



AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL WARFARE ORAL HISTORIES

Interview Number 4. Major Bill Jenkins, MID on Operations PYTHON, CROCODILE, POLITICAIN and SEMUT IV

Commentator: [00:00:00] Bill Jenkins had already served in the Navy and in the 39th Battalion of the CMF¹ when World War II commenced. He was commissioned in 1940 and after posting to Darwin, he embarked for Ambon arriving in December 1941. Six weeks later the Japanese arrived, and Bill's pioneer platoon had the role of making their original camp into a POW compound by adding wire fences.

On March the 17th 1942, Bill and six others escaped and paddled back to Australia in three native canoes arriving early in May. Following an attachment to military operations and plans, where he was involved with the formation of the first stay behind parties, he was invited to join the Inter-Allied Services Department and became chief instructor at Fraser Island.

In 1945, Bill was involved with the PYTHON, CROCODILE, POLITICIAN and SEMUT IV operations. After a period seconded to the British Military Administration where he commanded police forces in North Borneo and Brunei, he returned to Australia and was demobbed in January 1947. Bill is talking with Dave Sheehan.

Dave: Bill, could you start off with a quick resume of your experiences before joining Z Special²?

Bill: Yes. Six years in the CMF, called up on the 2nd of November to move all the POW's who had been incarcerated up to Tatura, Victoria. A couple of months there would change battalion from 39th to the 14th Battalion. [00:02:00] I've found that the CO that I had in the 39th was by that time CO of the 14th Battalion.

Soon as I came out of that exercise, I went into the 14th Battalion militia camp and travelled under the same CO. Out of that camp, I was sent to OCTU³ [00:02:21] and before I left the camp I was promoted to Lieutenant. Coming out of that camp, I was asked to wait for a short term until that CO got an army command, which he knew about.

On the 11th of July 1940 I enlisted in the 2nd 21st Battalion, which was of the 23rd Brigade, 9th Division. We were sent to Darwin and with sister battalions, we were

¹ Citizen Military Forces. Replaced by the Army Reserve in 1980.

² Z Special Unit was the administrative and training unit for members of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (Special Operations Australia) and the operational unit was the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD)

³ Officer Cadet Training Unit





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formed into forces, we were in Gull Force [00:03:01] and we were sent to Ambon. We were sent to Ambon in December, and we were there for three and a half, four weeks, and the Japs arrived. I arrived on the 31st of January, on the 3rd of February, the CO capitulated.

He was not the original CO. He'd been sent back to Australia and a new fellow from DMO&P⁴ had come along to take over a fellow named Scott. He capitulated on the 3rd of February and ordered the battalion to march in. I was then a Prisoner of War from the 3rd of February to the 17th of March. I left the prison camp 13 times, only 12 times did I go back.

I went from Ambon, via the Islands [00:04:00] for about 1,300 miles and arrived back in Darwin on the 5th of May. Hung up there for a few weeks to report to Ned Herring in 6th Division, trying to tell them, "Oh what we didn't knock the Japanese." [laughter]

Then I went down to Victoria as I was instructed by my CO in the prison camp that when I got back to Australia, I had to report directly to the Director of Military Intelligence, which I did. He dealt with me for a while. I then was co-opted on to the Naval Operations because I'd suggested a plan to rescue the POWs. We drew up a plan for the Arunta⁵, the Australian destroyer, and the Netherlands destroyer, The Trump to carry out the raid and to pick up the fellows out of the prison camp, which I was going to go back into to get them out.

The Americans after the Tromp⁶ and the Arunta⁷ were bought in for victualling⁸ [00:05:13] and I selected the team of fellows that I had but the Americans cancelled the operation. I then went back to DMO&P and was told about Inter-Allied Services Department. I expressed some interest to know. I was then introduced to Colonel Mott who had been the Director of the Inter-Allied Services Department, which later on became Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD).

I put a proposition to him that I was prepared to be inserted back into Ambon and try to get back into the prison camp or the radio set and to try and do some good about generating guerrillas and some opposition to the [00:06:00] Japanese. That ran into a slight political problem. The Dutch insisted that they wanted one of their men to go in prior to me going in.

I was sent to ZES in Cairns to do the training A23, which was the project and I turned out that I was A2. It took a long to realize if there was an A1. Finally, I found that there

⁴ Directorate of Military Operations and Plans

⁵ HMAS Arunta

⁶ HNLMS Tromp, a Netherlands Navy destroyer

⁷ HMAS Arunta (I30)

⁸ Resupply of food and beverages etc.



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was a Dutch Naval officer who arrived, quite a suitable fellow dark skin or darkish skinned and he had two natives with him, he turned out to be A1. He was to go in prior to me going in.

He was taken in by submarine⁹ onto the Coast of Seram¹⁰ and failed to give his recognition signals after a landing. Will Later on in the war, after the war, I got in touch with our own POWs. They had some recollection of a man coming through the camp, but they never, ever made contact with him, and he didn't go into the camp in a prison camp of the Japanese, so what happened to him we don't know. Because of that, my operation was cancelled. I had to start all over again.

