



*A view of No. 1 FBRD in October 1945 after a welcome rain. From the 15 August cessation of hostilities, aircraft buildup at Lake Boga increased as flying boats and seaplanes arrived for storage. Seven flying boats are moored offshore while several can be seen within the Depot, both in hangars and in the open. The stored Kingfisher floatplanes are in the centre of the image. (Frank Smith)*

Meanwhile on a flight from Morotai to Perth while repatriating POWs, Flight Lieutenant Lindsay Oats had occasion to land in the Swan River, Perth, where his Catalina became stranded on a sand bank. Oats recalled:

The flight was one of many carried out after VJ Day. On the way home we made a night flight from Darwin to Perth. Having studied the maps provided showing all the various hazards, I succeeded in setting the aircraft down on one of the very sand banks I was supposed to carefully avoid. Thinking we must have been on the outer edge of a bank I gunned the engines, only to find that by so gunning we went further on to the sand bank. After some ribald comments from the crew, we were taken ashore to enjoy Perth's hospitality while ground crews successfully towed the aircraft free.

Catalina A24-303 had departed Boga on 18 September to join three flying boats on a mercy mission to the Philippines, repatriating Australian POWs. Squadron Leader Ron Foskett headed the four Cat flight and by 29 September the RAAF flying boats swung at their moorings off Sangley Point, near Manila.

Now departing Manila, the Australian POWs made an early 0545 hour start on their homeward journey. As they climbed from a USN crash boat into their waiting RAAF aircraft, the men were each issued with Red Cross kits, medication and a pullover for altitude flying. Each Catalina carried twenty eager yet anxious Australians. Squadron Leader Ron Foskett:

The first thing I noticed on my Aircraft Manifest was the weight of my passengers, they had obviously been "fattened up" since the end of hostilities. We flew eight hours fifteen minutes from Manila to Morotai, and then on 30 September nine hours fifteen minutes to Darwin. This was one of the big emotional moments of my life, when we began faintly to discern the low-lying shores of Bathurst and Melville Islands, then Darwin. The men came up to the cockpit one by one and saw Australia again. There weren't too many dry eyes. We flew sixteen hours fifteen minutes to Brisbane on 1 October and on to Rose Bay the following day.