

Australians at War Film Archive

James Newell ('Blue') - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 30th September 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1038>

Tape 1

00:35 **Since we have so much information to cover today we won't worry about the life overview that we talked about. What we'll do is we'll go right into the Second World War. Now how old were you when you signed up for the Second World War?**

Eighteen years old.

So were you keen to join the army, or the navy,

01:00 **or the air force?**

I think it was the navy but I finished up going in the army.

How did that happen?

I don't know, I don't know. I just changed my mind.

And did any of your mates around where you lived join up with you?

No, I went in by myself in 1944, yeah.

01:30 **How were your parents about that?**

Not very happy because I had two brothers and a sister already in the military, so they weren't too happy about that and both the boys were overseas at that time.

Were your brothers in the army?

Yes, both of them, yeah, yeah, Neville and John.

Where were they posted?

They went to, Neville being fifteen years older he finished up in England, then they

02:00 came back to the Middle East and then he finished up in Greece and Crete and he was on the Costa Rica when it was sunk by a Stuka [German dive-bombing aircraft] and he was the colour sergeant and my other brother was in Milne Bay, in workshops in Milne Bay.

And what about your sister?

My sister was a nursing Sister and she being a nursing Sister she was a lieutenant and only once did we ever get together at home in Bangalow and

02:30 I said to them "When she comes in for breakfast we'll all stand and salute." which we did, and she said "Sit down you mugs". But she didn't go overseas, she was supposed to be on that boat that was going overseas, that one that was sunk, the Centaur, but she had the mumps, so she was lucky.

She was lucky. That's a bit of spell between drinks, fifteen years older than you? How did that work out,

03:00 **your older brother being fifteen years older? Was he the eldest?**

He was the oldest, yes, yes. If he was alive today he'd be ninety five or something like that, just roughly, about that I think, about ninety five. Yes, something like that, ninety or something.

And you were the youngest?

I was the youngest, yes.

And how many children altogether, Blue?

I had six, six, like seven of us altogether, six brothers and sisters. Four sisters, and two brothers.

So seven of you and four of you were in the military?

03:30 Ah that's right, yeah, three of us in the army and my sister, yes, yes..

I see. How did you enlist? Did you decide to go down and put your name down at the closest headquarters? Would that have been Brisbane? You said you were in Bangalow?

Yes, because we were in northern New South Wales we went to Sydney and I joined up there, at the Sydney Showground, at the Showground there.

04:00 **Can you tell us about enlisting?**

Well you join up with another lot of young fellows so you're all in the same boat. When you join up there at the Showground there's all these old soldiers yelling out "You'll be sorry." when you get your new boots and that sort of thing.

04:30 **Did you make any friends straight away from enlisting?**

Yes I did, I had no worries at all. I think being from the bush, well bush people do like to make friends. They're not very shy. They like to talk too much sometimes.

Are you talking about yourself there? You're from the bush?

Oh yes, in Bangalow, yes.

05:00 Only six hundred people there then.

Now it's a big tourist place.

I believe so. My grandfather would turn over in his grave. He was the first man in Bangalow and all the streets are named after my uncles in Bangalow. Back in 1882 I think, the Aborigines showed him how to get from the boat at Ballina all the way up to Bangalow, through the, they didn't call it jungle there, I think Mum used to call it tall scrub or the scrub,

05:30 just the scrub I think.

It's a beautiful place, I have a brother that lives down there.

True.

He lives in Clunes.

Yeah, yeah, do you know what we call Clunes?

No.

The holy city, there were about twenty houses and about five churches. That's how it got the name the holy city.

You'd be in trouble if you didn't go on Sunday living there.

I reckon.

So from

06:00 **the old soldiers telling you "You'll be sorry, you'll be sorry." did it change your mind? Did you think, obviously it didn't but did you think about it?**

No.

So what did you know then about Australia's efforts in the Second World War at that time?

Well being young men we just studied those papers and I used to get the papers and study those maps and especially when your brother's over in the Middle East, like Greece and Crete and all those places,

06:30 you hear about places you've never heard of before and the war in Russia and that sort of thing. I used to have all the photos and like anything like that and keep those papers and cut them out and all that sort of thing. And then when the Japanese come down there and they went to New Guinea and those places what went on there, like all the battles, like the Kokoda Trail and Milne Bay and

07:00 Buna and all those places, we were very interested, being young men. I don't say young women would have been that interested but young men were.

Do you think also you signed up possibly to have a bit of an adventure?

Yes.

It wasn't the money?

No, it definitely wasn't the money.

07:30 **So you were in Bangalow when the war had started as well?**

Yes and we built slit trenches and all that sort of thing around different places and the area and all that sort of thing and we had sort of a little, well I don't know, you could all it a home guard but they were home guard around there but we weren't in the home guard because we weren't in the home guard because we were too young but we did dig slit trenches and all that sort of thing around.

08:00 **Did you dig them for other people's families?**

Mainly in the town like say close maybe to the hotel or the church or where people might get or where they might be bombed, like the bigger buildings and that sort of thing, the stores and that. Not that we had many in Bangs, we only had one big store, yes.

What was your opinion then when Japan joined the war?

08:30 On the 7th December was a pretty big shock, even though we were only young. We thought, when it was overseas that's a long, way away, especially in them days, was like being at the moon today, but in those days when Japanese come down and when Singapore fell well people were starting to get worried, your Mum and Dads and you could see the adults were getting worried.

09:00 You can't blame them either cause the Japanese moved very fastly, when they took all those places, especially Singapore. And they got into New Guinea and all that sort of thing, then heading for Port Moresby and all that. Yeah, and we heard about what a terrible time those fellows on the Kokoda Trail, what a hard battle they had and Milne Bay. And when they drove them off Milne Bay everyone was very happy

09:30 because it was the first time the Japanese had ever been driven back, ever landed somewhere and pulled out a couple of months later. And that was the first time ever, even Field Marshall Sims said that, the first time the Japanese were beaten.

Do you think there was a fear in Australia, a real fear that the Japanese would get into Australia and take over?

Yes, definitely because,

10:00 how would I put it? They were going to let

ueensland go and that was pretty, that was well known. They were going to let North

ueensland go and

ueensland go and try and stop them somewhere around about North of Sydney or somewhere [reference to the Brisbane Line]. I'm not to sure where they were going to stop them but around that area. I forget they had a name for that.

10:30 **Some deny it today and some, depending on what side of the politics you're on.**

That would have been terrible because we wouldn't have had anywhere to live.

That's right, yeah, it would have been terrible.

So after you signed up there at the Royal Sydney Showground where did they take you?

We were sent to Cowra and

11:00 that's where we did our recruit training. There was about, I think there would be about, at a rough guess, five or six of those recruit training places where they taught us and a lot of these fellows were old soldiers, like to us they were real old soldiers, like they'd been in the Middle East, especially when we went to the machine gunners, they were later on (UNCLEAR) but nearly all them had been overseas, like in New Guinea or something. By the time we got there, joined the army, they

11:30 were all nearly, like had battle, they'd been in battles and that sort of thing so we respected them very much.

What happened in Cowra? Was it a part of culling of who was going to go through the training and who isn't? Did they accept everybody there?

That's right. They worked out where you were going to go. Well if you joined the Infantry

12:00 most of them went to the Infantry but I had a brother in the 2/1st Machine Gunners so I put in for machine gunners and they just had a little place in Bathurst. The machine gunners had a very small place and that's where we learnt to, on the Vickers machine gun because by that stage in New Guinea the Vickers wasn't very, wasn't used because of the foliage. I mean it was alright in desert but not in the jungle.

Because it was a long range gun

12:30 **and not a short range?**

Yes, that's right, yes, yes.

I see. So did you do the Cowra training as a general training before you went up to Bathurst?

Oh yeah, yes, I think, at a rough guess we were there about three months I'd say. I know we had one instructor who was an ex-commando, so everybody respected him, and didn't give him cheek either.

He was probably was only a couple of years older than you, was he?

13:00 I'd say only about four years older, five years older, yeah, yes.

What he'd been a coast watcher had he?

No, they were used up there in their own units and kept an eye on the Japanese and that sort of thing. They were more in the, I'd say more in the highlands and that sort of thing, more inland a little bit, not so close to the coast where the Japs, but they were there to keep an eye on them, what they were up too.

13:30 **So how did you cope with the discipline of the army when you first got in there?**

Well young fellows in them days they were disciplined when they grew up. You did as you were told and you respected adults and that sort of thing. You were very, you already had the discipline. It was just a matter of the army carrying on and giving you a bit more, yeah.

14:00 **What were some of the rules you had to get used to pretty quick?**

Getting out of bed real early but the people from the bush didn't worry them because most of them were farmers and they all get up early, whereas sometimes the people from the city they found it a little bit hard to get out of bed at half past five, six o'clock in the morning and also

14:30 the food and that sort of thing, I think most people in those days they were pretty used to eating food that sort of, you didn't get too many steaks there, you got plenty of mince because most people were pretty poor. Especially when they joined the army, and that sort of thing, joined the air force, joined those sort of things, they come from poor families. We were poor,

15:00 nearly everybody was poor in those days and you did what you were told and played football and that sort of thing and whatever.

Did you come through the Depression, Blue?

But I was only young but I knew all about it because my Dad was a plumber and he lost, well nobody's going to put roofs on houses in the Depression. Nobody had any money, so we finished up on a farm

15:30 for about four years I think. But my elder brother he was alright because he knew all about, a lot about farming. He'd worked on farms when he was growing up and that's where we finished up there for four years. But when I joined I was working in a bake house when I joined the army.

As a baker?

Yeah, but I was only learning as a baker, yes. I'd been there two years in Bangalow, yes, making bread

16:00 so you knew how to get out of bed in the morning. Four o'clock in the morning bakers start.

Do you still make bread?

No, no.

Was that an apprenticeship in those days, a baker's apprentice?

But I was not an apprentice so I think I just helped the baker, that's about it I would say. I was not an apprentice, no.

And would that have meant you had a lot of fresh bread?

Oh yes, yes, and

16:30 Sunday everybody went to the bakehouse in little towns like that and any spare bread you could get or rolls or something like that. The bakers would give it to you, you didn't have to pay for it.

It must have been very strange joining the army and being down there in Cowra and having not fresh food and fresh bread and things like that?

Well the thing that I loved and naturally where I come from in Bangalow there was no rabbits but there was millions of rabbits as we know in Cowra

17:00 and those places and we got rabbit just about every day. Nearly finished up looking like a rabbit but I loved it. I loved it better than a chicken because it's real solid meat, yeah.

I think you'd have to be the only person I've met so far that loved the rabbits. Most people talk about the rabbits as part of the Depression, as part of that being the only meat they could

get.

That's right,

17:30 those people who lived out in those bush places that's what they did, yeah. They just about lived on rabbit so I suppose if they went in the army they were sick of it by then, but us people from up in

ueensland and Northern New South Wales we didn't have rabbits but I like it, it was really nice.

So did you meet any mates there in Cowra that became friends with you through out the war?

Oh yes, yes, because we travelled together, Maurie Duffisey and...

Is he still around?

Yeah, Maurie's still alive. He's in Townsville and Jimmy Williams but I don't see Jimmy no more now and then when the Occupation come well naturally we all went up to, all went up together to Japan. And we're all still friends and Bill Ryan but I wasn't a friend as a

18:30 young fellow with Bill. I only met him in the machine gunners but I'm still friends with him, Bill. Cause he finished up a sergeant major. He did very good Bill, but a nicer fellow you wouldn't meet.

And how about the rules and stipulations of keeping your bed tidy and all that kind of stuff, was that a big part of your life in training?

19:00 Yeah, but I think afterwards when I was in the Regular Army it was a lot different, because you didn't have a bed to start with. When you got there they gave you a piece of Hessian and said "There's the straw up in the corner up there and away you go and fill er up." and then you all slept on the floor. You didn't have a bed, there was no beds, cause too many people you see, they'd never be able to make all those beds, would they?

19:30 **Was there a lot of men with you in Cowra, signing up and going to the training at the end of the war?**

Well I think there was five of those units operating so I wouldn't be able to say how many were in each one. Some one higher up would know the answer to that but I'm not too sure, but there was certainly a lot of people around.

20:00 We had a brigade parade and that's three battalions. That's about four thousand, that sort of thing. If it was a brigade parade which you didn't have very often in those days, but you did have a brigade parade so there'd be about, I'd say Cowra, when we were going through there'd be about three or four thousand.

We still had that many men in Australia which is?

20:30 Yeah, that's right, a small population, only seven million. And then at Cowra too, we finished up going over and looking at the POW's, the prisoners of war. We were very interested in the Japanese because we, I mean the Italians never had the name that they had, that they were pretty savage people and we spoke to one fellow and he'd been a pilot.

Japanese POW?

21:00 Yeah, he'd been a pilot shot down, but after we left there was the big, when they all revolted and got over the gate and killed the Australian machine gunner and that sort of thing and then the young soldiers there then, I was so sorry that we missed out on that only by a few months and they had to go all around the bush in Cowra and a lot of them committed suicide by shoving their head on the railway line and that sort of thing. Cause they believed that the Japanese were landing at that stage in

21:30 Sydney. They'd taken Northern Australia and the boats were coming into Sydney. They believed that.

Who believed that?

The Japanese, yeah.

The Japanese believed that the Japanese were taking over?

Yeah, were going to take Sydney anytime and they being prisoners of war, they mistreated their prisoners of war but I know what they would have done to them, they would have killed them, cause that was a lose of

22:00 face if you was taken prisoner of war. They would have killed them if they had of taken them.

How did you get to meet this Japanese prisoner of war in Cowra?

He just wandered up to fence and we got talking to him, and he said. He talked good English I suppose being a pilot I suppose. You could understand what he was talking about.

So the POW camp was obviously next door to the training ground?

You just went down and up the what's it name, up the other ridge,

22:30 like say two to three miles away I say, yes, yes. We'd seen the Italians and they were quite docile people and they were working on the railways there and they looked at us and said "bambinos". We didn't know whether to have a go at them or not, what this bambino meant. We thought it was an insult.

Babies.

Yeah, babies.

23:00 Well we were babies, eighteen years old, only kids.

So the Japanese POW though, did he just walk up to the gate and say "Hi" and start talking?

He walked over to us and started talking to us in English, but I don't know whether he was shot down. I can't remember, whether he did tell us I don't know.

23:30 **I wonder whatever happened to him?**

I'd say he committed suicide when they all escaped because I think there was three hundred killed wasn't there I think at a rough guess? Mightn't have been that many but I think it was and the ones that didn't get killed by our people well and surrendered back they committed suicide. Well a lot of them committed suicide, yeah, cause they knew that the Japanese were in Sydney and they were going, they would have killed them anyway. They wouldn't have let them live.

24:00 **They wouldn't have let the Japanese POW's live?**

No, that's the lowest. They were the lowest, lowest to the Japanese soldier to be taken a prisoner of war.

Can you tell us about those initial weeks in Cowra, was the main thing learning drill, was that the?

24:30 The main thing and then route marches and us being from the bush, no worries. Well I walked three miles to school and three miles back every day and only as a young kid, eight years old, nine years old. So walking did never worried us but some city fellows got a lot of blisters and that.

25:00 **How many blokes from the bush do you reckon were there?**

It's hard to say. I'd say it'd be fifty-fifty I'd say but it might have been sixty-forty, sixty from the bush and forty from the city, because a lot of people in those days did live in the bush. Not like now when they mostly all live in the city, yeah.

