

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Recording of

Mr. R. A. Evans

Date of Recording: _____

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Recording in progress.

Mr. Evans: I'm living in Sydney, Australia. During the Pacific War, I was a Coast Watcher on Kolombangara (spelling ?) Island, Central Solomons. These are my recollections of the events prior to the rescue of Lieutenant Kennedy, PT-109.

Late one night my scouts reported a fire burning apparently on the water. Next day an unidentifiable object was seen floating out the Ferguson Passage. After being informed the PT-109 was missing I then thought there must be a connection and all my scouts were informed and instructed to search all possible places for any crewman or information about the unidentified object. At this moment, I was in the process of moving my station from Kolombangara to Geneva Island on the edge of Wonawona (spelling ?) Lagoon. On reaching Yono (spelling ?) Island, I was informed that two natives...two of my scouts had seen and contacted members of the PT-109 crew. One of the crew members called out, "White Star, White Star," and that satisfied the scouts. They were among friends. Very little conversation took place...the crewmen did not speak Pidgeon English. The word *Rendova* was sufficient because that was the nearest PT base and all the scouts knew it. No

writing materials were available, so one of the PT crewmen carved a message on a large coconut and handed it to the scouts and asked them to take it to Rendova. This coconut was also on the President's table at the White House. The canoe had to pass my new station on Geneva Island and all the scouts were aware that I was due there that day. When I reached Geneva, I was informed of what had happened and that the two scouts were on their way to Rendova. A signal was then sent to headquarters at Rendova and reads as follows, "Eleven survivors PT boat on Gross (spelling ?) Island...*stop*...have sent food and letter advising senior come here without delay...*stop*...warn aviation of canoes crossing Ferguson...*stop*...a Photostat of this letter is attached and it reads as follows," "On his majesty's service to senior officer on Ario (spelling ?) Island Friday, 11pm – Have just learned of your presence on Nauru Island and also the two natives have taken you to Rendova. I strongly advise you to return immediately to here in this canoe and by the time you arrive here, I will be in radio communication with the authorities at Rendova and we can then finalize plans to collect balance of your party. We'll warn aviation of your crossing Ferguson Passage," signed A. R. Evans, Lieutenant, RANVR.

Lieutenant Kennedy arrived at my station late afternoon and after discussing the rescue attempts being overnight, the following message was dispatched to headquarters at 18:50, August the 7th...to PWD. "Lieutenant Kennedy considers it advisable that he pilot the PT boats tonight. He will await boats

near Papperand (spelling ?) Island. PT boats to approach island from northwest as close as possible to 10:00pm. Boat to fire four shots as recognition and he will acknowledge with same and go alongside in the canoe. Survivors now on our island northwest of Gross.” He advises an outboard motor. *Full stop* Papperand Island is one and a half miles and bears 2-1-4 degrees from Magatai (spelling ?). A Photostat copy of above messages also attached and I might add that the message referred to above are now framed and was on the President’s office table when I visited him...the White House in May, 1961...and that’s the story.

(end of recording, tape 1, side 1)

FINAL copy
CD – #OH00206 – Mr. R. A. Evans
Transcribed by: K. Matras
Houston, TX
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