Up to that time, they turned around and said right out, "You can become Chief Instructor of the Fraser Island school."¹¹ Which that time we were setting up with Jock Campbell¹² [00:07:35]. Jock and I helped to set up the new school. I arranged all the instructors, and I arranged the training syllabus. I arranged the schedule of training, and I arranged all the aids to training much to the chagrin of most of the universities in Queensland, because I deluded them of all the expert equipment. [00:08:00]

Whilst that was all going on, a party called Python 1 under Major Gort Chester [00:08:11] was dispatched to take by submarine to land in the East coast of North Borneo¹³. Prior to him leaving, I'd had discussions with him, and he'd agreed that I would be the party leader of Python II, and I was to follow him in three months or thereabout after he'd established himself. That was coming up to the time around about December in '42-- Sorry, '43, he'd gone into Borneo in September '43.

Coming up to December, I was thinking it was about time I was able to get on training with the fellows that were going to go in with me, five others with myself. Although three of them and I had been training together for quite some time, we hadn't met, we were trained with the signallers. I was not given the opportunity to meet or train the signallers until I arrived in Melbourne on the way of Fremantle to get the sub to go away.

The two signallers that I was given, I understood from Morrie Israel ¹⁴[00:09:40] that they were well trained and efficient operators. I had no knowledge of their other training. It was too late to make any trouble about this, and me wanting to see what

⁹ USS Searaven (SS 196) LCDR H Cassedy, USN landed the party on 29/30 December 1942 on 6th war patrol of submarine.

¹⁰ Seram (formerly spelled Ceram; also, Seran or Serang) is the largest and main island of Maluku province of Indonesia. It is located just north of the smaller Ambon Island.

¹¹ This would have been in the early 1943

¹² Major Jock Campbell, British Army attached to SRD

¹³ USS Kingfish (SS 234) CMDR V.L 'Rebel' Lowrance, USN departed Fremantle on 24 September 1943 and landed the party near Labuan Point British War Borneo on 6 October 1943.

¹⁴ V53815 LT. M. Israel, Director of Sigs. SRD





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sort of experience they had. It was unfortunate that [00:10:00] that didn't happen because we left Fremantle by submarine and landed on the East Coast at the rendezvous point¹⁵, we were met by the party ashore, we made contact, all the contacts and things. Within 12 hours, one of the signallers had gone missing. We never did find him. We spent three days looking for him, arm's length walking every square inch between the river and the beach, and we covered the whole ground.

We thought he'd fallen or broken something, but later I found out when I was working with the Administration, that he'd crossed the river, one of the first things you don't do, he'd crossed the river, walked up a path, found a local native hut, went in there and they gave him some food. The next day they brought the Japs down and they picked him up. He was taken away and put in the Sandakan prison camp. The other signaller that I brought was a different type of fellow. I never got to know Brandis, the only time I knew him was on the submarine and I could get little out of him, but I could not afford to give him any information.

So, he went in without any knowledge of what we're doing. I chose not to tell him till I got to know him and the same with McKenzie. McKenzie turned out a reasonable operator, but after some time, it was necessary to go over to Tawi-Tawi¹⁶ in the Philippines to meet another submarine to pick up some stores. It was necessary by this time to send two of the members of the party home [00:12:00] O'Keefe¹⁷ and Broadhurst¹⁸.

Paddy O'Keefe was from the First World War a fellow from Darwin, quite ill by this time, Broadhurst was next placement, excellent linguist, but he said that he had a contract only to serve a certain time and it was time for him to go home, so Chester agreed. I took them across to Tawi-Tawi in the boat that we had there, and we made a rendezvous with Narwhal¹⁹, one of the large submarines operating for MacArthur on the east coast of an island off Tawi-Tawi, a site selected by the Americans and not by us.

¹⁵ USS TINOSA (SS 283) CMDR D.F. Weiss, USN departed Fremantle on 10 January 1944 further her 5th war patrol in the South China Sea. On 20 January 1944 she landed item 2 and Turtle Beach near Labian Point, British North Borneo.

¹⁶ Tawi-Tawi is an island province in the Philippines located in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). It is the southernmost province of the country, sharing sea borders with the Malaysian state of Sabah and the Indonesian North Kalimantan province, both on the island of Borneo to the west. To the northeast lies the province of Sulu. Tawi-Tawi also covers some islands in the Sulu Sea to the northwest, Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi Island and the Turtle Islands, just 20 kilometres (12 mi) away from Sabah.

¹⁷ WX 36777 and AK X8 Captain Edward O'Keefe

¹⁸ VB 242720 Captain Douglas Broadhurst, British Army

¹⁹ USS Narwhal (SS-167) a large submarine used for resupply by SRD





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When we went and visited the site and saw it, we realized that there was no way that the submarine could come anywhere near the island. It was surrounded by reefs and there was a surf, constantly breaking over the reefs and we wouldn't have been able to get to them. We asked for a change of RV for the location, they wouldn't agree. We put up RV signal. We waited. We waited for seven days, and we found that we were now well past the time²⁰.

