

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

F sheet

Maurice

No 9

DONATED RECORDS LIST
6502
3rd Series

NO 9 324 155 3 x 5 - 2

Report April 1945

Weather to begin with was fine all day but has deteriorated since then. Rain is intermittent in the early mornings and late evenings. The best weather is around the middle of the day.

Natives - are very helpful and hospitable - in fact show a great desire to supply us with as much information as possible regarding the enemy. The Penghulu of this village is going down to Long Mah within the next few days to collect a member of his family, and volunteered me the information that while there he will find out as much about the enemy as possible and keep us posted.

He is particularly anxious to return with us to see the Juan Besar.

Without the help of the natives we would be hard pressed as far as food is concerned and they have been very generous with their offerings of food.

Their main need seems to be cloth and do not seem so concerned about money as to Enquiries about the former are constant and numerous. It is suggested that probably at present it will be the main form of barter.

Will be giving Sgt. Bower a call on 4110 KC at 1200 and 1600 each day and listen for him on 6065 KC 10 minutes later. Absolutely no sign of him yet. Check local time.

6502

9th April 1945

To Major Harrison,
Dear Sir

The motives which prompt me to write this letter are not the result of a chronically rebellious temperament, nor is it a desire to be impertinently critical. Obviously if it were the latter I should not commit myself to paper. That which follows I honestly believe to be just and legitimate criticism of various matters arising out of the organisation of this expedition, and of the various unsatisfactory matters which came to light during the course of our journey and the duration of our stay here. Owing to the fact that I have probably had more experience in the bush than any other member of the party, particularly as regard looking after myself personally as well as planning a project

I feel that some consideration should be given to his criticism and not passed off lightly.

Firstly I think the general trust with which this expedition was launched, and the consequent lack of time for preparation was a great mistake, the results of which have been most forcibly impressed upon us. Extra time spent in the preparation of stores and equipment and the thorough checking of the same always pays dividends. This applies equally as well to personal equipment as to stores. In the jungle, and no doubt you will agree with me it is the first duty of every man to see to it that he himself is fully equipped to attend to his own personal needs, so that he does not become dependent

on any of the personal effects of his companions. Carelessness and thoughtlessness in this matter, I regard as particularly inexcusable

With regard to this matter my criticism in this case is particularly directed against Capt. Edmedes, as in the first place the boots which he wore on the journey were marine boots of mine he having neglected to ensure that his own boots were included in the stores before leaving Australia. In the second place, he neglected to equip himself with an extra pair of boots from those spares which were available in the general stores either because of forgetfulness or to lighten his pack. Consequently when the boots which he wore proved to be useless after the first few days of travel

11.

he suggested without a qualm that he might have to borrow the spare pair which I had brought to make the return journey, not bothering to enquire firstly whether those which I was then wearing were in good order or secondly to ascertain whether or not they were likely to last the distance. This I regard as extreme selfishness - especially having regard to the reason why he had no spare pair - and most unbecoming in an officer and furthermore not tending to inspire confidence in his leadership.

I may mention in passing that though much of this letter will prove to be a criticism of Capt. Eames, it is not out of any personal animosity but an attempt to have certain

6502

deficiencies rectified and to ensure that there shall be no repetition of such an unsatisfactory state of affairs. You may perhaps wonder why all this was not aired during the course of the journey but if you consider for a moment criticism of this kind from a Sgt to a Captain without backing from a higher authority, would be wasted.

Rations

The deficiency of rations which we are now experiencing was again very largely due to insufficient time in preparation and also to lack of method with regard to estimating the amount of food needed. Included in the tins of "Compo" rations is a detailed list of the contents.

6.

of the tin, and further the amount of time it is supposed to last a certain number of men viz. 4 men for 3 days i.e. 36 meals so that this tin of rations was designed to last us precisely 4 days - actually, only the duration of the trip as originally estimated these tins of rations have been carefully made up ~~and~~ on the advice of experts to provide for the ~~minimum~~ needs of the fighting men in the field and is largely a result of the experience gained during the New Guinea campaigns. Therefore I think it is a mistake to disregard the instructions. The extra O2 ration covered only 2 extra days, so that we actually only set off with 6 days rations, when it was known that

6502

I.

21 members of the party would probably be away for at least two weeks. For some time I was under the impression that we were carrying two tins of "Bompo", as Capt. Edmedes had assured me so when I enquired early in the trip. It was not until we had nearly reached our destination, when I began to search for the other tin that it was discovered that there was no such extra tin. Here again is an example of complete lack of personal supervision and checking by the leader - which should be automatically carried out at all times.

