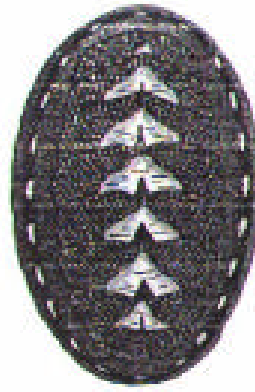


Moresby Town



As Alec and Molly were leaving the floor after a dance, the Base Commander signalled to Alec to stop by his table. Besides the Commander, there was his wife, Carol, Les Jones and his wife, Sally, and Mr. Edwards.

Alec introduced Molly, who acknowledged that she already was acquainted with Jones and Edwards. The Commander called for some more chairs, and insisted that Molly and Alec join them for a drink. Molly was placed in between Alec and Eban Edwards.

Molly explained to the Commanders wife that she was a teacher at the new school, and said that she remembered a few of her pupils whose parents worked at the airbase. Apparently Molly and Eban were the only ones in the group who had not met socially before.

Commander Ward's wife, Carol, was in a group of expatriate women with Sally Jones, and were regular visitors to the Ela Beach Club. Jack Ward and Les Jones had met frequently during the building of the school, and Alec had frequently gone with them on orientation trips around Moresby.

Eban turned to Molly during a lull in the conversation, and asked her how she was getting along in her study of *Tok Pisin*. When Les Jones explained that Eban was the resident expert in the language, it brought forth a torrent of questions from the rest of the table. "Why is there a necessity for another language besides *Hiri Motu*?" he was asked, and he told them that the great majority of natives to New Guinea lived in the central and North shores of the

island, and used the language daily. He revealed that he spoke several village dialects, as well as *Hiri Motu* and *Pidgin*.

Alec said that he was the only one of the present company except Eban to have been on the North Coast of the immense island. He gave a brief description of his being shot down and rescued in the early days of the war, and his subsequent assignment to his present duties. He said that he never had been able to thank the people who rescued him, and wasn't even sure of the name of the mission that made the rescue possible.

Eban told him that the mission was a Lutheran one, near the town of Alexishafen west of Madang. He asked Alec when he had been shot down, and then revealed that he was probably part of the party that brought Alec out. By this time everyone was hanging on Eban's words, and waiting for confirmation from Alec.

Both Alec and Eban were by this time comparing notes, and commiserating on the fact that neither knew how the other had made out after the incident. Molly was fascinated by the revelation that the assistant principal was not just another administrator, but had a life beyond what Molly could imagine.

By this time the entire table was focused on Eban, and questions were coming at him fast and furiously. He slowly told the whole story of the rescue, giving credit to everyone in the party except himself.

The military men in the party were obviously in awe of Eban's deed and through pointed questioning drew out from him his other experiences with the US and Australian army. Les Jones beamed with pride at each revelation and thought how fortunate he was to have picked such a man for his assistant.

After a while Alec begged to be excused in order to tell Tom and Pam why he delayed so long in returning to the table, and shortly returned to say that Pam and Tom had joined with

another party while they were gone. Molly enjoyed talking with the other two women, while the men went into a discussion of the fate of the airport after the war was ended.

When the dancing resumed, Alec danced with Molly and then was called to perform some of his official duties leaving Molly and Eban alone at the table.

Eban explained to Molly that as he had never learned to dance, he was reluctant to ask Molly. So they sat and talked about school matters and how Molly was so anxious to learn about the country and the native culture. Eban confessed that he knew very little about the Port Moresby area, and was himself trying to overcome his ignorance. He suggested that it might be wise if they explored it together some Sunday, as a sort of school-related project.

Towards the end of the next school week, Eban stopped in at the school library and asked if Molly wanted to join him that Sunday in a ride along the coast to a village that was the center of the *Motu* culture. He asked Molly to dress for the bush, and wear sturdy walking boots. That night in bed, Molly wondered, "What sort of man was this Eban Edwards?"