoda Trail article. My name was given by a person who had advised that during World War II I had been a Japanese kana wireless operator. I have a silent telephone number so the person calling the station was obviously known to me. My first reaction was to say 'No'. I was then advised that I would be tuned into the conversation between Keith Conlon and David Jenkins and, if I agreed, the conversation would become three-way and include me. I then agreed.

During the interview I was asked questions about the work of the kana operators during the Kokoda blunder. I advised that this blunder had occurred before my involvement but that I could talk about how the operating was carried out. This I did and I was asked about my later involvement. As the request to speak on air had been so quick I had little time to think, but I did reply to some questions. Keith Conlon asked David Jenkins whether my statements made sense and David Jenkins said, 'They certainly do'. I would have liked a copy of the interview but unfortunately the radio tape had been destroyed.

I have found that if I mention that I was with a secret signals intelligence unit, some people seem to back away from me. It seems as if they fear me. Sometimes I have been called a liar. Even now that I am able to talk about my wartime activities, some sixty years after the end of the war, people react differently—some back away, others seem not to be able to get enough of me.

Also about this time our ex-wireless group was to meet in Melbourne and speak to Captain Eric Nave, but sadly he died in June 1993. The following obituary appeared in the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* by Denis Warner:

The death of Captain Eric Nave, RN (retired) at the age of 94 passed with little notice in the media, although a crowded church in his local parish in a Melbourne suburb was a singular tribute to the man himself. He deserved much, much more from the Australian and world public at large. Few men contributed more to victory in the Pacific War than Eric Nave, father of British code-breakers in Asia.



Captain Eric Nave, RN, circa 1991
 (Photograph courtesy *The Age*)

In 1989, Eric Nave became embroiled in controversy when he claimed in his memoirs, which were written with former MI6 officer James Rusbridger and titled *Codebreaker Extraordinary*, that Royal Navy code breakers provided Winston Churchill with advanced warning of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Nave claimed that Churchill kept the information from US President Roosevelt, hoping that a surprise Japanese attack would bring America into the war, as it in fact did.

The book was withdrawn by its publishers after the British Government imposed a ‘D Notice’, saying that the book breached state security and threatened US–British relations. The claim, which has been largely debunked and is thought to have been more attributable to Rusbridger than Nave, was repeated in their second book, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, published in 1991. In spite of this controversy, Nave is still regarded as the father of Australian code breaking.

Eric’s death prompted me to renew my action to gain acknowledgment for kana men. However, before this, Air Commodore Bob Laing, Officer Commanding of

KATAKANA MAN

RAAF Base Edinburgh, invited me, as the first ATC cadet in South Australia, to attend a special parade on 11 July 1993 and to be presented with an RAAF trophy by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal I.B. Gration. Bob Laing, who was aware of my involvement as a kana operator, had told Air Marshal Gration who remarked to me, 'I believe you have had a very unusual and demanding war history'.

I volunteered to provide him with some kana details and of my personal involvement. He was keen for me to forward this information to him because he was aware of only some of the katakana work. I followed up my promise and also told him of my project to try to get the Commonwealth Government and the Defence Department to acknowledge the kana group.

I then forwarded the Air Marshal a copy of Denis Warner's article about Eric Nave. This was the Air Marshal's reply:



Air Marshal Gration's letter dated 5 October 1993

In October 1994 sad news arrived that Cora Price died at her daughter's home in Vallejo, California USA. I felt deeply the loss of one of my dearest Philippine friends from World War II onwards.

Next 'Australia Remembers 1945–1995' loomed. This was the name given to the official commemoration celebrating fifty years since the war ended. Money was made available to ex-Service personnel for a variety of projects. In February 1995 I made application for a grant to help publish my book, but I was not successful.

In May 1995 I made application to the Australian War Memorial Research Grants Scheme, 'John Treloar Grants', for \$5000 to assist with the research for my book. The application had to be supported by two referees. My application was not successful, probably because I was competing against academics.

When I did not receive a grant a referee wrote to me:

The work of the kana operators is one of the most important, and least told stories of the war. It is ridiculous that in the US every effort is being made to declassify all of this information, while here in Australia we are apparently bound by inhibitions that have no relevance at all in the current age. I am truly sorry that you did not receive a grant, but you must continue with the book. Your story simply must be told. That you say some people simply don't believe you when you talk about your kana work is all the more reason why the full story must be told. You know that Eric Nave faced all sorts of problems when he wanted to tell his story and finally overcame them.

The rejection of my application caused me to change the direction of my originally planned work to the operative katakana man. This change, to me, was at first a great disappointment. However, now, in a slight rewrite of my story, it focuses more on the people involved and, as such, is a unique treatment of the subject! As I wrote, it was like having a flywire screen, or veil, covering my memory bank for sixty years. It was then, as if I started to push pins through the holes in the wire and match events and people—just like solving a jigsaw puzzle—that this factual story evolved.

