Australians at War Film Archive

Harold McCosker (Lofty) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 6th October 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1036

Tape 1

00:30 My full name is Harold Francis McCosker and I was born 30th November 1922 in Brisbane. The fifth son and ninth child of Lily Mary McCosker nee Castleline and Thomas McCosker of Glass House Mountains. I was raised at

01:00 Glass House Mountains and educated to 8th Grade at Commissioners Flat State School, a little school half way between Peachester and Woodford. I terminated school at the age of fourteen and worked on the family farm growing pineapples and milking cows. At the end of 1938 and the start of 1939 the war clouds were gathering over Europe and Dr Goddard

01:30 was lecturing throughout Australia in the cities, towns and villages and he spoke at Glass House Mountains one night and his theme was 'the certainty of world war' and that Australia could protect itself with five thousand aircraft. The object of it appeared to be to motivate the Australian government to update military equipment. At that time, also, the government held a recruiting campaign

02:00 to bring militia units up to established strengths. When that occurred most of our cricket team and soccer teams from the Glass House Mountains enlisted, including two of my elder brothers. After they had been in a while I decided I would join and went to Caboolture and Captain Bubke dutifully filled out the form and then said, "I will recruit you

02:30 but it will be [as] a cadet and you don't get paid." I already had one job like that and we decided there was no point in that, so we tore the paper up and went outside and came back twenty minutes, half an hour later and got a year or two older and I was enlisted as a soldier in the Australian defence forces. My brothers and I attended the training nights at Caboolture Drill Hall once or twice a month.

03:00 The 9/49th Battalion did a twelve day camp at Canowindra at Easter in 1939. When we enlisted we enlisted in C Company of the 9/49th Battalion, which was a linked battalion at that time. At the Canowindra camp we probably were the first to put unexploded ordnance on an artillery ridge where

03:30 the people are still digging them up in their flower gardens and that type of thing. We continued training, as we got closer to war our training schedule increased and at the commencement of war we were at least partly trained infantry soldiers. When war was declared we were called into a drill hall at Caboolture, the movement orders stated to bring all issued military equipment,

04:00 underclothing, shaving gear, towels, socks, because the issued military equipment at that time was rather sparse. We were also required to bring a knife, fork and spoon, two plates and a mug and one blanket or rug.

Did you take any personal kit at all?

Only what you

04:30 needed. Having been at the drill hall for some period they took everyone's name and where they would be for the rest of the day and sent us home. Most of the Glass House Mountains group some twelve to fifteen people returned to the Glass House Mountains and went on to be awarded sports meeting. In those days you had to make your own entertainment because there was no TV [television]

05:00 or things of that nature at that time. Later in the afternoon the police officer from Landsborough came to the meeting and over the loud speaker requested that the service persons return to their training depots. We returned to Caboolture after many roll calls, stand up, sit down, relax, we bedded down with our one rug and during the night buses arrived and took us to Water Street

05:30 which was the headquarters of the 9/49th Battalion at that time. A company of that battalion was stationed at Water Street, headquarter company at Albion Drill Hall, B Company Sandgate Drill Hall, C Company at Caboolture and Nambour Drill Halls, and D Company the Gympie area. Having arrived at Water Street, Brisbane, at the battalion headquarters,

06:00 nothing like this had occurred for twenty years, and it was busier than pig day, there were roll calls, stand up, sit down, form up here and move there. In due course the buses got back and the buses went to the South Brisbane Docks which is now Southbank and assisted in loading a small ship which, to the best of my memory, was the MV Cooper which was the

06:30 ferry that ran from Brisbane to Sandgate to Bribie Island. The Bribie Island Bridge was not built for quite a few years after that. We cleared the Brisbane River at about daylight, landed later that day at Fort Cowan. Our task there was to build infantry defences around the coastal guns and search lights. Being a sand island, all pits dug had to be sand bagged,

07:00 otherwise they just fell in. It took some weeks to complete that job and towards the end of it it did become a little bit boring, particularly for the acting OC [Officer Commanding]. It would appear he over indulged in a nutty brown spirit and one evening he saw spies between every bush on every sand hill. Each of them had a signal lamp and a high powered radio and they were reporting direct

07:30 to Germany on actions of our little war. He turned everyone out and issued everyone ammunition by the bucketful. My platoon went across a footbridge at the back of the fort and lay on the sand hills there and with the breeze it was shockingly cold and the magnums were rattling like the bells of St Mary. However, someone finally realised that all was not well and called it

08:00 off and recalled the ammunition. I think it was terribly fortunate that none of the partly trained soldiers accidentally fired a shot. When we came back across the footbridge and there were two fully loaded Vickers guns and machine guns aiming straight across the foot bridge to the position where we had been.

Can I ask you what sort of defences were actually built there?

Two of very large

08:30 coastal guns and a series of search lights and the battery, naturally all concreted in. They are actually still there although a lot of the sand has been eroded and some of them are hanging out and falling onto the beach.

Was there barbed wire entanglements and things like that?

There wasn't before we went there. We didn't actually build barbwire, they did build a series of infantry defences, positions right around the fort.

09:00 **What sort of infantry defence positions?**

Weapon pits, machine gun pits and that type of thing, just ordinary infantry defences.

Did you think because it was like sand, like you said, was that harder than usual or easier than usual?

Very easy to dig but you add sand bags as you went down, otherwise you had to dig a big hole if you want one this big and you put your sand bags in as you went down. Having returned

09:30 from there we split up into small groups and did the security guard on important installations. The group that I was with had their tent lines on the southern side of Kingsford Smith Drive at Windstains [?] between the two oil depots, which incidentally are still there. Our duty was to guard the two installations, the tank farms for general installation. Two hours on,

10:00 four off continuous, which became a little bit weary after a time. As we had no official cook, when your off period coincided with breakfast, lunch and the evening meal you were camp cook for the day. A team of twenty year olds and nineteen year olds, there were some weird and wonderful meals prepared, but anyway, we survived. I got measles

10:30 there and went to the infectious ward at Royal Brisbane Hospital and then, having being discharged from there, went to the headquarters who was running that operation at Albion Drill Hall. After a short period I was sent to join another guard, which was guarding the overseas radio mask, which is immediately in front of the Pink and Bar Hotel. An awful waste

11:00 actually, because I didn't drink then. From that we were relieved, I think by the VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps], and then we went home.

Did any of the blokes get to go to the bar for a cold one?

Some of the older ones did, yes.

Was that on the sly?

On your off period, you never got leave but you could wander around the area.

When you were mentioning about the food, some of the meals were a bit weird, was it from fresh ingredients or was it all sort of army tin stuff?

I don't readily recall but we had rolled oats,

11:30 put a certain amount of water and a little salt and kept that stirring, you didn't get too many lumps in it, you were halfway there for breakfast. I don't readily recall what the other rations were, it probably would have been tinned meal and vegetables and bully beef [canned meat] or things of that nature. I don't even recall what type of cooking equipment we had because we must have had something because we made tea. We had thickened condensed milk

12:00 to go into our tea and you'd open a tin the next time you went to it, it was empty. A First World War soldier was there with us and he made a bit of an enquiry and found the person who was eating it and told him a story which I won't repeat here because it wasn't that clean and explained to him how it was made and the fellow never went within ten feet of it again.

I'm really interested, what was the story?

12:30 Basically it was that they, you used to put lepers on the roof and pick the scabs off and when it went down and was purified and it went into tins and that's condensed milk. Some people have weak stomachs. We went home from there and early 1940 we went to Redbank camp for a ninety day training camp. The 2/9th were also training there

13:00 and they had been formed on the 13th November 1939. After ninety days we went home. We were home for a period and we were the first troops into Chermside camp opposite Marchant Park and that was a ninety day camp. We went home again for a short period and came back for another ninety days towards the end of 1940. During that period I was promoted to

13:30 corporal and when the troops went home I was seconded to an AIF [Australian Imperial Force] recruit training depot as a junior instructor where I worked until such time as the battalion came back in early 1940. When the battalion came back in 1940 they were then on fulltime for the duration of the war. When the AIF battalions were formed there were some thirty to forty percent militia troops [that]

14:00 went AIF, which meant we were basically a training battalion because every time you went to camp you had at least half your battalion people. Also, they called for recruits for the Darwin Infantry Battalion, the 19th Battalion, and one of my brothers went into that and my other brother tired of walking and transferred to the AIF as a transport driver and

14:30 spent the rest of the war there. We trained at Chermside for quite some period then went to Canowindra and our duty there was to dig infantry defences from Moffat Headland north to the swampy area which now, of course, has been drained and is under industry and housing and also to run double apron barbed wire fences from Moffat Headland

15:00 north to the swampy areas, and that took some weeks. We returned to Everton Park and then went to Townsville, our task there was to assist in building the Townsville line. The 9/49th Battalion separated at the end of 1940 and became

15:30 individual battalions and again we lost half our troops when the 49th Battalion became an independent unit. At Rollingstone the task of 9th Battalion was to build infantry defences from the north south road rail bridge to the beach on the southern side of Rollingstone, which was thirty seven miles north of Townsville. One of our sister battalions was at Blackwater

16:00 Creek and the other battalion was somewhere in between Blackwater Creek and our position. While we were there we cleared lots of timber for fields of fire, dug holes and made barbed wire entanglements along the southern bank of Rollingstone Creek. Whilst there, there were two patrols that went out each day and the timing depended on the tide because

16:30 the northern one you had to go through a mangrove swamp and the southern one you had to go across two creeks, which you could only cross at low tide. I did first in charge of a section on a number of occasions and then on one evening another platoon sergeant and I decided we would do it and it was a two man patrol on pushbikes. We required some large bottles of beer and I don't know if they were bought or whether they had been issued.

17:00 We set off down the beach with a couple bottles of hot beer in our shirt. As we were going down we saw the search lights come in over Townsville and saw them pick up an aircraft and the anti-aircraft guns commenced firing and that was in fact the first air raid on Townsville. I think about six bombs were dropped and it killed a cow and damaged

17:30 a couple of coconut trees on the outskirts of Townsville, but otherwise there was no damage. We did a considerable amount of training while we were at Rollingstone. A lot of that country is quite heavily timbered and was quite a good training area for jungle warfare, which we were to ultimately go into. All stores were recalled and labeled "four river".

18:00 The people who had access to maps spent quite a considerable amount of time looking for four rivers but they never ever found it because it was in fact a small river in America and it was a place name or code name given to Milne Bay by General MacArthur's [General Douglas MacArthur Commander-In-Chief of the Allied Forces] headquarters. The strategy at that time, the American heavy bombers flying

18:30 out of Townsville and one of the islands was flying into Port Moresby, operating out of there to bomb Rabaul and all the targets north. However, to do that they had to climb to some fifteen thousand feet to

clear the Owen Stanley Ranges which limited their period over target areas. MacArthur wanted airports further east in New Guinea

19:00 to aviate that. A recce [reconnaissance] was made and it was decided to build a base at Milne's harbour. Milne's harbour is just over the range from Milne Bay to the west. However, and fortunately, an ANGAU [Australia and New Guinea Administrative Unit] officer, Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, which basically comprised of officers that had

19:30 been officers with the New Guinea government up to that time, one of their captains was in Townsville and he was familiar with the southern areas of New Guinea and he saw General Vasey who was 7 Div[ision] commander and suggested that Milne Bay would probably be a better base area as it was a much larger flat area and quite a bit

20:00 more high ground. Further recce was made by flying by Australian and American engineers and administrative officers, they had a look at Milne Bay and elected immediately to make that the base. The Japanese strategy at that time was, I understand, that they felt that any push back by allies through the Pacific would be from

20:30 Australia as a base, mainly with American equipment and troops. With that in view their object was to take New Guinea, they had taken New Britain, Rabaul and captured the Solomons and all islands south and east to New Caledonia and Fiji to force the American convoys so far east and south that it would be very, very difficult to supply a large military force in Australia.

21:00 They had a fair opportunity of doing that in that at the time they had a very strong navy and ten aircraft carriers in the Pacific area. To further that, a task force was put together at Rabaul to capture Milne Bay and then move on and attack Port Moresby from the sea, and that lead to the Coral Sea battle. The first naval battle in history, I understand,

21:30 where the battle was fought solely by carrier-borne aircraft without the naval vessels coming into contact and firing on each other. The honours there in relation to ships sunk or damaged were about even, though the Japanese did lose one aircraft carrier. They put a second task force together to capture Milne Bay and the American marines

22:00 landed at Guadalcanal. As a result of that a second task force was sent as reinforcement to the Jap garrison in the Solomon Islands. When it was decided that Milne Bay would become the base, a company of American engineers and constructions company were detailed to go there and build airstrips, two companies

22:30 with one section of Vickers machine guns who were then in Port Moresby were detailed to go with them as protection for them. Had either of those two first Japanese forces got through Milne Bay it would have been taken because no two infantry companies in any battalion or any army then serving could of held it against its strength of the Japanese forces at that time. Particularly as they

23:00 had air superiority and naval superiority in that area.

What were you doing all this time in Townsville?

Building the Townsville Line.

What did that involve exactly?

They were going to evacuate the people north of that and Japan could have that and that's what they endeavoured to do to stop them from coming south.

23:30 **Were most of the guys aware of that policy?**

Yes. We weren't real keen on it. The Australian coastline was so vast, they had to come up with a strategic suggestion which may be operational, and that was the reason why they had to be prepared to give away certain

24:00 things to do other things. We trained, we built the defences, we cleared lots of big trees in the fields of fire and all that type of thing.

What do you recon would have happened if it had of come down to defending that line?

It would have been very difficult, but that is quite a narrow area between the coast and the [Great] Dividing Range. Depending on the landing force, we only had one brigade

24:30 there at that stage and how big of a force we could of defended against, I don't know. You can never tell on those things because when the Japs went into Rabaul there was one battalion there, the Japs had naval, air and numerical strength ground troops yet the 2/22nd Battalion forced the first landing back. What you can do with

25:00 a bit of luck and good fortune.

What did you think that night when you saw Townsville being bombed, that must have just been incredible?

It was on, it was off, you could hear the anti-aircraft firing. What hurt us was when we got back we went to the battalion headquarters and reported the results and they reckoned we were either mad or drunk but we weren't either. Anyway, it was big news on the battalion and

25:30 company parades the next morning.

What do you think about the Australians that don't have any idea that Townsville was bombed?

It was bombed several times, there is something somewhere where it shows when it was bombed but it is in error that we witnessed the first one and what they had was after we landed at Milne Bay, the dates of that are definitely incorrect. The elements of the 9th Battalion

26:00 at Townsville on the 12th July 1942, we disembarked at Milne Bay on the 16th.

How did you go up there?

By small ships but mainly Dutch coasters, not very clean. Normally with Lascar crews and either Dutch or British officers.

How long was the trip?

Four days, we left on the 12th and disembarked on the 16th.

26:30 All the vehicles in north Queensland and I think all of Queensland had blackout lights. One little strip in the middle of the lens about two inches long by half an inch wide was all the light you had. When we pulled into the bay we were quite surprised to see the American trucks coming down to pick us up with full headlights on. We weren't very surprised when we got in and saw little narrow muddy roads [that]

27:00 were absolutely shocking and bogging so they had to have good lights. We went into a staging camp that night and the next day we moved to Gaba Gabuna Bay. The bay is a magnificent bay and it's approximately forty kilometres from the China Straits to Gili Gili and Gaba Gabuna Bay. It's approximately ten kilometres wide at the widest point and it's magnificent

27:30 deep water almost throughout. The advance party went up and took forty four gallon drums and lumber with them and when they pulled into the bay they had that ready to go, they assembled it there and put the drums together and put the lumber on top of it and that was dropped overboard with the winches. The winches of the ship were put on the coconut palms at either end of the ship and the floating dock and the ship

28:00 was pulled in almost to the bank. That's how the ships were unloaded up until, of course, it became a very large American base later on. Everywhere we went at Milne Bay they said, "Now get settled in and make yourself comfortable because you are here indefinitely." Well, it wasn't indefinitely because I think we moved twenty eight times in the first thirty days. Late in the piece we moved

28:30 to Capaleta village, Milne Bay, the valley runs northwest and goes for about twelve to fifteen miles to where the mountain ridges join. Our company went up to there, about fifteen miles, I'd say, out of the main Milne force area. Company headquarters stopped at the Murwarra River

29:00 with one platoon and the second platoon went to Baraga village, went right up to Capaleta Village, which was approximately six miles from company headquarters and it's where two mountain ranges met. From there, if you went further up you started going up and I took a patrol out for an eight hour walk one day and we went up for four hours and came back for four hours and

29:30 that track would of no doubt led to the east coast of New Guinea had we continued on with it. We received information that a platoon of the 2/9th Battalion would relieve us on the 25th August. Consequently we were packed, ready to go, and the arrangement was we'd leave our tents and gear there and we'd take over the 9th Battalion stuff when we got back.

30:00 The 9th Battalion arrived quite early in the morning and went out and my platoon commander saw me and he had told me he had to report back to headquarters and for me to break camp and I was platoon sergeant at that time. Take all stores and gear back to company headquarters which was about six miles. It rained a bit the night before, the heaviest rain I have ever witnessed.

30:30 Most nights I did one shift with the troops on guard, this was about midnight or one o'clock and I was doing this shift and there was an explosion, like a twenty five pounder, [but] we saw no flash, we couldn't smell any smell of burnt explosive. Then there was another one, closer, but

31:00 not as loud as others. What was happening was the jungle trees were loading with water and bending until they could no longer take it, then just snapping off. Our tents and gear were a bit heavy. We packed up and moved out and got back to company headquarters where we ditched all the gear other than the battle equipment that we would need. We were directed then to walk

31:30 back into the Milne force area. We had only gone a short distance when we came to a river that was flooded and being one of the tallest persons in a platoon and when I turned sideways I'm not having a

great deal of water resistance, I went across and it was up about chest deep. I called the platoon forward, “What about Jockey Klees?” Keith Klees

32:00 was a jockey riding the sand track at Wreckers Creek and he had put on quite a bit of weight since joining the army and he was a pretty solid little fellow. In they went and I saw his tin helmet washing off down the creek, I thought, “God, he’d be attached, I’ve lost one already.” He steamed up the other side, blowing water and bubbles, and when he finished doing that he expressed himself admirably. We marched

32:30 back into the Milne force headquarters where we were met by members from battalion headquarters who directed us to a company position near the copper factory, which was about a kilometre up the road from Gili Gili wharf, which was the place where all the ships were being unloaded. We settled in there amongst the coconut trees and formed a company perimeter and that was the first night that the Japs came in

33:00 and shelled, it was the night that they landed and that was the night of the 25th and 26th August. They came in and shelled and when the shelling started I was detailed to lead a patrol down to Gili Gili wharf and then go to our right to contact one of our other companies to see if there was any enemy movement there. As we were going down we could see the muster flash from the Jap naval

33:30 guns and you could hear a shell going somewhere and I counted, it was thirty. I don’t know if I said one two three or one, two, three, but it was thirty anyway, so if I knew I counted the same way we could see the flash and go on for twenty, twenty five seconds and dive into the mud at the side of the road, which we did. We got to Gili Gili wharf and there was no movement

34:00 of troops, we went to our right and found our B Company and there was no action there so we returned and reported to the company commander that it was all quiet.

Were there rounds splashing around you or just going over?

That was the difficult part, it was quite distressing, you didn’t know where they were going, no, they weren’t landing close to us but you didn’t know when they might. I think a naval shelling is probably the most awesome thing

34:30 to experience. Later on, when I did the Balikpapan show, 25th Brigade who I was with then were the reserve brigade and we remained floating while the other two brigades landed. There were a number of heavy cruisers and about fourteen destroyers just cruising up and down shelling the landing beaches. A terrific fireworks display

35:00 and it would have been awesome but we will talk about that later.

Can you just quickly tell me what the physical conditions were like there from a soldier’s perspective?

It was wet when we got there, it rained almost continuously during the whole of that operation. You never went anywhere where you were walking in mud that wasn’t over the top of your boots and very frequently up to your knees.

35:30 There were no maps in Milne Bay and it had never been mapped, you had to endeavour to do compass traverse where you pace out with a compass and you draw all that up and make quite a reasonable map. That is very good and you can do that accurately on dry land but in mud it becomes more difficult. There were workable maps made up from compass traverses.

It must have been slow going?

It is very, very tiring,

36:00 as I will explain when I get on to when we went forward after the attack on Number Three Strip [airfield]. The RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] took off on first light and they found where the Japs had landed and they strafed and bombed the barges and destroyed them all and also their stores depot. Apparently they had thrown a lot of drums of petrol overboard from

36:30 ships to float in, which they did. They were around the barges and the whole lot went up, which is a very good thing because it limited the Japs then to totally working on land where they would have probably used the barge to go around. When we were called from Kataleta Village, the companies of the 61st Battalion were up on the north arm, they had trails up at north point

37:00 right on the north arm of the bay but they sent three luggers up to pick them up at various places and the 2IC [Second in Command] of the battalion, I think it was, who went up with the barges, he insisted on them pulling down the shed to recover the corrugated iron and timber to build weather proof things back here. Which meant they never got away from north point and those places until about midnight.

37:30 On their way back the leading boat ran into the Jap landing barges and that’s when the first shots of that campaign were fired and the first casualties were sustained. On that boat, they turned it broadside on to the Jap barges, most of them dived overboard and swam ashore. There were some sick people aboard with malaria and what have you, they stopped on board, they were captured and murdered in

38:00 the most horrific manner at some stage. Others were taken prisoner on land and the same thing occurred. The main part of that company moved around through the range and came back to the Number Three strip and rejoined the battalion. A platoon at a standing patrol were expecting their own troops to come marching in at quarter past midnight on the morning of the 26th, a body of troops

38:30 were marching towards them and they called them all to halt, it was Japs and that's where the first land contact was made. The 61st Platoon was forced back, the company later attacked [and] forced the Japanese back about five hundred yards and were able to hold it and they were first back and that was the way it went. However, the 61st had established then that they had two

39:00 light tanks ashore and that is how it went on. The 61st attack forced the Japs back, they attacked [and] forced the 61st to go back, which was a very, very good delayed action because the 25th Battalion was also, at that time, to do basically the same thing and reinforce the 61st,

39:30 and that's what occurred. On the afternoon of the 27th, the 2/10th were committed. There was a walking track that went across approximately the middle of Number Three strip that had been cleared. The 25th Battalion were at that end of it and there were two platoons of

40:00 C Company, the 9th Battalion forward, my platoon was back behind them and the 61st Battalion then controlled the western side of the top end of Number Three Strip. The 2/10th passed through us late on the afternoon of the 27th and as they went through one of the young

40:30 soldiers called out, "Watch us go, you jolly Chocos ['chocolate soldiers' – militia], we will belt these beasts with broom handles," but that's what he meant but that wasn't how it was expressed it, because it was totally obscene. They went forward and they had been directed to put in a perimeter at KB Mission and as they went forward a major from the 61st Battalion had told them that the Japs had tanks,

41:00 that KB Mission was a reasonably high dry area where a tank could be used and suggested that they put in a perimeter other than there.

