

DIARY from the War

Written from memory in the observers seat of
A19-166 on 17-4-44
by Leslie Searle MONLEY



We took off by Douglas Airliner from Garbett Aerodrome and after circling the drome, made out to sea. The weather was rather thick and the trip a little rough. The coastline was visible through a break in the cloud banks as we cruised along and far below the Barrier Reef was ever changing, as what appeared to be large pools of deeper green, where visible, faded out into the ocean. The rain continued, and as we came into Cooktown strip, the weather broke up and we began to get a slight indication of tropical heat and vegetation. The kites were refuelled and after stretching our legs we loaded in again and circled the bay and the small town situated right on the bay. Out to sea again but this time not so far and the heart land of Australia and the Gulf country slowly slid away beneath us, and in the true sense of the word we were headed for the unknown. What each one in that plane was thinking, as we saw Australia fade away, would be very well worth recording, but then, they were headed for various units and will never be all together again. My own thoughts were as more as to when I would see it again, and just what adventure, hardship and peril the next year could hold for me. Onward over the China(?) Straight dotted here

and there with islands that appear from aloft like small green mats of irregular shapes. Many of these are considered too small to even charter and whether they are inhabited or not, I am unable to say. Through the murk ahead a range of mountains looms up, and we head into a valley, and fly along, with at times, the tops of the range high above us. The view beneath is like a carpet. The trees being so thickly matted, as to appear as a solid mass. Here and there was a small plantation, and in the middle, or on the edge, the only sign of the hand of civilisation, was to be seen a tin roof as it stood out boldly against the green of the surrounding coconut palms, and the adjacent jungle which spread for miles. Mountain streams brushed down the mountains and were lost as we sped onward. Here and there a cluster of “boong” huts would be seen on the bank of a river, or in the midst of what seemed a solid mass of jungle. The next thing was miles and miles of coconut palms. We were to learn that this was the largest coconut plantation in the world was owned by Lever Brothers, and was the main source of their supplies for the manufacture of their soaps. In the midst of this was the strip where we were to finish the first stage of our journey. This was Milne Bay. And as we have since found out, the weather that met us there, was that to which we have learned to accustom ourselves, but not to like. It was raining like blazes and as hot and steamy as hell. We all tumbled out and made for shelter. We have also found out that you don’t worry about the shelter, you just get wet, and dry out, and get wet again. But as we were all new to the tropics we did not know. We do now though. Accommodation was rather limited at the time and we were bundled into the church, made as most other things are in these parts by the natives, from the plaited leaves of the palm trees. Things were a bit primitive to what we had been used to on the southern stations, but in true Aussie style we settled in as best we could. Was only to be a temporary stay, as we all knew our destinations were to cover the whole of the South- West Pacific from there. We spent two days at the bay, most of the time at the strip awaiting transport to our various units. The strip was inland some little way from the bay itself and was wire meshed so as to make it usable in the continuous rains. Was here that we got our first sight of the “fuzzy-wuzzy”, but as our time was short we did not learn very much of their ways and habits, and their strange customs and mode of living before war brought so many strangers to their shores. On the second morning after arrival we took the air again, and headed out over the bay, which was dotted with many ships riding at anchor. They were all sizes and there were many of them, proving that at least Milne Bay had seen harder days. This was demonstrated by an odd one here and there either on its side or on its back or just the nose visible above the water. We made a circuit of the bay and the drome to gain height, and up over the mountains this time and the scenic grandeur was as it had been on our coming in a couple of days previous. More or less frightening in its greatness and the density of its jungle. High above many small islands and coral reefs, and the waters where many Jap Rugger(lugger) dropped anchor in search of pearl shell in peace time, and then down again to the island of Goodenough. Saw very little of this island as we were only there about twenty minutes and we were on the last hop of our trip to Kiriwina or the Trobriand as it is known. All semblance of mountain had gone once we left Goodenough, and Kiriwina was as flat as a board. From aloft this isle appears as a huge question mark the tail of it being all marshy country. The arrival here was the worst of them all as you couldn’t cut the rain with a knife. Off the plane and our journey was over. To our squadron the famous 30 Beaufighter boys, who had made such a name for themselves in the Battle of the