We went back in through the guerrilla force in Tawi-Tawi. We were able to contact Australia and ask for another rendezvous. We made the rendezvous on the east coast of Tawi-Tawi. We selected that place, and we gave them notice of it and they said, "Yes, that'll be right, and we'll meet you there on a certain day." We went back and put up the same type of sign. I should tell you that while we had the sign up on the seven days, a team of Moros came past, saw the sign, sent a canoe man in to investigate and find out what it was about. **[00:14:00]**.

Broadhurst who turned to be an excellent rifle shot and from 400 yards, from an elevation of at least 200 feet, shot him in the head. We watched him drop in the water. We pulled the sign down shortly after. The Moros, when he didn't come back, they toured on, this is a Moro war boat of 20 Moro soldiers who were against the guerrillas.

They didn't dare land on Tawi- Tawi, but they were brave enough to come nearby. We then put up our sign at the next place. We got ourselves ready to go. By this time, we had also brought from Borneo a Captain Jordan Hamner of American Army²¹ and a Marine Warrant Officer, Paddy McCain who were operating with Suarez?**[00:15:06]** the OC, and the Sulu guerrilla forces, but for some reason they chose to come over and join us.

They joined us and they were with us for, I think two months and by this time we were pretty sick of having two guests, feeding them, no work, or anything out of them It was agreed that they should return on the Narwhal so, we took them back to Tawi-Tawi. Fortunately, when we were making a second rendezvous, Hamner's signal ability was able to fix up that.

We made the rendezvous, Narwhal surfaced, and we went out to them in our Karakoa²² **[00:15:47]** and by the time we got through the shore to the sub, which was

²⁰ There is no mention of this rendezvous in the war patrol of USS N's narwhal.

²¹ Capt. Jordan Hamner US Army, worked as a guerrilla leader under Col. Wendell Fertig US Army, on Mindanao Island, P.I. He and Capt. Charles M. Smith US Army were sent by Fertig, to Australia by boat, arriving in Nov1942, to pass on reports about his resistance organisation. Hamner later returned, probably by submarine. Source: Willoughby, The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines, 527. See also <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1/ch10.htm>

²² Also known as Caracoas is a locally made Karakoa were large outrigger used by native Filipinos, notably the Kapampangans and the Visayans.





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500 yards in very sheltered water, the whole of the stores they brought up 2,000 pounds of them in boxes and well-packed, were all on the deck of the submarine. It was possible to get I suppose 200 pounds in stores into the inflatable.²³ [unintelligible 00:16:21] to get it ashore.

We put the first lot, 200 to 250 pounds of weight in stores to go ashore²⁴,. They had to paddle and row the Karakoa. We landed on the Narwhal we weren't going to leave it because we were all to go back on it except for one, Valera²⁵ [00:16:42] who was the best man we had in the Philippines, and he stayed on board to see that the [crosstalk] was going.

Then a couple of destroyers came down and interrupted the thing. The Narwhal backed off and went submerged. Destroyers went on their way and all the stores that were on deck were left floating on the lagoon. The skipper of Narwhal wouldn't go back. He wasn't going to see that all the stores got ashore, so he had a lot still downstairs, and he headed back for Darwin.

So, we had a rather unfortunate experience. The reason for that was that the Narwhal had been supplying parties ashore. I suppose she'd carried out well over 20 to 30 missions, just supplying the guerrillas and all she had to do was to surface and she'd be surrounded by guerrilla canoes and boats, they'd just push it over the side, load it in, and they choofed off and the sub would go. No other efforts.

Lieutenant Commander, Chick Parsons of the US Navy was in charge of all these guerrillas and the supplies from MacArthur and he had the command of these two submarines at his beck and call. It's worth reading the Special Missions' Section, the Submarine Operations of World War 2 Report²⁶, it's well worth studying and every party leader should study that, just to see what sort of mission was carried out. You can gather that by the amount of stores they needed and so on.

I got back to Darwin, flew to Melbourne and by the time I got to Melbourne, we discovered that Chester and the remainder of the party were being harassed almost daily by search parties from Japanese launches being sent in to find them. They'd had to dismantle the radio station and go further inland and set it up again to make contact and they weren't able to come back to the coast again.

²³ Most likely a Landing Craft Rubber Large (LCRL, ten man) which had been adopted by the U.S. Navy for submarine use.

²⁴ USS Narwhal war patrol report of the 10th war patrol dates they landed on 5 March 1944 off Bohi Gansa, Tawi-Tawi Island

²⁵ Not listed as an SRD operative but may have been a member of the Philippines Section of SOA.

²⁶ Unable to locate this document.