During the 'Australia Remembers' period, celebrations were held throughout Australia and one of the largest was held in Townsville. Dick Bong's sister, Joyce Erickson, had advised me that she, her husband, Reynold, and Dick's widow, Marge

Bong Drucker, were to visit Townsville. Before I had time to query fully the reason for the trip (because at that stage I was not aware of the Townsville celebrations) the family was already on their way to Australia. In Joyce's letter she had not mentioned the 'Australia Remembers' celebrations nor that a special memorial was to be held for Dick. The family attended the memorial and celebrations, sent me a postcard and forwarded to me a copy of the souvenir program and newspaper reports of the activities held. I noted there was no mention of Wireless Unit reunions.

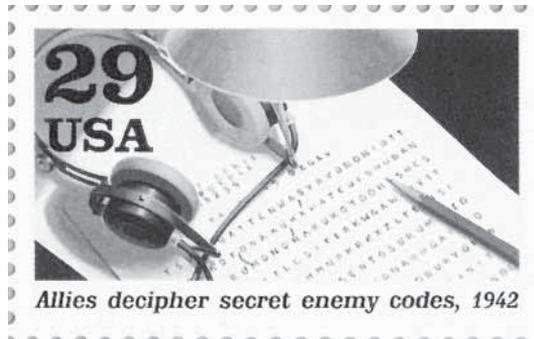
A perusal of the 'Australia Remembers' program revealed that the only signals reunion held was that conducted by the Royal Australian Army Corps of Signals, and I was disappointed that the RAAF Wireless Units had not been included. Most other kana men were not aware of the reunion. Had I known, I would have attended. Mr Graham Jenkinson, Chairman of the Townsville VP50 (50th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific) celebrations, was sorry that our group had not been represented.

During this same period I read, with interest, an article that appeared in a background information book published for 'Australia Remembers' by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, about Leyte Gulf and other battle areas. It was stated that No. 43 Airfield Construction Squadron had landed at Mindoro on 15 December 1944 and was the only Australian land unit involved in the Philippines. The reader now knows this is incorrect. Not one word of credit was given to the kana men for the important part they played.

RAAF squadrons played an integral part in the Leyte operation preventing Japanese air reinforcements moving north into the battle area. No mention whatsoever was made about kana operators who played such a large part in preventing Japanese air reinforcements moving north into the Philippines. Kana intelligence gave the RAAF and the USAAF (based then in the Markham Valley and some New Guinea areas) the places, dates and times, and airfields to attack when Japanese planes could be caught on the ground.

In all other battle areas of the south and western Pacific no acknowledgment was made that kana operators with their backups were involved either directly or indirectly by commanders using our intelligence in their planning of battles: Are we all nameless and faceless?—I think not. In many instances the kana group detachments were directly involved on the spot.

To commemorate the fifty years since the cessation of hostilities, two publications, including stamps, were issued by Australia Post. Excellent articles and stamps appeared, but I hunted in vain for an article about the Wireless Units. Similarly, in the US, five publications (one for each year of war when the US was involved) were made and I noted with pleasure that in the 1942 issue an article appeared titled 'US Breaks Secret Codes' and an appropriate 29 cent stamp was printed. This stamp showed a set of earphones, a pencil, transcribed letters on paper and the stamp read 'Allies decipher secret enemy codes, 1942'.



USA postage stamp issued fifty years after the war

I also read an article regarding Nos. 1 to 7 Wireless Units. Names of the 1941 field team were mentioned. Mention was also made that No. 6 Wireless Unit men had landed on 20 October 1944 with MacArthur and that a photograph had been given to this twenty-four-man invasion team known as the 'Foreign Legion'. It is unfortunate that their names were not mentioned, as they were available.

A US publication, *Worldradio* (April 1996 edition), contained an article written by George Folta headed 'Old Time Radio Code Breakers'. The article gave a concise history of Eric Nave, the workings of katakana, the work of No. 1 Wireless Unit, my learning of kana and made mention of the men of the 'Foreign Legion'. Oh, how I would like to see similar articles of the recognition published in Australia.

KATAKANA MAN

EPILOGUE

Just after the war ended statements were made by Allied commanders praising kana operators and other members of Sigint who had really proved their worth. General C.A. Willoughby, General MacArthur's Intelligence Chief, stated, 'That Sigint of which kana operators were the major part had chopped at least two years off the Pacific war'. Admiral Chester Nimitz, Joint Commander with MacArthur in the Pacific, rated our value as the equivalent of another whole Pacific fleet, and Churchill said the results from Sigint were worth many, many divisions. Yet most of the history of World War II Allied signals intelligence has been cloaked in secrecy. The extent of the intelligence network and its crucial contribution to the winning of the war has become public knowledge only with the declassification of American and a few Australian Government documents (see Appendix I).

The breaking of the Japanese codes provided crucial information about the weak links in the chain of Japanese island fortresses in the Pacific, thereby aiding MacArthur's successful advance from Australia through the South Pacific and his retaking of the Philippines. The breaking of the codes also provided the US Navy with incredibly accurate information about when Japanese merchant ships were to sail from port, including their routes, destinations and what they were carrying. It was the key to the Allies successful submarine campaign. We also learned exactly how many ships were lost during the course of the war, where they were lost and when. Credit was given to Sigint for being responsible for the sinking of a total of two thousand ships equalling five million tonnes. Kana operators were the first big link in the chain of Sigint.