To supplement the rations which we carried it was vaguely supposed that food obtained from the natives would serve to fill the

8.

gap. This I submit, is an entirely fallacious conclusion. Though it is possible to exist on native food, a white man unused to the diet cannot maintain working strength, and I imagine that it is one of our main duties at present to keep as fit as possible, in case the time should come when we have to live and defend ourselves as frugally as possible. Unfit we are not much use in the scheme of things. As to native diet, it consists mainly of rice, and they eat enormous amounts of it, consequently it is the main item on the menu for every meal. Secondly it was suggested that a pig could be bought every little while to supplement the rice. This I consider impracticable as 2 men cannot

6502

possibly dispose of a pig in a day, and unsalted meat deteriorates quickly in hot climates. As there is no means of salting meat here, that question does not arise. Natives cannot be expected to kill a pig every few days since they are valuable assets.

Although Capt. Edmedes remarked recently to me that this was a "lush place for fruit," I might say that it is one of the most poorly served in this regard, that I have ever seen. The same applies to vegetables, with the exception of cucumbers which tend to give one indigestion more than anything else. According to the natives wild pigs dispose of the vegetable and monkeys the fruit.

All this ration shortage can

very largely be put down to the extreme haste of departure, and in future I do not propose to leave base without personally checking everything of this nature myself, except in extreme emergency when the main consideration is to get out, and get out quickly.

Equipment

A good example of inefficiency was apparent when the ATRAA was opened and it was discovered that two transmitting valves were missing out of the set itself and another in the receiving portion U.S. This would have been rectified probably had the sigs. been given more time to attend the checking of the equipment which was to go away.

General Camp Behaviour

It is one of the unwritten laws of life in the bush, that every

6502

man shall contribute his share towards attending to the domestic duties involved in camp life — cooking, washing dishes, drawing water, making fires, gathering wood etc. — no matter what his status, unless there is included in the party a man whose special duty it is to attend to these matters, and in an assignment of this nature there is no room for such a man. So it has been in all my years in the bush in civil life and the army. In a field unit, officers and men alike — in the field on active service — do their share of chores, unless there is any special or legitimate reason why any member should be excused these duties, then others will do the chores gladly. So has been my previous army.

experience. This I think only fair and right, and it is no indignity for an officer to help with these duties, and should be applied in our case. Only once to my knowledge did Capt Edmedes help wash the dishes and then only after prompting by me. On one occasion in fact he did not even bother to take his "dixies" out of his pack, but contented himself with eating out of ours and at the conclusion of the meal lolled comfortably back smoking while Sgt Adams and myself busied ourselves washing the dirty "dixies". Never once did he take the lead in performing any camp duty. I cannot suffer laziness or indolence without speaking. I do not

6502

mind experience in these matters
so long as a man shows an
energetic willingness to learn,
and I normally do everything
I can to assist in the
teaching, but I do object
most strongly to any tendency
to laziness in the jungle, and
my main impression during the
whole trip was, as far as
camp duties were concerned,
that Capt. Edmedes was content
for us to minister to his
needs. The defence that he has
to have time to think and
concentrate on problems of the
moment is not legitimate,
for I have myself in the past
conducted expeditions and
carried out work under adverse
conditions requiring far more
concentration and entailing more

worry than this journey down here, and I may say that I never shirked my share of camp duties and I never found that the performance of them ever interfered with the work - unless there was an immediate and important matter to attend to. Men of my acquaintance in a similar position reacted likewise.

As for as my particular role in this phase is concerned - I believe that I was included for a very specific purpose, and while I realise and appreciate that this recce. is necessary, I wish to make it quite clear that my particular role is not "chief cook and bottle-washer". Furthermore if it is expected that I should automatically fall into

this role in future assignments I would ask to be transferred to another phase immediately it arises. In any case because of the above reasons and other minor ones too numerous to mention I would ask that if humanly possible, I shall not again be sent on a mission under the leadership of Capt. Edmedes - at least not until his judgement matures and his general camp activities improve.

In defence of the criticism relating to stores it may be submitted that we were heavily laden as it was, but may I point out that if a little more time had been spent in planning the carriers who accompanied us ~~could~~ probably ^{could} have been persuaded

16

to wait another day and extra natives obtained to carry additional stores - at any rate to the first village where further transport could probably have been arranged. Alternatively I could not see them and I do not see now why three men had to do the trip and one return, for the actual marking of the D.L. has in the end been left to Sgt. Hallan and myself and as far as I can see it calls for no special knowledge but just plain common sense.

The transport of ~~the~~ provisions etc. for two men only would have eased the position greatly.

To conclude may I offer the following suggestions.

6502

1/ In all future missions of any length at least one day be spent at base preparing for the journey and thoroughly checking stores and equipment. All members should be responsible for the checking of their own gear and any which has become his own responsibility in the course of his duties.

