

## PRIVATE RECOLLECTIONS OF 'THAT NIGHT'

The following are private recollections by people who remember the midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour, 31 May/1 June 1942.

They are unedited and were collated by the Heritage Branch, NSW Department of Planning, following a public call for stories of this kind (23 April 2009).

Historical facts and other details have not been verified. Contact details for each respondent are maintained by the Heritage Branch.

My husband's family passed down to him a souvenir from the Japanese submarine attack it is a small cardboard folder 7 x 12 cm illustrated on the front by text and graphics in blue ink, of a wreath with an insignia with letters RAN framed by 2 dolphins surmounted by a crown.

Within the wreath: A Guaranteed Souvenir from the Japanese Midget Sub-marine. Sunk in Sydney Harbour, Sunday, May 31st, 1942. Dated: 30th July, 1942 with printed signature of Rear-Admiral in Charge, Sydney G.C. Muirhead Gould. Proceeds to R.A.N. Relief Fund & King George's Fund for Sailors.

Inside it reads: GLASS WOOL

This folder contains a piece of the Glass Wool used as insulation between the plates of the batteries supplying power to drive the motors of the Japanese Midget Submarines that were sunk in Sydney Harbour on the night of Sunday, May 31st, 1942 - the night that the first attack on Sydney by a foreign power took place and was frustrated. Underneath is a small windowed panel of cardboard framing what seems like fibre glass

My father Humfry Henchman told us of the night the Japanese submarines came into Sydney Harbour. His version may be apocryphal but it went like this: At Garden Island the Admiral and his wife were asleep when she was woken by a noise. She woke her husband who growled: "Go back to sleep!" In the morning when they looked out the window, they could see a torpedo (unexploded) half way up the boat ramp. My father spoke of other shells that didn't explode, and the one that did, in Rose Bay, hit an unoccupied house.

My husband remembers a story told by his Uncle Clarrie (Clarence) Chesher about the submarines off the coast when they were shelling Sydney. He lived in Bondi, and said he was tending to his canaries when he heard the whistle of the shells passing overhead, he thought to hit Dover Heights.

On another occasion, the news went round that despite the arrangement of nets (the so-called Boom?) to discourage Japanese submarines, some had got into the Harbour, possibly by following a ship entering the harbour and had sunk a ferry. My husband himself remembers later seeing the recovered Japanese submarine on display in Sydney or in Canberra.

Regards

(Mrs) Terry Chesher  
Paddington

With my parents, sister and two brothers, I lived in Dudley Rd Rose Bay. I was 16 years old and attended Kambala School.

On the night of the attack, my father, who had been in the First World War, woke us saying that they were real shells and to get prepared. We all had certain functions to execute, such as filling the bath with water and getting the buckets of sand that had been filled previously. My father was an air raid warden and he left to go to his post while the rest of the family sat under the veranda, which had been covered with sandbags. We remained there until the siren was heard indicating that the raid was over.

The next day at school my friend, who lived in Plumer Rd, Rose Bay, said she was thrown out of bed by the force of the shell as it penetrated the building next to her home. She had a delayed reaction and stayed away from school the next day.

I don't think any of my family felt any impact of the raid except for my father who knew the horrors of war.

We did not know anyone involved in the detection of the submarines nor did we go and see them. I spoke to someone who had inspected them and he said that he had very bad claustrophobia as the submarines were so small.

Jill May  
Darling Point

At the time of the attack, I was 7 years of age and living with my parents at Bond Street, Mosman.

My first memory of the attack was when my mother raced down the hallway dressed in her nightdress but with her prized fur stole wrapped around her shoulders. She told us that the loud noises we could hear was probably an air attack by the Japanese and that we should take cover. Dad, in the meantime was dragging the dining room table from the dining room into the hallway and we all initially sheltered under it.

We could still hear the sounds of shells being fired and loud explosions and eventually Dad could not contain his curiosity and we moved to the front windows which faced east. It was then we could see the bright lights of the explosions and the curving of the tracers throughout the sky.

Strangely enough there were also quite a few people out in the street just getting a view of what was happening seemingly oblivious to the risks.

Some time after the event, my uncle, who was a Warrant Officer in the RAN, stationed at HMAS Penguin, invited us to view the raising of one of the sunken midget submarines from Sydney Harbour. We were subsequently given a toy submarine, said to have been made of metal from the sub, although this was never confirmed. (since lost)

As a result of the attack and the desperate state of the war at that time, my parents elected to move my brother and me to my Uncle's sheep property at Lake Cargelligo in Western NSW. The excuse was to help me overcome my bad asthma attacks in a drier climate but I suspect that the sub attack and its aftermath was the real reason.