Bismarck Sea. The main squadron had not yet arrived from Goodenough and we had joined the advance party. There was plenty to do, as the new camp was arriving next day by boat. A couple of my mates and myself were put to unloading and was on the second night that we were to get our fist “red” and to learn what our legs were for. The boat was discharging her cargo and about eleven o’clock at night we were on the wharf, when the alarm went. Also pulled in was a large barge load of marines did that barge unload in record time trenches were just not to be found and as the boat was well laden with ammunition we wasted little time ourselves in beating it. We went about a quarter of a mile down the beach and found an old gun pit where we laid down to await further developments. I won’t say I wasn’t scared, it wasn’t so much fright as not knowing what was going to happen. It didn’t that night but that is not to say that I didn’t get a hell of a fright. We had been working from eleven in the morning and it was eleven at night when the red came on and we were very tired. The gun pit into which we had found our way was covered with sand on the bottom and we all went to sleep. Up behind us unbeknown was an anti aircraft battery, a ninety mill, which fired one shot as an all clear. We all woke as one man, and subconsciously crawled closer to the banks. All this was in the space of half a second. And that was my first alert. On leaving the wharf a yank boong had been sitting in a tractor, and he wasted no time either, he left the tractor running and it was still ticking over an hour and a half later when we came back to resume the work that “nip” had so rudely interrupted. We duly settled in our new camp and much trench digging was the order of the day. This was not without its funny side in many ways. The coral was anything but soft, and many a time we cursed “nip” for making trenches necessary We had ours down about two foot six inches when a couple of boongs wanted to dig it for ten bob. They set to work and when they had taken out about three inches they had had plenty and demanded ten bob each. Those boongs left and what they said in their own lingo, if they can swear in it, well then, I reckon they used every word of which they had knowledge. But they only got their original ten bob. We had a few more alerts and one morning I was awakened about three o’clock by a kite. I was lying there thinking well this is a funny time for a kite to be up. When all of a sudden I heard the swish of bombs. At the same moment the hooter went, and I hit the trench very smartly. The nip had followed the Beauforts back after they had been to New Britain and had dropped two eggs her and hot tailed it for home before any body knew he was around. No damage was done and we soon went back to bed. All was quiet for a while until the morning of the twentieth of December when I really found out what a raid was really like. The hooter went about four o’clock in the morning and some tumbled out, others didn’t. I did. Many had got tired of getting out only to get back in again with nothing happening. We were standing about awaiting further developments when we heard the distant drone of many motors. We knew by their sound they were not ours and it was time we went to ground. Over he came about thirty bombers and hell broke loose on the little island of Kiriwina. He made three runs that morning and dropped between fifty and sixty bombs. I watched the ack-ack follow him across the sky until the explosions were overhead and then I kept the old skull well down. A tin hat seems very small in these circumstances. One of the boys in the tent decided after “nip” made his first run to go back to bed, he left again very soon as the kites came back. He put his boots on the wrong feet as he came out. However nothing daunted when Tojo had passed over in he scrambled again. This indiscretion cost him the seat of a pair of pyjamas as he left bed in a hell of a hurry. That morning “nip” stayed until just on

dawn and away he went. He could have saved himself the trouble of coming because his only result was a native kid about two years old. I heard and felt the concussion from his bomb but the closest to us was about half a mile at the "huba-huba" theatre. I saw where one bomb had dropped in the centre of a "boong" garden and it cleared a nice little patch out for him. So up till now that is the only raid I have had the experience of being in and it appears as though he has had it in New Britain and that Kiriwina is once more free.