And what about getting fit, was that part of the training at Cowra?

25:30 Oh yes, that was one of the main things and that's the bush people again, they didn't have too worry too much, they were already fit. I never had any worries, and any of my mates they never had any worries about walking over the mountains or hills or anything, yeah.

Did you find any part of that difficult, the training there?

No, no, not there but we did later on at Canungra. That's where they were fair dinkum,

26:00 they used live ammunition.

So you went up to Bathurst, you put your name down for the machine gunners course?

Yes.

And that was up in Bathurst?

In Bathurst, just a small part. All the rest of Bathurst and the hospitals, they had a big hospitals and everything and that's when my sister was there but she wasn't there at that time, it was mainly infantry. All they, they call them a battalion of some sort, they had a number but I can't what they were but we were just one little

26:30 part, that's all, the machine gunners.

Did you go up there with Maurie and Billy?

Ah yeah, Maurie, but I didn't know Bill then. Later on I met him in New Guinea really, but there was a fair few other fellows, they come home when the war finished, they come home. They didn't go to Japan but I just can't think of all the names of all the fellows. I can always remember Maurie because he was a character.

27:00 **That's okay. I wonder why they made you practice on Vickers when they knew you wouldn't be taking the guns to New Guinea?**

Yeah, that's right, I mean, short range weapons were for New Guinea, short range weapons, Owens and that sort of thing and whatever, yeah, yeah, and the Owens and the 303 well that was about it, yes, yes.

27:30 **Did you learn the Owen gun whilst you were in Bathurst?**

Yes you shot them and the Bren gun, I'm sorry, too and that was a little bit heavier machine gun but again you could carry it and you just put it on your shoulder. Usually the biggest fellows got them.

How about you, were you big or small or?

Oh I was five foot ten and a half, yeah, only weighed nine stone, so yeah, suppose I was tall enough in those days.

28:00 Yeah because a lot of people didn't grow real tall in those days because of a lack of food I'd say, yeah.

So tell us about the mateship there in Bathurst? Was that pretty good?

Oh yes, yes, yes. And you never seen anybody, you never seen any fights or anything like that, well they never got much,

28:30 and we were pretty young so we didn't drink that much or anything like that. I don't think we drank at all most of us. We certainly learnt in the army later on but everybody got on well. You could fight in the ring if you wanted to but if you had an argument they'd just take you down, put you in the ring and sort it out there and shake hands afterwards, always shake hands afterwards, never be enemies.

29:00 **What was your thoughts on going to New Guinea? Did you think that you'd be definitely be going?**

Everybody wanted to go, that's why they put us in the Infantry, haven't got many brains.

And what was your role on the gun that you took over? Were you the?

Yeah, that's right, you're right, you'd have one, two or three.

29:30 The man firing the gun, and then the other one looking after the belt and the other one bringing the ammunition up but you were taught to do the lot, to do the three of them and whatever.

What did you do when you were in New Guinea?

Ah in New Guinea? Like with the Vickers [gun]?

Yes.

Oh we only used it once. The Japanese never read the script.

30:00 We were told, they asked for volunteers and they said "You just go up to that bit of a ridge up there and the Japanese are over there in the jungle and just burn away, a bit of fun." and us being young fellas we thought that was great and two hundred and fifty bullets through in a couple of minutes and brrrh, think you're back in the First World War or something and we went up there and the Japanese never read the script. Nobody had ever been shot at before up there. They'd been up there plenty of times and fired,

30:30 and the next thing a gun went bang, bang, bang and one hit the side of the cliff where we were and the other two landed on the beach. There was a beach right behind us at Wewak and it landed behind some local people and they took off and if I'd have been with them I would have beat them. I don't blame them. They had little kids with them too but we thought this was so amusing. We could see they weren't hurt and these bullets weren't explosives. They were just, I think they

31:00 might have been anti-aircraft guns or mountain guns, but I'd say anti-aircraft because they didn't explode, yeah, and we're all drinking tea. It was like a picnic. One slit trench and about ten of us all trying to get into it.

Did you volunteer again?

They never asked again, no, no, no, they never. I don't know what happened after that, whether they just said that

31:30 might be, we won't do it again, the higher ups, the officers and that.

So after Bathurst, well how long were you in Bathurst doing the machine gunnery course?

I'd say about, that would be about three months, say ten weeks to three months, about that, yes, at a rough guess and

32:00 a lot of them knew me brother, not that that helped you at all.

They didn't treat you any better?

No, no, which was fair enough. I mean, at any rate you wouldn't want it anyway because you're in with your mates and whatever they get, you get.

Did you get any World War I instructors?

You're right there, there was a World War I fellow there, a very old man, like to us young kids, eighteen, anybody over thirty I think

32:30 was old in those days and yeah, there was one, an old fellow from the First World War but he didn't say too much, yeah. I can't remember his name but we peeled the beans in the sergeants' Mess and we just chopped them in halves and didn't string them and of course the sergeant come out and he was going to put us all in gaol I think. The string got caught in his throat, the old sergeant.

33:00 I mean how many kids knew how to string beans? Boys I mean, it was a girls job when we were growing up.

You know how to string beans now?

No.

So after Bathurst, what happened then?

We went to the young soldiers. You couldn't go overseas until you were nineteen, so we went to Singleton and into a camp there and again

33:30 we're all young fellows, but I don't know how long we were there. But again it was a good place to train the troops because in Singleton there's all plenty of mountains so it keeps you very fit and that's the whole idea of it, was keeping you fit.

How long were you there at the young soldiers camp?

Well I'd say only a few months because then we went

34:00 to Canungra to do our training. We come up here to

Queensland and did Canungra and, will I go onto Canungra?

Yes, tell us about Canungra?

Well we got into Brisbane and we got on the train, the old dog boxes. The train went to Canungra in them days and then when you got to Canungra and you got your gear and you doubled everywhere. You just doubled. There was no more walking or marching, you run and the first thing you seen was the cemetery next to the

34:30 (UNCLEAR) pass, they made sure of that. Fellows that had been training and been killed, that sort of thing, because they used live ammunition and then you had a wooden, at least there you had a wooden slate to sleep on. They was about that much space in between, and again the palliasses and the straw and that kept you off the ground and then you did all your ablutions in the

35:00 creek there. You didn't, everything was cold, and we were there in the wintertime too and everything was very cold. You had to break the ice just about before it and now you really hit the big mountains, really big, big, big. It was good training there. They did fire over the top of you. You went underneath barbed wire, so you didn't, so you fairly had a good chance you wouldn't bob up. But that was just to get you used to guns going over your head, bullets going over your head,

35:30 I should say, yeah, yeah.

Getting used to the sound as well?

Yes, the sound, the crack, so you'd be used to it because a lot of those poor fellows that went away at the start of the war they didn't have no training at all. It must have been terrible, a terrible shock to them, yeah.

Did they mainly use machine guns there?

Ah mainly a Bren gun, mainly a Bren gun,

36:00 yes. I can't remember ever using a Vickers but they were mainly a man laying on the ground, a sergeant, and he'd be firing over your head, yeah, yeah.

And what would they say, just lie down and hear this?

Yeah, and underneath and a lot of times they had the barbed wire on top of it so you went under the barbed wire, so you didn't have much chance of popping your head up. You wouldn't, you'd make sure of that, you were hugging the dirt.

36:30 You wouldn't be very wise to start looking around a bit, until you got there and then you went over the assault course. Now there was a beauty. That was fair dinkum. Over those big, I think everybody's seen an assault course sometime in their life on the movies and that sort of thing and you had to go up all these barricades and go up the ropes and along the ropes and when you finish you finish up at and they had a big water tower and a creek and you went on that, on the plank and then jumped in,

37:00 rifle and all and finished up down below. They did have boats there and people to, if you couldn't swim. Well most bush people could swim. They've always got a creek somewhere around and they'd make sure

nobody drowned or anything like that. Wouldn't do that. They always had somebody out in a boat there, watching, keeping an eye, if somebody didn't come up.

How did you find that?

Oh quite exciting cause

37:30 being, again I know I say this too often about the bush, you're used to jumping in the water, bush people and bush kids. Your parents would take you down, that sort of thing, or your big brothers and that sort of thing, yeah, to swim and that sort of thing.

Did you have any blokes there at Canungra that actually found all that kind of assault training very difficult?

Not to my knowledge,

38:00 I never seen anybody of our fellas, they didn't back out or get a bit nervous, or anything like that. I didn't see anybody like that, no, no, no. Well you didn't want to loose face in front of your mates at any rate.

That's the real reason.

Yeah, that's the real reason. You might be scared but you couldn't loose face.

And Blue had you actually used a rifle before you got into the army?

38:30 Yes, yes. Ex-serviceman come back from Kokoda and me brother, he come back from Kokoda, from New Guinea I should say. Milne Bay, he was at Milne Bay and we had fired, and we got into trouble over it too, because we were just out in the bush firing and somebody heard us and told the authorities,

You got dobbed in?

Yeah

39:00 we got dobbed in, yeah. I think the people who left their guns around and the bullets with young kids were a bit risky doing that. I think they should have taken the bullets somewhere and hid them somewhere or buried them anyway.

So what rifle were you given in the army?

303 and that was the size of the bullet any rate and the Bren gun was 303, the same size bullet,

39:30 and then on the Owen gun was a nine millimetre, nine millimetre and you put I think twenty something bullets in each cartridge. You put it underneath, no, on top.

And which was your favourite gun you used?

Oh Owen gun.

Why was that?

Oh it comes out pretty quick. You didn't have to reload, so if you got in a difficult spot you could use it pretty

40:00 very quick.

And did you use that over in the Islands?

Oh yes, yes, yes, but I was only, I only seen one big, like we tried to take a position and that was the only one I seen.

Tape 2

00:31 **Now Blue you mentioned to Heather [Interviewer] that you used to practice firing the rifle with your brother when he came back from New Guinea?**

Yeah, I pinched his rifle.

Oh you pinched it?

And he left the bullets there too and he should have hid them because young kids will do these things. Yeah, a friend, another friend, but he didn't join the army with me. I think he might have been a little bit younger, I'm not too sure.

01:00 **Did he share any stories with you, knowing you wanted to sign up and ?**

My brother?

Yeah.

No, he didn't seem to say too much. He didn't, in fact, he's never been on Anzac Day, a march or anything. I never miss them, but he never mentions it. I don't know why but that's

01:30 his way and I respect it.

If I could just Blue take you back to Cowra for just a second, the Japanese prisoner of war that you were talking about, can you remember what you actually chatted to him about or what he chatted to you about?

He told us he was a pilot, cause we were very interested then, yes. But the man up in the top there, in the tower, we had

02:00 a little while but not too long with him and he chased us. He said "Come on fellows, you go back to your camp". Yeah, because you're not supposed to go near the wire at any rate, but I think being up there, we talked to him so he was happy to have someone to talk to, sitting up in that box for hours, yeah. No, I can't remember what. He spoke English though and he told us he was a pilot, yeah.

And what was, I guess the general

02:30 **feeling around Cowra about I guess the prisoner of war camp that was there with the Japanese?**

By then we knew what was happening to our prisoners of war. We weren't very happy about them getting beds. Their officers had beds and that or senior rank and that, mattresses and beds, which we didn't have. We were sleeping on the what's it's name? We thought they should give them a harder time really.

03:00 Somebody went further but you couldn't do that.

And what was your impression of the pilot that you spoke too?

He seemed a pretty smart sort of fellow. Being a pilot he'd have to be, yeah, yeah, yes.

03:30 **You were talking to Heather before about the fact that the country boys who signed up did pretty well in training?**

Oh yeah, yes.

Cause they were used to a lot of all that stuff, how did the city fellows fair?

Most of them were pretty good but one or two would get blisters and sore feet and that sort of thing and find it a bit hard too.

04:00 If you were a bit plump, like carrying too much weight, you had a little bit of trouble but you never see too many of them people around in them days because nobody got much food, at any rate. You never got more than what you wanted at any rate. And you worked hard too, you had to keep busy.

And how did the officers in charge treat

04:30 **all you new recruits?**

They were very good. I had no complaints at all about NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers] and that sort of thing. You did what you were told and you had no troubles. No, they were decent people. They'd all been overseas and they were decent fellows, yeah and the higher up officers you didn't see much at any rate. Just about a lieutenant and below and mainly warrant officers and sergeants

05:00 and corporals, yeah.

And what did they, throughout all of your training, I guess mainly particularly at Canungra, what did they teach you about the Japanese?

That's a good question. I've never ever thought of it before because all they just said was they would never surrender and they were pretty cunning people

05:30 and they were pretty good on camouflage and that sort of thing and one thing they taught, once you were given a weapon or a rifle you'd never give it up to anybody. That was yours. If somebody asked you for a loan of your weapon, nah, that was your weapon.

06:00 **And were you taught, I guess, many (UNCLEAR) tactics to deal with the Japanese or counter?**

Section attack and that sort of thing and we did a lot of bayonet charges, like bayonet, like that sort of thing. They had those straw make believe people and that sort of thing, you did a lot of that sort of stuff, but I don't think

06:30 too many ever got that close anyway. You're either dead or the other fellow was dead before you got near him any rate.

What was the section charge that you were taught?

You had people acting as the enemy so then it was up to your NCOs and yourself to whatever, to spread out or whatever it was, where the enemy was,

07:00 where the fire was coming from because they had blank ammunition and that sort of thing. They used blanks in those training battalions and like how you move up a hill and that sort of thing and take cover and that sort of thing, yes.

07:30 And can you recall getting the news that you were finally going to head up to New Guinea?

Yes, we were at Yeerongpilly. There was a big camp on the top of the hill there and then we went, after we finished at Canungra and we went there and then we went down to the port there somewhere, I'm not sure and we went on the boat. I'm pretty sure it was the Duntroon, I think. I think it was on the Duntroon, yeah

08:00 and going up there well they were worried about subs but they knew there wouldn't be too many Japanese subs. At that stage the Japanese subs were just about beaten, way down near Australia, but you still had to do drill and that sort of thing. They did have people working on those boats. I don't know whether they were civilians or not or they were in the army. I think they were civilians and they just waited on you, on the Duntroon,

08:30 at any rate. They'd bring the food around, which was all the same old stuff at any rate, bully beef [canned meat]. You never got too many, you never seen anybody get chicken or anything.

Silver service but same old food?

Yeah, the same old food, yeah, yeah, yeah.

What was it like? Was that your first time on a ship?

First time, yes, yes. We'd been down to Burrum Bay many

09:00 times. There was a big pier there and the boats used to come in and go down to Sydney from there. We'd seen plenty of boats but never been on one, no. Yeah, that was the first time, yeah.

So what was it like? Heading off to sea for the first time?

Well it was fascinating, it was terrific. All the way down, you did have old soldiers with you going back to New Guinea, so they said, you had a tin hat and you could see all the tin hats floating down the Pacific Ocean because they said "You don't wear tin

09:30 hats in New Guinea." Well you didn't either. All you had was a felt hat, so you could see these all floating down the ocean. I don't know what the authorities thought of that.

So these fellows would just throw them over the side?

Over the side, yeah, because the old soldiers told you "Throw them over the side." cause they threw them over the side and nobody, when we got to New Guinea nobody wore a tin hat, so it was a waste of time carrying it up there.