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This seemed to be a pretty difficult problem and Headquarters in Melbourne had asked the American Navy in Perth, American submarine force in Perth to try to make contact with the party and bring them out. They made three attempts. The USS Guitarro²⁷ came past flashed the light ashore and didn't get any reply and he was on the way down to Fremantle, so he kept going.

The USS Haddo²⁸ under Chester Nimitz Jnr, later knew what to do, he headed up four miles off dead on the place, changed the signals. He kept changing the signals for about an hour and a half, exchanging signals and finally, after two and a half hours Nimitz decided that he'd make contact, but there was no one, they're not coming out, that something's wrong and he decided that he couldn't stay there on the same spot, so he gave it up, went back.

The next effort was being made by the USS Redfin²⁹. The Redfin under command of Cy Austin³⁰ was establishing local contact in what he thought was the position that he was supposed to do it in. It turned out and I'm able to tell you all about this because I had to investigate why the pickups were not a success and report to the Admiral, and he just made contact with somebody who's willing to shine a torch at him.

However, he was game enough. He knew by this time that they didn't have any transport on shore, so he sent a rubber dinghy with one of his junior officers and two other fellows. They paddled in and kept signalling the shore, and getting replies from the shore, and they're right in the middle of **[00:20:59]** Dent Haven Bay near Sandakan, send again they-- and coming near the surf line, and no big shot. [laughter]

Fortunately, they had a decent repeating weapon, and they killed at least six Japs on the shore and caused the Japs to steady up. They were able to backpedal and get out of the surf. In the meantime, they were able to talk by radio back to the skipper. He brought the submarine into Dent Haven Bay. Picked them up, turned the submarine around in very restricted waters and took them out to out the bay again.

That young fellow was awarded the US Navy Cross for what he did. Austin got a little bit of the kick in the backside for bringing a submarine into either very restricted waters and no depth and he got out of it and he was back. **[00:22:00]**

After I'd investigated the reasons that it had happened to what I suggested to the Admiral, that what he needed was somebody that knew the place himself, like me, and that he should let me go back with one that-- one other man and I would pick the party up and bring him out to the submarine, he agreed. He then put me into the rest house

²⁷ USS Guitarro (SS-363)

²⁸ USS Haddo (SS-255)

²⁹ USS Redfin (SS-272)

³⁰ Lt.Cdr. M.H. Austin, USN



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for resting skippers on leave. He said, "Take your pick, see if you can find one that would take you." It didn't take long before a fellow named, Commander Sam Dealey³¹, palled up with me and we became really good friends and he agreed to take me.

The planning for that involved quite a bit of security because I couldn't afford for anybody to get to know about this at all. I asked for a fellow who was serving by that time in New Guinea, he used to be my platoon sergeant, Stan Dodds, he was fighting with the 39th Battalion and directing the Americans in their operations in New Guinea. We flew him out of there and flew him to Perth. I went up to the barracks in Perth. I was given an empty office [chuckles] and sat at the desk, and Dodds was [chuckles] shown in. [chuckles] He nearly fainted.

Dave: [laughs]

Bill: He sat down and I said, " Well I've called you over, I think you have the right fellow for a job, are you prepared to come away with me without any knowledge of what you're going to do?" He said, "Sure, I'll go with you." I took him down and we stuck in down at Northam and sent him over to Garden Island. He learned to paddle a Folboat while I perfected the plan [00:24:00] with Deely. We got our stores across and we got complete operating stores - Limpets and the works, in case we got a target. We had two new Folboats and Dodds and I boarded the harbour and we went away. Halfway up the coast, I had, by this time got an approximate time of arrival, as I'd shown to skipper where the rendezvous point was, and he gave me an approximate date. We picked a date with two days either side of it. I then gave them a map reference for the - where it was, and it was on the north coast of the East Coast of Borneo right in the bottom of a convenient gulf. The party had to trek for 30 miles to get there. They did the trek and they were waiting two days before the rendezvous time. They diced their radios and everything else, they'd put everything on being picked up.

My old mate who originally was my batman, Alec Chew, he had every confidence [coughs] pardon me, he knew who was coming and I'd brought Dodds out of New Guinea, because I knew that when Dodds heard his voice he would either be able to recognize him or deny that he knew who it was. That was the contact security.

When we left Fremantle, we exercised in Exmouth Gulf, we had tremendous cooperation. We developed a triangular umbrella pyramid foil for reflection, which we could raise above the deck of the Folboat and the submarine could pick it up at 5,000

³¹ Samuel David Dealey (September 13, 1906 – August 24, 1944) was the commanding officer of a United States Navy submarine USS Harder (SS-257) killed in action with his crew during World War II. He among the most decorated for valour during war, receiving the Medal of Honour,[1] the Navy Cross (4), the Army Distinguished Service Cross, and the Silver Star for his service on the submarine USS Harder (SS-257). Commander Samuel D. Dealey.jpg





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yards. We had an ATR handset, press and talk which melded perfectly with their radio. I could talk to them, and they could talk to me on the same set, but not only that, they were able to direction find me. So that we exercised at Exmouth by taking the Folboat five miles away, well out of sight of the sub and then we went out of sight of them, and by talking to us on the radio, they could guide us back to the submarine until we saw them. They didn't have to pick us up, we had to find them and that was the purpose of those exercises over a couple of days. They were most valuable.