Neville Cleary  
Allambie Heights

I am now at the age of 82, but at that time I was a girl of 14 years old and lived in Leichhardt with my family.

When war broke out in 1939, my father built an air-raid shelter in our backyard - the lawn was dug up and wooden benches were built on each side of the shelter - my mother had it very well equipped with tinned food and medical supplies. One evening we had some very bad storms with heavy rain over a period of days - the air-raid shelter became filled with water with everything in it floating to the top. It was found out later that originally there had been a lake there! I was then filled in and dismantled. Not to be defeated, my father built another shelter under a back shed at the end of the driveway. My grandmother lived two houses away from us, so that night, after receiving word from dad; he suggested we all go into the shelter. This included my mother, grandmother, aunt, next door neighbour, my sister, me and our dog "Trixie". When the alarms went off, we did just that. My responsibility was the dog, my sister June's responsibility was to take mum's 'corsets' in with her - this was a family joke over many

years later. We stayed in the shelter for some hours, until my dad came by and gave us the "all clear".

Norma Goodman  
Drummoyne

The late Harry Rooklyn told me he saw the attack by/on the Japanese midget submarine on the night of 31 May 1942. This is his story. He lived at 2 Billyard Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, from the 1930s and would have been from 40 to 50 years of age in 1942. Before the creation of Garden Island dockyard the scene of action was clearly visible from the roof of 2 Billyard Avenue. Mr Rooklyn believed the Kuttabal was sunk by gun fire from the American warship (presumably the heavy cruiser USS Chicago) not by a torpedo from the Japanese submarine. I have long been interested to know if anyone else thought it was friendly firepower.

(for) Harry Rooklyn

I lived at 48 Karnbala Rd, Bellevue Hill. The explosions and light flashes were clearly visible and audible. The notable personal experience concerned a school friend who lived at Darling Point - the very last house, which had a tiled swimming pool: very rare in those days. They were right opposite the Kuttabal. I don't know if they had any windows broken, but the force of the explosions caused most of the tiles to fall off into the pool. They were not broken. The cement holding them in place had shattered, but the pool itself was not cracked.

Bruce Turtle  
Springwood

At the attack date of 31/05-01/06/1942 I was 7 years of age.

I was sleeping at the rear of our house in Lindfield on this date, only to be awakened from the sound of the sirens. I looked through the windows towards Sydney only to see the searchlights on the horizon in the direction of the harbour.

My parents were in the front bedroom; my father was on leave at the time. Both were asleep,

I awakened them, advised of the sirens and searchlights etc only to be told to return to bed and not to worry.

For the remainder of the night I sat at the window watching the lights and listening to the "explosions" etc. nothing occurred to me that we were under attack on that evening. It appeared to be another practice warning.

At school the next day, I heard of many who had heard the sirens retiring under tables and inverting couches against the wall and staying there until the morning.

Ross Piper  
Epping

I am Pamela Brockhoff, I was 13 years old in 1942 when the Japanese submarines attacked Sydney...

I am Douglas and Elizabeth (nee Manton) Brockhoff's eldest daughter.... we lived on deep water frontage on Shell Cove Bay at 172 Kurraba Rd, Kurraba Point, Neutral Bay.

We were all woken up by the noise and chaos. We at first thought the ferry had run into the Cremorne wharf....then the search lights filled the skies.

My Mother and I broke the blackout rules by turning on the upstairs lights and putting our heads out the windows to see what was happening! My father screamed at us both to "turn off the lights...you two girls and pull your heads inside"!

My grandfather and father were both great yachtsmen.... we were all taught to sail anything that floats...wire splice, mend ripped sails and read ship's flags and signals from an early

age! I've travelled all my life and have sailed on cargo ships and many liners and still have a passion for the 7 seas.

I went to Wenona College and during the war a local group of the athletic girls used to run and deliver messages by hand to and from the air raid wardens and shelters... so that the adults were free to do the more important and expert jobs.

The home garages were converted into air raid shelters and covered with sand bags.... full of bunks and food!

Pamela Brockhoff  
Lane Cove

I remember very clearly the night of 31 May 1942, when Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour. I shared a bedroom with my eldest brother. We were both asleep, when my father flung open the door of our bedroom and uttered two words with urgency "The sirens" Our family consisting of dad and mum, 3 boys and 2 girls hastened to the air raid shelter in our backyard which builder friends of Dad had constructed for us in case of an air raid on Sydney.

