

Earlier this summer the motion picture “Australia” premiered with a much romanticized version of the bombing of Darwin Australia.

While the movie's producer does not purport it to be an historical accurate portrayal of the actual event, it is loosely based on a gut-wrenching event in that country's history.

I have also compiled excerpts from the real history of the bombing, including the account of PMG workers (postal and telephone) losing their lives in the line of duty; or as we would say here in the States.....

In the Spirit of Service!

I have also included screen captures from the motion picture of some of the prop telephone instruments in the hope someone will be able to identify them, along with actual historical photographs.

Australia's Pearl Harbour

(Compiled From Various Sources)

Darwin Post Office and residence after the bombing. 9 PMG workers were killed in the raid and another died soon after from injuries.

The first enemy attack on Australian soil in the history of the Commonwealth of Australia occurred at 9.58am on Thursday 19 February 1942. The small Northern Territory town of Darwin suffered an air-raid attack by 188 Japanese aircraft. At the time of the attack the civilian population numbered less than 2000.

The man who had led the attack on Pearl Harbour, Mitsuo Fuchida, was in command of this first attack on Darwin. It had been launched from four carriers, Akagi, Soryu, Hiryu and Kaga, about 500km to the northwest.

Since the rapid advance of the Japanese war-machine after Pearl Harbour, some efforts had been made to secure the defence of the Darwin area. Darwin was the base of the 7th Military District of Australia. Larrakeyah Barracks contained men of the 23rd Australian Infantry Brigade. There were also two Australian Infantry anti-aircraft batteries. The important RAN base at Darwin included a floating dock. The RAAF was represented at a base, built in 1940, 8km south of Darwin.

Ironically, a radar station at Dripstone Caves outside Darwin was not yet operational. This newly invented aid, however, was eventually of great help in forestalling subsequent air attacks on Darwin.

There had been small numbers of American service personnel in northern Australia since before the attack on Pearl Harbour but from January 1942 a US presence began to extend to many other Australian cities.

By late February Port Darwin had become an important staging point for ship convoys and aircraft on their way to the fighting to the north-west. The port was particularly crowded on the 19th. A convoy of ships carrying Australian and American troops and supplies, escorted by USS Houston, had returned to port after an attack by Japanese aircraft and submarines. The congestion of the port contributed to the large number of casualties that followed.

In the town the Post Office had been hit and nine people killed. These were the Postmaster, Hurtle Bald, his wife Alice, and daughter Iris, four women who had remained in their essential jobs as telephonists, Emily Young, Eileen and Jean Mullen, Freda Stasinowsky, their supervisor, Archibald Halls, and another PMG worker Arthur Wellington. The air-raid trench in which they had sought shelter in the Post Office garden had received a direct hit. Walter Rowling, a telephone technician, later died from injuries sustained in the raid.

In fact, nine of the ten US Kittyhawks were approaching the airfield as the Japanese Zeros flew in and the Kittyhawks were shot down immediately. Four US pilots were killed in the attack. The airbase was therefore unable to mount any counterattack. It was left to the anti-aircraft batteries to try to defend the town. Although they kept up a continuous barrage from their gun emplacements, only one Japanese aeroplane was shot down by their fire.

The main target for the first attack was Darwin's harbour. There were upwards of 45 ships in the port, including the US destroyer Peary. Within minutes Peary had been sunk with a loss of 80 lives. Sunk also was the large US transport Meigs, though with a loss of only two lives. The Australian ship Neptuna, formerly a passenger vessel, was hit. Loaded with heavy explosives, it blew up with a terrifying explosion. The ship's captain, William Michie, and 45 crew members were killed. Five merchant ships were sunk. The hospital ship Manunda was hit but survived to play an important role in caring for the injured. Four people on the Manunda were killed including a nurse, Sistere Margaret de Mestre.

One of the most dramatic events of the affray involved HMAS Katoomba, a corvette being repaired in the floating dry dock. Although the ship was trapped in the dock its captain, Commander A.P. Cousin, RANR, ordered the 12-pounder high-angle gun and Vickers machine guns, together with rifle fire, to open up on the enemy divebombers. Both ship and dock survived, largely undamaged.

Just before the air-raid alarm and the arrival of the Japanese planes, 70 waterside workers had been unloading the Neptuna and Barossa on the right-angled extension of the long pier. When the pier was hit many wharf labourers were marooned on the edge. Dozens of men were blown into the water only to have to swim through burning oil. Twenty-two are known to have died.

There were many heroic acts as the dead and dying and survivors were plucked from the water by men in small boats.

Darwin Hospital was also bombed, fortunately with no loss of life.

At Government House the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Charles Abbott, his wife Hilda, and members of his staff sheltered from the bombing under the house. Daisy Martin, an Aborigine, and one of the Administrator's servants, died when a concrete block fell on her. All the others survived. There

were some extraordinary stories of escape from injury, such as **that related by Douglas Lockwood in his graphic book on the bombing, Australia's Pearl Harbour. Reginald Rattley, aged 26, a telephone mechanic, had tried to shelter with the Postmaster's group but found the trench too crowded. He sought shelter over the Esplanade cliff to the beach. As he jumped a bomb-blast lifted him bodily on to the sand where he landed safely.**

By 10.30am the first raid was over. It had lasted just over half an hour.

The shocked surviving population was just emerging from cover and trying to assess the damage when at 11.58am, the attack resumed. The second raid was launched from land in the Celebs and Ambon, recently occupied by the Japanese. This time the airfield was the target, the Zeros strafing and saturation bombing the airstrip with its easily targeted, un-camouflaged aircraft. The remaining Kittyhawk was destroyed together with a Liberator, three Beechcraft, three US Navy Catalinas, six RAAF Hudsons and a Tiger Moth. Surprisingly, only seven men were killed, including Wing-Commander Archibald Tindal RAAF.