10:00 I'll always remember that thing, about that.

And were there any other tit bits they told you about New Guinea on the way up?

Ah yeah there a few there but they didn't seem to say too much. They just told you about, like nearly everybody got malaria, everybody got malaria, well I got malaria, everybody got malaria.

10:30 And they take you down to the local hospital and that. When I got malaria in New Guinea the priest he come down to give me the blessing and I thought "I ain't going to die". I had a pretty bad strain.

So what were your first impressions of New Guinea when you arrived?

Pretty rough country, even though we were bush fellas. It was all trees, from the time

11:00 you left the beach, the port and we got off in Wewak and marched up to our place and then we joined the Battalion and that wasn't too far inland. We were very close to the coast so the Japanese were still on the inlet, cause they had them locked up at that stage on the Sepik River and there was supposed to be twelve thousand, but when the war finished I think there was something like

11:30 twenty something thousand, so there was a lot more. Cause they were dying pretty well too because they had no medicine and that sort of thing.

Did you have any awareness Blue at this time of what stage the war was at or whether it was sort of starting to wind down or not?

Well we knew that, that was the last part of New Guinea. 6th Division had them boxed in on the Sepik River and they had planes going up and down on the Sepik River and

12:00 nobody would swim the Sepik River, it was full of crocodiles, the big ones too. So they knew and they get an eye on any boats and that. They just go down in aeroplanes and just blow holes in them, so the Japanese, some of them tried to sneak over the river, the Sepik River.

And what was your understanding at the time of what your duties and operations were going to entail?

12:30 Well we knew we were just foot sloggers, just a soldier, just do what you're told and that was it and you keep out of trouble, and never volunteer for anything. We learnt that when we went up to machine guns. We were all volunteers to fire at the Japanese and we found out, my eldest brother said "Never volunteer".

13:00 **So you landed on the shore at Wewak and you sort of trudged up?**

Yeah and joined the Battalion. We joined the C Company, 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion. They were a machine gun battalion, still called, but they were used as infantry. The local Papuan police boys didn't have a good name. These fellows had all been trained

13:30 as machine gunners, a lot of them had been in the Middle East and that sort of thing and I think they were officers and that too and the Papuan police boys didn't have a high regard for the 2/3rd Machine Gunners.

Why was that?

They weren't as good as the infantry fellows, like the 2/1st, 2/2nd and all them fellows, the 2/7th, them infantry fellows, they knew what to do, yeah. They were good soldiers.

14:00 And our other thing there like over than that big attack and we lost a militia man. I don't know why he was with us at that stage but he was a militia man and they never found his body, but they did find it later on and they'd taken parts off him. He was a sergeant, a militia sergeant so maybe he'd been there, around that area, maybe he was there as a guide. Being a soldier you don't know everything that's going on because we were

14:30 still artillery support too and very heavy guns. I think they were Long Toms, or something they call them. And when we give that attack and other than that you used to go down in the potatoes because, I think they call them yams in New Guinea. And every night certain people would go down there and they'd take a couple of Bren guns and a couple of armed guns and they'd just stay there that night, not sleep

15:00 and the Japanese would come in because they were starving by that stage to get the sweet potatoes. But they did get a few but there was never any firing when I was there down there.

Is that because you didn't see any when you were down there?

No, we didn't see any Japanese, no, plenty of pigs. They kept you busy.

In what way? Did you take pot shots at the pigs?

Oh no, oh you wouldn't fire, no.

So how would the pigs

15:30 **keep you busy?**

Oh making a noise in the dark and everything. You'd think they were Japanese.

And the sergeant that you mentioned, the one who never came back, well they found him a lot later on, that they found remains?

Yeah, they'd taken parts off him.

The Japanese?

Yeah, I think it was one of the first, when people were, I don't know how they ever worked it out

16:00 who did it but I know that was one of the first cannibal trials in the Pacific, in that area, but I don't know how they'd ever work out which Japanese did it anyway. I don't know. No, wouldn't have a clue but people were tried for it, but ah, I don't know.

So when you joined the Battalion what was the state of the camp like?

16:30 We were on the top of a hill and we did sort of, at least here you had, not because of the and our Company was all in on top of a sort of ridge and naturally for safety and you had all the, like I say it was like a lantana, a very heavy bush close to us,

17:00 so they had no chance of getting through there. They had to come up one way and we had pickets every night and now and again the pigs would get into the kitchen and we had a mad captain and he used to blast away and fill all the dixies full of holes. I don't know if there was Japanese there, some say they were Japanese but they never kept any. The kitchen was down below the camp, close to a bit of a creek

there.

17:30 That used to be exciting because there was a lot of shooting going on.

And what were your living conditions like?

Oh, oh well you didn't get too many baths and that sort of thing. Up on top of the hill there wasn't no water and I can't remember how we ever, somebody must have went down with a few water bottles and filled them up somewhere. I think you took turns but I can't remember

18:00 how it was all organised in those days, yeah.

And so what were your daily duties Blue? Can you give us a bit of a picture of what you were doing on a daily basis?

Ah you'd do patrols a lot. There was always a certain area in front of you, and you'd see dead Japanese. Nobody ever buried them and some cruel, I won't say cruel, some tough

18:30 type of people would knock their gold teeth out and that sort of thing, but they just, by the time we got there a lot of these people were just skeletons, because of the local, the animals and that sort of thing. They had no respect for Japanese, after what we'd heard about Malaya and that sort of thing. They just treated them as animals, the Japanese. We treated them

19:00 as animals. I only seen one surrender and they got the Papuan police boys to take him back but they patted him on the head and saying "Japan man now finished" and I don't think he got back because they did some terrible things to the local people, to the women and that, they cut their breasts off and that. They were cruel people.

I have heard of some of those stories but not all of them. What kind of things did you understand or hear of

19:30 **or know of that they'd actually done to the locals?**

I don't think that we'd know much more than you would know. We just, we'd read it in newspapers and that sort of thing that women had been found and this had happened and we most likely learnt that before we joined the army. Because they'd been pretty well over run New Guinea by that stage and their commandos too, they'd bring back information and that sort of thing, cause they kept, their job was to keep an eye on the Japanese,

20:00 what they were up to and that sort of thing.

What did you know Blue about, I guess the atrocities that the Japanese had committed against Australian soldiers or missionaries?

I'd say that we knew about the Malaya. I don't know about the missionaries, but we knew that about Malaya, about the prisoners of war. By the time we went in the army, 1944, we definitely knew about it, that they'd been badly treated.

20:30 And what happened when in Malaya, I think it was Ten Pin or something when our wounded, they just bayoneted them, killed them. We, Australians knew about that by then. It was public information.

So was there a bit of hatred amongst the troops toward the Japanese?

21:00 Oh yeah, yeah, that's what I say, they wouldn't bury them. They had no respect for them at all. And then when they surrendered well they were all, a lot of them were rotten with disease and that sort of thing. But I know our people who had the landing barges they took them out a fair way in the water hoping half the buggers would get drowned. Or the sharks would get them. They didn't

21:30 bring them right up on the beach. They had to go through the water to get on them. We woke up to what they were doing and we agreed with it too.

I suppose it might sound like a bit of a gruesome question but I'm kind of sort of fascinated because I know how quick the jungle took over things in New Guinea, how long would it take, I guess for the jungle to kind of reduce a, someone

22:00 **who'd been freshly killed I guess, like a dead Japanese to a skeleton?**

I think with the local, cause you had wild pigs, a lot of wild pigs in New Guinea and that sort of thing and wild animals too, like plenty of them. They had tree kangaroos and that sort of thing but of course they wouldn't live on meat but they had a lot of other, like rats, plenty of rats and big rats, well I don't think it would only take

22:30 a few weeks before there would be much left I don't think.

Would they have been in one piece when you found them or were they scattered all over the place?

I seen full bodies laying on the ground, just one. You never seen more than one, yeah. Maybe they were

people who were suiciders or something like that, I guess. Poking around and looking for food or something like that,

23:00 by themselves or something and when they got shot the others escaped.

Wouldn't not burying them or doing anything with them kind of give off a bad smell after a while?

Oh yeah, but it was well away from camps. You could walk for nearly a mile or two miles and they was nowhere cause we were on top of the

23:30 hills, on the top of the ridges, and they'd be well down the bottom and along the track, naturally where people walk they, the tracks were really the easiest going area, with the local natives made the tracks and our mob would walk along that way. Yeah, they'd be a long way away but I don't think there was any just there as you went past. I can't remember but I don't think there was much,

24:00 but there was some of them that was fully formed, they weren't all stripped down to a skeleton.

And Blue you mentioned that some fellas would get into the gold teeth, but were there other souveniring going on?

Yeah, well I think most people were pretty, well if you was going along and you seen a samurai sword out in an obvious

24:30 place where a Japanese wouldn't leave it but if you went to try and get it and beat somebody else to it, I'd heard in the early days that they used that as a bait. They'd have a machine gun right on it but that was early days before we got there. That never happened. I bought a samurai home but that was after the war when they got all the Battalion did have a lot of samurais so they put all

25:00 the names in a hat and I thought really it wasn't right that I should have got that, anyway it should have been the old soldiers should have got it cause they were there all the time. But they drew the names out of the hat and that was it.

Blue can you tell us about, I guess for want of a better word, the older soldiers and the new recruits actually up in New Guinea, how they sort of got on?

25:30 Most of the old soldiers were good fellows. You got one now and again that would call you "Reo." that's a reinforcement and we had one like that and we had a pretty tough fellow amongst us young soldiers too. This fellow kept it up a fair bit so he said "Look if I was as old as you I would have been in Tobruk." so that shut him up. Cause most of us young fellows had brothers in Tobruk and overseas or been pilots or something like that, cause as

26:00 I say they was big families in those days and nearly all in the army. But no, they was good. They never tried to be smart with us fellows or anything, no and the officers were good too. They were quite nice fellows.

Would they look after you at all to a degree, do you think?

They did, they did, yeah, the older soldiers did and I think that lot had a lot of trouble with

26:30 in Vietnam. All those young men just eighteen or nineteen, or nineteen or twenty I think, nineteen and twenty in Vietnam and they didn't have any old soldiers among them. We had a stack of people in their late twenties and thirties and they looked after us, the young soldiers and I think that maybe caused a lot of, when they had the trouble in Vietnam.

27:00 Only the NCOs in Vietnam were the older soldiers, yeah.

So Blue can you walk us through I guess, one of your patrols you were doing? How that would play out, like how many men and how?

Well you always had a forward scout and that was the bravest fella of the lot. He's out there all by himself, if anything happens he's left

27:30 there. The Japanese might let one or two or three in but see, the patrols that we did in New Guinea, the Japanese had just about had it by then. The only one attack, and I've got to be honest, that was on top of a hill, but probably being a young soldier and I'd heard about this machine gun and you could hear which way they were coming towards

28:00 us and I don't know what the officer was but he said "They're ours" and we were trying to dig holes with our hands. I don't know where he got that idea from because and the Woodpecker goes a little bit slower, sort of I don't know whether the rounds don't come out as fast as the Vickers, but it's definitely got a sound different.

28:30 And yeah, so I always had to remember that "They're ours." yeah, but we didn't take no notice of him. No, I'll be honest I didn't see a lot in New Guinea, when a young soldier. See a lot of old Japanese planes there, all the Zeros, all wrecked. They did a good job of them, the air force.

29:00 We seen them flying over, a lot of ours, like the Beaufort's and that sort of thing. They called them "Whispering Deaths". You wouldn't hear them coming, they'd just go straight over the top of them so they were very good to catch the Japanese in the open and that sort of thing, I mean boats and that sort of thing. And the Lightning, we seen the Lightning too, because by this stage in New Guinea the war had moved up to Borneo by that stage,

29:30 Borneo and the Philippines for the Yanks.

So was there any kind of feeling amongst the fellows that what you were doing up there was a bit unnecessary at this stage?

Well us young soldiers, maybe the old soldiers most likely did and maybe the officers did but being young soldiers we didn't. We realised that later on, I've read a lot, I like reading history and that sort of thing and I know now that they said it was a little bit of a waste.

30:00 They had them boxed up but oh well, that's the way it went. It's the higher authorities, it's them that make the orders, isn't it? And you've just got to do whatever they say. But the buggers stayed there until the war finished anyway, they wouldn't surrender.

30:30 **And with the patrol that you were telling me about earlier, hearing the Woodpecker coming down the track and the CO [Commanding Officer] saying it was one of yours, was that the same show that you volunteered for, that you were telling us about earlier or was that?**

Oh no, no, no, you went out on them, everybody went, there was no,

31:00 only, I don't think, in New Guinea there wouldn't be too many, oh that's right, just the machine guns. I mean you knew the Japanese, there'd been nobody ever fired, they'd been up there plenty of times and nobody had ever fired at them and the Japanese were nowhere near us, they were way over on the ridges, yeah, so it was like a picnic. That was the only way that you could volunteer.

31:30 **Did you ever, Blue, encounter or hear of any stragglers, like of the Japanese that were sort of...?**

Only that one fellow who surrendered. That's the only one that I seen, like I really got close too, I was standing next to him.

What kind of condition was he in?

Pretty bad and he looked

32:00 in poor end for a little fella. He wanted to be anywhere place but where he was. And once they give him to those Papuan boys I wouldn't have taken insurance out on his life, I don't, but they were good soldiers, the Papuan police. They had bare feet, no shoes, no boots, you'd never hear them coming. They were good soldiers.

And how did you, I guess, work with the Papuan police?

32:30 Oh to be the honest Chris [Interviewer], that was the first and only time I ever seen them there. That was the only time I ever seen them there. They used to wear the lap laps the uniform they had, but the infantry would have. They would have worked with them all the time, the real fair dinkum infantry, like 2/1st, second and all those. They were the good, yeah.

How did you feel about

33:00 **going out onto patrols all the time?**

Well it went through your mind but oh, it wasn't, I mean, you knew that the Japanese had had it and you'd have to be terribly unlucky for any action anyway because

33:30 they were well boxed up, and I don't think they trusted our battalion to do to many patrols.

So you only got the small jobs?

Yeah. That was right, being machine gunners.

Were there any casualties at all in your Unit, in the?

Only that day when they lost us the what's his name and I never knew whether anybody else, when this gun that was supposed to be our gun

34:00 firing and it was the enemy, I never seen anybody carried out on a stretcher or anything. So I don't know. I don't think I seen too many, I'll be honest and think only people if they got sick. I never seen actually a wounded man or anything like that in the little time that we were there.

34:30 But when I was in the hospital there were plenty of wounded people, when I went down there with malaria. There was plenty of fellows in that hospital they'd nearly all been wounded, either sickness or wounded.

Where was the hospital based?

At, I'm not sure but it must have been around Wewak point somewhere. There must have been a hospital there because there were nursing Sisters there and that sort of thing.

35:00 But where that was and what locality in that area, I don't know.

And what did you know about malaria before you got it?

Well we'd seen all the old, all our brothers coming home and they'd all had it and they all their skin was yellow from taking Atebrin [anti malarial medicine], turns all your skin yellow.

35:30 **So what happened, did you know when you started getting the first symptoms that you had it?**

No, I just collapsed, yeah, yeah I just went, I passed out. I was walking along on a patrol when I put my foot over a log and that's the last thing I remember. I'll always remember that as long as I live. And the other fellas all got a fright, they thought

36:00 I'd been shot. My mate often, well he did afterwards, not long ago "You give us a fright that day".

