

H.W. BERT PRICE O.A.M

Dear Col,

Well Col you said rough notes of any kind would do - you certainly have got them -. It just came on me to write, but after 52+ the memory isn't too good, i.e. I am not sure when Smash Hodson And myself blew the load could have been before he had the incident of capture with the Japs think it was - know for sure when we could write home because I have the actual letter know when we got the surrender leaflets because it was my birthday we set up an ambush about the same time could have been a few days earlier. I am sure about counting 263 the Japs with Mach Conroy and Bill Epps (because I can still see the bastards) and going back to have Don Torton waiting for us - Don should remember also.

When I had my records show Captain Dunkleys
soldier marched in - (I was carried on) look young soldier -

Temp 101 - vomiting blood - bad pains - and he noticed I was
"slightly sunburnt" after nearly years in the tropics I would
be - on our evacuation from Timor records show "embarked
TIMOR DATE UNKNOWN - DISEMBARKED DARWIN 12th
December 1942. Think if I went back to my army records I
could come up with more dates but then I would not have got
this far - so unless you want more - I am not sure how quick you
want to work on your book. So will leave off and get this in the
post, in the meantime my regards to all 2/2 blokes - they were
great soldiers and mates. Keep up the good work Col, and I
wish you every success with your new book and will look
forward to buying a copy.

Sincerely yours

H.W. (Bert) Price O.A.M

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RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMOR CAMPAIGN 1941 - 1943

50 Years On.

Background-

Educated at Hastings State School (TAS) 100 Km South of Hobart.

Left school at 14 and worked in Timber sawmill until 1936 - then as a Cadet/Trainee - Forestry Department had a short time in processing factory while waiting for my 20th birthday so as I could join 2nd A.I.F.

Turned 20 on 17th June 1940 and immediately volunteered and went into Brighton Camp TAS. On 1st July 1940 as TX2781 - PTE H.W. Price, later Corporal 2/12 Batt posted to newly formed 2/40 Batt - B 11 Platoon.

Trained at Brighton TAS then Bonegilla VIC and then went to Katherine NT about March 1941. We immediately went to Darwin and HQ boarded the SS Zealandia and we headed for Timor and landed at Osepa Bazar - Koepang.

I was at Penfoie aerodrome for a while and then attached to A in a defensive position at Osepa Bazar and when Japs started landing, was sent to pick up A personal gear and take to Pjamdalong, to report back. But when paratroops landed was cut off and think I then came under Major Jack Chisholm - orders came to evacuate to Soe and then Atomboa - A Lieut. Atkins travelled with me in the drivers cab.

I am not sure what happened here, we were told to seize up our truck engines and make them U.S. We then went bush quite a large mob - again I am not sure of the orders but Brig. Veal who I never saw gave orders every man for himself and Jack Rice, Peter Cannon, Basil Keefe and myself said we would stick

together - our ages Jack 20, Peter 18, Basil 21 and myself 21 at this time Mick Balcombe (who lived near me at home) was with Trevor Sharmans 2/40 Platoon asked me to go with them but I said there was too many - and I was going with Jack, Peter and Basil - a wise decision as Mick and all Trevors Platoon were taken prisoner of war over the next 2 months.

Jack, Peter, Basil and myself then went to a place on the North coast something like Bataputi could be Atpaupa. We were there for awhile and for reason moved back to Atomboa - and as we were making up our minds what to do Japs started arriving and they gave us a start, a few shots were fired by Japs. Off to East Timor - Portuguese Timor and caught up with some 2/2nd I.C. I think at Tilomar and then went on to Mape or Memo - where we were assessed by 2/2 officers.

This is most important Jack, Peter, Basil and myself still had our rifles and ammo plus two grenades each - although Peter had taken some wood work off his butt still effective as ever. As we

proved later. We were soon sent out to Platoons - think I was awhile at Maliana with Col Doig. But then went to Atsade under Don Turton and sent to a place think Roti between Atsabe and Lete Foho - under Jerry Green - and at one stage was with a small sub section under Alby Martin at a small village with a name that sounded like Nun Berry Nun - we did extensive patrolling from this area and at night one of our Sigs would report to Atsabe from Roti by Adis lamp don't know his name but he was a great bloke and sig - a good signaler. On one patrol myself with Roy Hefferman to Lete Foho we arrived soon after the Hudson Bombers had been over and bombed the town and almost sealed the Chefe De Posto in his air raid shelter, he was amazed that the bombers were after him - we were always on the go. Don Turton was not one to sit idle - he wanted action. One vivid memory is being able to write home on 12th June to my parents and small notes to my mates who were prisoners of war to their parents - these notes are still in existence and one was recently printed in our local paper - then

on my 22nd birthday 17th June 1942, Japs dropped leaflets asking us to surrender.

