**Geoffrey Barnes** b. 1932 Malacca (brother of Kenneth Barnes)

He remembers his father hearing about Pearl Harbor on wireless (radio), as well as news of the Japanese on the NE coast of Malaya – the report was that they were being “mopped up” by British forces. The family stayed put and Geoffrey’s parents watched Japanese advance “with growing apprehension.” There was an order for evacuation of women & children; his father took the family to Singapore to board a ship to Australia. Geoffrey’s father returned to Malacca – he“tidied up, collected essential papers” – and stayed until general evacuation order. The day after he left, Malacca was bombed & Japanese “suicide squads” were in the streets.

Geoffrey remembers evac as “relatively easy, really” – left 7 January, more than a month before fall of Singapore (15 February) – the island was bombed nightly but there was no panic. He went from the Adelphi Hotel to an air raid shelter dug in padang each night. The ship was crowded, “at least double the normal number of passengers,” with people sleeping in the dining room, saloon, in corridors & on decks. They were met by the Australian Red Cross & treated as refugees; the boys and their mom were taken in by teacher, Miss Shepherd, who had house in the hills above Perth. At that point, there had been no contact with their father since the family said goodbye in Singapore.

Later the boys & their mom moved into a house with 2 other moms (1 was a friend from Malaya) & their kids; their husbands were all prisoners of Japanese. Geoffrey’s dad was 49 at time of war’s outbreak, so he was too old to volunteer for service but he worked with Air Raid Patrol. In Singapore he was made supervisor of an area of the docks – he was held as a civilian internee at Changi.

**Kenneth James Barnes** b. 1930 (brother of Geoffrey Barnes)

Kenneth was sent to boarding school in UK when he was 7; later he talks about school in Australia. He was sent to Malaya w/ his brother on the ship *Viceroy of India* – chaperoned by a 20-something bachelor rubber planter. Kenneth’s father’s was secretary of Malayan rubber company. The family was in Malaya when Pearl Harbor happened – “my brother & I had just come back from our school in Australia” a week earlier. “We arrived with a whole bunch of other children.” Kenneth & Geoffrey’s parents met the ship in Singapore & the family went back to Malacca. Their father heard about Pearl Harbor on 8 December (note time/date change – would be 7 December in Hawaii/U.S.). The announcer said that “small parties of Japanese had come ashore and were being ‘mopped up.’” (His brother mentions this too.)

Singapore was still associated with safety; friends evacuated from Panang came & spent the night “on their way to Singapore & safety.” Their parents were increasingly concerned, but “we all thought that it was only a matter of short time before we would stabilize our lives.”

“I have omitted the dreadful news of the loss of the *Prince of Wales* & *Repulse* “(10 December). “I had been very anxious to go into the Navy as a career.” He was due to go back to school in Australia in late January, but “in my diary, I see that we had lunch at the swimming club on 1 January and I know that the young girl who was also at the lunch party was being evacuated the next day. Her father had been in the Malayan administration. It may have been that that prompted my father to bring forward our departure. The next week we heard that we were going to go back straightaway, much to our disappointment. [Interviewer asks “Why disappointment?”] “We loved our house, we loved Malaya… we didn’t realize at the time exactly what was going on. I should have done, I was 11 – but I was 11.”

“I have, I think, a memory of seeing before we left Malacca a Japanese plane attacking one of the little steamship company ships – it wasn’t sunk, I just remember the plane swooping down.”

The driver for their household refused to take family to Singapore; Kenneth & Geoffrey’s father was very upset, but speaker says he can’t blame him – he notes that the British leaving Panang had done so with no regard for local Chinese, Malay, or Eurasians – they were just concerned with their own safety. The family found another driver, but they got to the ferry too late & spent night on riverbank. They eventually got to Singapore and spent the night there; there was an air raid while walking on padang & they got into one of the air raid shelters dug along padang.

“It is difficult to be certain but I have the recollection that we could see the Japanese bombers & they seemed to be much faster than the fighters that we were putting up.”

The next day mom & the boys got on ship – “quite crowded, but not overwhelmingly at this point.” They sailed to Batavia (now Jakarta), and the streets were full of the Dutch colonial army along coast to Surabaya (Dutch naval base).

He & his brother went ashore at Australian port and saw in a newspaper that Malacca had been captured. “I ran back to the ship with the news and announced it, possibly rather petulantly…another wife in the saloon asked, ‘Are you telling the truth? If you’re making this up, I will beat you!’”

They continued to Perth and were taken in by a schoolteacher with a house in Darling Hills. The household consisted of “four or five boys, two or three women.” Of that time, he says, “Boys are quite resilient… I have an idea that some of the wives were pretty (tearful?)… no one, of course, knew.” Got one postcard from dad re: moving possessions to Singapore.”

The boys went back to school – “I must have been a bit reserved b/c I used to walk the mile & a half from the senior school to the prep school to visit my brother each day.”

News arrived of the fall of Singapore; the school was evacuated amid fears that the Japanese would invade Western Australia

The mother moved the boys to a day school so the family could be together (it was also difficult to afford school fees). They all moved into a house in Perth with 2 other moms and their kids.

“I can remember the enormous headlines, 2 or 3 inches high, when the first bombs fell on us in Darwin. Very hard times for the wives… didn’t know for a long time whether husbands were alive or not… also very short of money, b/c with the fall of Singapore our bank accounts were lost.” Their father’s company no longer had any assets – “Dunlop’s (name of co.?) did pay an allowance, but it was very small.”

Their mother wanted them all to go back to England – “on the face of it, it seems [like] a rather surprising [decision] in 1942, when the U-boat war was at its height – but I think she was just worried that if anything happened to her, what would happen to us?” He felt pressure to be the man of the family. There were many false alarms re: a ship coming; finally in May 1943 they got on a ship from Perth to UK by way of South Africa. “We left Perth at end of May & sailed pretty far south” b/c of so much Japanese activity in waters.