When we got to the rendezvous point³², we had plenty of assistance to assemble the Folboats, two of them. Dodds and I paddled one, we pulled one behind us and the one that I was in had a quarter horsepower motor. We got to the rendezvous point. They guided us in by radar. We were advised "You're drifting left Bill, come left about two degrees in relationship to your Folboat". [00:28:00] We were then brought right on to the point of pickup, I signalled the recognition signal, which is was to be responded, was a letter of the alphabet, was just to be responded to by the following letter of the alphabet. No response, I flashed the signal 30 degrees right, no response. [laughter] 30 degrees left, no response. I thought, "We've gone a long way from that."

Dave: [laughs]

Bill: I tried on the original point again and back came the signal. Right response and I said bring Alec Chew to the RV point. He said that's me. **Dave:** [laughs]

Bill: I knew it was. I said, "Do you recognize my voice, or you won't understand?" He said, "I've got you." He said, "G'day Alec, you old bastard." **Dave:** [laughs]

Bill: He said, "Dodds, you bloody old bastard." We were right but we were clear. I then asked him to come out. They all had to crawl out because of the mangrove mud and we were only in-- we were almost to ground with our Folboats only in three or four inches of water. We had to back away to be able to get them on. They crawled out and we got into waist-high water. We suggested that they strip off a few of the stinking clothes. [laughter]. We loaded three into my canoe and three into Stan's canoe. Stan's canoe was still tied to mine. I started the motor and we headed on out. Only trouble about then was the sound of the motor which didn't allow us to get very much reception on the radio. We headed off in a reverse compass course got to what I suppose, we came in 4,000 yards. We got to about 1,000 yards when we could see dim things in the distance, so I turned the motor off, contacted the sub, found it was them, found we were on track, started the motor and came back in. They got a marvellous reception. We then stacked away. [clears throat]

³² USS Harder SS 257 CMDR S. Dealy, USN on 8th of June 1944-from war patrol reports





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The submarine was on patrol and there was the Chief Operations Officer of COMSUB Southwest Pacific area, Captain Murray Jones Tichenor³³ was on board this time for submarine patrol. The USS Harder [00:31:05] had a pretty good reputation by this time and he wanted to see what was going on. After we got on, five destroyers-- Later, we got back to our home. [laughter].

Two destroyers of which were up on top of us. It was a successful patrol. We off-loaded at Luggar Maintenance in Darwin. We travelled by air back to Melbourne and USS Harder was down to only two torpedos. She was ordered into Darwin to pick up more two torpedos and that's how we got back to Darwin so quickly. When she loaded, half-loaded torpedos, she was sent out for another four weeks and later came back into Fremantle.

I was privileged to be able to go down and meet her and welcome her. At the same time, I was able to put to Admiral Christie, because at that time that he had two of my fellows on submarines for targets of opportunity and to give you a bit of protection with limpets on shallow targets. He accepted the proposition. I was able to form POLITICIAN - 26 operators. I was able to get Major. Ednie-Brown³⁴ out of Army Intelligence in Western Australia and enlisted him into SRD and he became mostly of our Western base at Northam and Garden Island. He continued to recruit and coordinate the two fellows to go out on submarines as they were selected to go. It was necessary for the leader of the party to be able to get the confidence of the skipper before they'd be accepted. And that took a little bit of doing and they weren't all-- they were pretty choosy, they weren't all just saying, "Oh I'll have a look at this and see what it is." It was pretty carefully done. They were very cagey, but we were successful about it. PYTHON sorry, POLITICIAN made six war patrols. I made three of them and three other peers made three others. I made two trips with USS Redfin for not terribly much advantage and put very close to land targets. [00:34:00] [laughter]

That's not a criticism. It's a method - every man operates his own ship the way he sees best. I then was asked to do a special job with USS REDFIN up in North Borneo to pick up some downed airmen, and to pick up the survivors of an American submarine that had grounded on the very North West tip of Borneo. We went up and off Palawan, we made contact with the guerrillas there and it was like a circus. There were three large local boats, no wind, so no sail. They were trying to row like hell. We looked at them through the periscope and I could see a hell of a lot of danger about this. So, I took off in the Folboat with Stan-- Sorry, no, with Tommy, Tom Barnes. Pardon me

³³ Capt. Murray Jones Tichenor USN, C.O. USS Dolphin (SS-169) May1938 - Jan1941, Operations Officer COMSUB SoWesPac Aug1942 - Apr1945, Temp Duty in USS Harder during her 5th war patrol Jun1944, data from U.S. Congressional Record, Vol 94, Part 2