The Japanese Air Force gave similar information, together with aircraft types and numbers on airfields, aircraft build-up on the bases, aircraft targets and take-off times. During the war it lost thousands of aircraft as a result of our work.

I know that the kana operators changed the course of history, but this has never been documented. The Australian Government never mentioned Sigint. Even during the 'Australia Remembers' celebrations commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Sigint's importance was ignored. This was despite the kana men of Sigint being acknowledged by the American hierarchy, namely Generals MacArthur, Sutherland, Willoughby, Kenney, Akin and others.

Sadly our little 'Foreign Legion' group is diminishing. Before long, no one will be left to recall the contribution we made. As this book's final words are written there is still no acknowledgment or recognition for we katakana men. I cannot understand how the Australian Government, from the end World War II up to the present day, can completely ignore the work of kana operators and their backups who did so much for the Allies and Australia in defeating the Japanese.

We men made history; it is on the record and the politicians cannot change that! Is it right that not one kana operator, out of those on my course, ever received any promotion during approximately four years of service? Even after graduating in our special type of work we stayed as aircraftmen, a 'Day One' rank, the lowest rank in the RAAF. It took eighteen months of our service in the RAAF to be made a LAC (leading aircraftman), which is not a promotion, and we received less pay than the majority of Servicemen.

We were told in training that our service and secrets were so vital that we were to take our own lives if we were captured so that our secrets would not be revealed under torture.

Hopefully, this book will come to the attention of some politician, or other person of influence, who will take up the recognition of the RAAF katakana operators.

One man can make a difference; every man must try. I have written history as it happened and have not changed it for political or other reasons. Few of us are still alive. In a few short years there will be none.

APPENDIX I

MEMORANDUM ON THE 'VALUE OF WIRELESS INTELLIGENCE IN RELATION TO ENEMY AIRCRAFT ACTIVITY'

COPY.

MEMORANDUM ON THE "VALUE OF WIRELESS INTELLIGENCE IN RELATION
TO ENEMY AIRCRAFT ACTIVITY."

The information received from Central Bureau is of the utmost importance both for intelligence and operational purposes.

2. All enemy aircraft flights in this theatre may be assumed to be made in pursuance of some mission of importance to the enemy's operations; obviously, therefore, the more detailed the information received of enemy air activity the greater is the assistance in estimating the enemy's probable air intentions.
3. Information received from Central Bureau is laid before the Commanding General, and the Chiefs of Staff of Army and Navy at the daily noon meeting, and is also passed by signal to operational areas and bases as circumstances demand.
4. Wireless intelligence of the nature supplied by Central Bureau is one of the important factors in determining our own operations.
5. Some of the uses to which this intelligence has been applied are set out hereunder -
 - a. Information as to Japanese aerial recco, particularly when read together with other intelligence, has given a strong pointer to the enemy's intentions. Enemy operational activity has usually been preceded by a recco and the transfer of enemy recco activity from one area to another has generally been the pointer of a new centre for operational activity.
 - b. The location of identified Japanese air units has been established from time to time by intelligence received from Central Bureau.
 - c. From information received from this channel as to the control of aircraft flights and the number of aircraft involved it has been possible to establish where concentrations of enemy aircraft have occurred, and on the other hand to determine when enemy air bases have been abandoned, or when lightly held.
 - d. The areas covered by Japanese recco have been of great importance to the Navy when movements of our own Task Forces are imminent. Complete and timely information was sent to COMSOPAC before the recapture of Guadalcanal on 7th August, and there is good reason to believe that the course taken by our Task Forces in moving into this objective was largely determined by information supplied by Central Bureau. In like manner similar intelligence as to the enemy recco activity is always passed to Navy when Task Forces in COMSOWESPAC area are moving into an area within the ambit of enemy aerial recco.
 - e. On a number of occasions the first intimation of the establishment of a new enemy air base has come through Central Bureau as the result of the W/T control at this base having been fixed by Central Bureau.
 - f. Information received from this channel as to mobile controls has enabled this Directorate to fix the location of surface units such as Seaplane carriers and in some cases Aircraft carriers.

ITEM 45/301192.

/Page 2.....

2.

- g. Intelligence as to the enemy air flights has proved of great value in assessing enemy air strength and has also, from time to time, given indications of enemy air movements from one theatre to another.
 - h. RDF, from time to time, has given warnings of the approach of hostile air units.
 - i. Intelligence as to enemy recco flights has furnished as to whether our own impending operations and movements are known to the enemy or if they remain undiscovered.
 - j. Lastly enemy air activity in particular areas has provided a strong pointer of the movements of enemy convoys and Task Forces.
-

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APPENDIX II

LETTER FROM MINISTER FOR AIR TO PRIME MINISTER SEEKING APPROVAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO NEW WIRELESS UNITS, 16 DECEMBER 1942



SECRET
48 301 92

MINISTER FOR AIR,
Victoria Barracks,
Melbourne, S.C.I.
16-12-1942

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ~~MOST SECRET~~

My dear Minister,

MOBILE WIRELESS UNITS.

