Australians at War Film Archive

Bruce Robinson - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:31 **So if you can take me through briefly where you were born, where you grew up and your schooling and so on?**

Well, I was born in Lismore in northern NSW [New South Wales] and I tell people I was born at the RSL [Returned and Services League], it is now the RSL, it was the hospital in those days, and we lived at Alstonville, my family owned a little shop in

01:00 Alstonville, between Lismore and Ballina. And then we moved to a farm at Durragy [Baryugil?], again outside Lismore, and we farmed there for some years, then moved to Kyogle, still in northern NSW and we farmed there for some years and I went to school in Kyogle itself. We had a change of farms, we

01:30 moved further north to a little place called Wiangaree. Basically there was my father, mother, one brother and myself. My father died in 1941 and my brother joined the air force so Mum and I ran the farm and I hated it and wanted to join the services, of course by this time the war was on. By this time I had finished school I had gone to second year in high school

02:00 and then left school to help with the farm. But with my brother in the air force I was always mad to get into the service of some kind. So it was a happy day when Mum decided it was too much, we had had a bit of struggle because there had been droughts and things like that and often at the end of the month instead of a getting a cream kickback we would get a bill if we had to buy feed and [things] like that. So my brother's allotment virtually kept us afloat. So we moved into town

02:30 sometime in 1944 and I was apprenticed to an engineering firm as a welder. But again, I wasn't terribly happy because people I had grown up with were away and I wanted to get away. Then the recruiting stopped, and I had made one forlorn effort to join the navy when Mum and I were out on the farm, it was forlorn because she wouldn't have signed the papers

03:00 and I got a letter back to say we were in a protected industry [an industry considered essential, whose workers were not able to enlist] anyway, so it was a token effort, I guess you could say. Then when it came time to legitimately join the forces they stopped recruiting at the end of the war. I had been in the Air Training Corps for about four years, I suppose, during this time, but that finished up too by the end of the war. But the next thing that came along,

03:30 the navy started to recruit and I thought, "I am in," but unfortunately it was only for twelve years and my mother wouldn't sign the papers again, despite a lot of wailing and weeping. And shortly after that the army recruited for two years to go to Japan and I persuaded her to sign the papers, I had just turned eighteen, and so I went to Japan with the occupation forces.

04:00 **Excellent, and can you just take me through briefly your time in Japan and then leaving to Korea?**

This first year I was in Japan [I] was stationed at a place called Kurashiki which is about four kilometres from Hiroshima, which we used to visit regularly, we didn't know anything about radiation or anything like that and every chance we got, we'd go in there, there wasn't much in there but

04:30 a lot of little gift shops were springing up and we used to wander through the rubble and walk around. That was a field workshop and that used to undertake repairs to Australian equipment. And then I was posted to a small unit with an artillery battery at a place called Hiro which was about nine miles off base from Kure and I stayed with them

05:00 until the British forces left Japan at the end of 1947. We moved up with 67 Battalion to a place called Okayama, about halfway up Honshu, and stayed with them when they were in that area, and then they moved back to Hiro and we rejoined 8th Field battery. And I stayed with them

05:30 until I came home when the occupation forces started to run down in 1948. During that time we did several exercises with 8th Field battery. During that time they were involved in guard duties on various

places and ceremonial parades in Tokyo and various gun firing exercises around Japan, around the southern part of Hiroshima prefecture.

06:00 And that was our, we repaired their equipment. And we came home at the end of 1948 and went to North Head in Sydney. I think I went to Japan in January 1947 and came home in December '48, so nearly two years in Japan.

06:30 I enjoyed the experience very much. [I] went on leave several times to various leave centres, they had several leave centres throughout Honshu. And all in all it was a great experience to someone that had never been overseas. We mainly stuck to ourselves

07:00 for entertainment. None of us had much money because there wasn't much money available in those days, the pay wasn't terribly good. But all in all it was a good experience, no great dramas except just before I came home one of our members was killed and that was a bit distressing because I was with him when he was killed. We had been to

07:30 the canteen in the evening, we used to get one bottle of beer a day. You couldn't save them up and have seven on Sunday, you had to have the one bottle. So after we had finished our one bottle we decided to go up to a canteen just up along the road about five hundred yards away and we had a bit of a meal and four of us were walking abreast along the road, two of us on the bitumen and

08:00 two on the verge. And we heard this truck coming along behind us at a great speed, we knew it was an army vehicle because Japanese vehicles didn't go that fast. And I was near the middle of the road next to my friend, who was on crutches, and he said to me, "We had better move over or this bastard'll hit us." And we all moved over a little bit, I moved right back around behind him, and he was hit in the back and was killed. And I can still see arms and legs and crutches

08:30 and things going along the road. He died on the spot. That was about two months before we came home.

What happened as a result of that?

Well the fellow that was driving had stolen the vehicle and fortunately the military police were chasing him and caught him just up the road a bit. I think he got three years or something like that, he was court martialled.

Why had he stolen the vehicle?

Drunk.

09:00 I don't know where he was going, into Kure probably, I don't really know, I never heard that part of it. But that was the worst thing that happened to me in Japan. And it's strange, in about the mid '90s there was an article about it in one of the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupational Forces] newsletters and I wrote in and said that I was with him at the time,

09:30 and how distressing it was, and I got a letter from his sister, he came from Leeton in New South Wales and she by this time lived in Ballina and she said she would like to see me because she didn't know the full details of it, she had been told it was a Japanese driver and an American driver and she wanted to know the story. So I met her and we had a good conversation and she was quite happy then to know what had happened.

10:00 But yes, that was the most distressing thing that happened to me in Japan at that time. I moved around in Sydney to a couple of units, and I was a gun fitter at this stage and that's why I was attached to artillery, and I didn't like the job I was in, we were attached to an ordnance depot, we were putting old guns into storage

10:30 and things like that. Working with a lot of older civilians and it wasn't very exciting and an opportunity came to change trades. This was in 1951 and I passed the course and was posted to Leichhardt in Sydney and I was there for a week, I think, and they said, "There is a posting to Japan as an instrument fitter, do you want to go?" and I said, "Yes I do, very much."

11:00 So I went back again. During that time, I was there for two and a half years again and was posted to Korea to a British unit. We didn't have an Australian workshop there at that time so they used to attach us to the British fields infantry workshop. So I spent about four months there, was hospitalised with a chest complaint

11:30 and was sent back to Japan. And after the war finished I went back to Korea again on an inspection team, but I was only there for about two months, I think, and shortly after that I came back to Australia. Other than that, when I came back to Australia I did courses, was in Sydney for a

12:00 while. Posted to a place called Seymour down in Victoria and then to Woomera in South Australia to the rocket range. And I was there for about three years, married there and was posted then back to a place called Bandiana, which is near Albury in New South Wales [but is actually in Victoria], and after

12:30 that went back to Melbourne and from there to Townsville, and then my last posting was in Brisbane in 1976 and I retired from there. So it covered thirty years, thirty years and one week. And through it all I

enjoyed my life in the service, fortunately my wife didn't mind travelling. She was from South Australia, and the only problem I

13:00 suppose we had was we didn't know where to settle. It took me twenty-eight years to get a posting to Brisbane and they decided that I could soldier on if I wanted to, the family was staying here, so I retired.

Excellent, we might go right back to the beginning now that we have reached the end, makes perfect sense, and talk a bit about your childhood and that sort of thing.

13:30 **Can you tell me about, first of all, your family owned a store?**

Yes. I don't remember too much about that, I was only very little then. My first memory was the farm at Durragy [?] just outside Lismore.

What sort of farm was that?

Dairy. Dairy farm.

What are your first memories of that farm?

Not a great deal, I enjoyed the life there.

14:00 There wasn't a great deal to do, we weren't close to town. We were, I suppose, about fifteen miles from town. We had a car, sometimes we would go to Lismore to shop. But mostly we just stayed on the farm and in those days kids made their own sort of fun. I started school there, it was just an ordinary country

14:30 school. Everyone sort of knew one another from the farms around and I think we left there in about 1932 and went to Kyogle.

In those early days you mentioned that you had to make your own fun, what sort of games and things did you used to do?

Games and our, I think my favourite toy was a treacle tin full of dirt with a string on it as a tractor,

15:00 I would pull it along. That's about all I had, I think. My brother was interested in catching butterflies so we had a butterfly collection. Just general everyday stuff. I didn't have any particularly close friends because the farms were scattered, of course. I had a cousin [who] lived just up the road

15:30 and she was a great help to me as a child. But nothing outstanding happened, we just lived from day to day, I guess you might say.

And how close in age were you to your brother?

Six years, I was the youngest and my brother was next, six years and then I had three sisters older again.

16:00 So they classified me as the baby and I assured them that I was the youngest, not the baby. They dispute that, of course.

And having three older sisters, was it like having three extra mothers or … ?

Well the eldest one, she cried when she couldn't take me on her honeymoon, I was told. But no, they all, except one, married while we were there, so they were sort

16:30 of out of our lives after that. We would see them periodically but they moved away so we didn't see that much of them. And there was only my brother and one sister left when we moved to Kyogle.

And what were your parents, were they farmers originally?

No, my father was a builder. And I often think he would have been a better builder than a farmer. He liked farming,

17:00 and this was during the Depression, of course, and although we didn't have much money we always had plenty to eat. But then before we left Durragy he started a bus run from Durragy into Lismore and that was another thing he would have been good at if he had stayed with it. My brother-in-law was helping us with the farm, he had previously had a farm himself and didn't do very good on it. So

17:30 he wasn't a world leader at farming either, so my father handed the bus run over to him and kept his herd of cattle and we just carried on on our own then.

As kids did you have any farm chores that you had to look after?

Oh generally just normal farm chores, feeding the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and helping out around the place, like sweeping the dairy sometimes.

18:00 Things like that. My brother, being older, he was more involved in the farm than I was, I had it pretty easy I think, until I was left on the farm with my mother, that's when things got a fair bit more difficult.

And you mentioned it being during the Depression, do you have any memories of the Depression affecting your family?

Not so much our family because, as I said, we had

18:30 plenty to eat but I can remember in Kyogle particularly, the number of people out of work and families were pretty hard up, it was a bit of a struggle time for them. I found out that from the children going to school. A lot of the things they couldn't participate in because of money shortages. But that we lived

19:00 the first farm in Kyogle was about five miles from school and I had to ride a horse to school and then when we moved up to Wiangaree I used to ride again to Wiangaree and catch a train in then to town, about eight miles in a little train. Things got a little better then because during the war there was more money around and people were a bit better off, but the early

19:30 days in Kyogle were really tough.

So how did it happen that your family always had enough to eat, was it due to the farm?

Oh, we had plenty of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and the neighbours would kill a beast and share it and we always had a vegetable garden. And Mum was a good provider, she had been brought up in a fairly ordinary family

20:00 and she knew how to get the best out of everything. So there was always plenty to eat. One of my favourite fares in those days was rabbit, we had stacks of them but Mum wouldn't cook rabbit, there was no way she would ever cook rabbit. So I used to have to go to the neighbour's place for a meal of rabbit.

Why wouldn't your mother cook rabbit?

Her theory was it was too much like cat.

20:30 So she wouldn't entertain the idea.

And would you and your brother or your father hunt rabbit and that sort of thing?

Oh yes, but we would feed them to the, my uncles lived in Tweed Heads and periodically they would spell them out on the farm with us and that's what we would feed the dogs on.

21:00 **And how would you hunt the rabbits?**

With dogs. We didn't trap or shoot at that stage, we always just hunted them with dogs.

And these little, the schools that you went to, what were they like, how many teachers and how many students?

Well the school at Durragy where I

21:30 first started, there was one head teacher and I think maybe one or two other teachers, they were combined classes. But Kyogle was an intermediate high school so they had teachers for all sorts of subjects. Even in the primary school they had fairly big classes, but there weren't the distractions for children that there are now so there was none of the violence

22:00 or anything that you hear about now in the classrooms. And teachers in those days could successfully handle big classes. Most of them mixed classes. Although I think sixth class was the first all male class I was involved in. High school again was well catered for teachers because each teacher had their own subject.

22:30 **And did you enjoy school?**

Primary school I did, I was always around the top, but I received a culture shock my first exam in high school, mid term exam, I was second last. And struggled up a little bit then towards the top and was coming alright when I left. But I found that a lot harder, naturally, I think town children had a better deal. By the time I got home from school it

23:00 was getting on towards dark and not much time to study. So a lot of my scholastic ability was from memory, not study. And quite often I was in trouble for not doing homework or something like that but by the time I got home I had had enough. And then I was up early again in the morning to ride the horse into the station and catch the train,

23:30 it all started again.

And what was the decision to leave?

I think my mother would have liked to stay on the farm but she knew I didn't want to and as I said it was early in the war and things were pretty tough and droughts and one thing or another and I think she was pretty glad in the end that she didn't have to worry about things, you know.

24:00 I can remember I was in the Air Training Corps and on Friday, that was shopping day, she would go into

town and I would have to milk up to forty cows by hand that day and on Saturday was Air Training Corps parade day, so she would milk forty cows on Saturday. So you know, it wasn't a very pleasant experience for either of us, I don't think. And then we had a car that kept breaking down.

24:30 Not many happy memories at all.

Do you remember the declaration of war? And where were you and how did you react?

Oh yes. At Kyogle, on a farm at a place called Omar Road [?], and I can remember all of the, they had parades in town and all of the local people were enlisting and going

25:00 away. And we'd sometimes go down to the station to see them off if they were on final leave or anything like that. And at that stage my brother wasn't in the air force but he wanted to go.

Had your father had any involvement in World War I?

No. But I had two uncles, one was at Gallipoli and was wounded there and he came home from there. And the other one

25:30 was gassed in France and he died as a result of that sometime later. And my wife's grandfather was killed on the first day of Gallipoli. So we have both had some contact with World War I.

Would your uncle tell you any stories?

No, not very much. I didn't see him very much, the one that was gassed and died I don't think I ever saw him.

26:00 His greatest feat here, I think he rode a bike from Longreach in Queensland to Mildura in Victoria looking for work and he died down there as a result of his gassing. So I don't ever recall meeting him. And the other one I knew and he owned a café with my grandmother in Tweed Heads and we used to go over there quite a bit. But no, he never spoke about the war at all.

26:30 But I can remember my sister telling me he had a big bullet hole in his shoulder that had never healed properly, she said you could put your finger in there, it was so big, but he didn't ever show me that.

How did your life change after the declaration of war, after the war began?

Well, up until my brother joined the air force, not greatly, again as I said, we knew a lot of

27:00 people that went. The most disturbing part would be to see the casualty lists and find someone's name that you knew and see how distressed the families were. But our participation didn't start until my brother joined the air force in 1941.

And how closely would the family follow news of the war? Was there a nightly ritual of …?

27:30 Oh, we listened to the news every night, we always had a radio and we listed to the news every night and we would get the paper every day. So we knew what was going on, and then when any of the people we knew came back from overseas we would talk to them and they would tell us bits and pieces about their experiences and so forth. And we lived fairly close to a community hall at Lynches Creek at that time where [we]

28:00 had the farm and they would have send-offs there and welcome homes. So we would meet the families of the people and things like that, they would have a dance. Again, we'd meet them either coming or going.

Did you notice any change I guess economically on the farm after war started or during the war at any stage?

No, not

28:30 as far as we were concerned. Prices for, in those days we used to separate our milk and then the cream carrier would come along and pick up the cans of cream. Later on, after we left the farm, they just sold the milk and a big tanker would come along and collect the milk from the farms. So as I said, often we would get,

29:00 the cream would go to the butter factory and make butter and we would be paid on what our cream was worth. And as I said, sometimes when there was a drought on we would get a bill instead of a cheque and that was why our brother's allotment later on in the war was the thing that kept us afloat.

And when did your brother join?

1941. He went into the air force in ground crew and

29:30 I didn't see much of him then except when he came home on leave. But by the time he got out of the air force I was in the army, so again I didn't see much of him, only when I was on leave at that time. So we didn't have a great deal of time together.

When he first joined the air force and he came home on leave before he went away, would he tell you stories of what it was like in the air force?

Oh yes.

What sort of things would he tell you?

30:00 Not too much. But I was mad keen about aeroplanes and he would tell me about the planes he had worked on and that sort of thing. I had started a souvenir collection and he would bring me bits and pieces and badges and things like that. And bits and pieces off planes and things. And that went on then, of course, until I joined the army and

30:30 I remember he came home on leave at the end of 1945 and brought his then future wife with him and I said, "I mightn't be here when you come home on your next leave," and he said, "You'll be still here you won't go anywhere." But of course I did, I had enlisted and I was in the army when he was discharged.

And when did you join the Air Training Corps?

31:00 Oh, I think in about 1942. I was only, you had to be sixteen, I think, and they let me in and I was only fifteen or something like that. And we used to have one night a week class, and a friend and I would ride our bikes the eight miles into town to attend class. And Saturday we would have a parade and then occasionally

31:30 we would go down to Evans Head which was the bombing and gunnery school for a week or so. And we would go flying and that was good, I enjoyed that.

What sort of thing would they teach you in the class that you had in the evening?

Oh, mostly aeronautics and maths and navigation and stuff like that. You know, things we would be involved in, they anticipated that we would go onto the air force from the Air Training Corps.

32:00 So it was air force subjects, mainly.

And what were the instructors like?

Well, our main instructor was an old World War I fighter pilot, lovely old chap. He had been burnt severely during a crash in World War I. He was our main instructor, he held an honorary commission in the air force and then we would have one or two of the high school teachers

32:30 would also have honorary commissions in the air force. And they would teach us various subjects.

Would this World War I guy tell you stories about his crash or ...?

Never.

Would you press him for stories?

No, not very much. We knew that he didn't want to talk about it too much, he was badly scarred in the face and we left well enough alone, we didn't ever ask him too much, but his greatest highlight was at Evans Head,

33:00 they let him fly one of the planes, you know, take over one of the bombers on the training run. He was tickled pink about that. He was a lovely old fellow and mothered us pretty well.

I mean, aside from the fact that you like aeroplanes, was there anything about the training corps that you enjoyed, I guess the discipline or any of

33:30 **the parading or ...?**

No, aircraft recognition we had drummed into us pretty well, I enjoyed that, and we had to learn morse code, and I enjoyed that. But just getting together with the other fellows, we formed a pretty good group. Because we were part of a squadron, 36 Squadron they called it, they were

34:00 headquartered in Lismore and they had a flight in Lismore, a flight in Casino and a flight in Kyogle, and so we would sometimes go to Casino or Lismore to participate in a parade or something like that. And the bands would play and the uniforms would be there and it was all inspiring.

What was your uniform like?

Air force uniform, proper air force uniform.

Can you describe it?

Summer uniform was khaki shorts and shirt and a

34:30 four inch cap like the air force used to wear. Winter uniform was dark blue, same as the air force, long trousers and a jacket. And everything else was air force, we had our own cap badge, and Air Training Corps flashes [distinctive marks on a uniform] on both shoulders. All in all it was a small air force uniform.

35:00 **And what was it like, wearing that uniform?**

Oh great, we were ten foot tall. All going to be fighter pilots and we thought it was great. We came down to earth a bit when we went to Evans Head, of course, and they looked at us as a bit of a nuisance when we were trying to get into everything, look into everything and ask stupid questions, but

35:30 they tolerated us, that was the main thing.

Can you tell me about the first time that you went up on a flight?

Yes. Two of us went up together, we had to get written consent from our parents to go on flights. And this was a Fairy Battle bomber, and we pestered the pilots to take us up and this one fellow must have wanted to go himself, because we

36:00 had to polish the perspex on the front of the windscreen before he would take us. And two of us from Kyogle went up together and I thought it was wonderful, it was a sort of open cockpit in the back behind the pilot and we were able to look out and see all sorts of places, flew up over Casino and Grafton and it was wonderful and all too short.

36:30 Later on they had a different type of aircraft, it became a navigation school then, rather than a bombing and gunnery school and we would go up and help the training navigator, sharpen their pencils and get their training maps for them and that was good, too.

Would they ever let you have a go at flying?

No, nowhere near it.

37:00 We were just lackeys, I suppose, helping out the trainee navigators. Unfortunately, that came to an end towards the end of the war and there was no more.

Would any of the people at Evans Head, I guess they were training to go into war, would they talk about that at all?

No. As I said, they helped us where they could but they didn't sort

37:30 of mix with us very much, we sort of were in a group and mainly didn't get a chance to mix with them terribly much. We were allowed to go to the canteen of a night but we weren't allowed to have a beer or anything, we were too young. They pretty much kept to themselves and so did we. But generally speaking they were fairly good, you know, they didn't

38:00 rouse on us [get angry with us] for getting in the way or anything like that. And they let us fire the machine gun on the ground range, not in the air, and that was exciting at that time to a fifteen, sixteen year old.

And by this time, we are towards '42 and '43 and that time in the war, what were you hearing about the Japanese?

Oh, we had heard all of the stories of the atrocities and we were

38:30 particularly concerned again for Kyogle people that we knew were in Malaya and hadn't been heard of. That was always distressing, not to know what had happened to them. And then we heard stories of the bayoneting and the ill treatment and that sort of thing and I think it affected everyone

39:00 at that time.

