During the early dark days of 1942, the Japanese staged a daring long-range attack against the small Australian town of Broome — inflicting heavy losses on the many Allied aircraft that had gathered at the remote bastion in what would become known as “Australia’s Pearl Harbor”.

The United States had its Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Australia’s Pearl Harbor was to occur just three months later — at the town of Broome on Australia’s remote northwest coast. The similarities between the two attacks are remarkable: Both were surprise raids carried out by Japane Navy aircraft, both resulted in minimal losses to the attacking force, both inflicted heavy casualties in life and Allied aircraft losses. By further coincidence, pearling was the main industry in Broome, which was situated on the shores of Roebuck Bay — a southern hemisphere “pearl harbor”.

Early 1942 was a dark period for the Allied forces, as Japane troops were advancing on all fronts in the Asian-Pacific theater of war. Toward the end of February, the Allied High Command considered that a Japane attack on J ava could be expected within a week to ten days. As a consequence, all Allied personnel and their families were to be evacuated from the island to the relative safety of Australia. An aerial shuttle service then commenced between Tjilatjap in J ava, and Broome in Western Australia — a distance of 560-mile.

The maps he made on our luggers.

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