

Synopsis

*The Sudden Storm: The AANS sisters of Singapore + Radji Beach **

On 16th of February 1942, on a remote, tiny beach on Bangka Island near Sumatra, a shocking incident occurred - shocking even in the context of the terrible world war that was raging at the time.

It wasn't until around three years later that 21 Australian families found out what had happened to their daughters and their sisters, members of the Australian Army Nursing Service all, who had enlisted to serve their country in the early years of WWII.

The incident was part of a story that began with the Japanese occupation of Singapore a few days earlier, and the hurried, chaotic evacuation of civilians and AANS nurses by sea. It ended with their execution by soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. Incredibly, one Australian Army nurse, Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, lived to tell the tale.

What happened on Radji Beach was a massacre that ranks as one of the worst war crimes of WWII involving Australians - a tragedy that is still remembered today, eighty years later.

In *The Sudden Storm* you'll hear from a raft of people – young and old - dedicated to keeping the story of these Australian Army nurses very much alive and present, especially when it comes to telling the story of women in war.

From mural artists, family members and military historians, to high school history students, ex-service personnel and authors, over 25 voices contribute to this 'sonic memorial' dedicated to women who served and sacrificed in the most difficult of circumstances. It's an emotional road trip that takes us into the past and the present.

The podcast also focuses on two of the women who fell on Radji Beach: Sister Elaine Balfour-Ogilvy and Sister Lorna Fairweather, both from South Australia.

While this story about women during wartime is at times difficult to hear, it's also one of courage, fortitude, compassion and hope. It teaches us much about war and the ever-increasing necessity for peace... That frontlines aren't always on 'the battlefield' and that memorializing those lost to war can be a hugely creative and expansive endeavor.

You can't be unchanged by this story.

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With stunning music and powerful sound design, *The Sudden Storm: The AANS nurses of Singapore and Radji Beach* was made by award-winning podcast maker Megan Spencer for the Virtual War Memorial Australia. It was made possible with funding from the South Australian Department for Education.

**Please note that this podcast contains concepts related to war and some depictions of war and its aftermath. It also includes references to sexual violence in war. Please refer to the episode Show Notes for exact timestamps. Download the Show Notes PDF from the menu at vwma.org.au/explore/schools.*

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