What did you hear of the concept of the Brisbane Line?

I don't remember too much about that. It was only in later years that I sort of heard a bit about it, although we were sort of told on the farm to prepare to move inland, and I think to, the Russians coined the phrase of the burnt policy,

39:30 and they used to burn farms and that before the German advance and we were prepared to do the same. And that became another potential adventure for us, that we would be rounding up our cattle and moving them into some part of Australia, away from the coast. And there was talk of evacuating families and things like that, it was a

40:00 hands-on thing for us, we were expecting the worst. That was when the Japanese were taking over everything they tried for and winning all of the battles and for a while it looked as though they were unstoppable. So yeah, we were prepared to move. I don't know where we were going to go but we were going to go somewhere.

Tape 2

00:30 **Tell us, at one stage you wanted to join the navy, tell us about that experience?**

Well, I suppose principally because I suppose I always liked the navy uniform, but principally because

they were recruiting earlier than the other services. You could join the navy at seventeen whereas the other services [you]

01:00 had to be eighteen. That was the first avenue of escape from the farm, to get into a service as quickly as I could. Other than that, any service would have been good. I just wanted to go, you know, as most fellows of my age did at that time.

01:30 I don't know that there was any particular reason, glamour or whatever. But just, I suppose, the adventure of it, the same as young people joined the First World War at fifteen, sixteen and seventeen, it was an adventure and I suppose most of us my age could feel it slipping away. And we wanted to get into the action, I suppose.

02:00 **Had you been told many experiences from your family about war time experience?**

My uncles, as I said, I didn't have a great deal of contact with, one of them I didn't have any contact with at all. My wife's, the only participant in her family was the grandfather, I think, that was killed on the first day of Gallipoli, so she didn't have any conversations with anyone that had been in the service.

02:30 My brother was the only one and he was only home on leave periodically, he didn't talk a lot about it. Only, as I said, I was interested in planes that he had worked on and things like that. He was in Darwin during the bombing but he didn't go overseas. But I asked him about that when he came home on leave from Darwin, about the bombing, and he told me

03:00 a fair bit about it. No, I didn't have anyone I could really confer with about their experiences to any great depth. As I said about the welcome homes and things like that, I talked to the people I knew but a lot of them were reluctant to talk about their experiences, I guess that was the same with World War I people too, they didn't like to talk about their

03:30 experiences too much.

Can you tell us, your father died, when was this?

In 1941.

Tell us about this time for you as a young man?

Well we had just moved up to a farm north of Wiangaree, a place called Lynches Creek,

04:00 and I suppose we were only there a few months and he, again things weren't too good financially and we were struggling a bit and he was to take on a job to drive a bus from Kyogle to Brisbane. And he was to go for an interview the next day and he took sick the night before and was put in hospital and he died in there, he didn't come out. So that was another

04:30 way I suppose we were going to help our finances, we were going to work the farm, my mother, my brother and I and my Dad was going to drive the bus from Kyogle to Brisbane, had he got the job, so he left a big gap in our lives. At that time the farm we moved onto didn't have a house on it, but there was a house on an adjacent property; we were only renting

05:00 the farm, we didn't own it. We owned the cattle and the equipment. And we pulled this old house down on an adjoining property and moved it all down on a slide and had it about half way constructed, I suppose, when he died. So Mum and I lived in half a house when my brother joined the air force, he joined soon after my father died. So

05:30 we gradually did a little bit more building ourselves and got another old carpenter to help do some of the work. And it wasn't fully completed when we left the farm, in 1944 I think it was. Oh, things were pretty rugged.

What did he die from?

Well they think it was hepatitis now, in those days I think they called it yellow jaundice.

06:00 But that's the theory now, that's what it was, hepatitis.

And how did your mum react to the situation?

Oh I don't know about inside, she wasn't a terribly emotional woman, but I often heard her crying at night and things like that, because we had bought cattle and they hadn't been paid for before my father died and there were bills to be paid for and no insurance or anything like that.

06:30 So it was a struggle in those terms, so she didn't show a great deal of emotion but I know she was pretty upset.

In those days what could someone do in that situation?

Not a whole lot. I imagine there would have been a widows' pension but then even with the meagre income from the farm it would have been

07:00 too much to obtain a pension as well. So we just had to battle on as best we could, until my brother

joined the air force and he made an allotment to my mother which helped out a whole lot.

And what role did you take on at this time?

Well I was the general factotum around the farm. I helped with the milking. And by that time we

07:30 didn't do any cultivating, we didn't have any tractors or anything, we still used horse drawn ploughs, and I had never been taught how to do it. I was still fairly small and young and we hadn't anticipated this happening. So we didn't cultivate, we just grazed cattle and separated the milk and sold the cream and calves,

08:00 we sold calves that we didn't need. And we sold vegetables and eggs and stuff like that, which all helped to finance us. We sort of made our own way as best we could, with the help of my brother's allotment.

Where did you sell your vegetables and eggs?

Just to the fruiterers in town.

08:30 And eggs were always easy to get rid of. The calves we would ship into town in the back of a car to a stockyard they would have of a Friday. We didn't get much for them and that was my pay. Whatever calves we sold, I got the money for that and that was my wage for working on the farm.

09:00 So I used to pray a lot for calves to be born, particularly ones that we didn't need. I would get them to sell.

Did you have any close friends at this time?

Yes, there was a friend that lived on the adjacent farm and of a weekend we would saddle up our horses and go bush and go shooting or whatever have you, and we would attend dances together. And then we were both in the Air Training Corps together so we would ride our bikes the eight or nine

09:30 miles into town one night a week. No lights, on a dirt road, [I] often wonder how we survived that. Although there wasn't a great deal of traffic in those days, so it wasn't particularly dangerous. We made our own fun. I think he was the only close friend I had while I was out on the farm, other than the people I

10:00 would meet when I would go to town for the Air Training Corps meetings.

How were the dances back then?

All old time dances. They had a little community hall about two or three miles from our place at Lynches Creek and one in Wiangaree which was a little bit further away. But all of the farming communities had their own

10:30 community hall. And we would ride our horses or whatever, sometimes we may, if it was to the local one, Mum would drive the car up and we would go that way. Sometimes I would walk. There was no problem walking in those days, but there was very little traffic on the road so it was fairly safe. But yeah, they were always good,

11:00 the local dances, they would put on supper and it was a real old get-together for the farming families. The mothers and the fathers would be there looking after their daughters, so it was a real sort of a family get-together social event. They would have them about once a month, I suppose, something like that.

Were there any local girls you were sweet on?

11:30 No. Not really. No. Not until I went to town I don't think I got involved with anyone. Farmers used to keep a pretty close check on their daughters, and they would take them to the dance and take them home. So there was no avenues for romance very much.

12:00 **You mentioned before that you didn't like working on the farm?**

A lot of work for very little reward, I found. We would have to milk twice a day and the greatest joy in my life was when, if we would get home, if Mum and I happened to go to town together and we got home late and it happened to be raining, she would say, "We won't milk tonight," and I thought that was heaven.

12:30 There was nothing worse than milking wet cows, again I say, for little reward.

What's bad about milking wet cows?

Getting swished with a wet tail or getting dripped on. Just terrible, and then having to round them up, of course, when you got home. We let them out to

13:00 enter the paddocks in the morning after we milked them, and it was pretty wild country on the later farm. And you'd have to go out on a horse and round them up and get them into the yard and milk them

and then separate after that. So often it was well into the dark when we finished.

How many would you have to milk a day?

In summer time it would be up to forty by hand. Winter time it would drop down to, say, twenty perhaps.

13:30 Generally up around forty in the summer, that was the worst time, I found, particularly if you were on your own. I would cheat a bit, we used to start milking about half past three, four o'clock, I suppose, but if it was my night to go to town while Mum was in town I would get them in at half past two or something and get an early start. I

14:00 wouldn't tell her because she would want them done at the correct time, later in the afternoon. But by the time she got home I would have it all done and be ready to catch the bus to go into town. There was a bus [that] used to run from up near the border, a place called Woodenbong, every Friday night and we used to catch that in to go to class, we would ride the horse down to Woodenbong and catch the bus into town.

14:30 Either that or else we would ride our bike in.

Did you think you were going to get to fight in World War II?

No, no. Not after they stopped recruiting towards the end of 1945, I knew I wasn't going to, but I was still prepared to join the service for some period.

15:00 Initially it was only for two years when I joined the army and then I signed up for a second term when I was in Japan, and then they brought out the enlistment for the permanent army and I joined that, transferred to the permanent army.

I will just step you back a second, tell us about receiving a letter that you …?

Oh yes, I think I was only sixteen, and

15:30 there was only the two of us on the farm, so I thought I would take a chance and write away to the navy and see if I could join a little early. Because recruits for the navy were taken at seventeen although they did take recruits early for midshipmen courses. So unbeknown to my mother, I wrote this letter and posted it and then got the reply

16:00 that I was in a protected industry. They thanked me for asking, thanks but no thanks.

How did that feel, receiving that letter?

Oh, I wasn't surprised but a little let down, I suppose. But I knew in my own mind that with only the two of us on the farm my mother wouldn't have signed the forms anyway, so it was sort of a token effort.

Can you tell us about getting her to sign

16:30 **the papers when she did?**

Later on? Well, when the navy started recruiting again it was for twelve years and I approached her again, I was in an apprenticeship by this time and I said, "The navy is starting to recruit, can I join?" and she said, "How long for?" and I said, "It's for twelve years." And she said, "No." I cried and she cried, but to no avail,

17:00 she wouldn't sign the papers. She said, "If it was for two years or something like that," [to] let me get sick of it and I would be glad to get out. Then, as I said, the army were then the first service to start recruiting for two year periods, again after a lot of argument she relented and signed the enlistment papers for me, much to the disgust of my employer at that time.

17:30 He, I had been working for him for some time and he was a bit of a tyrant and I thought he would have been fairly receptive to it because he had tried to join the army but he was physically unfit, they wouldn't take him. That was during the war, and I begged, we used to work half-day Saturdays then, and I got a call up to go to Lismore for a medical on a Saturday and I

18:00 approached him after I had been there for some time, "Could I have Saturday morning off? I want to go to Lismore on business." I didn't tell him what it was for. So I went to Lismore and passed the medical and shortly afterwards I received my call up, and I said to him, " I have just received my call up for the army." "Oh, that's alright," he said, "Were you called up or did you enlist?" "I enlisted," and oh dear,

18:30 he jumped up in the air and was not happy at all. Talked about people bludging on him and that sort of thing. He said, "I was going to fire you anyway," but I knew that wasn't right because he had no one else that wanted to work for him. So that was my escape from this job I was in in Kyogle.

What was the job exactly?

19:00 I was a sort of an engineer's assistant, I was supposed to be an apprentice welder, but during the war you couldn't get oxygen and acetylene to do oxywelding and he taught me how to electric weld and I did a bit of that. But it was just general engineer, repairing. We used to repair farm equipment and we used

to make our own vehicle springs. And his brother worked with him and he was on the spray painting and upholstering side.

19:30 And the two of them worked together, they would bring vehicles in and upholster them and do any panel beating or anything like that on it. It was just a country town general engineering shop.

And how was he a tyrant exactly?

Fairly unapproachable, bad tempered, you know? A lot of the welding I did was forge welding,

20:00 that's when they join two pieces of metal together, get it white-hot in the forge and join it together that way. General blacksmithing and I was his striker and I had never had that sort of physical work on the farm. I was wielding a fourteen pound hammer and I was only sixteen. And you know, he'd get a piece of red-hot metal out of the fire and then I would have to shape it

20:30 into crow bars, and big timber dogs, they were big sort of hooks made out of an inch and a half thick steel, and you would have to sharpen them and bend them, and then put a big eye through the end and make a ring. And so you would have to forge weld that together, and this is all through the summer. The only break we got was when it rained.

21:00 The old building was that badly dilapidated that if it rained we couldn't light the forge, and that was another bonus for me, no forge work if it was raining. The builders wouldn't get up and put a new roof on it, it was so badly dilapidated. He was just a tyrant, you know. Periods of good will, but not very often. I think he had a lot of physical discomfort too. He wasn't

21:30 particularly well and he expected me to be able to do things that he did and I had never had experience like that before and I sometimes used to get under his skin a bit, I suppose.

Did you learn a lot during this period?

I had attended a, they had a railways carriage that used to [go] around to the country towns, a technical train, they

22:00 called it, and all of the farmers' children of my age, they could apply to do a farm mechanics course where they were taught a bit of welding and a bit of fitting and turning and while I was on the farm I attended that for a while. And then when I came to town he said, "Oh well, I will pay for you to continue on this technical train." So I went down there.

22:30 So I had a fair bit of technical background, but [not the] blacksmithing side or electric welding side. Or the spring making side, you know. So yeah, I learnt a lot there, not that a great deal of it helped me in my job as a gun fitter in the army, but it was good knowledge, good background knowledge.

Did this background knowledge lead you to your role in the army?

23:00 In the fact that I was allocated to a service called AEME, the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, yes. When I finished my recruit training we did an assessment test and I was allocated to AEME as a fitter, so it was a good lead-up. When we finished our recruit

23:30 training and I was allocated to AEME I went to Ingleburn to do a fitting and turning course and after I passed that we were ready to go to Japan and they said that they had enough fitters and turners so they broke the course in half and one half did small arms, which is rifles and pistols and that, and the other half did guns. Field and anti-aircraft guns. And I went on that course,

24:00 and on completion of that I went to Japan.

Tell us about initially joining up?

Well, we received our call up, and there were people from Lismore, Casino and Kyogle and we were all trained from Lismore on the same day. And we went to Liverpool in Sydney, that was the staging camp. And I can always

24:30 remember the reception we got there, because most of the camp population were World War II people being discharged. And all we got from the time we marched in the front gate was, "You'll be sorry." That's what they were singing out to us. But we met a lot of them, and a lot of them had rejoined the service and were going through the same process we were. So they were able to tell us some of the pitfalls

25:00 that we had to avoid. And they were pretty good, they were very helpful.

What kind of things would they tell you?

Oh, never volunteer and make the best of everything. Things to avoid, like distressing the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] and things like that. General hints on how to behave in the army.

Were they telling you specific things from their wartime experience?

25:30 No, no. Didn't ever hear one tell of any of his experiences, and I don't think I ever heard anyone ask.

They had us mixed up in tents in Liverpool. But by the time I got to Greta, where the training camp was, they had separated us into new enlistees and re-enlistees,

26:00 and they went to a different camp, [a] different part of the camp. A lot of them then didn't have to do the three months or whatever it was recruit training, because they had done enough. They might have had a week or something refresher course and then they went to various units, so we didn't see them again.

And what about people telling you, either veterans or the instructors telling you, about the Japanese and what they had done in the war?

26:30 The only person during recruit training that were involved with us was a little Aboriginal fellow who came from Red Hill in Brisbane. He had fought with one of the battalions on the Kokoda Track and he didn't even volunteer much information. He was a corporal,

27:00 and although he was good to us, they were segregated, he was on staff, of course. And they kept them pretty well segregated from us except for any training periods. We didn't mix with them at all, they had their own separate portion in the mess to eat, so we weren't involved with them at all, until the last couple of days [when] we were allowed to mix with them.

27:30 And I think he was particularly good with the group that I was with because one of my group was an Islander from Lismore and I suppose because of that he was more aligned with our little group than the others. And [he] took us on my first

28:00 run to the canteen in a beer drinking contest. I didn't come out of that very well, I am afraid, but that was my first introduction to beer in the army. That was just before we finished our training.

Tell us about the contest?

I don't suppose it was much of a contest other than to keep the rotten stuff down. It was canteen beer which was terrible at the best of times. We had to queue up for it

28:30 and it was out of an enamel pannikin, so it wasn't very tasty. I think we were all glad when we had had enough. And not having drunk before, it didn't take us very long to have enough, of course, that was my first experience with drinking.

29:00 **And how did you come out of it?**

Not good, very sick the next day. Didn't touch it any more for a long time after.

With this Aboriginal corporal did you notice any different treatment that he received?

No, not really, I am not sure how he got on with the rest of the corporals, because as I said, they were in their own hut. But he was pretty well respected I think, mainly because of his service in New Guinea.

29:30 And he was a very good boxer, and used to put on demonstrations with some of the recruits in the lines, and he was very well respected by the troops themselves, and I think by his contemporaries in the instructing team. I never ever heard anyone say anything bad about him.

30:00 In fact, I went looking for him once in the corporals' hut and inadvertently called him Eric, and I was jumped on very quickly told that he was Corporal Morgan, he wasn't Eric.

What kind of things were you learning in this training in the first?

Oh, only drill and

30:30 tactics and shooting. Rifle shooting and a lot of route marches and general exercises out in the bush. A lot of parade ground work and rifle drill and general instruction on army life.

And how were you responding to this?

Oh good, I found it very good.

31:00 The only thing I found a bit strange, there was about five from New South Wales people, we were in a platoon of Victorians, and we found Victorians a bit strange at that time.

Why?

Well, I found them very noisy and boastful, a friend of mine who is Victorian said,

31:30 "You can tell a Victorian some things, but not very much." But generally speaking they weren't too bad but they were of the opinion that everything that came out of Melbourne was the best and they didn't particularly like New South Wales people, I don't think, because of the rivalry. All in all we got along pretty well. We never had any hassles or fights or anything like that.

32:00 We had one of the Victorians, he was a very good boxer, he was heavyweight champion in Victoria after he got out of the army and played a couple of league games with Richmond, he was a very good

footballer. And this dark chap from Lismore, he used to do his laundry, this fellow always seemed to have plenty of money and my friend from Lismore used to do his laundry for him. He paid him to do it, so he sort of looked

32:30 after us and fostered us a bit. So we never had any trouble. We just found them different to us, as they still are, I think.

Yeah, I know. And what about Greta?

Well, it had been a military town for, it was

33:00 only a little country more or less out of Newcastle, and it had been a military town all through the war. So we didn't get in there very much, I don't think I ever went in there while I was there. Some of them used to go into dances. We never got very much leave and whenever we got leave we went into Maitland which was a bigger place and had more to offer.

33:30 And we found that better, there was nothing in Greta at all. If we didn't stay in camp, we went to Maitland. There was always plenty of sport in camp and movies, and occasionally there would be dances, they would bring nurses and people from Maitland and Greta and that sort of thing. We didn't go to Greta at all, it has grown now, we have been back through there a few times and they have

34:00 put a little memorial sort of rotunda and information on all of the units that served there during the war and that it was a staging camp for the occupation force. But there is nothing left of the camp there now. We went out there and had a bit of a look and you could see where the ablution blocks were, like the concrete floors and things like that,

34:30 but that's all that's left of it now.

What were the dances like?

I didn't ever go to one, I wasn't a dancer in those days. The ones I went to in Kyogle, I used to go to look at the girls, I think, more than to dance. I was a pretty reluctant dancer so I didn't bother going to them.

Didn't want to look at the girls?

35:00 It was not much of a, there were pickets all over the place, there was no romance there either, they were very well looked after. Chaperoned.

And you mentioned that you were learning about the guns, what sort of things would they be teaching you specifically?

Oh, just repair and maintenance, stripping down. They would have to be topped up with oil

35:30 after they [were] fired and the sights had to be set each time they went into a position. You would have to line the sights up with barrel.

How do you do that?

Well there is a, you put a cross wire on the end of the muzzle and take the firing mechanism out and sight the gun on a distant object, like it might be a particular tree or a wireless tower or anything like that, and then you would adjust the sights to that.

36:00 So they knew the sights were lined up with the barrel of the gun all of the time, and we used to do that, they wouldn't let the gun crew do that. The AEME people used to have to do that. During the firing we used to have check, when a gun fires, it recoils and then runs out again. And you would have to adjust the speed of the run out so that they wouldn't crash

36:30 into the end of the stops. And you would have to be doing that all of the time because when the oil is cold it runs out pretty slow and as the oil warmed up in the recoil system it would speed up and so you would have to adjust this and go along and adjust that from gun to gun. And we later on suffered from hearing problems a fair bit because of that. We would have to stand outside the shield so that we could

37:00 watch the run out, make sure it was slow enough. And then any adjustment for sights along the way we would have to do that if we were called upon. If there was a misfire in the round we would take the primer out and put a new one in so that they could use the round again. Stuff like that. And then when the firing was finished for the day, when we got

37:30 back to camp, we would have to check all of the recoil systems to see that they hadn't leaked and there was enough air and oil in them and generally go around each gun and check that it was alright.

What causes the problems?

Well, there is a lot of packing in the recoil system and they would sometimes leak and let the oil come out, and they had a floating piston in the guns that we were using then, they were twenty-five pounders, mainly,

38:00 and if you could see this floating piston sneaking forward you would know that there was an oil leak

somewhere and you would have to push the piston back and put more oil in. And then we would have to check the air in it. There was six hundred pound of air in the guns and we'd have to check that each day to see that that was right.

What causes the sights to get out?

Just travel. And they would take the sights out when they left the position to go back to camp, and when they were put back in the next day

38:30 they were only tightened up with a ratchet and often there would be a movement in the alignment. So each day you would have to do that, every firing you would have to do that sight check.