It will be of interest to you to know that our No.1 Wireless Unit has been operating in Queensland since April last, one of its primary functions being to intercept enemy messages, the derived intelligence then being passed on to Air Intelligence Section, North-Eastern Area, Allied Air Headquarters, and the Central Bureau.

The value of that unit for intelligence purposes is regarded as of the highest importance as, apart from its immediate operational utility, the information gained by the unit has been of the utmost value in determining the location of enemy air bases, in detecting the movements of enemy aircraft and surface units in the area, as well as in formulating our own operations.

For your information, I attach copy of a short memorandum prepared by the Intelligence Section, Allied Air Headquarters, showing the importance of wireless units of this nature.

In view of the great advantages of such facilities for intelligence and operational facilities, Allied Air Headquarters, S.W.P.A., have now made representations for the establishment of five similar units - one each in North-Western Area (Darwin), Port Moresby, Eastern Area (Sydney), Western Area (Perth), and Southern Area (Melbourne), in that order of priority.

Immediate installation of the first two has been strongly recommended, for the following reasons -

(a) North-Western Area:

No intercept unit concentrating on Japanese air traffic exists to serve the requirements of this area or to provide a warning to the Darwin Sector. The establishment of a unit here would afford an essential warning system to North-Western Area which, in turn, would pass to Intelligence, Allied Air Forces, and to the Central Bureau, all operational intelligence intercepted.

(b) Moresby:

Certain of the traffic made by Japanese operational aircraft (Fighters) is Radio Telephony, which can only be intercepted within a range of approximately 400 miles. Therefore, in operations from Lae against Moresby in which Fighters have been engaged, no Japanese signals have been intercepted. The establishment of such a wireless unit is thus regarded as vitally essential, more particularly so as Army has requested that its No.55 Special Wireless Section be relieved of air-ground commitments at Moresby.

The Rt. Hon. J. Curtin, M.P.,
Prime Minister and Minister
for Defence,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

1. Col. Wilson
2. Mr. ...
3. Mr. ...
4. Mr. ...
5. Mr. ...

Page 2.....

ITEM: 48/301/92

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The Central Bureau intimated at a recent meeting that, in the event of additional R.A.A.F. Mobile Wireless Units being formed, it was able to allot receiving apparatus and H/F Direction Finding equipment - one each for New Guinea and North-Western Area.

I have discussed the matter fully with the Chief of the Air Staff, and now strongly recommend your approval for the immediate establishment of those two units.

The estimated cost of the two stations, including equipment, is £90,000, the personnel establishment approximating 200 officers and airmen for each station. All costs could be financed from existing appropriations.

In view of the extremely secret nature of this proposal, I am following this rather unorthodox method (rather than by an Agendum) of seeking your approval, and early advice of your concurrence in the proposals would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan D. DeBevoise

*Duncan & I have by approval. The
Questions of the other locations to be
submitted when position of Army
we are ourselves in work more
decided. Treasurer agrees. Minister
to furnish copy attached with this endorsement.
18-12-42 John Curtin*

*The Minister for Air has been furnished with a copy
of this letter with copy of the Prime Ministers
approval endorsed thereon.*

*J. M. Lauglin
18/12/42*

APPENDIX III

EXTRACT FROM DECLASSIFIED TOP SECRET ULTRA LETTER ABOUT FORMATION OF NO. 6 WIRELESS UNIT

ULTRA

THIS ITEM IS DECLASSIFIED BY
AUTHORITY, THE SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE, CANADA

NO. 6 WIRELESS UNIT.

This Unit became operational early in October 44 when an intercept and intelligence detachment drawn from personnel of No. 1 Wireless Unit at Biak proceeded from Hollandia to Leyte with the invasion forces. The Unit was formed specifically for the purpose of supporting operations in the Philippines.

The detachment operated en route to Tacloban, Leyte, and during the voyage it was able to report that the convoy had been sighted by enemy airplanes.

After the landing, enemy air raids on Allied shore installations and shipping were constant. The new enemy strike frequency was located within a few days and it was then possible to pass frequent air raid warnings to Air Formations and Advanced Echelon GHQ.

Early in November 44 the detachment was joined by the remainder of the Unit which had assembled at Hollandia.

When fully operational, the Unit comprised both Army and Naval Air Sections, the operational personnel attached from No. 4 Wireless Unit constituting the Naval Air Section.

Although the Unit was hampered by ~~lack of~~ technical equipment and the loss of a D/S destroyed by a typhoon, enemy air activity from bases within close range was so constant that it was possible to gather and pass a large volume of intelligence material.

This information included:

- (a) Air raid warnings.
- (b) The location and composition of enemy convoys attempting to reinforce Leyte.
- (c) The location of convoys moving along the Indo-China coast.
- (d) Enemy sightings of Allied shipping and task forces operating in the area.
- (e) Air Base activity and movements of enemy airplanes.
- (f) Movements of enemy air formations and high ranking officers.
- (g) Serviceability reports of enemy airfields.
- (h) Enemy weather reports in both target and more remote areas.