1--5-44

TENT C 14

26 OB LINES

Had one other experience with the alert, which had its funny side. Was having a shower one afternoon just on five when the hooter went and even though waited long enough to remove the soap I didn't wait to dry myself. This was done by the current of wind as I sped on my way to the regions much more handy to a trench, but I need not have hurried, as it was only an alarm: mistaken identity. Laughs are frequent amongst our little gang. One night a wind storm and torrential downpour hit us about one a.m. Most everybody was out, as rain seemed to find every little hole. Amidst much swearing, laughing and chiaking one another, the soft notes of a tin whistle were heard to the refrain of "Home Sweet Home" at least we found we still had a sense of humour and the point was appreciated. Early in my stay I was a little inclined to lean on the natives but I found that like "Shylock" they wanted their pound of flesh. They were always "you give me", "me your number one friend", "I give you banana, I give you pawpaw". But when the fruit did if ever arrive it was two shillings. Their carvings etc were all the same, one pound; two pound was apparently the only prices they knew. But they found that when the "aussies" came it was very different to the "yanks" and towards the end of our job on Kiriwina was rarely that we saw a native selling or trying to sell his goods. I have visited many although not nearly all of their villages, there being over one hundred and thirty on the island and while interesting for the newcomer one cannot get away from the smell of them. Their huts are built of palm leaves woven and laid on the wooden framework and their storehouses are built in the centre of their ring of huts. Whether the idea being that this way their foods are protected from perhaps in the past enemy tribes I do not know. Pigs, fowls, and flea ridden dogs are prevalent in great numbers. Their customs are strange, but some of them very binding and containing a great deal of common sense. We have though in reality learned little of their customs, as most of them are taboo while we are in residence here. We can distinguish a married woman from a single one in so far as the single woman is the only one allowed to wear any colour in her "dorba"(grass skirt). Free love, or trail marriage is practised freely, and also birth control, but you would not imagine from your own observation that the latter was very extensive. Should in marriage children fail to appear, the relatives of the parties are called in, and the one or other proven to be at fault is allowed to terminate the marriage. When a native dies the next of kin goes into deep mourning. This is done by blackening the body, which is allowed to remain on until the weather eventually cleans the body. They do not wash during this period, which may last up to twelve months. Their "wee-weelas" (women) during pregnancy live entirely on a fish diet, but do not appear to cease work during any period. The women do all the carrying of

wood, water, etc, and the loads they carry on their heads are alarming. Their dances are all symbolic of something in their lives that plays a major part: the moon, stars, hunting, fishing, are all embraced, and their actions even though you cannot understand their words, are sufficient indication of their meaning.

3-5-44

UNDER A19-166

Naturally there was little to do in these parts after ones work was completed, but from time to time we had a little entertainment out of the ordinary for this part of the world. Shortly after our arrival we saw Gary Cooper, Una Markel and Phyllis Brooks, at the "Coconut Grove" and had the pleasure of meeting them personally while working on the east wharf. Cooper was himself, entirely as he appears on the screen. The other two if being a true indication of Hollywood standard then their standard could be improved. later saw a picture featuring Phyllis Brooks and was amazed to compare the likeness and was fully appreciative of what make-up men in the film colony could do. I t was during their stay here that Phyllis Brooks lost her gold watch, supposedly in an air raid trench, during a raid, as to who found it, well, we have never heard. Another Hollywood identity we saw was John Wayne, and he was as Cooper, his natural self. We, or rather the island, also had a visit from some of the ????? Ballet ?????, but I am much afraid that many moons have passed since the days when they were front liners in the ballet. But I guess the idea was alright of entertaining the troops in the North. There were always up till just before we left plenty of picture shows on the island, but as units moved out the pictures became more prevalent. There was plenty swimming on the island and we spent a fair amount of time in the water. Spent several days from time to time in walkabout around the island and the most interesting thing I discovered was a cave containing many skulls and skeletons on the east side of the island.

