

Commando's Mother Is Told Of His Execution

One of the Western Australian commandos executed by a firing squad in Timor was Donald Hylton Airey, son of Mrs. Hilda Airey of Shenton Park. After 4 years of waiting she has now received an official message, "Missing believed prisoner, now deceased." But she has heard the real story from the only survivor of the massacre.

Two groups of commandos were killed by the Japs and there was one survivor from each group. Mrs. Airey's son was in the second party.

"Sixteen Australians were sent into Dilli for stores on Feb. 20, 1942. They heard guns firing and thought the Portuguese had arrived," Mrs. Airey told The Sunday Times.

"A Portuguese native came along the road in his car. He was talking and waving his hands and probably trying to tell the Australians that the Japs had landed.

"Not understanding, the Australians continued forward.

"They ran into 300 Japs.

"To make room for the guards

4 of the 16 were pulled off the j

truck Keith Hayes was one.

"Nothing happened for a while.

Then there was a volley and a l

shot went through the side of '

Hayes" neck. When he came to, he found his 3 mates dead beside him. Despite a bullet and a bayonet wound in the neck, Keith finally reached a native village. A native woman hid him in the long kunai grass, fed him, eventually got him a pony. Keith rode through the Jap lines to safety.

"Now for the second group.

"Twelve Australians on a truck were driven towards Duli, until the truck was fired on. Australians and Japs ran for cover and the party reached Dilli on foot.

"Peter Alexander, being at the end of the line, was grabbed and taken into Jap Hq for questioning. When he came out his 11 mates had vanished. He asked the guard where they were and the guard replied:

" 'They have been taken away and shot. They are buried at the back of the aerodrome..'"

Donald Airey was an amateur champion welterweight boxer before he joined up and was only

22 when executed. His mates all thought highly of him.