On some occasions, the information supplied by the Unit was the sole source of Allied intelligence as to the position of enemy convoys. A notable example was the Unit's report of the enemy's attempt to reinforce Ormoc on the West Coast of Leyte. This led to the total destruction of the convoy involved.

Provision of this type of spot target information and other tactical intelligence earned the ready appreciation of local air formations.

Early in 1945 Far Eastern Air Force Headquarters was set up in close proximity to the unit, and thereafter closest liaison was maintained. The extensive communications of this HQ enabled intelligence derived to be disseminated to all appropriate air formations in a minimum of time.

Seventh Fleet HQ was also located close at hand enabling the Naval Air Section immediately to pass information which could be of

APPENDIX IV

EXTRACT FROM CENTRAL BUREAU TECHNICAL RECORDS, PART B - NAVAL AIR-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS

EXTRACTS FROM CENTRAL BUREAU TECHNICAL RECORDS

PART B. NAVAL AIR-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS

(Pages 23, 24, 25, 26)

14. INTELLIGENCE DERIVED

a. Weather

The first important information obtained from Naval Air-Ground traffic was a regular flow of weather reports from enemy occupied territory north of Australia. In the early days of the war when Allied air power was very strained, it was most important from a meteorological point of view and afforded an economy in weather reconnaissance.

Weather information was obtained continuously throughout the whole period that Naval Air-Ground traffic was read.

b. Air Raid Warnings - 1943

An early success of great importance at the time was the prediction of air-raids from Naval Air-Ground traffic.

Air-Ground traffic always contained a high percentage of weather messages passed by various bases to incoming or passing aircraft. However, some weather messages were broadcast by Rabaul and/or Truk and/or Tokio.

It was found that reports broadcast by these large stations were of weather over territory held by the Allies.

A special investigation soon showed that this broadcast of weather was invariably followed by an air raid on the place named in the report. The Japanese practice was to make a special weather or shipping reconnaissance prior to bombing missions.

Field sections were at once advised and were able to issue air raid warnings at the place named whenever these messages were received.

By calculation of the difference between the time of origin of the message and the time of the raid in past cases, the actual time could be forecast with reliability, and this was done for some time with great success in New Guinea and the Solomons.

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c. Enemy Convoy Positions

Over a long period Naval Air-Ground traffic provided important intelligence of enemy convoy positions. This was obtained through interception of traffic to and from the air cover, and was a result of our growing offensive power with the enemy compelled to provide regular air cover against submarine attack and, when convoys were within striking distance of Allied air bases, against Allied air offensive action.

(1) Rabaul Convoys

Regular convoy positions were first obtained in the closing days of Rabaul's importance as an enemy naval base (early 1944). Protection for convoys coming down from the North was provided mostly from Kavieng, and depending on weather and other factors, the position might be given by either the aircraft reporting the position back to base or the base giving a recent position to an aircraft attempting to locate the convoy.

The position was always expressed by bearing and distance from a place, the place name being expressed by a Roman letter indicator, e.g. Convoy bearing 307 degrees course 120 miles from "M", course 85 degrees speed 8 knots.

(2) Empire-Singapore Convoys Via Manila

Considerable success was obtained with these convoys particularly during the second half of 1944 when important convoys between Japan and Singapore were routed via Manila and Miri. Air cover was provided primarily against Allied submarines, and at times almost daily positions were obtained between Formosa and Manila and along the Palawan passage.

.

As this convoy run grew more hazardous for the enemy it became quite a practice for convoys to shelter for the night (in protected anchorages). The air cover would report back to base "convoy anchored temporarily in -- Bay, I am returning" 1820. Such reports were most helpful as they gave about 12 hours margin for the passage of the intelligence. Next morning the air cover reported convoy's position, course and speed when it took over duty.

(3) Allied Submarine Positions

Positions of Allied submarines when discovered were always broadcast when sighted by aircraft. The reports were in a self-evident form and when the submarine attacked a convoy the report of the submarine also disclosed the position of the convoy.

(4) Malaya Coast Convoys

When Allied air power was established in the Philippines the Singapore-Empire convoys were driven to the alternative route via Indo-China Coast. The same reports from air cover were frequently received and in this area both methods - bearing and distance from base, and by latitude and longitude - were used for reporting positions. Such reports were received up to the time of the surrender.

(5) Celebes Area Convoys

Air cover convoy reports were received from this area over a long period but the convoys were not as large as those mentioned above.

.....