Tape 2

00:30 To go back a bit when Milne Bay was accepted as the base, an American engineering and construction company was detailed to go there, they arrived on the 26th July

01:00 and commenced work on the 28th and in twenty two days they cleared hundreds if not thousands of coconut palms, graded and leveled Number One Strip. They used local labour and elements of 7th Brigade to link up and lay Marsden matting on the surface of the strip. Marsden matting is perforated metal sheets

01:30 approximately three meters long by half a meter wide, they lock together and formed a good solid landing strip. Later other American engineering construction companies arrived there, they cleared a Number Two Strip right up the head of the valley, I don't know if it was ever completed. Number Three Strip, which was to the east of Number One, ran basically from the

02:00 mountains to the sea and that later was to become the main defence area for the allies. The Milne force was a little over nine thousand people, of that, four and a half thousand [were] infantry or combat troops, a battery of artillery and a battery of anti-tank guns. There were six anti-aircraft batteries

02:30 and three of them were Australian and three were American. The 2/10th, having passed through us, went forward to KB Mission where they put in a perimeter late in the afternoon and prepared for a defence for the night. At about 8 pm they were attacked by tanks, by the two tanks supported by infantry, they had taken sticky bombs

03:00 with them, they didn't work - they neither stuck nor exploded, we were told. A sticky bomb is a grenade about seven or eight inches in diameter with a short handle and it has a metal cover, you pull off a clip and the metal cover is spring loaded, it springs off and when you throw it, it sticks to the object and explodes and it is a cutting charge. Different explosives explode different ways and some

03:30 blow up and some blow down and the charge in this was one that blows against greatest resistance. The tanks penetrated their perimeter, they had nothing with which to defend themselves and the lights of the tanks were reflectorized in such a manner that they couldn't shoot them out, they were very bright, which made it very easy for the Japs and very difficult for our people.

04:00 Part of the 2/10th Battalion pulled back to the west to where they put in another defensive line and the remainder of their troops went into the mountains and walked back around the mountain to, ultimately, Number Three Strip over the next two or three days. It was intensive patrol activity from Number Three Strip, which was the main defence line,

04:30 the 25th Battalion, the 61st and our C Company people did a number of patrols forward. With the air

superiority of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] there the Japs did absolutely nothing of the day time, it was the first time that the Australians in that war had had war air superiority. It was the first time in the Jap war that they had done an

05:00 assault without air superiority. They didn't like it much, and you can't blame them, I suppose. The patrols never struck many Japs, you'd strike an odd one on a patrol sleeping in a hut or something so you'd fix him up, and then they would operate all night.

Can you talk me through a typical patrol?

Any

05:30 patrol in an area held by the enemy is difficult, your nerves are a bit on end, particularly your forward scout.

Were you ever a forward scout?

No, I was a platoon sergeant. That was the thing about getting a promotion, you could detail these things. I was a platoon sergeant at Milne Bay and I was lieutenant by the time I did Balikpapan with the 7th Div[ision].

06:00 **How would men get picked to be a forward scout, did it take a particular type of a person?**

They'd take it in turn. Some of them are brilliant, they have very good hearing, very good sight, particularly some of the country fellows, they may not [have] been very well educated but they have very good eyes, very good shots and they are used to shooting game. The thing that you look for is movement, and

06:30 they were very good at it but everyone took their turn because if anyone was going to get shot it was normally the forward scout. You are familiar with the establishment of an infantry battalion?

A little bit.

A company is three platoons and in each platoon has three sections, one section when you were forward, he leads this time, and the other

07:00 one leads the next, so you've got to do it in turn. That is where I think you learn a lot of man management, when your troops are very, very tired, they are not getting fed very well and they are under stress all the time, they have been wet for a week and they have run out of tobacco. The tobacco is the thing that does it. That is when you make sure if it's someone's turn to

07:30 do something, he does it, you don't tell someone else to do it because he's not going to be happy. The Japs on or about the 28th August landed reinforcements, I don't know how many, their initial landing was some two and a half thousand highly experienced troops that had fought in

08:00 China and did the Rape of Nanking and had taken part in the battles of Malaya and other island campaigns, so they are highly experienced and well trained people. On the night of 30th or 31st, at about three am on the morning of 31st, there was a gong sounded on the eastern side

08:30 of Number Three Strip and our people sent up flares and there was a great group of Japanese in a cleared area on the eastern side of where the track crossed the strip. The previous day the battalions defending Number Three Strip had sighted in weapons, Vickers machine guns and Bren guns on tripods

09:00 for across lines of fire, that's where you get the projectile at a certain target to cross like that. The artillery had previously registered in on that position and the mortars of two battalions had also done the same thing. As soon as the flares went up and the Japs were seen, all hell broke loose, all the automatic weapons opened up, the mortars opened up

09:30 and the artillery did the same thing. In their attack they basically walked into a solid wall of flying metal. They stopped, they went back, they re-formed, they attacked a second time, they attacked a third time and exactly the same thing occurred, they just walked into a wall of death and they were slaughtered. They then turned to their right, no doubt with the view

10:00 of going around the mountain end of the strip and try[ing] to get through that way. The 61st had prepared positions up Stevens Hill, just on the eastern side top of the strip, the Japs walked into that and copped another lacing, a bugle was sounded and the attack ceased. Later on we heard what appeared to be pistol shots, the moaning of their wounded from their attack on Number Three Strip

10:30 ceased so I do not know if they took their wounded back or if they shot them there, but anyway that ceased. At nine or eight the 2/12th was committed which commenced the offensive by our allied forces there. When they crossed the strip they came under fire from snipers, and Japs stood up amongst

11:00 their dead and fired into their backs. That was dealt with very, very promptly and very, very efficiently, any Jap that was down was dead, there was no doubt about that, it was looked after. The lead companies of the 2/12th Battalion fought their way forward as far as KB Mission that day and one of our A Company of the 9th Battalion followed them through and the second

11:30 part of the 2/12th put in a perimeter at Gama River which is about half way between Number Three Strip and KB Mission. Our C Company that I was with, the 9th Battalion, crossed the strip late in the afternoon of the 31st.

12:00 The company commander had obviously received instructions for someone that were a bit unusual, he never had an A group to pass information onto his platoon commanders. My platoon commander, I hadn't seen him since he had left our camp up at Kataleta Village, he was detailed to do patrols with other troops and I was in charge of 13th Platoon. With no A group and none of us knew

12:30 where we were going and the company commander led off and we followed him for several miles through the mud past the 2/12th position at Gama River and went on quite some distance. The company commander then decided that he'd gone too far and turned around and we went back. We crossed to the western side of the Gama River which was higher than the eastern side and I suppose our troops would have extended about

13:00 fifty to sixty yards down the government road on the western side of Gama River in front of the 2/12th perimeter. At that time several hundred Japs came around a corner to our west, they saw us and opened fire. I had gone forward, having crossed the river trying to find the

13:30 company commander to endeavour to find out what he wanted me to do with the 13th Platoon. I couldn't find him and as I was walking back to the river, this was when the Japs came around and the firing started. I heard the small arms fire and I looked around and I could see the muzzle flashes of the Japanese. I don't know if the Japanese opened fire first, or whether the 2/12th did, because the 2/12th would have been firing away from where I was and I would not have seen

14:00 the muzzle flashes. Most of our people went straight into the 2/12th perimeter which would have been a damn nuisance to them with strange troops coming into a perimeter just when you have a fair kind of battle on your hands. The remainder of us went the river and some went across the river and went into the jungle and laid off there, and the Japs continued to attack all night.

14:30 A barge came in, I think on two occasions, and brought extra ammunition in and took wounded and dead out. I don't recall the actual number of casualties that day but I know [that] from our C Company [we] had two people killed on the road when the Japs first opened fire. It was quite a successful operation in that a body count the next morning after clearing patrols had gone out to all fronts

15:00 to make sure there were no Japs still there. The thing you did every morning on a perimeter before troops started moving around was [to check] that it was clear in front of you. There was over one hundred, one hundred and six enemy dead that was found around that perimeter that morning. Going back to when we crossed the strip, that was the most horrific thing that I had ever seen. There were heads in steel helmets with the chin strap beautifully adjusted but no body, there were arms and legs off

15:30 and there was absolute carnage. In fact, death never worried me a great deal after that. I was a detective for twenty five years in the Queensland Police Force where we saw quite a lot of death by violence, road accidents and things of that nature and a lot of them kids. Death never worried me to any extent of what we seen during the war years. I saw quite a lot of death after that but not as traumatic or as devastating as what

16:00 those bodies were at Milne Bay. Gama River at one area and we were in for a couple of days and killed ninety two enemy there but they were all over the place and they were just shot and not ripped to bits like they were at Milne Bay. Then the 2/9th Battalion were then brought over from Gili Gili to KB Mission by boat which saved them a terrific lot of energy and dropped

16:30 them off at KB Mission and they were committed and took over from the 2/12th as forward troops. After several days of bitter fighting the Japs that survived were evacuated and a number of stragglers were cleaned up later, they endeavoured to walk over the mountain and they were picked up by patrols and most of them

17:00 killed anyway. During that severe fighting by the 2/9th a section in charge of Corporal John French in the 2/9th Battalion was held up by three machine gun posts. He put his troops under cover and he went forward with grenades, knocked out the first machine gun post and the second with his Tommy gun

17:30 and knocked that out and when the third machine gun post ceased firing the section went forward [and] found the Japs manning the third machine gun post were dead. Corporal French's body was lying close by that third position. He was ultimately awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross

18:00 for valour above the order of duty. That basically completed the Milne Bay campaign and quite a lot of Jap stragglers were cleaned up later by patrols. We pulled back into Milne force area but spent the rest of our time unloading ships and building roads. The mud there, I don't

18:30 think you can explain it to anyone that hadn't been there. You walked in it, if you got an opportunity to sleep you put your ground sheet on it or the most solid part of it. We had our boots on; we were continuously wet for two or three weeks but never cold because even the rain there was quite warm. We were always wet, either with perspiration or with rain

19:00 and that was the way it was for the whole of that campaign. Malaria, from the time the fighting ceased

we were seldom had less than two hundred troops out of action at any given time with malaria. When we arrived there we were told the incubation period was eight or nine days and we never had quinine for that period, we had a regular supply of it

19:30 up until the action commenced and none then until after the fighting finished. The two hundred was made up of people in hospital, those that had come back from hospital on light duties and those getting crook and going to hospital. I myself was evacuated from Milne Bay with quite a number of others on the 5th December 1942 to the Charters Towers military hospital.

20:00 From there I became an old boy of Scots College at Warwick, which was an army hospital at the time. I was treated there and I went to the convalescent camp at the Warwick golf course, from there to Glen Innes to a reinforcement training battalion and only there a short period and I had a recurrence of malaria. I was submitted to the Glenn Innes District Hospital,

20:30 they didn't treat you but they kept you there until such time [as] they got a Red Cross carriage load to Tamworth military hospital. I was quite delirious the last night I was there because with the shivering and heat you get, you get worse. I went to Tamworth and got treated there and went to the convalescent camp and went from there to Soli [?] outside Charters Towers.

21:00 **What was the theory behind moving sick patients so much?**

They moved you on to treat your malaria so as fresh patients being evacuated from New Guinea or wherever could be treated initially at the northern hospitals, which is less travelling for them, I'd say that would be the reason. At Charters Towers

21:30 as a sergeant I frequently took the picket into Charters Towers of a night. Right through that area there were a lot of air strips of thousands of American airmen and all types. You took picket in and placed one at each brothel and then the sergeant and the rest of the pickets patrolled the pubs and took care of the brawls.

22:00 **Was there much brawling and tension there?**

The Americans and Australians, they fought side by side, when they didn't do that they fought each other, there were some really good battles. Two nights before we left to go to Milne Bay there was a bit of a fight that broke out at Louders Hotel, the leading

22:30 hotel in Charters Towers. At that time there were literally thousands of servicemen in that area, if you were at one end of Flinders Street in Townsville and you wanted to get to the other you walked down the street because you just could not get down the footpaths, it was absolutely packed with people. At one of the brothels the picket there, if he wished, he could have a free beer and an onion sandwich at the end of a night's work. I don't know whether they

23:00 accepted it or not. From there they took a group of us back to Nambour which was a staging camp out of Townsville. From there we got a ship back to Milne Bay to find the battalion had moved to Port Moresby. I was taken off the ship with a recurrence of malaria and back to hospital again. On discharge

23:30 from hospital a small group of us went around on a small ship, all metal, we were issued with rations before we left Milne Bay. I think it was about three or four days and it must of only being going about four or seven knots. We were restricted totally to the top deck. A metal ship in the sun, you could of cooked eggs on the deck, it was only a short trip but it was the worst trip that I had ever had.

24:00 We got to Moresby and rejoined the unit at Doma Dabau which is up in the top of the range above Port Moresby where we were retraining and we got reinforcements. We were only there for a short time, I was seconded to New Guinea force headquarters, it was found that a lot of the staff at New Guinea force headquarters, when the Japs were coming over the ranges,

24:30 were almost within thirty two miles of Port Moresby. That a lot of the staff of New Guinea force headquarters were not familiar with infantry weapons at that time. So myself and a number of instructors from a number of other units were sent down to instruct them on infantry weapons. I found it a bit strange, having almost a full squad of officers or warrant officers, instructing them on Bren guns

25:00 as a sergeant, they were all superior to me but they all did as they were told, which wasn't too bad. From there I was recalled and flew out of Moresby to Townsville to attend an officer cadet training unit, number four at Woodside in South Australia. [I] flew from Moresby to Townsville and then Townsville to Brisbane by train, Brisbane

25:30 to Sydney by train, Sydney to Melbourne by train, Melbourne to Adelaide by train. At Adelaide Central we caught a train to Woodside and walked the last bit in and that took about a week, and god I hated trains by the end of that. That was a particularly cold winter in Adelaide, with a lot of rain and sleet, and having come from tropics and tropical rig I was very, very unhappy there. They issued us

26:00 with winter rig, winter uniforms and things. There were three wings there, the first month was weapons, the second was mapping and the third month was field work. The second month on the mapping one I had twenty three separate chilblains just on my hands, which is not conducive to doing fine work with compasses and things of that nature, and I was miserable. Then the third month

26:30 was field work. We were camping out in the field or potato barns or whatever we could find in the sleet and rain and that, too, was rather unpleasant. At the completion of that, those that qualified, which was most of us, they commissioned us with lieutenants on the 5th September 1943. We came back as a batch to Brisbane and went to the Jungle Warfare

27:00 Training Centre at Canungra where we were instructors. At that time the railway line ran from Brisbane to Canungra, the thing I never struck anywhere there was a gate on the railway line and the train stopped, the fireman got out and opened the gate and got back on, the driver drove it through, the guard closed the gate and away the train went, it was a bit unusual, I thought. We got to Canungra and initially

27:30 all the new baggy lieutenants did a carter [introduction?] to familiarize us with the training, snap-shooting and the type of ranges [that were] there. The only thing wrong with that is the shocking flea epidemic, there were six of us in a tent and you basically had to nail the corner of your blanket to the floorboards each night, otherwise the fleas would carry [you] out to the fresh air to eat you,

28:00 god it was unpleasant. We finished our carter and went over to H Company as an instructor and we were instructing senior recruits there for a number of months. At that time there were fifteen hundred junior lieutenants at Canungra, thirteen or fifteen of us were detailed to

28:30 the 2/25th Battalions as reo [reinforcement?] officers and most of the others were cleaned out in that all infantry battalions in the Australian army at that time were brought up to strength with junior lieutenants. At that stage I think we had about sixty infantry battalions in the Australian army. The 7 Div[ision] had recently come back from New Guinea, they were camped

29:00 out at Kalinga [in] the northern suburbs of Brisbane and had gone on leave and at the time I had joined them in early 1944 they were just coming back from leave. We started recruit training again, they had been reinforced for those that had been killed, or downgraded medically. I was seconded then to a

29:30 physical training camp at Burleigh Heads, as the troops came back quite a number of physical training instructors from the division were sent to the armed division physical training camp at Little Burleigh, I had done two physical training camps prior to that. We were there for twelve weeks handling a battalion at a time on getting them physically fit, we only worked two hours a day, nine until eleven.

30:00 For the instructors that was great and we could go into Coolangatta or go to Tweed Heads and we could go anywhere we liked and it was a lot of fun. But for the troops it was a pretty strenuous two hours and then they rested and did whatever they wanted to do. They were there for a week, then they went home and we got another thousand men the next week and did the same until we dealt with pretty well the whole division.

What type of training did they do?

There was climbing nets,

30:30 when you do combined ops [operations] the troops normally go down a roped net into the barges to go ashore. Running, climbing up hills, running in the sand, swinging on ropes and doing back flips, a lot of silly things but it did get them a little bit more fit. The chief instructor used to make the instructors run over Little Burleigh every

31:00 Morning, which wasn't that good if you had played up the night before. At the end of twelve weeks the camped closed and we returned to our battalions and training pretty consistently over a couple of weeks for a divisional march through Brisbane. It was, to my knowledge, the only time that a full division ever marched through a city in Australia in the Second World War.

31:30 There were fifteen thousand troops that marched.

Can you describe the reaction and what it was like that day?

It was magnificently planned, convoys would pick up troops from camps here and there and everywhere and go in and drop them near Victoria Park near the hospital. When you disembarked you formed up and just keep moving gradually up towards Normandy and that was where you formed up and started

32:00 marching, and it was just continuous. When you got up to the Normandy end you formed up, fixed your bayonets and you marched down Counter Street and down Roma Street and across the front of City Hall, the hall square wasn't there at that stage, it was Albert Street that went up the other side. Up Adelaide Street, down Queen Street to the valley, up Brunswick Street, down St Paul's Terrace.

32:30 As the troops pulled up just near the gate of the exhibition in [St] Paul's Terrace a convoy of trucks pulled up and dropped the tail boards and the troops go on them and the convoy left and other troops stopped marching and other trucks, it was an absolutely magnificent operation, I have no photographs of that.

Did it all go like clockwork?

Yes, it all went like clockwork. It was quite strenuous, marching at that distance with sloped arms, with

bayonets sticks

33:00 and things of that nature, it was a very, very impressive parade with fifteen thousand troops marching six abreast.

Were there a lot of public there?

There was quite a large turnout from the public. From there we went to Kurai on the tablelands, the division moved up and that's where the serious training started. We started from basic training,

33:30 recruit training, weapons, map reading, minor tactics, mortars, all infantry weapons, worked up to fire and movement, platoon attacks, company attacks, battalion attacks and a divisional exercise.

Can you describe some of those in more detail, those training exercises?

On a battalion exercise normally it started on a Monday and finished on a Saturday.

34:00 You did an average of twenty miles a day, which was one hundred miles for the week. At times you were enemy and other people attacked you, you attacked other people, and so it went on. You attacked with artillery support, live ammunition to get first timers used

34:30 to live ammunition, you did fire and movement. A platoon going to there and giving covering fire while this one moved to there and so you went on. It worked right up then to a divisional exercise and then we did the longest march I ever did, we did forty two map miles in one day, from Kurai out to the Walsh River at Dimbulah. We just got out

35:00 there and another officer and I settled in, I had just unrolled my swag and I was about to have a rest and they said, "Put your gear together and go to battalion headquarters, you and McFarland are going back to the battalion to prepare to go to Cairns the next day to be in an advance party for the combined ops training." We went back and being very hot, very tired and very thirsty we had a few

35:30 and my other chap, he did really like a drink, and made quite a mess of himself. The next morning I was watching him and he was shaving and I could see a bit of blood running off, I had a look and he wore glasses that thick normally. He shaved and I had a look and he was having a look at the back of the mirror, he had his shave and we went down and we did combined ops.

36:00 Four were down there for about a week, I think, to familiarize ourselves [with] where the battalion camps would be and also to test ducks [amphibious vehicles] and the amphibious track vehicle that went on land and on water, you just drove them in and away they went. That was very good because one day we finished up out at Double Island and nobody had been there for ages and there were oysters like that all over the place at low tide so we

36:30 got our bayonets out and had the best feed of oysters we had ever had. When we had eaten all we could, away we went again. Then the division moved down and there were two British LSIs, Landing Ships Infantry, available and we trained on those. You would load a battalion of troops on them and they had all the landing barge on each side and the troops went into the barges

37:00 and then they lowered them down and they formed up and away they went. You went to land and then you came back and went back on the ship and did it again, and you did it again and you became a reasonable expert at it.

With that sort of training, what are the mistakes that can happen and what things are you trying to get right when you are actually going to have to do a landing?

Not getting off the barge quick enough, not deploying quick enough.

37:30 In infantry work you want space between people so if you come under fire more might get killed, the others with a bit of luck might survive. The British Royal Marines were running the landing barges and they were also instructing us on getting into the barges and getting out of barges and so it went on over quite a period.

38:00 At the completion of that and [when] they were satisfied [that] we had some idea of what we were doing, we moved back to the tablelands and it was only a short time then before we went by truck to Innisfail and then by train to Townsville and waited to board

38:30 ships to go forward. Nobody knew at that stage where we were going. It was when that 9th Battalion sailed, there was a good fight with the Americans at Louders Hotel, I started to mention it. The first night it started, the two nights before we landed, some of the Americans produced knives, nobody was badly hurt, they just got a bit of a cut. A whole group of our people went

39:00 in the next night wearing their tin hats and started the brawl. As soon as the Americans produced knives they took their tin hats off and used them as weapons. We sailed the next morning and I've never seen so many black eyed, skinned faces anywhere, anytime, in mass, but we did learn later that fifty two of our allies went to hospital so we must of won that one.

39:30 Speaking of that, a sign at Port Moresby, the Australian troops were great pillagers, if they didn't have something somebody else did, we normally finished up with it. A sign on an American camp there was,

"Dogs, wogs and Australian troops keep out," that led to a few fights also.

40:00 A lot of the troops loaded out of Townsville, some loaded out of Cairns, no one knew where we were going. One day we were going down a companion way to a mess tent, hundreds of troops were trooping through and there was one card face down on one of the steps at the companionway. Snowy Northy, one of our corporals, said,

40:30 "I bet that's the ace of spades, if it is, we are going to Borneo and I'll get killed there," he said. "I'll walk around it." And he said, "What's the difference?" so he picked it up and it was the ace of spades. Later on, when we go to Borneo, and later on I will tell you a bit more about Snowy, he did get killed in Borneo.

