

"GOLDEN VOICE VIAL" PLAYED AN HEROIC LONE HAND.

1 **Flt-Lieut LEIGH GRANT VIAL, RAAF**

was the second Australian and first member of the RAAF to win the US DFC. The award was made by Gen MacArthur in September, 1942, for a remarkable exploit, which reveals why, in the dark days of 1942, Japanese raiding aircraft always found Port Moresby's defences ready for them.

2 In the early 1930's Leigh Vial, an old Wesley Collegian and Melbourne University commerce student, was one of 10 candidates selected from 2,000 to join the New Guinea administration as cadets.

3 Vial's work enabled him to know the New Guinea country well. He made a pioneer trek through the Finisterre Ranges, and was the first white man to ascend Mt Wilhelm, 15,000ft peak in the Bismark Ranges. When Japan entered the war he was an assistant district officer, stationed at Rabaul.

4 The Japs came to Rabaul, and, after helping to evacuate the inhabitants and eluding capture, Vial was flown out by Catalina. Later, he helped RAAF men get away from enemy-threatened Salamaua, and on arrival in Australia offered his services to the RAAF as a spotter.



5 In February, 1942, Plt-Off Vial went "into the blue." Only a small Air Force circle knew that, accompanied by a few native boys and equipped with provisions for six months and a radio set, he had established a lonely observation post in the hills overlooking Lae and Salamaua.

7 Moresby, where the message was immediately picked up and passed on, enabling defences to jump into action. Day and night he was on the air, and came to be known as "Golden Voice Vial." Time and time again he ruined the enemy's best-laid plans.

9 His life was one of extreme hardship as well as of danger and loneliness, yet he later referred to it as "dull work." His hideout was damp, his menu monotonous. Twice he went almost blind, and although he became crippled with a tropical rash, he refused to leave his post until the expiration of six months.

6 For six months he watched and transmitted enemy shipping and aircraft movement. When a flight of bombers took off from the aerodrome beneath, his voice carried through the roar of their engines over the radio to ...

8 The Japs tried to locate the voice. Once they flew over and photographed Vial's position, but immediately he collected his gear and moved to another locality. More than once he had to move, but he was never more than from four to six miles from enemy-held Salamaua.

10 Vial was on leave in Melbourne with his wife and family when he learned of his award over the radio, but soon after returned to New Guinea. In April, 1943, this 34-year-old officer, whose story was revealed a year later, lost his life when the plane in which he was travelling on a special mission was shot down by Jap ack-ack fire in the Sepik district.

Next Week: Flt-Lt Dudley Marrows, DSO, DFC