8 JULY 1944

AITAPE PLANTATION

NEW GUINEA

Some time has passed since I last wrote and besides time many hundreds of miles have sped by under the grey wings of A19-166. As I indicated by the margin we are far from Kiriwina. The trip as all my other movements in these parts has been by air, and this time has proven more than interesting in so far as we flew over country of which we had heard and read so much of not only during my term in the tropics but prior to my coming. We took off from Sia strip, and headed north-west, but about half an hour out we had to change course because of bad weather, we had set course direct from Kiriwina to Lae, but due to deviations we had to strike the coast of New Guinea far below Salamaua, and the scenery on the coast to Lae was beautiful, mountains rising as if out of the sea, and islands of emerald green set in the blue waters of the pacific. Coming into and over Lae we could see Finschhafen in the distance. From Lae we really saw some country rich and well watered from Lae you enter the famous Markham Valley, and unless you have seen it you cannot explain it, and when you have seen it you still find it difficult to put into words. Try to imagine a fly in the bottom of a bathtub and you can get an idea of the vastness of this terrain, and

imagine that same tub being shattered on the bottom with many cracks and one big one running irregularly all over it. That is how this valley appears from the air, towering mountains and hills on either side, and green fertile flats stretching for miles down below with the mighty Markham River stretching away onwards from these hills to the sea. The smaller cracks representing the hundreds of little creeks and waterways that feed this great stream. This valley was followed up until Nadzab was reached where we had lunch dusty dirty black sandy place, with nothing to recommend it, and as you can imagine hot as hell itself being so far from the sea and in the bottom of a valley. After leaving Nadzab we flew for about an hour through the valley and it is something that will ever remain in my memory. Here and there is a strip set in the floor which is used by kites going and coming from the northern battlefields whence we were headed and here and there other valleys would open out on either side of us, and towering peaks would rear their lofty tops above us as we flew onwards. We were over an hour in this valley from Lae until we turned out of it on a line running north and south-east of Wewak. That time we were cruising at 210 miles an hour and had just entered the Ramu Valley where it joins the Markham when we again took to the malted jungle on the hilltops beneath. We headed to sea just east of Wewak and as it was in enemy hands we were quite content to view it from out at sea, as we were not seeking trouble at this particular moment. And so having side tracked Wewak we flew over many islands that showed mute testimony of the allied advance up the north coast of New Guinea and at last we sighted our destination, Ladji drome and Aitape Plantation. The drome was wicked, that was the old fighter strip but we are now operating from the new bomber strip which has been put down since we came here. The camp is situated right on the water's edge and in the centre of the Aitape plantation, but other than that there are thousands of coconut trees little can be said for the place as it is a dusty dirty place. The nip is well handy being some 10 miles to our east, 5 miles west and four miles south, so needless to relate we don't see overmuch of this part of New Guinea. Our job has been the hammering of Tojo's Merry Men from here to Wewak and we have done a good job. I don't say we have got away Scot free we have had practically every kite in the squadron holed by gunfire, and we lost one over the target area. We have worked hard here and particularly long hours, we did 147 sorties in eight days, and that is not standing still. There is only one third of our squadron here, the remainder are on the high seas on their way to Noemfoor where we are headed next, as to how long we will be here we don't know, but nowhere near the time we spent at Kiriwina. This resume was started in A19-166; she met with a "slight" accident during our stay here, having been used as a bulldozer down around Wewak. She is now being patched up and will be "repatriated" to Moresby for repairs

18-7-44

Time has passed, all days being much the same since last I wrote. But one day recently was the worst we have had since I joined 30. We lost three kites over enemy territory this day will remain in the history of the squadron as "Black Thursday" the thirteenth of July. But the war must go on, and we must continue to do our job despite setbacks.