Tape 3

00:30 After the combined ops [operations] we moved back to the Atherton Tablelands

01:00 for a short period and then the division moved to Townsville and Cairns pre-embarkation for the final campaigns. We embarked at Townsville and no one knew where we were going, eventually we disembarked at Morotai. The whole

01:30 assault force assembled there and as they came forward quite a lot of troops were loaded back on ships, the ships that they'd be on for the invasion, because there were slightly under thirtyfour thousand service persons in that convoy when it did ultimately sail. We were ashore for about a week and then we were loaded onto

02:00 an LST, a Landing Ship Tank, both the bottom and top decks were crowded with motor vehicles and we then put two companies of infantry on the top deck of the LST that we were on. A little bit crude, the toilet system was a piece of guttering along the rail of the boat with salt water being continually pumped through it. American troop

02:30 ships only served two meals a day and the officers got three. We disembarked at Morotai and after a period we went back on ships and we sailed in and out of the harbour while all other troops were embarked. There were approximately two hundred vessels in that convoy, we sailed northwest, north of the Celebes, and then turned south well out to sea from the

03:00 Borneo coast. A couple of days before the end of June we saw a number of ships closing quite quickly on us and we hoped they were, and as it turned out, that was the bombardment fleet of American and Australian naval ships that were going to assist in landing. Balikpapan

03:30 had been bombed very, very heavily and when we were some twenty-four to thirty-six hours out of Balikpapan you could see the smoke rising from the oil refinery fires and other oil industries burning. On the morning of the 1st July 1945,

04:00 the 25th Brigade was the reserve brigade, and of that, 25th Battalion was the reserve battalion of the reserve brigade and we were floating. The 18th Brigade were on the left flank and the 21st Brigade was landing on the right flank. The object of the 21st Brigade was to take the high country in front of them and turn to the right and clear the Japs from the Sepinggang mango area which was

04:30 north along the south coast of Borneo. The object of that was to get control of the landing strips there and we had some fifty-two RAAF headquarter units with us, so they could then get organised to bring allied aircraft in and to use those strips. The 18th Brigade were to go to the left

05:00 and capture and clear the refinery tank farm area and the town of Balikpapan, the 25th Brigade landing on D [day] plus one, that was the 2nd July 1945, and we were committed the following morning. The first night ashore, my company commander came into my platoon area and troops were a bit jumpy and

05:30 the lad on guard fired a long burst from his Owen Gun and said, "Halt," which the company commander did, because with your gaiters on, your pants hang down over the top of your gaiters, and there was about seven holes through the flap of his pants and the bullet burnt across his ankle. I don't know why he never come into my platoon after dark.

What happened to the young chap?

06:00 No problems, he just walked in and the lad was a bit jumpy and it went zap. From there the 2/31st Battalion, their object was more or less to clear the area along Milford highway, 25th Battalion was west of the highway and the 2/33rd were to clear the areas east of the road. By the time we

06:30 got to Balikpapan the maps were absolutely magnificent, they had been run by aerial survey, every road, every junction, every creek and every hill was given a name which was absolutely magnificent to work from. Working west of the road on one occasion we were on the forward slope

07:00 of a very long ridge and the Jap artillery didn't have crest clearance to bring their weapons to bear on our position. They used air burst which was a little worrying, some of them you would hear the crunch, you'd hear them coming and then as they passed over your head, if they did you'd hear the crack as they

07:30 went over and then they hit the tree behind you and exploded or they'd explode up there somewhere, which was quite distressing. Fortunately, I don't think we had any casualties there, the jeeps [that] bring up supplies used to come over the top of the ridge and come straight down where the artillery and heavy machine guns couldn't put a bear on them. They went as flat as a strap and dropped over and down and going out

08:00 they did exactly the opposite, they flattened it and got over the hill and out of sight. From there we moved forward, we had people killed on a patrol down at the bottom of the creek. Then we went forward onto the next ridge, the Japs were hiding in the high group up to our right. One of our corporals did a patrol across the

08:30 front of that ridge, he turned his head to give an order and a bullet entered his opened mouth and knocked a tooth out and came out here, it shocked him a bit but it didn't do too much damage. We dug in that afternoon and just on dark a machine gun opened up from a position that they were holding onto on top of the ridge

09:00 and our stretcher bearer and another soldier were hit. There was one occasion where we could get our wounded out, and as they were taken out the stretcher bearer was calling out, "I'll be back to have another go at you bastards," the other fellow was saying, "I'm going to die." Invariably I found, on several occasions, when a soldier said he was going to die, he did, but they got out.

09:30 The stretcher bearer never came back but he did leave and worked as a barber in Brisbane for quite a number of years after. The other fellow received surgery and he was going okay, he would of lived, but he got up and went for a walk and busted everything and died like he said he was going to.

10:00 Later on my platoon was the forward platoon of the battalion, there were troops in front of us and we had to cross a swamp. The first section had no problem but they stirred it up and by the time the second section and the rest of us got into it, the troops were physically bogging. You'd put your rifle back and pull him forward. It took us an hour to eventually cross.

Was there ever any concerns in those sorts of conditions?

No, but the largest crocs [crocodiles] that I've ever seen anywhere in the world

10:30 were in the rivers at Borneo during the war years, but we will get to them a little bit later. We went forward and put in a company position. That night a company commander's batsman, who was on duty in the centre of the perimeter, went off, killed

11:00 one person and wounded another and an overthrow from a burst he fired with an Owen gun and wounded one of my corporals up in the perimeter in the knee and he went out and never came back. These things do happen. Jungle warfare, if you are outside of a perimeter at night it is best to stop out, because if you are going to go in you have a good chance of being shot. A lot of the Japanese spoke quite good English

11:30 but a thing they didn't do was they didn't know the Australian language, if you had to get into a perimeter you used that language and the troops you were going into realised you were Australian.

Can you give us an example?

The most obscene words you could think of in a short space of time. I had to use that later on but we will get to that.

With the friendly fire incident, is there ever any sort of

12:00 **repercussions, are people spoken to after incidents like that?**

There was really no point in it because it wasn't done deliberately, it was something they did believing it was enemy. Particularly in jungle warfare there was always Japs cut off, you'd have patrols out that should have been back, they probably weren't because they got held up or stuck in impenetrable country.

12:30 You had to be awake all the time, which we will leave with a funny incident that occurred with that regard, also. The 2/31st, going up the Milford highway they did a company attack and cleared a feature, their CO [Commanding Officer] felt that they had broken the resistance of the Japs and sent a platoon forward. The position there was a large cutting, I suppose the banks would

13:00 be about six or seven metres high, the road went down one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards and turned and from the cutting you couldn't see where it went but actually you'd turn a little bit left and went across a bridge. There was a sharp bridge coming in at the end of the straight stretch of road which had been cleared sometime before which had undergrowth from a few metres to four or five metres high. The forward platoon got almost to the bridge

13:30 and the Japs opened up with everything, a lot of them opened up with rifle fire and they had fifteen killed and fourteen wounded in about two minutes, including people back in the cutting. They held that position and they pulled the troops that weren't dead back and there were too many of them and we were pulled in and our company took over their position the next day. My platoon was on the western bank of the cutting

14:00 and we had another platoon on the right bank and then a third platoon filled in the back of the perimeter. That afternoon I was directed to take a patrol forward to see if I could see or do anything about the troops that were holding this spur that was coming in. It was very, very thick, with low timber and you could not move a patrol through it without causing the tops to move.

14:30 As soon as that occurred we came under fire and it was obvious that if we continued we would suffer casualties without benefit, so I pulled back and that was it. We were on a minor attack on that section with my platoon just on dark and two or three Japs came up and they were dispensed with and those that weren't hit went. The next day,

15:00 being on the highway, our quartermaster and cooks brought up a hot meal, the first we'd had since we had left the ships some fourteen or fifteen days earlier. They brought it up by vehicle to the bottom of the hill at the back of the cutting. As soon as they started carrying the dickies [?] up with the rattling, the Japs started mortaring. Fortunately, it must have been a bad batch because the tails were breaking off a lot of them and you could hear them swishing

15:30 and swishing as they were turning end over end, very few if any went off but it was the ones that weren't doing that worried us. Frequently a situation of that nature led to an attack, so I just sent my troops out a few at a time for a meal and when they finished a meal they came back and sent more out. I was one of the last to go out and anticipating that there could be an attack following the mortaring.

16:00 When I got most of the troops fed I left the sergeant in charge and then I went back and had a hot meal, which was absolutely delightful. Under those conditions we had canned heat, a tin about twice the size of a boot polish tin with solid fuel and if you had dug a weapon pit you could stick your bayonet in it and I normally carried a two pound fruit tin with a handle on it and fill

16:30 your billy with water, put the can in and made a cup of tea, it was absolutely magnificent. After a few days in that position, where we couldn't move the Japanese from their position, so that gave the Japs an opportunity to dig in and if they had a win, and they did have a win on that occasion, they were damn hard to move. The 2/33rd Battalion took over

17:00 from us and we moved back down the highway a little way and picked up a native track to the west of the road again and went forward, I suppose a couple of miles, and put in a two company perimeter that night with battalion headquarters with us. Our platoon was on the east of the native track and the other platoon was on the west of it. Later on in the afternoon another of our rifle companies passed by and

17:30 went through the saddle and onto the next hill and put in a defensive position there. Just on dark, on the western side of the perimeter, the other company, there was a grenade explosion and I didn't know then or now whether it was a friendly or some Jap might of thrown one. Anyway, a young soldier had received bad abdominal wounds and

18:00 he immediately said he was going to die. We had stretcher bearers with us and each company had a certain amount of morphine, which they gave him in small doses, which kept him quiet until about midnight. They had run out of morphine and he screamed for the rest of the night. It was a little upsetting because somebody could of very easily shot him, that's how stressing it was. Also, that night one of my troops

18:30 in one of my sections, his nerves had gone, so I brought him into my weapon pit and sent my batman out to take his place in the section to give his section a bit of a rest. I basically had to do it even though it wasn't a good idea because I'd do my hour, I'd get him up, stand him up and make sure he was pointed out and then squat down the end of the pit with

19:00 arms on knees and head on arms and just about to shut my eyes and then, "Did you hear that?" and that's what went on all night. I basically did my hour and his as well. Pretty well all that night the forward company was being attacked, with grenades going off, with automatic fire, there was quite a fire fight going on up there. I was briefed just before daylight to have my platoon ready to move at daylight to go forward and

19:30 assist the forward company, with two platoons from the other company that was with us. Just on daylight we moved forward and the object of it being was the forward company was pretty well out of ammunition and to assist and bury their dead and to carry the wounded out. The two platoons of the other company led out, one of them went straight out into a company position

20:00 and the other went on the ridge. The saddle was here and the knob was there and the ridge led off down here in this position. I was detailed to take my platoon down into the creek area to endeavour to force the Japs out, which we eventually did after a pretty savage fire fight. We fired quite a lot of seven second grenades from a discharger and when one of those landed there was a clang

20:30 like it had hit a metal object, whether it hit a tin helmet or what I don't know, because there wasn't any

metal about there, it could have been that. After a period we found that the Japs had pulled back and the company commander said he was pulling his platoon back and for me to come up. At that stage we found that Corporal Bill Wilkinson, one of my platoon section leaders, had been killed, so we picked him up and carried him back

21:00 and dug a shallow grave and buried poor old Bill. The padre wasn't up with us but somebody mumbled a few words, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," or something like that, "May he rest in peace." We had searched him and taken his personal possessions and photographs, rings and watches or whatever off and put them in his tea bag and taken one meat ticket [identification tag] off and left the other one on him. We buried him and made a rough cross and

21:30 then had a meal. Later that day we were directed to move forward and again it was my platoon's turned to lead the company out, which we did. Crossed the saddle, passed where the company … down this long ridge, we would of gone about two or three mile and then we crossed a creek and went up a hill. We went on a few hundred yards and the jungle on the right of the track

22:00 had been cleared and there was a lot of undergrowth. The jungle went further forward on the left of the road and then curled back. When my troops went out into the cleared area they immediately came under fire. I spread my troops to the right on the edge of the jungle and the second platoon came up and formed the left side of the perimeter and the third platoon closed the back of it.

22:30 The CO felt that it was an important position so he brought a second company up, which thickened up the back of the perimeter. At about four o'clock we got in and that's when the firing started and it [went] right through until eight o'clock the next morning, it was quite a savage fire fight there. But going back to the night where the two companies and the platoon headquarters was back on the other ridge.

23:00 The two CSMs [Company Sergeant Majors] put in a pip right at the back of the perimeter, right on the side of the track, and they were there and it was raining like normal in the tropics, and they heard, pad, pad, pad, "Don't shoot yet, let him come closer." This went on, "Don't shoot yet, don't shoot yet, and the next time he moves we will shoot." A great orangutan gave a great scream and ran up a tree and they both nearly died.

23:30 We are now on Charm [?], the name of the feature. As I said, the fight started about four o'clock in the afternoon and went through until eight o'clock the next morning. Just sometime before daylight somebody came and saw me and said, "The sections are almost out of grenades." I got a haversack and went back to the back company, got a stack of grenades

24:00 and came back and then it was daylight and we tossed them from pit to pit and exploded everyone with grenades. When we started trying to dig in when the commander came up and had a look at our positions and said, "Yes, put your pits there," kind of thing, I got the corporal and had a look at the various section leaders, "Put your pits here, here and here, and dig in." As soon as anyone started to dig in we came under fire so I said,

24:30 "Stay down, wait until dark and dig in then." Kenny Baker on a Bren gun and his mate started putting in a pit and ran into roots and couldn't get down, so they moved a yard or two to the side and started putting a pit down and they heard a scuffle here. Ken picked up his mate's rifle with a bayonet on it and jabbed it into where they had been digging. A little Jap gave a scream of anguish and Kenny got such a fright

25:00 and stepped back and pulled the bayonet out and the little man disappeared into the night. Then just on daylight, Ted [Edward] Campbell, my platoon sergeant, took over from Kenny Baker on the Bren gun because he had been on it all night and as the enemy moved out the front, Ted moved up and knocked two of them down and went down and came up at the same place and was shot through the forehead.

25:30 At about the same time Snowy, who I had mentioned earlier, he was doing the clearing patrol in the front of the platoon on the left of the road and he was shot and killed and Snowy was at the back of the perimeter. It must have been a small mortar or something, it almost cleared the perimeter and almost landed on to the back of his neck, but he was killed immediately, I think we had three killed and seven or eight wounded that night. Back companies did very well, unbeknown

26:00 to us, when the perimeter went in it completely circled a large Japanese food dump, we were too busy, we never even knew about it until the next day and it was too late. The troops went back there and opened this and opened that and they found which was tinned crab and they had a magnificent feed. The padre was up and we again dug three shallow graves and went about the business.

26:30 The next day I took a patrol out to the right of my position, forward onto the highway, and located a Jap position there and knew where several pits were and went back and reported that. The following morning another platoon was detailed to attack that position, one of my corporals, Col Ford, who was an expert

27:00 flame thrower, he went with them as a flame thrower operator and [it] was mainly by his good work that that attack was successful and they cleared that position. However, there were three wounded and there was one fellow shot in the arm and it took a whole lump of flesh off. The second fellow wasn't too badly wounded but Col had a spare night set for the flame thrower in his pocket. It's a

27:30 cylinder, similar to a large pistol cylinder, with metal pins going into it. When you pulled the trigger it pushed a pin forward and broke the back light and released the magnesium, magnesium when it comes in contact with oxygen, air, it immediately lights. If you drop a bit of it into a boot tin or a tobacco tin it just goes straight through it. That was hit by a bullet,

28:00 busted right open and he was shockingly burnt, so he was gone for the rest of the campaign. There were three of them who were wounded and they were taken out. That night I was detailed to take part in an ambush position between where this position had been on the road and the forward one that had held up the 31st Battalion. I think there were nine of us that went on that one

28:30 and pretty well all of them had automatic weapons. A standing patrol had been in before and just on dark a party of troops went forward and sure enough, just on dark, down they came and we hit them, we let them get right in front of us and everything just cut loose and we pelted a number of grenades out. All instructions at that stage of the war was, “The war is ending, hit hard and get no casualties.”

29:00 We hit them and threw grenades and we pulled back, my Bren gunner was wounded and I had copped a bit of shrapnel in the back, where we were supposed to stop out overnight in the jungle and just lay off. I decided that I would take the patrol in because the Bren gunner was in quite a lot of pain, a piece of shrapnel or something had gone straight down into the top of his shoulder.

29:30 That little ambush got a one liner in the final campaign in military history. The morning after the all night attack when we were on Charm, there were approximately fifty enemy dead outside of our perimeter. One of the other pits heard a scuffle

30:00 just in front of him, threw a grenade and went down and there was quite a long burst of machine gun fire which cut off a tree about seventy-five millimetres behind his pit, about six inches above the ground. The grenade went off, the machine gun ceased firing and the gun and two operators were dead just ten feet in front of his pit the next morning. I got hit on the ambush thing and I was going

30:30 out the next morning and the flame thrower had to go back to brigade to be recharged. Col hadn’t cleared it and I didn’t know it at that stage. The Indonesian boys are not nearly as big or as strong as the New Guinea boys and a flame thrower with a hand gun was too big of a load for one person. I said, “Take the hand unit off and give it to another fellow and you’d be right.”

31:00 I just flipped the pulls back which released the hand gun, it hadn’t been cleared [and] the native with the thing on his back spun around and around like a top, he pelted the thing into the bush and the whole carrying party went down the track at a rapid rate of miles before anyone could catch them and bring them back. Quite a lot of us got sprayed with the last bit of napalm

31:30 which was in it. Flame throwers are shocking things, with napalm you’ve got around about forty feet but with diesel in you’ve got a shorter distance, but god it was hot. You’d put it on someone and they’d do a little tap dance and that was the end of it. They started it and they used them at Milne Bay and I think ours were better later on. I was evacuated and went to CCS [Casualty Clearing Station], an operator on the Bren gun,

32:00 and took his piece out and they left mine in and I got penicillin needles every three hours, day and night, for the next ten days. I finished up getting them in the arm of the day time and the rump of the night because it’s the best thing to do, they stung because they were refrigerated and they were so cold. After ten or twelve days I was discharged from hospital. I went to the LOB [left out of battle] section, when a battalion goes into action there is a LOB section

32:30 which … if an infantry battalion goes in and gets slaughtered beyond a certain percentage and that almost would of happened at El-Alamein, if they hadn’t of had LOBs. Spent some time there and went back up to the company, the company commander sent me back because he had got another lieutenant from somewhere, so I went back to LOB for a while.

33:00 Then they sent some troops down, we went by barge up to Wayne Pumping Station as a standing patrol, that was the water supply for Balikpapan. It was at that time that the hostilities ceased. The lieutenant that took my place was only with the battalion a short time, I understand, he was sent out on a patrol out there to make contact,

33:30 he was still a thousand yards back here then he went right back and he was no longer required, poor fellow. We often had a lot of casualties by virtually going out hard, get back and have no casualties because they’d go out and have a bash, which you did anyway.

Did that change the mental approach of the soldiers?

I think it did and I think that was the problem, because you must be a little bit more careful whereas if you went your normal way you probably

34:00 would be hit anyway. The hostilities ceased, the battalion was pulled back into Balikpapan after a number days up at Wayne Pumping Station because the barge came up and we moved back. Then we moved up to Mangar where we slept for about a week, because you don’t really get much sleep. Then there was no

34:30 Training, we just slept, it was a magnificent beach area, if you could get over the tank track it was quite

a nice beach so we did a bit of swimming and what have you. Then the surrender was signed and our battalion was directed to go to Sanga Sanga and Samarinda which was up on the Markham River about sixty miles up from Balikpapan town.

35:00 It was on the road on the Milton Highway that we had been defending but we hadn't gone up that far. Half of the battalion went to Samarinda and I was with the section that stopped at Sanga Sanga which had been the residential area for the Dutch people running the oil fields and refineries, Sanga Sanga and Samarinda were the area for the oil refineries. They, pre-war, had been exporting seven or eight million tons

35:30 of petrol exports a year, it was quite a big industry.

Can I ask how you found out about the war ending?

I was at LOB and word had come through, because you had field telephones,

36:00 but what made it very obvious and I will get into more detail about it later, all base people, with thirty-four thousand people in the convoy which was nurses in hospitals, anti-aircraft suppliers, boot makers and mechanics, a lot of them would not of fired a shot in anger during the whole war. But having heard that the hostilities had ceased

36:30 they fired everything in every bloody direction. In fact, I went out of the house and spent the night in a slit trench, it was just going everywhere. At Samarinda, where half the battalion was, we finished up with a collection of some ten thousand Jap prisoners, we were responsible for rationing them and a hundred

37:00 thousand indigenous people, Dayaks and ten Dutch oil people who came back to look at the oil fields with the view of ultimately getting things going again. The Japs and the Dayaks we issued in bulk and they looked after themselves, working parties, we got the Japs and they did it which was quite a good arrangement. Whilst there, there was a Jap ship that had been loading rubber at the time Balikpapan started and it stopped in the river.

37:30 I was detailed to be in charge of a guard to take the ship with the a crew from the wharf at Samarinda back to Balikpapan and hand it over to the navy. Which we did but when we got outside the river the captain dropped anchor and stopped, I didn't like that and I presumed and I never really thought about it at the time but it probably

38:00 was low tide and he was mainly worried about shallow water. I insisted and suggested if he didn't get it moving he'd go over in the anchor's place and away we'd go. We got him moving and he went very, very slowly until we got into deeper water and we steamed into the harbour at Balikpapan. Anchored in the bay and after quite a period the navy came out and

38:30 we handed it over to them. I had quite a lot of Jap stores and things that I had to take to the division. [I] came back and the navy took over and we landed then and had to wait for a barge to take us back to the battalion. While we were on the wharf waiting for the barge that night a hospital ship came in with quite a lot of the 8th Div[ision] on and we started nattering with them. A little chap stuck his head out of a porthole

39:00 that I knew, a fellow by the name of Buddy Glover, an ex-boxer from Bundaberg or one of those places, pre-war. I had done a physical training school with him at Frankston, Victoria, before they sailed. He stuck his head out and came down and I had quite a natter with him and our barge arrived and away we went. After the surrender we weren't doing a great deal.

What was the mood like after the surrender, did you see it change dramatically?

39:30 Yes, you realised that you would see quite a few more sunrises, you wouldn't see too many because you wouldn't be up that early too often, it was a much lighter attitude. The fact when we moved up to Sepinggang the officers started getting issued with spirits again. A number of our officers apparently didn't drink gin but a couple of us did.

40:00 Jack Ray, a platoon commander from my company, they'd give us their forty ounce bottle of gin and some were real kind, they'd give us their lemon squash with it which was quite good. What we would do was we'd get a bucket and fill it with fresh water and take a bottle of gin, bottle of squash as long as it lasted down on the beach and sit there and watch the waves roll in and drink a bottle of gin between us.

40:30 At times we did have a bit of trouble negotiating the gate trap.