(6) Ormoc Operations - Convoys

During the early part of the battle for the Philippines when enemy reinforcements were being rushed to Ormoc, a great deal of valuable convoy information was obtained. Indeed, this was probably the peak of the Naval-Air Section's usefulness. The operating bomb wing gave 6 Wireless Unit the credit for 17 ships destroyed. The reason was the same - air cover reporting to base the progress of the convoys, particularly in the final dash in and out of Ormoc Bay.

d. Enemy Convoy Designations

(In all cases the designation preceded the word SENDAN)

There was a variety of methods employed in designating convoys; the most important convoys between Japan and Singapore were known as:-

(1) "HI" Convoys

The convoy was described as "HI" followed by a number, odd numbers denoting an outward bound convoy and even numbers a homeward bound one, e.g., HI 21 on reaching Singapore would become HI22 on the run home. The numbers ran in sequence, but this was not invariable, if HI 21 and 23 suffered heavy attack they might eventually proceed in company and return as HI 22, the number 24 being more or less lost. . . .

It was assumed that "HI" meant a convoy sailing from Hiroshima to Singapore, an alternative theory was that it meant "high speed".

(2) "MI" Convoys

Similar to "HI" convoys in that the number following indicated "outward" or "homeward bound" with the numbers running in sequence.

It was assumed that "MI" meant a convoy routed via Miri, an alternative suggestion was that it sailed originally from Miike, as was the case with MI 17.

(3) Two-Kana-Figure Convoys

These were very common, the first Kana represented the port of sailing, the second the destination, and the figure the trip number, these last of course following in sequence.

The Kana indicators, with meanings, were as follow:

TA	Takao
MA	Manila
MO	Moji
HI	Hiroshima
MI	Miri
SI	Singapore
SA	Saigon
YU	Yulin
PA	Palao
NO	Manokwari
KI	Keelung
FU	Fukajima?
MU	Mutsure

.....

(4) Roman Letter Convoys

These letters were self evident indicators for the convoy destination. They were followed by the trip number in sequence

W	Wewak	C	Cebu
M	Manila	D	Davao
H	Halmaheras	Z	Zamboanga

(5) Three-Figure Convoys

This system was used between Japan and the Philippines for small ships, possibly mostly unescorted. The first two figures were the sailing date and the last the number of ships, e.g. Convoy 205 sailed 20th consisting of 5 ships.

(6) Roman Letter and 3 Figures

A combination of systems-(4) and (5). Convoy Z 258 was a convoy which sailed for Zamboanga on 24th, consisting of 8 ships.

APPENDIX V

EXTRACT FROM DECLASSIFIED SECRET ULTRA 'SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN' FROM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA, 24/25 JUNE 1944

18

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION, GENERAL STAFF SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN	
NO. 474	DATE
824	24/25 Jun 44

CONTENTS AND SIGNIFICANT ITEMS:

- Par. 1 Aitape: Plans for the attack. *
 - Par. 2 Air traffic analysed.
 - Par. 3 Borneo: Indications of a new airdrome.
 - Par. 4 Marianas: Air forces are being reinforced from Japan. *
 - Par. 5 Palau: Naval air forces possibly being reinforced from Sumatra and Java. *
 - Par. 6 Difficulty being experienced in 37mm equipment in Type 2 bombers.
 - Par. 7 Philippines: Air forces being reinforced by fighters. *
 - Par. 8 Army Air Units are receiving training in torpedo tactics. *
 - Par. 9 Ceram: A new airdrome is indicated.
 - Par. 10 Java: A new airdrome is indicated.
 - Par. 11 Philippines: Torpedo storage facilities probably completed at two naval air bases.
 - Par. 12 Truk: Torpedo storage facilities probably completed at Matsushima Naval Air Base.
 - Par. 13a Part of 1st Striking Fleet is evidently enroute to the Empire. *
 - Par. 13b Destroyer units of 5th Fleet may be transferred to Central Pacific area.
 - Par. 14 New Guinea: Cruiser Division 16 still indicated in Halmaheira-Western New Guinea area. *
 - Par. 15 Philippines: Important convoy believed approaching Manila.
 - Par. 16 Timor: Commander South Western Area Fleet concerned over possibility of invasion of Timor.
- Note: Significant items are indicated by an asterisk (*).

I GROUND:

- * 1. XVIII Army's attack against Aitape:
 - (1) The XVIII Army on 20 June again referred to preparations for launching an all-out attack on Aitape using its full strength. Date of the attack was indicated to be about 10 July. This operation is apparently being scheduled in cooperation with coming operations of the Second Area Army, (whose Headquarters is Menado).
 - (2) According to the report, the 20th Division is now located in the area along the right (east) bank of the Rarapu (probably

