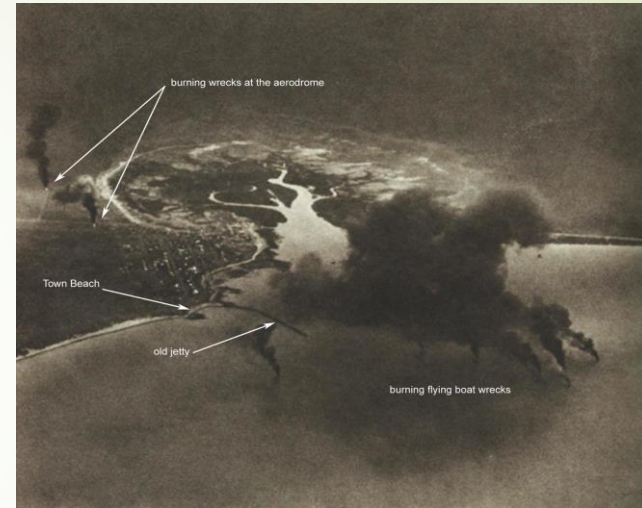


# REFLECTIONS

The human cost of the 20-minute Japanese Air Raid on Broome, on 3 March 1942.



**BROOME MUSEUM**  
**2 March 2023**



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Professor  
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University**

# The Loses of War

- **The Second World War was a watershed when civilian victims were as numerous as combatants. In this carnage, more children were killed or orphaned than at any other time in history.**
- **Today we Reflect on the Broome attack, naming the Dutch that died, were wounded or maimed from the ferocious 20-minute Japanese fighter attack on Broome airport and the flying boats in Roebuck Bay on 3 March 1942.**
- **I want us to consider the Dutch families and crew that entered Broome, compared to the fractured, traumatised families and individuals who were**
- **airlifted out of Broome.**
- **All told, 48 of the known 161 on board the nine Netherlands East Indies flying planes lost their lives by either gunfire, drowning, swimming through burning oil or caught in a burning vessel.**
- **16 men, 12 women and 20 children died that morning or thereafter.**
- **All the survivors were scarred for life, physically or mentally or both.**
- **None could not go home for support or comfort to the NEI or NL**
- **Both countries were occupied the NEI by Japan; the Netherlands by the Nazis**



# Naming the Victims

**Humans have a deep-seated need to name and be named, and researchers have long acknowledged that there is great power in naming things.**

**We name to identify, symbolize, refer, describe, simplify, organize and, most importantly, to tame to bring it closer. Through the act of taming, we make ties and emotional bonds with people and things.**

**I now name the victims**

# On Catalina GVT-17, Y-60

- Crew: L. Polak survived, his wife Klassina and 9 year old daughter survived, but were wounded. They were air-lifted to RPH. The doctors there decided to keep family members of wounded and/or burns victims in the same room to assist survival given the nature of the trauma and language differences. The Broome tragedy also alerted them to the benefits of dousing in saline, as in the ocean. It proved to provide a better chance of survival for burns victims. Professor Fiona Stanley burns unit emerged from these beginnings.
- Crew: G. Visser and his wife survived, their child died (The couple were now childless).
- Crew: H. Heblj and his son, aged two – died, his wife C. Heblj-Hooghuis survived with serious burn injuries (she was now a widow and childless).
- Crew: D. Hoogvliet, survived; his wife Mrs J. Hoogvliet-Duijtshoff, died (he was now a widower).

**There were 4 deaths on this flying boat**



# On Catalina GVT-17, Y-59

- Crew C.J.F. Albinus died.
- Crew: Sergeant Johannes Gerardus van Aggelen (32) (RNN) and wife Johanna van Aggelen-Kooten (32 civilian) died, baby Josina survived (O)
- Crew M.Borsch and his wife Johanna Borsch-Baars (36) died, their child survived (O).
- Crew J.M. de Bruijn, his wife & one son survived; a daughter and son Hendrik (4 civilian) died (They lost 2 children, the surviving child lost a brother and sister).
- Crew: A Spreeuw, died.
- Crew: B. van Emmerik and his child died; his wife, F. van Emmerik-Boer, survived (she was now a widow and childless).
- Crew: Sergeant Albert van Tour (RNN) (35) and his daughter Catharina (8 civilian) died; his wife S. van van Tour-Klapper, survived (she too was now a widow and childless).
- Civilians: Dr J.M. van Arendz and his fiancé J.M. Arendz-Polderman, died, his child survived (but was now an orphan).

(There were 14 deaths on this flying boat).

# Catalina GVT 17, Y-59 Josina Maria van Aggelen

Willy Josina Maria van Aggelen was a baby. Both her parents Sergeant Johannes Gerardus van Aggelen (32) and his wife Johanna van Aggelen (32) were killed. The pilot who rescued her, swam with her on his chest. He later adopted her.

On the right is her grandson. They are laying flowers at her parent's graves in the Dutch enclave, Perth War Cemetery



Ceremony to the victims of Broome in Karrakatta Defence cemetery

c2012

# On Dornier GVT-7, X-20

- Crew: J. Blommert died; his wife J. Blommert & 2 children survived. (Widow/fatherless)
- Crew: A. Kweekstra died.
- Crew: J. Walters died.

Lieutenant Bastiaan Sjerp; Mrs A Sjerp



Captain David Sjerp

David Sjerp was only sixteen months old at the time of the air raid. He recalls his father's account:

The flight to Broome probably was uneventful and the next day, after the aircraft was refuelled, people were waiting for further instructions. Then the raid came and we ended up in the water. My mother was not a good swimmer and, had she not been helped by one or two crew members of my dad's, she would have drowned. On the contrary my father was a very good swimmer and took care of me. David poses the question: ...**What would have happened had there been two children!**

3 crew died on this flying boat



# Dornier GVT-7, X-1

Crew: Jan Piers, survived. His wife Mrs C. G. E. Piers – Morien (Moriem???)42 and their two sons Cornelis (14). and Frans (7) Piers, died.