Tape 4

00:30 The hospital ship came in and I met a fellow that I had known, the barge came and we went back to the battalion and the total operation there with the prisoners and the rationings was going quite satisfactorily. We did start playing a bit of sport, soccer, and when we took over at Sanga Sanga we

captured a considerable amount

01:00 of Jap liquor, cheap wines, but there was also crème de menthe and various odd things there. The troops broke into the warehouse where it was stored one night and got very, very full, so the CO the next day ordered that all will be broken. The warehouses were about three hundred feet long by about one hundred feet across. The concrete drain went down the front across the end and into the canal, and that,

01:30 as you expect, was pretty well loaded with beetle nut and all that type of stuff. One of our troops, who may of well been then, but he finished up being a bad alcoholic in Brisbane after the war, was catching it in his hat where it ran out of the drain into the canal and tipping it from his hat into a two litre water can for after. Also, a number of the fellows captured little monkeys

02:00 and after they had them for a while, providing you fed them, they were quite friendly and they'd sit on your shoulder and chatter away and hop up and down and not run away. They did like crème de menthe, you put a bit of crème de menthe on a saucer and they'd lick it and have a lot of fun. They use to get full and they'd run along and jump for a tent pole and miss it. Obviously they had hangovers because usually they were quite friendly because the next day if you went near them,

02:30 they'd bite your head off. So I became an expert of drunken monkeys at that stage. The allies decided that they'd put together an occupation force to Japan. It was decided that a battalion would be raised from 7th Australian Division, one from 9th Division and one from 6th Division and militia divisions.

03:00 That was formed at Balikpapan on the 12th October 1945, Colonel [Richard] Marson from 2/25th Battalion was appointed CO of it and before he left the battalion I said that I would like to join him. Consequently, I took a draft of volunteers from the 25th Battalion

03:30 down to 65th Battalion area on the 15th October and became a member of the 65th Battalion BCOF, British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. The battalion later moved back from there to Morotai and we waited there until early 1944 for ships to go to Japan, we arrived in Japan early

04:00 1946. [We were] initially stationed at Kaitachi which was between Kure Harbour and Hiroshima. We were in largely what was Japanese ordnance depots and they were buildings one hundred to one hundred and fifty

04:30 feet long and about the same width. The officers' quarters they partitioned off, so each had a little square, but the partitions only went up six feet. We had been right on the equator since June 1945 and it snowed the day we disembarked, so we had a very, very miserable winter. The only nights I ever slept

05:00 warm during that winter, when you went to bed you'd put on extra cardigans, if you got real full you slept on top of everything and you slept well, but it was a very, very hard, cold winter and we didn't enjoy it. Besides, at that stage we hadn't been issued proper winter equipment but we were later issued with sheep lined parkas and things of that nature and it became much better.

What were your impressions of Japan?

05:30 At that stage it was a very, very poor country, everything was run down. The towns that were bombed were just heaps of rubbish. In Hiroshima the only buildings left standing there were

06:00 concrete buildings, but they were completely gutted, the insides were all twisted and burnt out. I went to a barber there one day and he shaved me with a blade and I was very concerned whether he was going to shave me or cut my throat, but he did shave me. The thing that impressed me most was a little bit later on when hundreds and thousands of Japanese servicemen were being repatriated from all over the world.

06:30 Japan has lots of festivals every year where hundreds and even thousands of Japanese get reasonably full on sake and other drinks. The fact that I'm a serviceman and Americans and Australians would be wandering around amongst these people and never ever did I see or know of an incident occurring where had they been in Australia if they had allowed Australians to drink,

07:00 the first thing that the Australians would of done with the few drinks taken was to knock the Jap over and probably get show, where there was no sign of that at all. As I found out later, which I will come to later, I was on military government for a while, a Japanese born in this village here had never even gone as far as that village, two or three kilometres away. Now, of course, they are one of the most travelled people in the world, so it was very insular

07:30 at that time. We then moved from Katiche to Fukuyama into our old barracks and it had been a Japanese naval airplane base with runways and slipways, we were in old barracks there. They did build completely new steam heated barracks for the

08:00 battalion, which were very good. Our first year there we were pretty busy searching for, collecting and destroying war stores, anything, firearms of any kind, swords or weapons of any kind were collected and loaded onto barges and take them out and dumped in deep water.

08:30 After the first twelve months we played quite a lot of sports, rugby union, rugby league, soccer, hockey, basketball, tennis, swimming, shooting. Also, we did quite a lot of squad drill and the Australian troops, you would have seen the Brits in their parades in England and they are absolutely spot on.

09:00 The Australians became actually up to their standard which rather surprised me but that was the standard we had to have. About every month or so the battalion would move to Tokyo and we mounted guards every afternoon, we had a guard on the Imperial Palace and various other places. One of those was a good one and it was on Tokushima,

09:30 the railway line went from Tokushima across the canal to an area over there where the Americans had their beer supply for the whole American force and that's where it was dished out from. They had one man guarding it and he walked it anticlockwise and by the time he was at this corner it was actually twenty minutes before he got back there. Some of our troops on that guard would watch him here and give him

10:00 ten minutes and race across the bridge, put a carton of beer under each arm and come back. The occupation did become quite a social bit, I've got photographs there where I was coming off a twenty-four hour guard as an officer from the Imperial Palace. Another one where we were training recruits and some of them in the snow on one occasion, and reinforcements

10:30 on drills so they could catch up with the rest of our troops.

Can you tell me a bit more about the Imperial Palace?

I was never in it, we had at the plaza outside on the main gate, we had a guard there. A moat all around it and built in a fortress type thing with cascades or whatever they might be called, with drawbridges.

11:00 In 1948 I was seconded to American Military Government Kagawa Team on Takamatsu on Shikoku. Part of my duties there was surveillance and marketing of fresh food products.

11:30 Food was very short in Japan at that stage and the object of this was to get primary produce all sold through markets and things so that everyone could get a reasonable share. Instead of being sold on the black market where farmers and people would get much more for it than going through the controlled system. While I was in the military government I had

12:00 a capacity, if I didn't like chiefs of police I could sack them, I could of used that authority much later in Queensland. I spent probably one of the most interesting parts of the period that I spent three years up in the occupation.

Can you talk a little bit more about the system and what you actually

12:30 **did there?**

We would go out to the fishing fleets when they were catching sardines and then we would find out what was the volume that they caught and the records where that went into the market. I have a photograph there of where we raided two Jap ferries going from our area further up

13:00 to the more heavily populated areas. There were one hundred police on the raid and we confiscated black market food stuffs to feed twenty-eight thousand people for a day in one raid, so that was the volume of stuff. We also had to check on war stores which could be used by the Japanese, one member of Jap parliament had a whole warehouse of rope,

13:30 which he was selling for his own benefit. We had the local detectives working with us and they questioned him but until we impressed on them that they were doing [it] for the military government they weren't going to touch a member of parliament, he was a high caste. Once we got through to them that it was a military government investigation they really did a good job, there were a

14:00 couple of very good senior detective police.

Can you talk a little bit [about] the different culture and how difficult it was to work with them?

It wasn't difficult to work with them at all, they were just so compliant, the Emperor would say, "Lay down your arms and don't give trouble," and they didn't, that was the thing that amazed me

14:30 more than any other thing that I saw or did up there, they are just so servile. On military government at times we would go quite a long way from headquarters and we'd stop at a Japanese hotel overnight and we almost inevitably, on those occasions the chief of police and the local mayor would put on a function for you, they could even give you geisha girls if

15:00 you wanted them, but I never ever came into that. One reason being that venereal diseases were quite rampant up there, in fact, one of the doctors did a study on it and maintained that ninety nine percent of the Japanese prostitutes had a venereal disease in some form or another. As the Americans expressed it, "If it's not as bad as a cold, you can get a couple of needles in the arse and you can start again,"

15:30 but commissioned officers in the Australian force, if they got venereal diseases they got the sack.

We have heard from other men who were in Japan after the war with things you could basically have a woman for a cake of soap, can you talk about the poverty and the families?

Prostitution wasn't looked down [on] there, you could be walking down the street and the troop was looking for a brothel, he could walk up to a reasonably high-classed Japanese woman

16:00 and ask, "Where is the brothel?" or get the message through to her without turning a hair and she'd say, "About two streets down and two blocks down that way on your left." Quite a lot of the female children were sold into geisha houses and the high-class geisha girl is an entertainer,

16:30 the lower-class ones are all prostitutes part-time or what have you. Going back to when the first Americans landed here at the end of 1941, we were in Chermside camp at that stage and

17:00 suddenly all the tables and stools disappeared from all of our messes including the sergeants' mess and they were given to the Yanks, that didn't do much for public relations. It wasn't the Yanks' fault, it was the Australian administration who gave it to them, so we sat on our bums in the dust and had Christmas dinner at Chermside that year. Another incident, when we were at Rollingstone a whole team of

17:30 Americans came with trucks with lots and lots of fishing nets, we had a number of professional fishermen and they helped them. We fished up with more fish than they did, they came back a few weeks later but they brought guards with Tommy guns and blew up our fresh water system. Again, the occupation became pretty much a social occasion,

18:00 we were searching for war stores, you did training, you played sports, and we had some very good mess parties. There were hundreds of American girls working there as stenographers and we got to know quite a lot of them and they'd come down and we'd billeted them in after we got our new barracks at Fukuyama. From there they'd come down one day and we'd have the function that night and they'd catch the train and go away.

18:30 Then there was Australian nurses, AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], canteen girls, there were English NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] girls, there were quite a lot of odd company there as we were later on at Etajima, an island just off Kure Harbour.

What sorts of entertainment did you get there?

You could go to the pictures pretty much every night of the week. A lot of the films used to tear and they'd be repairing more films

19:00 than what you would see. It was very well set up and we brought in a steam laundry, we had about a thousand people in our camp at Fukuyama and we had a full steam laundry there, the main ration supplies would come up a couple of times a week, we had butcher shops and large freezers, totally contained.

Can I ask you to talk a little bit about whether it was strange having fought the Japanese

19:30 **and knowing what they are like as fighters and then to come to Japan and seeing them being so hospitable?**

It was quite amazing because a lot of the ones that we struck, they were highly efficient soldiers, they were very determined. The ones we struck at Milne Bay, I would say they were prepared to fight until death, otherwise they wouldn't of endeavoured to walk on the strip [airfield] three times,

20:00 it was a solid wall of death they were walking into. However, at the latter stages at Balikpapan, if things were really hot they'd pull back, they weren't as determined as they had been. Atrocities was something that I hadn't dealt with, there was not one Australian taken prisoner of war taken by the Japanese at Milne Bay

20:30 or Owen Stanley [Ranges] that survived. I will just get a paper on that. Appendix 9 of the Japanese war atrocities at Milne Bay [from A report on Japanese atrocities and breaches of the rules of warfare] made by Sir William Webb, who at that time had been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland, was commissioner of war crime trials in Tokyo and supervised others. At Milne Bay there were fifty-

21:00 nine natives, male and female, captured and slaughtered and thirty-six Australian soldiers. A lot of them were tied to trees and used for bayonet practice and they were killed in the most inhumane manner. A number of the native women were staked out with signal wire, raped with a number of

21:30 condoms around them and then just split up the middle or had their breasts cut off and things of that nature. There is a report on it and it outlines most of the atrocities. About a mile past KB two soldiers with their hands tied behind their back near the Japanese headquarters, two militia men whom they had tied to a palm tree and facing inwards with his hands strapped

22:00 in front and when they bayoneted it was around the posterior and the rectum. That is the type of thing that had happened but, like I said, there was not one soldier captured in the Owen Stanley or Milne Bay that ever survived. You can never comprehend but you could possibly understand it in that the number of the people that we struck at Milne Bay were the biggest and the tallest Japanese

22:30 I ever saw anywhere, they had been fighting in China, they had been in the Rape of Nanking, they had participated in the Malayan campaign, they had been in other island campaigns, and they had never been turned around. They no doubt believed that they were invincible, they could of done what they liked and there would never be a reckoning day. Milne Bay was the first day of reckoning

23:00 and from there on it went bad. I think I missed out. After the second group that were put together to capture Milne Bay, the Japs changed their idea and decided they would attack the Aleutian Islands

23:30 and capture Midway [Island], which was the American base there. Prior to that, the Japanese naval codes had been broken and the allies then had the capacity to know exactly what their navy was doing and when the Japs decided they were to attack Midway, the Americans had an advantage, they did have quite a lot of surprise on the Japanese. Again, it was a noble battle fought solely by carrier-borne

24:00 aircraft, the wins and losses there were about even but Japan did lose another four aircraft carriers there, so that was fifty percent because they had lost one at the Coral Sea battle and they lost four there so they lost half their aircraft carrier strength.

24:30 I haven't done this very well, I've missed out lots of things I should of said.

That's okay, we can always go back …

On the 24th August 1945 the aerial reconnaissance and coast watches found that a convoy was heading southeast from Rabaul and a string of barges

25:00 were heading south from Buna Gona [?] to the north coast of New Guinea. That was reported to the RAAF at Milne Bay and at that time they were tied up with an air raid, having sorted that out they no doubt would have landed, re-armed and refueled and then went out looking for the barges and the convoy but the weather had closed in and they didn't find them. However, the next

25:30 morning the barges were found on the southwest coast of Goodenough Island. The RAAF went out with about twelve aircraft at midday and strafed and bombed and the whole thing had burnt and destroyed their stores, but more importantly, destroyed their communication equipment, which basically completely isolated that segment of the Japanese force.

26:00 Later it was found that they had gone ashore to stretch their legs, having spent a day in the barges, and packed a number of meals, and prior to going back to their barges and landing on the north coast of New Guinea on the afternoon of the 24th and walking over the range and coming into Milne Bay, so two hundred and fifty three hundred Japanese that should have been in the Milne Bay battle were totally stranded there.

26:30 They remained there until they captured a native boat, they rowed it to shore and a couple of them walked to Buna, however, by that time Milne Bay had finished and the 2/12th Battalion were sent around and cleaned them up on Goodenough Island, so that was one little aspect of it.

27:00 **Can you talk a little bit about mateship and your experiences of it?**

Friendships made in war are such, I don't think anyone that has not had that experience can really understand the depth. The old friendship that exists between men who have fought and lived, shared their tin of bully beef and all that type of thing. The morning we

27:30 buried Ted Campbell, I shed a tear or two that morning, it's a thing that just goes on. Jack [John] Capper, very good mate of mine, we met pre-war and we are still top mates, not that we see a lot of each other, it's something that goes very, very deep and it just exists. If you haven't seen a fellow for twelve months

28:00 and you just start talking to him and saying that you'd be seeing him the previous day.

When you talked about sharing a tin of bully beef are you saying that Australian soldiers were more inclined to share what they had?

They did. The Americans had a lot of problems, if they got one day's march in front of the ice-cream machine, they'd starve.

28:30 At Milne Bay our main rations was bully beef and hard army biscuits, they were very, very hard, but it was a ration that you could sustain yourself on if you got enough. During the battle at Milne Bay we were moving about quite a bit and I think I had something to eat about twelve times in twelve days, so if you got it, you ate it,

29:00 but if you didn't [you didn't]. Later on, by Balikpapan time, we were on service rations which is a tin of stuff with a bit of everything, a bit of breakfast, a bit of dinner, and you all carried your own and you had a tin of this or a bit of that or something else when you needed it. We also had tea, cigarettes, and matches. Prior to Milne Bay I always drank a lot of milk and

29:30 sugar in my tea, we ran out of both and just got used to black tea with just tea, and I've drunk it that way ever since, I just can't stand it with anything in it. Another time there we had baked beans, that would have been after the show. A ladle of baked beans for breakfast, dinner, for tea, I finished up not

liking baked beans. Another occasionally had asparagus, I must of got

30:00 the whole Tasmanian crop and they were about that long and about as thick as your finger and they were [the] toughest, you could of knitted with the stems of them. You got that for breakfast, dinner and tea, it was a little bit of a mess up. Also, too, no doubt at all, the army bought every bit of raspberry jam ever made in Australia

30:30 during the war because whenever you got jam it was raspberry.

How do you feel about raspberry jam these days?

I eat it now. I couldn't stand baked beans after the war for quite a long time but then baked beans on nice fresh bread I find now quite warm.

31:00 Lots of things at Milne Bay, I took a door off a native hut when we moved those early moves, I took it every time we moved with me. One blanket on that and I slept quite comfortably on that. When I was at Warwick camp I shot through for a few days because I knew I'd go back to New Guinea without seeing my parents. I went AWL [Absent Without Leave] and somebody answered my name on roll call in the morning and went and saw them and went back and

31:30 jumped the train from Warwick to Brisbane, from Brisbane to Glass House [Mountains], I had to get a tuppence platform ticket to get back on it at Railway Street on the way back.

How was it going to see your family under those conditions?

It must have been more traumatic for them more than for us. You could nearly say

32:00 ninety five percent good fun and five percent of intense fear. If you weren't in a battle, and if you wanted to go somewhere and do something, there was always somebody or a group of people who would go with you, that's what I missed when I got out of the army. I was only in the police force for a couple of months and I went to Roma and I was only in Roma for a couple of weeks

32:30 and I went to Surat and that's a little pub town and I was living in an eight by eight room on the veranda of the police station, I borrowed a pull cord shower from one of the graziers for a shower and a bit of canvas to hang up. During the working day it was no problem but from five o'clock when we knocked off until the next morning I didn't know it sailed at three hundred mile, it was very, very difficult. In fact, I got a letter from

33:00 a guy from the Victoria Barracks looking for battle experienced officers to go to Korea. I didn't take that one up but I very nearly did because I was so frustrated and it was such a change to what I had been used to with a group of people. One of the reasons I didn't was because most of our people who were killed in Balikpapan were the five by twos, people [with] five years' service and two years overseas,

33:30 possibly two or three campaigns, or the first campaigners; it was my second [campaign] and I got hit there, the third one could have been worse.

Can you talk about coming back to Australia, the journey back and what you found and experienced?

At the end of 1948 the occupation of Japan was reduced from a brigade of three battalions to one battalion, 65th and 66th Battalion

34:00 came home and 67th stopped there and they were reinforced with the troops from 65th and 66th that still had time to serve, and also officers, warrant officers and NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] who wanted to remain in Japan, they went across to 67th. The 67th or 3rd Battalion RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] was the first battalion committed to Korea

34:30 and actually would have spent more time there than any of the other one or two battalions. At the end of 1948 the 65th Battalion came home to Sydney with about two hundred troops after our people had gone over to the 67th. We were in camp there, [the] 65th, because 1st Battalion Australian Regiment at the end of 1948 and about the end of January, early

35:00 February, they were redesignated as one battalion RAR, the R (Royal) was added to them. The act of parliament of 1902 forbade the formation of infantry units for two reasons: they felt that (a) the government might use regular infantry battalions to uphold the beliefs

35:30 of that government, or (b) could be a military task come up that might coup and take over a government. In fact, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions were the first regular infantry units ever in [the] Australian army. Australia had been sending troops overseas from 18 something, when the first two hundred

36:00 of our troops went to the Maori wars in New Zealand, since then they have fought almost everywhere. South Africa, the uprising in China, in almost every war since then Australians have been involved in a major or minor way. In fact, I think Australian troops have spent something like fourteen or fifteen years collectively in the Middle East alone. Our deadlines and ordinations

36:30 in the seas of the world, the naval and the airmen and our ground forces, have graves from South Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Malaya, right through the tropics. Such is the glories of war.

How difficult was it or what did you experience trying to settle after

37:00 **you were discharged from the army?**

Having joined the police, so many police told me how much they enjoyed VP [Victory in the Pacific] day, well they did have a great time, but as I explained earlier, there were so many bloody clowns shooting everywhere I went into a slit trench, that was one difference. When you came home

37:30 your mothers gave you big meals but your stomachs were used to eating small meals, and for the first week or so you couldn't eat, you couldn't consume a large meal. You couldn't sleep comfortably in a soft bed, you were used to sleeping on hard things. Initially, in the army they gave you a palliasse, which is a big hessian sack, and you add straw to put in it, and you could put as much or as little

38:00 and that was quite a good mattress. But later on they issued the palliasse, they never gave you straw, and it wasn't much of a mattress. As I said, in New Guinea I just slept on a door with one blanket on top of it and I slept quite comfortably. You either sleep behind your hip or you roll over a bit further and you'd have your hip back and you sleep quite comfortably, you get accustomed to it.

38:30 Malaria again, later on they went from quinine to Atabrine and once Atabrine was introduced it became a self-inflicted wound to get malaria because it was a total suppressant. As long as you took your prescribed dose each day you could not get the effects of malaria. However, if you came home on leave or your unit came home and you were off Atabrine, there was a bit [of a] probability that you'd get a recurrence

39:00 of malaria because you had the germ in your blood stream.

So you are saying that troops on leave weren't issued with the medication?

When you came back to Australia you were off the Atabrine.

Even though they knew you'd probably have a relapse?

Yes, they would treat you anyway, wouldn't they?

You had quite a few relapses, how

39:30 **demoralizing was that for your spirit, continually getting malaria?**

It was rather debilitating, I was just on fourteen stone when I went to New Guinea and I was nineteen, and when I came home I think I was nine and a half, ten stone, and I don't think I've ever been over twelve stone since, so whether it affected my metabolism or not I don't know, but I had it many, many times.

40:00 There is benign tertian and malignant tertian, one of them, and I'm not sure which now, is the recurring, one where you get the drug into your blood stream and it just builds up and builds up and then you have an attack, you're freezing and it doesn't matter how many blankets you have on, you just can't get warm, your temperature goes up to one hundred and three or one hundred and five or something, you get over it, so it doesn't really matter, does it?

Tape 5

00:30 **Can you talk about leadership to me?**

Leadership is a difficult subject to define, in my opinion, particularly to the respect of the army. You have your Duntroon officers

01:00 who have passed their ranks at Duntroon, but not as an infantry private, infantry corporals, sergeant and so forth. The wartime people that were promoted through the ranks, I got a commissioned rank, had a better understanding of the problems

01:30 that a combat soldier has, than what RMC [Royal Military College] people do. That is the difference between directing and leading and I'm not suggesting that the RMC officers weren't highly competent people, a lot of them were highly decorated, which is only reasonable. But when it came to man-manage leadership, the knowledge

02:00 of the things that a private soldier has to endure, I think the wartime fellows came out with a better opinion with their troops than what the RMC fellows did. I think I mentioned it early, being in action with troops when they are very, very tired, they are undernourished because you don't get regular meals,

02:30 you are under stress and you've been in action, some of the Owen Stanley people were three months or

twelve weeks, almost continually in action, and you run out of tobacco. That is when you start leading, or you learn how to lead, I should say. It is something [that] comes to you and it comes to you in a flash.

03:00 The same with any occupation, some people can assimilate these things, the same with a manager and he's dogmatic, he's difficult and he's basically impossible, but another man can do the same job and have his entire staff behind him, you get army officers who are exactly the same thing. Some have the common knack and some don't. Whether I had it or not I don't know, but it's something that only others could say whether you did or you didn't.