What was the next thing you remember after that?

The padre giving me the last rites and the Papuan police, the Papuan bearers were carrying us. They carried you back

36:30 and down to the hospital, yeah, but I knew I wasn't going to die and I was pretty happy, well I hoped.

And how long did it take you to recover?

I think I was in there something like a couple of weeks, two weeks, not too long, two weeks, yeah. On my bit of paper they had cerebral malaria but I don't think I had cerebral

37:00 malaria, but that's what they had written on the bit of paper. I think cerebral malaria you had a fair chance of dying with that.

Yeah, not many people.

Yeah, not many people lived with it , so at any rate I think they just put it down there.

I must admit your symptoms were pretty strange.

Yeah.

And what was it like having a couple of weeks in the local hospital?

It was

37:30 good. At least you got better food down there. I can't remember what you, you definitely never got steak or anything, it was still tinned food, tinned food, tinned sausages and that sort of thing.

And were there fellows that you knew in there at all?

No, no, no I didn't know anybody, yeah.

38:00 **And you rejoined your?**

Yeah come back to the Company, C Company, yeah.

And had anything changed at all while you were away, in terms of what was going on in the camp?

No, it was much, still the same thing and then our Battalion was taken down to Wewak Point, just

38:30 before the war finished and we were in a beautiful spot there, right on the ocean and we could go fishing and catch fish and get something nice to eat. And while we were there, the next thing the word come over and we had one gramophone and one record. The padre, the good old Salvation Army, they looked after us and he had a tent there and that sort of thing and you could get a cup of tea there and a biccy and that sort of thing and the next thing somebody in the night time, someone said "The war's over."

39:00 cause we didn't have much information like they were getting back in Sydney and that sort of thing, about bombs and that sort of thing. Well there were more smiles around that night and morning, plenty of them. And then two sailors come down a couple of days later, but we used to call them "Pop" and they had beards, real big beards and these two fellows walked down and we said "Who are you mob?" "Who are you mob? This is Bill and Jack". These were the fellows but they

39:30 hadn't shaved, they had no beard, they looked about twenty years younger. We thought they were old fellas.

Was there much celebration?

Oh yeah, but what you could do, there was nothing there to, you couldn't get a beer. And then word

come around that they wanted volunteers to go to Japan, well it was all smiles then. But to put it into those people,

40:00 but while we were in Japan there was never anybody like I mean, the front line soldiers they not the type to be cruel soldiers, not in the Western nations anyway. They respect the other people and there was never anything like that in Japan, nobody was being nasty with people or anything like that.

Tape 3

00:33 **Blue you were just telling Chris about Morotai but before we go there, how long did it take you to get of Wewak to go home to Australia?**

Well we got on the boat at Wewak and went straight to Morotai from there. The ones who wanted to come home, you could either go to the Occupation Army or if you didn't, well you come home. The old soldiers naturally went first, which was fair enough and then the young

01:00 soldiers last. And then we had a Battalion parade, a Company parade I should say and it was a farewell and when the Battalion broke up some of were going to go north to Japan and some were going south, so they had a big parade there. And there was a little red headed fella from Grafton, a little short man and he was an old soldier too and of course us young soldiers wouldn't have been game to do what he did. They numbered us off, one, two,

01:30 three, and we were all lined up and he was sixty six and they got to sixty four, sixty five and then he yelled out "Bingo". He said "I've wanted to do that for five bloody years." Well the officers, everybody died laughing, nobody got upset.

Maybe because the war was over people were a bit more relaxed?

Relaxed, yeah, it was a good joke, I thought that was fantastic.

Did you, just by the way, did you

02:00 **see the surrender of the Japanese?**

Yes, we went down and watched them on, down on the parade ground and they had all these big Military policemen and all these little Japanese officers and all the big Military policemen were soldiers of about six foot four, six foot three, six foot two, and they escorted them and all their white webbing and that sort of thing and they did surrender there, the officer. Mainly the officers, they handed their sword over and that sort

02:30 of thing. But we seen them coming in,, especially being on Wewak, we had a good what's it name? Were they bought them down to put them on the boats to take them out to an island. There was an island off Wewak and they put them all on there, the whole whatever there was, twenty thousand. There was a few islands there, little islands, not far, not far to go and they just dumped them there and we said "Let them stay there, don't give them nothing", but they didn't do that. They give them bully beef or whatever. Somebody

03:00 supplied them with food and that sort of thing, but they were rotten with malaria and diseases and their officers and their NCO's, they were still slapping their faces, which we found out later, through Japanese friends, that's what they did when they trained their soldiers, where in the Australian Army you weren't allowed to touch anybody. But they were, they were numbered, which I learnt later on in Japan, yeah, in Japan, itchi-ni,

03:30 saying one, two, three, four, five and yeah they numbered them off and if they mucked up, they'd whacko, and they had leather belts and hit them with that and that sort of thing. And a lot of these people they were just wobbling, because they had malaria and that sort of thing. They were very cruel to their own people, which the Japanese soldiers had told us later on when they come and worked for us. That's the way they trained them.

But even though the officers and

04:00 **the NCO's and the soldiers that were POW's, they were still treating each other badly, the officers were still treating them badly?**

Yes, they marched in there to put on a, those that could stand straight, marched straight, now I can't remember, I don't think, naturally they didn't have weapons. They only had their gear. I'm a hundred percent sure none of them had weapons and they were just, they had stacks of gear,

04:30 a lot of gear. So because they were so weak and that sort of thing a lot of them would get the wobbles and that sort of thing. Yeah, and then they marched them down and put them on those barges and they took the barges out in the water a bit.

So they didn't want to be seen as failures?

Yes, that's right, they were still proud, because they are, the Japanese are a proud race,

05:00 very proud people.

What about the surrender, looking at the Japanese officers giving up their swords and what have you, how were they?

They were all dressed up beautifully and they didn't seem ill. They must have kept the good medicine for themselves because I didn't see too many of them and they had beautiful white shirts and white clothes and white gloves. I've never seen this before, men wearing gloves and they had their big swords and this sort of thing.

05:30 [Japanese] General Adachi was the man in charge at Wewak. He was the man in charge and handed his sword over, it wasn't Blamey, it wasn't General [Thomas] Blamey. I forget who the Australian, no, being a young soldier I wouldn't have known. I can't remember who took the sword and all that sort of thing, yeah. But that was a parade just to watch those officers, they were the only ones that there.

How far away up from them were you at the surrender?

When they come in with all this, when they marched in to go on the barges we were standing right near them, cause they had no weapons or anything. Those front line infantry battalions that were further inland than us, they would have taken all the weapons of them. And then when the word come through and after it was all organised, and they

06:30 said they would surrender because it was still, whether they thought we might be pulling their leg. Our artillery they had flares and all that sort of thing and when it was signed and the war was definitely over, they fired it all towards the Japanese and this Japanese come in under white flag. He said "You Australians I know you're good sportsmen and that sort of thing, but if you keep that up, it's on again."

07:00 But they weren't dropping bombs on them or anything or shells, it was only flares, that sort of thing. They weren't bombing them or anything or shells I should say.

Were the Australian soldiers well behaved at the surrender? Was there any booing or hissing?

No, no, that's what I say, front line soldiers they're not cruel people and that happened in all armies. It was always those buggers behind that did nothing, that caused all the trouble.

07:30 **That's a very interesting point. So Blue, well tell us about Morotai? Hang on, sorry, I've just got to ask you this, why did you want to remain in, go to Japan?**

Oh young soldier, I was only nineteen.

You hadn't had enough?

Oh well we were going to live it up over there, weren't we? Plenty of sake [rice wine].

Blue did you and your mates all volunteer for the Occupied Forces?

Some went home, some of the young soldiers went home and some went

08:00 up, yeah, up there and one fellow he had very bad teeth and they wouldn't take him but he come up later. He went back to Australia and then rejoined. Must have got his teeth fixed up or something. What the hell was wrong with his teeth? They sent him to New Guinea with his teeth. It seemed weird to me, poor old Jimmy Williams, yeah. Dear old Jim.

So the ones that joined up were sent to Morotai, is that correct?

Yeah, we all formed up there. The 67th was

08:30 Sixth Division and the people from Rabual and New Brit and those areas, were 67th Battalion. Now 65 was from the 7th Division and they were in Borneo at that stage and the 9th Division was in Borneo at Balikpapan and Tarakan, I don't know which was which, but they made up 66th and 65

09:00 Battalion and we were all on Morotai, lovely, beautiful spot. And we signed up to do eighteen months or whichever was the most, by the time we landed over there and that caused an argument. We were out on a beach somewhere and we knew days before they had organised that we were all going on strike and they, and the Minister for the Army come up there and they had no officers,

09:30 was only warrant officers and the sergeants and they marched the men on and the men marched as if they were outside Buckingham Palace, bunging in on because we'd been, we went on strike and they were all on strike. Our officers come out because we were all in the bush and he said "I've got to read this to you fellas" and he read it out what they could do to you. I don't know about shooting you, I don't know, I can't remember what they, and then everybody went and played football on the beach.

10:00 **Can you tell us what you went on strike for exactly? I think I missed it.**

Yeah, we had to do eighteen months after we landed in Japan, I think it was eighteen months or two years. Something like that, but we got to Morotai about, oh we were there for Christmas, I'm pretty sure, it was about November I think, something like that and we got to

10:30 to Morotai and we were there December, January and we looked like they were going to keep us there for evermore. So that's why they went on strike and then when we got to Japan then we had to do eighteen months or two years. I forget now. And that's why they went on strike but the ring leaders of that, do you know where they were sent? Straight back to Australia, and discharged so they never went to Japan. But that was the higher ups, like sergeants or warrant officers.

11:00 They were the ones that organised the strike and the Minister for the Army was there, who I can't remember his name but they hot wired the microphone and when he touched it he got a shock. They knew it wouldn't kill him because it only had batteries.

And what was read out to you saying you'd better come to the party or you'd all be put in gaol?

We could be put in gaol. I don't think there was anything about,

11:30 I think they could shoot you because we was still at war, peace hadn't been signed, like the proper peace but we knew, I don't think they did read that bit out, I'm not too sure but if they did nobody took any notice of it. They knew they wouldn't shoot ex-servicemen. There would be a hell of a trouble, wouldn't it? And, but they could you in gaol but they'd look funny putting about four thousand people

12:00 in gaol, wouldn't they?

What was Morotai like?

Oh beautiful, beautiful and they reckoned there was Japanese still in the jungle there and it's only a little island, and who hadn't surrendered, soldiers who hadn't surrendered. Yeah, beautiful and you could see the smoke coming from the Islands, the Halmahera's I think it was, you could see the volcanoes. There wasn't no volcano on Morotai, not to my

12:30 knowledge but you could see the smoke coming up from Halmahera's, the islands not far away. And they were nearly all Christians, all down through a lot of those, so the Portuguese must have been there, yeah, they were saying they were Christians.

Were any of the men told to go on patrols to try to capture the Japanese that were hiding there?

That was still on Morotai? No, everybody ignored them I think.

13:00 No, there was never, I never heard, no, never, no. But it was good there, it was great there on the island, swimming and that and catching fish and that, yeah.

Could you just go and hook a line or what have you, throw a line and get a fish and cook it yourself?

Yeah, yeah, yes, cook it yourself and catch it.

Gee that would have been an improvement on bully beef?

13:30 Yeah, those tinned, all those tinned vegies and that sort of thing, carrots and that, not very nice and powdered egg I should say, the egg was powdered.

So tell us about going to Japan, how did you get over there and how long did it take?

Now we all, I used to remember the name of the boat we went but I just can't remember, but we all went

14:00 on this American victory ship, victory ship and so all the bunks were there, like the Yanks and they had lovely food, oh lots of Yank stuff.

On the ship?

Oh they had, it was paradise compared to what we'd been eating, especially on the Duntroon or any of those, or in New Guinea. It was all fresh food, but a lot of fellas got, like they got

14:30 sea sickness, I was lucky and they had to up and sleep on the deck. They let them sleep on the deck all those people who had sea sickness. I could sleep down below on the bunk no trouble at all and then I found a bit of paper left by some American soldier I suppose and said "These victory ships in a big storm would crack in halves" because they were welded that way and it had happened. And the next thing off the coast of China we hit the biggest storm. I was watching the screws coming out of the water,

15:00 down on the stern. She was dipping, yeah. I was thinking "I hope she doesn't break in half." cause they had big storms in that area, off China.

What did happen?

No, nothing, no, it was all, no. Must have been a pretty bad one. Well they do get bad storms naturally in the Asians and that sort of thing, some worse than others.

Did you stop anywhere on your way to Japan from Morotai?

15:30 No, we landed right in Kure, in Kure and they wouldn't let us off because they were still trying to find out, that was the Yanks, that was the Americans and they were moving out and that sort of thing and we were taking all that area, around Hiroshima, that was all our area, the British Empire and the Brits and everybody but we were the first there and of course everybody all went down and joined and once it went dark we went straight down the what's its name

16:00 at the front and the back and we all got off. You weren't supposed to but we all did. We couldn't wait to get a taste of that sake.

How did you find the Americans on the ship?

Oh good, the sailors were pretty nice fellas. I think they were pretty used to it and that sort of thing, carrying soldiers. I think, I don't know whether they were regulars, like real sailors like in the American Navy or whether they were civilians. I've got a

16:30 sneaking suspicion I think a lot of them were civilians. I could be wrong, I'm not too sure, but one Aborigine there, he was our cook sergeant and he was a lovely fellow but he was, I've never seen an Aborigine so pale. He said "Blue, I'm going to die". I think he come from Alice Springs. He'd never seen the ocean before too much. It's a terrible sickness I

17:00 believe. It was with those fellows. Some of them would try to come down and once they smelt that food down below and the oil, the smell of oil and food, they (demonstrates) straight back up again and away they go and loose it all.

I wonder what happened to that Aborigine bloke?

Oh he come up, he was right once he got off at Kure and come with us. He was our cook sergeant and nice fella. Can't remember his name.

How long was that trip Blue from Morotai

17:30 **into Kure?**

I'd say, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I'd say it took a week, seven days, at least and then we come into the port there and who did we see first? It was great, the Warrilongli, the Australian flag flying and it was zipping like that in front of us, because of the mines, to make sure our boat didn't hit a mine, yeah and it was criss crossing and

18:00 we followed it in, yeah, into the port there. And then they took us off and put us on trucks and took us out to, in the suburbs of Hiroshima, a place called Kaitachi. It was winter time and we'd just come from New Guinea, it was February and that's pretty cold in Japan. Snow was everywhere and they had forty four gallon drums

18:30 and pieces of wood and you lit that of a night time just to warm it and they looked like either workers huts who worked in those factories or army. I'd say workers I think they were. There was a stack of them because that's the way the Japanese did it with their factories. They used to live there on the job, yeah, so when you got up in the morning you were covered in soot.

You're kidding?

19:00 But it was that cold, after us coming from New Guinea, we felt it terrible.

Did the army provide you with coats and what have you?