³⁴ WX29331 and AKV30 Major Ednie- Brown





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and we met them 2,000 yards away from the sub. We called them to halt and they said, "Shut up and who are you?" [00:35:39]

I lifted off and said, "Just do what you're told you fellows. I'm here to see who you are and I'm here to see you don't get too close to the submarine until I give it okay that you can proceed past me." They shut up and they accepted it. We went on board in a local boat, there was no Japs there. I got back in the canoe. We said, "Righto, now you can follow us." They thought they were going to race us; they were paddling like hell. [laughter]

We just quietly paddled back, and we were 400 yards ahead of them, but the time they got back they were well received and the fellows who had pulled them out were well looked after. They were typical of American hospitality in the submarine. We went back to Fremantle I can't remember the next sub off-hand. We moved up to Subic Bay. I went to Subic and it was agreed we should establish a forward base in Subic Bay.

I went up on the submarine to set that up and set it up and we arrange to send stores up to it. They were going to handle it for us so that we wouldn't have a hell of a long way to go, and it suited them because the operations were getting further north. So, we set up our base in Subic and one of my party, Johnny Sachs³⁵ and Cliff Perske³⁶, they were on the USS Bream³⁷. They were in the Java Sea and the Bream had seen a convey of three ships, fairly small, wooden, and fired torpedos at them and they all went under.

They didn't know that on that same day, the same little convoy had been fired on by a British submarine. They were torpedo happy and submarine happy. That night, Johnny said, "Right, this is me, I'll Limpet them and come back and meet you on the other side of the island tomorrow morning." All things arranged, radio communication, voice, identification, certification. They didn't have the ability that I had given me on the Harder, I had to investigate the reason for all this. They drifted 2,000 yards off the target, were last contacted by the sub and the sub lost their contact. The next day, the sub went out to the rendezvous point with the sun behind it facing the island well away, and he was supposed to meet Sachs coming out to meet him towards the sun.

He pottered around for a long time and got worried and thought, gee, they're a long time coming and suddenly he heard what he thought was Sach's voice on the radio. It was Sachs' voice most likely because there was another officer on the sub who also identified Sachs' voice. The only thing that didn't have was an authenticator. Sachs was talking to him knowing that he knew "no authenticator, go home". He knew that.

³⁵ NX 9629 and AK 25 Lieutenant John Sachs, executed as POW in Java on 5 April 1945

³⁶ QX 22425 and AK 62 Lieutenant Cliff Perske executed as POW in Java on 5 April 1945

³⁷ USS Bream (SS-243) 5th war patrol CMDR J.L. McCallum, USN





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Unfortunately, he didn't go home. He'd forgotten all about it and God knows why. He still thought he was going to pick up John, didn't imagine that he was captured and that he was sending the signal from some other place to the submarine.

Two anti-sub specialist vessels came out and worked him over. He was on the bottom for 36 hours. He had a lot of damage, got himself up after 36 hours and limped back to Fremantle. By the time he got there, I was there waiting to talk to him. After we did and I had a go in and found out why, purely because of the lack of authenticator, absolutely unnecessary. I found later on that Johnny Sachs and Cliff Perske were incarcerated in a jail in Batavia and I believe they were later beheaded. We knew they were in the jail; their names were found on the wall of jail. Quite a lot of effort was made to try to find out the history of it, but not enough. We didn't really find out the story, it was not investigated. By the time the war was over our party weren't really interested in finding out where the fellows we'd lost, they were wanting to wrap it all up.

That operation caused Admiral Christie to say, "Well, POLITICIAN, if you want any more operations, you'll submit to me a prepared plan and it'll have to be approved by me before I agree, and you've got any of my submarines."

We agreed with it, but what we were doing was we were blown apart. I took all my POLITICIAN operations, we travelled across Australia by train, flew north via Morotai to Labuan. I was able to use my fellows as SEMUT IV - SEMUT I, II and III were in the field. We needed a party on the west coast down in the Bintulu area to stop the Japanese from reaching the coast.

We put in some work for, it was divided into three parties, there were four parties in SEMUT IV, and they were operating up the Rajang River and had a similar jail Bintulu. That part of the operation was quite successful. Bill Chaffey³⁸, who is an ex New South Wales politician knew a fair bit about administration, and he was in charge of that party, and he did a great deal towards restoring the civil affairs back into that region.

He had a lot of help from Rowan Waddy³⁹, Hughie Ellis⁴⁰ Johnny Walne⁴¹, Johnny Walne was in that. After SEMUT IV or during SEMUT IV, our headquarters said that they wanted to examine and carry out a reconnaissance of Anambas, the Natunas and Terempa area of islands about 120 miles away from Singapore with a view to

³⁸ NX 78912, 2135668 and AK 30 Lieutenant William Chaffey.

³⁹ NX 131582, 256835 and AK 55 Lieutenant Rowan Waddy.