03:30 **When was it first noted that you were being nominated as an officer?**

After Milne Bay I had fever and I went back to Milne Bay and went to Moresby, the 2IC of the battalion called me over for an interview on one occasion and said, "How do you think you will go as an officer in infantry?" and I said, "With the experience I have I think I can do it as well

04:00 as a number of others, I can do it better than others that I've served with, but probably not as well as some I've met," that was basically what it was. That [was the] end of that and some weeks or months later I went off to number four [officer cadet] course.

What sort of physical training did you do at an officers' school?

None at all.

What was the other sort of training,

04:30 **what was the classroom stuff?**

First month was weapons, knowledge of weapons, use of weapons, deployment and the capabilities of weapons. Let's say a Bren gun has a beaten pattern, all ammunition is basically the same, but rounds would land from there to there and from there to there and that is your beaten pattern,

05:00 you get a better idea of that. I served in infantry rifle companies all of my service, which meant I never had anything to do with mortars other than at OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit]. Vickers machine guns, I had fired them but I didn't have any knowledge, I had the knowledge of their capability, not their beaten pattern but

05:30 their capability, the range. In the Middle East they developed a Mark VIII ammunition for Vickers that could fire x thousands of yards, but they found that it was very hard on the barrels, things like that, well that was the thing that you covered. The next month, most of us had been sergeants for some time,

06:00 we had instructed on most weapons, other than specialist weapons, mortars, Vickers and things of that nature, Brens, Owens and Tommy guns, you could even strip the firing mechanism of them and put it back together, which we did basically blindfolded. It was only the weapons that you didn't normally use that you picked up a lot on.

06:30 I think it was terribly important that all infantrymen had a knowledge of every weapon available to infantry soldiers. If possible, some knowledge of the support weapons which you may have to use or assist in use at some time. On the tablelands at one stage, artillery OPOs [Observation Post Officers], and they are people that can say, "Up a hundred, up x degrees,

07:00 right one degree," or something, we did an exercise with them but we did it differently from the fall of your target, the target is up one hundred and right fifty, up one hundred yards and right fifty yards and from that they could correct. Whereas if you were trained in artillery you had a degree of change. The same thing with mortars, the greater they stood up the closer they dropped and that

07:30 happened at Milne Bay. A lieutenant from 101 Tank Attack, Keith Ackerman, he saw the need for an OPO and he happened to be up there and he got on the phone and he then directed the mortars and the artillery to go up one hundred or what have you. One of the mortars as it was rapid firing and a good mortar crew could get possibly fourteen or fifteen bombs in the air before they start coming down like a string of sausages.

08:00 One of them, the base plate was sinking in, which was bringing the barrel back up. One shell landed about ten feet from him in soft mud, it went well in and didn't explode. So he went up one hundred and up another OPO.

You were talking about the second stage of officer training, what was that about?

That was mapping, everything pertaining to mapping. The Australian

08:30 maps are formed on a system of triangulation. You have a base line, one from Southport to Brisbane which is accurately measured to the last inch or part thereof, and from that a bearing from that end and a bearing from this end to a mountain here will fix its position. Say this works then you fix all those by bearing, a system of triangulation that is laid out on a map.

09:00 The world being a globe and if you drew the lines on the map in accordance with that, from the equator they would be wider and as they come down they would get closer together. It would be basically impossible to get an accurate map reference so they put down on a transverse decoder projection,

09:30 that is the curves straightened out to give a flat surface with the least amount of error. It's built up on triangulation. Then you did compass traverses, you would actually build up a map and you'd have a known point here from where you started, you took a bearing and you paced x distance to it, you logged that and then you took another bearing

10:00 and so on, right around if you were doing a closed traverse, one, two, three, it might be a dozen bearings. Then, with a protractor at a scale you then drew them up onto a piece of paper. The one we did at OCTU I did it twice and I couldn't get the bloody thing to close, so I did it the reverse way around, you have to convert all your bearings from magnetic to

10:30 true, so I worked it backwards. I started where I finished and I worked back that way and doing it the opposite way and it closed, but the printing on it and it wasn't as neat as it could be. Every aspect of mapping, you did. When an officer in our company, after I got hit and the Japs were forced back, he took a patrol up the road, he was carefully watching his map

11:00 and he walked off it miles before, he didn't realise it [was wrong]. That was the necessity [of] knowledge of map reading. Even from here to there is x bearing and if you come back the same bearing it's exactly the opposite, isn't it? Working on ninety, you're coming back two-seventy, things of that nature. When we were battling there was a

11:30 margin of error, between true north and magnetic north and it varies according to different maps. When you are doing a compass traverse you have to correct your magnetic to true as you get it back into perspective. It's an interesting subject and I liked it, I had my maps reasonably accurate, but my printing was never

12:00 met a copperplate. Milne Bay, no maps, which made it very difficult for artillery, mortars and things like that because they take bearings, they'd pick distances off a map and then they set their weapons up to fire that distance on that angle, in the infantry you'd walk it anyway so it doesn't matter if it is a mile or ten miles. Then having done both

12:30 of those, they were put together as platoons and you did field electives.

Was that the third part?

Yes, that was the third month. We must of had sixty or more of us in that course, so you'd have twenty to a platoon and you'd be doing an attack or something and the controller said, "The platoon commander was killed, you are now platoon commander," so you just carried on.

13:00 They would give you a land situation with x enemy with x weapons and your syndicate then determined how it was best to attack it and how you would use your supporting fire and what angle you would attack it from. That again was very interesting, but having done a lot of that previously and in New Guinea it wasn't that

13:30 terribly difficult.

Was there anything hard about the course or did you find it fairly easy?

I had to work, the thing that made it very, very difficult for me was the coming from the tropics into such a cold sleety winter, I was very, very miserable. If you missed one element of the course you stopped for the next course and you did it again.

14:00 I made up my mind [that] if I failed one I was going back, I wasn't doing it again, because there it was so physically uncomfortable.

They were obviously training all these officers to go back up north, it seemed surprising that they trained them so far south?

It was where the schools were and where the barracks and things were. Woodside was a big camp, when 7 Div[ision] came back from the Middle East they disembarked at

14:30 Adelaide and they went to Woodside. They trained there, they then went to northern New South Wales at Glenn Innes and then from there they went to Caboolture and various places around there and from there they went to New Guinea on one of the first campaigns.

Where were the instructors from, where were they pulled from?

For all of the courses like Canungra and everywhere, the officers and NCOs were detailed from battalions.

15:00 Initially they would have been largely staffed by AIC, Australian Instruction Corp, who was a corp of professional instructors and very, very capable instructors. We had two with us in the 9th Battalion, one of them stopped with the battalion, he was RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] initially and then he was commissioned and he became adjutant and I think he finished up a full colonel by the end of the war, they were very, very capable instructors.

15:30 **You mentioned the answer you gave the 2IC when he asked you about becoming an officer and**

you said you could do better than some, did you see instances of bad leadership in the field?

Yes. Irrespective of how people were trained or what their mental ability is, they will be brilliant at something and not much good at something else. The chap I mentioned who couldn't read maps, he was a Middle East veteran with a lot of service

16:00 but he had never ever mastered map reading. He may have been commissioned in the field, I don't know, and not done a school on mapping. I had done a month's mapping at OCTU but then I also did another mapping course when we were on the tablelands. I passed it without any difficulty, I knew it, so I didn't work very hard and I never got very good marks.

16:30 If I worked hard and got a good pass then probably I would have been IO [Intelligence Officer] in Balikpapan. We used to have a few beers every night. I knew the whole principle and what you needed to know with respect to it. You felt you had incompetent people and you had extremely competent people also.

Were there any officers at that time before

17:00 **you that you really looked up to and maybe used as a mentor?**

I had served with a number of officers who I had the greatest admiration for. Another example of an officer that is not really capable was the one I mentioned there, the company commander, when we went forward on the 31st August at Milne Bay. He was told where we had to go and what we had to do there. Normally a CO

17:30 would then have an O [Operational] group and he would tell you exactly where you had to go, what was expected of you when you got there, but he never did that. So we walked a long way past from where we should of gone to, through the mud, the weaker men were falling back, they just couldn't cop it, because we were carrying extra ammunition and supplies and all that and then we would have to march back. He was one of the several officers

18:00 who left the battalion after Milne Bay finished, some of them on age, some on not doing too well. Names don't matter because most of them are dead now, they had relatives I suppose that are still alive and we shall not embarrass them.

Can you tell me about the jungle training you did in Australia before you went up there?

We did a lot of that at Canungra and a lot of that was snap-shooting with the pop up targets. You were going through just a walking track

18:30 and a target would pop up there and you'd swing and shoot and hit it to qualify. A number of the instructors there were doing a lot of shooting regularly with a 303 rifle. They could put forty-eight hits on a six inch target at fifty yards in a minute,

19:00 which is almost automatic machine gun fire, by the time I had been there some time and practiced a little bit I'd got forty two, but I never got to forty eight. You also did quite a lot of fire and movement with live ammunition and in wartime the safety angle is ten feet,

19:30 in peacetime it's possibly one hundred feet. Consequently we had a number of casualties in the training at Canungra. With a Vickers gun you change the angle of fire by tapping it, one tap right or two taps right but if they tapped left instead of right you got a couple, people fell off cliffs, we drowned a few. My brother-in-law, he was a lieutenant

20:00 at Milne Bay and he went back there as an instructor and they were firing grenades out of cup dischargers. A cup discharger is a metal object that fits on top of a 303 rifle that has been reinforced and you fire thirty-six grenades from it. One went off in the cup, the fellow who was firing it was okay, John got hit by a small piece that hit him there and crackled up through the heart, bingo;

20:30 accidents do happen. In training at Canungra there were a certain percent of casualties, accidentally shot, falling off mountains, getting drowned, it was pretty realistic training, six days, six nights a week. We as instructors got the Sunday off in between courses every

21:00 six weeks, so we finished up very fit. You know, you can get reasonably full of a night, you could start a march at five o'clock and for the first hour you thought you were going to die and after that you were fit again because we were terribly fit at that stage, doing that up and down those mountains.

Once you got to New Guinea, did you think back that the training that you got at Canungra was realistic?

Generally speaking, yes, because by the time I was at Canungra most of the instructors there were ex New Guinea veterans

21:30 and we based it on our experience in accordance with the syllabus the directed staff had set, so it was quite realistic. By the issue of the training, too, the troops went forward, we didn't take raw recruits, we took senior recruits who had done all their foot drill, we were just the final training bit before they went to the battalions. The battalions did it all again and they started them as recruits when they went there and they went right through it again.

22:00 On the battalion principle and what was expected from you, also a bombing thing within the battalion.

How long was the jungle training at Canungra?

Each course was six weeks, you have two hundred to two hundred and fifty troops for six weeks and away they'd go and then we'd get another lot in and the same thing happened over and over again.

How did that training compare to the jungle training they did up at the [Atherton] Tablelands up near the back of Cairns?

22:30 Again, it was basically the same thing. Until New Guinea started all our training was on open warfare, deployment, so you had lots of space between people. Up there you worked closer because you couldn't see any distance.

Did you fight alongside blokes that came back from the Middle East?

Yes.

How did they find the difference in geography and temperature and stuff like that?

23:00 It was a matter of change, but by virtue of their previous experience it was very, very simple. That was the difference between the AIF and militia units. In the 9th Battalion I don't think we had initially one person that had seen active service when we went into action at Milne Bay. Of every battalion that ever went into action and then went in a second time, [they] would have some reinforcement officers,

23:30 some get killed, some get promoted, others get B grades, all those go, some new officers and some of them may not of seen action before. Whereas NCOs are people who have come to the battalion as privates and they become corporals, they have become sergeants so you could say almost every NCO officer in infantry battalion at that stage of the war by the time they came back to New Guinea

24:00 were battle experienced soldiers. Even if your officer was new and green and it did happen on many, many occasions, the platoon sergeant could assist him and guide him until he got the knack of or fell into the procedure.

Is it fair to say that corporals have one of the hardest jobs?

I actually controlled more men individually than any other commander. A divisional

24:30 commander basically commands, even though he is in charge of everyone, he commands three brigade commanders. A brigade commander commands three battalion commanders, a battalion commander commands five company commanders. A company OC, he commands three lieutenants or platoon commanders, I think I took forty eight or forty nine people in at Balikpapan. You have got twelve or fourteen people in each section and you've got one corporal in charge of

25:00 twelve or fourteen people. They physically control more individual people than any other rank. I was responsible for forty eight but I had a platoon sergeant and I had a section in charge of each. A lot of people may say, "Why did you need a batman for?" A good batman was a terrific advantage to an officer in that when we came out of the jungle

25:30 I was flat out getting the troops sorted out and where the pits were to go, seeing that they had ammunition and what have you. Which meant that my batman, if he was any good, could possibly make a billy of tea. My pit was always forward on the perimeter but about the centre of it so that I could work both ways and he could start digging, lots of things like that, which you could not have done

26:00 having done so many other things in time but you needed it. During a blue, advance or an attack they used them as a running anyway, they were considered to be inferior people by some. Other people would consider that officers didn't need a servant but they had many uses other than being a servant or washing your clothes. I could of killed my batman on one occasion. We had been out on a

26:30 week's stump and then I come home, I took my clothes off and he'd wash them the next day, he put them in a bucket with a lot of soapy water. I had a few drinks that night and got out of bed and I got very, very thirsty, and we had a water of bucket as well and dipped my mug in and had half a cup before I realised which bucket it come out of.

27:00 **How was the relationship between the militia guys and the AIF?**

Very, very strained and for two reasons. The AIF had signed up to serve anywhere in the world for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter. The laws within Australia at that time were militia men could only be used in Australian territories. Further, AIF soldiers

27:30 were on five shillings a day or fifty cents a day and the militia soldiers were on eight shillings or eighty cents, that was a big contention and did lead to lots of fights prior to the troops going to the Middle East and prior to New Guinea opening. I stuck a 2/12th fellow, the Number Three Strip was totally defended the night of the attack by militia people other than the artillery,

28:00 who I think might have been AIF. This fellow later said, "When we walked across and saw the Japs dead, [I thought,] these militia boys will do me." He said that again to me many years later, it proved that we

were capable. The training was basically the same, the only difference

28:30 was the experience of the NCOs who were giving the training. If you were instructing at a training thing you would instruct by the book but when you were instructing within a battalion, if the bloody thing stops this is what you do to get it going and that is the difference, there were lots of blues. After the 39th Battalion that they worked with the 21st Brigade at the early stages of the Owen Stanley were in fact the first battalion that struck

29:00 the Japs, they established themselves. But then there were other battalions like the 53rd, got their reputation of the galloping battalion, they allegedly went through, and if they did, and I believe they did, it wouldn't of been the troops' fault, it would have been the fault of their officers. It was a bit cruel, what they did to those people, some of them had been in New Guinea for two years, they hadn't done one day of

29:30 infantry training, they had built roads and unloaded ships. One battalion which was flown from Port Moresby over to Kokoda when the Japs were just starting had no instruction on Bren guns, they took Bren guns in the airplanes with them in the original packing cases and took them out and instructed their troops on them on the flight between Port Moresby to Kokoda,

30:00 which is absolutely ridiculous. Again, [General Thomas] Blamey and MacArthur [General Douglas MacArthur] were prepared to put units like that into action because they had to, whereas the American 41st Division who was training at Rockhampton, they weren't ready to go in at that time because they weren't trained.

30:30 Most of the people who joined the Australian defence forces in the Second World War were progenies of the Depression of the 1930s. They had learnt to be self-sufficient because they had to be, they had learnt to improvise because if they hadn't they would of starved during the Depression. Even though most of them were quite young,

31:00 they had a lot of experience in life and they were survivors. Whereas the Americans were straight off the streets of New York, recruited, they had none of that type of experience, and probably had never ever gone shooting bears. Whereas I made my pocket money sitting under trees shooting flying foxes, six was the claw, crows heads were worth a shilling

31:30 and currawong six pence, so I trapped both of them and shot things and made a bit of pocket money. The Americans were not competent in doing that. During the Depression a lot of people made a living by getting scraps off rubbish dumps and making stuff from it and selling it for a few pence. The wages at the start of the war, a labourer on a farm [earnt] eight shillings a day for an eight hour a day,

32:00 nine shillings a day for a nine hour day, the money had more value, people could be raising a family on that forty-eight shillings a week, but it wouldn't buy a carton of stubbies now.

You spoke about that incident where the AIF guy said, "These fellows will do me," were there any of those other bad cases where there'd be out and out sledging?

32:30 The only one I struck there was the one I mentioned about as the 2/10th went through us, "Watch us go, you fucking chocos, we will belt those cunts with broom handles," whereas they didn't and they straggled back.

What were the padres like up there, did you see much of them?

They moved around to the various companies and when we had the three killed we had the padre

33:00 up and he buried them. We had some unusual ones in the occupation, we had one chap and he wasn't with us very long, but he brought everything possible he could from the canteen and sold it on the murky market. In the short time he had the best camera in the battalion. We had another fellow and he was a lovely fellow but he liked to have a drink. We was walking around the ocean wall where we were and [he] fell off into the sea one night.

33:30 One of the sisters from the 130 AGH [Australian General Hospital] when we were at Etajima Island, I used to quite often go with this lass, there were a team of nurses and other officers, to the club and she had a friend who was a priest

34:00 and he had liquor, and we used to go down and help him with it and things of that nature. They did a top job even though, like all of us, they had their idiosyncrasies.

Can you remember the Salvation Army blokes?

They were absolutely magnificent. You'd be slogging through mud, tired, exhausted, disillusioned and unhappy and you'd come onto one

34:30 of these fellows and he'd give you tea and a biscuit. Alan Castle [Allen Cassel?], a 2/25th fellow, he became the Salvo fellow with the 25th Battalion and he is one hell of a man, he was one of the whitest men I've ever met. When you come on them they were good, they'd give you a

35:00 cup of hot tea and half a dozen cigarettes and you were as good as new.

It must be fantastic for morale?

Yes.

What were the sorts of things that would really plummet the morale?

Deaths, for a start, particularly their mates. Even though the comradeship will continue for our lives, you

35:30 endeavoured not to get totally wrapped in any person because they got killed or whatever, you did feel a dreadful loss as I did when Campbell was killed.

How much harder is it in a battle situation, you don't have time to mourn the loss of a mate?

You can't, it's a job to be done, you get your next senior NCO and you say, "Right, you're the platoon sergeant, put so and so in charge of your section

36:00 and you're with battalion headquarters, let's go." There was no room or time for sentimental mortality during an actual battle, you could think about it afterwards, you can drink about it afterwards, but no, it's an ongoing business during the currency of a battle.

How about writing letters home and receiving mail?

Mail did come up quite regularly, normally through your Red Cross envelopes and what have you.

36:30 One letter I got in Balikpapan, I think it was, and I had no paper so I wrote a letter back on the back of the page, turned the envelope inside out and sealed it and sent it off. A letter from my mother went down with the [MV] Anshun when it was sunk at the wharf at Milne Bay and I got that and had it for quite a number of years. Then while I was in Japan they

37:00 had a new house built and got rid of a lot of rubbish, my father pulled that house to pieces where we lived eight miles out of Glass House Mountains and moved it back onto a block and rebuilt it, and a lot of that stuff got burnt at that stage so I lost that rather unusual letter that had got sunk and recovered. You wrote as often as you could. When you were in a camp, let's say, on the tablelands,

37:30 some people were terrific letter-writers, my batman, he must have had four hundred girlfriends and he wrote to each one everyday, you never finished censoring his letters.

Was that one of your jobs, to censor letters?

Yes, a platoon commander censors the letters from the troops in his platoon, then they went into the post.

How does that make you feel, reading personal letters

38:00 **from guys?**

You had so much of it, when you finished reading one you had very little knowledge of what you've just read, you scanned it more than read it. Anything as to place names, or where you'd been or where you were going, so with a razor blade you just took it out. The more you did of it the less you knew of what they were writing about. It might have been interesting to some people but it was of little interest to me because it was to their girlfriends, wives,

38:30 mothers or what have you. You just got it done and you got it away.

What about having been a platoon sergeant and then becoming a lieutenant, how did you find that difference?

I think you have a different attitude to what you had as a sergeant because you have to be slightly more removed from the troops. I

39:00 was most apprehensive about it having being choco NCO then posted as an officer to an AIF unit that had done Syria and two New Guinea shows, the Owen Stanleys and the second New Guinea show, I only did one show with the 2/25th, that was Balikpapan. You had a lot of people with a lot of experience [thinking], "Now here's a bloody choco coming in."

39:30 You had to endeavour to do it right and gain the confidence of the troops which was another thing that surprised me, just how much those troops relied on their platoon commander that had been very skeptical of you when you were in action. You had such a vast influence on them living or dying if you did something stupid. My troops would follow me

40:00 anywhere purely out of curiosity for what I was going to do next.

Did that job ever fall upon you where you had to write home to mum?

It was normally the duty of the platoon commander but in the Balikpapan one my company commander did them all for the company. The 25th Brigade had almost fifty percent of the casualties of 7 Div[ision] in the Balikpapan show.

40:30 We had seven officers wounded and ninety other ranks killed or wounded in about six weeks. In the six to seven weeks of that campaign we had nearly as many casualties in 25th Brigade in what they had in the ten years they had in Vietnam, it was slightly less, but well up towards it. The one hit on 2/31st, fifteen killed and fourteen wounded

41:00 in one hit, and a lot of them were left on the road because they believed the Japs had come up and booby trapped the night before so we were sitting up there with a string of bodies on the road still when we pulled out.

Tape 6

00:30 **I was just wondering what you could tell us about the Dayak people?**

Very little, other than they were very, very active even before we went there, they cut off the heads of a lot of Japanese. They were great assistance to a reconnaissance party that was landed and went

01:00 inland prior to the actual landing.

Did you have much contact with them at all?

No, I didn't personally, one of our battalion 2ICs and a patrol went right up the river and they had quite a lot to do with them and they were even entertained by some of the chiefs. Our company stopped at Sanga Sanga, which was

01:30 back, Samarinda was further up the river and that was pretty well where all that business was done, out from the Samarinda bit.

What did you carry in your kits as far as medical supplies were concerned?

Everyone nearly had one shell dressing, a package about so square and

02:00 about half an inch thick and that was a pad with a bandage that was fitted to it and you just wrapped it around. You always had stretcher bearers attached to a company that had some knowledge of nursing, you might say, of injuries and treatment for it, and they did carry a reasonable amount of first aid gear. They all carried a certain amount of morphine for severe wounds, like the fellow who screamed all night.

