

# Survivor points way to wreck

■ By Jerry Pratley

ONE of the last survivors from a Royal Australian Navy stores transport ship sunk by the Japanese during World War II has helped identify the wreck's location off Arnhem Land.

John Leggoe, 92, of Mt Lawley, was a sub-lieutenant on board HMAS Patricia Cam when it was bombed by a Japanese plane on February 22, 1943.

The float plane strafed the survivors in the water, landed and took one man prisoner, the Rev. Len Kentish, a missionary who was travelling on the Patricia Cam.

Mr Kentish, who was later beheaded, was the only Australian prisoner of war to be taken by the Japanese from Australian territory.

Mr Leggoe was approached by the RAN to confirm what was believed to be the ship's location when it went down.

The RAN plans to send divers to positively identify the wreck, off Marchinbar Island, at the tip of Arnhem Land.

Mr Leggoe still has vivid mem-

ories of the attack. "The Japs caught us by surprise," he said.

"The hatch was a big open hole over the hold and the Japs dropped a bomb straight down the hole.

"It blew the bottom out of the boat. A couple of blokes were blown back up out of the hold by the force of the blast.

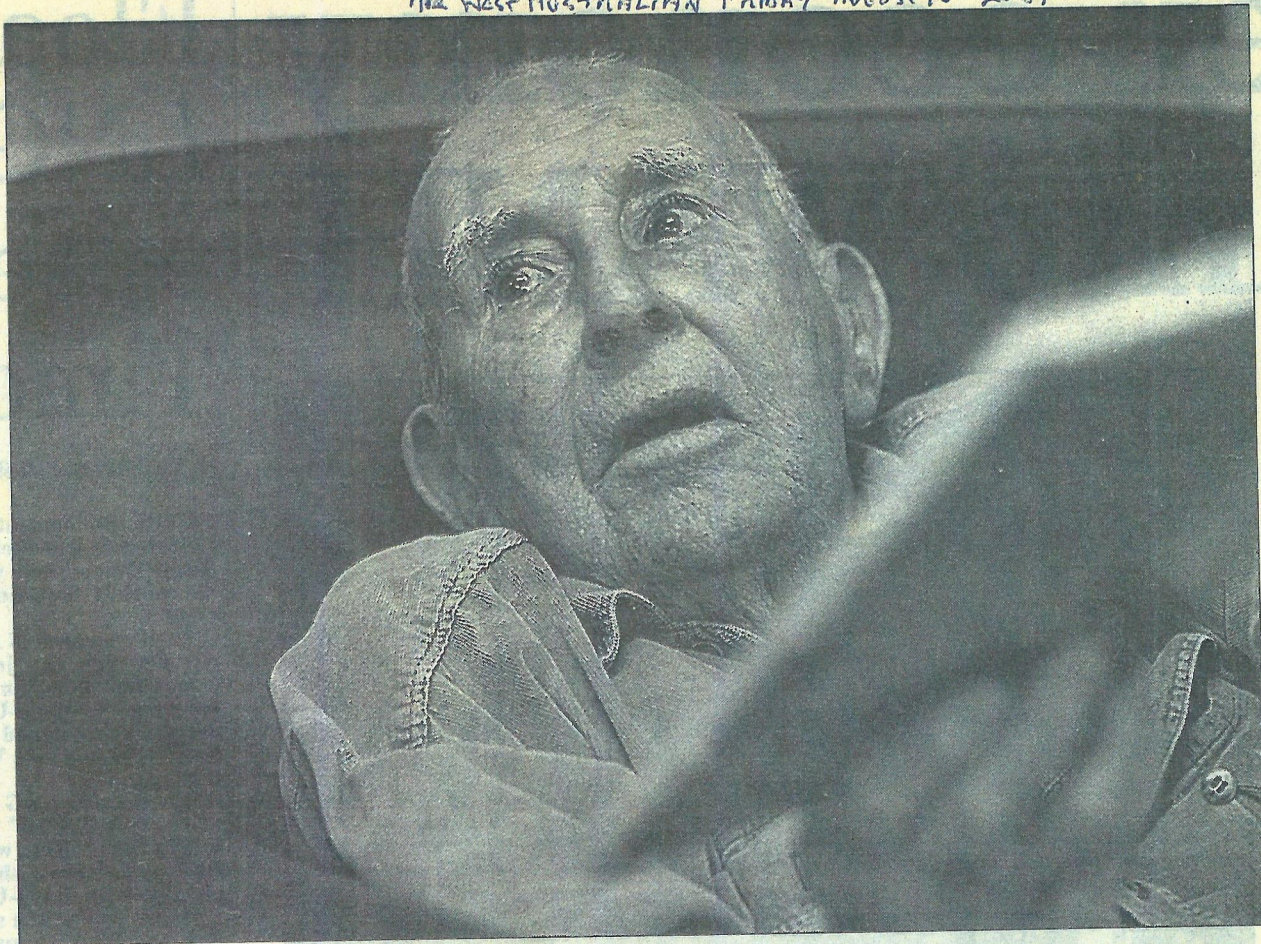
"The ship went down in about a

minute. There was no chance to get off an SOS.

"When we were in the water, the Japs bombed us and machine-gunned us.

"I dived under water to escape the bullets and just at that moment they dropped a bomb that blew me to the bottom of the Arafura Sea.

"I was like fish that had been dynamited.



**Old hand:** John Leggoe, 92, one of the last survivors from an RAN supply ship sunk in 1943. PICTURE: GUY MAGOWAN

"Maybe that's why I'm so deaf now. When I came up and had fresh air and sunshine it was the happiest day of my life."

Mr Leggoe and other survivors scrambled on to a life raft and drifted to a small island south of the Cumberland Strait.

The men were rescued after being spotted on the island by a search plane.