

Bio on John Patrick (Paddy) Kenneally

John Patrick (Paddy) Kenneally was born in Youghal County Cork Ireland on 7 February 1916. On St Patrick's Day 1927 John, his mother Mary and his three siblings arrived in Australia and finally reunited with their father Michael, who had left Ireland many years earlier due to the civil war and in search of permanent work to support his family.

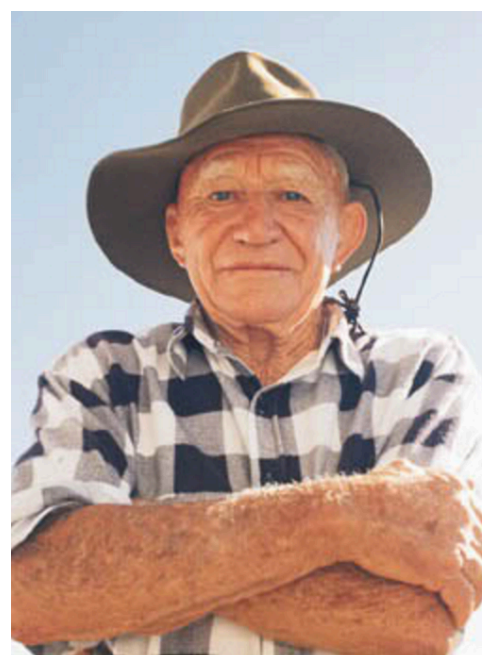
The sectarian violence and British occupation of Ireland had a lasting impact on Paddy. He did not sign up for active service with the Australian Army to support England when it declared war on Germany in 1939. However, with the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, he immediately and illegally left his job on the Sydney wharves *"to fight for Australia not the King."*

Less than a month later he was on his way to Dili to join a newly formed guerrilla unit named the 2/2nd Commandos – whose sole purpose was to protect Australian Borders from the Japanese. From the moment the Japanese invaded Dili in February 1942 the 2/2nd Commandos waged an effective and disruptive guerrilla campaign, and apart from an initial skirmish, suffered very few injuries or deaths, including amongst reinforcements from the 2/4th battalion who joined them in September 1942.

There was never any doubt in Paddy's mind that he and his fellow commandos owed their lives to the Timorese who sheltered, fed and cared for them and risked their own lives providing detailed information about Japanese troop positions. However, even with this outstanding assistance it was clear that a small group of Australian Soldiers would never succeed against the 20,000 Japanese soldiers who had landed in Timor.

The Australian's were evacuated under the cover of darkness on 19 April 1943 – sadly the Timorese criados who self-assigned to each soldier were not allowed to come. Even sadder was the knowledge that between 40,000 and 60,000 Timorese lost their lives protecting the Australian Soldiers. The Timorese believed the Australian Government when the RAAF dropped leaflets saying *"Your friends will not forget you."*

While the Australian Government may have forgotten the people of Timor, the men of the 2/2nd would never forget the bravery and friendship of the Timorese. They raised money to construct a memorial in the form of a wading pool and resting place in the lee side of the mountain overlooking Dili. This was a significant site in many ways – it provided a resting place for people bringing food to and from the markets in Dili but it was also from this site that the 2/2^{nds} watched the Japanese invasion.



Following the 1975 Portuguese Carnation Revolution, East Timor declared their independence on 28 November 1975, only to be invaded by the Indonesians nine days later on 7 December 1975. The impact of these events, including the massacre of 5 Australian newsmen at Balibo was devastating to Paddy - while clearly he had strong values about the debt of honour to the people of Timor, the ghosts and violence of occupation of Ireland also brought back dreadful memories.

For the next 23 years Paddy devoted every waking moment doing anything he could to support independence for the people of Timor. He spoke at rallies and conferences, attended meetings, contributed to books and films, supported church and community groups, wrote to newspapers, badgered politicians by word and by pen – he lost friends and made friends.

In 1990 at the age of 76, and on an Irish Passport, he illegally entered East Timor, headed to the hills and hid information from the resistance movement in the soles of his boots to bring back to Australia. He travelled to Portugal and spoke ahead of the tripartite agreement between Portugal, Indonesia and the UN on a plebiscite for independence or remaining as Indonesia's 27 Province.

The post-independence violence brought him to tears and deep disillusionment with the slowness of the Australian Government response to secure the safety of the people of East Timor and to enforce integrity of the plebiscite. The fact that tens of thousands of people fled to the safety of Dare of course was not lost on him.

Paddy of course had an opinion about everything including the effectiveness of the post-independence peace keeping processes. For those who knew him he took no prisoners. His final call to arms was the Timor Sea Oil negotiations where again he entered the public and political space to insist Australia was fair dinkum in its negotiations regarding maritime boundaries – He appeared in a 2005 Anzac Day Eve advertisement to tell Prime Minister Howard, *"I'd rather that you did not come to my Anzac Day parade."*

Paddy made his final journey back to Timor in April 2008 accompanied by his sons Sean, Gerald and grandson Daniel. He revisited Dare and its wading pool and reflected on what might have been if the Japanese invasion, Indonesian occupation, the 1999 plebiscite and the Timor Oil negotiations had been managed differently. He died less than 12 months later with unfinished business regarding the debt of honour but his legacy lives on in his children and grandchildren who use their own particular skills to work and fight for justice for the people of Timor.