Tape 3

00:30 **So in your time, we will talk about Greta, what were the facilities there like, how were you housed and so on?**

We were in wooden barracks, I think there was about thirty to a barracks in companies. I think a platoon

01:00 took one barracks and there were about four platoons in a company. And we had our own, each company had their own mess, and as I said there was an area theatre there that provided entertainment. Once a week I think they had a sports day. And then Sunday morning they would have a church parade, big parade, and they would

01:30 have a church parade, and I found out that if you went along with the normal parade you went on parade about ten o'clock and you marched down to the big parade ground and they had an inspection then and they had an open air service. But I found out, that was about ten o'clock, but I found out that if you had your communion you could go early in the piece and come back and have a leisurely breakfast and then go back to your hut, I was a Presbyterian

02:00 at that stage until I found out about communion and I became a Church of England then, and we used to go and do our little service, go and have a leisurely breakfast and then go back to our huts. I did that for the rest of the time I was there. I don't think it saved me in the long run, but it was good at the time.

On the days that you had sports, what sports would you play?

02:30 I always used to play rugby league when I grew up and then going to a platoon of Victorians I learnt to play Aussie Rules. And we would play Australian Rules or baseball or cricket. There was plenty to choose from.

Was there any division about the codes of football at all?

Not really, no, they all just went their separate ways, and I don't think any of our chaps, oh, one of them,

03:00 the dark chap from Lismore, he played rugby league I think. But the rest of them were Victorians and they played Australian Rules. But one of the other chaps from Lismore and I used to sneak down to the creek and have a bit of a talk. We didn't play a lot of sport all of the time, if we could get away with it, we didn't. Anything we liked we could have played, there was tennis, just about anything.

03:30 **And at this stage did you know that you would be going to Japan?**

Pretty certain, yes. A lot that went through when we were there didn't get to Japan although we were all pretty sure that we would. Although they couldn't give us any indication just then, it would depend on when we left the training area to go to our unit

04:00 and finish our training there, see, some went to Kapooka to be engineers. We went to Ingleburn in AEME, others went to signallers in Balcombe in Victoria. I think the infantry went to Singleton, I think, stayed up there. So everyone was split up and we couldn't get any guarantees that we would go to Japan but we were all pretty sure that we would.

04:30 **And tell me a bit more about AEME, I guess the running of it?**

Well, up until 1942 it was part of the ordnance corps, the ordnance corps are the ones that supplied the equipment. And there was no AEME then, it was all ordnance corps. And in 1942 they decided to split ordnance corps into ordnance and AEME,

05:00 and that was what [was] referred to as Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Well, they did more than just electrical and mechanical engineers, they did all sorts of things. And then in 1948 I think it became Royal, so it was AEME up until 1948 and then it became RAEME, Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, still the same function but just added the royal to it.

05:30 **And were you pleased about your posting to AEME then?**

AEME, yeah, fairly pleased because we got more pay than the rest, like infantry or a lot of other corps. We were trade group, either one, two or three, one for certain trades, and then down to the three which was for lower classes of trades. I think that's how it worked.

06:00 And gun fitters, I think we were on the top trade pay. Later on in life they got up to group twenty-four or something like that, it became ridiculous, radar people were group twenty-four and so it went down the scale again, depending on how good they thought

06:30 you were. Or how selective they made your particular grouping. And trade grouping became a pretty nasty thing later on, because when we were in Townsville we were camped next to a transport unit and their drivers ended up getting more pay than our mechanics who had to do several courses to get where they were, so there was a lot of animosity about that.

07:00 It was always a controversial thing, pay grouping in the army, it could still be for all I know.

And how did they select you out to these different units, you mentioned that some people went to signals and you went to AEME, what was the process of selection?

I am not sure about the other corps but because I had a technical background I went into RAEME and …

I guess, who made that decision and what was that process?

07:30 Army headquarters made that decision, although the people who did the assessment at Greta would make their recommendation because of our background.

What was the assessment like at Greta?

Oh, it was an aptitude test, you know, they ask you all sorts of strange questions about things that seem stupid. Like they would have three big reels of different size and they say,

08:00 "If they all turn at the same speed, which would roll up a rope faster?" Well the big one naturally would. It has got more area. Little things like that. "If you were using a pair of pliers, where would you get more leverage, right down at the end or the middle or right up the end?" But you're always looking for trick questions so you probably put the wrong answer.

08:30 They said there weren't any trick questions there but you didn't believe that because some of the questions seemed stupid and you thought, "There must be some trick here." Well, like the big reel, if they were all turning at the same speed the big reel would wind up faster than the others. Things like, they would get three gears meshed together and they say,

09:00 "If I turn the right hand one clockwise, which way would the third one go?" You know, things like that.

What do you think this test was testing?

I have sat for lots of them and I am never quite sure. Some of the questions you have to think logically, like they give you a run of figures and say,

09:30 well I am not quite sure how the question would be, but which number would be the next one in the series and you would have to think ahead. It might go up in doubles or threes or something like that. And you would have to think which would be the next number, they would give you some numbers and you would have to put the next one.

10:00 It all seemed very strange to us but they reckoned they got something out of it. And they were doing it for a lot of years. I remember doing one in the Air Training Corps, which was much the same as the one I got when I sat for a commission in 1967. They all seemed the same to me, so obviously they must have got something out of it or they wouldn't have kept them that long.

And while these assessments were going on, was there much talk between the guys

10:30 **you were training with about which corps you might want to go to?**

No, it was all done like an examination, you were put in this room and given the paper and it was just done like an examination, you were given a certain time and at the end you were finished.

And had people talked at all, like, I want to be a signaller or …?

No, not really. Not really.

11:00 I think the basic thing everyone wanted [was] to get to Japan and that was the bottom line. Didn't care what unit they went to.

Was there much talk about Japan while you were at Greta?

No, not a great deal, we didn't see anyone, I don't think, that had been there. At that stage we were one of the first intakes. So we didn't see anyone that had been there so we didn't know what to expect. It wasn't until we got on the ship to go that

11:30 they gave lectures in what to expect and how to behave and that sort of thing. But you know, there were always some, the logical posting, you can't see the benefit of them really, people who had been cooks or something like that would be posted as a rifleman to an infantry battalion. Things like that, there didn't seem to be any logic in some of them. Perhaps they were

12:00 just sent there to fill in gaps, I don't know. The same thing happened when national service same in. A friend that worked with me, he had a relation posted to ordnance, he had done some time at university training to be a psychologist and they put him to ordnance as a storeman, things like that, you know? That caused a lot of controversy in national servicemen.

12:30 That's just an aside from, but the army or the services does things in strange ways that we are not often allowed to think about. We just go along with whatever. There would obviously have been a lot of heartache for people that had an idea of wanting

13:00 to go, say, to infantry because, say, their father was in it, if they were posted as a cook they would have been a little bit upset, I guess.

Was there any way to get around your posting?

Not really, no. Particularly once you started training. Once they trained you they would expect you to carry out that function. The only divergence from that I saw

13:30 was when they started up aviation, army aviation. People were able to transfer to that corps rather than stay in their original once, but in the early days, no, if you were posted to a corps, that was it. You didn't have much recourse at all.

And so you were posted to AEME, and sent to Ingleburn,

14:00 **what was Ingleburn like compared to the previous camps you had been in?**

Like Greta. Wooden huts, so many to a hut. Except trade courses were all mixed up. I didn't stick with my own, I stuck with my own group but we would be in a hut with vehicle mechanics and things like that, we weren't segregated into courses.

And had you formed very many close relationships with people that were posted with you?

14:30 Not from the training camp, no, except while we were there we stuck with the ones we knew, the two friends of mine came from Lismore and I came from Kyogle, so because of locality we started to stick together. And we started to find our own friends once we got to Ingleburn. We had never met them before,

15:00 we were all from different places and had been in different companies in Greta, so we didn't have any close bond when we got there. I didn't know anyone in Ingleburn when I got there to this course. And then you started to form friendships during the course.

How did those friendships form?

Oh, just particular interests and personalities, mainly. And if the going was a bit tough on the course you would

15:30 find someone to help you and you sort of then went along with them. Altogether it was a pretty good group. We had a couple of fellows with us that had been in the army during the war and they were pretty good, they helped us a bit. But mainly you sort of stuck together as a loose group, but individually you picked someone that you liked and stuck with them.

16:00 **And Kiernan [interviewer] may have covered this a little bit, but was there a major difference in what you were learning at Greta to Ingleburn?**

Oh yes. It was all trade at Ingleburn. Nothing to do with drill or rifle drill or anything like that. All trade, nothing else, except we had our morning parades and things like that.

16:30 **And just specifically, the type of trade you were allocated to?**

Well firstly as a fitter and turner because I had experiences in fitting and turning, I think I mentioned that farm mechanics course I did in Kyogle, that was three months I think we did that. But then at the end of the course when we were all set to go to Japan and all ready to go, they decided they had enough fitters and

17:00 turners so they split the course in half. And half went to small arms and half went to guns.

And you went to guns?

Yeah.

And what did you think of the fitting and turning?

Oh, I enjoyed it. It was more advanced than anything I had ever done. And because a lot of the, some of the

17:30 tradesmen with us on the course had done their apprenticeships as fitters and turners, and they were able to help me with a lot of the technical stuff that I didn't know before. And the instructors were all World War II people and they were pretty good, they didn't belittle us in any way because we were virtually recruits, it was good, very good.

Did they

18:00 **ever teach you by using examples and say, you know?**

Some of them would tell us, on the guns particularly they might tell us about their experience in the desert and this sort of thing.

What sort of thing would they tell you?

Oh, difficulties they had in repairs, you know, if there was a lot of sand, they would have difficulty with the sand getting into the equipment and stuff like that.

18:30 Things mainly to help us, things we might find that could go wrong or to be aware of, things like that. At that time we hadn't seen a gun fire, they didn't have any firing on the course. So when we were allocated to units later on it was all a bit of a mystery and we were always thinking of the worst that could happen. And a lot could happen, a gun could get a bad leak

19:00 while it was in a firing sequence or something like that and what could you do? Would you pull it out? Try and fix it?

What would you do?

Well, you would have to make a decision on the spot. I remember we were having a shoot at Holsworthy in Sydney and one of the guns didn't completely run out.

19:30 And that made it ineligible to fire again because we didn't know what the trouble was. And what had happened, a little nut had fallen off a little safety clamp at the front of the gun that we couldn't see, and got down between a rivet on the cradle and the recoil system and wouldn't let it run out. So we had to drop all of the air out of it and let the gun slide back. Then we got this little nut out of it and put it back on again and filled it up with air again and away we went.

20:00 But anything could happen, little things like that. Something could dislodge in a sight. You never knew what could happen, a round could get stuck in the bore, that never happened to me but that could happen, and you would have to get that out, all sorts of things.

20:30 **And how were you feeling once you got transferred from the fitting and turning to the guns?**

Oh, once I got into the, we were disappointed that we didn't go to Japan straight away but once I got into the gunnery side of it, it was very interesting, we did a range of guns from two pounders up to five point five inch, so there was a big range of them.

21:00 And we would have to strip them down under the guide of the instructor and put them back together again, and then at the end of the course or that particular phase we would have to do the trade test to see that we had absorbed what he told us.

What was the trade test like?

Written paper first and then he might, the first one I did was a sight test, they put a range of tools on a little table

21:30 near the gun and sprinkle saw dust all over the table and did something to the sight bracket. And the first thing you did, of course, was clean all the saw dust away from your tools, so that it was a nice clean table. And then you would have to work out what tools you wanted, find this problem, if it was an adjustment out in the sight you would have to adjust it, tell him what tools you would use

22:00 to do it and things like that. Mainly stuff that you would need to know on a gun position.

So what happened after you completed your trade test?

Well, it would culminate in a major one at the end of the course. We would have to do a final trade test over all of the equipment that we had covered and we would get a pass mark or a fail or whatever, and then

22:30 we were set to go to Japan. We moved from Ingleburn then, back to Greta, ready to go back to Japan.

Were you given any leave before you …?

Yes. I went back to Kyogle. It was only about a week or a fortnight, something like that. A friend of mine, he was on leave with me, we were on final leave together,

23:00 he was allocated a transport as a driver, and we had a decision to make on the day we came back. It was New Year's Day and all of our friends that we had left behind at Kyogle were getting onto the bus to go to the beach at Evans Head and we had to catch the train back to Greta and we thought, "Will we or

won't we?

23:30 Will we go to the beach and be AWL [Absent Without Leave] or will we go to camp?" And common sense prevailed in the end and we thought, "If we go AWL we won't get to Japan," so we went back. But it was a big decision to make then. All the girls and the fellows were on their way to the beach and we had a train trip back to Greta.

24:00 As I said, common sense prevailed and we went back.

And how long did you spend at Greta before …?

Only about three weeks, I think. We were re-kitted with new uniforms and didn't have to do any training, basically getting ready to go, attending lectures and getting all of our gear ready. Back to the wooden huts,

24:30 but again people were all together, people from all corps were in huts together so we didn't form any real friendships there, except this chap friend of mine from Alexandra Hills, he was in a different hut to me, but he had been in during the war, and we sort of got together. Even though we went to different units in Japan we

25:00 sort of stuck together, kept our friendship alive, and when we came back from Japan we were posted to the same unit in Sydney.

And you mentioned that you went to some lectures and this sort of thing in Greta, what were the lectures regarding?

Oh, general behaviour.

What is general behaviour?

Drinking.

25:30 No fraternising, that was high on the agenda.

What did they mean by no fraternising?

Well, you couldn't associate with the Japanese people at all, it wasn't allowed. Only time you could was in the workshop itself.

Did this seem strange?

Well, it did to us. We were supposedly going up there to teach them a better way of life and yet we weren't allowed to mix with them,

26:00 which seemed pretty strange, and it was policed pretty heavily, too, the military police policed it pretty heavily.

What were your, expectation is not really the right word, but I guess, attitude towards the Japanese people at this time before you went?

Well I was aware of the atrocities they had committed. And we didn't go up there thinking

26:30 that we would greet them with open arms or they with us. But not having experienced anything like that myself I had a fairly open mind, I guess. I was convinced I wouldn't like them very much, but I didn't have any hatred towards them, even though I had known how they treated our people.

27:00 One of my relations was one of the nurses that was a POW [prisoner of war] during the war, I never saw her after the war, but she wasn't one of those that was massacred, but I think she had a pretty hard time. I had certain feelings about them but not to the extent that I would want to do them any mischief or anything like that. And they avoided that, of course, by this fraternisation

27:30 thing.

What do you think the motivation behind that non-fraternisation policy was?

I really don't know and I don't think anyone else knew either. It's, I have read books that have convinced me that it was not a particularly wise move, that there was no real rhyme or reason for it. Well, that evidenced by the number of our people that married Japanese.

28:00 You know, it was obvious that they couldn't keep them apart forever and I really don't see any rhyme or reason for it. The Americans weren't as strict in their, they had a fraternisation ban, I think, but certainly not as strict as ours.

Was there anyone that you went over with that had any real animosity?

28:30 **Not the first time, but the second time I was with an ex-POW. But again, he ended up marrying a Japanese girl too, he was sent over there for the war crimes, as a witness for the war crimes. And he used to tell me lots of stories about the Japanese.**

What sort of thing would he tell you?

Oh, he would tell me about the ill treatment, although he said the Korean guards were worse than the Japanese. But he used to tell me

29:00 funny stories as well. Like he said he was on a ship to go to Japan from the prison camp and their ship was sunk, it was sunk by an American submarine and they were in the water and picked up by a Japanese boat. And they, in turn, saw smoke on the horizon and thought it was an American ship and kicked them all back into the water again, and they had to be picked up later on.

29:30 Again, he accepted them in the end, I don't know that he would ever be bosom buddies with them, but he was enough to marry one of them, so he must have got over his dislike or hurt. There was another fellow, an ordnance fellow that was attached to us and he was much the same.

30:00 He could speak Japanese very well, stuttered very badly, but he had a lot of bad treatment, although he didn't dwell on it too much. I was always astounded by him, we used to go out together a little bit. And all of the little beer halls were out of bounds in our region, but we would sneak up into one and he would go up for a meal and he would eat all of this

30:30 horrible looking goo that the Japanese would put on, and I wouldn't have it. I would have a drink while he was eating. But he would talk to them and he was quite happy with them, too. I think a lot of them that went back never accepted the atrocities as they were and they began to accept the Japanese people for what they were. And realised from what we heard that they had just as hard a time as we did.

31:00 And their troops treated them just as badly as they treated a lot of our people, not to the extent that they would bayonet them and deprive them of food, but they would bash them, their NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] would bash them just as they did ours.

And what was your take on what the occupation

31:30 **force was going to achieve?**

Well, on the way up we were given lectures on the ship about what they hoped to achieve, voting rights for everyone and the democracy thing. Generally we were supposed to be ambassadors, I suppose, and work with the authorities and teach them that

32:00 there was a better way of life. Whether we did that or not I don't know, I suppose we tried. But in the end I think we just behaved much the same as we did in Australia. We were just young soldiers and soaking up the experience.

What other sorts of things would they teach you about in those lectures before you left, you mentioned

32:30 **behaviour, was there other things that they …?**

Oh, to avoid the call girls at all costs. And don't let this happen to you sort of thing.

Would they show you films?

Oh, they did better than that, they took us for a little stroll through a Japanese VD [venereal disease] hospital. And that cooled any

33:00 ardour we might have had. That was something else. A lot of it was models, but very realistic models.

What did you see?

Oh, gonorrhoea and syphilis and all of that type of thing. A trip through the ward and then

33:30 a lot of movies on how to avoid these types of things, put out by the Americans. VD pictures.

What were the movies like?

Pretty gory and pretty basic. They would start off with a young fellow happily going on leave, say, going to a beer hall and having his fill and meeting a lady of the night and

34:00 ending up in a VD hospital. Again, you didn't see too many of them or want to fraternise.

What was the reaction of the audience when these films were showing?

Oh, anything from laughter to disgust or a range of expressions. And that sort of thing. It

34:30 served its point. Again, the first time I was there the Japanese kept to themselves pretty well and they were struggling. They had nothing much and you mentioned before about, did I have any sort of animosity towards them, when you saw little kids in our garbage can

35:00 looking for food, that sort of put you in a different perspective. And you began to feel sorry for them. The men were always pretty stand-offish, but once the women found out that we weren't what we were painted to be, that they were [not] going to be ravaged and so on, they became more friendly. You know,

we had

35:30 house girls working in our kitchen and the sergeants had house girls and we got to know them better and they were a different race of people to the men, they were a different personality altogether. Because they had been kept down all of their lives, you know, they didn't have great scope to get around or say what they wanted or vote or anything like that.

36:00 So they became quite friendly.

And you said before, once they realised that you guys weren't what they had painted you to be, who had, I guess, what are you referring to there? Who had created the image?

The Japanese government themselves.

During the war or previous to the occupation?

Previous to the occupation and even during the occupation, I think. They weren't happy

36:30 or eager to mix with us very much, I don't think, so of course they wouldn't want their women folk to mix with us either.

Did you ever hear stories from anyone about the kind of way that you would be portrayed?

No, not really, not in any great detail. But just the way that they would move aside when you walked down the

37:00 street or turn their head away, it was indicative that they had been told things about us that weren't true.

Was there any sort of feeling amongst the Australians or the American troops that we are the victors, this is ours?

No, not really, I can't speak for the Americans because they were up in the top end of the, they were in the good area, they didn't want to be

37:30 down near where the radiation was. We were down there, the Australians and the New Zealanders were down there. But no, we didn't have much to do with them except when we went on leave to Tokyo we would sometimes meet them in the beer halls, there wasn't a great deal of get-togethers with them. They stuck to themselves pretty well. So I don't really know what their feelings were or how they

38:00 got along with the Japanese. The only Americans we had down our way were small military government teams and they would be attached to a prefecture and they would oversee what we were doing and make sure we were doing what General [Douglas] MacArthur [Commander in Chief, Allied Land Forces] wanted. So we didn't have a lot of dealings with the Americans at all and we were happy enough with that too,

38:30 because we were all a bit envious of them. Their pay and their uniforms and all of that sort of thing.

How about the relationship with the New Zealanders?

We didn't see them very much either, but we always got on well with them, always. There were a few of them used to get up to Hiroshima, they were down south, further than Hiroshima. And once I went on leave to the air force base, our air force base at Bofu, and they took us on a bus trip

39:00 down to the New Zealanders and they made us welcome. We always got along well with them, except at football time.

I was going to ask, was there any of those sort of traditional rivalries that existed?

If I could jump ahead a fair bit, we had just come back from Korea, they had just had the celebrations for the end of the war and we went into this big marquee with our slouch hats on, full of Americans.

39:30 Apparently the Minister of Veterans Affairs was up there but she didn't come anywhere near us. And the only recognition we got was from these Kiwis calling out, "Did you hear the football score?" They had beaten us, of course, and laughter all over their faces. No, we get along well with them, really well. And we go over there periodically, they have occupation force reunions every two years. And we have been over there about four times I

40:00 think, no, we get on well with them.