Soon after this we did a patrol and ended up in a coffee plantation which the Japs had never touched and we slept in beds - here we went steps to a most beautiful church - I don't know the name, but it is the most beautiful I have ever seen - We did patrols and ambushes around villa Maria and Ermera and here I am lost a little but was about this time that Marr Conroy and I were sent to look out O.P Liquissa and see what Jap planes were coming and going and a Timorese runner came through and said get back to our Platoon - as Japs were coming from Dutch Timor it took us awhile to get safely through and caught up with our Platoon I think at Hatubuilco or Maubisse - it was this time Smash Hodson was caught by Japs and escaped.

And I remembering him coming into us and his first words were to Jack Rice Smash wanted some trousers - Jack.

Smash and I blew a road one night think this was near Three Spurs - we did a good job took the Japs awhile to fix it - I read somewhere it was Smash with his section - but it was only Smash and myself plus Timorese who helped carry the explosives but left soon as we arrived - Smash was great to be with full of confidence and thought for his mates - we had a good talk that night have a feed at about 3 a.m. Whenever I saw Smash after he always said we did a good job, on blowing the road.

"Old Pop Brown" - said he was in first world war - some of us thought he could have been in the Boer war too - he was old but he was tough.

At one time I got pleurisy bad - really bad and think it was R.A.P Mal Sparkman sent me by carriers to Captain Dunkley Alby Martin went with me as he was also ill - but by the time we reached the M.O we were on the improve - Captain Dunkley

painted my back and side with iodine and gave me a few A.P.C and with rest was soon on the mend - on the way back to my platoon we got a lot of pineapples and also made a search of where H.Q had been - (think they had to move out in a hurry) and found a large tin of marmite - both were very welcome to the boys.

One episode I won't forget as when we had a Timorese carry notes to the Japs we were questioning Harry and he all of a sudden took off - as a Bren Gunner I had a revolver and chased him with six shots, think all missed, but he was caught and dealt with as Jerry Green said in proper manner.

Jerry Green, we set up and ambush and Jerry said let the Japs and anti Aussie Timorese get real close I'll give the word to fire they got close alright think Mark Conroy had one almost behind him, so Mark opened up with Tommy Gun - we got good results in another ambush I had opened up the gas ports on my Bren and really got the rounds out - kept pushing me back and I

ended up with a sore shoulder and eyes we also got good results here.

On another occasion the Japs had been on to us and Don Turton sent Bill Epps, Mark Conroy and myself on a patrol think this may have been from Maubesse, and we went into a village and asked about Japs - Timorese were quiet and then aroused and next think started yelling Nippon Mi Nippon Mi and we looked where they were pointing and could see plenty of Japs and we took off up a small knoll over looking the village - Mark had his Tommy Gun - Bill Epps his rifle and I had my trusty Bren, we decided if Timorese gave our position we would open up and take our chances - the Japs passed through the village and then stopped a short distance away and we counted 263 of them and several large dogs - I can still see the Japs some were big soldiers - when they moved on we made our way back to our platoon position - and only found Don Turton waiting for us, so we gave him our report and the Hudsons came over next day and bombed the village the Japs were with good results

think they caught the Japs at breakfast I have often wondered how Bill, Mark and myself would have fared if the Timorese had given the Japs our position and we had opened up. Think we would have got away. From here on I am pretty hazy, but I know Col Doig took over our platoon and we kept our patrols up.

The night we getting ready to go to the beach to be picked up for home we had (think this was at same) a sought of rear guard in two four hour shifts - I was with 3 others from midnight on and we came in at day break, but the Japs must have followed us in and opened up, Les Moles was killed, and we retreated down a road - Babe Teague and I set our Bren Guns up and was firing when Babe's magazine flew into pieces - Babe was picking up the rounds and trying to fix it - and I told him put another magazine on - Babe always laughed about this and even remembered it when we both did a Civil Defense School at Mr Mecedon Vic. In 1971.

As we got down towards the beach we had to cross a river (maybe the Qualan) and I was half way across with my Bren and ammo and was completely bugged and a big 2/4 chap saw me and said do you want a hand mate - yes - and he towed me across like a boat - never knew his name, but have never forgot him - wish I could find out his name.

That night I was on a rear guard again old Pop Brown was with us and some Portuguese came down the track and we wanted the password - the Portuguese said we know, and old Pop Brown said you better give I've got the safety catch off and finger on the trigger lucky Portuguese gave it - old Pop would have acted. That night we were told we would be leaving about 0130 hours but 00200 hours came and then 00215 - 00230 and we thought next trip for us when a runner came up and said down to the beach - we all jumped the closet boat and would have sunk under our weight and the Dutch said plenty of boats and there was another six or more.

Out to the Tejerk Hedes and up the scrambling net and someone grabbed my trust Bren and threw it aside and down below to bread, butter and jam and cigs - I was feeling done with some others and the Dutch took us up on deck and I slept in a coil of rope 37 knots different to the SS Zealandia going to Timor.

On getting to Darwin we disembarked and transported to Winneleai Camp and a soldier looked into the back of our truck and said bloody Australians where from - I can still hear those words - then to Laramah (Birdam) where some of us became ill and hospitalized with mostly dysentery and isolated or guaranteed for a month.