~~ULTRA SECRET~~

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- Drinimor) River, (20 miles east of Aitape).
- (3) Preparations are also being carried out by the 41st Division for an attack to be launched on the left (west) bank of the Rarapu (Drinimor?) River in the early part of the first ten day period of July.
 - (4) The 41st Division, including the 66th Inf Regt (51st Division), one mortar company attached, a provisional Army artillery unit made up of the 62nd Naval AA and Army Field AA battalions (with 3 mountain guns) is now moving and should be concentrated on or about 5 July in the Yakumul-Ulau area.
 - (5) The Army command post leaves on 23 June for an area south of Yakumul, arriving on the 30th. Sarupu (probably Balub) appears to be the location of the rear echelon.
 - (6) The strength of the above mentioned forces appears to be about 23,000.
 - (7) The commanding officers of the 1st Shipping Group and the 4th Field Transport Headquarters are to be responsible for supplying Army and Navy units in the area probably from Wewak to Yakumul and will command the 1st and 3rd Transport units respectively.
 - (8) 11,000 men of the 51st Division and the 27th Special Naval Base Force will be jointly responsible for the defense of the Sepik River-But area.
 - (9) The 44th L. of C. unit and an unidentified organization are transferring materials probably up the coast into the Wewak area, using 20 large MLCs and 30 trucks. During the first 10 day period of June, they have moved supplies out of the Hansa Bay area.
 - (10) In the Burui-Maprik area a cadre of one infantry company is stationed for reconnaissance. For long range reconnaissance in the region south of the Toricelli Range running between Wewak and Aitape, three probable groups (30 to 50 men each) are working toward Aitape. (MBY 5779 and 5779A)

COMMENT: The above figures in parenthesis refer to numbered dispositions on the enclosed maps. This information confirms previous identifications of the enemy's intentions to launch an attack on Aitape, but this is the first concrete evidence of the date of the attack or the axis of advance. Some doubt exists as to the correct translation of "Rarapu" river but as it is mentioned as being 30 kilometers east of Aitape, it is reasonable to assume that it is probably the Drinimor River; this is further borne out by the fact that the 20th Division is said to be in the Rarapu River area, and recent prisoners of war and captured documents from 20th Division have been taken in the Drinimor River area. Previous information contained in G-2 Daily Summary #21 has indicated the 41st Division moving up in rear of the 20th Division, from which position it is evidently to move around the south flank and while 20th Division attacks west across the Drinimor River, the 41st Division will attack north and north west towards the Allied defenses around Aitape and the Tadjil airdrome. The enemy reconnaissance to the south and south west of Aitape has been mentioned previously as a possible preliminary to a diversionary attack from that direction, while the main attack is being launched by the 20th and 41st Divisions from the line of the Drinimor River.

The mention in sub-paragraph (8) of 11,000 men of the 51st Division and the 27th Special Naval Base Force seems very high, in view of previous information which placed the strength of 51st Division at approximately 4,000, and also the fact that one regiment (66th) of 51st Division has been attached to the 41st Division for this operation. However, it is possible that a number of base personnel will be used to build up the depleted strength of 51st Division.

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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~~ULTRA SECRET~~

APPENDIX VI

EXTRACT FROM DECLASSIFIED TOP SECRET ULTRA 'INFORMATION BULLETIN' FROM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA - 'ANALYSIS OF AIR BATTLE LESSONS, 10-28 OCTOBER 1944'

~~TOP SECRET ULTRA~~

15

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION, GENERAL STAFF

G-2 INFORMATION BULLETIN

'ANALYSIS OF AIR BATTLE LESSONS, 10-28 OCTOBER 1944'

No. TS-6

DATE
30 Oct 1944

The enemy has adopted the best possible solution for the future employment of his dwindling air strength through bitter historic example in the SWPA. This employment is based on the inherent capability of the air arm to intervene rapidly in any strength, under favorable conditions, and at times and places of the enemy's choice. It is based on the air's capability for an equally rapid withdrawal. Over-riding both of these the continuing and long used capability, as with sea power, for careful husbanding of air strength as a threat-in-being continues, thus restricting our freedom of movement on every front.

After analyzing the cause and effect of recent Japanese air action from special intelligence, combat reports and in light of the inexorable book-keeping of war, this conclusion emerges as the probable pattern for future command and employment of air power by the enemy.

That such a Japanese air doctrine is in effect becomes clearly apparent by studying the rapidity of reaction and relative power attained by 'T Attack Force' in opposing first our deep carrier strikes against the Rusaai-Formosa areas and next the rapid recovery and quick thrust forward of massed air strength in support of naval forces directed against our Central Philippines invasion. Our fast carrier forces struck Okinawa with tactical surprise 10 October. Some 90 enemy aircraft were destroyed, principally on the ground. Our losses were light. Luzon and Formosa carrier strikes come next. In this one week period of intense carrier action the ledger stood as follows:

Period	Est Jap First-line Combat Strength Philippines-Empire as of 5 October	Enemy aircraft Reported Destroyed	Balance
10-16 Oct	2,675	1,108	1,367

From both special intelligence analysis and combat reports the enemy's subsequent air reaction was prompt. Resisting our first Rusaai strike with air forces in place, each following day found the enemy's Navy-Army scale of air effort increasing rapidly under the centralized control of a single unified command, 'T Attack Force', commanded by the C-in-C, Second Naval Air Fleet. To his flag were flown substantial elements from Japan, Bonin, Zairens, Hainan, China and Luzon within 24-48 hours, to engage our surface forces again and again despite large-scale Jap aircraft destruction. These forces and their movements are graphically shown on Map, Incl. No. 1.

On 20 October, five days after the Rusaai carrier strike, our forces landed at Leyte against negligible air opposition.