02:30 **If you had been wounded, what would be the procedure [be] as far as who would go with the stretcher bearers and that sort of thing?**

That was one problem with jungle warfare, but in the desert they could normally get them out or in that type of warfare they could get them out. I think there was only one occasion in the whole of the Balikpapan show where we had people wounded in the afternoon and we could get out because they just stopped

03:00 in the perimeters because there were always Japs and people about. You couldn't spare six or eight people to carry a wounded man out, whereas the next morning you could get native carriers up and of a night-time you needed all your men and it just was not safe to take them out through the jungle by night with a small party. Consequently the DOWs, died

03:30 of wounds, was much higher in jungle fighting than it was in the desert or in open warfare.

Can you talk a little bit about the natives who helped take the wounded out?

That was mainly in the Owen Stanleys and that campaign, where they had to be carried for long distances to an airport or to a dressing station.

04:00 At Milne Bay, the ones wounded on the strip, they could be taken back the next morning or taken back that night, others as you got up further where boats picked them up and brought ammunition and food over and took the wounded out. Whereas in the Owen Stanleys, at times the boys there carried them for days, they apparently were

04:30 magnificent in that role. It was something that I didn't have a lot to do with. Normally ANGAU officers, they ran the natives, they ran the carrying parties. The native carrying parties was what sustained the Australian forces at the early part of the Owen Stanleys.

05:00 The Japs, they brought in Chinese workers and when they got to Rabaul they were very kind to the native population, they'd take their trucks around the various villages and bring all the boys into the markets and then later in the day they'd take them back. Until they wanted them to carry us in New Guinea and they went around as they normally did, run them straight into a stockade, locked them up and put them on the ships and took [them] across to New Guinea as carriers, where they basically worked them

05:30 to death. They also took a stack of horses and mules that were used for packing stuff in. Consequently

they could maintain five thousand troops forward, the Japs, and the most we could ever maintain forward as I understand it, I was not in that campaign, which was fifteen hundred, and then only not fed very well until they got the biscuit bombers going. Then you had to make sure you had an area

06:00 where you could drop and recover. Initially on the biscuit bombing, the aerial dropping of supplies, some eighty to ninety percent was being lost. Anything of a fluid content couldn't be dropped because it would burst, say tinned potatoes like we used to get, beetroot, anything in tins that hit the ground, well the tins would burst and you'd lose the lot. They became more selective on what they were sending forward and they were becoming more expert

06:30 at it with experience, that was the first time I think anywhere any troops had been totally supplied as best could be by air.

In terms of your personal experience on the ground, were there certain times of the day that was more likely that the Japanese would attack?

You always stood two before daylight and you always stood two late in the afternoon.

07:00 Tropics are unusual, as in the evening it can be quite light and you can see almost indefinite distance but within seconds it is totally black and you can't even see your hand in front of your face. Probably the morning bit was the worst because you had to then send a patrol out to make sure your front was clear before the troops started moving about,

07:30 which they would after daylight, going to the toilet or getting a bit of breakfast or whatever was available, so you had to make sure that that was clear. Either that or you stopped in your pit and had your feed there, or went back out to the toilet or wherever.

How many men would you send out to clear an area?

Depending on the width of your front, you'd probably send out about a section, but they'd

08:00 cover the whole of your actual front for that platoon to such a distance. Depending on the thickness of the jungle, fifteen or hundred yards, depending on the nature of the country you were in. If you are in open country and you could see some distance, well you didn't send anyone out because you would have been able to see them. Officers and NCOs, particularly in the first New Guinea campaigns, if you turned your head

08:30 to given an order you were the first one shot. So everybody took rank down but if you were giving an order to someone on your right, left, well, you just gave it looking straight ahead and move up on the right or move up on the left or fall back on the left or whatever, close up or spread out, but you never looked and said it. As I mentioned earlier, the fellow who was giving an order and the bullet went through his mouth and knocked a tooth out and came out through his cheek and he continued on his merry way,

09:00 he was a little upset.

Is that something that you learn fairly quickly, not to do that?

You had to, otherwise you didn't need to know, particularly in the Owen Stanleys, a lot of officers and NCOs got knocked off there very, very quickly.

Did you have any experience or can you tell us anything that you know about the tunnels that the Japanese had?

09:30 No, not in that part of it, but having served in Japan later they did an extra ordinary amount of tunnelling, where we in Australia as engineers might send a road around a hill or over it by cutting, they just went straight through. In fact, between Moji and Shimonoseki at the bottom end of Japan the railway runs under

10:00 the sea between those two islands, they take the steam locomotives off and put electric ones on and you go down under the sea and come up the other side. They did an awful lot of tunnelling.

That's really interesting in the way that you said that, I was just wondering if there were other things when you got to Japan, either about the culture or what you saw, that then helped you make sense of the way that the Japanese fought in the jungle?

They were totally loyal to the Emperor,

10:30 the Emperor was basically God and when the Emperor said, "You will stop fighting," they stopped fighting, even though we did have people killed after the cessation of hostilities. That was because the Jap troops were not aware that hostilities had ceased and we had had a number killed and wounded after that, until all the Japs got to know,

11:00 and [were] brought in and told that, "She's over, chaps." That was it, the old warrior thing of the Japanese. Yet there are differences to it, I have a book somewhere written by a Japanese who was taken a prisoner of war in the Owen Stanleys and according to the book he has written, he wanted the Australians to kill him, he didn't want to live

11:30 and what have you and he finished up down at Cowra. On the night of the breakout there he took no real active part in it, he was one of the last out of the gate and as soon as he got out of the gate he went into a gutter and stopped there all night and the first thing the next day he was waving his dirty white handkerchief, so he wasn't really keen on getting killed at that stage. It is interesting the way

12:00 he said one thing and then did something else.

Can you tell me about the trenches that the Australians had compared to the Japanese, were they different in terms of how you were dug in?

We normally dug a trench about so wide and to a depth where you could get your head down under the top of it, if you dug a real deep one and it

12:30 wasn't a trench to fight from, it was a trench to hide in, that was the attitude we took. The Japanese, I've read stuff on Bougainville where they did an attack and our people never really heard any digging all night but the next morning there were Jap trenches everywhere in front of them, so they must of went down very carefully. They did tunnel very, very well and in Vietnam, that's how they beat the French, wasn't it?

13:00 They tunnelled under there and come up into there, fought, and them tunnels went for miles and miles in Vietnam.

You've spoken about the orang-utan giving you guys a fright and vice versa, were there any other instances where the jungle or the wildlife … ?

The monkeys were a damn nuisance and also an assistance, depending on which way you looked at it.

13:30 Going somewhere and a group of monkeys came through the trees above you and if you stopped there they'd scream and it was obvious to you. Obvious to anyone that something different was there but the same thing if the Japs were coming in on you, the monkeys of various sizes and types, and they would scream and jump about and make a hell of a commotion so you knew that something was on, so they were both

14:00 derogatory and an assistance at times. After you had been in action against the Japanese for a while, if you were going forward and you came to an area where the Japs were or had recently been, you could smell them. I suppose they could do the same with us because after you wear the same clothes for two or three weeks and you started digging a trench and after you were digging for a while, you'd get out and have a breath of fresh air because you couldn't stand

14:30 your own body odour, it was shocking. Whenever you could and if you came to a river, you wash up as far as possible and down as far as possible and cleaned up as best as you could, but you never had your boots off, for weeks at a time, you were permanently wet.

How big a problem were snakes or leeches or creepy crawlies?

We had not real problem with that but at the Owen Stanleys and places like [that] we [had] it to some degree.

15:00 There was a little mite that gave you scrub typhus and some people died from scrub typhus and that was carried by a small parasite, a tick, a little bit of a fellow, a lot of people died from it. Those that did survive, they never ever properly regained health. In fact, one of our 2/25th fellows

15:30 was ringing me yesterday on another matter and he mentioned that a couple of our people had been in hospital and one had had typhus that apparently affects your liver and having had typhus and liquor, it doesn't mix, they both give you liver problems and one excels the other. This fellow had an operation and now he's going back home today.

16:00 **Was there anything like the malaria medicine that they could give you for scrub typhus?**

No, but there would be a treatment for it, but not an antidote as we had for malaria such as quinine or Atabrine and later on heparin, which was an improvement on Atabrine. You could tell the people who were on the Atabrine, when they came back to Australia they were all quite yellow

16:30 from the effects of it.

Did you try both medications?

At Milne Bay we had quinine and by the time I went to the 2/25th in 1944 the quinine was the treatment and when you first went on it you had four a day for three or four days and then one every day. It was

17:00 a suppressant and as long as you took your daily dose it suppressed it and you couldn't get malaria. If you got malaria you were charged with a self-inflicted wound because you were medically proven that you couldn't get it if you took your daily dose, if you didn't take it, you got it, so you were guilty of a self-inflicted wound.

How unpleasant of a medication was it to take?

The liquid quinine which they gave you in hospital as a treatment

17:30 was the worst crap that I have ever had. In fact, it was that bad that every time they gave you a dose they gave you a lolly after it, it was bitter, even the tablets. They were quite bitter but you could wash them down with a bit of water and you didn't really get the taste to an extent, that stuff was shocking.

18:00 **How good was the line of communication when you were in battle?**

The little walkie talkies on a level ground or from hill top to hill top [were] quite good, but if one was there and one was here, you couldn't hear a thing. In fact, the best conversation that I ever heard two people have on them,

18:30 unbeknown to each other they were standing either side of a bush and their aerials were like that. They weren't very good, the sets that the companies had, they were very, very ordinary and then as you got up to the bigger sets, they worked quite well. When the Japs landed at Milne Bay a section of our sigs [signalmen] went across to

19:00 the south arm and put in a watching station there and they took x wireless with them and couldn't get back to headquarters with it. More sigs came over and brought a better set and they couldn't get New Guinea force headquarters on that. Then the Milne force sigs came over themselves with still a better set and that was when the first time

19:30 they could communicate from that listening post back to force headquarters. The radio equipment at that stage was very average. It has improved drastically because when I retired Dot [Mr McCosker's wife] and I drove to Cape York and we lost our muffler going up and I had spoken to one of the superintendents in Cairns prior to leaving and

20:00 he said, "If you have any trouble, contact me if you need any parts, I'll get them to air freight them up and you can fix it up when you come back." So I saw the local police and said, this is the problem, and the fellow called Cairns on his hand held and I just had a conversation as though we were just talking here, that is the improvement. On emergency squad we had safe radio, you set all your radios to

20:30 x so they were all on the same wave-lengths, you worked through a base station. You spoke into it clear and it went through the air scrambled and come out the other end right. It use to drive the newspapers mad when we had the seeds and they couldn't find us, that was when I was a detective many years later, of course. The radio equipment has improved vastly. Prior to the Commonwealth Games

21:00 our Chief CTO, Chief Technical Officer, had been to Europe and America to look at equipment and when he came back and we completely revised the whole communication system in the police to where I think we had fifty-two separate channels, each venue had their own channel. The main arena having its own direct channel

21:30 on, headquarters had another channel to control the police in that area, we also set up a couple of new operational rooms. Irrespective of what's on, the normal police activity goes on, people get murdered, there's domestics, there's car accidents, so that part of the police must continue as normal

22:00 and all the other [things] must be handled by another operation room. I had quite a knowledge of that and I was in control of the bomb control centre during the Commonwealth Games with about seventy state police, seventy federal police. All of the army explosive dogs and their handlers and a whole team of the all senior EOD, Explosive Ordnance

22:30 Disposal, army people. I had one servicing major and one ex-army major who had just recently finished as duty officers, I had two federal agents in a similar position. I had one senior sergeant and a CTO from the Queensland force as six chief commanders, as it were, it was quite a busy period.

You've talked a little bit about leadership,

23:00 **I was just wondering if you could talk about whether there is a fine line with getting on well with the men but still having a bit of an arm's length?**

You had to, particularly as an officer. As an NCO, Non Commissioned Officer, you can be pretty close to your troops, but officers had to be a bit more removed. Once they got to trust you it became a relatively simple thing but at the same time

23:30 there are some troops that are fractious, if you expect them to work hard and they reckon you are a bastard, you probably are. There is that balance that you have to strike, you have to know the personalities of these people. I actually did that as a detective, I pounded to their idiosyncrasies and they will do anything, in other words, you have to lead them by using

24:00 their technique on them.

Is that something you learn in the field?

If you are going to be in those positions you have to. I think you start learning as a corporal and as you go up you control more and more men as a group, you do learn it. Some people, every person learns it slightly differently so you apply it slightly differently depending on your own personality or your ability

or lack thereof.

24:30 **When you did get reinforcements, was there any special thing that you did to make them feel part of the unit?**

You did my best to interrogate them. A group of reinforcements would come to a company, x number would go to each platoon and

25:00 in the platoon, x number would go to one or two sections, so you never had five or six new fellows in one section, you had some of each in the sections. A platoon has three sections, so within a platoon you have three sections and in a company you have nine sections. Whatever number you got was split between or whoever needed them plus even up, if you had to move some of the experienced fellows

25:30 from one section to another, even though they didn't like that, they liked their own little groups and systems working.

You spoke a little bit before about how some men said, "I'm going to die," and sometimes they did, how superstitious were some soldiers, did you see any instances?

The one of Snowy, where he saw the card laying faced down where he said, "If that is the ace of spades we will go to Borneo and I will get killed,"

26:00 we went to Borneo and he got killed. Not a lot of superstition really.

Any rituals that certain people did before they went out?

I think I saw at least three or four cases where a person was hit and they said, "I am going to die," and they did, I think a lot of it is the will to live. I think I mentioned the two fellows who got hit one night, one late one afternoon and one fellow screaming out,

26:30 "I'll be back to have another go at you bastards," and the other fellow, "I'm going to die." Skinny Cochrane was a skinny man and he was our stretcher bearer and he was dying. The doctor came in one morning and had a look and said, "God, Cochrane, you have improved overnight." He was right, the other fellow who had the operation should of lived but he got up and walked and tore everything apart and died as he said he was going to. I saw at least two or

27:00 three occasions where a person said, "I'm going to die," and they invariably did. Whether other officers had the same experiences I don't know but I certainly saw those examples of it. I suppose there are some that said, "I'm going to die," and didn't, in spite of themselves.

Being in such difficult physical conditions, how did you maintain your strength mentally, where does that come from?

27:30 I think from the fact that you were responsible, that was the thing that worried me at Milne Bay, when my platoon commander was taken away and I was a nineteen year old sergeant, I was in charge of about thirty or forty people. Not what we are going to do but how well am I going to do it? Whether I did well or not I don't know but I did my incompetent best on the instructions that I was given. However, I was sent to an officer's course a few months later,

28:00 so I must have done something right.

Is there any aspect of being responsible for other people that maybe takes away fear from yourself?

Most fear was when you were waiting for something to happen. When something was happening you never had time, you were either going to live or die. If you lived there was no need to worry

28:30 and if you died you couldn't worry . You were either going to get wounded or not, if you didn't get wounded you had no wound to worry about. If you did and got wounded you were either going to live or die so that was the way that it was. You had to accept your responsibility and live for a minute, or the next hour or the next day, take it as it comes.

You've spoken about some people who were fatalists, did you feel

29:00 **optimistic that you'd get home or was it just living day by day kind of thing?**

I hoped that I would. I never really had expectancy in death, even though we all came reasonably close to it. Silly things that happened would break the tension quite a lot. A number of us got into an ambush

29:30 and got separated, it's dark, it's the middle of the night, it's raining like hell and one of the fellows apparently had a comb and he must of combed his hair and said, "Here Frank, comb your hair, what if your sheila could see what you look [like] now?" That was bloody nonsense but it broke the tension and those were the things. Like the orang-utan, that breaks the tension that occurs. With the official history with the 2/25th Battalion,

30:00 one of our people wrote it and he maintained that he was too sick and I basically took it to publication and got it published and made about fifteen thousand dollars to the association. That was the thing that he missed, as Peter Brune, who you may know of, he has written various military histories, The Spell

Broken, and a number of those. I sent various people a copy to see if we could get it published

30:30 and he wrote back and said, “This is ghost writing from the battalion war diary,” and it was, but he never interviewed enough people. Peter Brune, when he wrote The Spell Broken, that was Milne Bay and the 18th Brigade at Buna Gona and Sanananda and he interview six hundred people from the Milne force. He got the humour, he got the dialects, he got the picture. Whereas our fellow

31:00 has not got the humanities in our book which could of done with more humanities, that’s the difference.

Can you share amusing stories like that, that broke the tension?

There was always something silly happening. I told you about the fellow spinning around like a top and the troops and the carriers taking off down the road. There was always something happening

31:30 which broke the tension.

What about the Americans, did they sort of have a sense of humour the way that the Aussies did?

No, and they had a very, very different sense of humour and I will give you an example of that. Dot and I did a tour of American two or three years ago and we were standing and looking down at the Canyon and it’s really a grand sight and the tour director was standing

32:00 next to me and I said, “That’s a magnificent sight,” and he said, “Yes, it surely is,” and I said, “Do you know that we have rabbits in Australia that dig holes like this every night?” He snorted and walked away, saying, “Get out, twerp.” The thing that we noticed on that trip was [that] the Americans like to tell stories but they didn’t like the tourists to tell stories because they

32:30 wanted to control the whole thing, but I fixed him with my rabbits.

What were your thoughts or feelings when you found out you were going to Japan?

I really had very little to come home for because we were growing pineapples and at the time, Tom, one brother and myself and my father and another brother who was slightly retarded ran the farm but it was the father, Tom and I

33:00 who were the main workers on it. Len could do a day’s work but had to be supervised and directed to some extent. Pineapples you have got to keep them chipped, keep the grass out of them and that was a very bad winter. We got grass in the plantation and if you get a heavy frost everything gets frost burnt. Four thousand pounds is not a lot of money today, it was a bloody fortune then.

33:30 The whole crop by virtue of the plantation being dirty, grass and what have you in it and dew on it, the whole crop had bad frost and burnt the plants which would of taken some years to have come good. The old father knew that he couldn’t get it going on his own so he gave the land back to the government and that’s when he moved the house into Glass House Mountains. He worked in saw mills after that until he was quite an old

34:00 man but he gave away farming at that stage. So basically I had nothing to come home for. The reason I went to Japan was (a) that reason and (b) we had our ups and downs during the war, we had been a bit frightened here and there and ninety five percent good fun and five percent intense fear and I thought, “I might as well do this.” So up we went and

34:30 it was quite an experience and you will never see Japan again as we saw it then because Dot and I went back in 1975, it has completely changed. At the time of the occupation you couldn’t drive a truck from Kure to Tokyo, because you couldn’t get around the corners in the little villages, there were no roads connecting them because everything was done by water.

35:00 There were various advantages, twenty-four ounce bottles of Jap beer was thruppence [three pence], that’s five cents.

What was the Jap beer like?

The Kirin and another one is a nice beer, a reasonably light beer, quite a nice beer. Through the canteens for the officers and sergeants you could buy spirits for about four and six a bottle and there was no excise on anything.

35:30 Packets of fifty English cigarettes, Blue Caps, and things, they were six pence which is five cents, so everything was quite cheap. Japan had changed so much. Any city that had been bombed, you went back up years later, you could tell that they had been bombed and they were modern cities. Hiroshima

36:00 was a magnificent city, completely rebuilt. Assembly factories working twenty-four hours a day turning out thousands of cars the centre street about two chain wide running right through with flower boxes and all that type of thing, totally different from when we were there.

Can you describe what you saw and how you felt when you arrived in Japan and you just saw the devastation?

36:30 It shook one up a bit when we saw Hiroshima because there was basically nothing left there other than the concrete frames of buildings. I have somewhere a part of the American order for the invasion of Japan and with it is also the Japanese defence plan. The Americans were

37:00 planning on one thousand casualties an hour, they anticipated they'd have a million casualties had they gone into Japan. We anticipated that, had it come to that, we would have been part of it even though it's not shown in the American order. Probably one good thing that Blamey did, and I don't know if he did too many good things,

37:30 MacArthur wanted to use the 3 AIF Division, 6th, 7th and 9th, as spare heads for some of his island-hopping things in the Pacific war before Etajima and some of those places. Blamey said, "No, you can use them as you wish, but as a corp," in other words, the three divisions in one bash, otherwise our divisions would have been the first people ashore

38:00 in those various landings, and we would of copped a hell of a bashing.

How long were you in Japan for?

I arrived up there early 1946 and I came back later 1948, I came home at the end of 1946 on leave and went back up for another two years, so I was up there just under three years.

Can you talk about the changes you saw in those three years?

Not a great deal of changes in those three years

38:30 when they were getting industries going and things like that. The difference between when I went home in 1948 and when I went back in 1975, it was just a total change. The place where we were stationed at the later stages of the war, the Americans were bomb casing on a certain day, "We will bomb, bomb, bomb x places,"

39:00 consequently there were very few casualties. The whole town was destroyed, Fukuyama when we went, we didn't stop there, but when we went back through there on the train in 1975 there was only one thing that I recognized, a Japanese shrine over on that side of the railway line, the rest had just been just shambles or rebuilt smaller huts while we were there. When we were there [in 1975] it was high rises and you

39:30 recognized basically nothing because it was so changed. The railway station at Hiroshima, it was just a big old wooden station when we were there but when we went back it was a magnificent large station and trains going through on several levels. We went down there a lot. After we stopped collecting weapons, thousands

40:00 of Koreans in Japan were given the option of taking Japanese nationality and remaining there or being repatriated to Korea. The Yanks were collecting them up in the northern areas of Japan and bringing train loads down to the BCOF area and put a guard of two armed men per carriage, we would have an officer and a sergeant on the train and then we'd take them to the

40:30 southern island where they were repatriated back to Korea. That's where you went from Moji to Shimonoseki to under the sea. We had some fun down there because the first Americans that went down there paid too much for their Japanese beer. When the marines moved in they did an audit and found the

41:00 Japs had charged them too much for the beer. From then on all the American clubs, officers, NCOs and troops had free beer. We would take a guard of, say, ten carriages, twenty-two troops down and we'd get in at nine o'clock in the morning and they would park our railway coach in the middle of the three tracks at the railway station, we could do what we liked during the day time.

41:30 Then we would board the train about nine o'clock to start the seventeen hours back, you could imagine Australian troops drinking free beer all day, the fun they had.

Tape 7

You were going to tell us about the Koreans?