Yes, that's a good question, now where the heck did we, we did have overcoats, so they must have organised them. They must have been in Japan and they issued to us there, yes, yes. Didn't take long before they set up a canteen and you got bottled beer and you had beer every night

19:30 and that sort of thing, yeah. And then you got your leave into Hiroshima and all that sort of thing because everybody wanted to see Hiroshima, didn't they? I mean nobody had ever heard of the atom age or anything, the atomic and you could see these people and all the, like as though porridge, the poor people who survived and all that

20:00 burnt on their faces, the women and the kids and men and everything. They must have been a long way out, they weren't anywhere where the bomb went off. They must have been, it killed everything in the mile radius.

What was that, did you go and look at the crater where the bomb?

No, it went off in the air but there's a photo there of where they aimed it at. It was like a museum I think or something like that.

20:30 It had a dome on it, yeah and they reckon there was footprints from somebody running across the bridge when the bomb went off. Cause I think they had three planes up and only one had the bomb. I think there was three or four, yeah and I think seventy eight thousand, something like that I think, that's in a mile radius, but the one's further out well they still got damaged with these things

21:00 on their neck and on their, anything that was bare. If they had something on, covering it, it never effected them but it was mainly here, where it was bare, cause winter time Japanese walked around in a lot of clothing, yeah.

Were the streets around there just decimated from the bomb?

Absolutely, you can see it there in those photos, just flattened and then our Salvation Army man he set up in a bombed out village, on about the

21:30 third or fourth floor, and all the wood was gone, all burnt, and they put a donut place there and we used to go up there because nobody knew anything about radioactive, never heard of. This radioactive city we'd be sitting up there eating donuts and having cups of tea and coffee and all the wood was gone, everything was, right where the bomb went off, where they aimed at.

22:00 I don't know how long the Salvation Army man, how long he survived but a lot of our fellows did get cancer but I don't know whether that was through that or not. And we'd pick up all the beautiful bottles, anything bottled and all melted and we'd pick them up and look at them and "Have a look at this one". We're running around.

Like a glass bottle of apple juice for instance or something like that?

Yes, yes, something like that. Bottles just melted, they're all melted and all different colours and

22:30 here we are picking them up. I know it was about, well that was three, four, nearly six months later but still radioactive stays, it doesn't go away for a long time, does it? Years and years and years, but the brewery which was out further, well out, well away and any rate little bits of paper started to arrive

23:00 in American headquarters, "Ten dozen beer, Ned Kelly, six dozen beers, Darby Munroe." he was a great jockey, well known in those days, all these funny names. The Yanks said "What's going on here?" And the next thing when somebody went out they had a two big military policemen on the brewery. That finished Ned Kelly, he never got no more beer.

What were the military police like there in Japan?

23:30 Pretty rough, pretty rough and they all got in the black market, cause we went in and took over from them. I come home one night and they said "You're going to be a military policeman". No soldier wanted to be a military policeman, that was the bottom job, way down the bottom and I said "No, no". We all said no. They said "You're still infantry, you're not what's is name" and they put us in there and we were in there about six weeks. I never made so much money

24:00 in all my life. I think I was there fifteen months and never drew a pay but the NCO's they had to draw a pay because how were they paying their mess bills? My mate sold a quarter of a truck load of sugar and he was a truck driver in Kure, a little fellow I palled up with on Morotai and he had a tin truck full of Japanese money and then one morning we all got out

24:30 bed and they said "Alright on parade, carry your money, what money you've got with you and you can change so much money" and we got all this Japanese money and it had a little stamp on it, just like a little stamp, a very small one and the other money, he had a truck load of money that was no good to him. You couldn't use it, not out in Japan or anywhere.

What would happen on the black market? Another soldier would come to you and say "Look Blue, I want to get this and that" and you would say "Alright well I'll get it for you but

25:00 **it comes at a price." is that how it would work?**

Well it was us selling to the Japanese, cause I had twenty four Japanese working for me. They were all ex-soldiers and any rate we weren't getting bad food then and like I wasn't pinching anybody's food and that because it was tinned peas and who wants tinned peas at any rate. The soldiers didn't want them, so I used to take them into Hiroshima, belt the side in and I sell them to this fellow this

25:30 day and he had a suit on and a little tie, like a little what's it's name, boot lace tie, and I can see by looking at him he was an intelligent looking fellow and I tell him it was honey. They were starving and they hadn't honey for about seven or eleven years, or something like that, because of the submarines, the Yankee submarines sunk anything that had sugar and they didn't grow with sugar. And at any rate I told him a tin of honey and he looks at it and

26:00 says "P E A S" and he said "That don't spell honey, that spells peas". I said "Oh you educated people".

You almost got hold of a whole bunch of peas?

Yes, it was better for them than honey anyway, it was good for them those peas, full of vitamins. They give it to the army.

26:30 **But why were the Japanese keen to buy black market stuff? Weren't they getting any food?**

No, and sugar, sugar, I believe if you don't get sugar your body starves for it and you start wanting it. They hadn't had sugar for years.

So what would have happened, lets say, if the authorities found out that the army was dealing with the black market? Do you think there would have been big trouble?

Yeah, you could be, yeah, you could be charged under the army regulations, yeah, they could charge you,

27:00 yeah, yeah, yeah, and then when we went into be military policemen, we had a MP [Military Police] armband and we'd go down and sell it to the Japanese and then we'd have a mate waiting outside with the MP armband and he'd come in and catch me and the Japanese, and naturally the Japanese lost his money and we just took the stuff back and went around the corner, and cut up the money. I told that to my

27:30 niece, and she, I could see, telling her about Hiroshima and like that and she was a bit peeved and I said "Listen, just get a book and read about what they did to some of the fellows, the Chinese in Singapore, just have a look. We did nothing."

Then after we were there a little while, the Americans left and a little island called Itajima and that's where the military hospital finished up and we went

28:00 over there and they had a big sign, it was the 43rd Battalion or something, they had this big sign "THE LIBERATORS OF LUSON" and then they had down two sides of it, this was the gate that you drove through to get into camp. And down on both sides they had Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney. Our major, Major Ferguson said "Blue, get a paint brush, find one" and I said "Where am I going to find one?" He said "Just find a paint brush."

28:30 So I'm painting it off as they're driving out in the trucks, cause we were taking over that area from them and there was a beautiful island there. We used to go from there, because we had a boat then, our Company, and we used to go down to a little place called Miyajima and they had beer halls there and it was a nice spot. They did have a fair bit of beer still. That brewery must have been making a lot of money.

29:00 **And Miyajima?**

This was Miyajima. Miyajima was a sort of sacred place to their religion too. You know like a lot of people have these sacred places, just like the Aborigines, the land was sacred and that was a sacred place to do with their religion. Not Buddhist, that other, the Japanese religion, Shinto, Shinto and those two things out of the water, you seem them when they're advertising Japan, either Fujiyama or that thing sticking out of the water, and

29:30 there's a little island next to it. You often see it on Japanese stuff they advertise. That was their Miyajima, yeah.

Buddhist, is it?

Shinto I think, Shinto I think, yes. Shinto when you go there that's for this life and Buddhist is for afterlife, so they told us.

Is the bowing part of their religion or just part of their social...?

30:00 Social, yeah. When you're on guard they'd all come up to you and bow, they'd always bow. Like the Japanese guards made our prisoners do the same, didn't they? And if they didn't they used to whack em.

I'll just bring you back to the black market for a second Blue. There must have been a whole Mafioso about it because you must have had to get the stuff from the...

30:30 Pinch it from the army.

Pinch it, and the person in charge of the store room, or what have you, they must have given it to you?

Yes, because nobody wanted these tin peas, that's one thing and then I wrote down to home and I got all these saccharine tablets sent up, yeah, and I also had those vitamin tablets that the army used to issue you in New Guinea. That was later on, not the earlier soldiers would have got that, so I used to take a few out, because I knew

31:00 they'd taste them and just put a few on top and sell them for saccharine. We were up for all the tricks but that was nothing to what they did. Not even a wink.

You had testers going on?

They'd take one out and taste it and "Oh yeah, yeah, okay" and give you the money, beauty. When he got down a bit further, well saccharine was good for you anyway, I mean vitamin tablets were good for you.

Of course, absolutely. So where did you sleep in, how far away from Hiroshima were

31:30 **you and where did you sleep?**

There was about, we had two stories, we were on the top story in our Company. We were a Headquarter

Company and we had a real nice, good major and he was a stern but good fellow, Major Ferguson. We had beds, we had everything, sheets, oh everything, really nice.

- 32:00 One night that big earthquake, one of the biggest that Hiroshima ever got, hit and one fellow run down and he stopped. The fellow said "What's the matter?" He said "Well I'm going out there but might be bolder to let somebody else go first". But the only damage done was mainly buildings. There was nobody hurt or anything and they found out the picket were all asleep too, they woke up to that, so they got into trouble.

And how far from the centre of Hiroshima

- 32:30 **were you, there when you were in those, were they barracks, I suppose they were barracks?**

Yes, I think this was, where our Battalion was, was where all these workers again in the factory there where they all lived. This was for the workers, the Japanese had that, maybe they were a bit further up workers because they were quite nice buildings and we had a big parade round there and that sort of thing. And then we went up to, then

- 33:00 to Tokyo and we went up, our Battalion, our Company, to clear out all this big building in Tokyo and it was all full of furniture, from other bombed out buildings, one's that had been burnt, because Tokyo was heavily bombed and heavily burnt and this was where they tested submarines. They still had a little midget submarine there and we cleared all this out and we went up there first and we had the time of our lives with the Yanks and out at their camp and that sort of thing, cause they were still guarding that

- 33:30 place. They were still doing the guarding. I've got a photo of them there. They were guarding that camp, at Ebisu in Tokyo and that was used in the Korean War. There was a holiday place at Ebisu and there was lovely big buildings they were. You could see Fujiyama if you got right on top, you could see Fujiyama on a nice day. Yeah, and that's where I met that lady because soldiers were taking girls into the park and that was part of their religion,

- 34:00 Meiji. Meiji was a famous man. He bought Japan out of the old ways, he bought them into the modern way and we used to go up there and garden and I seen this European woman walking up and she was crying. And I thought she was an American and I thought maybe some Japanese had attacked here or something and I said "Are you alright maam?" And she said "Yes". I said "Are you American Red Cross?" and she said "No". And especially seeing a woman by herself,

- 34:30 they usually, there was always, if you a woman like that, a European woman, there'd usually be a stack of people or a lot of people with her and she was still crying and I said "Well are you Australian Red Cross?" and she said "No, but it's lovely to see a slouch hat." She said "I'm married to a Japanese, so would you like to come down?" So I got onto that dusty Billy Ryan and we used to go down there and take food to them. They were starving but you could see that

- 35:00 they were upper class. She was married to a pianist, he played the piano in Lismore before the war. He was a pretty famous man, not that I'd ever heard of him and so we used to take them down what's it's name. In fact we've heard from the boy, I rang Billy up and told him and he wrote to him and he thanked us very much for the food we used to bring and he was only a little baby.

She was an Australian though?

Married to a

- 35:30 Japanese, yeah and I can show you the book too, I'll find it after cause it's in there and I'll show you her name and that sort of thing and she stayed with him till 1950 and she left him and she went to America and she wrote a book called A Patch of Blue and they made a film about it. A beautiful film about a Negro going down the park and this little blind girl and America is a little
- 36:00 bit racist and so are we, at any rate he did everything for her, looked after her, anyway it was just a nice story, nothing like that, it was all nice. He played the part of a nice man, he was a nice man that actor too, a real nice fellow and A Patch of Blue became a famous film, showing in Australia and everywhere. I'd seen it and she wrote some more plays and she was a great friend of John Wayne's too. Then she came back to Lane Cove and she died

- 36:30 and she was in Sydney and I was going to go and she here but I never got around to it, yeah.

Well you were very nice to her in the first place?

Yeah well, yeah well we always had plenty of, by that stage we were getting not bad food then, still stews and that but it was still a lot better than what we got in New Guinea. Nice fresh meat anyway, it was meat, not tinned meat.

What was she crying about Blue?

Oh she said

- 37:00 "Oh isn't it lovely to see the slouch hat". So I knew she was Australian then.

So she was happy?

Yeah, to see the slouch hat, cause all she seen was Yanks, all Yanks, Americans. She was the first time.

What were the American MP's [military police] like?

Alright but you didn't annoy them. They could be nasty and they didn't muck around either.

37:30 They'd shoot you too. But that would have to be something terrible, you'd have to be do something terrible, but they had a big hickory stick and they bonged you, hit you on the head, but they never worried us much. You'd see them always in the beer halls. In Tokyo there's plenty of beer halls and then we guarded the Emperor and there were thirty two posts and the first guard was only Australians. The rest of our Battalion come up then, after we'd been there a month and cleared all this place out, they all come

38:00 and moved in where we were at Ebisu and then they said you can do four hours on and sixteen hours off and that sixteen hours off you can go down to the beer hall. We used to go down to the Ginza and drink beer. I've never heard that before in the army but one muck up and you bashed the fellow up if there was anyone causing trouble and there'd be no more of that and there was never trouble.

38:30 The Yanks used to say "Geez you fellows like drinking don't youse?" Cause it wasn't regimental and the next thing the British arrive and it was like Buckingham Palace. They had their little goat, you know those little mascots they have, some of those British units? And everything was regimental, they had bands and everything so that finished that. I did one more. I went up from down there in Kitochi in Hiroshima and went up there and did a second guard, but that wasn't what the first one, the first one was a beauty.

39:00 It was good fun.

What was the Australians' attitude to the British arriving?

Ah we were on guard at Kure, there was a house there, it was like a nice building and they had a canteen there and that and a lot of people living there and Red Robbie, who was the famous General Robertson, lived up just above it and anyway we were there when the Argyle Sutherlands arrived. Well you should have seen the Japanese,

39:30 their eyes, you could have poked, knocked their eyes off with a stick. To see men walking along in skirts, they couldn't believe it. They were looking, all these Jocks, yeah.

And they were tough men, those Scots?

Oh yeah, in the First World War, the French said "The Scotch, the Canadians and the Australians" and their own troops as well, naturally, well they were the best.

40:00 **And did you say before that you guarded the Imperial Palace?**

Palace, yeah, yeah.

What kind of gig was that?

Now if the Germans had of occupied Britain, how would an Englishman like to see a German standing outside the entrance to Buckingham Palace guarding the King, in those days. It would be, what's the word?

Horrible?

Humiliation and that's what it was for, humiliation, yeah.

40:30 I've got a photo there of where we were guarding with the Yanks and that. We put a policeman in just to take the photo. The Yank didn't want it but I said "No, we'll have one for his photo and one for us" because the Japanese were coming around taking photos in those days and they'd bring them back and you'd pay them. And that's how I got the photo.

So is both the Australians and the Americans guarding the Imperial Palace?

The Imperial Palace, yes, and policemen, Japanese policemen but they had no power, like us. We didn't take any notice of them. The Japanese had no power at all

41:00 when we were there. But our fellas, the Australians, they'd never take it out on anybody, they could never be cruel people. It wasn't born in us, that sort of thing. You know to be cruel to people, even though the terrible things that they had done.

Tape 4

00:32 **Okay Blue, still on your time in Japan, when you first got there, there would have been a non-fraternisation policy in place?**

Yeah, you're not supposed to talk to the girls. That's a waste of time that law, isn't it? Where there's a male, there's a female.

So how did you go, I guess, getting to know the local people?

