



A story from the history of Australian Artillery:
Commemorating 150 years – 1871-2021
QX4648 Major Rex Blow DSO, MID, Silver Star (U.S)
2/10th Field Regiment, RAA / 'Z' Special Force
'Born Fighter'



Lieutenant Rex Blow was never born to be a prisoner. Highly intelligent, a powerful swimmer and athlete, coupled with ruddy and tough physique and a zest for danger, he was the perfect figure of a young and competent Gunner officer. A member of the 2/10th Field Regiment, Rex had served admirably in the fight down the Malay Peninsula in the face of the Japanese advance, and was one of many thousands of Allied soldiers made prisoners of war, when forced to surrender at the fall of Singapore.

Originally imprisoned in Changi, Blow was like a caged animal. Eager to escape and rejoin the fight, he volunteered to be part of the POW draft relocated to Sandakan, Borneo. To aid in his eventual escape Blow had concealed parts of a radio, a .38 calibre revolver, ammunition and a map in his personal effects.

Biding his time in the infamous Sandakan prison camp, Blow made a run for freedom with a group of other escapees. Instead of heading south towards Australia as expected, they instead headed north to the southern islands of the Philippines.

Marrying up with the local guerrilla forces, Blow and his mates were handed over to the local senior officer, Colonel Suarez, commander of the U.S. 125th Infantry Regiment. The POWs were seconded to remain with the guerrillas and help train the growing force of irregular recruits. Blow and a fellow trusted Digger, Jock McLaren, led separate small bands of guerrillas attacking superior numbers of Japanese with great success. Both were integrated into Australia's famous - 'Z Force'.

Later in the war, Blow, now a Major, was tasked to conduct a close reconnaissance on the infamous Sandakan prison camp from which he initially escaped. It was hoped that a rescue mission could be planned in the future with the hope, to save the remaining prisoners.

Blow's incredible deeds were almost beyond belief, though the citation for his DSO summed it up perfectly, in stating – *'he was the most outstanding guerrilla commander of the Pacific War'*.

Sources:

Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P10684869>, accessed 15 August 2021
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