Special intelligence warned that our bold advance would be contested from the air. G-2, GFM, Special Intelligence Bulletin 534, detected the enemy's plan for staging aircraft of 'T Attack Force' through Luzon against Leyte starting 23 October. This force was estimated at 800-1000 aircraft with some 200 available

TS-6 - Cont'd

for immediate Leyte attack. Later intelligence (SID 538) confirmed the fact by the indicated presence of the Second Naval Air Fleet commander at Manila with the First Naval Air Fleet commander forward at Cebu during the enemy air operations of 23-25 October in support of his naval forces.

Here was the second example. Unified, mobile and massed enemy air strength again committed to action within a week of the Manila-Formosa-Luzon debacle. Its withdrawal was even more rapid as our fast carrier forces returned and our land-based fighters established on Leyte regained control of the air.

Again the inexorable book-keeping, based on preliminary reports:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Balance of Est First-line Strength Plus Production as of 26 October</u>	<u>Enemy Aircraft Reported Destroyed</u>	<u>Balance</u>
17-28 Oct	2,367	432	1,935

That the risk was calculated carefully against the advantages to be gained is apparent. Our land-based aircraft were as yet unestablished on Leyte. The mass of our fast carrier strength was believed by the enemy to have been impaired seriously and committed beyond effective range to the northeast. The time was fortuitous for wholesale destruction by air and by sea of our shipping confined in the waters of Leyte Gulf, for relatively unopposed heavy air attack of our beachhead supplies and troop concentrations and even for enemy air basing from his Leyte Valley airdromes as yet unoccupied by our troops.

Similar air employment, even without naval support, is probable against further Philippine landings. The scale of enemy effort will be only dependent on the degree of security he is able to provide for his aircraft from surprise massed carrier attack and still defend the Empire.

More important from a strategic viewpoint is that by the threat alone of such coordinated air strikes, the enemy attains an advantage even with deteriorating air strength. This air strength-in-being will force upon us the maximum of air defense measures for each subsequent operation and restrict our capability for complete mobility and freedom of action.

The most effective counter is to neutralize, interdict and destroy this mobile force at its rear bases to prevent commitment until our land-based aircraft have been established firmly over our successive beachheads and newly won airdromes.

1 Incl - Map, "Analysis of Air Battle Lessons 10-28 October 1944".

APPENDIX VII

US PRESS RELEASE: COMMUNIQUE NO. 949 FROM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA, 12 NOVEMBER 1944

Released to the Press at Advance Echelon, G.H.Q. *Fry. L...*

G.H.Q. SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
COMMUNIQUE NO. 949, 12 NOVEMBER 1944

PHILIPPINES:

LEYTE: In the X Corps sector, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division have pushed spearheads into the rugged mountain regions surrounding MT. PIHA and MT. BADIAN. Fighting is in progress near MT. CABUNGAHAN, eight miles southwest of CARIGARA. 24th Division units are maintaining pressure along the ORMOG road south of PINAMPOAN where the enemy is resisting stubbornly. In the XXIV Corps sector, elements of the 96th Division overran a series of strong enemy defensive positions skirting PATOK and are driving enemy remnants into the hills to the northwest. Heavy rains are impeding operations. Another enemy convoy attempted to reach ORMOG this morning with further troop reinforcements. Four large enemy transport vessels escorted by six destroyers approaching under cover of darkness were caught by our aircraft in the morning entering ORMOG BAY. Carrier planes of the Third Fleet, striking in force, destroyed the entire convoy with an estimated 8,000 enemy troops aboard, only remnants reaching shore. Other enemy shipping in the VISAYAN area was also attacked, with full reports not yet at hand. Our Army fighters attacked enemy shore installations in the ORMOG area concurrently with the strikes on hostile shipping, shooting down nineteen enemy aircraft with only minor loss. The new Japanese commander in the PHILIPPINES, General Yamashita, is using every endeavor to build up a prepared line of defense in the ORMOG corridor. It is his evident purpose to assemble sufficient forces to attempt to break out from this YAMASHITA LINE which is now enveloped by our troops on all ground fronts. He has chosen Western LEYTE as a main battleground for his first supreme effort to crush our liberating forces.

MINDANAO: Our heavy units in adverse weather bombed DAVAO airdromes. Air patrols to the north and west sank two small freighters and dropped bombs on PALAWAN and MACTAN ISLANDS.

MOLUCCAS:

HALMAHERA: Fighter bombers swept bivouac areas and airdromes destroying two enemy planes and damaging installations.

TIMOR: Our air patrols bombed enemy defense positions at ATANBOEA and installations near DILLI and in the KAI ISLANDS.

NEW GUINEA: Heavy units and attack planes bombed defense positions and enemy concentrations in the WENAK area. We lost one plane to antiaircraft fire.

ADMIRALTY ISLANDS: Three enemy planes attacked MOMOTE airdrome causing minor damage.

BISMARK-SOLOMONS:

Medium units, dive bombers and fighters dropped 77 tons on supply installations at RABUL and occupied areas on NEW IRELAND and BOUGAINVILLE, destroying numerous buildings and starting fires.

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