01:00 Yeah, well the little girl that I knew, Mary, she picked that name, not me and she worked in a shop in Kure and I got to know her and I got to know her real well. She was a nice lady, a nice little girl and her father had been killed in Hiroshima and she was living with her mother. I used to go and visit them there, up on top of the hill. Yeah she was a nice lady, and the other one lived at Kitochi, but her brother was a

01:30 Kempeitai and that was a secret police in the Japanese, way back in those days. I didn't care much for him at any rate.

What were the secret police up to at that stage?

Like the Gestapo [German secret police during World War II], cruel people. Oh in those days? Oh he was nobody, that's when the war was on, when he had a bit of power, he was an officer. I seen his sambran

02:00 hanging up there and I asked and she said "Yes, Kempeitai." and I thought "Mmh". So I didn't go back there very often.

So what about Mary and I guess and her mother, she was living with her mother at that stage?

Yes, just her mother and her in this little, they had quite a nice little house, quite a nice little one and that was in Kure.

02:30 **What were the locals, how were the locals themselves actually getting or coming to terms or getting along with the fact that they were being occupied?**

Once the [Japanese] Emperor spoke, they obeyed. And that's why all those soldiers surrendered in all those islands and that without much trouble. Once they knew it was the Emperor, cause he was everything to them, he was God,

03:00 and so we had no trouble with them at all. There was never any, they'd bow and all that sort of thing, if they come into the camp and that of course. I don't mean walking along the street or something like that. No, they were very honest people. I went back there on holidays but the Japanese I believe, I've read about them and they are very honest people. You have no worries but we taught them a bit of difference.

03:30 **How would they just demonstrate their honesty to you, from an outsider's point of view?**

That would be a good question. Yeah, well it's hard to answer. I went back there on holidays to Naguria and I walked out and left my wallet

04:00 and a parcel and a fellow chased me up the road yelling out "Mister, Mister" and he give both back to me, but I've read about them too, that they are very honest people.

What about the locals that were around Hiroshima and the bombsite there, I mean how were they actually living?

Yeah, well most of them, the one's that were still surviving were really on the outskirts, because as I say, the

04:30 one mile radius and when you went out a bit further there was still damage and then a bit further there was plenty of villages still there, there was still people living there. And well we got there six months afterwards and they had trams running and there was no, in Sydney there was a shortage of electricity but where they bombed they had trams running and all lights and everything. Because they've got a lot of mountains so they had a lot of electricity.

05:00 And I met a priest there. He was upstairs when the bomb went off and then he was on the deck, the whole thing went out from underneath him. Naturally being a priest he was pretty religious and an old lady was there too and he was a German and he said he was going crook at the old lady, "Stop crying woman, stop crying!" and I thought "Yeah, that's typical

05:30 German." because they're a pretty tough race too and he was only about eight hundred metres away, about half, no, about a thousand metres, about three quarters of the way, but he was a very religious man and that's what he said. He believed in, I don't know if you've ever heard of Fatima and that sort of thing? He believed in that and that's what he believed saved their lives, cause him and this old

06:00 lady. But later on I read, and I'd heard about him and he was written up in the papers cause the Yanks naturally grabbed him. His red corpuscles started to eat his white corpuscles, but as far as I know, he was still alive five years after the bomb went off. What happened after that I don't know, whether he just died or what happened, I don't know. But he was back there working, back there at Hiroshima, after the bomb went off.

06:30 He spoke good English.

And Blue, can you tell us about the, I guess the locals that would come into camp and just how the locals would actually work within your Unit and what you were doing on a daily basis?

Ah yeah, I had twenty four working for me and they were waiters and that sort of thing and

07:00 after a while some fellows, some people left and then we got the prisoners of the Russians and they were like, I don't know whether you've had much to do with dogs? But a dog that's been belted by a cruel person, he gets a real, his tail between his legs all the time, that sort of thing and that's the way these people were when they arrived. They'd been a prisoner in Manchuria by the Russians so they must have treated them, I'm not blaming the Russians because

07:30 again I'm not on the Japanese side but like the people I worked with they'd bring me in sake and we'd have jokes and they were quite, I palled up with them. They'd all been in the army, well that was their business, not mine but these people it took a while before you could get them to laugh and joke, joke with us, have a bit of fun. And we had one there, and he

08:00 used to go down, we had a punching bag for training boxing and that sort of thing, and he'd go down there and the fellas would go down with him and we christened him "Punchie" and that sort of thing. We had a cook and you could see, he had no psychological problems about it, but just a little bit you could see that somewhere in his family there'd been an Oriental I'd say, maybe Chinese or something, so we called him "Tojo". He come to us from another unit to go to Japan in Morotai and he was a cook,

08:30 and that was his nickname. He said "Call me Tojo" and he didn't seem that worried about it but these Japanese "Him Tojo? That his name?" "Yeah, that's his name." They couldn't believe it, that was only his nickname because he had slanty eyes. You know Australians, mad half the time tormenting people. Tojo, yeah I wonder what happened to Tojo?

09:00 **So what were your daily duties originally when you first came to Japan before the guard duties that you were doing?**

Yeah, that's a good question too. We had it pretty easy, well we finished up in a machine gun platoon. That Bill Ryan was a sergeant. You might have to, you might talk to him too. I hope you do because he's a lovely man and he was our sergeant and we'd get the machine guns out

09:30 and clean them and still muck around with the machine guns to fill in the day. And you were allowed to have time off, once you finished, in the afternoon you could go into town, Hiroshima, but you had to be back by about eleven o'clock. They had a curfew. A lot of people sometimes got caught and you'd get three days CB [Confined to Barracks] or something like that, or fined five pound or something like that yeah for being out after curfew, or

10:00 if the military police caught you that would be more serious, cause they used to go around and check all the beds.

And where would they know where to look for all the fellows that weren't there, in their beds?

Well if there was an empty bed they'd, being the NCO's there was a corporal and he'd know straight away, like "Bill Smith's mate slept there, well where's Bill Smith?" and A lot of fellows in the infantry platoons,

10:30 like we were in the Headquarters Company, the machine gun platoon, a lot of the fellows in the what's it's name, they went down to another place near a port and as these soldiers came back they sort of deloused them, or they had Japanese delousing them I should say, but they were in charge of it, yeah a lot of them worked on that. And the look on their faces when they, and they had trains to take them away with to where they lived. The Americans organised all that sort of thing and then when

11:00 they seen you, especially when they, a friend of mine he seen them when they went through Hiroshima and the look on their faces.

How do you mean?

Well like all the demolition, all the bombing that happened to their country, it really affected them. They got a shock, a big shock because more than likely they were somewhere where the news was cut

11:30 off and naturally their officers weren't telling them how bad Japan was being treated by these bombers, yeah.

And how did you feel about what you saw, given that you were up in New Guinea and you'd heard a lot of, you'd been through that part of the war and you'd heard a lot of things, what was it like, how did you feel about the devastation and Japan when you got there?

12:00 Well I could never agree with the atomic bomb, but there's one for and against it. It might have saved our lives because they were pretty fanatical people. They were going to fight for their country. They had their women and everything, they were going to fight. They were going to go to their death. Yeah, so I'm, let's hope it never happens again, that's all I can say, it's terrible. It was terrible, as far as I'm concerned.

12:30 What you seen. Some went to the hospital. I never went there. They were still in those hospitals, still

half alive. I never went there.

Did you hear any stories about?

Oh yeah, oh the soldiers that went there. You could wander anywhere, nobody would, the Japanese wouldn't say anything to you. They used to just go there and have a look, terrible, terrible.

What would they tell you what they saw?

Oh their burns and everything, still half alive and that sort of thing.

13:00 Oh it, I said "Not for me, I don't want to go, thank you very much." I seen them walking round Hiroshima with those things, those burns, the radiation burns and that's the way it stayed, like porridge on their face, all red but like porridge, lumps. It was on arms too, anything that was bare seemed to cop it.

And there was nothing they could do to?

13:30 No. They had that till the day they died.

Were there any fellows in the Occupation Forces, American, British, or Australian, that I guess didn't think too highly of the Japanese, or didn't treat them terribly well?

There was no cruelty in our area of Australians at

14:00 any rate. I don't think, I think those American soldiers too, I don't think there was, I never did see it at any rate, I never did see. Sometimes they used to cart those, cause everything was all carried in carts, no sewerage, and they'd put it on their paddocks, their rice and I'd heard about fellows going along and they'd just give it a push at the

14:30 back, both full of this sort of thing. A bit risky though, might have swung around, you never know do you? No I never heard, never seen or heard of any cruelty at any rate.

And you mentioned to Heather before going down to Miyajima for a drink

15:00 **and stuff, was there, well in Miyajima or other places, was there I guess many brothels or prostitutes?**

Everywhere in Japan there was brothels and they also, the lower, I suppose you could say the poorer class, or the lower class, the higher class who ran Japan and after the war they still run Japan they put those girls

15:30 into fraternise with the soldiers. So they more or less said it was going to happen, so what will happen, will happen and so they were quite happy with it. So the good girls, their daughters and such wouldn't be touched cause they thought that we'd start raping them and that sort of thing but you rape a girl over there and you could go to gaol.

Did that ever happen?

I heard of one case

16:00 and that's when we were in acting Military Police and anybody in Japan who rapes anybody they must be off their head, that's all I've got to say, cause there was brothels everywhere.

And were they visited a lot by the Occupation Forces?

They were. I've got to be honest, yeah. There was a far bit of VD [Venereal Disease] and there was a lady come up from the Women's Weekly

16:30 and she printed it, but then somebody answered her and said in Sydney when the Yanks were there, the VD was about the same, twelve percent, so that shut her up. Don't know whether I agree with that but anyway, I read it in the paper.

What did the, I guess how did the brothels kind of deck themselves

17:00 **out? Were you...?**

They'd be just a little, in a village or something like that it would be just a house. And naturally soldiers get to know, don't they? Certain, this one here and that one there and over there, all soldiers get to know about the brothels, but

17:30 VD amongst the troops was pretty high, well it was twelve percent.

And what was the, I guess the repercussions or the treatment of VD at that stage in Japan?

I've had friends who've told me, I was never in there with VD but I had friends and they went into the British, there was an Indian hospital there. Naturally all the officers and the doctors were all British and they called it the Indian Hospital,

- 18:00 well they used to go in there and they had a certain ward and that was the VD ward. And the army didn't look kindly on it either. They tried to, they even had people come around talking about how if you got syphilis, how you'd be back in Australia running for a bus and you'd grab your heart or something and you'd have a heart attack or something like that. They tried to scare the people. You only scared them for one day. I've got to be honest,
- 18:30 it happened and that's it.
- Yeah, that's why it's good to know.**
- But everywhere they had what's it's name, Kure, I don't know about Hiroshima but I know Kure where most of the soldiers were, they had what they called a blue light outfit. They had a blue light and the people went there and they could get condoms and all that sort of thing, so they had no reason to catch VD.
- So the blue light brothels were set up by Occupation Forces?**
- 19:00 Not the brothels, just the blue light thing was where you went and there was two soldiers there, medical people, and they run it. They run it for the soldiers, no questions asked, to try and cut down the VD.
- So like a hand out post that would hand out?**
- And that's right and penicillin had just come along, did it come along then I think?
- 19:30 I know it was there when we were in Korea penicillin was in, because we were treated with penicillin. I think that was about 1950 but that would be after, I think, yeah. Wouldn't be there then, I don't think. But they treated them. I don't know what they used, maybe sulphur or something, I don't know.
- So how prevalent, you said that they were sort of everywhere, but I mean how prevalent were the brothels say I guess in a major district?**
- 20:00 **I mean would it be just one or two or?**
- Well in Kure up on top of the hill there was just one. Yeah, there was one there, yeah, there was one there, yeah. I never heard of any other place than that one but there might have been others, but that's the only one I knew of. It was a pretty big one, but in Tokyo, they had suburbs. It was hard to believe, isn't it? And it was before the Occupation Army, this was
- 20:30 way back in Japan, before the war. They had just absolutely, they had big medical places and everything in this suburb in Tokyo, yeah.
- Now Blue if it's alright, I mean I don't want to get into any intimate detail, but I just wanted to ask if you could tell us about getting to know Mary and meeting her mother and what that was like? That would have been a bit of a new experience?**
- 21:00 Yeah, it was great, she was a lovely lady and she worked. She worked in a store selling souvenirs to the soldiers and of course naturally we had the money. The Japanese never went in there at any rate and we used to go on a picnic and all that sort of thing, up in the scrub, up in the bushes and that. Her and about two or three of her mates, on a holiday or something like that. They'd have a holiday and we'd meet and go up, cause they loved the countryside,
- 21:30 the Japanese, yeah.
- And would they talk English or would you get along with a little bit of Pidgin Japanese?**
- Pidgin Japanese and their's was Pidgin English, that's right, in between us all but they seemed to learn English pretty quick, working in the stall with all Australian customers.
- How did her friends take to you?**
- 22:00 Well they were all mates and they had some Australian boyfriends too. I think some of them married them and come back to Australia, yeah, yeah. When we have a reunion over here I know two Japanese girls turn up, they're married to Australians and they're still married. One played football, my mate,
- 22:30 a very good friend of mine, he married a Japanese and his son become a famous footballer in Sydney, rugby league, played first grade for Balmain. Can't think of his name now, not off hand.
- And how did Mary's mother take to, can you tell us about meeting her for the first time?**
- Yeah, well, yeah, she didn't seem to say much at all. You could
- 23:00 say hello, Konichi wa or something like that, something like that, Kompan wa [good evening] or something like that, or how are you, con bar esco, [?] I think I've got that right, I think so. I knew a little bit and Mary had an organ there and she'd play that and but I'd always take food there because they were battling for food, even then, because it was just after the war
- 23:30 with the Occupation Army. She was a nice lady, a very nice lady. The Japanese are different from the

men, nothing, no comparison, real gentle, nice ladies, real nice.

And what about the Japanese fellows?

(Shakes head). The fellows that were working for me they seemed alright, yeah. I made up a funny story when I come back. This is

24:00 half true and half not true. One of these fellows that worked for me, I think it was Punchie, he'd been a Kamikaze, so this is not all true. He'd been a Kamikaze, and I'm sorry, his name wasn't Punchie, it was Chow Min, and I said "Punchie, I said if your name is Chow Min." I said "How come your name's Chow

24:30 Min, you're a Kamikaze." I said "How come you're not dead?" He said "I was chicken Chow Min." I made that one up.

So Blue once you were telling me before your initial duties you were still sort of mucking around with the machine guns and cleaning them and things like that to keep yourself busy,

Yeah.

What duties did you progress

25:00 **to, from that?**

I worked in that, like I had the Japanese working for me so they'd clean up they'd had their breakfast, the soldiers, and their dinner and their tea at night. I had these Japanese working for me and they waited on the soldiers, which was a bit of a change. The sergeants get waited on in the Australian Army and the officers but they were there. Everybody got waited on. We had the Japanese waiters waiting.

So were you in charge of the barracks in that

25:30 **sense?**

No, I was only in charge of that mess hall, in charge of that mess hall, yeah, yeah.

So how would you co-ordinate twenty four employees? What would you get them all to do?

