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Royal Australian Navy.

DIRECTORATE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

CONFIDENTIAL NO. 508/7.

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

No. 34.

16th July, 1943.

FROM: S.I.O., N.E.Area.

TO : Director of Naval Intelligence, Melbourne.

COASTWATCHING REPORT - PETTY OFFICER L.SCHRODER, R.A.N.V.R.

1. Forwarded herewith, for your information, is Coast Watching Report by Petty Officer L. Schroder, R.A.N.V.R.

Encl -  
Report.

*J. H. G. G. G.*  
Lt. Commander, R.A.N.

~~S. R. I.~~  
Solomon's File.

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I arrived in the Solomons approximately 25th December, 1942 and was stationed at Halavo on Florida Island in Tulagi Harbour. The U.S. Naval Air Corps have a flying boat base at Halavo and I was engaged with them surveying possible landing beaches at Malaita and Guadalcanal. I was on this work for about three weeks. I was then called over to Guadalcanal by General Patch. He was desirous of obtaining information of the hinterland of Guadalcanal and also certain coastal areas. I was able to supply all the information required.

Later I was instructed to proceed to Savo with 200 troops. It was thought that the Japanese were using Savo for equipment and ammunition dumps to supply their troops at the western end of Guadalcanal. After ten days of thorough searching throughout the Island, we found nothing and returned to Lunga. I returned to Halavo and was then instructed to proceed to Ontong Java as assistant to Lieutenant McCasker, R.A.N.V.R., my particular duty being to carry out patrols of the various atolls which comprise this group.

After a period of two months, I became sick with dysentery. Following on that, in my weakened condition, I contracted influenza and then a severe attack of malaria followed which lasted for four days. I was in a very weakened condition at this stage and Lieut. McCasker signalled Lunga apprising them of this fact and I was instructed to return there for medical survey. On my arrival at Tulagi, I was placed in hospital at Halavo and kept there for two weeks. I was then sent back to Lunga and then ordered to return to Australia for further medical treatment and survey.

In the general interests of the Service, I consider that in the case of Coast Watchers on out-stations, on many occasions within the enemy lines, six months duty is quite sufficient. Owing to the strain, mentally and physically, the men at the out-stations are very liable to sickness. I think that this could be overcome by sending the men out for a spell in Australia whilst they are well; because if they are only relieved when they are sick and their health is becoming undermined, there is too much time lost in obtaining medical attention and in the recuperation period. This generally means that the man is useless for coast watching work for a period of perhaps six months and, in many cases, is never again fit for this type of work. I consider that men should receive one month in Australia after they have served in one of the out-post coast watching stations. I realise, of course, that there are several instances where this is not practicable, owing to difficulties of relieving the men.

In addition, all residents of the Islands over 50 years of age are, generally, not sufficiently fit to carry out the arduous duties of coast watching. Men of this age already in the Service, in my opinion, are a liability rather than an asset. Owing to hard living and the strain of living under active service conditions, they are unable to stand up to the climate.

*L. Nelson*  
Petty Officer, R.A.N.V.R.

6TH July, 1943.

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