Then home - I had not seen my parents - brother and sister for almost 2 1/2 years.

Back after leave to Cununcra and some of us decided to go to another Tasmanian unit the 2/12 - 50% Queensland, 50% Tassies.

I think it is most important that some note be made of those that served with the 2/210 in Timor and went on to the 2/12th - seven of us went through the New Guinea campaign in Rhow Valley - Finstere Ranges, Shacoy Ridge and then Morotia and Balikpapan Borneo, and were here when Japs surrendered. All except two were made N.C.O and we really stick together although there is only Syd Swampy Marsh and myself left down South Tassie.

The Timorese - what can we say about these wonderful loyal friends - from the day we crossed from Dutch Timor to Portuguese Timor they were our friends - certainly there were a few who went over to the Japs - but that is always the case - in any walks of life, or in our own country who are anti.

I can say from my heart they were true friends and without their help and assistance doubt if we would have survived - I had my trustworthy creado "Joey" think Calemono was his real name he came from a village near Roti LeteFoho and stuck with me at all times - and the hardest thing I ever done was say goodbye to "Joey" on the night we left Timor I think from time to time - did he get back to his village or did the Japs or pro Jap Timorese get him - It is my ardent prayer he did get back to his village.

More.

The time Mark Conroy shot the pig and we enjoyed a meat meal only to learn Mark had shot the village sanitary pig.

Another time I shot the pig with the Bren the 303 went from end to end.

Jack Rice the time he shot up a truck coming out of Dilli - Put a Bren gun to his shoulder and used it as a rifle the only man I

knew who could do this. Also when Japs were on us coming to Atomboa we had packs with a bit of gear on a Timor pony who wouldn't go fast enough - Jack took the packs - His own, Peters, Basil and mine and took off we couldn't keep up with him big strong

Basil Keefe big strong man great soldier - some Timorese got stuck into him with stones and he was sent out before us.

Peter Cannon - only 18 perhaps young wiry tough think he went to Rose Platoon.

Health and Hygiene

We as soldiers had been trained to look after ourselves - most of us had Malaria from time to time (except Jack Rice he never had any bouts) my worst time was pleurisy - injured my back at one stage which still troubles me - also tropical Dermatitis - think I was reasonable lucky as I came out pretty good - 11 stone 8 before we left Darwin 9 stone 6 out - (and went on to

serve to end of war) tropical ulcers a worry - until a Dutch put Peroxide on food rations.

Pretty tough at times - but other times pretty good - can recall Jack, Peter, Basil and myself had been on our own for sometime and we came into a village and got some fowls, built a fire, put them on feathers and all, tasted pretty good when hungry. Timorese helped us a lot - Mark Conroy was a good cook when we got something to cook. Maize or corn had too much on Timor still makes me sick to look at - never grew it in my garden no bread, butter and jam for months.

Clothing sleeping gear.

Slept boots and all for months - shirts and shorts were pretty bad at time boots - mine wore out and a Timorese put soles on of green buffalo hide - when it got dry it shrunk and often gave me blisters but when wet OK. Boots were dropped about June and I got a new pair - plus others as we went along sleeping gear was almost non existent - think I had one army blanket, but

others had none but it was always the need to sleep in full marching kit.

Ammo and weapons.

As stated before Jack, Peter, Basil and myself carried our 303 rifles and ammo and 2 grenades each, later on I had a sniper rifle for a short time until Bren guns arrived and must have carried this for about 8 months and nearly always slept with it tied to me was greatest weapon I had in my 5 1/2 years in the army - should have brought it home. The 2/2 IC had made ammo hides prior to Jap landing which was our mainstay for a long time - then when contact was made with Australia ammo and some weapons came in.

“Winnie the War Winner” what a great job it done for us - a friend Barry Riseley has made a replica - he worked with Max Loveless after the war - we hope to have the replica for display 1 - 7 August at our Australia Remembers display in Huonville TAS.

Moral.

This is a most important aspect of the Timor campaign and should be highlighted in any writing.

From the time Jack Rice, Peter Cannon and myself stated out on our own our moral never wavered - we would talk of when we got back home - then when we met up with the 2/2 IC and started with Col Doig Platoon we were more sure than ever we would get back home - Col leadership and the way the 2/2 accepted us was great - and later when Jack, Basil and myself, together with Mark Conroy - Dern Anning - Arch Webster and Perhaps 2/40th i.e Roy Hefferman. We settled in well we knew what Don Turton expected of us and with the leadership of Gerry Green, Slim James, Bill Epps, Smash Hodson we at all times gave of our best - we were highly trained infantry men and with the expertise of the 2/2nd who had trained in other spheres, we felt we were a great contribution to the campaign we experienced very little if any differences when it could be

expected under the tough predicament and conditions that some petty squabbles could occur - to me there none and today we can still look back with pride and satisfaction on our service with the 2/2nd - Moral nothing less than 8 out of 10 for the whole campaign.