They had a good job, they were happy. They didn't have to do too much, a bit of waiting and that sort of thing, yeah, yeah. Some of them worked around the cook house. Now here's two little stories,

26:00 I'm glad you mentioned that. The Japanese were in there peeling spuds and all that sort of thing. Now in the Korean War some of the young soldiers said "Blue, you were here before, you were in the Occupation Army, you know all about Hiroshima." and of course naturally all those fellows going to Korea, had never been in Japan or wanted to see, everybody wants to see Hiroshima, which is natural. They said "Will you take us down?" I said "Yeah, no worries at all". I took them down, we jumped on the train

26:30 to leave and that sort of thing and I showed them all round Hiroshima and that afternoon, or that, just after dinner or something like that, we were on Hiroshima station and this fellow in a suit walked up to me and he said "Good day Blue-san". Now how many Japanese would know to call me Blue, cause that's what the Japanese used to call me

27:00 in Kaitachi. Blue-san, that's Mr Blue, and I said "Good day mate, where do I know you?" He said "Me spud-san". He said I used to peel the spuds out at Kaitachi and I thought "Blimey" I was thinking to my self, "He's doing alright with this suit on and everything". I said "What do you do now, Spud?" and he said "I'm in charge of the refreshment room on Hiroshima station upstairs." He said "Come on, I'll give you a free,

27:30 a beer." I said "Well we'll pay for it". He said "No you won't". They have big jugs like Germany, you know the big jugs of beer? I said "Gee, you're doing alright now, Spud." He said "No Blue, I'd sooner be back with the Australians". What a recommendation for an Occupation Army? Cause our fellows couldn't help mucking around, having jokes with people and that sort of thing. They were never cruel to people, I mean for them to work for us,

28:00 and to work for a Japanese boss, I know which was the best job, working for us. The Japanese are pretty strict.

Were they paid at all for the work they were doing?

Oh yeah, but I don't think they got much, but again I suppose rice doesn't cost much in Japan. Yeah, they did get paid. Now

28:30 in Sydney one day I heard, I read it in the paper. I don't know how come I read it in the paper but it was sort of people looking for people and here is an article in there and I knew 'would anybody know the whereabouts of sergeant.' I can't say his name, we'll just say his name was Sergeant Smith, cause I can't remember his name, but as soon as I seen this name, it was an unusual name, I knew straightaway. "Hygiene Sergeant at Kitochi Army Camp, I would like to see him."

- 29:00 signed the Japanese. Now there's another good story about Occupation. He got down to Sydney on holidays. He must have done alright. After the Korean War and that the Japanese made a lot of money and he come down and he was wanting to find this sergeant and I remember he was the hygiene sergeant, he was too. So that's a good recommendation for an occupation army isn't it when the enemy come looking for you to say good day to you.
- 29:30 **Were there things about the Japanese culture Blue, that you particularly liked or warmed to?**
- Well I liked their honesty, that was good. Yeah, well of course only knowing the girls you know and there is no doubt about it, they are sweet little girls. I'll say no more than that. They are sweet little girls, yes.
- 30:00 But the men, well I don't think they changed much. I think their cruelty was there and it could come out again. I don't know. Yeah, who knows.
- And what about their customs? Were there things while you were in the Occupation Forces that you found particularly, that you warmed to or didn't warm to as well as their customs?**
- 30:30 Yeah, that's a hard question. The fellow Kitochi, when he walked, that's one custom I didn't like, when he walked his wife walked behind him and that was one of their customs which I didn't like. No way in the world, that's not nice is it? That's a bad one I reckon and they all did it. Back in
- 31:00 them days, I suppose they've all changed now, yeah. Him and I would walk up the front and the two women walk behind and that was their custom. You couldn't change them.
- What can you tell me about a fellow you knew by the name of Lenny Leno?**
- Oh Lenny, yeah Lenny was part Chinese and not a
- 31:30 very tall man so he used to go to Hiroshima. We were camped there right in the suburbs in Kitochi Kitochi and he had a girlfriend and he used to wander down there and all Japanese men always wear a kimono. They walk down the street wearing a kimono and that's a custom and that's fair enough and that's their custom and that's quite nice, nothing wrong with that. And Lenny would wander round Hiroshima with this kimono on and the military police would walk past and not even look at him. Why would they? He
- 32:00 was only a little short man and he had a little, he just looked like Japanese at any rate. A lovely man and then got killed in the big battle in Korea, the biggest battle our Battalion was in, yeah. Dear old Lenny, good fellow. Him and I had a fight with the Yanks one time.
- What was that over?**
- I'd say it was race, because of him, and in that beer hall they still had mixed race
- 32:30 beer halls and the Negroes [African American] never went into a white what's it's name and this white Yank tripped him up, so we end out and all I got out of it was a black eye. I couldn't fight my way out of a paper bag.
- He got you into a bit of a scrap?**
- Yeah, he could fight, he was a cane cutter from up north. Old Lenny kept knocking them down as quick as they were getting up,
- 33:00 and a few others of our fellows. Then we all went back to their camp and became friends and got on the grog. We used to go back and visit them.
- So where did Lenny come from?**
- Ayre, A Y R E, isn't it? Yeah.
- And so would he, so he'd dress up in a kimono so he could just basically walk free and avoid**
- Well he was down with his girlfriend. I think he might have married her by then. I think she was Mrs Leno. I'm pretty sure she was.
- 33:30 They got married. They could get married in the Shinto religion or the Buddhist religion.
- Did you attend any marriage ceremonies while you were there?**
- No. All I ever saw were the Japanese and that's where I met that Australian woman, that one that was married to a Japanese and they took us down to a wedding, a Japanese wedding. I've got a photo of it there too, and that Bill Ryan and they gave us green tea and they went out to show Bill something
- 34:00 and he said when they were out shove it out the window or something. It was terrible, you couldn't drink it, it was terrible.
- And how about picking up the Japanese language while you were there Blue?**
- Yeah but I could only speak, as you say Pidgin Japanese, how are you? It's a hot day,

- 34:30 or ohsuidan, it's pretty close to hot, oshuidan, and samui was cold and that sort of thing and naturally counting, itchy knee, san and all that sort of thing, yeah. I wish now, I wish that I'd studied it like some people and they become officers because they become interpreters. One finished up I think maybe a colonel through that. He went into intelligence,
- 35:00 because he could speak, but he was a Polish man and they seem to pick up languages quick, the Poles, because they got all different nations around them and they learn their languages, yeah, nice fella.
- And you were talking to Heather about the black market earlier on Blue, was there, what was the range of things that you could actually get on the black market that would**
- 35:30 **be mostly for sale?**
- Cigarettes, they loved cigarettes and I didn't smoke and that suited me because you got a ration. Every week we got a ration, or every payday I'd say. Yeah when you got a pay you got a ration, naturally you paid for it, you didn't get it free. Cigarettes was a big thing and we used to sell them on the black market, that was one thing, yeah. I can't think of much else, other than
- 36:00 the ones I used to cheat them on, the saccharine and that sort of thing and the Australian Army food.
- Were there any odd things that were going through the black market that sort of stand out?**
- No, not to my knowledge. No, mainly they wanted food and they wanted like honey or syrup or anything like that and if you could get hold of it, it was worth a lot of money.
- 36:30 **Now Blue, when you were at Tokyo and you were sort of on guard duty, you were guarding the Imperial Palace a bit, were there other places that you were charged to guard as well?**
- The day they had Anzac Day parade and I've got a photo of that there too, in 1945 the
- 37:00 War finished and the 46, 47, yeah 47, I was a guard on the Canadian Embassy and we guarded the embassies, the Canadian and British embassies and those nights guarded those embassies, the Canadian embassy and I was going home soon. Anyway I was getting close so I could be a bit cheeky and they were all going, all these Canadian officers
- 37:30 were going out in the morning and I was on the guard, but it wasn't like Buckingham Palace. You just stood at the front. You had a rifle, but I didn't even stand to attention. I'd been there about twelve, fifteen hours because they wanted everybody on the parade. The Yanks were all interested in this big Anzac parade, Anzac Day.
- 38:00 I seen one officer back and I thought "You're in trouble here" but nothing was ever, he probably got on the grog and forgot all about it anyway.
- So what was the main aim of guarding the other embassies? Was there ever a threat of any kind of trouble?**
- Oh no, not with the Japanese. Once the Emperor spoke that was it. No.
- So what do you think the main aim behind actually standing guard in front of**
- 38:30 **British and Canadian embassies was about?**
- I think it was a sort of a guard in name only. Was just a little bit of showpiece, cause the second guard when we went up there, we didn't do that in the first guard, we only guarded the Emperor, the second guard the British arrived in 47 and they started all that little bit of bull. So that was more likely a British idea.
- 39:00 End of tape

Tape 5

- 00:32 And worked on the railway until 1949 then I joined the army to go back and see Mary.
- We might just rewind a little bit there Blue. Can you tell us did you do your eighteen months in the Occupied Force?**
- Yes I did that regulation time, yes.
- And then did you put in for a transfer back to Australia?**
- Our AIF [Australian Imperial Force] time was up and they were just starting the regular army and all that sort of thing.
- 01:00 And our time was up, so you either signed on and stayed up there, which a lot of my friends did, Lenny Leno one, or come back and got discharged. Well I come back and got discharged, yeah, and I was on

the wharf and this fellow came up to me and I had my bag, Bangalow, Bangalow, Bangalow, and we'd been drunk. We were on Sake and I couldn't scratch myself. The RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] said "You're a disgrace, disgrace" but we were coming home and at any rate

01:30 this fellow walks up to me and he says "Are you Peter Newell from Bangalow?" and I said "Yeah". He said "I'll talk to you on the boat, the Kanimbla, so when I went on the boat

Hang on a sec Blue. Now what would they say in the army if you folded your arms?

Only, "Private Newell, only pregnant women fold their arms".

You don't look pregnant to me or like a woman. What happened, a guy came

02:00 **down to the wharf at Kure?**

Yeah, on the boat to come home and he said "I'll see you on the boat when you're sober." so he come down and we got talking and him and I went to school in Bangalow and they left. They left Bangalow and he was only a little boy and him and I had had a few fights behind the Smith shop, where everybody used to finish up their school days, having a fight. His name was Liam McKew.

And what was he in the Occupied Forces?

02:30 I think he was in Sigs, in Signals, in Kure, working in Kure, yeah, working in Kure, yeah.

So were all the other blokes, your friends, drunk on Sake that night before as well or did you actually catch the boat?

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, oh no worries cause the army organised that and we made sure we were on the boat, that we got the trucks all the way from Hiroshima to Kure, which was about twenty

03:00 miles away from Hiroshima and yeah I mean, they just about threw us on the back of the trucks, with the suitcase.

So there were a bunch of you drunk?

Oh a fair few, yeah, not all of us but a fair few. We were going home.

You were happy? How did you like the Sake?

Nice,

03:30 warm, you had to drink it hot, warm, warm, not hot, warm, yeah. But you could get plenty of Japanese beer, it was good too, good beer, cause Germans, they learnt that off the Germans beer, how to make beer.

So you came back to Australia, where did you arrive first?

Sydney and at Marrickville, went to Marrickville and that's where we got discharged from, from Marrickville.

04:00 **What was at Marrickville?**

It was an army camp all during the war, like you'd get there during the war and if you were moving from Melbourne to Sydney or Melbourne to Brisbane, you'd get off the train in Sydney and go out to Marrickville and then they'd pass, bring you back to the train the next day or the day after, whatever it was. That was a sort of a posting place, that's all it was. Right in the middle of the city at Marrickville.

04:30 **How did you feel getting discharged?**

It was pretty good, to be able to do what you wanted to do yourself. And that's when I got that twenty five bob [shillings] a week, twenty five bob a week flat.

Hang on a sec, that was in the eastern suburbs?

That was in Stanley Street, Darlinghurst, yeah. That's Eastern suburbs yeah, right near Hyde Park, right in the middle of the city for twenty five bob a week.

05:00 **What was Darlinghurst like then?**

All those places were very good, I mean you could walk around there of a night time and nobody would ever, Sydney was a safe place of a night time, day time or any other time in those days and that was a real working class suburb.

Now it's worth a fortune.

Is it? Darlinghurst?

Inner city.

And I'd believe that and you know who moved in there, so they'd make the fortune?

05:30 All the Italians and Maltese. They were moving in when we were there.

What were they ex-Italian soldiers?

They were just migrants, all the migrants that come out, yeah.

After the war?

After the war. A lot come out didn't they?

So I've got to ask you this because you said you didn't have to draw a pay for a while when you were working on the black market,

06:00 **did you get back pay for all your efforts in the army when you were discharged?**

Mmh, they couldn't touch that. They knew we were cheating. How did we live? Yeah, we got it all, it come in very handy.

What did you do with it?

I used to always, me brothers too, well one brother at any rate, cause the other brother was married, when he was in the army but

06:30 we used to always allot Mum a pound, ten shillings a week, cause my Mum and Dad didn't have much money, had to help them out. Even so with that black market money I was doing alright. I saved a fair bit.

What about going home? You came back to Sydney, did you go up to see your folks?

Oh yeah because families were very close in them days.

07:00 I didn't tell anybody. I thought I'd just sneak back in and I walked around the back and I had these suitcases and this strange lady come out, somebody had just moved in, and she said "Yes?" She must have thought I was selling something or something. I said "Is this the Newell home?" She said "Yes" and as she walked in she said "I'll go and get her" and I followed her in and she nearly fell over, because Mother looked up and there I was. Mum nearly fell off the chair, she nearly collapsed.

07:30 **Who was this strange lady?**

Oh just some neighbour who'd just moved into that neighbourhood in the last year or so. Cause by the time that I went away and went to Japan it was a couple of years, three years I think.

So it had been three years since your mother had seen you?

Seen me, yes.

And what about your dad?

Yeah, he was, Pop would

08:00 be working then somewhere, because he used to put roofs on houses and that sort of thing, yeah. Cause when he come home that afternoon (UNCLEAR).

Was he proud of you?

Yeah, he would have been proud of everybody, because he had the three of us in the army and another, a girl, my sister, and he was proud of the four girls too. Well

08:30 husbands, men do, don't they? They are really proud of their daughters, or sisters. There was only went in the army though.

How did he deal with all the, were your sisters of courting age, going out with blokes when you went to the army?

Yeah, but me being a baby, I was the last one left and they'd gone. They were living in the hospitals and that sort of thing.

09:00 One married an ex-serviceman, he died. He was an TPI, Totally and Permanently Incapacitated towards the end, because of war wounds and he lived in Sydney. Well he died in 1963 or something like that, poor old Billy. My sister married him, the one sister and the other one married a farmer and the other one married a chemist. The chemist wasn't in the army and the one that was in the

09:30 army she married a chemist but he wasn't in the army. It looked funny, the woman was in the Amy and he wasn't. But he was a bit old too. Made a lot of difference.

Good on her though.

Yeah, yeah.

So your dad was happy to have all the boys back?

Yeah, and so proud of his four daughters, nursing sisters.

Yeah, it's a very nice family. Very

10:00 **dedicated family there to the services.**

But all those little towns, and I'll bet it was all over Australia, doesn't matter what religion or anything else, they were all nice people, they were nice people. Your doors, you didn't lock them, night time or day time, we slept on the veranda. The girls did sometimes when we were away somewhere, so you had no worries in those days. People were nice.

10:30 **When you got into Sydney when you were back from the Occupied Forces, you went straight up to see your folks first and then you came back to get your flat in Darlinghurst?**

Yeah, did, come back and got a job at the railways. I worked at Everleigh Railways for a while.

How did you get a job there, Blue?