Tape 4

00:30 **Okay, tell us about what ship you were on and what it was like?**

Well, we embarked, we moved out from Greta to Sydney and we embarked on HMAS Kanimbla, it was

still a navy ship at that stage and it took us about seven or eight days, I think, to reach Japan, we called in

01:00 to Finch Haven on the way and had half a day's leave there, but the rest of the time was on board the ship all of the time.

What were you doing on board?

Nothing, just laying about. It was wonderful. The first time I came back on the Kanimbla as well and at that time we knew one of the little fellows on the workshop on the boat and we worked all of the way back.

01:30 We got into the workshop and helped him on the way back, so it was a little better, we weren't sitting around idling, even in the rough weather we had something to do.

On the way up you just relaxed?

Relaxed and went through the tail end of a cyclone and got seasick.

What was that like?

Not good, we hit it I think in the Coral Sea and we had been taking Atabrine

02:00 for malaria on the way up and that came up pretty quick and we were sick. And strangely enough, most of the navy meals involved greasy pork chops. And not many of us during the cyclone ventured down for meals too much. In the good weather, of course, we were allowed to sleep up on deck, which was very good,

02:30 except when the navy starts swabbing their decks at an ungodly hour of about four o'clock in the morning so you had to pick up your blankets, they wouldn't tell you they were starting, next thing you know you would be amongst a heap of water on the deck. They didn't mind us sleeping up there of a night, which was very good because it was pretty hot and stuffy.

What did you think of the navy from this impression?

03:00 They were alright, we didn't have much to do, they always had their chores to do and we didn't mix with them socially. So you know, we had nothing in common with them really. We just used to watch them go about their duties, had no contact with them virtually at all.

What did you notice of their structure, did you notice anything at all?

03:30 Oh, their discipline I think was a little harder than we were used to. Like, a leading seaman in the navy is a pretty big wheel, but a corporal in the army, in the infantry, is pretty well thought of, but in other corps a corporal is the start of the ranking system in the army and doesn't carry the same sort of weight as a leading seaman in the navy, I don't think.

04:00 He is a pretty big wheel in the navy.

Did the thought ever come to your mind that you could have been …?

Yeah, it did. I was fairly pleased with my lot by that time. I was where I wanted to be, in the service, and going to Japan where I wanted to go, so I was pretty happy. And later in life, the second time I was in Japan we used to visit the navy shore base there

04:30 and again, they were pretty strict. We used to go to the canteen at night and when the orderly officer moved through every night at nine o'clock you would have to, visitors and all would have to, stand up. They were pretty strict. And then they told me that if anybody went AWL, absent without leave, there and then came back he would be charged twice.

05:00 He'd be charged with breaking ship and then breaking back into ship. We would only get one charge for going absent without leave, navy fellows would get two. So I was fairly pleased then that I had chosen the Army.

Tell us your first thoughts as you started to come into Japan?

Well mostly the scenery, it was awe inspiring we found, the different islands

05:30 and the inland sea generally, it was calm. And seeing the fishermen around and the strange way they used to row their boats, and the terraced hillsides with the rice fields and the pines growing on the hills, it was magnificent, particularly after being on the ship for a fair stretch, we were fascinated by the scenery, until we got to

06:00 Kure, of course, and that was still showing signs of a lot of bomb damage, there was sunken ships in the harbour and a lot of damage on the docks. And then seeing the Japanese, the way they were dressed, their clothes were pretty ordinary and that sort of brought home to us that there had been a pretty savage war on there,

06:30 and the place had been hit pretty hard.

Describe that for us, I mean you described it quickly, the ships in the harbour, what exactly did the place look like?

Well, the docks itself was still all bomb-damaged. A lot of debris around and, as I say, ships sunk in the harbour with just a superstructure poking out, and just general bomb damage,

07:00 although I hadn't seen bomb damage before I had seen enough photographs to realise that this was the same sort of thing. Kure harbour had had a fairly severe going over by the American air force and that was still pretty obvious. By that time a lot of the housing had been rebuilt because their housing is

07:30 fairly basically structured and it is pretty easily put back together, you know, mostly wood. Or tiled rooves and things like that, and not big so they were all rebuilt pretty well, that we could see from the docks, so to speak.

And where did they take you first?

Well, when we disembarked they took [us] up to Kodaichi. That was about eight miles

08:00 Away, down towards Hiroshima. And we were housed in an old Japanese army barrack right beside the water. I forget what they call the bay, Hiroshima Bay, I suppose. The workshop itself was all in tents along the waterfront. But the barracks itself was a two storey building made out of pine.

08:30 A fire trap, I suppose, in that every second story window had a rope out of it in case of earthquake or fire. There was a couple of fires while we were there, one Australian soldier was burnt to death in the barracks, because apparently the hut, I believe, had been partitioned off with the sisal [a fibre] card, that hard paper, and it went up pretty quickly and he

09:00 couldn't get out. So there was always a sort of a feeling that if anything happened you had to move pretty quickly, you know? Other than that, the barracks were fairly comfortable, only in stretchers, food was pretty good and all in all it was a happy sort of a unit. I think there were about

09:30 a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy, perhaps, in the unit itself. And I was there for five months in that particular unit. As I mentioned before, we used to go to Hiroshima whenever we could. There was no restriction to where you could go in Hiroshima, other than the obvious out of bounds places. And …

Why were they out of bounds?

10:00 The houses of ill fame and the beer halls were all out of bounds. As were the eating places, you weren't supposed to eat anything, if you went you were supposed to take a cut lunch with you, well the Japanese didn't have much anyway. So that wasn't any great problem.

Did you ask why you had to take a cut lunch?

Because of disease and

10:30 hygiene, we were only then starting to get a bit of information on radiation, not very much. And I always wonder about that, because the beer we got was made out of water from Hiroshima, as was the lolly water [soft drink]. A lot of the extra food stuff could be purchased from Japanese sources.

11:00 So you know, it was strange that officially you weren't allowed to eat any of their stuff or drink any of their drinks but the very beer and soft drink that canteen supplied was made from water from the dam, Hiroshima dam.

What kind of information did you receive about radiation from that time?

Well, very little,

11:30 most of it was from American sources I think at that time, that the atom bomb did produce radiation, but as I say, there was no restriction on us going to the bomb site and wandering through the rubble, no restriction at all. It's, they still claim, well, certain scientists for the government still claim that there was no problem,

12:00 that we weren't there in sufficient time to get a decent dose of radiation. The Americans and the New Zealanders have accepted, I believe, that it was a problem and they get pensions for cancers and things like that. But despite the number of Australians that have died from cancer, BCOF people, the government still won't budge,

12:30 they treat cancers, of course, free, but they won't pay pensions on it, won't pay disability pensions on radiation.

Have you any effects that you think might have been from …?

No, not so far. I have had skin cancers but that might have been from sun. [I'm] always apprehensive when I get sore throats because a lot of the cancers that I know people have died from started off with a sore throat.

13:00 So I always get a little bit apprehensive when I do get a sore throat. Otherwise I have had no indication of anything.

What did the scene look like at the time you were there?

Oh, not as bad, when I first saw it, there was pictures

13:30 you've seen of Japan right after the bomb where other than a couple of concrete buildings everything was flattened. By the time I got there there was little shops and houses built up all over the place, there was still a lot of rubble around and bare spaces, there had been a lot of building undertaken and it was still going on. Their

14:00 method of building in a lot of cases was bamboo and chicken wire and then that stucco spray on, and they would put up a building pretty quickly, so there had been a lot of building undertaken by the time I got there.

What kinds of things were they selling in the shops?

Oh, just little mementoes and trinkets like that.

14:30 In memory of Japan, all of this sort of thing. Materials, quite a bit of silk stuff. But mainly little mementoes, woodwork and that sort of thing, a lot of carvings and things like that.

15:00 **What were your impressions of the local Japanese in Hiroshima?**

Oh well, if we were wandering around the shops they were happy to take your custom, but again they were pretty stand-offish, they didn't want to mix very much. And a lot of [the time we]

15:30 didn't see a whole lot of men, a lot of the shops were run by the women. So consequently we didn't have a great deal of mixing with them. We had Japanese tradesmen in the unit and you would have to mix with them, of course, and kitchen staff and things like that. Otherwise we didn't have [the]

16:00 opportunity to mix with them frequently.

Were there times when you purposely ignored the non-fraternisation rule?

Oh no, not really. We'd sort of, where we could mix with the shopkeepers and try to learn a bit of Japanese, but not socially, no. Not socially because, as I said, all of the Japanese houses were out of

16:30 bounds and the provos [Provosts, Military Police] policed it pretty strictly. They would do patrols through the local villages and if you were caught and didn't have a good excuse, and there was really no excuse because they were nearly all out of bounds, you were in trouble.

Were there any times when you did visit a Japanese home?

A couple of times we went to a, they have a festival called the

17:00 called Bon Odori in Japan and they dance in the street and we met this fellow in Kodaichi, which was just the camp, the village we were camped in. And after this dance we all sort of had a few sakes and got into the fun of the things and danced, and this one fellow took us home and we had a meal with him. But that was on very rare occasions.

17:30 **And what did you do when you had this meal with him, how did you make sure you weren't caught?**

Oh well, they had a pretty good spy system, if there was MPs coming they would get the word around, "MPs come." And you would keep a pretty low profile then until they got out of the way. But

18:00 generally speaking we wouldn't advertise the fact, if we were in a Japanese place we would keep a pretty low profile in there.

What was the Japanese home like?

Oh, they were very basic, they, it's all floors, tatami matting, so you have to take your shoes off when you go in there, and their bedding was all on the floor and locked away each morning in a cupboard.

18:30 They all have, well most of them have a little, I forget what the word is, but it is like a little shrine set into the main wall of the living room where they can pray or whatever they do. And all the doors are made out of paper, sliding doors made out of paper. All very neat and tidy, there is no

19:00 clutter. They have a, when they cook they bring in what they call a hibachi, that's a pot about that big filled with hot coals and they cook on that. When they finish eating they sit around a little table in the middle of this, you wouldn't call it a lounge or a dining room, family room, I suppose. No furniture other than a little table and when the meal is finished they take the hibachi outside and it becomes just a

19:30 family room then.

What did you think of this experience?

Oh well, I thought it rather strange at first, but after a while when you find that everything is the same, you take great pains not to do any damage because everything appears to be so fragile and you got to

20:00 great pains to behave yourself and not upset anything or, act decorously.

Now at the time, tell us a bit about the work you were doing?

Well in the workshop I was in first I was a gun fitter but they didn't have any

20:30 gun work there, all we were doing there was basically repair of equipment that required minor repairs or adjustments. Or the manufacture of small parts, perhaps, something like that. It wasn't until I was posted, after five months there, out to this artillery unit, that I started to work on guns.

21:00 And we did everything on the guns, complete overhauls, adjustments, anything. We didn't ever send any to the base to the workshops, we did it all ourselves.

What were the guns being used for?

Just for training exercises with infantry or for artillery itself. We would probably get an allocation of officers from Australia, after they finished their course at

21:30 Duntroon and they would send them to Japan and they would put on shoots for them so they could practice as gun position officer and observation post officers. Well, then we would do an exercise with infantry and we would fire over their heads and they would advance as they would in a normal battle situation. And in the meantime the artillery themselves,

22:00 we didn't do any of that, but they would do guard duties, they had a guard duty on a coal dump. A guard duty on a cash office, a guard duty on an army hospital on the island of Iwo Jima, and if there was a ceremonial parade on Tokyo or a guard duty in Tokyo they would combine with an infantry battalion as a company and they would go up with them. And in the meantime we would just stay and maintain the equipment. The AEME people would

22:30 stop and maintain the equipment. We have vehicle mechanics and gun fitters on staff, there was about fifteen of us I think, something like that.

And how did you get along with these blokes?

The artillery? Oh, good. We socialised with them, mainly with the drivers because we had more dealings with them, I think.

23:00 There were only three gun fitters in our unit, and I think about four or five vehicle mechanics, so we got to know them better because they would come into the workshop and work on their vehicles with our mechanics and we got to know them better so in the canteen at night we would mix more with them than with the gunners. The main time we had mixing with the gunners was when we would go on a shoot and

23:30 we'd be working on the guns on the gun position. Or if we needed a hand they would help us. No, we got on well, we were an LAD, Light Aid Detachment. It's, they varied in size, I think our unit was one officer and about fifteen other ranks. Armoured regiment LAD was about two officers and about eighty [other ranks]. It depended on the size of the parent

24:00 unit. Yes, LAD stood for Light Aid Detachment but the artillery fellows called us Lousies and Dirties. We were always in overalls and one thing or another. So we were called Lousies and Dirties by them.

What about the Duntroon fellows, did you mix with them at all?

Well, they were a class above us, when they came out of Duntroon, firstly they were pretty gung ho, but after they had been,

24:30 become a troop commander, say, with a group of old gun sergeants, they settled down and became very good. They played sports with us. But that was the only social interaction we had with them, playing sports.

You said a class above, what do you mean by that?

Oh well, they were officer class and we were all enlistees and

25:00 they had done courses in Duntroon for four years, I think it was, or five years, and so you would naturally expect them to be a rung or two higher than us on the social ladder.

Was this rivalry expressed much?

No, no.

Behind their backs?

No. Oh, occasionally there would be one officer you took a dislike to,

25:30 but that would be a general dislike, if we didn't like him there would be a lot of other people [that] disliked him too. But they became good on the gun position, they always kept their place, they were always Sirs, but generally speaking they were always good, and didn't step over their place and neither did we. We had our own friends,

26:00 and we stuck with them and we had no recourse to socialise with the artillery officers. Occasionally they would come over to our canteen and have a beer with us, but generally they stuck to themselves.

And you said sports? What kind of sports would you play?

Cricket, football, we played softball in

26:30 Japan rather than baseball. They were the three main sports, I think. Although there was tennis, you could play tennis if you wanted to. And we played against other units in the brigade, 34 Brigade. Occasionally we would go down to Iwakuni or Bofu to the air force camp and play against them.

27:00 Or if there was a navy ship in we would play a game of sport against them. So it was fairly widespread and the commanders pushed sport as a means of relaxation, rather than have us go to the out of bounds beer halls in the villages.

Did you go to the out of bounds beer halls in the villages?

Occasionally.

What were they like?

Oh pretty good, nothing special.

27:30 Japanese beer was very good, it is a light beer much like our own light beer, of course, and we found it better than the heavy Australian beers, actually. Once in a while, this was when beer became more plentiful, of course, they would have an Australian beer night and there would be people full all over the place, they

28:00 couldn't handle it after drinking Japanese beer, so we would often, if we could find one out of the way, go to a Japanese beer hall, or it was only in those days, it was a beer house later on during the Korean War, in Kurei they had beer halls, bigger beer halls. But in the occupation days it was

28:30 mainly only little houses, rooms. You'd sneak in there and keep an eye out for the MPs and sneak out again.

Were you ever caught?

No.

What were the MPs [Military Police] like?

The Australians were good, if they did happen to catch you, I think I was caught the second time or a couple of times,

29:00 but if it was an Australian MP and he was in charge of the patrol, the patrol would be a British red cap, they were very severe, the New Zealander was nearly as bad, and an Australian, and they would have a Japanese policeman with them normally. If the Australian was in charge of the patrol he would say, "I will be back here in ten minutes and if you're still here you're gone." So you'd scoot. But anyone that was caught by a

29:30 red cap in there, he was charged, or a New Zealander.

And what would happen?

Oh, they were charged for being out of bounds.

What kind of punishment would you get?

Oh, it would be a fine normally. You might get a couple of days confined to barracks but mostly a fine. Told not to do it again.

How much?

Oh, in those days it would be about a pound, perhaps.

30:00 Thirty shillings. That was a lot of money in those days. We were still only getting, it might have been ten shillings a day then, and by the same token we were being paid in sterling, so if we drew a pound out of our pay they would take twenty-five shillings out. So, you know, it was, money was fairly tight.

30:30 **And what was you, you said you didn't have many dealing with the Japanese, but what was your impression of them from the perspective of Australia having been at war with these people?**

Well, in four and a half years in Japan I never met a Japanese that said he served in New Guinea, they

all served in China. We had a ex-air force pilot when we went back the

31:00 second time in the unit I was in that worked in the instruments section and he told us that he was fighter pilot but didn't ever tell us where he fought. He could be a bit antagonistic, but otherwise they would very rarely tell you that they fought anywhere, although you had to know that there weren't too many Japanese that weren't in the army, navy or air force, they were conscripted, so you knew they had to be somewhere if

31:30 they were a certain age. Later on, during the Korean War, we sometimes would meet the Japanese self defence force, they started that up and I remember getting in a beer hall with them once, when we had been doing playing football at the air force base at Iwakuni and coming back through Kodaichi we called into this little beer hall that

32:00 we had known from the early days and it was full of these Japanese self defence personnel. And we had a great time. They bought us drinks and we bought them drinks and we had a great night. Managed to understand each other, basically. That was the only dealings I had with them, they wouldn't let us go near their camp or anything like that, in fact they had taken over the old camp that I had been in down near the water.

32:30 **Did they seem to you, being the occupation force, to be the fearsome force that you had heard about?**

Oh they could have been, being well disciplined and always well presented, their dress was excellent. And this time in Korea, they invited us back to Hiroshima to their academy and oh,

33:00 they were really good. Their uniforms were good and they were well disciplined.

What about the local Japanese you saw in the street when you first arrived, did it seem strange ever?

Oh no, we found them strange and no doubt they found us strange too but with this no fraternisation ban

33:30 we knew we couldn't socialise with them very much and they sort of stayed out of our way. Like I said, they would move out of your way if you passed them on the street. And or turn their head away, they wouldn't sort of look at you very much. We excepted, I suppose, to feel a bit of animosity from them because they had never been beaten before,

34:00 but that didn't happen. And we were surprised and I think the occupation authorities were surprised that there weren't more incidents. I didn't hear of any incidents really, I guess there might have been. I didn't ever hear of any incidents. One fellow in our sub branch up here, his brother was murdered up there, but he said he doesn't know who did it, there was no details ever given out, they just found his

34:30 body and they don't know who did it. But that's the only incident of a killing that I ever heard of. They, it is remarkable that things went so smoothly and I think it must have surprised the occupation force authorities as well. It must have surprised them as well that there was virtually not much to police.

35:00 There was very little crime and I don't know that there was any stealing much went on, in the early days there might have been some little bit of stealing from the workshops and that, not that I recall anyone being taken to hand for it.

We were talking about Hiroshima before, how do you feel about the Australians being given this

35:30 **section of Japan to work in?**

Well again, initially we didn't know any better, I suppose, I suppose we might have thought it was a bit of an honour, I don't know, we didn't really give it much thought, the only reservation we might have had was that we knew the Americans were in a better area because all of the leave hostels were all up that end of

36:00 the island, and probably the better scenery was up that end of the island. And their treatment and that sort of thing was better than ours, their meals, uniforms, their pay. We were very envious of all of that, of course, [but] I don't think it worried us greatly earlier at all.

What about upon reflection?

36:30 Of course now we realise why they didn't want to be down there, I have not heard of too many of them dying of radiation, of cancer. Although a lot of them were, of course, involved in atomic tests in America itself so I guess a good many of them, they didn't have precautions then, as we didn't.

37:00 So the areas that they occupied were mostly fire bombings and things like that, not atomic bombing. I think there were a few of them down at Nagasaki, down that way, but mostly I think they were all up toward Tokyo, from Kobe up to Tokyo.

37:30 And the British were in Okayama, and the New Zealanders and the Australians were in Hiroshima prefecture.

Do you think they were purposely given a raw deal by the ...?

I wouldn't like to comment on that. I would like to think that we got the third pick. Okayama wasn't damaged very much where the British were.

38:00 I don't really know why we were given that particular area, I really don't know.

You mentioned leave before to Tokyo, what was that like when you were on leave to Tokyo?

Oh, pretty good. I went on leave twice in the first two years I was in Japan, once to a place called Kawana that was a very big resort pre-war,

38:30 down south of Tokyo, and the second one I went to Tokyo itself and we had a trip up to Nikon which was a very historic Japanese area north of Tokyo. Again, the treatment was very good, the meals were wonderful. Kawana had its own golf course. And it

39:00 was just a relaxing time. All in civilian clothes and plenty of staff to look after you. Golf was cheap to play, there was entertainment. And they put on tea parties and sukiyaki [a Japanese dish] parties to show us the Japanese culture. Tokyo wasn't so good in that respect, but it was a headquarters for the Australian component in Tokyo

39:30 and also later on a staging camp for Korea, and a R & R [Rest and Recreation] camp for Korea, so it was a lot more basic, much like an ordinary army camp. Kawana was nothing like army.

Tape 5

00:30 **So just a question about, we have talked about the interaction with the Japanese people, but how would you rate the morale of the Japanese people?**

At that time it was very low because they had not much in the way of food, clothing particularly. And the, of course, they didn't know what to expect from the occupation

01:00 Bit. It certainly picked up fairly rapidly after that. By the time we came home they seemed to be a bit more affluent and certainly more contented, I think, than what they had been.

And how about just if you were walking on the streets, what were some general observations that you made about the Japanese people?