A part of our duty was the escorting of train loads of Koreans being repatriated back to Korea. Japan gave them the option of remaining in Japan and taking Japanese nationality or being repatriated back to Korea. A lot of them decided, had they remained

01:00 in Japan they would be second-class citizens, so they elected to go back. The American forces that were collecting them up in the north of Japan, and we were collecting them up in our area and they were being loaded onto trains that the Americans would bring them to the BCOF area and we would then put an officer or sergeant and two armed soldiers to each carriage, supervised by an officer and a sergeant. Escort them down to where

01:30 they were repatriated back to Korea. When the American troops who went in there initially, they apparently paid too much for their beer, when the marines moved in they did an audit and found that they had been overcharged and from then on free beer was the order of the day in all messes and clubs. I took a guard down on one occasion and we got in and cleared the train at about eight am

02:00 and we weren't leaving until nine o'clock that night. They were quite generous, normally some of their officers would take you on trips around the area and entertained you and you met quite a lot of people and you had meals at their clubs. I had just had an evening meal at an officers' mess and they brought a Provo [Provost, Military Police] marshal in and he had a problem. Our troops,

02:30 having drank copious quantities of free beer and flogged a Provo and I think they might of taken his pistol. They had retreated to the railway station and we went up there and there were armed Provos on both platforms. My bodies are all in the carriage with loaded Owen guns and Bren guns pointing out on either side and thank God no one fired a shot. I said to the Provo marshal,

03:00 "I'll fix this," and he said, "Don't go over there, those bastards will shoot you." I said, "It will be alright." So I called out to them and went over and got them to pull in their weapons and unload them and found the pistol and returned it to the Provo and said, "I think we can settle this, if you can take your troops away mine will be stopping here because they are going out, so the incident is finished," and that was how it finished but it could have been a tragedy. Another occasion, we didn't have an officer

03:30 with a thing and they got back as far as the New Zealand area, the New Zealanders locked a lot up. That hurt me because I had captured a good Dutch primus in Borneo which we used on the train to boil the billies to make cups of tea. Australian steam engines, you get out, water, you could make tea at every station, but you can't do that with the Japanese, but I never ever got my promos back from those New Zealanders.

04:00 That was the kind of thing that occurred and it could have been a tragedy, and it got a little worse than it was but that was the free beer, that was the cause of it.

You said before how the Japanese never showed any animosity towards the allied forces, do you know if any of the Australians in Japan had any animosity towards the Japanese?

I sat on one general court martial when one of my sergeants, and I had told the battalion not to take [him]

04:30 because he was the clown, he got mixed up in the murky black market and was having a bit of a difficulty with one Jap, so he shot him with a pistol and killed him. I sat on the court martial to that, in any deals there can be animosities and that was one. This fellow should never of gone to Japan, he was convicted of manslaughter

05:00 and sent back to Australia for a final decision and I never ever heard from him again, that young fellow.

You also mentioned how during battles the Japs would sometimes lie still on the ground and then jump up and that was looked after. Presumably anybody on the ground would get another couple of rounds put in them on the way through, would they?

When that happened, in a very short time it was firmly established that everyone on the ground

05:30 was dead, one way or another.

Were you fighting with fixed bayonets all that time in New Guinea?

No, I never took part in any bayonet charge at all. The night at Gama River where our company commander mucked us about and took us and brought us back, when our people went into the 2/12th perimeter they assisted by priming grenades, carting

06:00 ammunition, looking after the wounded and things like that. The OC of the 2/12th Battalion that was in charge of that perimeter had said, "Fixed bayonets, but do not fire in any direction," which you couldn't do because you were totally within a perimeter of men. The only thing that you would hit would be your other battalion soldiers. They did fixed bayonets and just

06:30 laid in case of a breakthrough into the perimeter.

I was just going to ask you also about, did you become familiar with the report of enemy weapons?

Yes. Enemy aircraft, you could pick the different beat of their engine without any difficulty after you had heard it. The Jap engine wasn't just a straight noise it was a woom, woom, kind of a noise. The Japanese

07:00 ammunition had a different sound to ours, a lot of it was .223, a smaller calibre, and then their bigger one was pretty well the same calibre as a 303, but it was [an] indented rim but you could still pick the difference of the different weapons. You had no difficulty in identifying enemy fire.

Did any blokes pick up any captured enemy weapons and give them a go?

We did pick up

07:30 a lot of weapons at times. When the 2/12th were overrun, Jack Capper, a platoon sergeant from one of our other platoons, he did a patrol back up to KB Mission and picked up a stack of Bren guns and Tommy guns that the 2/10th had left behind. At the night of the attack, normally you had three Bren guns to a platoon

08:00 and six Tommy guns to a section. He must have had eight or nine Brens in his platoon the night of the Jap attack, zappo.

Did you ever see any of the entertainment units that were about?

We had a couple of the American ones at Milne Bay. There was the man with a big mouth, he would be dead about one hundred years now, Joey Brown or someone,

08:30 I've forgot his name now. There were several American entertainers who came in, there were, as in Japan we had the Tivoli Girls, we had quite a number of entertainment groups come through there. There was a famous Australian pianist woman and she was absolutely magnificent, I knew her name for many years and she had an accompanist and they did a tour of Japan, it was absolutely terrific. We did like the Tivoli Girls better.

09:00 **Were they actually girls?**

Yes.

We have heard from a few fellows where they had seen a few women shows and they weren't women at all.

The Tivoli Girls were, Ronny Elliot was one of them who came up, she was quite a big woman and she did very, very well in the American Broadway for many years. The Craig sisters, and they were little blondes, singers and dancers and they were quite good, as were all the concert parties.

09:30 **How did you find your gear and equipment handling the conditions of New Guinea?**

It was adequate, you only carried as little as you possibly could. Your clothing was what you stood up in, you normally carried your small haversack, wore a couple of grenades and ammunition and your two pound fruit billy.

Did your clothes practically start disintegrating and falling off you?

Yes,

10:00 you never carried extra stuff. At one stage if you carried three socks, you washed on every second week. When our shirt rotted off they got one up for you, you never carried anything and that's the way that it went.

On the officers course was that only infantry blokes?

No, there were other forces there as well. From there on being commissioned people

10:30 rarely went back to their own unit unless your CO particularly asked for you. I only know of two that did, Stan Walsh, he was 2/15th, his CO asked for him back, and Sanders, the big fellow from the 2/48th, and they asked for him back and got him, other than that you never went back to your own unit. Because of the transition from sergeant or warrant officer to commissioned rank with a different aspect to the troops so they kept you away

11:00 from your own troops.

Did you see many Aboriginal soldiers in the course of your career?

There were a few but not a great number, there were a few with a dash of colour, other than Charlie Meni, an original of the 2/31st Battalion, right through I don't think I saw one other full blood. Charlie use to get three weeks more leave than us because it took him that long to get back to the gulf where he lived.

11:30 He was a terrific bloke and he soldiered on after the war and became a provo in Malaya with a rank of corporal and he had won an MM [Military Medal] during the war. When his unit came back from Malaya he brought a big Buick with him and used to drive around Brisbane in his Buick, but he died a few years ago, he was a very capable soldier and a very humane and a sensible person.

12:00 **What happened at the end of your three years in Japan?**

I came home and at that stage RMC was taking over everything, there was very little promotion in BCOF because the Australian army was something like sixty battalions. The RMC, the Royal Military College, was in each of them and when a vacancy came up

12:30 they brought an RMC fellow in on rank, I was six years on rank as a lieutenant, I was a senior lieutenant of a battalion and had been for some time when I left. I had an uncle in the police and when I came home for leave at the end of 1946 he suggested [that] if I want out he could get me out then to join the police, and I said, "No, I've entered a verbal contract to go back for another two years." I did put an application [in] and got a letter back from

13:00 the Queensland police when I got out [of] the army to contact them and came home at the end of 1948 and was in Sydney for some time. About April or May in 1949 I contacted the police and I at that stage decided to leave because there was no indication of any further war or overseas service, in other words you'd be doing ceremonials and very little else.

13:30 I contacted the police and got an interim discharge one Monday and went into the depot the following Monday and started training.

Where did you think that initial interest came to joining the police, was it purely from your uncle or maybe the work you were doing in Japan?

Other than being a reasonably well qualified soldier I was not qualified for anything else other than a farmer, milking cows or something of that nature.

14:00 We weren't paid much money, I had accumulated leave, I still got leave for a few months after I had join the police, thank God for that because otherwise I would of died from thirst, like American wolves.

What sort of training did you have to do in the police force, what was the basic training there?

You had to study quite a lot. There was quite a thick book of instructions and you had to rewrite one of those for yourself.

14:30 You were instructed on law, you were instructed on traffic, they had instructors there similar to what you have now at a recruit training depot when the young police recruits come in. The main difference is I would not get into the police now, any person going to the police must have a degree of some kind. I don't know if that is a good thing because if you educate an idiot what have you got? They became a bloody idiot, and not suggesting

15:00 that they are. I can see a disadvantage in children doing senior, going straight to university and getting a degree in something, be it in civil law or management or anything else and going straight into the police and become very powerful officials at about nineteen and never having worked in any aspect of civilian life. Never driven a spike in a railway, or physically working for a living.

15:30 I think it has been the power over recent years where that system has been in, not suggesting that a lot of police are not very, very competent people today, either. I think it is a disadvantage not to have worked with people and done other things.

Did you come across any ex-army blokes in the force?

There was a big intake of police at the end of 1948, from 1945 on.

16:00 A lot of people without any trades went in, some intakes were pretty well all ex-servicemen, consequently there were a lot of ex-servicemen in the job when I went in two or three years later.

How did you find your army career helped you in your police career?

I don't think it did initially, other than the experience in writing reports,

16:30 supervision and things of that nature, and being a little older, I was just on twenty six when I went into the police. Whereas a lot of the others were nineteen and a lot of them country people with a very narrow experience in life. The only exam I ever topped was the entrance exam for the police, because of my experience in life that I had, those ten years in the university of hard knocks.

17:00 **How did you go from being a lieutenant in the Australian army to being a constable in the police?**

Derogatory, I think I was on fifty five shillings today when I got out of the army and as a policeman it was a lot less. Therefore I was very pleased whilst I was doing my training to get my police pay and army pay, which I didn't get weekly because I took it in bulk, but I had it for the next three months or so.

Before you went to Japan

17:30 **did you actually come home at any stage?**

No.

Or was it straight there?

It would have been much better if we had, because we came back from Balikpapan to Morotai in late October and we sat there until February or March because we just couldn't get ships to move. We could have very easily gone home on leave, but the only problem was they were looking for ships to bring people home who had to come home, so we sat there.

18:00 We started recruit training, of all things, every troop we had at that stage was battle experienced. I used to take my fellows on a march and we used to sit in the shade in the jungle and talk. There was an incident there, too, that would be worth reporting, I think. Some of our people raided the bulk beer store and I thought for years and years they had dug a hole under the wall.

18:30 There, beer in those days came in a wooden crate with four dozen, I think they got eleven or twelve of those. It wasn't until recent years that I ascertained that when they went to the canteen, the guard was asleep, they aimed an American 45 [gun] to the head and said, "Don't wake up," and drove a truck in and loaded it with the crates and took it

19:00 down to the jungle and hid it, and until it was gone they drunk hot beer. The provos were flying around like blowflies.

Hot beer? What about jungle juice, did you come across the jungle juice?

Yes and it was very pleasant. It was made on the tablelands and it was made in New Guinea.

19:30 In New Guinea they used to take the top off a green coconut and you could put raisins, rice and various things and then you corked it up and then you strained it out. It was very pleasant, you could be playing cards and drinking some of this stuff and all of a sudden it would sneak up and hit you. One of another company's officers was expecting his first child and he made a lot of this and they

20:00 said, "Baby has arrived," and he got onto this stuff, he was as mad as a bloody snake for three or four days. They made it on the tablelands and what they did there was to use rice and apricots and fermented it and then distilled it. I was on as a duty officer one night and I went over and they had about that much in

20:30 a Worcestershire sauce bottle, pure white spirit, "Here lieutenant, try this," I tried one and it nearly blew my bloody head off, half a cup, I got drunk on that much. The New Guinea jungle juice was quite a pleasant drink, but God it had a kick when it caught up with you. There was no effect, no effect and then bang. Milne Bay because a very

21:00 large submarine base, naval base, stores base, the American negroes [African Americans] there were draining the alcohol off torpedoes and drinking it, it had a kick, I understand. The night the Anshun was sunk, we were back up the road from it and one of the American negroes had been unloading a ship and he came through us and he was going,

21:30 somebody called out to him, "Where are you going?" with the view of stopping him and letting him into a slit trench and he said, "I don't know where's I going but I sure am is gone fast."

How was the difference that you saw between the white Americans and the black Americans?

The white Americans at that stage had basically no time for black Americans. In Brisbane the

22:00 negro Americans were not allowed the city side of Victoria Bridge. Two of them were found in a lane way just between North Quay and George Street and there was a dance hall in there and they were found one night, the provos just shot them, boom, boom, end of story. The aircraft before the start of the second New Guinea campaign,

22:30 the 7th Div[ision] was being flown over the range from Port Moresby to Nadzab. The assembly area for the troops was at the end of the runway, the Liberator [aircraft] was taking off and had apparently been [(UNCLEAR)], had enough power to take off but not enough power to lift over the trees, it hit the trees and crashed into the 2/33rd Battalion who were waiting in trucks

23:00 to go out for transport. I think there were ninety killed and one hundred and thirty casualties. True or not, I don't know, but it was stated to have been an investigation, the negro was found that it was probably that cotton wool had been placed in some of the jets which gave it power to lift but not to climb away.

23:30 The story was that the negro crew were summarily tried and shot, they were cheap labour in those days. By God, one thing those people could do was drive, there were some great drivers amongst the American negroes. Another thing that we struck at Milne Bay which might not be commonly known, we all had Thomson submachine guns at that stage, which were not a satisfactory weapon for

24:00 jungle warfare with the mud. We got a batch of ammunition and a number of rounds were loaded with sawdust. The cap would send the projectile just a little way up the barrel, so you had to try and knock it out with a rod or get it back to armour and you were out of business.

Someone at the ammunition factory was sabotaging?

Yes.

Where was this ammo [ammunition] from?

It was all American ammo at that stage, 455.

24:30 **Did you get much gear from the Americans?**

We couldn't afford the war without it. We had Wirraways [aircraft] who went up gallantly at the war against Spitfires [British aircraft], they were no match for them and they were just shot, they were very, very brave men to have even tried it. The Thomson machine gun was the only weapon

25:00 in infantry that we got from them. There were a lot of other weapons and a lot of other things. They supplied weapons, aircraft and a lot of things of that nature and that was Lend Lease and we repaid a lot of that by the manufacture of … When I was on military government in Japan and I was eating at the American mess you could get tinned turkey that was made in Australia

25:30 which we never saw in the army service but they were getting it and it was part of Lend Lease [program devised to overcome shortages in goods and materials]. Another part of Lend Lease was the war manufactured trucks or anything would not go back to America, it would ruin the industry. At Morotai when we were waiting there to go to Japan, brand new trucks and bulldozers were being loaded onto barges and taken out to deep water and just driven off.

26:00 Brand new typewriters still in their grease and packing boxes dumped out to sea and so all the stores were going. When we went back we had some crook tents and there was a big American camp down the road and most of them had left. I went down there one night with a truck to get some tents and every time we moved somebody asked us what we were doing, so I thought this was no good and we went home. We went back ten o'clock the next morning and unloaded our troops and I said, "That one, that one, that one," we pulled the lot down and put them in the truck and drove out, and nobody asked us a question. We got good tents,

26:30 because we only picked the good ones.

What was the level within your situation with American soldiers, what was the interaction, was there any at all?

It was quite good between combat personnel, within cities there were lots of shocking fights and things. After the 2/6th Div[ision] came home in Adelaide Street there were a set of stairs [that] went up to the first floor and a number of our people with a few

27:00 drinks in them used to go to the top of [the] steps and throw the Yanks down them. I suppose the reason was they were getting a lot of Australian girlfriends but in Tokyo there were lots of American girls and we had a lot of fun getting under the Yanks' necks for their sheilas, so that's life, I suppose, you win some, you lose some.

Was it hard for a lot of the blokes under your command

27:30 **to maintain relationships back home?**

I think the war experience had had a vast effect on it. No one could serve in a war without changing quite considerably in his aspect of life, his aspect of people and things of that nature. I would have no doubt that a lot of marriages broke up by virtue of the incompatibility after war service.

28:00 **In some regard through your association with other blokes you would of heard stories about ex-army blokes who had come home and had problems. What about in your police career, did you find that you'd often come across instances with ex-army blokes or blokes who had served in the war and were having difficulty adjusting to life?**

You'd come across a lot of them but you didn't enquire into what their background was. Darley [?] was a shocking place and nobody there in the initial part of it

28:30 ever went to bed with their own wife. I wouldn't say that was right but we had a terrific amount of domestic strife there and violence of all kinds. That and Grovely were two areas developed with public housing, the last of the people left in the housing camps, there was a big one at Carole Park where the Australian Rules ground is now,

29:00 opposite the hockey fields, another one in Victoria Park on the terrace side. Those were the last of the camp dwellers that were moved and the greatest risk in relation to responsibility and what happened. Grovely, there were more young criminals out there to the acre than there at Wagga [?] at that stage.

29:30 **Can you give us a general overview of your police career?**

I joined early 1949 and did training and was sworn in September 1949. I spent two months in Brisbane working out of Roma Street on beat duty and cross over duty. Trams in those days

30:00 and you stopped the people coming across and you moved the trams and let the people go. I was doing that in front of the post office one day and a tram was coming down so I stepped forward to let it go but I didn't step forward quite far enough and it hit me just on the back of the head, the helmet shot up in the air and I spun around in circles and went down and got up and felt my head and it was still in one bit and away the tram went and it was never reported. After two months I was transferred

30:30 to Roma around at district headquarters, Roma Station, and only there a few weeks when I started going out on relieving duty, a lot of the stations in that district were two man stations. If the sergeant went on leave the other person would normally be in charge and I'd go and work with him. I did that pretty well continuously for two years,

31:00 which was good experience and after twelve months I was going to one man stations. You had about fourteen different receipt books and you were an agent for everything and you had to work all that out

but it wasn't that difficult. I relieved at Surat, Miles, Mitchell, Jackson, Wallumbilla, Hebel,

31:30 a number of times over that two year period. I then went on uniform enquiries at Roma and did that for some time and then I did uniform enquires as an assistant clerk in the office of the district officer for some time up until 1956. I transferred then to plain clothes at the CI [Criminal Investigation] Branch as a plain clothes constable first class

32:00 and spent the next twenty five years there passing through the ranks of detective senior constable, sergeant 2C [Second In Charge], sergeant IC [In Charge], detective senior sergeant and then detective inspector. I left there as detective inspector first class, second in charge at the CI Branch in Brisbane.

32:30 I went from there to Superintendent Services and when the Commonwealth Games were coming on it was announced in the paper that there were quite a number of Federal Police coming up to staff the bomb control squad. One of their officers was to be in charge of it, the fellow from the bomb control centre in Canberra. Two of our union members had a press conference with the press

33:00 and they basically said, "We don't need the AFP [Australian Federal Police] here, the equipment they are bringing doesn't work and if it did they wouldn't know how to use it," this came out in the morning paper. As a superintendent I used to get in early because I could get rid of more paper before the phone started ringing for an hour or so than I would for the rest of the day. The deputy commissioner rang down, called me up and said,

33:30 "Have you read this morning's paper?" and I said, "Yes, I read the bit by the union reps," and he said, "Are you prepared to take over the bomb control centre?" and I said, "Who is on it?" and he said, "So and so is on it," who was one of the two. I said, "Take him off and direct that he will not enter the bomb control centre unless with my specific permission, and I take it over." That was an interesting one because we had some said seventy AFP people, we had

34:00 seventy state police, we had the total explosive dogs from the army and about sixteen EOD, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, people, bomb explosive people. It worked well, I had two majors, one serving and one ex, just recently retired. A fellow a lot of police knew because he used to lecture on a lot of explosives at the Chelmer College

34:30 and they were both good. I had two AFP senior sergeants and two of our own people as duty officers and the fellow from the AFP was my 2IC and it went well. My pass permitted me to go anywhere at any time, and a certain place I didn't want to go was into the ladies' shot-

35:00 putt quarters but we had no call to go the ladies' athletics quarters at any stage but we had the authority had it been necessary. We had two senior PMG [Post Master General] people with us and their task was all the mail coming through for all the athletes was sorted at the

35:30 postal and then their men came over to our people and checked that all the parcels for everyone who was connected with the Commonwealth Games to see if there were no explosives or things of that nature. Our job was to search every complex every day before any sport was played there, we searched every VIP [Very Important Person] car every morning

36:00 before they went anywhere. That was a bit funny because the chauffeur used to bring them up to us, if they were to go off they would have only killed the chauffeur, wouldn't they? Those were the main things that we did. The dogs were absolutely amazing, the whole of my group got together a week before the games, so as every member of it would be totally familiar with every venue prior to it starting,

36:30 including the dogs. During the period they were doing that, the dogs were indicating their starting caps as explosives. The day it was opening, the last thing that we did, we did a sweep through the whole thing including the main ring. Did you go there at this stage? There was the main track running and down there was

37:00 a small stage about this high and the dogs indicated explosives. We put the machine on it and it went mad, we dug a hole and we came up with some rock and we put the explosive thing on it and it went click, click, click and it really went mad. We got in touch with city hall and found out who the contractor was that had filled the stadium and contacted them and they said, "The rock for the base fill was quarried

37:30 out where the towers are, blasted out," and that was what the dogs had picked up. On one occasion the ex-army major, he had an army ammunition box as a tool box in his car and he had left the felt in the bottom of it and the dogs identified his car as having explosives in it,

38:00 we opened it up and there was the tool box, they were very good. There was only one [bit of] strife, was those fellows, all that group was made honorary members of the police club. There was one little Kiwi bloke, part Maori, he was in the club one afternoon and had a blue with his girlfriend and he threw a glass from one end of the bar and smashed it against the wall at the other end and then the empty stubby followed it and did the same thing.

38:30 One of the detective sergeants spoke to him and he immediately started fighting, if you are ever going to have a fight with a Kiwi, never punch him in the head because it is pure ivory and this fellow finished

up with a couple of knuckles back here, he was locked up. The officer immediately barred all dog handlers from the police club. I saw him the next morning and I said, “I don’t think that is fair,” so he let them back in,

39:00 other than this fellow who spent the rest of the time cleaning out the dog kennels and he never came back into operations. The thing I did, and I’m very very pleased that I did, was the bit that was in the paper would have been animosity particularly with the AFP people. The first afternoon that they were all together I had been over and seen the commissioner and said, “Look, the bit that was in the paper,

39:30 we have got to get these people to work together, I would like to put on a keg.” He thought it was a great idea and he even arranged it with the caterer at the police hall to make a bit of finger food and a couple of kegs. We got the people talking and we never had a problem with them, it was one of the best things we did to get that group working together. We put one on when we finished also. I retired from the police the following week,

40:00 so it was quite an interesting bit.

That was a great highlight of your career and a perfect place?

It was probably one of the reasons why I got the British Empire Medal, for running that and service to the citizens of Queensland as a detective. During that period I was a detective I locked up about three thousand people and probably didn’t lock up a few more that should have been, lost some, won some, so you can’t win them all.

