

THE NAGASAKI BOMB

Experiences Of Three W.A. Soldiers

The second anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese port of Nagasaki occurred at 10 a.m. (Perth time) yesterday. Three West Australians witnessed its fall—Messrs. A. E. Montefiore, C. Parkins and G. Ross. Yesterday Mr. Montefiore told a representative of "The West Australian" about it.

"We had had a heavy air raid lasting about six hours on August 1," he said, "and after that the air-raid sirens were going almost continuously, but there was not much actual bombing. The Japs got so tired of taking us back to camp that at last they left us there."

"On the morning of August 11 I was working on the construction of an air-raid shelter for the 'Nip' guards, and you can bet it was not a very good one. At 11 o'clock we saw a plane streaking over the city very quickly. It dropped three parachutes and we dived into an air-raid shelter."

"Into the shelter you were making?"

"Not on your life! We had made one of our own. There was only one bomb and I've never found out what the other two parachutes were for. There was a blinding flash and a terrific bang. Everything went dark and the sun was out for about 15 minutes. It may have been the effect on the eyes of the brilliant flash that made everything seem so dark."

"There was terrific destruction all around," Mr. Montefiore went on. "An area of five miles by two miles was completely devastated and fire broke out immediately. We 'went bush' to the nearby hills. The crops of sweet potatoes two to three miles away were all scorched."

"We stayed in the hills that night and returned to Nagasaki next day and lived on what we could find among the ruins for three days. Then the 'Nips' took us to the hills, where we stayed for nearly three weeks. After that we were taken back to Nagasaki and put to work to clean up the mess."

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"The Japs stopped us working one day and had a meeting. Then they put us back to work; then stopped us again the following day. That was about one week after the war had actually ended, as we discovered from an American war correspondent, who said Americans had landed at Konoyu."

APOLOGIES.

"We Aussies got on the first train we saw and told the Japs to drive us to Konoyu, and they did. When we arrived and reported to the Americans they apologised because there were no sheets on our beds. We were put on a plane and flown to Okinawa, thence to Manila. From there we were brought to Sydney on the Formidable. We went to Melbourne by train and came on to Perth by air."

Mr. Montefiore said that he left this State in charge of some members of the 2/4th Machine-gun Battalion. Singapore having fallen, they were landed in Java, where he was transferred to the 2/2nd Pioneers. When Java was captured by the Japanese he and two other West Australians, D. Carter and E. Ford, fled to the bush where they managed to subsist until captured by the enemy a month later. Ford and Carter were sent to work on the Burma-Siam railway and Montefiore was imprisoned in Java until June, 1944.

He was then taken with other prisoners to Japan, he explained, the ship being torpedoed about 60 miles from Nagasaki. About 75 per cent of the prisoners lost their lives, Mr. Montefiore said. After clinging to an upturned boat for 10½ hours he and others were picked up by a Japanese whaler. They were landed and put to work in a factory. Their camp was in the factory and sheltered 212 prisoners, of whom 25 were Australians, 13 Dutch and 12 English.