01:30 Mostly how docile the women were. Well, the men were to a certain degree too, they picked up a bit later on, they were outgoing and outspoken, I guess, but the woman played a fairly minor role in the way of life of the Japanese at that stage. And we weren't concerned but we were surprised at how servile they were

02:00 to the men. You know they didn't play any part in anything other than looking after the home, that was their main concern, apparently. Again, they picked up too. They wouldn't turn their heads aside when we walked past, and they would walk down the street, not with us, but beside us. And they were more forward than they had been.

02:30 **Was there ever any of the men that had been soldiers, Japanese soldiers, was there any particular way that they would dress?**

Although when they first came back a lot of them still wore their old uniforms because they had nothing else and there wasn't any clothing to be had much in the way of shops. I guess they had no finance either to buy clothing. So a lot of them still wore their uniforms, and they were

03:00 fairly bedraggled, a lot of them, their uniform was in a bad state of repair. Again, by the time I had left in two years' time it was getting better and people were looking better.

And you mentioned earlier that there were some people who would work around the barracks, Japanese women. Was there a different sort of interaction with these people?

Oh yes, they became quite friendly. In fact, some of the

03:30 sergeants had house girls, sergeants and officers, and some of the sergeants married their house girls. And oh yes, they were quite outspoken.

What sort of things would they say and do?

Oh, they wouldn't take any cheek, we had them as waitresses in our kitchen, in the other ranks' mess but oh yes, they would let you know if they weren't happy if you said or did anything.

How would they do that?

Oh, yabber away at you in Japanese and

04:00 give you a narrow look. The house girls were different again, they sort of got used to looking after a particular room, there was two sergeants per room and they became sort of a family with us. In fact, the one that looked after us, she was a house girl at Kodaichi, this is the

04:30 second time I am talking about now. She was a house girl at Kodaichi when I was there before and she remembered me and she was a mother with a couple of kids, she was very good. Quite nice, the rest of them, they weren't in any way subdued by us, they were outspoken and said their piece if they wanted to.

Could you understand any Japanese at all?

05:00 Oh yes, quite a bit by the time I left. A lot of it wasn't the kind of Japanese spoken in the best of households but …

What sort of things?

Curses and rude ways of saying things rather than the proper way. They used to laugh a bit whenever you would say it, of course. But yeah, we could make ourselves, most of us could make ourselves understood a bit.

Was there much cause for you to use the language in shops and that?

No, not a great deal.

05:30 Sometimes in the workshop you might have to learn phrases or something. But otherwise, no, they knew what they wanted to sell us in the shops and we knew what to buy so it was pretty easy, they knew how to say how much it was so that bit was easy.

Amongst the women that worked around the barracks did they have any quirky names that they would call you? As in …

06:00 No, I don't think so. There was Baby sans and Chippy sans and things like that, if they were small that was the nickname, one girl that worked in the sergeants' mess, we called her Bamboo because she was real thin. Yeah, there were a few nicknames.

Did you have a nickname?

Me? I was called "Baby san" when I first went up there because I was very young and the first flush of innocence still on the cheeks.

06:30 **What did you think about the nickname?**

I didn't mind because at that time I was the youngest in the unit, I think. And no, it didn't worry me, I had been called worse.

And just when we finished the other tape, Keinan was starting to talk about leave to various places, I guess can you tell me about where you went and the things you saw?

Well the two places I went to were Kawana, that had been a

07:00 very classy resort before the war, had its own golf club and we used to go up there for a week at a time. Didn't cost us anything. All meals for free, we had to pay for our own drinks, but we played golf, it was very reasonable, a few hundred yen, perhaps, that was only about

07:30 two shillings or something like that. Golf boys were cheap, Japanese golf balls and the girl caddies were free, we could go on tours, they would run tours from there. And when I was in Tokyo they ran the tour up to Nikon which is a very historical Japanese place, a lot of temples and carvings and things like that. And we stayed up there for about four days. Again, we were only there for a week.

08:00 When we went on leave it was a mixture of air force and navy and army. Not so much navy because there was only a shore base there, the ships didn't stay there long enough to take leave, so it was only a few from the base that would take leave. Always air force and army predominantly.

08:30 **And who would you go on leave with, what size groups?**

Well, I suppose, I don't know, fifty in all at a time. Again, you wouldn't mix with all of them. You generally went with someone from your own unit if you could. But it didn't take you very long, after a couple of beers, to find someone that you liked and then you would pal up with him for the rest of the time.

09:00 Or we'd play golf in a group, easy to get to know people and mix with people in those sorts of situations.

What were your impressions of, you mentioned that they would take you on tours, what were your impressions of the countryside, of the natural environment around Japan?

Oh, around the main cities it was always a bit squalid if that is the word, all cramped, no yards like we have.

09:30 But the countryside is beautiful, of course, and the seaway is beautiful, the islands. Very impressive, the country, always seems to be green, a lot of pine trees on the hills and they are terraced with the rice paddies. Near Kawana was Mount Fuji,

10:00 you could see that in the distance and that was generally covered in snow and that was a highlight. They used to run tours up to there but I didn't ever go, I don't know why, I wish I had done. And there were times when they would run walking parties and you could climb Mount Fuji. But again, I didn't go on one of those.

It sounds like at least that part of the economy was getting on its feet at that stage, is this a result of the occupation force?

10:30 Oh, I think in the end it was because the occupation force provided a terrible lot of work, all facets of it, the Americans, the Australians, the New Zealanders and the British all employed a terrible lot of Japanese. And then of course when the Korean War was on they employed a lot more. But certainly the economy seemed to pick up very quickly and I like to think it was a result of

11:00 our presence, in some way, anyway. And I think it would have been because businesses started to improve and there were a lot more products appearing on the market, cigarettes and things like that. A lot more stuff from overseas was appearing, not just Japanese stuff.

11:30 **Can you tell me about any differences that you might have noticed between Japanese people in the city and then further out, that you might have seen when you were on leave and so forth?**

They seemed to be a little different in Tokyo than they were in Hiroshima, they had a slightly different dialect, so a lot of our conversations didn't go too well up there.

12:00 We found a basic difference in the people, and of course they didn't know Australians in Tokyo, only what they had seen on the ceremonial parades and guard duties on the Emperor's Palace. So that was the only time that Australians were ever with Tokyo people. So we didn't create much of an impression up there, I think they thought that MacArthur was God and that was the end of [the]

12:30 story. They were more [along] American lines than toward us.

How big was MacArthur's influence?

Big. Oh yes, he was treated like the Emperor, nearly. What he said went, and I think he played up to that a bit, I might be wrong.

13:00 We didn't have a good impression of him, we never did.

Why is that?

Well, we had heard a lot of Australian experiences of war, where he didn't think highly of Australians as troops. I think he was better by the time the occupation forces came along, he made some promising speeches about us and it was alright. But all in all I think we were just another

13:30 country that was involved in the occupation and I don't ever remember him being down our way, I don't think he ever came down south. Could have done, but I don't remember. He was up there and we were down there and we didn't think about it much. He always had a lot of publicity in the Japanese papers and

14:00 the American Stars and Stripes, they had their own newspaper, so he got plenty of publicity.

What sort of publicity?

Oh, good for him. Well, pictures in the paper all of the time and everything his family did was headline news and I suppose the publicity that generals expect. But again, it didn't impress us

14:30 very much. We weren't involved with the Americans very much so they lived their lives up there and we lived ours.

You have mentioned these ceremonial parades, can you tell me about them and what they were for?

Well, we had our own down in Kure and Hiro on Australia Day, Queen's Birthday, things like that. The big parades in Tokyo,

15:00 which we didn't ever get to see because a battalion would go up and do their parade and guard duty up there and we would never see that. But we had several parades a year in the Hiroshima prefecture and they would take the form of each corps would be on parade, armoured corps would lead the parade, artillery next

15:30 and so forth down the line. Except when the artillery had the guns on parade and then they would take the right of line, as they called it, and lead off from their guns. So there was always a little bit of, not animosity, but showmanship between armoured and artillery. Sometimes the artillery would let us on parade with them but not often, they didn't have much respect for AEME people as soldiers, I don't

think.

16:00 **How would this animosity be expressed?**

Not nastily, but the AMEM theme song they said was, “See them shuffle along.” Things like that, you know, all in good fun. But I think I was on parade a couple of times, once as a driver towing the guns because they were short a driver. And once AEME

16:30 had their own little group, but normally it was segregated into units. And we would just have a review by some officer, it might be the brigade commander, might be Red Robbie [Lieutenant General (later Sir) Horace Robertson], who was the BCOF commander; someone of importance would review the parade about, sometimes three a year, perhaps might be four.

17:00 **Would the general public come and watch or …?**

When the wives came up there, I think that was towards the end of 1947, they would watch and they would participate from the sidelines, of course they were fairly prominent. I don’t know that they ever participated in any sports or things like that but we

17:30 certainly, single soldiers weren’t allowed down near the married quarters or anything. We could go down on invitation from the husband of the house but otherwise they were out of bounds, the married quarters. So we didn’t, the ordinary rank and file didn’t get to see much, sometimes it was a source of supply for spirits to find some willing husband that would let, because they used to get a spirits ration,

18:00 we didn’t.

Why is that?

Oh, they reckoned we couldn’t handle it or something. We just used to get, most of the time our one bottle of beer a day. And then the Japanese beer in the out of bounds place. Sometimes we would scrounge a bottle of whiskey out of someone and we would have a party. But that was the only social intercourse we had with the wives.

18:30 They had house maids and I think they had gardeners to do all of the gardening, they had a ball really. In fact, I am led to believe that it was the breakdown of many marriages, not only in Japan, but Malaya as well, the wives had got used to doing not very much and they couldn’t handle it when they came home. So I am led to believe, but

19:00 that wasn’t a worry of mine so I didn’t put much stock in it.

Just a question about the food, there were Japanese people working in the kitchens and that sort of thing, was there ever any Japanese food prepared?

No, it was all from Australia. Even the Kiwis [New Zealanders] had our food, as far as I know. Later on during the Korean War there was a lot of Japanese vegetables and stuff

19:30 bought by the kitchen staff for use, because you can imagine by the time we got cabbage and stuff from Australia it would be pretty yellow and unappetising. So the various committees in the messes used to go out and buy stuff. We used to get oysters from a place near Kodaichi and the cook used to cook

20:00 them for us. Crabs and stuff like that, we could go to the fish market and buy, and one of the cooks would cook it up for us. Generally it was army rations all of the time.

And so tell me about the end of your time in Japan, when did you know you would be coming back to Australia and …?

Well, we knew that the British had gone in 1947 and then the New Zealanders left, so we knew that

20:30 the time was getting pretty short. And we had an idea of what Australians would be remaining up there. So we were all prepared and we had been up there, well I had been up there for two years, some of them had been up there since the islands [New Guinea, Morotai, etc.]. They went up in the islands and they were allowed to go home on leave once during their tour if they had been there for that long. I was just ready to come home on leave

21:00 and they decided to send most of the troops home. We were all fairly happy then to go. A lot of the fellows stayed up there with units, they transferred and stayed up there. One friend of mine, he had been in the Middle East, New Guinea, he went straight up to the island and spent eight years there in Japan, didn’t come

21:30 home on leave at all.

Why was that?

He had no family and he was just happy up there, he played a lot of sport and when I first went up there he was in charge of a Red Shield hut, a Salvation Army Red Shield hut, and then when I went back the second time he was the projectionist, film projectionist. And he adopted me, he said, “You, young whatsisname, you need looking after.

22:00 So I am going to adopt you." He became my uncle then.

What sort of things, in adopting you, how would he look after you?

Threaten to kick me in the tail if I didn't do the right thing. Because he had been everywhere, the Middle East and New Guinea, a likeable fellow, real likeable, but he would pull me into gear if I needed it.

22:30 And I met him again when he came home after he retired in the army.

Was it hard for him to be in Japan after what he had seen in the islands?

No. He had no trouble, when he was in charge of the Red Shield hut he had a staff of about twenty Japanese girls and he had no trouble at all.

23:00 Certainly when I went back he never mentioned any trouble he had. He let life go on. He had been wounded in Borneo, I think, so he had fought the Japanese and had no trouble with it.

And what were you thinking about, coming back to Australia at this time?

Well, I had by that time joined the permanent army so I knew that I would be staying in, I knew that I would be coming back with the unit I

23:30 was in Japan with. We were going to North Head which was a great sight, so everything looked rosy. I had no family problems or anything like that. I didn't have a whole lot of money. When my brother got out of the air force I took over the allotment to my mother.

24:00 So I didn't always have a lot of money but I had a lot of fun. And I pretty well knew that life as it was in Japan would go on as it was in Australia.

And so how did you travel back from Japan?

On HMAS Kanimbla ,the same as we went up on.

Any differences in that second trip?

No, that was the last trip that she did for the navy. They paid out, they had what they call the, when a ship is leaving the navy they

24:30 fly this great long pennant, paying off pennant, they call it. And it must have gone for a hundred yards off the back of the boat, with all of the action it had been in during the war and all of that sort of thing. So they knew that they were finished too, that they would be transferred, but they didn't say anything to us [about] whether they liked the idea, they just accepted it as part of the service.

Did the Kanimbla get a welcome into Sydney as a result of ...?

25:00 Oh, yes. Ferries and that going past, but no official ceremony. We were taken off the ship and out to Marrickville and dispensed with as quick as they could.

Why was that?

The sort of name that this lady had given us,

25:30 I wouldn't say we were an embarrassment but they just wanted us out of [the] road and settled into our units as quickly as possible, I guess.

Just tell me a bit about this reputation, we talked about it a little bit before.

Well, someone had put a flea in her ear about something or other that she said or did, and she got a bit nasty and came back and said that we were all playing up and we were drunks,

26:00 and we were fraternising and we were all doing this or that. And it stuck.

And what did she publish that in?

I forget what she wrote, I think it might have been the Women's Mirror then, or the Women's Weekly, one of the two. We were a bit upset about it. I can remember when I went back to Japan one of the fellows had written a poem about it and it was hanging up in our meal room.

26:30 **How does it go?**

I can't remember what it said. But it made mention of the false reporting that she had made of us, that we would all come home safe and clean and something like that. But yes, it was a, I never ever met the lady, I don't know, I don't think there were any repercussions about anything that she said.

27:00 Just that she obviously didn't think very much of us.

Was there ever any attitude from the general public back home about that?

I don't think so, no.

And were you given leave at this time?

Yes, I think I ended up with about sixty odd days' leave altogether. I don't know how, but I accepted it.

And where did you go?

27:30 I went home to Kyogle on leave. Then when I finished that I went back to North Head to the unit.

And what was it like seeing your family again?

Good, I had nieces and nephews in Kyogle and there was only my mother, she was living on her own. And my brother at that time was working in Kyogle so I was able to see him. It was good. Got to know the fellows that I had gone to

28:00 school with again. I think at that stage I had a break and I went back to Sydney to be best man at a friend's wedding. And paid my own way down and back, and that was a bit of a break from the leave, because it was getting a little bit more,

28:30 not boring I suppose, but spending more than I was earning. It was good, it was good to get home.

And did your mother and your brother talk to you about Japan?

Well, the family told me that she was concerned that I would get married up there, and she told them that whatever happened, she was obviously hoping that I wouldn't but she said that whatever happens we'll accept her if he did. And that will be the end of it. And knowing

29:00 my mother, that would have been the end of it, too.

Did she ask you what it had been like?

Yes.

What sort of things would you tell her about Japan?

Much the same as I am telling you. I would gloss over some of it, of course.

What sort of things would you gloss over?

Well, the parties we used to have and the out of bounds beer halls that we went to

29:30 and things like that. I didn't tell her about that.

Was there any talk about the bomb?

Not much, I can't say I ever heard anything about it at all. It was sort of over as far as we were concerned. Again, not an Australian problem at all, that was an American problem as [far as] we were concerned, not ours. There had been Australian POWs [prisoners of war] involved in it,

30:00 they were in Hiroshima when the bomb dropped, not very many and I don't know how many were killed there, if any. But there were a couple there at least. But no, we didn't ever hear much about the bomb. The Japanese didn't certainly talk about it.

But what about your brother, he had been involved in World War II, did he have any interesting questions or anything about Japan?

30:30 General questions, he would ask me about places if it happened to come up on the news. Or ask me about the work I did, but generally speaking he was more interested in trying to resettle himself after five years in the air force, he wasn't terribly concerned about my

31:00 service life, he didn't know much about the army, so just general questions he would ask. You know, in conversation.

And so at the end of this leave, when you headed back to North Head, what sort of work were you doing there?

The same as we did in Japan. We would maintain the guns and

31:30 they'd do more shoots than we did in Japan, they would go probably once a month, so we were kept pretty busy. If the guns weren't doing anything we would help the mechanics or vice versa. We didn't do duties, that was one good thing. We had a recovery vehicle which we would go and pick up broken down vehicles around part of Sydney,

32:00 but basically the same work that we did in Japan.

Did you miss Japan?

Well, I think you always come back wishing you had done this or seen that or go[ne] somewhere else, so I did miss some of it, which is why when I had the opportunity to go back I grabbed it.

What did you miss?

Oh, some of the places I could have gone.

32:30 Well one example is there, not far from the air base there at Iwakuni there is a historic bridge, the Kintai Bridge, they call it, and it was made centuries ago without any steel in it, it's all wood. It is a series of arches across this river and in cherry blossom time it is beautiful, all of the river bank is lined with cherry trees. So that I didn't see until the second time I was in Japan.

33:00 I made a point of it. Things like that and some of the temples I didn't go to, putting it off until another day and then another day didn't happen. I think the second time I was there I saw more places because a group of us would get on a Japanese ferry, didn't know where it was going and get off on some island and have a picnic and

33:30 look around, and we did that quite a lot. So there were things I should have done the first time that I didn't and I regretted that.

And was there a difference, you said the work you were doing was the same, was there a difference doing it in North Head compared to Kure?

No, the facilities were worse in North Head, we just had a gun park to work in whereas in Japan we had a nice big workshop.

34:00 And it was easier to get parts and that sort of thing, naturally. No, I think working conditions were better in Japan than they were in North Head because we often had to work out in the open in North Head. But the barrack rooms were much better, I don't think the food was any better. Life went on pretty much the same except

34:30 we had access to the city on leave every weekend we had off and night time we could go over to the city if we wanted to, there was more time and no out of bounds beer hall.

And what was Sydney like at the time?

Pretty good, much the same I suppose, Sydney got over the war pretty readily

35:00 and it was just a big city. We would go to dances or go over to town for a meal. We spent a lot of time in Manly because it was just down the bottom of the hill. A lot of people joined the surf clubs and civilian football teams and cricket teams. Sport we had every Wednesday, I think it was, we had off for sport.

35:30 I played a more active part in sport in Australia than I did in Japan, really. Yeah, life was again pretty good. Then I was only there for about two years, I suppose, and I was transferred out to another unit.

And where was that unit?

At Moorebank, just outside Liverpool in Sydney.

And I guess, what control do you have over transfers?

None.

36:00 None. You can jump up and down and scream but it doesn't do much good. If you had compassionate grounds you could fight, but if you were posted that was it, that was the end of the story. [In] later years I went to Bandiana in Victoria on promotion to the training centre and I went as an instructor and it was a step up to another rank but I ended up staying there for ten years.

36:30 Normally tenure in a posting was two, but if they wanted you there after two, that was it. So I stayed there for ten years because nobody wanted to go there.

Why not?

Well, nobody wanted to be an instructor much.

And this second posting after North Heads, was it Moorebank?

Moorebank.

Was there any great differences?

Oh yeah. We had no activity as far

37:00 as shoots or anything, all we were doing was stripping down wartime guns and putting them into preservation.

How do you do that?

Well, they would be stripped right down and put in what they called the pickle, it was an acid bath that would take off all of the rust if there was any, and the paint off it. Then they would be dropped into a bath of mineral jelly and bees wax to seal the rifling in the barrel. Then

37:30 they would be painted and then in a lot of cases with the old six inch naval guns they were just put out on the paddock and sold as scrap after they had been prepared, so …

Who would buy them?

Scrap metal dealers. They would melt them down or cut them up and sell the steel. I though that was a bit of no hoping job. We had a lot of very old civilians working there and we were in

38:00 charge of them and it was pretty hard to get them motivated as well. So when this availability of a transfer of trades came along I took it and I suppose never looked back from then.

How did that transfer of trades come along?

Well, every so often there was a schedule of different trades come out and if you felt like doing one you could apply for it. You wouldn't always be selected,

38:30 but as long as it was allied to something you were doing you had a fair chance of getting it. And the instruments trade was aligned, you know, in some respects, to gun fitting because it involved repairing gun sights and binoculars and all optical equipment.

39:00 So it was sort of allied in a way to it. So when I was offered the chance, I took it. And the atmosphere in an instruments workshop is pretty good, it is air conditioned mostly and dust free, so the working conditions were a lot better, pay was a bit better, so I took it.

Tape 6

00:31 **During this time in Australia, is this when you met your wife?**

No, that was long after.

Okay, we'll talk about that later, stab in the dark there. Tell us about when you heard the news that there was a possibility that you might go back to Japan.