⁴⁰ NX 101411 and AKO 341 Lieutenant Hubert Ellis

⁴¹ VX 114714 and AK 28 Lieutenant John Walne





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setting up midget submarine bases, the one man submarines and the Welman's⁴² and to set up Snake Boat bases from which our snake boats could operate and tow the submarines into target area and bring them back.

This seemed to be a pretty interesting sort of an operation. It was right down my alley. Off I went with six fellows on USS Hawkbill⁴³. We had strict instructions to that reconnaissance was to be made by periscope and the submarine presence was not to be disclosed. The first reconnaissance we were making on the first group of islands, a native with a boat came out and looked at the periscope. [00:44:00] [laughter]

The game will who was up, he told us where the radio station was and the skippers said, "Oh, to hell with this," so he surfaced and blasted the radio station out with the deck gun. We got enough information from the native to tell us that where the Japs were, what they were doing. We then went to the next lot and unfortunately, we decided to make the reconnaissance in a clockwise fashion at the islands.

We were, therefore, always looking into the sun, which meant that the sun was always likely to shine on the glass in the periscope and give us away, and that's how I think the first native saw us. We didn't tick on this until after we'd made the third landing, that don't do reconnaissance by a submarine clockwise, anticlockwise. Doesn't matter what travel, but do it anticlockwise, so that you've got the sun behind you, not in front of you and you've got the sun looking over the shoulder for the target.

We then got to Terempa and we went in fairly close to Terempa, grabbed the fellow in the boat who told us that the 200 Japanese Force that was in there had that morning taken off inland. We later found out that the reason for taking off was the they had received a signal from the first island [laughs] and the second island to say that we were there and they thought we will be the next and they happen to choof off the day that we surfaced nearby.

I went in a Folboat, and the skipper sent a couple of teams in inflatable rafts well-armed. [00:46:00] We got in to find the place was evacuated. We got a lot of Japanese intelligence information, and we found a 300 x 44-gallon airplane fuel dump there. We had a little bit of fun firing at it and setting it alight. We got a Punjabi prisoner of war (Sikh) who said he had been imprisoned. We took him back and we released another prisoner, for goodness knows what, we heard that he's up for murder, but we told him to piss off. [laughter]

⁴² The Welman submarine was a Second World War One-man British midget submarine developed by the Special Operations Executive. It only saw action once and was not particularly successful. 6 were provided to SOA from SOA.

⁴³ and



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We took everything of worth out of the place and we damaged everything. They in fact damaged their own radio before they left. We made sure it was fully damaged and finally we heard the hooter from the bridge of the submarine and the skipper, a marvellous fellow world standard commander⁴⁴, he had a hunch and he reckoned that it was just one of his usual hunches. It was the hair in the back of his neck was starting to bristle, so he called us back.

We went back, we went back pretty quickly, we got on board the sub because we didn't know why he was calling us back. He was calling us back because of the hunch, but we thought, well, there's some problem. We got on board, we brought the canoes and the inflatables aboard, came below and he told me that he just had a hunch, he headed on out.

I'll trip back in a minute to tell you another thing that happened, but headed on out and at decks awash level⁴⁵. We were on the bridge and radar [00:48:00] picked up two float planes some 6,000 or 8,000 but they were feet in the air, but they were well away. We watched them coming up towards us and we kept watching them. We were quite prepared to submerge when we thought they might see us, and they apparently woke up to what the great black column of smoke was coming from [laughs] where they were going.

They turned around and we estimated that they were over halfway. What was to happen, they'd fly there, refuel, had enough to get back, but this time they turned around and we don't think that those two got back, we were never able to check it out. What did happen, when I came back, I pulled up one large native boat and went aboard it and had a look what was going on, asked them a few questions.

I found in the bottom of the boat; they had a whole lot of small turtles. I got two of them and I thought, you'll never believe it, they were Hawkbill turtles, and I presented them to skipper. He took them back and put them in the zoo when he got back to America. That operation was considered quite a success. It was agreed to by Admiral Jim Fife, USN, who had taken over from RADM Christie, and who had come to Labuan to see off the British X Craft, were going to raid Singapore.

They were being towed to Singapore by British submarine, then changed the transit crew to the attack crew. He'd go in and attack, and Singapore using torpedoes and then come back and be picked up by the tiny sub and be brought back⁴⁶. That

⁴⁴ CMDR Scanland

⁴⁵ This is trimming down the submarine until the deck is awash reduces your silhouette and wake making it harder to be spotted especially from aircraft.

⁴⁶ This is incorrect as the craft had no torpedoes, carried live in mines and were also fitted with 2x 2 tons side cargoes which were neutrally buoyant explosive charges with timers attached to the outside





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operation was success. They did get to Singapore. The submarine took them out beyond to another place and didn't bring back to Labuan. Admiral Fife was very pleased about us having met and he agreed to the operation that I put to him about this reconnaissance in the islands. He called in the Hawkbill for that purpose and saw us off on the Hawkbill. We got back on the day that war finished. I was privy and the only other one privy to the two signals received while we were down in the vicinity of the islands, somewhere 150 - 140 miles from Singapore when the first bomb was dropped, we knew all about it and we were told it was being dropped and we were then told it was dropped, and we were told to hold fire and not fire unless fired on.

