

PADDY'S STORY

"And there I was, alive because of them!"

John (Paddy) Kenneally was a young private with the 2/2 Independent Company of the Australian Army, which was stranded in Timor by the Japanese invasion of 1942. He speaks of his anger at the subsequent betrayal of the East Timorese people.

"We went to Timor and brought nothing but misery on those poor people. That is all they ever got out of helping us – misery."

"In 1942 we were just a handful of men, short of everything and fighting an all-conquering enemy. We were the only unit from the Philippines, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies which didn't surrender and survived, and only because of their help. We were living off them. We arrived in Timor with plenty of ammunition but only one month's ration and we were there for twelve! They didn't sit down and say, 'The fight's between you and the Japanese. You paddle your own canoe.'

If they hadn't given food to us we'd have had to take it, because we had no money at the start and we weren't going to starve, and once you start to grab, abuses creep in. This is true of every army in the world. It wouldn't have stopped at taking food, they'd be taking money and women and anything else going. Once we'd started those sort of relations we wouldn't have lasted a month because they'd have informed on us and you couldn't blame them.



Paddy Kenneally and Rufino Alves Correia

photo: Jon Lewis

This photograph was taken in 2000 during one of Paddy's many return trips to Timor. He sought out Rufino, who had been the "criado" of Tom Nisbett, a Victorian soldier in the 2/2 Independent Company. Rufino is proud of his strong links to the Australians, and knows he represents the many courageous and loyal Timorese who saved so many Australian lives.

"That's all they ever got from helping us - misery."



"The Government has never really acknowledged our debt to the Timorese from the War. Governments are pretty unreliable, you can't leave your conscience with them. In 1975 everyone behaved very badly. I thought it was an absolute disgrace. No one seemed to care about the Timorese. About all they got out of it was that we put a monument to them at a place called Dare, on the heights overlooking Dili.

"We donated so much and the Government put in some money and built a memorial in the form of a pool and a shelter for the natives as they travel in and out from the bazaars. I'd say now it would be more like a memorial to betrayal, seeing what's happened to the Timorese with Indonesia and we've done nothing to help."

(Turner, Michele: *Telling: East Timor-Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*)

Opening of Dare Memorial, Timor-Leste 25.04.2009

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PADDY IN TIMOR

"My criado Patricio was very slim and fairly tall for a Timorese. He would have been nineteen years of age.

"I went to Mass in Ainaro for Easter Sunday 1942. The beautiful Gregorian chant of the natives' singing was wonderful and when I came down from the Church Patricio and a mate were there and they said in Tetun that they wanted to join the Australians. I had no money at all. All I could do was give him a feed when we got down to where our mates were, but he stayed with me.

"After the first few months of being in the place all our rations were gone and we had to do a deal with the locals to be fed. Once all we could get to eat were green peanuts. They tear your insides apart. The dysentery was so bad sometimes you just couldn't afford to have your trousers on because you didn't know when you'd have to leave the track and you didn't want to dirty them.

"On Easter Sunday we got in about ten o'clock to a place called Liltae. It was a pitch-black night. I finished guard duty at midnight when the Japs started a war chant. It was to work up their blood lust, quite terrifying. We'd been in Timor fighting for six months but it still chilled your blood. The officer would lead and hundreds of voices would reply. They just completely wrecked the nearest native girl, ripped her straight up the stomach and disembowelled her. She was a bonny little girl about seven years of age. They must have found her in one of the huts.

"The section dispersed and we had to find our way through. The hill was just crawling with Japs who thought they must have wounded or killed some of us. But the dozen of us got through in twos or threes except for Bob McEwan. Two of us went back later and the place was deathly silent, not a bird. We found Bob's body and buried him, but the dogs dug him up again because we couldn't bury him very deep, as we only had bayonets and the ground is pretty hard in Timor. I don't know what happened to Patricio.

At night I slept between a couple of the blokes to get a bit of warmth off their sleeping bags because mine was with him. I knew if the Japs got him with an Australian pack he was gone, but he turned up with it. He'd had to go a long way around. They were so good, the criados, they risked their lives all the time for us, it shamed you really. At the end of 1942 we got word we were being taken off. The night on the beach was heart-breaking. The criados were crying their eyes out. I was spared the worst because Patricio wasn't there. After we survived the August push he'd got malaria very badly and had gone for a spell to his village. We went to Timor and brought nothing but misery to these poor people.

That is all they ever got from helping us – misery."

(from Michele Turner *Telling: East Timor-Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*)

NO RECOGNITION

The success of this Australian operation was mainly due to the selfless support of the Timorese people. They helped the Australians by feeding them, housing them, nursing them when most were struck down with malaria, and by acting as lookouts, warning them of the whereabouts of the Japanese. When the Australian forces were withdrawn, these loyal Timorese were left to the mercy of the Japanese who regarded them as hostile. At least 40,000 Timorese were killed in reprisal, all civilians under a neutral colonising power. The scale of the losses suffered by the Timorese as a result of their friendship with Australian soldiers is clearly seen when compared with the number of British civilians who died during the Second World War - 60,000.

While staff from the Australian War History Unit were sent to East Timor after the end of hostilities in 1945 their task was primarily to ascertain the fate of any Australians who had died or been captive in Timor. There was no official attempt to find out what had happened to the local people as a result of the Australian presence. Those Japanese who were put on trial were those who had committed crimes against Australians, not against the East Timorese.



Australian War Memorial

In the *Australia Remembers* year of 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, no official mention or commemoration was made of the great strategic significance of the partnership between the Australian and the East Timorese in securing freedom from fascism and imperialism in this region. There is no display of the Timor campaign in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

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1. What is the tone of Paddy's comments?
2. Note down some of the emotive words and phrases Paddy uses.
3. Explain why he would feel this way.
4. List words that would describe the attitudes and actions of the Timorese in regard to the Australians.
5. Why do you think there is no memorial in Australia to commemorate the Timor campaign?
6. Design a suitable memorial or display that would be a reminder to Australians of the friendship, loyalty and sacrifice of the Timorese people during World War 11. Send it to the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.