01:00 I was overjoyed. The workshop at Leichhardt in Sydney was only a workplace, there was no accommodation or anything there. And we lived at the personnel depot in Marrickville and we had to find our way to Leichhardt. We didn't do any duties at Marrickville but we were there at the beck and call of the staff if they wanted us, I suppose. We were there for rations

01:30 and quarters only. As I say, I was only there for a week or a fortnight, perhaps, and then I moved out to go to Japan.

Why were you overjoyed?

Well again, the job mainly, well not so much the job, it was interesting enough for the time I was there. The quarters at Marrickville were spartan and I think we were just on

02:00 an old wire bed with a mattress. And the meals weren't very good. Like the personnel depot, they are mass produced, pretty well, and not very nourishing or appetising. And the thought of getting back to Japan was enough to make me feel pretty good about life. I was pretty well aware of what unit I would be going to and I

02:30 knew that a lot of the fellows that I had known in Japan the first time were still there, so it was like going home, I knew there would be someone there I would know.

And what about the war in Korea, did you know much about this?

Yes, before I left, the first of the battalion people had come home. I hadn't spoken to any of them but

03:00 I used to see them around at the personnel depot and I had been following it closely on the news, so I knew what they had been through and what was involved. And I didn't know at that stage whether I would be going to Korea, I knew I would be going to Japan but not Korea, that came later.

What did you think of the political situation there?

03:30 Didn't know much about it, didn't follow it too much. We knew Syngman Reeh was the president [of South Korea] and that a lot of people were unhappy with it but I think South Koreans are renowned for demonstrations from students and that. So we weren't interested in the politics of it. More interested in army politics than civilian politics, really. How the Americans,

04:00 who were basically in charge, how they were running things and keeping touch with casualty lists to see who we knew that had been wounded or killed. That was the main interest we had.

What about communism, what did you hear or know about communism?

There had been a communist action in Japan right from the days of the occupations.

04:30 It was held down pretty well so they weren't generally too outspoken, but we knew that was there. And we knew that was basically behind the Korean War, the Russians backing the North Koreans and the Chinese too of course and the Americans and

05:00 the other nations too that were involved in Korea eventually, on the other side. So that was about all of the political aspect of the thing that we knew or worried about rather. No, I can't say that we ever got involved with the civilian political side of it much.

What about the notion of fighting communism?

05:30 Well, we thought rather in their backyard than ours, and that was the same for Vietnam as well, I think, although I think the Korean War was a lot more popular, if I can use that expression, with the civilians than the Vietnam one. Because they could see all of the nations that were behind the United Nations set-up.

06:00 A little bit more palatable than Vietnam, I think.

So tell me about your trip back to Japan, how did you get [there]?

We flew back on a DC6 [aircraft], landed in Manila and had the night there. Met a very, met an American benefactor, we didn't have very much money again, and we met an American benefactor

06:30 from the coast guard who was returning to America and decided we were a likely looking mob to shout for. It was a great night. Again, Manila was a bit of an eye opener, another Asian country that we hadn't seen before and we didn't get to see a lot of it because we got there late in the afternoon

07:00 and left early next morning, but we had a bit of a walk around and we stayed at the Manila Hotel which was a bit of a palatial sort of place and all in all it was a very good night, very good.

What did you do that night?

After our little walk around we settled into a bar with our benefactor and stayed there until it closed.

07:30 We wouldn't have been having much to drink. A friend of mine was drinking a Tom Collins [cocktail] and that was about fifteen shillings, I think, and that was way outside our league, but this American wouldn't let us pay so we took advantage of his hospitality.

What were the locals like there?

Didn't have much to do with them at all.

08:00 There was a big society wedding in the hotel that night and we just had a look at it from the outskirts but no one wanted to get involved with us. The waiters and that we didn't have much conversation with, they spoke good English, of course, but we didn't have much conversation with them .We just stuck in a group and we were gone the next morning so we didn't have much to do with them.

08:30 **And tell us about arriving in Japan, what were you seeing that was different from before?**

Not a great deal except that we landed at a different place, we landed at Iwakuni and then went by ferry through the island to Kure again and I think that was an hour's trip, something like that. And the scenery was much the same as I had left it as relating to the country.

09:00 There was more buildings there the second time, three years had lapsed so there was a lot more buildings, the docks had been cleaned up a lot. And then there was a vehicle waiting there for me and I went to this base workshop [that] was in Kure itself, so I didn't have far to go from where I landed.

You might have briefly touched on it, but how did it look

09:30 **as far as, like you mentioned before that it was bombed out and there was sunken ships, what …?**

Well the ships had all been cleaned up pretty well, and a lot of the bomb damage had been cleared away, a lot of the rubble. And generally where there had been gaps in the buildings there was new houses and things. And where a lot of the foliage had been destroyed [it] had regenerated and it was looking more like a city than

10:00 when I last saw it.

And what about the people, did you notice a difference with the people?

They were just like everyday people that time, they just mixed with the Australians, Americans or British, whoever was there. That's on the street of course. They seemed to be a lot friendlier than the first time. They weren't hostile the first time, but like I said, they were a bit stand-offish and not sure how

10:30 to take us, but by the time I got back there, what, it had been five years had lapsed since the occupations started, they were a lot more affluent than they had been. You know, they had plenty of

food and there was more vehicles on the road, better vehicles. The first time they had old vehicles with gas producers on them because there wasn't much fuel.

11:00 The second time they had big transports and buses, much like the coaches today like we see down here. Much more affluent than they were before.

And you also described some of their mannerisms as docile, had that changed at all?

That hadn't changed at all, no. Still no, the only incident I heard of that

11:30 led me to believe they were a little more assertive, this friend I worked with, not a friend, he was a bit of a boozer and no hoper, and he was walking down the street drunk and elbowed this Japanese out of the way and the Japanese fellow had a pair of getas, wooden shoes they used to wear with the big thick heels on them like that

12:00 and when this fellow elbowed him out of the way he hit him down the side of the face with these shoes. So they were very much more assertive than they had been the first time.

And what about the shops, were the things they would sell you the same or …?

Oh yes, but much better quality. You know, they were happy to get a lot of our stuff that we didn't want the first time, but the second

12:30 time we were there they had as much as we had. Restaurants were still basically out of bounds, but it was not policed nearly as harshly as it was the first time. [We] still went to our out of bounds beer halls, and the Japanese spy system still worked, they would say, "MP come, MP come," and shoo us into a little room out the back or something like that.

13:00 It was good, and all of this was happening in a little close area to our camp, we didn't have to walk very far. This one particular beer hall, this fellow that got hit with a wooden shoo, he was a watchmaker and he would repair people's watches for them,

13:30 and if he was short of money he would go and flog them around at this little beer hall. And they would come to get it and he would say, "Oh, I'll get it back on pay day." He'd hock it around there. So everything was a lot better the second time. And the reason they had more money, of course, was because they had more employment, due to the Korean War, than they had before. The workshops were fully staffed by Japanese tradesman.

14:00 Most of the Australians were in a supervisory role.

I am curious how the fraternisation policy was the second time?

Well, the MPs still did their patrols, and to all intents and purposes the Japanese houses were still out of bounds. But they weren't nearly as strict as they were the fist time.

14:30 And by that time a lot of the soldiers had married Japanese girls, although it hadn't been officially recognised at that time. And we could go up to their place and have a meal or a drink or whatever, there was no problem with that. It was a lot more relaxed and not frowned upon as much.

15:00 I like to think they realised at last that the fraternisation ban wasn't working and as I said before, I really couldn't see if we were going to teach these people democracy, how we were going to do it if we weren't allowed to mix with them.

And what about women's position in Japan, had that changed much?

Oh, a good deal. I think by that time they were voting and they didn't seem as

15:30 servile as they did the first time, you know? They had been downtrodden for years before the war. And if you read stories about how the Japanese military stood over the people, it is not hard to understand why they were cautious when we arrived. But by the time I got there the second time they knew they could just about say and do as they liked.

16:00 They were a lot more open. And you know, a lot more involved in the Japanese life.

And were you noticing changes in the culture they were adopting?

Their dress had changed, fairly dramatically. You could see kimonos but mostly on occasions of celebration. They had adopted western style of dress, pretty much.

16:30 **And any other western styles that had been adopted?**

Not that I can think of or had any association with.

What about things in the community, like shops or something, like the American embassy that you mentioned, were there things of this nature?

17:00 No, again, there was not much American influence down where we were, not much at all. Very rarely seen American, as I said, there were military government teams around about but they kept to

themselves. Some of our fellows were attached to military government, over on the island, the city of Matsuyama on the big other island whose name escapes me [it is Shikoku].

17:30 But they were attached to military government and they would go around looking at things, visiting the mayor and prefecture chief and things like that. We were involved quite a bit with doing recovery work on their vehicles. If a bus went into a ditch they would get in touch with the workshops and we would pull them out.

18:00 So we were getting a lot more involved with the Japanese population than we did before.

Down in that area did you go to Hiroshima again?

Yes. It was changed dramatically too. Still see lots of damage and the epicentre of the bomb where it supposedly went off, it was still there,

18:30 and the rubble heaps were still there. But a lot more building had taken place, as I said, they used to put a building up in no time at all with their bamboo and chicken wire and stucco type buildings. So it was a lot more stable than it was and transport had grown tremendously,

19:00 trains were very good. So a real big difference, I noticed.

And what was your role during this time, what were you doing on a day to day basis?

19:30 I was working in an instruments section, mostly supervising Japanese, although they were very good tradesman, we would allocate the work and then just supervise that it was going on alright. Later on I got involved more with the repair, some of the instruments coming out of Korea I hadn't seen before so I worked on those,

20:00 the tank instruments particularly. They didn't allow the Japanese too much to work on those. I suppose they were still a bit secretive about it, and then once it was repaired they had a tank workshop at Hiro, which was about nine or ten mile from Kure, I suppose, and when we repaired the instruments we would go out and fit it to the tank when it was finished so it would be sent back to Korea.

20:30 **How would you learn to do a new piece of work if you haven't seen it before?**

Oh, they would bring literature out on every piece of equipment that's introduced into the army. They call it an EMEI, an Electrical Mechanical Engineering Instruction. And there was a series, there is a data summary which describes the equipment and then there is a user manual, which is the second stage. Then there is a unit repair, I was in a LAD

21:00 first, the unit could only adjust and do minor repairs, they couldn't do a complete overhaul. Then there would be a field repair which went a little bit further, maybe on man hours, a field repair. And then there would be a base repair where you could do a complete overhaul. Like they would strip engines right down to the block and strip tanks right down. That was a base repair, all governed by man hours,

21:30 the stages of repair you could do, but an instrument shop being a base workshop, we were allowed to strip them right down and we had the manual to follow, and we had to test it when it was repaired. So it was all pretty well laid out you didn't have to be a Rhodes Scholar [particularly clever].

Would it take a while to learn?

Oh yes, you developed a technique for the various things, particularly with equipment I hadn't seen before but you develop shortcuts for yourself, you know?

22:00 And the Japanese were particularly good, some of the more elaborate instruments that we allowed them to do, they could pick it up fairly quickly, they were masters at that sort of thing, you know.

Why do you think that is?

I don't know, they were just good tradesmen, you know. I remember one fellow in

22:30 the section was responsible for medical equipment, used to sharpen all of the scalpels for the hospital, got a recommendation from them how good a job he had done. Some of the vehicles coming back from Korea, English vehicles, the instrument panel was in a plastic frame and they came back from

23:00 Korea all distorted and this Japanese tradesman made up a jig, and he used to clamp therm in that and soak them in hot water and they would come out as good as new. He got a recommendation for that. They were just very good tradesmen.

And how would you work on stuff that was secret to the Japanese?

Well there was some stuff that came in there that even we weren't allowed to see, we had by this time some British tradesmen working with us,

23:30 and any cipher equipment that came from signals, they used to lock him in a little room and he was the only one that was allowed to do it. Later on when the British equipment became a bit more common they were allowed to work on it. But the fellow that was working with us was mainly doing the everyday

stuff like binoculars and dial sights and things like that.

24:00 **How would they get to assure your confidentiality?**

I didn't have to sign any secrecy documents until I went to Woomera. There was always a senior NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] in the shop and he made sure that we did it and not anyone that wasn't supposed to.

24:30 He had the final say on who would do what.

Were you seeing new weapons coming through?

Not weapons so much, only optical equipment which was my forte.

What did you think of this new equipment?

Oh, good. Some of the Australian equipment we had was way back from World War II but then we got a bit of American equipment

25:00 that we had never seen before and that we had to pick our way with that, we didn't have any literature to go by, but it was mostly just cleaning the optical system and we just stripped it down as we went and put it together in the reverse order.

What were some of the new features of this equipment?

25:30 Well one of the things, all optical systems have got what they call a graticule in there, it is a series of lines and that's always on the focal point of the instrument, so any dust that fell on that particular piece of glass was magnified to whatever the instrument was. A piece of dust magnified eight times. So one of the things that was very hard to do was to clean that if there was any dust around. But the first American

26:00 tank sights we got, mostly they were etched into the glass. And you could wipe them over and be a little bit rough with them, but the first American tank sight we got we discovered that the graticule was photographed on and the first wipe of a rag it all disappeared. We had to be careful of things like that. If we could get literature we

26:30 did, if we couldn't we just had to proceed slowly.

And what were some of the advantages of the new equipment?

I don't know that there were any real advantages. Probably a bit bigger magnification or better structure but the principal was the same.

What news were you hearing about how the Korean War was going when you were in Japan?

Well we would always get

27:00 sit reps [situation reports] you called them from our own people there from the workshop, and then the American Stars and Stripes, that was their newspaper. We would sometimes get copies of that. And there was an Australian group [that] published a newspaper called the BCON [British Commonwealth Occupation News] and that was published twice a week or something like that and that had all of the

27:30 war news and sports news from Australia, or any earth shattering news from Australia, they would print that. That was based in Osaka which was up in the American sector, that was quite a nice little newspaper that was published twice a week.

And were you hearing news about China's involvement?

Yes.

What did you think of China entering the war?

28:00 Well it was pretty scary originally because our people were right up near the Yalu River and all of a sudden the Chinese came in and we had to retreat fairly rapidly, almost back to where they started, they made a big difference. They had so many men and their equipment was better than the North Koreans had, they were a real force to be reckoned with.

What was your feelings towards the news

28:30 **that the Chinese were pushing the UN [United Nations] forces back?**

Well, a lot of that happened before I had left Australia to go back. By the time I got to Japan again a lot of that had more or less stabilised. I think the Battle of Kapyong was the last big battle, that was just north on the 38th parallel and that was on the 24th of April 1951 and I got there in May 1951. So the battle,

29:00 the war then took on more of a static role where they were on a fixed line, more or less. They would do patrols and that sort of thing, but basically on a fixed line.

And were you keen to go to Korea?

Yeah.

Why were you keen to go to Korea?

Various reasons, I wanted to taste a little bit of active service

29:30 and war service, and it was a different atmosphere in the field than in a base workshop. There were only, we didn't have a proper workshop in Korea, we were with the British infantry workshop. And the instruments section was in

30:00 the back of a three tonne truck. There were about half a dozen Englishmen and I was the only Australian and there was one Kiwi.

Tell us about the structure of working in the back of the truck?

Oh, it was about a three tonne truck. It had test equipment in there and benches, but you didn't have much room to move. But I think they had a watchmaker, he sat right down the

30:30 end next to the cab, in a little bench down there and then we worked along either side. There was a gap between one of the benches for a tester for the binocular that was called a collimator which was fixed to the wall and that allowed you to line the two binoculars up so that you would be looking in the same direction with both eyes.

31:00 And then they had a tent next door, that was where the section leader worked. That was his little office where he did the administration part of it, like the job cards and the worksheet, he would fill all of that out.

And why were you in the back of trucks?

It was a mobile workshop, not a fixed workshop. So the vehicle mechanics were in tents,

31:30 the gun fitters were in tents and all of the accommodation was tents and I think we were in a vehicle and I think the wireless mechanic was in a vehicle, there were a few of them, like you wouldn't know how many, but there was enough space for us anyway to work there. And the idea, of course,

32:00 was if you had to pick up and leave at a fairly short notice, although we had a wire perimeter around the camp which we had to patrol every night, it was a case of if you had to go you had to go very quickly.

And would you go to other places to repair stuff or ...?

All there. If it couldn't be repaired by us in the field it went back to Kure

32:30 to the base workshop. The workshop I was in, 16 Infantry Workshop, they did all of the equipment for the 28th Brigade which was the Australians, Kiwis and one British unit, or it might have been two British battalions. 11 Infantry Workshop, they did 29 Brigade but that took over the remainder of the British units and then there was a Canadian workshop, they looked after their own,

33:00 that was in the British Commonwealth division.

And how did you mix with the other nationalities?

Oh, we only ever saw the British, mainly, and the Kiwis, although when the vehicle mechanics brought their vehicle down they had to stay with the vehicle through the day and help the mechanic if they could.

33:30 And somehow or other we got to know the Indian field ambulance very well and we used to go up there for a meal occasionally, and they treated us very well.

What would you have?

Mostly curries. Being the middle of winter, scotch with hot water in it, general Indian food. And they would make

34:00 us very welcome and we didn't ever get to invite them down to our place because we were quartered by the British and we often didn't eat in their mess ourselves, we had a good association with the New Zealand ration point and they used to give us American rations and k rations, that was little tins, and turkeys and steaks and things like that and we would often cook it in our tent

34:30 rather than go down to the British mess for meals. Some of their rations were pretty suss [suspicious].

In what way?

Their bacon. Tinned bacon was something different and their tinned steak and kidney pudding was something different. Fatty and we didn't like it very much, although one of us would go

35:00 down each morning and get enough bacon and eggs for breakfast and take it back to our tent. The only

real meal I can remember was Christmas Day 1952, we had made plans to go up to the Kiwis and the 3rd battalion and our boss wouldn't let us go, he made us have lunch with the Brits, which we weren't too happy about, but it turned out alright anyway.

35:30 **What did you think about the way that the Brits were set up? How was their army in your view?**

Well, it was much the same as ours only their discipline was a bit more severe, I suppose, in that they couldn't understand how we would be able to call a warrant officer by his first name and still respect him and they had to sort of

36:00 kowtow to their senior NCOs. They just couldn't understand it. Our discipline was as good as theirs and yet we were able to call our senior NCOs by their Christian name, it was frowned upon even in our army but it used to happen. And they sort of still looked on [us] as colonial, I suppose they always will. But their boss, the major that was in charge

36:30 of the workshop, he was one of the finest men I have ever served under, he was a real old soldier and Christmas Day 1952 he spent nearly all day over in our tent. Walked around with a bottle of Benedictine [alcohol] in his hand all day, taking a sip, and I gave him my hat and he thought we were wonderful.

What about the class system, did you notice that in the British [army]?

37:00 Only in relation to their rank structure. They sort of envied our free and easy style and yet we could get the job done just as well as they could.

And what about the Indian set-up, did you make any observations of differences in their Army?

No, not really, I ended up going into hospital there. They were wonderful, very gentle.

37:30 I only stayed there a couple of hours and then I went onto a Canadian field hospital and that was different. But the Indians themselves, I suppose they would be Pakistanis and Indians at that stage, they were very gentle and they had a terrific name from the battalion people that were wounded and came back through there, they were really good.

Were there any mannerisms that you noticed of interest?

They liked rum, I know that.

38:00 We used to occasionally get them a bottle of rum when they would come down to repair their vehicles and send them on their way. Of course, it was the middle of winter and everyone liked a bit at that stage.

What about various cultures, did you notice the difference?

No, all just soldiers doing their job, that was what it was all about.

38:30 **Did they tell you anything about their home?**

No, I don't know where they came from, whether it was Pakistan or India.

And did they tell you anything about their political situation?

No. Although by that time the partition had happened but

39:00 in Korea, as far as I know, it was just one unit.

Tape 7

00:30 **We'll just go back a little bit and just talk about the actual trip to Korea, so I guess if we take it from the point where you got the news that you would be going and what procedure you went through after that?**

Well, when I got the news I was going I had to go out to a reinforcement holding unit at Hiro

01:00 and be fitted out for Korea.

What did that involve?

Winter clothing and a whole new range of equipment.

What was the winter clothing like?

Parkas, they didn't have any boots, I only went over in ordinary army boots. Knitted string vests, long john underpants with a slit in the back so you didn't have to pull them down and different caps, just mainly winter

01:30 gear. And then when we got to the British unit we were equipped with a sleeping bag and stuff like that.

And what was the different kind of gear that they fitted you out with in Japan, you mentioned the uniform, was there any other sort of ...?

No, wind proof clothing, mainly, for the Korean winter.

02:00 And a parka which was fur lined. Heavy socks.

I guess in your bag, was there any other stuff specific to Korea that you hadn't had in Japan?

No, we had to leave all of our uniforms in Japan and all of the stuff that was for everyday use. Everything else we got to go to Korea.

02:30 And when I got to Korea I was able to get proper snow boots. British snow boots because it was pretty well the middle of winter when I got over there.

And so after you had got the new kit and all of that, what did you do after that?