We lived in the Sydney suburb of Dulwich Hill, an inner suburb. After sitting there for about one hour with no sound of aeroplanes or thankfully bombs falling, Dad ventured out, turned on the radio and heard the news of what had happened. We therefore went back to bed.

I was 15 years old at the time, and this attack confirmed my desire to join one of the armed forces when I turned 18, if the war lasted that long, to "do my bit", this being a favourite phrase at the time meaning to do something positive to help drive back the "Yellow Peril" as the Japanese armed forces were known.

Soon after my 18th birthday in 1944, I enlisted in the RAAF and after training as a telegraphist at Pont Cook in Victoria, was posted to Merauke, on the south coast as what was then Dutch New Guinea, and was there when the Japanese surrendered in August 1945.

Thankfully, this was the only time we used the air raid shelter!

Ron Jarvis  
Kings Langley

In May 1942 I was seventeen years old. I travelled by Manly Ferry to school, to Sydney University and then to work in the laboratory at Commonwealth Industrial Gases from 1936 to 1947.

On the night of 31 May 1942 I boarded the ferry at Circular Quay to return home to Manly. As was often the case, a number of searchlights were switched on over the harbour. The ferry as usual was blacked out. We only travelled a short distance, not far past Bennelong Point, when we stopped. We reversed back to Number 3 wharf at Circular Quay.

I walked to Wynyard, caught a tram to The Spit, walked across The Spit Bridge, bus to Manly wharf then home to 88 The Corso.

Next morning, Monday 1 June, I caught the 7.40 ferry from Manly to Sydney on my way to University where I was a second year student in Chemistry. We followed the eastern channel and therefore quite close to Garden Island. There was Kuttabul, half submerged. At the time, I had no knowledge of the sailors who had died.

Within days, at Man'o War steps, part of one of the midget subs was hoisted by the crane attached to the steam barge, over the walkway to The Botanic Gardens. It remained there for some time, definitely not the composite. The public could buy parts as souvenirs.

My father, Percy Dorsett, bought a piece of the sub, a bolt I think. He had a small lathe, later

requisitioned, in his workshop. He made two key rings from the souvenir piece, one for my sister, Jessie, and one for me. As you see, I still have my Midget Sub Key ring.

The Chicago was gone from the dolphin over in Athol Bight. So were other ships. During all the war years the regular commuters on the Manly Ferry took a keen interest in the opening and closing of the boom gates and the naval ships and troop ships such as Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and Mauretania in the harbour.

I do not believe that the composite submarine was made immediately. Remember that there was complete mobilization of manpower and industry and fuel supplies. I have heard that parts of the subs were originally stored at Garden Island.

My future husband, Doug Hall, who I was yet to meet in 1942, was sent from CIG to collect gas samples from the midget subs to try and ascertain how long the crews could have survived and whether the attacks were suicide missions.

Thelma J Hall  
North Turramurra

Call (Walked home from Manly to Croydon as trains had stopped) Jeannette Fotheringham,

I live at 66 Beresford Road Rose Bay where I was on the night of 31st May 1942.

Studying my final year at Scots College, I was awakened at midnight or thereabouts by shells whizzing through the air. One exploded with an almighty noise 200 yards away in Plumer Road between Balfour Road and Salisbury Road.

The sound of screams and broken glass was obscured 15 minutes later by air sirens. On inspection later, of shrapnel scarred buildings and a destroyed ground floor flat kitchen window and destroyed gas stove. I observed an enterprising tenant selling as souvenirs, pieces of his gas stove. I demonstrate today to my grandchildren the still visual scars

Most flats had been vacated by Australians at war. My father used one as an air raid warden. Some more were occupied by refugees from Hitler's Germany. Sadly they vacated to Katoomba the following week. They had had enough, as this followed a week after the Japanese submarine attack on Sydney Harbour.

Multiple shell casings had bounced off the water from the US Chicago firing at the submarine, landing in Double Bay.

The submarine attack was announced by a well primed rum smelling fisherman. He rowed to the biscuits Arnotts yacht Lauriana on patrol outside the net. In slurred speech he complained that "a submarine periscope had just snagged his line out there". Dutifully Lauriana sent by Aldis lamp, there being radio silence the message to the signal station atop Vaucluse. After a significant pause, the reply was "tell him to take more water with it". The reply was jarred by an almighty explosion as the submarine, caught in the net, blew itself up.

In the meantime the second submarine aimed at the US Chicago. The faulty torpedo went under the Chicago and hit the Kuttabal ferry used as a sleeping dormitory for sailors on Garden Island, killing about 30. The Chicago dropped a man on the buoy, to undo the mooring shackle. To the sailor's delight the Chicago bolted leaving him on the buoy to enjoy time at Kings Cross before rejoining his ship.