NOEMFOOR

6-8-44

Time has moved forward and once again we are about to move and having spent two months at this place I don't think there is one of us who will not be pleased to say goodbye to Lodji. While we had have had no trouble from the air we have had our real experience with Tojo. He has been close, too close in fact, one of our chaps was shot one night while on guard on the strip, and then the game was on as far as we were concerned. Guard with a capital G was the order of the day. Two hours on and two off sitting behind a machine gun in a foxhole was anything but child's play. The first half hour you were alright, the second things began to move, and you talked to the jungle, the third the jungle talked to you and the fourth you answered it back. Was common for the Japs to break through and to hear machine gun and rifle fire day and night, and when that was not going the artillery was having their say. If these two were silent the Navy and P.T. boats were doing their best to annoy Tojo. Our kites were shot at as they circled the strip, and we could hear and see bombs as they left the kites to land in enemy territory. The fight still goes on there but we have played our part there and here we are in fields anew. We came as has been the case in all the travel by Beaufighter, and the scenery over the six hundred miles was much as has been described in previous trips, being tropical splendour and coral isles set in the blue waters of the pacific. There is nothing to be gained by my dwelling on the trip sufficient is to say that we passed over Hollandia, Wadke, and Biak all places mentioned in the news as the allied armies moved forward in their march to here. This being one of the more recently acquired places, in fact the fighting still goes on in the middle of the island, and as it is only 10 X 12 miles, they once again are handy. The place though is anything but impressive; the strip is good as can be well understood being a coral island. The place is torn to pieces and Jap kites are everywhere, smashed and twisted and blown to pieces. Trucks are the same way. This is the closest we have been on the heels of an invasion. We were six weeks behind at Aitape, and a month behind here; maybe we will be closer still next time. Our camp site is on the top of a small hill, and red mud inches deep is the order of the day. Had not long to wait to hear from Tojo, the first night we had three alerts and one raid in which a few eggs were dropped. He got a couple of trucks. Last night there were two alerts, but no raids. What tonight has in store we don't know. We understand that "Tokyo Rose" has given us twenty four hours to get off the island that was forty eight ago, but we have had that threat before. We were given the same time to leave Kiriwina, we stayed six months, so who can tell.

8-8-44

Well Tojo left us to ourselves the night before last but played us another visit last night and dropped six eggs, which did no damage. Fortunately he goes for the strips and leaves the camp areas alone, this we hope continues to be his practice, as we don't hesitate to go to ground. Doubt if he will venture out tonight as it is raining like hell, but the moon has not risen, so he may drop us a "line" later on in the evening. In the distance from here we can see the hills at the back of his base at Manokwari so he is not very far distant, and he also has another base handy in the Helmaheras where he still has a few kites although to raid in any strength he will have to bring his kites

through from the Philippines as he is very weak in aircraft strength hereabouts.

13-8-44

Nothing very startling, have been out of bed nearly every night, but he hasn't dropped any. Was on the strip a couple of days ago just on daybreak when the red went, I stood on a log and watched for him but he didn't arrive. Have just had some information on the Ladji-Aitape area and our time spent there the official figures for our operational time spent there. We commenced on the tenth of June and our last operation was on the thirtieth of July at a total of fifty days. In that period we did in all 451 flights over enemy territory. In appreciation of our work in that area we have had the following letter:

Headquarters U.S. Forces
APO 705

3rd August 1944

Commanding Officer
30th Squadron RAAF

Dear Sir,

As Commanding General, Persecution Task Forces I wish to commend the Officers and men of the 30th Squadron for the very splendid and whole hearted support given the Persecution Task Force.

The action of this Squadron in a large manner contributed to the operation by their continuous interception of enemy lines of communication particularly were they valuable in their close cooperation with P.T. boats at night in the interruption of enemy barge traffic.

The officers and men of this squadron have demonstrated their ability to use an all out effort at all times to destroy the enemy.

Very truly yours
(Signed) C.P.HALL
Major General

25-8-44

Time once again marches on and things in this area are still very much as usual, we have had a few more alerts since I last wrote but nothing has come of them. We have done our share in stopping Tojo, and he has a few cracks at our kites. The squadron put up a record on the 23rd we did 26 sorties in one day which is the highest the squadron has ever done and as we have only thirteen kites we have done a good job. Had my photo taken and I understand it is to appear in "Pix" sometime in November and in "life" magazine in America. Had a visit today from Bob Hope, Francis

Langford, Jerry Cobuna, Pat Thomas and Tony Romano.

4-11-44

We are still on Noemfoor, but that is all one could report as every day is just the same. The island has played a big part in the recent raids prior to the landings on the Philippines. All the raids on Borneo have been carried out from here, and sufficient is to say that we have had a few reds and a couple of reds. One of these they caught us, the red went and about twenty minutes later the all clear, we had just settled in again when we heard aircraft. Our tent was holding an argument as to what it was when the bombs began to fall. We left the beds in a hurry but it was all over by the time we were out of the tent he had gone. Later he claimed having got 200 planes on the island. The true state was he lost two planes and our loses were nil, but one bomb injured a couple of yanks. Tokyo radio have made some broad statements that we have really been in a position to check up on.