The ferry that I had come from Iwakuni to Kure with took me back to Iwakuni and we caught

03:00 a RAF [Royal Air Force] flight to Seoul or to Kimpo airport in Seoul.

What was that plane like?

Two engine general transport, you still see a couple of them flying around occasionally. DC3s, pretty basic, aluminium seats down one side and the other no frills. Just

03:30 a couple of hours' flight. So we didn't expect any frills or get any.

And what was the atmosphere like on that flight?

Oh, good. Even with some of the fellows that were going back off R & R [rest and recreation]. They had had R & R in Kure as against Tokyo, some of them had been in the occupation forces and they wanted to go back to Kure and Hiroshima and have a look around there rather than Tokyo.

04:00 So it was pretty good. I met one fellow I had been in the same unit with the first time I had been up there. He was an infantry man, he had gone home in 1948 and got out of the Army and re-enlisted again when the Korean War broke out. So I knew him pretty well and met a couple of others.

Would they tell you anything of what to expect of Korea?

No. Because there was none of them going to the unit [that] I was. I asked them about the weather

04:30 and that sort of thing and they told me, but we were worlds apart as far as eventual job were going to be.

And so where did you land?

In Kimpo, that was the military airport outside Seoul, and then I got transport up to a place called Tok Chong [?], up towards the

05:00 38th parallel, and as I said before, that is a British unit.

And what were your first impressions of Korea?

Well it was a bit like Japan as far as buildings and the rice paddies and that sort of thing went. Seoul was in a hell of a mess, having been bombed and gone through by both armies a couple of times, and it was a bit of a mess,

05:30 but up where we were you wouldn't know we were in a war there, because there were only little villages here and there and we were in a valley with no damage of any kind. And so once you got away from Seoul you wouldn't know there was a war on, really, you could hear it.

What could you hear?

Gunfire and artillery fire and planes going over all of the time.

06:00 Fighters and those sorts of things.

What was this experience like for you?

Oh, a little bit amazing. You know, I sort of didn't know what to expect and I don't know at this stage whether it ever really sunk in that I was in a war area,

06:30 but you know, once we were there for a while and we used to visit the battalion. Up the sharp end, as they called it, so it became a bit more realistic then.

How would you visit them?

We had our own vehicles.

And you would just?

Just tell the boss we were going up to visit the battalion and normally he would let us, except on Christmas Day he wouldn't.

07:00 No, we had fairly good access to transport.

And how were the battalion based different to you?

Well, they were pretty well all in tents. They had several different areas, echelons they called them. A echelon, B echelon and then the front line. So they were geared for pretty quick moving too.

07:30 They were all in tents with their transport but they didn't have to worry about workshops or anything like that, they could move pretty quickly. Their cooking facilities were under canvas or probably in the side of a hill or something like that. Again, pretty basic, but all geared up for a quick get away if you had to.

08:00 **And what was your, I guess, the way you were working, like you were talking about from the trucks and everything was very different to Japan, how long did it take you to settle in to that sort of work?**

Not particularly hard. It was just sitting down working at the bench, same as I was in Japan except that it was a little bit more restricted.

08:30 The turn around times were often a lot quicker because they needed equipment pretty soon after it arrived. So you wouldn't go to all of the detail to repair equipment, like you wouldn't repaint it or anything, whereas in base workshops you would. Things like that. The quicker you could get onto it and repair it, the better.

What was the pressure like?

09:00 Not too bad, but you're on the go all of the time. Sunday we had off. And I think from memory half of the staff used to have Saturday off and the other half would work, something like that, I know I worked a couple of Saturdays while I was there.

09:30 Generally it was accepted that it was in a more restricted environment but it was much the same as Japan. Certainly not the polished lino floor and the big glass outlook over Kure harbour and things like that. But, well, you just reported to work in the morning and worked at the bench all day and knocked off at night.

10:00 **And you mentioned you were talking to Kienan how you would cook in the tent, I have been camping a few times, just how big was the tent? It doesn't seem like it was?**

Oh well, it was much bigger than this room. All of the Australians were in one tent except the senior NCOs, I think, there was four of them in the one tent. About ten of us, I suppose, around about ten in the one big American tent. And we had stretchers around the wall

10:30 and then in the middle we had an oil heater. It was run by dieseline. You would light it up and dieseline would rip onto this hot plate and create heat. The chimney went up through the tent and if it got too hot there would be a fire so you had to be careful you didn't stoke her up too much.

11:00 **Did your tent ever catch?**

No, but I saw several that did, they didn't have much time to get out. They were supposed to be fire proofed but of course they weren't, they used to go up really quickly. So we used to, particularly if we had these American tinned rations, we would just sit them on the stove and sit around the fire. And that's where we did our eating, sleeping,

11:30 drinking and just about everything.

I just can't imagine a ten man tent.

And then we [had] a dugout in case of air raid and that was our refrigerator in the winter time because everything just froze in there.

These American rations, you spoke about them briefly but what were they exactly?

Oh, they would be in the size of a baked bean tin.

12:00 You would get baked beans and frankfurter chunks, ham and lima beans, corned beef hash, stuff like that. And whilst it was tasty, it wasn't terribly filling. Like they used to say about Chinese meals, ten minutes after you had one you want another one. So we used to add to it with some of the stuff we would get off the New Zealanders,

12:30 like a bit of steak or turkey or something like that. And breakfast time we would go down to the English kitchen and get enough food for the lot of us and we would eat it up in the tent. And then we had a little

bathhouse with a little bath in it, but we only used to use that about once a week or something. Because it was too difficult to light up enough hot water, it would get cold so quick,

13:00 and it would get greasy after a couple had had a bath in there.

And tell me what the weather was like when you first arrived?

Colder than I have ever been. Colder than Japan. You would wake up in the morning with ice across your sleeping bag where you had been breathing. That's how cold it was in the tent. You couldn't leave the heater going at night because

13:30 of the likelihood of fire. And whoever was first up used to light the heater. And whoever would light the heater would brew up cocoa, we used to drink cocoa in the morning. It was cold.

How did you sleep in that cold?

Oh, the sleeping bags were pretty warm. You know, once you got in there, they would lace right up to your neck and then you would often had a blanket over that as well. You were warm enough

14:00 but then your face would be exposed and that would be pretty cold. It was a real drama if you had a few beers beforehand and had to get up during the night. That was a drama, because generally you slept in your clothes as well. Didn't have pyjamas or anything like that, you slept in your clothes.

How far away were the toilets?

14:30 They had a urinal I suppose from here out to the back door away so you could nip out there pretty quick. And then they had a little toilet that they used to burn off, dieseline, down there, [they] would burn it off periodically. I think the shearers call them long drop dunnies, just a hole in the ground with a seat over it.

15:00 We had our own Australian one, we were a little bit fussy, we had our own.

Fussy in what way?

Well, we wanted to be a bit aloof from the English, they had theirs further up the hill and more of a communal one. We had our own little one-holer.

15:30 **In Japan you were, the second time you were there you were working on repairs that were coming from Korea, well was there any difference in the work or the types of repairs that you were doing while in Korea?**

No, but as I said the work in Korea was cleaning mostly, you wouldn't do any cosmetic stuff.

16:00 Very much because you had to get it back to the unit as quickly as possible. But in Japan you had to strip it right down and paint it and do all of the cosmetic bits.

In your experience, which would have been a bit by then, was there any wear or tear that was happening to the guns that was specific to Korea, to the environment or the type of war or anything?

16:30 Well, I didn't work on guns in Korea, so I don't know, the British did the guns, I only did the sights because I had changed trades.

Was there anything to do with the weather that was affecting …?

Yeah, summertime I had fungus in the optics. From the humidity, because it was just as hot in the summer as it was cold in the winter in Korea.

17:00 Not much trouble in the wintertime in that respect. But in the summertime there was and then the dust in summer as well. Fungus was a bit of a problem sometimes, you had to be very careful that you didn't leave a fingerprint in there because the acid off your finger would leave an acid spore in there.

17:30 Well, not a fungus spore, but something for the fungus to feed on.

And what did this fungus look like?

Oh, it's, I suppose it is like a miniature mushroom. I suppose you would call it a parasite or something like that, and it eventually eats into the glass if it is left there long enough. And it would also

18:00 interfere with the definition of the image you get because it would cloud the lens.

And how did you get rid of the fungus?

Alcohol, clean with alcohol. If the optics were particularly dirty you would probably wash it in soap and water and then clean it with alcohol.

And you mentioned dust? What would the dust do to the equipment?

18:30 Well, if there was a breakdown in the sealing, when you repaired a sight for instance, all of the outside

glass had to be sealed with bees wax or something like that so that the dust wouldn't penetrate past the glass, you had to make sure that that was all fairly sealed else the dust would get in. And it would get down onto this graticule that I talked about and then you would see all sorts of spots because it

19:00 all gets magnified. And that again would destroy the definition of whatever you are looking at.

Can you describe to me what a typical day was like, we have talked about bits of it but talk me through how you would wake up and what you would do throughout the day?

19:30 Whoever was first to wake up would make the cocoa and we would take it in turns to go and get breakfast and then we would clean up the tent and get ready to go to work. We didn't have to walk very far to work, about two hundred yards I suppose. And we would work there, I can't remember getting morning tea, I don't think we got morning tea in Korea, but we would knock off for lunch and go back

20:00 to our tent, go back in the afternoon and we would work until five o'clock or something like that. And then at night some of us would be on picket duty. They had a picket hut right up the back of the camp along the wire and you had to patrol the wire, or they had the big guard room down the front, so you would be on guard one night and picket the next. Or the other way around.

20:30 I just forget, so you did two nights' duty in a row. But that came around every couple of weeks, I suppose.

Was there ever any scares on duty when you were on?

No, but like Vietnam with, you didn't know who was who, North Korean, South Korean, you wouldn't know one from the other so there was incidents where North Koreans would penetrate and we had an order that

21:00 we weren't allowed to pick up any Korean on the road at all and that was a bit scary because you would be going past them at night and they would be thumbing a lift and they would be heavily armed and you wouldn't know what to expect. The reason for that was that some Americans had some picked some Koreans up and they turned out to be North Koreans and they murdered them and stole their vehicle.

21:30 So that instruction came out that we weren't allowed to pick Koreans up and they mostly would be walking back to their villages and desperately wanting a lift, I suppose, but you couldn't pick them up.

What was your general interaction with the Korean people?

None at all except for a couple of old ladies used to come and do our washing and we couldn't talk Korean,

22:00 they couldn't understand us and we couldn't understand them. But they knew enough to pick up our washing and take our money and that was the only Korean people, oh, I think there were a couple of house boys in the unit. Some of the English fellows had adopted a boy or something like that and he used to look after their tent, but we didn't have one, so no, we didn't have any interaction with the Koreans at all.

22:30 Their troops early in the piece, they were in the American sector and it was only in the latter stages of the war that they were introducing Korean troops into the Australian battalion. Firstly as porters and secondly, I think, there were some fighting soldiers with them. KATCOMS [Korean Augmentation Troops, Commonwealth], I think they called them, I forget what that stood for.

23:00 Yeah, Katcoms, and they were integrated into the Australian battalion.

Just one thing that came into my mind, you mentioned that you would go down to the British kitchen and get your breakfast that you didn't eat there very much. Did this cause any dislocation or resentment?

Not that I heard,

23:30 I don't think they were any more pleased to see us down there than we would have been pleased to go. But Christmas Day we had no problem. A lot of them had been in the workshop in Japan so we knew quite a few of them. They didn't seem to mind and the boss didn't seem to mind, the British major didn't seem to mind.

24:00 We got on fairly well with them, there was one Australian officer in the unit and he was the one that wouldn't allow us to go out on Christmas Day. He did at the end of the day, we ended up going over to the Canadians for a bit of a party, but after dark that was, after we had done a bit of a stint with the British. But no, everything worked well

24:30 and there was no, only one night there was a bit of a scuffle, for some reason we had left our flag up, we had an Australian flag outside our tent. We heard this noise and we looked out and there was a few Brits trying to steal our flag. So we jumped on them and took our flag inside and told them to get lost.

Why did they want the flag?

Just a souvenir, I don't think they liked us flying it very much

25:00 in a British unit.

You mentioned that on Christmas Day you gave your hat to … what was the story with that?

Oh well, I thought it was just a nice gesture, he had let it be known that he admired the Australian fellows that he had very much. And I was looking for something nice to do for

25:30 him and I gave him my hat and he wore it all day.

Did he give it back?

No, no, I gave it to him. And then when I went back to Korea the second time he was my boss again. He was wonderful, he was a really fine officer. He had been in the army a long time, served in the Middle East and France and Germany and India, all over the place.

26:00 **Did you get another hat?**

Yes, my friend gave me one and it was the ugliest looking hat in Korea and I had to wear it back to Japan.

Why was it ugly?

It had been kicked around and sat on and it was all out of shape and it was disgusting. When I got back I bought a new one.

What did people think of the Australian slouch hat?

Oh, they were a souvenir.

26:30 Even this time when we went back the other day, we were sitting with an American one morning after breakfast and he said, “Oh gee, I like your hat.” And he would have grabbed that pretty quick if he had been able to.

Why do you think they liked it?

I don’t know, I think just the history behind it and the look of it. And, oh yes, because we could have sold truck loads of them.

27:00 **Maybe it’s a new business. And so did you spend any time on leave in Korea?**

No, only the little trips we did up to the battalion and we went down to Seoul once, but there wasn’t much to see there. We had a meal there, and we went out to Kimpo air field, one of the apprentices that we had known in Australia and was in the unit,

27:30 he had a brother who was a fighter pilot so we all went down to see him, but that was only once.

And what did you do when you were in Seoul?

Just looked around, there wasn’t much there, but we just wandered around and I think we went for a drive somewhere or other, just around the area.

What was the general morale of the people like?

Well [we] didn’t see much of them. Saw more Americans than Koreans, I think.

28:00 **What did you think of the Americans?**

They were alright, they are generous to a fault, but I suppose full of their own importance a lot of the time and all of their units had big signs up with some catchphrase. You know, they gave us, we went to the 2nd Division in Korea just recently and they had across the back of their

28:30 caps, it’s got, “Second to none.” Second Division is second to none. And I believe the story goes that the New Zealanders put up a big sign, “None.” They were none and the Americans were second to none. Don’t know how true that was but it has got some credence, I think. All in all they were very generous and helpful, we didn’t have

29:00 a lot to do with them, of course, but the ones that we did have a bit to do with they were very generous and treated us well.

And we were talking earlier when we were talking about Japan about MacArthur. What was your, did you have anything more …?

Well, he got the sack, of course.

What did you know about that?

29:30 Oh, only what I have read, that he obviously went too far. The war would have been over a lot quicker if he had stayed at Pyongyang and stopped there but he wanted to go all of the way and go into China as well.

Did you have any awareness of this at the time?

No, not at the time.

So there was no talk about it amongst …?

We knew that he had been replaced but at that stage we didn't know why.

What did you think about the fact that he had been replaced?

30:00 Well, he didn't have much to do with us so we didn't worry. He did all of his fighting from Japan, he didn't come to Korea very much. General Ridgway was in charge when I was there and he was well liked by the troops and MacArthur was just calling the shots from Japan.

You said that he was well liked by the troops, what does it take to be well liked?

30:30 Well, someone that visits the troops, that goes up to the front line with the troops and is not afraid to mix with them. Lets them know what they are supposed to do and what's going to happen next. Doesn't spring things on them and things like that. [Australian] General [Peter] Cosgrove now has got a remarkable name with the troops because of the way he treats them and passes on information, he is a soldier's general, where there are others who aren't.

31:00 [There] have been in the past and I guess there always will be. I think Cosgrove is an example of a soldier's general because he is so well liked.

I guess on the same line, the British guy that you gave your hat to, you said you well respected him. What was it about his abilities or the way he worked that made you like him?

31:30 **Well, just the way he treated his troops, too. On the second time we went to Korea we went as an inspection team, we went from Japan by ship to Pusan, that's right on the bottom of the Korean peninsula. And we were all sergeants except one Canadian, he was a corporal, and when we got to Pusan this English major said, "Well, we can't have you separated from the rest of them,**

32:00 **you're a sergeant from now on." And he promoted him on the spot. He had to take them off when he went back to Japan, of course, but that's the sort of fellow he was. He looked after us and made sure we were well treated, he was that sort of a CO [Commanding Officer].**

So tell me about when you went back to Japan from Korea the first time.

32:30 Well, I had been in hospital in a Canadian field hospital, it had been in winter and I had some bronchial complaint and when I got back to the unit they recalled me back to Kure.

Why?

I suppose in case anything was ongoing. And there would have been a replacement there for me anyway, someone else wanting to go. And I was happy enough to go back, I suppose.

33:00 And I stayed back at the workshop, I was sort of ready to come home again, but then I heard there was a, I wasn't getting on very well with the English section leader we had in the section, he didn't like Australians one little bit, and let it be known. I heard that the war had finished and I heard that there was an inspection team going to Korea from the workshop.

33:30 And I saw the workshop manager and asked him if I could go.

Tell me about the war finishing, when did you get the news, what did you do?

Well I had just been promoted to sergeant and we got word that the war ended on the 27th of July 1953 and that was my birthday.

34:00 So the mess president decided it was time for a party for two reasons, so we had a big party in the sergeants' mess.

What kind of party?

Oh, free drinks and free food. Real party.

And what was your reaction to the fact that the war had ended?

Oh, nothing in particular. I knew that I would be going home soon anyway

34:30 because I had been up there for two and a half years again the second time, and I suppose I was ready to go home too. Things were changing in the workshops and …

What sort of changes?

Well, the British had gone or were going. And it was again only going to be an Australian component there.

35:00 And the work would change because there would be no equipment coming back from Korea, a lot of the Japanese would have been put off because the workload would be reduced, so I thought it was about time I went home again.

What did you think about the way the war ended?

I think everyone was a bit, well they were glad it was over, of course, but it was an anticlimax

35:30 because they didn't gain any territory and suffered a lot of casualties for virtually nothing. But a lot of people were being killed for no gain, if you can understand that. They were in static position on mountains and they would do patrols in the valleys and get killed. They would be shelled every day while they were sitting in fox holes. It could have gone

36:00 on and on for no gain. So I think everyone was pleased that it was over. I don't know the fellows that married Japanese girls, I don't know how they felt, I suppose they would have liked to stay up there a bit longer, they were living fairly cheaply and got leave every night.

36:30 **Did the army allow these marriages?**

In the end they did. Well, the fraternisation ban had been more or less lifted by then. You had to get permission but all in all it was a fairly acceptable thing. And they were being accepted back into Australia, that was the main thing.

37:00 **Did you ever observe or keep in contact with someone who did take a Japanese wife back?**

Yes.

And what was the reaction of the Australians?

I believe it was a bit difficult at first. You know, the wives couldn't speak English very well. Nowadays we go down to a BCOF reunion in Victoria once a year and there are a lot of Japanese wives [that] come to that and they are all accepted and, well, they have got grown up families by now.

37:30 They're part of the community and they are just like any other wife now.

It must have been a big step for them?

Oh yes. Well, in all sorts of respects, a lot of the fellows that stayed on in the army wouldn't have had the finances to send their wives back to Japan. There was a concern [that] once they got here, would they be able to go back?

38:00 Yes, there were all sorts of ramifications of the marriage. I have never heard any of the wives that went back and couldn't come back. They have all stayed out here, and a lot of the husbands have died and the wives have still stayed out here. They would be strangers in Japan now, but they still speak their language, but I would say a lot of their children wouldn't have been back to Japan.

38:30 So they just stayed with them, but they have fitted in well with the community in general. There hasn't been as many in Brisbane as there are in Melbourne, I don't think, if there are you don't hear of them. I know of one fellow that was in our unit, he lives at Wellington Point and he married a Japanese girl, I sometimes meet them in Capalaba. She speaks fairly good English.

39:00 He has got his own family now. So I guess if anything happened to him she would stay here as well.

And what was the reaction of the Japanese people to the end of the Korean War?

Well I think a lot of them, as I said, were fearful for their jobs because they knew that the workload wouldn't be as big and they were pretty sure that the occupation, well, it wasn't an

39:30 occupation then, that finished in April 1952, it became British Commonwealth Forces Korea then. They knew that would be winding down and I guess they were fearful for their jobs.

Was there any process put in place, I guess if they had been working for the occupation force, to place them in other industries?

40:00 Not that I know of, no. I had gone home then before the actual finalisation of the Australian troop base, they went on for another three years after I left, so there would have still been some Japanese working in the workshop. But it certainly would have closed down a fair bit.

Tape 8

00:30 **In your time in Korea did you ever see the front line?**

No, I could hear it, but we were kept pretty well away.

Did you see any of the casualties coming through?

I saw some in the two hospitals I was in. Wounded.

01:00 That's about all I think. We didn't have access to the front line after any of the actions or anything.

And what were the hospitals like that you were in?

Well, the Indian field ambulance was more like a transit hospital, they would bring you in there and treat you initially.