We pottered around for a couple of days. I think three days. Apparently, the Japanese response wasn't quickly enough and the second one was dropped. The response became fairly quickly. We were ordered back home, and we'd bent on 19 knots because we received an encoded signal to tell us that a Japanese destroyer had left Singapore and was hightailing it after us. That was an intercept signal, so we got the benefit of it. We had a pretty good start. We had 19. He had 27. He had a long time to catch us, and he never got within range until he turned around and went back. It wasn't worth him coming any further.

We got back at five o'clock **[00:52:00]** on the night that war finished. We celebrated that with some selected members of the crew of the sub. We invited some nurses from the local AGH⁴⁷. I had all my gang there. We got all the grog we could get hold of. It was a party. At 11 o'clock, I had promised to get the nurses back, so I provided transport, allowed the officers who were with them to take them back, but the jeeps had to come straight back. We got all the nurses back.

I didn't get all the jeeps back. One was in a ditch on the side of a road next morning. The other was stuck up a coconut tree. I got the drivers back. They managed to get back. At one o'clock in the morning, I made an inspection of the camp and at that time Jumbo Courtney who was CO of the camp, but he was away at Morotai. He was in the festivities over there and missed Labuan festivity and so I was SOP. I inspected the camp and decided it was time for me to go to bed so I went to the edge of the cliff for the last exercise before I went to bed. A stroke of lightning came. Lo and behold, looking down from the cliff was one of our Catalinas. It had got free from its mooring somehow, and it had drifted round and had come in amongst the reef and was sitting between the two outcrops of reef, white cliffs in Labuan. I mustered all the troops in

of the submarine which could be detached and secured under the whole of the target. It was these that were used in Singapore harbour to sink the ships.

⁴⁷ Australian General Hospital





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the camp. Sent them down. We got a rope onto the Cat. We held it off the reef. [00:54:00] We tried to get the skipper of the Cat. He was--

Dave: Under the weather?

Bill: Unavailable and his second in command was no better. We tried to get the fellow with his hand on the work boat for Catalinas in Victoria Harbour, but couldn't get them, so we dug out our own work boat -we got in around and we hooked the Catalina on and towed around the Victoria Harbour and we tied her up to a mooring.

Finally, at half-past 5 in the morning, we went to bed. The next morning, they went down to Victoria Harbour to have a look and the bow of the Catalina was rather low, heavy in the water. She had hit the reef and she'd taken on a fair amount of water in two skins, and we had to beach it before she was able to be repaired, fit to fly back to Darwin. It was one of our own Catalinas. We had three of them operating at that time with RAAF, our own personnel. It was rather an unfortunate part, but we learned a lot of it, and we did salvage the Catalina.

We then transferred our fellows in the field, exchanged them with BBCAU fellows, British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit, Australian-trained, and Australian personnel, and we made proper handovers in all the places we were occupying. As GSO 1 to Jumbo, I also had to do it to all of those other parties that were stationed up in the hinterland and everywhere because we had to hand over to Civil Affairs.

[00:56:00] The next thing was for me to get all of these fellows back home on their priorities, which I managed to do, and managed to get myself transferred to the British Military Administration and I was transferred to the BMA and became a Commandant at the North Borneo Armed Constabulary for quite a period. I joined them in September, and I was CO of the Constabulary, and I rehabilitated the North Borneo Armed Constabulary with the help of Johnnie Walne who was my Adjutant. We recruited new policemen and we included the first Chinese into the North Borneo Armed Constabulary. We recruited all the ex-policemen. I was also Inspector of Prisons. I was able to investigate the death of Rudwick⁴⁸ and Brandis⁴⁹, the two fellows that were captured by the Japs and hung in the Jesselton jail.

I was able to get the War Crimes [00:57:14] fellows to exhume their body and replant them back in the Labuan war cemetery. I left Borneo around about early December

⁴⁸ VX 102007 and AK 14 Lieutenant Alfred Ludwick. Operation-PYTHON executed in Borneo 30/31 December 1944

⁴⁹ WX 16743 and AKS 36 Sergeant William Brandis. Operation-PYTHON executed in Borneo 30/31 December 1944



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1946 to come back to Australia. I took demob on the 11th of January 1947 and jolly glad to get out.

Dave: [laughs] On that note, we have to end now, Bill. Thanks very much. I'm sure that any of the people watching will pick up a great deal of training points from the operations [00:58:00] and all the comments you've mentioned.

Bill: There are some helpful points that could be available, particularly in submarine contact communications, and especially moving from submarine to shore, and from shore to submarine. They are subjects that I think that might well be dealt with at some time. Thank you very much for your interest. [00:58:50]