The exciting time in Sydney was swapped for a more exciting time as a bomb aimer in Lancaster bombers in R.A.F over Europe.

John Musgrove  
Rose Bay

The Night the War came to Sydney Harbour

1942. The war in the Pacific was coming ever closer to Australia  
Pearl Harbour had been attacked in December 1941.  
Darwin had been bombed on 19 February 1942.  
Food, petrol, and clothing rationing was in operation.  
Brownouts had darkened our city at night.

All our beaches had barbed wire and concrete barricades to resist a possible invasion from the sea.

Sydney Harbour was a very busy seaport and naval base and for that reason, an anti-submarine net had been built across the harbour. It went from Georges Head on the western side to Green Point on the eastern or Watson's Bay side of the harbour. At each end of the net was a boom gate to allow shipping to pass in and out of the harbour. The boom gate on the western end was the larger of the two gates. The smaller boom gate at the eastern end of the net was mainly for ferries and smaller shipping.

My story took place on the last Sunday night in May 1942. I was nearly sixteen years old. I was travelling home to Manly on a late ferry. There were only about seventy passengers on the ferry at that time of night.

The weather was cool and calm with very little moonlight, as our ferry was approaching Bradley's Head. We passed the American heavy cruiser "U.S.S. CHICAGO"; it was at anchor in Athol Bay. A few minutes later, we rounded Bradley's Head, only to be confronted with the display of searchlight activity, down at water level, something I had never witnessed before. It soon became obvious that some kind emergency was taking place in this part of the harbour. As we got closer to the boom gate at the eastern end of the net, the searchlight beams were concentrating on that part of the net.

The Manly Ferry timetables had recently been adjusted, to allow the ferry from Circular Quay to arrive at the boom gate about the same time as the ferry from Manly. This was to reduce the number of times the boom gate had to be opened. The opening was sufficiently wide enough to let only one ferry to pass through the boom gate at a time.

Another precaution that had to be observed by all shipping that had to pass inside of the Heads was to extinguish all visible lights, so as not give the enemy any indication of the harbour entrance. But so much for the details about the net and the boom gates.

It's back to my story. When the boom gate opened our ferry from Circular Quay moved through the gate. The ferry from Manly was slowly starting towards the gate to pass through. As soon as our ferry cleared the opening, both ferries were in darkness. The beams of the searchlights were scanning both ferries and the boom gate area.

One of the beams concentrated on the ferry from Manly and as the beam panned just behind the stern. I got a definite glimpse of what I believed to be a periscope, closely following the ferry from Manly through the gate.

It was only then I realised Sydney Harbour was being threatened by what I believed to be a submarine.

I do not know how many passengers on our ferry had seen what I had seen, but the thought went through my mind, I had never been so close to an enemy before.

As we left the searchlights beams behind us, our ferry in total darkness, all of a sudden the waters of the harbour started to look very black and ominous. I can tell you, I was pretty scared. It seemed forever, before we arrived at Manly. When my feet were safely on the wharf, I was very relieved, believe me.

This is one journey to Manly I will never forget.

I had a fifteen-minute walk home from the wharf. I was only about half way home, when all hell broke loose. The noise of explosions – what I believed to be heavy gunfire – was coming from the direction of Bradley's Head. The commotion and noise lasted for nearly an hour. It was not until the next morning we heard the news on the radio.

Three Midget Japanese had attempted to get into Sydney Harbour with the intension of torpedoing the "CHICAGO" and as many warships as possible. The raid failed to do any damage to any of the warships. However, sadly twenty-one sailors died when one of the Japanese torpedoes hit a seawall at Garden Island, very close to where the old Sydney Ferry "KUTTABUL" was moored. It was the sleeping quarters for these unfortunate sailors.

Two of the three midgets Japanese submarines that got into the harbour were sunk by depth charge or scuttled. The third midget sub escaped and mysteriously disappeared.

As I recall for some weeks after the disappearance of the third sub, sightings were reported mainly in the Broken Bay area. The Navy conducted several searches but no traces were ever found.

After the salvage of the sub that had been sunk by depth charge in Taylor's Bay, and the second sub that was fouled in the anti-submarine net near the Western boom gate, a composite of the two salvaged subs were displayed in front of Customs House, Circular Quay, Sydney. They are now permanently exhibited at the National War Museum, Canberra.

Epilogue In November 2006, nearly sixty-five years after its mysterious disappearance the wreck of the third missing midget Japanese submarine (M24) was located about 3 km off Sydney's Northern Beaches near Newport.