Tape 8

00:30 **I might just get you to talk a little bit about the different cultures between the police force and the army?**

I think that any group of people that follow one occupation, there is that culture. It’s probably stronger within the police and army, in large groups like that. To survive you have to stick together to some degree. However, the same

01:00 thing exists in the medical profession, you can never get a doctor to give evidence against another doctor, you can never get a solicitor to give evidence against another solicitor, and you will have difficulties, because of the same culture. That is the way that it is. Certainly police used to stick together very, very closely, what you did,

01:30 you did as a group and as far as I was concerned I think always did it as fairly as I could under the circumstances prevailing. There are some that say when a defendant goes to court and pleads not guilty he has told the first lie of the season, but I don’t think you can rely on that. Every group of people

02:00 have their culture of that group and have a tendency to stick together. I don’t think it is as strong amongst doctors now as it was many years ago and there have been incidences over more recent years where doctors have given very strong evidence against other doctors. You may have also noticed that years ago, I worked on the fraud squad for a couple of years,

02:30 and normally there were always a solicitor or two in prison for stealing money from their trust accounts. That duty was taken from police and handed over to the law society and if you follow the papers I don’t think you would have seen where many solicitors have gone to prison since the police stopped the investigations of them

03:00 and taken over by the solicitors’ board. However, a number of solicitors have been stood down or barred temporarily or permanently by the bar or the solicitors’ board. The culture does exist and it exists in many more forms than what is generally broadcasted.

Can you talk about how your experiences as a soldier affected your outlook on life or

03:30 **what humankind is like compared to what you saw as a police officer?**

Entirely different, I think in the army you took people as you found them until you found them different and then you treated them as they should be treated.

04:00 In the police, particularly as a detective, where you are dealing all the time, every shift, with people that may or may not

04:30 be telling the truth, you do tend to get a feeling that everybody is corrupt, which is not good. There are lots and lots of very decent and totally honest people in the world. I think this more applies to youth where you are dealing with quite a lot of youth, you get the impression that all youths are thieves. However, the percent that we were dealing with [in] that age group was

05:00 relatively small in the taking of the overall number of youth. It was, I think, a bad thing that you did start to breed that suggestion in your mind.

05:30 **You spoke about leadership in the army, was there any difference in terms of leadership in the police force?**

It was an entirely different aspect. Within the CI Branch there were a number of squads, there was motor theft squad, there was break and enter squad, there was consulting squad who were the people responsible with

06:00 keeping in touch and the movement of criminals coming and going, anti-pillage squad, of the wharf. There was an OC in charge of that but other than that, rank at that stage didn't make much difference. If you were detective sergeant [it] meant that you got more serious investigations to handle than if you were a plain clothes constable. Any detective that spent some time at the CI Branch, by the time he's a detective senior constable, [he] should be

06:30 capable of handling any crime of any nature that comes up and most were. Then a major investigation such as homicides and things, the OC was appointed to that, and there were a group of people working under him, worked as investigators. There might be an inspector in charge

07:00 and a senior sergeant who looked after staffing and movements, detailing of files to the various detectives on it. But the rest of them, they were investigators and they investigated what was coming in. Whereas in the army, each rank had a responsibility to supervise, direct, train and look after an x volume of men, so it was a vastly different thing.

Which of your careers did you

07:30 **enjoy more, on a personal level?**

Probably I'd have to say army. Your time in battle was basically so limited, that was the five percent of intense fear and the other ninety five percent was a rather casual type of living. Whereas in police, particularly as a detective, you had just so many files that you had to work,

08:00 you had to do everything you could. At one stage on fraud I think my workmate and I had something like forty fraud investigations on hand at one time, that could of amounted to some four hundred thousand or even greater amounts. You just had to pick the easiest one to wrap up, work on it get rid of it and go onto the next one so you were always working

08:30 under quite a lot of pressure. I know one Christmas my mate and I we had had a purple patch and we had something like forty briefs of evidence to prepare on indictable offences over a relatively short period, so you were flat as a strap.

What do you mean a 'purple patch'?

Where everything goes right, if you are playing tennis you have a day there where it doesn't matter how

09:00 you hit it, it goes in. It's a time where everything falls into place. Other times, you'd get your crime report, a crime report is a sheet of paper with what has been stolen or what the offence is and the circumstances of it. You would get a lot of those that had suspects on it and you could run them out but you couldn't connect them, or couldn't get evidence to connect them. Whereas other occasions you would get a run of paper like that

09:30 and everyone, you just pinched them. You'd pick up a fellow for break and enter on one and you'd find he'd done fifty, sixty or seventy. There was one young fellow and it was his third time that I had pinched him in seventeen years, I was in charge of Redcliffe CI Branch at the time, the night crew rang and said, "We have so and so in," and I said, "Okay, I'll come in." I went down and said, "Hello Kenny, how are you, how many have you done this time?" He said, "Oh Frank, I've done bloody plenty."

10:00 He had, from Redcliffe, Three Bald Hills, Petrie, Aspley Heights, West Chermside, he'd done something like seventy house break-ins, those were the things that happened. We spent the next two or three days and he took us back

10:30 to every house and every street and he could remember each of them and basically what he got from each of them. People at times don't take cognisance of what occurred, some of the houses that he got through a downstairs window which was open. When he took us back a week, fortnight or a month later, that same window was open again, and so it went on.

Did that surprise you, that he took you to all the places that he had broken

11:00 **into, obviously you didn't have the evidence for all of them?**

He took us around and we got the street address and the people's names and it was just a matter of going to the information bureau and getting the list and they turned up the crime report. Every offence that is committed is reported, is on a crime report and that is listed, [it] would be on computer now. We had the largest card index in the southern hemisphere, when we started pulling stuff out

11:30 of it about the time I retired, the stuff we didn't need like applications for police, applications for sports, we pulled seventy thousand cards that we didn't need. That was man hour intensive, but it was all getting ready to go onto a computer at that stage. That is the type of pressure that most detectives that

were working,

12:00 and they were working under it permanently. At times you would wake up in the middle of the night and you'd go to court the next day or the next week and think, "I haven't got a statement from so and so." It would come to you when you were asleep so you would chase it up. The best relaxation I could find was I had a boat and I'd put it in before daylight and run down to the mouth of the river and start getting bites just on daylight, you forgot about those silly briefs of evidence.

12:30 It was an interesting occupation and it was time consuming and it was quite draining, if you were working. We had people, not a number of them, fortunately, who did a good job and then they'd talk about it for twelve months and do nothing much else.

I was wondering if you had any comments from a personal perspective about the power of the uniform. You would have known how the people

13:00 **reacted as a soldier and then as a policeman?**

The sight of a police uniform has a great effect, even in a police car. Say you were going from here to Cairns and you strike a police car on the road, you slow down a little bit and things of that nature. During the war years there were just so many soldiers, Australia at the start of the war had six point

13:30 nine million people and during the course of the war nine hundred and ninety three thousand men and women enlisted in the Australian forces. It would have had to have been one of the highest enrolments of any nation in that war. Of that, there were sixty-six and a half thousand women in the womens services, predominantly army and air force, the navy weren't sending girls to sea in those days, and they had a much smaller proportion of women.

14:00 They had nurses, they had qualified sisters and I guess they would have had some clerical assistants. Whereas the army had stacks and stacks, we had women driving trucks, ambulance drivers, anti-aircraft battery crews, clerical in ordnance depots, right throughout the base service, there were lots and lots of women.

Did you all get on pretty well?

Some of the pretty ones, we got on very well.

14:30 There were quite a good relationship. I thought it was funny, but at Toga on the tablelands there was a big ordnance depot, largely staffed by AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], the engineers come in and put down a new multi-seater toilet, a big long building with twenty seats. But when they finished it they left a loud speaker down there and they went over here, waited until three or four girls went in and apparently they said,

15:00 "Would you mind moving over, I'm still painting down here," all the girls left, I don't know why. Things like that happened.

Do you have any other gems like that?

Only my mate, who I told you about earlier, and we got drunk the night before and he was looking in the back of the mirror and shaving, but there were funny incidents. You remember some times

15:30 and other times you don't, but I thought that was quite good. The girls weren't amused and the administration wasn't amused.

Was there much social activities for the men and women, like dances?

Around the tablelands there were a couple of places where the dances were held regularly. The girls from the ordnance depot, they would be taken there in trucks, the nurses and AAMWS [Australian Army Medical Women's Service] from the two army hospitals from Rocky Creek,

16:00 particularly the nurses would be conveyed there, into there in trucks and home again. The officers' club was in Atherton and we use to go in there quite often. Just before we sailed, a group of officers from one battalion, we won't mention the battalion, decided they'd take the King's picture with them.

16:30 They worked out an operation order on it, x would put of the lights, a couple of big fellows would form the pyramids and a couple would go on top and they'd take the picture down and off. The pyramid collapsed, the lights came on sooner than they thought, when the lights came on and the administration rushed in, George was face down on the floor with a heap of drunken

17:00 officers on top of him. Fortunately we sailed, otherwise no doubt a lot of those officers would have been court martialled, so away we went to war and it was forgotten. I had a company commander in the occupation, he drank two bottles of whiskey every day, he opened the first one when he got up and finished the first for morning tea because he didn't have tea.

17:30 He wouldn't open the second one until he finished work at four or five in the afternoon. Occasionally I'd have a couple of nips with him and then he'd kill the second one. At an earlier time, when his battalion was in Port Moresby, he built a still in his company kitchen and he put all the stuff in it and he fired it and fired it but his retort was blocked, and it exploded. It blew the back end out of his kitchen and put

all his company cooks in hospital.

18:00 So the war went on and we won it in spite of these things. He's a good friend of mine, JJ. Another occasion, officers were drinking in the barracks so the 2IC, Black Jack McCafferty, got us all in the officers' mess after lunch. "There will be no

18:30 more drinking, this will cease, this will cease first forthwith, there will be no drinking in the barracks." He finished that and the officers dispersed and I was walking back to the barracks and caught up to Black Jack, he said, "Frank, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm just going back to my room and I'll probably read for a while," and he said, "Come in here." We went into his room and drank a bottle of whiskey.

19:00 Such was army life, it's not what you do but it's the way that you do it. I had a lot of fun being a soldier and I had a lot of fun policing.

Can I ask you about your early life. You told us the funny story at morning tea and all the different names A –N in your family?

That was my mother's family, the Castleline family.

19:30 They went from A – N, Annie was the oldest, Annie, Bertha, Charles, Dave, Eli, Frank, Garry, Herbert, Ida, Jillian, Kate, Lillie, Millie, Noel, my mother was Lillie Mary McCosker.

Can you describe the Glass House Mountains and the area at the time when you were growing up?

Initially my father went to Glass House Mountains in 1902, he and his bachelor uncle,

20:00 they [were] both single at that stage, took up blocks, timber blocks there. Started off splitting palings, posts and rails, fences, then used [to] split posts and rails, you mortared the rail of the end and then you nailed your palings and then split palings as opposed to being sawn timber as they are today. They also cut sleepers for the railway and they cut log timber and they got billeted teams later on and hauled the timber to the

20:30 rail head to go to the various mills around the place. Also, we always had cows, I had milked a few cows and I learnt to do that quite young. Then we always had a farm and grew pineapples, sweet potatoes, custard apples and various odd other bits and pieces. Not commercially at that stage but it was always there, we used it and gave it away.

21:00 During the depression my uncle and my father sat on the veranda and played cards for days and days because there was just no work to do, there was nobody buying timber, buying posts and rails. Prior to that, Thurick Brothers Saw Mill had moved from Jimna onto our property and had

21:30 been cutting timber, but the orders dried up and they were basically doing nothing. They decided they'd build the palindrome in Brisbane, and Thurick Brothers got the contract for that, a big contract for timber. My uncle, father and Lenny, they went back to timber cutting which was hauled into the mill. At that time

22:00 McCosker Brothers bought a truck and they were cutting the timber but then they were hauling the cut timber into Glass House Mountains. They also, in the late 1930s, they started to get contracts again for split palings, fencing materials and cut quite a lot of that so money started to come in again, not a lot.

22:30 The Glass House Mountains had quite a lot of farms, they were growing pineapples, citrus and various other things at that time. That went to market, it was sold through the Brisbane Markets, and consequently when there is glut of fruit there wasn't much money in that either,

23:00 Northgate cannery never started until after the war. That was built by the farmers, eventually. Glass House Mountains was practically no dairying at that stage, but out in the Stanley River was mainly all dairying, they'd have a bit of cultivation, grow potatoes and things like that for their own use.

23:30 **During the depression did you eat quite well because you were able to grow things?**

Firstly, we had as much milk as we needed, we made our own butter, which was a big thing. My father at one stage started a bit of a fruit run around the Stanley River, the farmers there and into Woodford with a few pineapples that we were growing and various odd other things and he was making a few bob there.

24:00 That gradually built up and then we went into farming, cleared further land and cleaned it up, ploughed it and put pineapples in. We had fifteen acres under pines at the time when my brother and I went to war. Which was quite a large plantation at that time, not compared to some other places. Anyway, had more pineapples in

24:30 one plantation some years ago than what was grown in Queensland, a major thing, they had their own cannery, the whole thing. The cannery had started at that stage, we sent early pines to markets because you got a reasonable price for them and the rest went to the cannery. That's what we were doing when

war was declared, in large, continually clearing more land and planting

25:00 more pineapples. That was eight miles out of Glass House Mountains in the mid west of Beerwah Mountain, ten miles from Woodford. From where we lived to Commissioners Flat School was three miles and we went straight through the forestry. When I started, little bitty ankle biter, we used to go three on one horse, we used to ride our horses to school and unsaddle them and let them go in the school paddock and then we'd saddle them up in the afternoon and ride them home.

25:30 We knew every black snake and where he lived, the blue tongued lizards and which trees they lived in, quite interesting. Quite often in those days you'd see koalas in the forestry there, occasionally dingoes.

How many kids roughly would there have been at your little school?

The most that went there to my knowledge was thirty-two, that was from grade one to scholarship, there were eight classes with the scholarship,

26:00 with scholarship kids stayed back and doing extra study. I was fourteen in November and I left at the end of that school year.

What sorts of things did you and your brothers get up to for fun?

Trapping crows and currawongs and shooting flying foxes for pocket money. As quite young I started leading tourists up Beerwah Mountain,

26:30 not a bad climb, the first rock was the hardest. I'd go up to the first rock and tie a rope to a tree and they'd come up that way, after that you could walk, if you were any kind of a climber you could walk the rest and I did that quite often.

Was there much of a tourist industry as far as people coming to those mountains?

There weren't hundreds, but you'd get half a dozen people this week and in three weeks time

27:00 you might get a couple, people just came and went. There would be people who would want us to show them the way up the mountain, they'd arrange for a Saturday or Sunday and away you'd go. My father went up one night and brought a person who had gone up and a cloud had closed in and he couldn't find his way down, he gave him quite a nice cup with an inscription on it. Then years later we played soccer

27:30 in the afternoon, we got home and we could see a fire pretty well up on top of the mountain and it was flaring up and then going down, flaring up and going down. My brother and I and another chap went up, a fellow working at the mill, it would have been much easier if we had left him behind because he was no climber at all and my brother and I knew the mountain quite well and we would have been up and back in half the time, but he came with us.

28:00 We found these people and they had missed the track and had gone over too far to the left so we found them and got them organised and brought them down. It had rained and it was a bit slippery but it wasn't really a problem, I think they gave us thirty bob or something, which was a lot of money. A little cup to have kept would have been much better. I got front line on the Sunday Mail. I never got any copies of it.

28:30 That basically was Glass House Mountains, there was a cricket team in summer, a soccer team in winter, a lot of English and Scots people had settled at Glass House Mountains in the early bits, so that's where the soccer came from. There were tennis courts and that was about it from a sporting side of things. There was the school of arts and there were regular dances there. There were regular

29:00 dances held in the Commissioners Flat State School, the Stanmore Hall, which is getting around towards Woodford on the northern side of the river. Those were the three main things. Occasionally there would be a picture show at the Stanmore Hall, travelling show and that was about it. So you had to make your own fun. As kids we used to play cricket up against the

29:30 bee shed in summer and kick a soccer ball around in winter. At one stage we had about forty hives of bees and I use to help my father with them. One brother, if he ever went near a bee hive he'd always get stung, there was something about him that he didn't like bees and they didn't like him, but they never ever worry me very greatly. We used to get a lot of honey

30:00 and we used to get stung occasionally, but I never worried about that. Putting bees in the box is quite interesting, the hives and they swarm and then they land. You smoke them a bit and you very gently scrape off a handful of bees, and shake them off your hand at the entrance of the box and they all start going in like sheep. The queen ultimately goes in and they all follow and then you have a new hive of bees.

30:30 **What about honeycomb?**

There is a special bee box and the frame just fits over, there are about fourteen to fifteen to a box, and there is just a little gap between each one for the bees to move up and down. They fill them and when they are filled each of the little cylinders with wax and when you are extracting you take them out, smoke them and brush the bees off. Take it over to the extractor house

31:00 and you have a special knife that you dip in hot water and scoop the tops off all the seals and you put it in a spinning [(UNCLEAR)] and spin the honey out and you are in business.

Do you recall whether there were many tropical fruit diseases that plagued your father or other farmers in terms of their crops?

Not to any extent at that stage. Since we have been here I grew

31:30 beautiful pawpaws at the same stage of the season or towards the end of the season the flying foxes would get on them and eat them. Whenever that happened the tree would get centre rot and die, and I would lose them and I've pretty much run out of paw paws. I believe personally that the flying foxes were responsible for picking up the diseases from other plantations and bringing it here.

32:00 **Besides pineapples and you mentioned custard apples before, what were some of the other fruit crops that were grown in that area?**

We used to grow persimmons, some figs, custard apples, loquats, a bit of citrus, but not a great deal. We grew sweet potatoes, pumpkins, strawberries, picking them in winter time

32:30 while playing sport with frost on them, God your fingers get cold.

Were you disappointed that you couldn't go back to farming after the war, when your dad lost the farm?

It was the only thing that I knew and I didn't really know what to do other than go back farming. At that stage we only had the house block at Glass House Mountains so we would of had to acquire

33:00 land to go back into it because the father's and uncle's properties had been handed back to the government, who later sold them to APM, Australian Paper Mill, and they cleared the lot and planted pine trees on it. Being so used to a lot of people I probably would have been better to policing than I would of back on a farm

33:30 where you were basically on your own. When I was transferred to Roma I was only there for a couple of weeks and I went to Surat to relieve and between finishing working and starting work I nearly went mad because I had nothing to do, I couldn't read of a night because I only had a lantern. I don't think we had electricity in Surat at that stage, I only had

34:00 a lantern so it was very, very boring and I nearly went to Korea, and I'm pleased that I didn't.

How did you meet your wife, Dorothy?

She was a Surat girl and I think I first met her when I went out there to a Christmas party, another policeman was invited out and he asked if I could go along to their station Christmas party and we met there. I relieved at

34:30 Surat other times after that and the relationship went on from there.

What are the locals in small towns like Surat make of the local cop?

If the policeman was half reasonable it was a very, very pleasant existence there because if you assisted the country people they would assist you. People gave you pumpkins

35:00 and at Roma at one stage I brought a cow and I used to milk a cow every morning and every afternoon and when it went dry one of the graziers that lived in the street, he didn't like milking cows and I'd milk it and give him half the milk. Between a group of policeman we bought a cow and a separator which meant we could separate our milk and have cream, skim milk. As long as the cow was giving plenty I gave this chap half

35:30 and if there was only enough for one of us, I said, "I only have enough milk for one," I think I had one child at that stage and he said, "Okay." As that one dried off a bit more, mine would come in with a fresh calf or he'd bring another one in so we always had stacks of milk and stacks of butter, we had a few chocks and all that.

36:00 **Is Surat sheep country, out that way?**

Sheep and cattle, it was then, it was almost entirely sheep and cattle but there was a considerable amount of farming there now, wheat, milo. One of the men from the west, he bought one of the stations there and it would have been a tax lurk, it was one of the best

36:30 sheep properties in the Surat district. It was about seventeen thousand acres and he cleared most of it and got it ready for wheat and then sold it again. Some of them are leases too, when the leases were renewed by the same people and the condition was a certain acreage had to be put under pasture. Now there is an awful lot of grain grown in the Surat and

37:00 Roma and all of those districts through there. Since the farming came in and the old father-in-law was alive he one night said, "There used to be x number of sheep on such and such a station and there is now so many," and as he did that I just roughly added them up and there was something like seventy thousand sheep gone from the Surat district. During the period we were there, [there] were up to five

shearing contractors which worked from January through to December

37:30 and never worked outside their district. When we were back there a few years ago I was talking to the one contractor that was left and he said, “I can shear all the sheep in the Surat district now in three months.” If he had finished a shed and went onto the next shed, straight one after the other he could shear all the sheep in three months. That is the difference, where there use to be three, four or five contractors with full teams used to take all year to shear the number of

38:00 sheep in that district.

Was there any previous history in your family of anyone serving in World War I?

My father didn’t, he married and had several children at that stage. I had quite a number of relations that did. A cousin was on the Centaur, I think two of them might have been on the Centaur, and one got off and one didn’t and various others served overseas

38:30 with various units. The brother-in-law who I mentioned was killed, that sister later married another ex-serviceman and he was taken POW [prisoner of war] in the desert when [Erwin] Rommel [German Field Marshall] forced them back in the first instance. He spent part of the war in Italy and when Italy capitulated he had wonderful fun for three weeks on the loose. Then the Germans gathered them all up

39:00 and shot them and he spent the rest of the war in the German prison camp which was not too bad. They used to go out on working parties, which meant they got a bit of extra food and were treated quiet humanely as opposed to the prisoners of war in Jap prisons. The thing I dealt before on the atrocities committed by the Japs, absolutely shocking.

39:30 **What was the initial attraction to the army?**

Eight bob a day, eighty cents a day and an adventure, I suppose.

Was it what you expected?

That was what it was, that was what we knew it was. The fellows joining the AIF at that stage, they were only getting fifty cents a day which was a bone for contention while there was a lot

40:00 of fights. We have a country fellow and he was the dopiest looking thing that you ever saw, from his neck his shoulders came down like that, I had never seen a man with sloping shoulders. A blue developed in front of City Hall one night and he said, “Don’t you fellows get mixed up in this, I’ll fix it, you just stack them,” oh, could that man fight, he could lay them out,

40:30 god he could fight. All we did was stack them and he would knock them all out. I don’t think I ever saw another person like that, who fought like he did. Going to the Middle East when Les went over, he was the fellow who was taken a prisoner of war, he had taken on twenty-two short bouts as an amateur in Brisbane prior to that and he and a couple of mates made a lot of money going to the Middle East

41:00 and he was fighting and the other fellows were backing him. He won every fight he had there, they made a bob. I think that must nearly wrap us up.

Yes.

INTERVIEW ENDS