2/ In making up stores for a journey the availability of carriers should be considered in relation to the proposed load, and if sufficient carriers cannot be obtained immediately the possibility of leaving stores or personnel temporarily should be considered. In no case should the minimum needs of those going, in respect to food and ammunition be sacrificed for

other stores.

3. That in the making up of rations the scale as set down in the list accompanying each tin be strictly adhered to as far as possible. Planning should be made so that a party can live for the duration of the trip without native food, unless it is definitely known that adequate and suitable rations are obtainable from the villages to be visited.

4. Heavy boots be worn with spare pair of same carried in pack. Barren boots, patrol boots and creepers are useless for heavy walking especially in wet conditions.

5. All members of the Phase should be addressed by you pointing out the necessity for every

19.

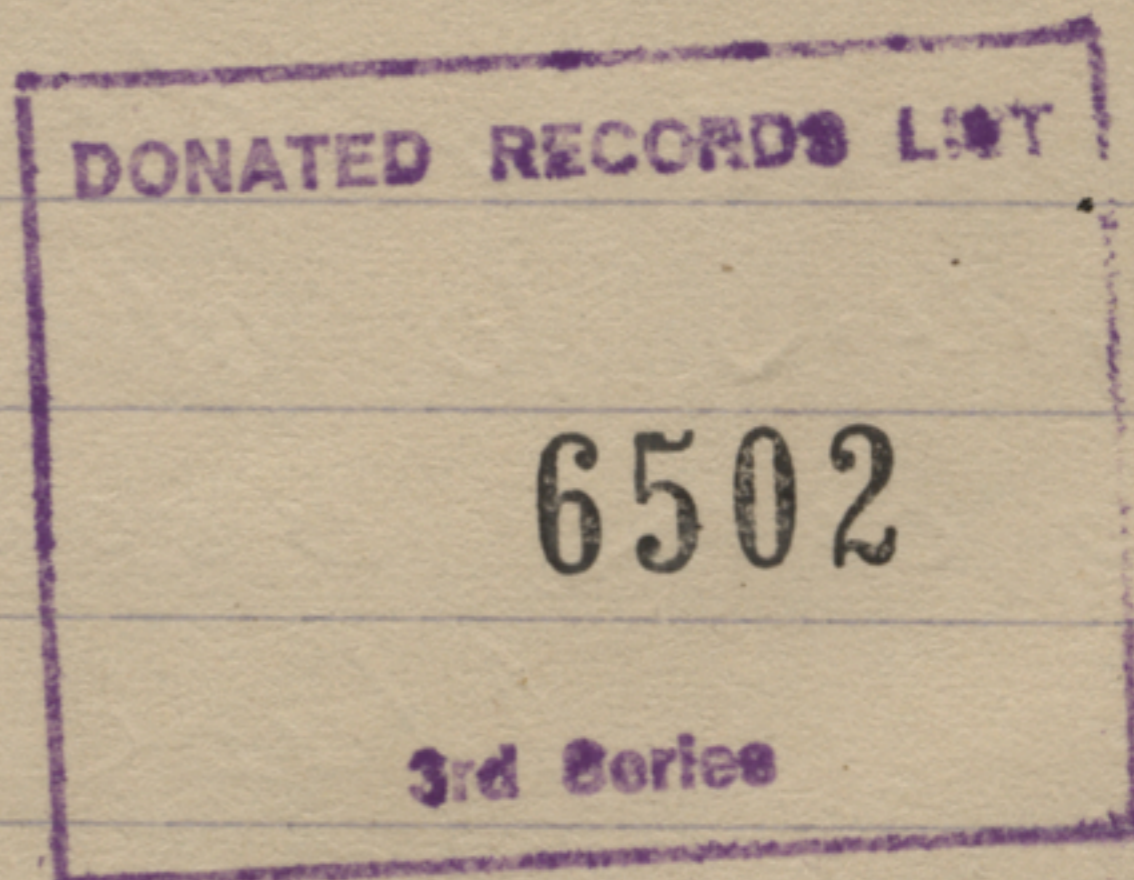
man to be as far as possible independent and to provide by prior planning for all his known personal needs. That all men should share equally in camp duties and that laziness and selfishness in any form whatever should not be tolerated. Further should any man find himself lacking in personal equipment during the course of an expedition due to his own carelessness or lack of foresight he must not expect to make up his deficiency by depriving one of his companions of the missing item. In other words no man should become a burden to other members due to his own avoidable mistakes.

I have stated facts as fairly as I can and I hope

20

That this letter may clear the air
somewhat. Personally I could
not go on keeping all this to
myself. I do not doubt you
will have criticisms of myself
and I expect frankness there
too.

Md. J. K. Barrie
Sgt. (?)



DONATED RECORDS LIST

6502

3rd Series

TO

MAJOR T HARRISON

PERS ONALLY