Kevin J. Loughry  
West Albury

At 35 I was employed as a supervisor on the British Naval Torpedo Base at Milson Point. On the nights of 31st May and 1st of June I was living in Kirabilli House with my wife Jean and son Barrie.

We were the guests of the State as Mr Curtin our Prime Minister had refused to live in Kirabilli and so it was let to a Mr Smith who welcomed me and my family as live-in people in one of the flats which was available.

Kirabilli overlooked the whole scene which was directly below us. It was dusk and an appeal for people not to light cigarettes was made. I had trouble with a spinster who lived in one of the flats. She kept lighting up all of the time. She was a woman who left money lying around and then kept accusing my son of being a thief.

It was dark but my view from the front of the House was complete. I could see the landing shells that at that time I believed were being fired from our protection area, with some of them doing damage in Rosebay which was directly across the harbour from my view point. As dawn broke the anxiety below us decreased and I went to work as usual.

This is a remembrance of my experience at that time.

Alex McCullough - 92years and 10 months.  
Mount Beauty

I have just completed a history of my own life.

I have read, with interest, the article which appeared in the Wentworth Courier regarding "stories from the raid on Sydney", which states that of the ten shells fired from the Japanese submarines, only one exploded. A picture of a damaged house in Bellevue Hill is shown, intimating that the one shell that exploded was in Bellevue Hill.

Yet I am holding in my hand a fragment from a Japanese shell that exploded in Plumer Road, Rose Bay and landed on the balcony of a block of flats on the corner of Balfour Road, where my parents lived at the time.

Regards

Stephen Baer  
Vaucluse

I understand from the Wentworth Courier article "Stories from the raid on Sydney sought" (29/4/09), that you are interested in accounts of the submarine attack on Sydney Harbour.

I was born on 28/9/1934 so I was 6 at the time and living in Oatley. On the night of the attack, I was asleep in bed when the air raid siren, situated on a telephone pole directly opposite our house, sounded the alarm.

My parents carried me still sleeping and with my 11 year old brother, took shelter under a very stout dining room table with mattresses put on top. Despite the siren, I did not wake up. So I was not a witness. However I have a very vivid memory of being taken, some weeks later I think, to view one submarine (blown open) and put on display at Circular Quay.

I remember we queued for what seemed like eternity and then filed past and were able to look inside the submarine. I was struck by how small it was and how it was only possible for those in it (2 from memory) to move about by crawling along a tiny passageway. Apparently the commander wore full ceremonial naval dress and I was most fascinated by the Commander's ceremonial sword which was on display.

At the time my father, Myles Dunphy (Father of Australian Wilderness) was working extra hours, on top of an exacting job, with the Australian military creating the first detailed relief maps of the Blue Mountains. The idea was that, if the Japanese succeeded in invading Australia, the army would retreat into the Blue Mountains and fight a guerrilla war. On the night of the submarine attack, this must have seemed to my parents an increasingly likely and frightening scenario.

Dexter Dunphy  
Visiting Professor  
School of Management  
University of Technology, Sydney

I was going on 4 and on that night I can remember my father being called out he had received a phone call (Having a phone in your home was a rarity in those years) to alert the area around Grafton St Balmain of impending danger.

He was a member of the N.E.S whose job was to make sure that no light was visible from any dwellings and to help with any emergency etc.

On that night at 28 Grafton St after my father left for the N.E.S my Mother and I heard an aircraft engine somewhere overhead we all including grandma sheltered beneath our heavy wooden table maybe expecting to be bombed, Stayed until we could not hear the plane anymore.

In those days most homes had all their windows blacked out with adhesive backed decorative paper which only allowed a small amount of light through not enough to be seen from the air. My dad's 1939 Ford V8 and any other cars at that time had a white band of paint around the edges of the mudguards front to back and along the running boards. Also the standard headlights were replaced with external regulation front lights with down facing louvers showing a dim light on the road just in front of the bumper bar.

Not long after the event the torpedoed Lady Kuterbull ferry was lifted from the harbour along with the suicided Japanese midget submarine. I think that they were lifted from barges by a floating crane called the Titan. They were both placed at what was then called by the locals as Piltchers paddock (Now Balmain Container Terminal) at the edge of the sea wall facing each other I can remember the ferry was leaning slightly towards the bay.