19-11-44

Strange places once again this time it is the island in the Halmahera known as Morotai. We landed here on the sixteenth. D-Day was the 15th of September. This place is a hive of activity. Had a pleasant trip over, took us three hours, but it was a very dull trip compared with the previous ones in so far as we flew over water all the way, about 460 miles from Noemfoor. We are fast approaching the Philippines they being only a little less than four hundred to their southern tip.

24-11-44

Things are sure lively in this part of the globe. Second night here we were out of bed, forth night also, but they did not raid. But the night before last hell broke loose, about a quarter past eight over he came with about six kites, he stayed until a quarter to eleven, and blasted hell out of us. They picked him up in the lights and the ack-ack made a good show, but I understand they got only two, fires were blazing everywhere in the strip area and explosions were the order of the night. The yanks lost five liberators and two Dougs and 22 squadron lost four and had four badly damaged. One bomb explodes near enough to us to shake the sides of our trench and we waited to see where his mate was going but it was apparently the last of a stick, luckily for us perhaps. He made seven runs and dropped bombs every run. He opened his attack by a strafing run up the fighter strip. Last night he paid another social call, about eight the alert went and we made ready for him, the red was on until about nine thirty, we sat around and talked, but he didn't get right in. All was quiet until 25 to 1 when up she went again this last until just after one when all was clear again. Twenty past three and out again, sat around the trench for about ten minutes and then saw a searchlight stab the heavens right on him, and hell broke again as every gun on the island that had the range let go. Straight over the strip area and whoong whoong whoong they came, fires and ammunition exploded everywhere. This was our turn the first time we have had it from him since Moresby in 1942, of course it had to be "A" flight and we got it right in the neck. One of my kites 190 (Margron III) went up in smoke, 179 with her, 211 petrol tank exploded and she was riddled with shrapnel, two

Aussie beaus were badly damaged. 196 was like a sieve where a daisy cutter had landed about twenty feet from her. 214 my other kite got off lightly with two holes in the mainplane, one through the mainplane and two in the fuselage. A bomb landed not ten feet behind 215 in soft ground, and while it made a hole about four to five feet deep and eight feet in diameter it made only very minor repairs necessary in the kite about four holes and a new elevator will do the job. I wrote today and told Marion that things were quiet and there was nothing to write about, maybe a man is a liar. Tonight is another night and I wonder what we have tonight, more trouble I suppose. Tokyo radio have claimed leaving Moratai in flames, and for once in their lives they were right, only wants another stick in our area and we can say 30 is no more. 196 had 247 holes in the fuselage alone. 365 all told.

25-11-44

As predicted he came again last night, first visit ten minutes to nine and he stayed till 9.40, when he finished his visit by a strafing run. He left fires on the strip, which were another liberator and a Boston both totally destroyed. The fighters were up last night and with nip in the lights we saw a bit of good fun for a few minutes. Midnight he was over again with a strafing run up the strip, and at three twenty - his favourite hour - he came over again. Not to let us rest for long he had us out again at five, so we had a nice quiet night. Ten raids in three nights, sure keeps us going, but I guess we will pick up on our sleep one of these nights again. Tokyo radio claims they have destroyed seven camps on this island and that we are starving, looks like it when we had roast turkey a couple of days ago and our food is plentiful. Well we can only wait until tonight and see what we have to put up with, and how many times he will come in to pay us his usual social call.

26-11-44

Yes! He payed us the usual call again, three in all, eight o'clock, ten, and two thirty, didn't have such a good night as he usually does, a Lib, a Mitchell, and a thunderbolt, made us bob the old head and get well down as a stick fell near the camp. But we are getting used to them now, the only inconvenience is the loss of sleep.

27-11-44

He didn't get in last night, but was cruising around from six fifteen until eight twenty. We retired expecting more, but he left us alone.