<<Ground or
Station
Wire?



Brass?



<"King" Carney

CARNEY CATTLE CO.

CCC

CARNEY

Carney Cattle Company Hq.

Cow Boss- Stockyards

xmtter
mount



Crank Details

"Darwin" Harbour circa 1939

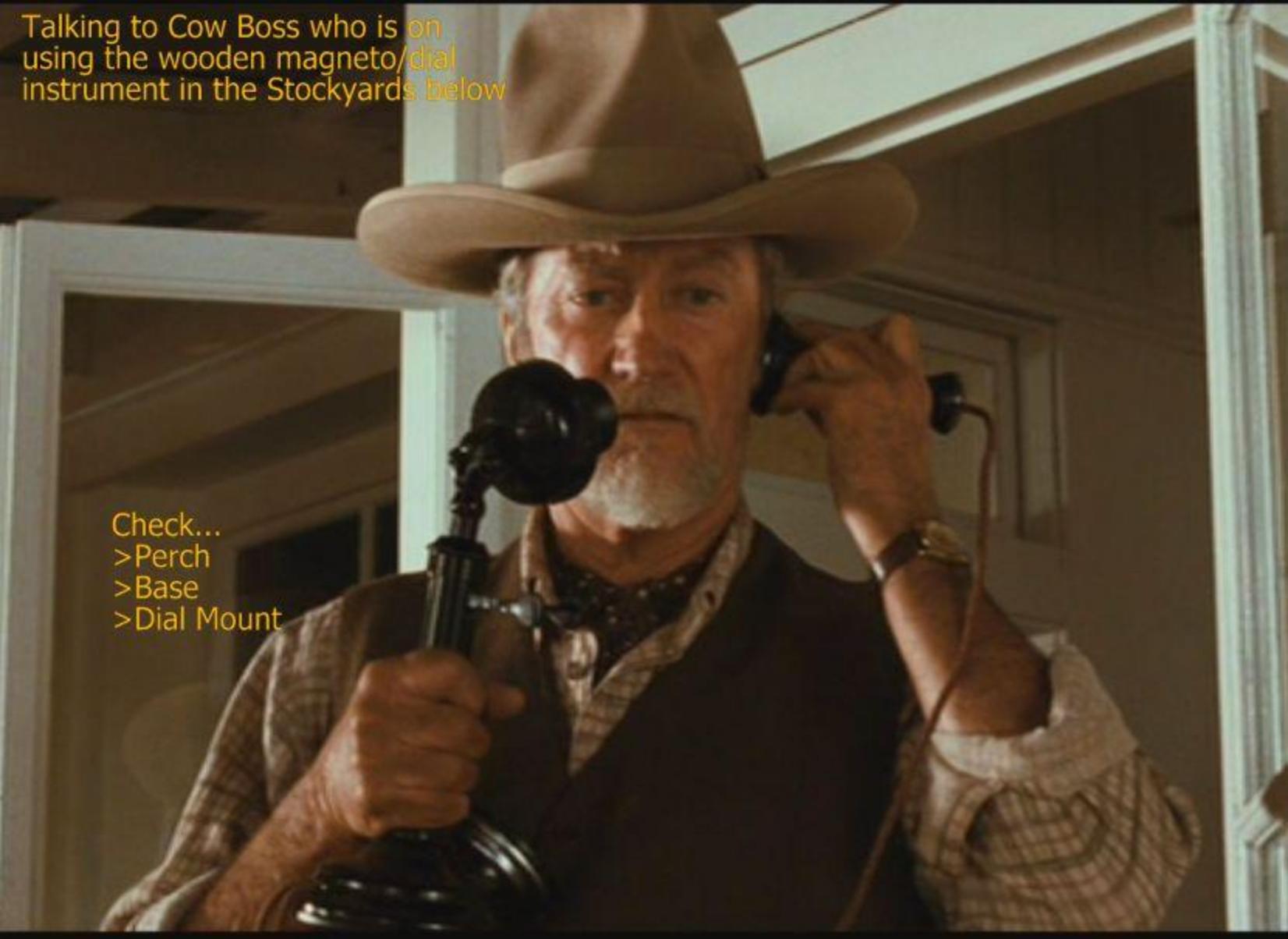




Mr. "King" Carney

Talking to Cow Boss who is on
using the wooden magneto/dial
instrument in the Stockyards below

Check...
>Perch
>Base
>Dial Mount



A close-up shot of a man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a brown cowboy hat and a dark vest over a patterned shirt. He is holding a black rotary telephone receiver to his ear with his left hand, which has a watch on it. A black rotary telephone base is visible in the foreground on the left. The background shows a wooden interior with a window.

Close-up of perch



Same Office
(remodeled)
about
6-years latter

"Darwin" Harbour

Desk Stand replaced with
combined Desk Set



Close-up of Handset



<<Proper Headset for era?

Close-up of Switchboards



A man in a black tank top and cap is looking out over a military camp. In the background, a large explosion is visible in the sky. The camp has several tents and a vehicle. The man is standing on a wooden structure, possibly a balcony or walkway. The scene is set in a rural area with hills in the distance.

<<<Direct Hit of Telephone Exchange



Stockyards>>

"Darwin" Harbour

A blurry, low-angle shot of an interior space. In the foreground, a black bar phone is mounted on a wall. To its right, a framed picture hangs on the wall. In the background, a large, ornate chandelier is visible, and a blue globe sits on a surface. The scene is dimly lit and has a vintage feel.

Bar Phone Close-up

Telephone

"Territory Bar"



Another Close-up
No Dial? >>

Inside
Wire? >





Remains of Darwin
Post Office/Telephone
Exchange
After Bombing of Darwin