Think that the sub was in two halves can remember at a later date not long after walking inside the interior was painted a sort of a light greyish blue as I remember it, but I was around 4. Both vessels were guarded for a short time but in typical Aussie fashion in those days the guards disappeared and it was a free for all. Samples were removed mainly from the ferry by many locals with my father borrowing the pie oven made of 1/8"plate steel in which he used to dry hair for the artist brushes that he made. From the submarine I have a small stainless stating in Japanese (Oil Daily)

After a while the sub was removed leaving the Kuttubul to be cut up for scrap, the last piece of that I can remember was rear end of the keel with the propeller still attached. Where would that brass propeller be now was it melted down or is it still being used somewhere on a vessel skippered by an unknowing captain.

Warren Davies

On Friday 24 April I read an article in our local paper the Border Mail, asking for information regarding the Japanese Submarine attack on shipping in Sydney Harbour, in May June 1942.

I had just turned 5 years old in 1942, my parents Garnet Reid senior and Thelma and myself lived at flat 2/63 Bersford road Rosebay. The property was owned by a Mr and Mrs John Promford they had two daughters name of Hope and Gloria they lived in flat 1/63. I lost touch over the years I feel both would be deceased as they were 15 and 12 years older than I.

I only have a vague recollection of shells flying over us, but remember being told a few years later that a Japanese mother submarine had released 3 midget submarines to into Sydney Harbour under shipping when the net across the Harbour was opened. The mother submarine was sitting off Bondi beach trying to shell the flying boat base at Rosebay this was about a mile from us.

I remember being told that a shell landed in a child's sand pit at the back of 67 Bersford 2 doors from us, the shell did not explode, the army were called in. There was also a block of flats hit by a shell which exploded I think on the corner of Plummer and Balfour road Rosebay.

It is quiet a while since I have been to this area but it was the net corner south of the shops on Plummer road.

It I remember correctly the front of the ground floor flat was destroyed and a person or persons killed.

My parents told me about a friend who lived at Pasley Bay in a block of flats, sorry I do not recall their names. I cannot remember the flat number in pasley Bay road either, but it was 5 or 6 buildings to the west of the swing bridge that overlooked the bay. I was told this couple had a son in the navy, he was home for a couple of days leave. I am told he could not sleep and got up and went for a smoke on the flat's verandah which overlooked Pasley bay some

time around midnight he heard a diesel motor running, I was told he saw what he suspected to be the top of a small submarine sitting just off shore.

He got dressed and rang Garden Island from the local phone box, to report what he had seen and heard.

He was told to go home and if there was a torch in the house to shine a light at the minesweeper that had been despatched, to let the crew know where he was. I believe that there were no depth charges used as it was too shallow and close to shore. The submarine was not found that night, but could have been the one that got snagged in the boom net. I am sorry I can not provide more information.

Yours faithfully

Garnet Reid  
Wodonga

We lived a long way from Sydney Harbour at Rawson Road, Guildford, in a little weatherboard house, on 2 acres of land, where my parents had a poultry farm, though father, at that time, was away in the army.

It must have been during the evening as my sisters, aged 7, 9 and 10 were still up, when mother heard distant rumbling, explosion like noises so went out on the veranda to investigate. That was before the "ALERT" siren went.

Then when it did we, and mother, with new baby sister and elderly great aunt huddled and cuddled together believing that bombs would soon drop on us and 'the end' was near! I can't remember how long it was before the "all clear" sounded or how we slept that night, or about the news next day.

I don't know what your research is in aid of but because you have a Parramatta address and because from 1938-late 1942, I went to school in Parramatta (at "Tara", then Miss Waugh's' school, Hassall St Parramatta), you may be interested in further memories of that time?

Looking back it seems those happy school days were punctuated by air raid practices in the playground shelter and overshadowed by the fear of "WAR"!

Best wishes

Judith Pierson  
Hornsby

Nita McClure was in her mid teens and on the Manly Ferry on the way to Chatswood. They had just come through the boom gates when the ferry stopped, there were search lights on the ferry, the ferry moved and stopped a number of times. They stopped again near the US ships and there were multiple search lights on the ferry. They finally reached the wharf and she caught the train to Chatswood. They were not aware at the time as to what had happened.

As a teenager she was quite excited by the experience at the time, this turned to a fearsome feeling the next morning when she heard on the radio what had happened to the Kuttabul including the reports that the sub had entered the harbour under the ferry.

This feeling stayed with her a number of years and kept her away from catching the Manly Ferry during this time.

Nita McClure

Sunday, 31st. May, 1942. A date I will never forget.

Not so much for what happened, but for what could have happened. At the age of 18 I had just completed basic training as a Signaller and was attached to 2nd Corps Signals, camped at OATLANDS, in the Parramatta district. Things were winding down in camp as several drafts had already moved out in a week or so, and on this particular weekend was enjoying a leave of absence, due to report back at midnight.