30-11-44

Tojo continues to belt away at us, a couple of nights ago the night fighters got him on the run and a dogfight was in progress over and around the island for two and a half hours. We had had it I can tell you, with kites screaming around all the time, and you never know when or where you were going to get one. We have been here fifteen days and in eleven nights of that time we have had seventeen raids, not to mention another eleven times we have been out of bed for reds when he has just flown over or been chased away. Was rather fun when it started but we are getting tired of hearing

bombs drop and kites whine and ack-ack burst, not to mention the amount of sleep we are in arrears. Last night was a "good" raid, only lasted forty minutes all told and we were back in bed. Tonight is another night.

3-12-44

We have had three quiet nights with only one alert. But they seem to expect big things in this area as we have been told to be prepared for the defence of this area and extra precautions have been put into operation. They expect Naval and aerial bombardment of this area.

?-12-44

Has not been so hectic since last I wrote, he has only been over five times, two of these being last night, actually the first time in nights he has got even over the island as he has been intercepted and shot down or turned. Last night he came right across at first alert 3-4 but one stick only fell in the jungle. He sneaked in again at twenty to five. I was having a wash and heard a kite just above the trees in front of me at what I thought about 200 feet. He had no lights on I was looking for him in the gloom. Next thing three reds went up and the guns of the island and his simultaneously opened up. The tally now is nineteen raids and ten alerts since we landed here, nice quiet place.

13-12-44

Have had one more strafing run night before last and no disturbance last night. It is raining tonight and very overcast, but who can tell what it will be like by midnight or morning.

22-12-44

The score is slowly mounting and the tally has now reached twenty-five raids and twelve alerts. There is nothing else of consequence happening, the Helmahearas have been posted today and for the next couple of days. We have lost a few a/c and are now down to eight kites, but we can still hit hard enough and keep them all flying.

25-12-44

Last night was hectic enough we raised our tally of raids to 27 and our alerts to 16 but we saw a nice sight as a spitty shot a nip kite down in flames. Was rather a funny night as most of the camp was fairly on the way to being intoxicated when nip came over and they were sitting in and around the trenches singing Christmas Carols as the bombs were falling. We eventually landed in bed at a little after two, we get plenty rest here I don't think.

18-1-45

Since last entry the tally has slowly mounted until now we have had thirty-five raids

and 26 alerts. Have seen another kite come down in flames and explode in mid-air. They make a good sight especially as they are always another nip or so gone to join honourable ancestors.

23-3-45

Have not heard from nip for two months up till last night, he paid us a visit just as the pictures finished. We had only just stood up when the red went up. We just walked along the road as over he came, he dropped seven bombs but none near us, lucky, as we had nowhere to go but just hit the deck had they sounded as though they were coming our way, but we can judge their direction fairly well by their swish.

17-5-45

Here we are again in a strange land. This time it is Sanga Sanga, an island in the Philippines in the Sulu Archipelago. Arrived here two days ago having travelled in the usual way in our own aircraft. The trip of 650 miles was mostly over water, we striking the Philippines about eight miles above this island and flying down through the islands. Very different from the other places. We found the natives interesting, and they found us much the same, as we are the first Aussies on this island. They have a market or bazaar where you can purchase any of the native goods. Food including fruits and poultry and fish. The natives would rather clothes than money as they say the Japs have taken all their clothes.

THIS IS THE LAST ENTRY.

Details

Full Name:

MONLEY, Leslie Searle

Number: 66952

Rank: Leading Aircraftsman

Muster (RAAF Trade): Flight Rigger

Length of Service: 3 Years 10 Months

30-6-1942 to 15-4-1946

POST SCRIPT

On the 28th of May 1945 while still on the island of Sanga Sanga dad injured his left knee.

Documents from the time state:

“Patient admitted to the second field hospital with history of accidentally incurring wound over left knee, 2100 hours, 28 May 1945 on Sanga Sanga.....when he fell from a truck and struck his knee against fragments of a bomb.”

He was moved from the American hospital on Sanga Sanga to another at Zamboanga on Mindanao and then onto yet another at Leyte. He eventually found his way back to Australia turning up in the hospital Number 3 RAAF at Concord in Sydney.

