



## Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels at battle service

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September 06, 2006 03:58pm

Article from: AAP

**FOUR years' war service in defence of his country was, it seemed, not enough for Australian soldier Brian "Lucky" Leeder.**

Having helped defeat Japanese enemy forces during World War II, the digger was ordered to stay behind in what he described as "the rotten islands" of South-East Asia to help restore some sense of order.

"Those people had nothing to eat, nothing left at all. We Australians had to feed them, look after them, help with re-housing, for nearly six months after, you know," the retired 41st Australian Landing Craft Company veteran said of life in Papua New Guinea and Borneo after the end of hostilities.

"You could say it was one of the first major humanitarian operations Australia was involved in all around the South Pacific, New Guinea and the other places."

Mr Leeder today joined hundreds of veterans in attending services around the country to commemorate Battle For Australia day.

The services, held annually on the first Wednesday in September, honour those like Mr Leeder who fought off the threat of invasion from the Japanese between 1942 and 1945.

A highlight of the Sydney service, held at the cenotaph in Martin Place, was the attendance of two Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels – the Papua New Guinean villagers who worked fearlessly to care for wounded Australian soldiers along the Kokoda Track.

Australian diggers and the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels formed a special relationship during the many battles along the treacherous trail between Port Moresby and the village of Kokoda.

Kokoda Village chief Benjamin Ijumi, whose father and uncles were Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels, said the bond was still alive today.

"The bonds of friendship between Australia and Papua New Guinea (are) so much there that we are brothers during the war right up to now, and that concept is still here today with us," Mr Ijumi said at the service.

Governor-General Major Michael Jeffery addressed more than 130 veterans at a commemoration at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, while more than 100 veterans gathered at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.

Ted Lynes, the Victorian Battle For Australia commemoration committee chairman, said an important focus of the day was to encourage younger generations to honour all war veterans.

"In the seven years since we started the Battle for Australia (day), the response has been getting better and better – every year we get more and more people and schools involved, which is great," Mr Lynes said.

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