At Circular Quay during the early evening I spotted Sydney's Showboat about to leave on its regular Harbour Concert Cruise, and upon an impulse boarded the craft. In those days Sydney's Showboat was a large ferry, based at Circular Quay, fitted out well for Harbour Cruises, Dance Party nights, and Concert Performances. I was soon enjoying the concert, although the only act I remember is of a huge Maori Chieftain doing war-dances.

I remembered him because I'd seen him earlier performing at the Tivoli Theatre. Despite the nightly blackouts imposed on the city, regular ferry services still operated at night fully illuminated, with out Showboat brighter than most, because of its entertainment role.

Despite Pearl Harbour in December, 1941, and the Darwin raids in February, 1942, most Sydneysiders regarded the war as being far away. Even the suspected flight of an enemy sea-plane over the harbour on the previous night didn't seem to alarm people to the fact that the war was at the front door. Most regular ferry commuters had passed the severely damaged US Cruiser, the "CHICAGO" by day. It was anchored close by Taronga Park and was being extensively repaired. I recall seeing the whole front blown away, with sailors at every level working with acetyl in torches on what appeared to me a shattered mess.

At the conclusion of the concert, our boat pulled into Circular Quay, at approximately 10.30pm. I boarded a tram, went to Wynyard Railway, and within the hour was walking through the gates of our camp. At that point I heard huge explosions coming from the city and saw searchlights sweeping the skies over the city. I should point out that our location at OATLANDS was fairly high with views of the city skyline at any time. I recall commenting to the guard at the gate that the city was putting on a pretty realistic exercise.

It was morning before we were fully alerted to what had happened sometime close to midnight, when 3 Japanese mini subs had apparently penetrated the boom-gates across the harbour and attempted to destroy the "CHICAGO". It was sad to hear of the deaths on our "KUTTABAL" which was just a training craft berthed at Garden Island. The rest of this story has been well documented but I can't help thinking that our brilliantly lit Showboat must have presented a temptation but they had bigger fish to catch. We must have been in the sights of their periscopes, at least for a while. It's a thought.

John Tesoriero  
Lane Cove

Regarding info sought in Wentworth Courier article about 1942 Bradley Ave house in Bellevue Hill. My father had been given a saucepan that sustained damage in that attack. He visited the site to take photos very soon after. I sent the saucepan to AWM Canberra two or three years ago, where it was accepted by Chris Goddard (assistant curator). Note I have photos.

Richard Moseley  
Bondi Junction

I can recall vividly that particular day. I mention facts leading up to my involvement so as to explain the story. From Business College in 1941 I was placed in a Secretarial position with a firm of Consulting boat Accountants, the principal and two other gentlemen. The office was in George Street, Sydney. I was fourteen years old, I loved the work which involved typing, visiting the bank and also often required to deliver important documents to the Principal who

spent most of the working hours at the ministry of munitions in Market Street, Sydney.

Censorship of mail and security was known to us all. A very good way to know some happenings was to visit the "newsreel" small theatres set up for that reason. One particular one was very close to Wynyard in George Street.

During the morning of 31st May 1942, I was requested to collect from the Bank in George Street, the cash payroll required for a firm called "Snow Cream" in Manly, (one of our clients) because the managers of that firm were unable to do so because of having to appear in court.

I cannot recall the exact time but collected pay roll from the bank then proceeded to Circular Quay, where I boarded the ferry headed for Manly. With the other passengers we were all enjoying the view, when suddenly the engines stopped I cannot remember our exact position but do believe it would have been just past the Heads the only announcement made was that we would proceed as soon as possible.

Estille Whittington  
Penrith

Her husband Raymond McClymont was in the Merchant Navy. His was the last ship out of the Boom net.

Lillian McClymont

I am writing to tell you that the photograph of the house in Belleview Hill, bombed in the attack on Sydney Harbour by the Japanese, which was published in the Wentworth Courier dated 29 April 2009, was the house belonging to my great grandmother.

My father remembers that day very well because he, his parents and brother were living in Watsons Bay and my grandfather went to pick his mother up after her bedroom wall and side fence were damaged by the charges. The following day (I believe) he picked up the rest of the family and relocated them.

My father lived in Pacific St Watsons Bay which is right on the water. He remembers well all the excitement and all the kids and adults from the area launching their boats to collect all the floating shocked and dead fish from the harbour. My father tells it so much better. I would love you to hear his version so I can put you in touch with him, or get my sister to write his story for you.

I hope I am not too late in writing to you but my father's story really should be heard as it is really very interesting historically.