Jan Ruiter, crew member recalls the horror of the loss of Sergeant Jan Piers wife, Cornelia Gerardina Elisabeth and two sons, Cornelis and Frans.

I will never forget the screaming and the crying of the Jan Willem Piers calling for his wife and children. Not for the rest of my life.' He had jumped into the water and tried to persuade his wife and children to do the same, but she couldn't swim and was afraid to jump, also because there was fire everywhere. She decided to stay on the flying boat near the opening and was holding her sons against her. Jan tried to get on the boat again that was already burning; like the flames you can see when phosphorus is burning but the current was too strong. Two members of the crew had to take him away from the boat by force. Thanks to these men he reached the shore but he was crying and screaming all of the time. All the others survived. (He was now a widower, he had one other son as on the photo).

Eleven-year-old Ellie Koen recalls, My mother jumped in to the water, I followed, then my Mum swam to aid our father who was wounded.

A shark appeared nearby while she was swimming ashore. Ellie her parents and brother, all survived. They made QLD their home.

**There were 3 deaths on this flying boat**





# Catalina GVT-17, Y-67

- Crew: C. Amsterdam and wife Mrs P. Amsterdam-Willemse survived, their 3 children died. (The couple were now childless).
- Crew A. Kramer, his wife W. Kramer-Maat, Dr Kramer and a child Adri Kramer civilian aged 17), all 4 died.
- Mrs L. Lacomblé-Silvergieter, widow of the Captain of H.N.M.S. 'De Ruyter' died. Their son Rob survived (O).
- Crew: C. van der Plassche, survived, his fiance, Ms Loes Heidsieck civilian (25) died. Another woman and child van der Plassche, survived.
- Mrs J.J.J. Doorman-Herligus and son Theo, survived, her husband, Rear Admiral Karel F.W. Doorman, died in the Java Sea Battle 4 days earlier. (She was now a widow and her child fatherless). Part of the crew was rescued but Doorman, following navy tradition, chose to go down with his ship

There were 9 deaths on this flying boat

# Catalina GVT-17, Y-67

**Theo Doorman (8)** recalls the air raid

... Suddenly there was shouting, the roar of engines and the rattle of bullets piercing the aluminium. My mother grabbed me and shoved me under the bunk. Shortly after, when the plane was on fire, we climbed up to the flight-deck. Mrs. Lacomblé, the wife of the Captain of H.N.M.S. 'De Ruyter', had been wounded and lay huddled on the starboard side. Apparently she told my mother to go on as she could not swim anyhow. We jumped into the water from a hatch near the starboard pilot seat. I lost sight of my mother and I was sucked under the burning starboard wing by a fairly heavy current. I managed to swim free and after a while I saw another boy, who later appeared to be 12-year old Rob Lacomblé. Together we dived underwater whenever we heard the roar of the Zeros.

Mrs. Lacomblé, Rob's mother died, making him an orphan (O).

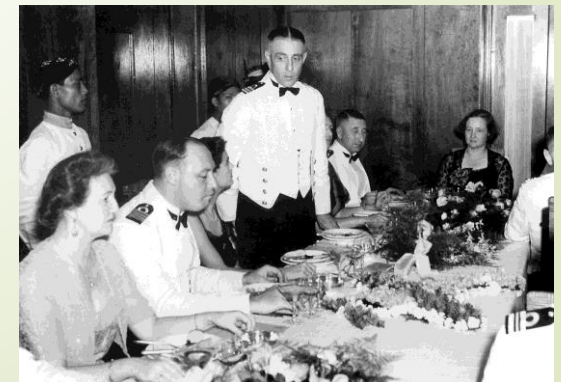
Rear Admiral K.W.F.M Doorman, his staff and *De Ruyter's* commanding officer, Commander E.E.B. Lacomblé chose to remain on board as the cruiser sank.



**Lieutenant Commander Doorman (Retired) of the Dutch Navy.**



**Y-67 and Y-70** – 'Left to right – Mrs. Hendrikse (died at Broome), Captain K.W.F.M. Doorman, his (second) wife, I.J.J.J. Doorman - Heijligers (mother of Theo, survived); Commander P.J. Hendrikse, naval commander of the airfield Morokrengangan at Soerabaja from 1937-1942.



# CATALINA -GVT-17, Y-70


**Crew: L. Brandenburg, his wife, Alida Brandenburg-Tromp (Trompie?? 30) and their child, all died.**

- **Crew: J. Kuin survived; his wife Anna Maria Kuin-Sturk (civilian 29) and child Elizabeth Kuin, civilian (5) died , (He was now a widower and childless).**
- **Crew: Luitenant ter zee Pieter Hendrikse RNN (51) and his wife, Jenny Hendrikse-van der Putte (28), died locked in each others arms.**
- **Crew: J. Schraver and wife, M Schraver-Kam, both died.**
- **Crew: J. Lokman his wife Jeannette, sons Johan & Johnny survived, their other four children: Hendrika, Jeannette, Jan & Johannes, died. (A tragic loss for parents and surviving siblings).**

**There were 13 deaths on this flying boat!**







**Many heroic acts took place that day by Australians, indigenous Australians and the evacuees.**

**Americans and Australians also in the other six flying boats and the aircraft on Broome airfield and in Carnot Bay, also died that day. I have only named the Dutch.**

**Lest we forget**

**The impact on the town, its inhabitants and the evacuees was and is formidable.**