01:30 And then I was moved down to near Seoul to this Canadian hospital and that was something else. They gave you the impression that you were a bit of a nuisance and they didn't want to know you too much. And there was one particular ward corporal, he was a French Canadian and he was a real grub, he wouldn't help you at all. You could have died in bed and he wouldn't worry, I don't think. Some were good, but

02:00 they didn't keep any records of what was wrong with you or anything so when you applied for a disability pension there was nothing in your records about what the problem was or anything. They kept you until you were well enough to go back to your unit and then you were out. And I guess any records they kept went into the incinerator as you went out the front door, because I never saw any.

Why do you think they were like this?

02:30 Don't know. I suppose, again, they were only more or less interested in their own people.

So you mentioned you were in Japan when the war ended and then you went back to Korea, can you tell us why you returned?

Yes, it was an inspection team to get an idea of what sort of repair commitment would be required before the equipment went back to Australia or New Zealand or England or whatever.

03:00 So they endeavoured to repair it all to first class condition again before it went home. And that was basically what we did, just inspect every unit's equipment. I did instruments and a couple of vehicle mechanics did vehicles and so on.

What kind of things would you be discovering?

Well, dirty optics in my case and compasses that needed repairing.

03:30 If the lens in the compass was deteriorated it would have to be repaired so that it could be used at night. General damage, for instance, they had a tampered pin in the lid and the lid was supposed to stay open in any position and once that had worn the lid would flop open and you couldn't hold it up to take a sight, things like that. You would

04:00 have to estimate the man hours to repair it and we had a big sheet for each piece of equipment and [we would] have to estimate the man hours required to repair it and that would go back to Japan.

What were you noticing about Korea after the end of the war?

Not so much when I went back again straight after the war, it was pretty much as it had been. Seoul was still, we were camped in Seoul

04:30 and it was pretty much still as it was. A few more buildings, a bit like Hiroshima, a few little buildings had sprung up here and there but there was still damage around. Basically nothing much had changed in the countryside at all.

So tell us, when you were given the news that you were to return home, where were you and what happened?

05:00 I was back in Kure [when I] received my first charge in the Army, we went out [with] the Kiwis celebrating a bit and they wouldn't let me come home, and they rarely ever did a bed check on the sergeants lines but this particular night they did and I was caught and I got a severe reprimand for that

05:30 and shortly after that I was on my way home. By air again, I flew home and landed at Mascot. Processed and Marrickville again and then I went on leave, I went back to my old unit with artillery before I went home on leave, to see who was still there and the boss there said, "There is a job here for an instrument

06:00 mechanic, do you want it?" So when I finished leave I had a job to go back to in Sydney. So everything worked out pretty well.

And what was the reaction of people to your service when you returned?

Oh, nothing spectacular, I got a cup of tea from a Red Cross lady at Mascot, that was about it. No bands or receptions.

06:30 3rd battalion, when they came home they got a reception, they marched through Sydney, that was, I suppose, some, oh I don't know, twelve or eighteen months later, they got a very good reception. I came home virtually as an individual, there was two of us, I think, came home from the workshops together.

And that was it. I can't remember others on the plane, I guess there was some, but

07:00 I can't remember who else was in the party. Again, they processed us at Marrickville very quickly and sent us on leave.

What do they do in the processing?

Give you inoculations and give you a medical check and see that you haven't brought any exotic diseases back. Pretty straight forward stuff, you know. Any inoculations that you were due to catch up on they would

07:30 give to you. Catch up on all of your leave and pay and then send you on your way. Give you a rial pass and tell you to report back on such and such a day and send you on your way.

And how was some of the, like the RSL's reaction?

Didn't want to know us.

08:00 **Why not?**

They reckoned that the RSL at that time was for World War I and World War II people. They didn't recognise Japan, BCOF, and they didn't recognise the Korean War until sometime later, I didn't join the RSL until 1957, I think,

08:30 and then that was at Woomera, and then before the paperwork came through on me I had been posted so I joined again in Wodonga, when I was posted to Victoria.

How did that make you feel, their reaction?

Well, often upsetting. I remember one day in Parramatta, we were on leave in Parramatta and felt in urgent need for some tonic one afternoon and we fronted up to the RSL and they

09:00 told us in no uncertain terms where to go. And one of the fellows with us was a Middle East fellow, had his ribbon on, and they wouldn't let him in either, they were fairly restrictive in those days, if you didn't belong to that RSL or were from BCOF or Korea, they didn't want to know you.

What did you think of the notion of the Korean War being the "forgotten war"?

09:30 Well, I suppose again, it was much like the Vietnam [War], people thought when they come back, we come home unnoticed. It didn't worry me in particular that we didn't have a lot of fanfare. I had been to do what I had to do and seen what I wanted to see. Parades are alright but it is a fleeting thing and forgotten pretty

10:00 quickly. I think there are more important things than parades. Welcome home parades would have been nice. The thing was that a lot of it, we came home in dribs and drabs, BCOF came home in a fairly large force but not from Korea, we came home at different times, in different batches, in different ways. So it

10:30 was pretty difficult to have any sort of a parade. I am not sure where this forgotten war terminology started, I don't really know when that came along. I suppose someone said it and it sounded good so they took it up.

Do you march on Anzac Day?

Yes, I do now. I didn't for a long time.

11:00 But I joined a BCOF RSL, there wasn't many of them, and I thought I might as well go along and join with them, except last Anzac Day they had that big Korean one, welcoming home the Korean veterans, so I marched with them then. It is only a bit of a get-together, we march in Sydney and go out to our sub-branch and have lunch and it is all over.

11:30 It's really no big deal.

Do you feel part of the Anzac tradition?

Hard to say. Maybe as far as being service-oriented, I guess. What I did and saw was a long way from what they experienced in the First World War,

12:00 which is, I think, the Anzac tradition. It is fine to say we did everything we were supposed to do, but I don't get carried away with it. When they came back they didn't get pensions, and had to work whether they were injured or sick or not, I feel for them, they didn't get pensions for years, you could call

12:30 that a forgotten war. Because they just had to make their way, you know? At least we got service pensions later on and disability pensions and things like that. You had to fight for it a bit, the disability ones, but all in all we have done fairly well, I think.

13:00 **Have you had any disabilities from your wartime service?**

Yeah, from a bronchial complaint and deafness.

What caused this?

Well the deafness was from gun fire and I assume the bronchial was from winter in Korea and in Japan. They were better than Korea but still a lot colder than we were used to.

13:30 **So looking back upon your service time in Japan and Korea, what were the best of times?**

Overseas service was the best, you did your job and no one worried you. In Australia there was always something, there was courses to go to or different things that we were obliged to do and things

14:00 like that, basically that was the difference. Overseas you did what you had to do and no one worried you. You had your discipline and that sort of thing, you had to take into account fraternisation bans and out of bounds areas. It was a different atmosphere, and I don't know, you felt that you were doing something important. In Australia it felt often as a nine to five job, you know?

14:30 That was the difference.

What about the worst of times during your wartime service?

I don't know that I had any worst times. After I was commissioned and worked as a staff officer in Melbourne, that was a bit soul destroying, I didn't like that particularly much. But no, I don't think there was any time in my service career that I was basically unhappy.

15:00 I enjoyed the life and I enjoyed the camaraderie and I enjoyed the people I worked with mostly. The other thing was we weren't terribly troubled with education for the children and my wife didn't mind travelling, so all in all it was a fairly good life.

You were telling us before about returning to Australia, what did you do with the army from then on?

15:30 **Returning after Korea, what was your role in the army?**

Well for the time I was with artillery it was much the same as I had done in Japan, we attended shoots and things like that. Moorebank I covered, where we were doing restoration of military equipment and putting it into long term storage.

16:00 I then went on several courses, one of them lasted ten months. It was an advanced equipment course where they did, well, advanced equipment like theodolites and coast artillery equipment which we had never done before and stuff like that. That took ten months to do that. And then I was posted to Woomera from there to the Army Guided Weapons Trials Unit.

16:30 And I spent three years there.

Tell us about your time in Woomera?

I thought it was a horrible-looking place when I got there, it was in the middle of the desert. Quarters were very good, meals were very good. But Port Augusta, I think, was three hours away along a dirt road and none of us had cars, of course, in those days. So we were restricted to the base, virtually.

17:00 A couple of times we flew to Adelaide on leave for the weekend, they flew us down and back. I had a horror start, the first week I was there, we used to have to go out and check on the tracking station out in the outback, they might be an hour's drive from the base. And this

17:30 morning, the chap that I was relieving was driving me out and it was a lovely sunny morning, slight breeze blowing and we were driving down this dirt road and we saw this Department of Works truck coming towards us, they were painted a bright gold, that's how we knew it was Department of Works. So we passed this vehicle and the chap that was driving, the fellow I was replacing, he started

18:00 to pull back into the centre of the road, he didn't know that there was another truck right behind the other one in the middle of the dust. And I happened to look up and see this vehicle and I thought, "We're going to get a bit of a bump." And next thing I know I am sitting in the vehicle with the canopy turned off, covered in blood and I didn't know where I was. And the young fellow that was driving the works truck, he was running up and down the road screaming

18:30 and I caught up with him and he had a big gash out of his arm where his arm had been resting on the window and the glass tore out where our vehicle side swiped it and tore a great big piece out of his arm. And I put a handkerchief over it and he said, "You better go and have a look at your mate, I am alright." And I found the fellow that was driving our vehicle and I couldn't work out what was wrong, I could see something was wrong but I was concussed.

19:00 It turned out [that] his arm was torn off where he had shot in under the vehicle. Next thing I know a taxi flew up and the door flew open and all of these girls that used to man the cameras out on the range, they all shot out of the car when they saw me and they were upchucking on the side of the road and fortunately one of them was a nurse and she made me sit down. I was gashed all

19:30 across the head where the canopy of the vehicle had torn off. And next thing I was in hospital, so that was the start of my week in Woomera. And the fellow was dead, of course, the fellow I was replacing.

He was due to go back to Adelaide, his wife was pregnant, expecting her first child. It was a pretty sad story for her. But I got over that and

20:00 spent three years in Woomera, in the end, and got married there.

How did you meet your wife?

She worked up there, she was up there before I was. She worked firstly in one of the messes in the catering side and then she got the job on the tracking camera out on the range. And we got a married quarter there in Woomera. They built new flats,

20:30 nice little flats and we spent the last six or twelve months of our time in the married quarters.

How did you develop a romance with her?

Well, it didn't start out that way, in the start she was witnessing and when I got out of hospital in the staff mess they called it, the senior NCOs and that,

21:00 and she said she used to nearly be sick when she came to serve me and I would have all of these stitches on the top of my head. And we developed an intense dislike for each other, as a matter of fact. But I suppose we were a captive audience for one another because we couldn't get out of the place and the romance blossomed. And we were the first army wedding in Woomera. We were married by a Salvation Army major.

21:30 Warrant officer in the canteen catered for us and it was a wonderful occasion. Very good.

How do you go from disliking each other to loving each other?

I don't know, must have been some sort of a potion, I am not sure how it happened. But whatever happened, it worked.

22:00 We have gotten on alright since.

What kind of work were you doing out at Woomera?

It was mostly to do with optics again, on the tracking stations, and I worked in the Department of Supply, Instrument Section. And they used to do cameras and all stuff attached to the tracking systems and I worked with, there was a RAF

22:30 fellow in the unit with me and two civilians. And we all got along fine. The section leader had been in RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] before, he was an Englishman that had been in RAEME before and knew a lot of people that I did. The other civilian was an ex-air force fellow, very easy to get on with, so it was quite pleasant.

23:00 Often we would have to attend particular launches when they were launching the rockets, and particularly one of the rockets that went, of course, that had to be destroyed and a couple of army fellows were given a tracking set with the ability to destroy this thing. One couldn't do it on his own, there had to be more than

23:30 one operate this sort of trigger. We would do this sort of thing and they let me do a launcher officers' course there and I was able to launch a couple of minor rockets there. Only meteorological rockets, not anything with warheads on it. So it was very interesting. And the other RAEME people that were there

24:00 looked after the radar sets. There was only instrument people and radar mechanics there, there were no vehicle mechanics or gunnies or any other trade, artillery fellows did most of the launching and we were just a nice little compact unit that lived in with the civilian population.

24:30 But most enjoyable, my time there. You know, it was hot and cold when it rained, winters could be very cold there. But it was a place [that] when they did get any rain, it bloomed, a remarkable sort of place and like I said, I really enjoyed it there. From there I was offered a job at RAEME training centre, that was a place in Bandiana where they

25:00 trained all trades in the army and I was offered a promotion and I went there. Stayed there nearly just on ten years.

And what was this role?

Instructor in instrument repair.

Were you working in Woomera with any other nationalities other than Australians?

Yes, a lot of English people there, civilians, a few RAF, I don't think

25:30 there was any navy, there were a few Australian navy people there. A couple of English army people there but mostly civilians, they worked with people like De Havilland [aircraft manufacturers] and those sorts of things, doing rocket trials. And they used to come up from Salisbury on Monday

26:00 and then they would stay the week and go back Friday.

Did you hear any stories about the atomic tests which had been there?

I knew they, I thought I was being posted to Maralinga, in fact I was told I was going to Maralinga, but I went to Woomera instead. Knew a lot of of people that went to Maralinga, of course they have had problems with radiation too. One particular fellow that I served with in Japan,

26:30 he was a radio technician and we both ended up for a while at a place at Seymour and he was told that he was being posted to England to do a course on some radioactive equipment that was being used in trials at Maralinga. Oh, he was elated.

27:00 He didn't drink but that night he got drunk and made a bit of a mess of himself. But he went to England and consequently went to Woomera and he died of cancer within about six years, I suppose. So it wasn't a happy ending for him.

I just have a couple more questions about your wedding, what were you both wearing?

I wore uniform,

27:30 my wife had a bridal gown.

And where was the ceremony?

At Woomera itself, there was a church for all denominations there. And I think the Salvation Army major, they let him use the Church of England church. The army had a Methodist minister,

28:00 the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] had a Church of England minister and the Catholic priest was a civilian. But we liked the Salvation Army major, he had been in Japan and Korea too, so we decided we would like him to officiate at the ceremony, which he was happy to do.

Did you have a honeymoon?

Yes, we went to Bandiana,

28:30 of all places, where I knew I was going to go to. I had been there before on a course, we had about a fortnight, I think, and we went up around Brighton and Mount Beauty, places I hadn't been before. Stayed in Wodonga for a couple of nights, I think, and then drove back to Woomera.

You mentioned the married quarters, what was the difference between the married quarters to where you had been?

29:00 Well I had been just in a little tiny room, oh, about this big, that was my room and my wife was in a girls' dormitory. And when we were first married we didn't have a quarter. I think the first couple of weeks a friend of mine that had a married quarter was going on leave so he let us use his place. And then for the rest of the time until these new flats were

29:30 built I would have to sneak her over to my room in the dead of night and sneak her back in the dead of morning and that was how it worked. And that only happened periodically, not all of the time, because you would get some raucous cheers if anyone saw you going into your room. And it wouldn't have been allowed, it wouldn't have been on from the officials.

30:00 We managed.

Were you part of the gossip?

Oh no, there were many of us in the same situation. Fellows that had brought their wives up, they were allowed to come up sometimes for weekends. They would have to get clearance, of course, to come up. And some of them came up while they were waiting for married

30:30 quarters so they were in the same situation. It was not an accepted policy but it was an accepted policy that you could take your wife into your room as long as you didn't make a song about it, I suppose.

You mentioned you were a staff officer, tell us what you thought of this job?

31:00 Well, it happened after I had been to the training centre at Bandiana for ten years and you were a warrant officer first class, they gave you the option of becoming what they called a quartermaster commission. Now a quartermaster normally looks after the clothing and supplies and transport in the unit. And mostly the people that received a quartermaster commission they did just that, they became quartermasters. But signals and

31:30 RAEME, they stayed as technical officers if that's what they were. I think it was in 1962 my name came up, I was thinking of getting out, I had bought a block of land at Kingscliff on the coast and I thought I had had enough and I bought this block of land. The only thing was, when we came up to see about work it was in the middle of a recession and there was no work about, in fact

32:00 I went to the CES [Commonwealth Employment Service], I suppose it was then, or what it is now, in Murwillumbah, and they couldn't understand why I would want to get out of the army and chance

looking for a job in Murwillumbah because there wasn't very much there, nor in Tweed Heads, so I went home and said, "Look, the only thing I can consider is to stay on."

32:30 For security for the family. And I had knocked back the commission at this stage, so I had to go back a bit red-faced. And I said to one of the captain's in the unit, there was another list coming out, and I said to him, "I think I have run my race, I have blown it," and he said, "No you haven't, you might want to go cap in hand a bit with them, but I will write a letter for you," which he did and the next selection process it came up that I was selected.

33:00 And I became an assistant adjutant in the unit for a start and then I was posted to Albert Park Barracks in Melbourne as a staff officer on instrument repair, policy and repair. I stayed there for, that was at RAEME headquarters and I stayed there for about two years, I think. And we had to get

33:30 out of the place, I had had enough of Melbourne, I had thirteen years in Victoria and a posting came up to a field workshop in Townsville and I applied for that, I knew the CO up there, I had done courses with him before, and he was down in Melbourne for some reason or other. And I said, "What are the chances of getting the adjutant quartermaster job up there?" and he put in for me

34:00 and I went up there.

You mentioned that you disliked this job staff officer, why was that?

Oh well, you were the, you had to deal with all of the complaints about defects in equipment and policies that we put out that they wouldn't like. We would put out policies and some units would like them and some wouldn't. Same old thing, you couldn't please everyone. And just sitting in an office all day, basically. And I lived a fair way away from work, I had to travel into

34:30 Spencer Street by train in the morning and then out to Albert Park and that took an hour and a half or something like that. It was just a depressing environment. There was about ten people sharing the same office space, all different trades. And you would be trying to work and there'd be conversations

35:00 going on and telephones ringing.

What about your impressions during this time, the Vietnam War?

Well, the only thing that really affected us, we were the logistical support for Vietnam but the only thing that made it more noticeable, we were asked not to wear uniform. To and from our job, we would change when we got to barracks if we wanted to but they asked us not to

35:30 travel on the train in uniform because that was the time all of the moratoriums were on and there was the potential for violence and that sort of thing. And that was the only real thing that I had to do with the Vietnam War. Except that they made every officer responsible for a family, someone that the husband was at the war and

36:00 we would have to look out for them and see that they were alright. Other than that, the war didn't affect us much, the Vietnam War, at all. I applied to go and wasn't accepted because there were a lot of other people wanting to go, too, that hadn't had war service and I had. So that was one of the factors that stopped me going.

36:30 I'd like to have gone.

Why?

Again, to experience the different equipment and the different people and the different aspects of the service.

Do you remember who you were assigned to look out for?

No. Only that she was the wife of an infantryman and once I was posted I didn't ever hear from her again.

37:00 But I used to ring her up periodically, she had family in Melbourne so she was pretty right.

And what did you think of the politics of the situation, having to not wear your uniform?

It was pretty readily accepted because we didn't want any trouble either, when you were travelling on trains individually,

37:30 it could have been dangerous. And the antiwar people at that time were fairly volatile in their dislike of all things military even though sensible people knew that it wasn't the army that started the war. They were told to go and they went. They didn't have the luxury of saying, "No, I don't like this war, I don't think I will partake in this one."

38:00 If you went you went, that was it. But by and large, I think, as the war went on a lot of the service people were of the impression that it was wrong too, and perhaps we shouldn't have been there but again the old thing, better in your backyard than ours.

38:30 That was an overruling factor, I think.

From your time in Korea and Japan are there any changes or lessons that you learnt within yourself?

I think the main thing is the tolerance you have of different people and cultures

39:00 and aspects of their lives. I think that was a great eye opener for me and the fact that I can accept anyone now. I don't get uptight about any of the races at all. When I heard of the uprisings in Woomera and that, although not

39:30 so much of their anger at being caged up, I suppose that was understandable, but when they were complaining about how things were tough when I knew that they had air conditioning and we didn't when I was up there, in fact the first troops in Woomera were in tents, in sand storms and goodness knows what.

40:00 And these people are bleating about their conditions when they have good accommodations and air conditioning and all of that.

We are just about to run out of time, do you have any, you went back to Korea, what were your impressions of returning to Korea?

Just recently? I was astounded at the affluence of the place, you don't see any old cars,

40:30 they change them every two years and then they ship them out to New Zealand and other places. Everyone, they live in a state of siege, for instance all up and down the coast it is barbed wire and on the beach they open big gates of a day so people can swim and they close them at night, but no one seems to worry about it. Everyone just goes about their business. They seem delightfully happy and

41:00 there is no shortages, there doesn't seem to be any shortages of anything. And the people are real friendly, they treated us real well, the Australians. They would come up to you on the street and thank you for being there during the war and really make you feel welcome.

Any final words that you want to say?

41:30 Just that I enjoyed my life in the service, the only thing that got me out of the service was that they were pointing in the direction of Melbourne again and my family said no, they wanted to stay in Brisbane and that was the reason I retired but I still had something like five years [of] service I could have continued on with. But no chance for promotion, I reached my ceiling rank and I couldn't see any point in upheaving

42:00 the family again when they were happy in Brisbane, to go back to Melbourne for no gain.

INTERVIEW ENDS