Thank you for publishing the photograph as we have heard the story a few times as we were growing up. It was quite thrilling to see the damage to the house first hand, to know that people really are interested and that this important and unique occurrence in Australian history will be properly recorded.

With kind regards

Kathy Pearson

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is in response to a request for personal recollections from the events surrounding the Japanese midget submarine attack. This is the recollection of my grandmother, Freda Sewell, then Tonkin, of the events in Sydney in 1942.

Freda was 29 at the time, and was living at Strathfield. She belonged to the NES, the National Emergency Service, of which Hilda Jamerson was the organiser.

An alarm in Strathfield rang during the night. Her father was the street warden, so he took his gear and patrolled the street, making sure that all lights were extinguished. He had a tin hat, a gas mask, and a torch. Her mother stayed at home, underneath a dining room table, in the centre of the house, on a mattress underneath, with a few mattresses on the top of the table.

Freda walked from her home in Strathfield to the patrol headquarters, about half a mile away, across the railway line. There were seven emergency ambulances in the headquarters. They were to be dispersed at arranged places in the Strathfield area. The idea was that if bombs landed, they would not all be lost.

All of the ambulances were cars that had been donated. Some of them had the back part taken out so that a stretcher could be put in. At that time she received training from a military technician in the maintenance of the cars. Normally, there were two girls who would sleep overnight at the headquarters. There were about thirty people in the group. The car was driven to the designated place, until the all clear signal.

At that time, nobody had any idea what was happening. In the daily paper there was a cartoon with three wise monkeys - with the caption "see everything, hear everything, say nothing". People were worried about the alarm. There was a lot of preparation after the bombing of Darwin. Her father went to a lot of meetings for training to prepare. Some people in the street visited the house to find out what to do because her father was the warden for the street.

Nicholas Sewell

The night war came to Sydney

Due probably to wartime censorship, the full and accurate account of the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour in 1942 has never been told.

As a thirteen year old boy living in Vacluse, I watched the whole bloody spectacle from the doubtful security of my family's front garden which overlooked the whole harbour.

Late on the night of the attack I awoke to what sounded like the moaning of a feral animal above the roof. My father, a veteran of the First World War, knew exactly what it was. "My God we're being shelled!" he said and hurried the family down into our underground reinforced concrete shelter which was out in the garden (In the 1940s air-raid shelters were as commonplace as swimming pools in Eastern Suburbs gardens today).

We sat there in our pyjamas surrounded by tins of corned beef and baked beans listening to the shells exploding in Rose Bay near the seaplane base which was the target, to act as a diversion to the submarines entering the harbour.

It should be noted that contrary to popular belief the mother submarines shelled Sydney once

only. This was on the same night the midget subs sneaked into the harbour. It did not return and shell Sydney a week later as so often incorrectly stated.

The seaplane base at Rose Bay was an important military target. It was where long range reconnaissance Catalinas, Sunderlands and Vought single float scouts flew their sorties.

We were expecting an air-raid but after about thirty minutes of silence all hell broke loose on the harbour so we left the shelter and watched, what was to me, the biggest fireworks display I'd ever seen. Apart from the deep shudder and spray from the depth charges, every gun of every calibre from every vantage point was firing into the harbour; tracer ricocheted off the surface of the water and into thick bushland on Bradley's Head starting a bushfire that burned for a week. I remember questioning the logic of trying to sink a submarine with machine gun fire.

It was about then that we heard the loud explosion of the torpedo which sank the Kuttubul with the loss of all hands.

I should mention that a net, complete with boom gate was strung across the harbour. The midget subs must have followed a ship in. Although I remember that one became tangled in the net and was a total loss.

Apparently, the Japanese subs mission was to finish off the USS Chicago, a large battle cruiser, which had been badly damaged in the battle of the Coral Sea and was docked in Sydney for repairs. It is untrue that the Chicago was about to raise anchor to exit the harbour where it would have had more room to manoeuvre for the simple reason that it's bow had been torn away by enemy action. I watched it towed through the Heads and down the harbour with dead US sailors still wedged in its wreckage.

There was an uproar in the press the next morning which demanded to know why our coastal guns hadn't fired a shot at the mother sub. It was discovered that guns and searchlights weren't manned that night with invasion thought to be only weeks away.

Not a thing happened on the harbour that I didn't know about. If I hadn't been so busy giving Oscar winning performances when pretending to be a casualty at air-raid drills I would have made a wonderful spy.

At the time houses in Vaucluse were, literally, a steal. Many were unoccupied and a deep water frontage, a Deco or a Spanish Villa could be snapped up for around the equivalent of a thousand dollars.

Donald Fish  
Double Bay