Oh they were begging for people then, because all those people come out from Europe later on, those refugees and that and there was

11:00 no unemployment in Australia until about 1970, from 45 right to 1970. You could walk from one factory, fellows used to tell me, "Oh throw the job in here, go up the street and get another job." There was plenty of work, plenty.

And how was it? Was it physically demanding?

The railways wasn't bad, no, no, but you'd do a lot of shift work on the railways

11:30 because trains run all the time. They get to drive you mad.

What was your actual job on the railway?

Fireman, fireman.

And what did that mean though?

Cause it was all boilers in them days, stoking the boilers where now it's all diesel. You don't have to stoke the boilers, so they were all steam

12:00 trains in those days, all steam.

Would you get really filthy from stoking?

Pretty dirty, you would, cause it was all coal and all the coal was at the tender.

And where would you mainly go? Was there a certain section of Sydney where you'd mainly go on the trains?

Mainly out to North.

To where, sorry?

Up through North,

12:30 up to Newcastle, up to Broadie, Broadmeadows then you'd change over there and come back on another train, and you'd sleep there, you could sleep there at Broadmeadows. They had special places for you to sleep and then you could get the other trains back and then you'd fire another train. You knew which one you were going to come back on and you could go south, down towards Nowra and that sort of a place, down that way, Wollongong mainly.

13:00 Or up to Katoomba, up the mountains.

Did the flat that you, the one that you got in Darlinghurst, was that a one bedroom?

One bedroom but in the kitchen, in the wall like the Americans, used to see in the old American films, you pulled the bed out and that's the one I slept on.

Who slept in the bedroom?

In the kitchen, I slept in the kitchen and me sister, she come down there to live, we both lived together

13:30 and she was a nursing Sister at St Vinnie's [Vincent's] Hospital and she had the bed and I had the bed in the kitchen, pull it down of a night and when you got up of a day just push it back in the wall. You didn't have to make the bed that way.

I think they're great.

They were great alright.

I suppose it would have suited you because your sister would have been at home more often,

do you think?

14:00 Yeah, well being a nursing sister well they start at odd hours too, don't they?

How was that living with your sister?

Yeah, she was a nice one, she was a nice lady. Then she got, I left and I away and then joined the army and then she met this fellow and married him but they were both old, they never had any children. Cause she was much older than me.

14:30 **So you'd only actually been out of the army, what two years before you signed up again?**

That's right, 47, 49, yeah.

Why did you join up again?

To go back again and see Mary and get married, because they were marrying them then, see before that you couldn't marry them.

And what happened? You signed up to go back into the army?

And I never got to Japan until the Korean War started.

15:00 And that suited me down to the ground.

You didn't keep writing to Mary when you were away?

Yes, yes, we kept, some people would bring me back a letter and that sort of thing., not too often but now and again. Then in the Korean War I met the little friend and she said she was married. She was married to a Japanese, so that was it, the finish of the friendship.

15:30 But I was glad of that because she was a nice lady and I thought "Good on you".

Do you think she was waiting for you?

She definitely wanted to get married. And she got a change of religion and everything. That's where she took that name Mary, I suppose. She must have read a few books I suppose.

So tell us what happened, you went to where was it? Puckapunyal?

Yeah, terrible, yeah.

16:00 **To do your training. What was that like?**

Well being an ex-serviceman we went straight to a Battalion, I went straight to 2 Battalion at Puckapunyal. Because I didn't have to do any training because being an ex-serviceman, so we were lucky, so we didn't have to do all that silly rot and we were there and that's when the Korean War started. We were there then. It's a terrible camp.

What was wrong with Puckapunyal?

Freezing cold and terribly cold and way out in the bush.

16:30 Ingleburn's right close to the city, Enoggera's right close to the city, those were the best. Enoggera's the best, just jump on a tram.

But Puckapunyal was in Victoria wasn't it?

In Victoria, yeah, way out in the bush, up near Seymour.

Why did they send you down there?

That's right, being a New South Welshman I thought I'd go to Ingleburn, but see nobody wanted to go to Puckapunyal and I just come along and I suppose everybody else, there was others come down later on too, or before me too

17:00 from New South Wales, but that was all politics because Victorians run the Parliament in them days, the Liberal Party, and they wanted an army camp there, for the locals, for the money and all that.

So how was it going back into the army then, when you'd have two years on civvy street [civilian life]?

Well going back in there, you go back in there and you've got a little bit of, what do they call them?

Medals?

Yeah, medals, but they call them some other name, but any rate, medals. You're a bit of an old soldier.

But you must have still been very young though?

I was yeah, yeah, yeah. That would be right, in 49 I would be twenty three, yeah. Twenty three, that's right, I was still only young.

18:00 **So which battalion, you joined the 2nd Battalion did you say?**

Yeah, then the Korean War started and I went up and joined 3 Battalion, my old mob, because that was 67 Battalion and they changed their name in the regular army to 3 Battalion. And who did I see up there? A stack of me old mates, they stayed there. Some of them had married Japanese, a lot of them married, had married Japanese.

Where did you run into the 67 Battalion?

18:30 When we went to Morotai that's what they called it, 67th Battalion. And the Occupation Army was 67. In 48 they changed it to 3 Battalion because they then went into regular army, made it all regular army.

So you were at Puckapunyal what for a few weeks or months or?

Oh gee, 49 and

19:00 the war started in 50, so I'd say I was there about eighteen months, yeah, about eighteen months, yeah.

Gee, what did you do to keep yourself busy there?

Working with tanks, they had a lot of tanks there and all training and all that sort of thing all the time. And I think we'd been up to Singleton I think. Went all the way up there by train, more training, more training too, an army camp up there. They always seemed to find something to do in the

19:30 army to keep you occupied. Well that's the best way, got to keep you occupied.

Were you frustrated though, because you'd joined the army to go back to Japan and possibly see Mary and now you weren't going anywhere. You were stuck in this cold place for eighteen months.

Yeah and I was very happy, well you shouldn't say that but well I was. I was happy that, I don't mean it was the Korean War, I wasn't happy with that but these things come along and I was getting back to Japan.

20:00 That was my luck, but nobody wants war, because a lot of people get killed and it's cruel.

Was it building the war over there in Korea when you were in Puckapunyal? Did you hear about it?

When the North Korean crossed the border into South Korea, oh yeah, it was headlines. And the next thing they said we'd be going, very quickly too.

20:30 By the time they, cause we went to up there when they were still down in Pusan, so we got up there because we were all trained. They put us on aeroplanes, so it wasn't going very long when we arrived in Korea. We flew to Japan though, we didn't go to Korea, we flew to Japan and did our training there, back to where 65th Battalion used to be at

21:00 Atheiro, and we went in that big, beautiful camp built specially for the Occupation Army and we did our training there and then we went up to How, I'm not saying it properly, How me, anyway a Japanese name way in the mountains where the Japanese Army used to train and the British Army trained there and that was Australian Army, because the British had all gone home by then and we went up there and trained up there.

21:30 **So how did you see your mates in Morotai? Those were the ones you had in Morotai, is that what you mean?**

That's the ones I had, yeah, they were all put together there.

So where were they? How did you run into them again?

The fellows who were in Japan and I come home and discharged, a lot of them stayed. They could stay and a lot of, Lenny Leno stayed, Billy Ryan stayed, a lot of them stayed. And I knew a stack of them, I knew a lot of them.

22:00 It was like going back home.

And then did you all go over to Korea together?

Yeah, we went over by boat to Pusan and when we got off there, there was an American band there playing jazz music and the little girls giving out flowers and that and then we went to Taegu.

Oh hang on a second Blue, I'll just bring you back a sec, so you actually flew from Australia to Japan, then from what Kure, from Tokyo you went?

22:30 From Kure to Pusan, straight over on a boat.

On a ship, on a boat. Can you remember the name of that boat?

No, my memories going, isn't it terrible?

That's it, you're sacked. That's okay.

Where's me pay?

So it was a relatively small vessel though, is that what you're saying?

Yeah, yeah, of course, but it fitted a battalion on, a thousand people.

23:00 **Yeah.**

But it didn't have to go far, it was only overnight to Korea from Japan.

Into Pusan. And what were your first impressions of Pusan?

Oh it stinks because it was the only part that we had left then. The North Koreans had taken everything, all the south bar that bit and all the poor people there in the city and that, it smelt. But we didn't stay, we went straight up to Taegu and another

23:30 little town and that's where the battle was.

So when did you hear about Mary? Was it on the flight over to Japan? Mary being married?

No, no, when I was in the hospital after being in Korea I run into Mary in Kure, I was in the hospital and I run into Mary there and she said "Don't go looking for Mary,

24:00 because Mary's married." I said "Oh well, good on her anyway." Nice lady.

And what did you know about Communism then?

I was always a person who's read a lot, read a lot of books so I knew and also by religion, the Communists and us we don't get on very well. We didn't get on very well in them

24:30 days, so we knew a lot about it.

What is your religion? I didn't ask you before?

Catholic.

So you had read about the Communists?

How they treated religious people and all the people they'd killed and murdered and tortured and sent up to Siberia. They were terrible people. I knew all about it, yeah.

25:00 friend of mine in Sydney, he was much the same as me and before they put him on the plane he and his mates were in the George Street, his mates were telling me, and they went past a Communist Party window in George Street and he walked over and got the biggest brick he could get and straight through the window. He was a fellow who came from Kempsey. I can't think of his name now.

Those Kempsey boys.

25:30 Yeah, Slim Dusty.

So the war I suppose then became more of a personal political thing for you, because at first it was to see Mary and then that all changed and then you were quite happy to fight the Communists?

Well yeah, yeah, because I knew, they didn't have very, didn't have any good points as far as I was concerned.

How long were you in Pusan before you moved on?

Oh gee, they just

26:00 about took us off the boat and put us straight on the train and went up to Taegu, which is a little bit North of Pusan, not far, a little bit. Maybe thirty miles, forty miles, something like that, yeah.

Was it summer or winter when you arrived?

Ah summer, we were just going, it was the end of summer. We didn't know what we were in for. We would have got back on the boat.

26:30 **And were you with your mates now? Those fellows?**

Those fellows that I'd been with in Occupation with, Bill, Billy Ryan and Lenny Leno and Muggo and a stack of them, a lot of them.

Were they annoyed with you that you'd actually left them?

Oh no, everybody, you make your own bed and you lie in it, whatever, you have to make up your own mind. They were happy being

27:00 up there. Because they were all just coming home, so they weren't too happy, I suppose they were going to a war, but I don't think it worried them too much. They'd all been in a war, so they knew what it was all about. And all the K [Korean] Force fellas who joined us, they'd been in the army. In my section at one stage I had a sergeant, a warrant officer, and a corporal and a couple of other corporals, they'd

27:30 all been in the last war. The fellows who, I think a lot too just couldn't settle down, a lot of people were like that after the war was over.

Did you feel a bit like that?

little bit, yeah, a little bit, I'll be honest, a little bit, yeah. I kept thinking of Japan.

28:00 **And how was the attitude in Australia about the Korean War?**

Nothing like Vietnam. There was no troubles because a lot of Australians didn't even know we had soldiers in Korea. They called it 'The Forgotten War', that's the name of it, 'The Forgotten War'. They didn't even know we went to Korea, a lot of people. Never made the news and never made the papers or anything hardly.

28:30 **Did you believe that you'd joined up again and then you were off to war?**

Yeah, well it got me back to Japan.

You must have thought somebody was challenging you maybe, do you think?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So tell us about arriving in Taegu? Was it Taegu?

Taegu, nothing there. We just went up the hills for guerrillas because by that stage

29:00 [General Douglas] MacArthur had landed in China and cut them off, so they all headed for the hills, the ones that could get away, that weren't take prisoners and that stopped the war in the south, then we got on an aeroplane and as we were getting on the aeroplane, this fellow who was about four foot three and "Hey you guys, this is the safest plane, there's no worries about this plane" and that sort of thing and "He'll give a parachute and he'll show you what to do,

29:30 if there's a , if we have trouble, you just go out the back" and then the next thing this plane come into the airport on one wing, the same plane we were getting on and I thought "Hang on, Hail Mary, oh dear, this is the safest plane". He came along in on one wing, sparks going everywhere. Any rate we got there to Kimpo, no worries at all.

Where was the plane going Blue, sorry?

30:00 To Kimpo airport, that's at Seoul, that's the airport for Seoul, still is there. That's not far from Seoul and then we got on trucks and then started to go North and went over exactly that Peace place is now, no I can't think of it. Isn't that terrible. That grey matters going slowly. We went across the border there.

30:30 And we didn't see any action till we got just about the other side, yeah, the other side of Pyongyang and they had the battle of the apple orchard, but our Company wasn't in it, it was mainly B and C Company and they had a good battle there. The Yanks had dropped parachutes behind, the pretty famous parachute unit from the last war and they were in trouble. They dropped their weapons away from them, their heavy weapons and

31:00 the Koreans were trying, they had them surrounded, so they asked our Battalion to go in and help them. It was pretty, pretty, our mob did a real good job there because they were all ex-servicemen. They all knew what to do and they got through to the Yanks, and I've got the photo there, the Yankee wounded there and you can see them all laying on stretchers, that's the American wounded.

How come your Battalion didn't go in there? How come your Battalion didn't go in there?

A Company,

31:30 our Company didn't go. They only used, they used B, C and Support Company. They only used three and maybe that's all they thought it needed and that's all they did need anyway. These fellows were getting chased by them and they just took off at any rate, but they killed a lot, our fellows killed a lot. I don't think we hardly had a man killed.

Were you still on the machine gun? Was that your position?

Those people wanted me back, Lenny Leno was a machine gunner, so he wanted me to go back.

32:00 I said "No, I'm in the infantry, so I'll stay there" and I was D Company and I, it was all my pals and I was with these fellows and I'd known them from Puckapunyal and up there and I thought 'oh no, I'll stay with my mates" and then we got a bit closer. We arrived at a place called Pakchong and B Company went across the bridge and we went down into the town

32:30 and the people there had big signs up and "Welcome" and that sort of thing. I think they were happy to

get rid of the Communists because they were way up in North Korea. There was a couple of attacks on hills, I wasn't in them and some of our fellows were killed and at Pakchong the broken bridge too, I think we had five killed there, but they had tanks there too but they used Yankee planes to knock them out.

33:00 Then we went further north.

Can you tell us about the action Blue. I don't want to upset you by going too deep. If you'd like me to stop, just ask me, but can you tell us about the action that you first saw in Korea when you lost those men?

Yeah, well they were mostly B and C Company, where I wasn't used. Our Company wasn't used. We didn't seem to have much and we went after Pakchong which

33:30 was a reasonably large town to a place Chongjin. Now we did see some action and we took a hill. That was our Company and A Company on the other side of the road, they went the other side. We struck a fair bit and we'd lost men taking those hills. It wasn't very high and it through a lot of trees and

34:00 that sort of thing and that afternoon they kept dropping stuff on us, like mortars and that sort of thing and that night they come back and counter-attacked and run through us. They mainly went through our platoon, that was 10 Platoon, so my mate Billy, he was about six foot three, and he was a big Western Australian, a big rough fella, and he got hold of this Korean and he's having a wrestle with him, in the night

34:30 time and you could pick them because they were only little fellas and I said to Billy "Throw him down Billy." so he threw him down and then I shot him, but they got through the headquarters, Battalion Headquarters which is always at the back, well by that stage they'd lost that many men then they started to come back through us, well they were popping more off. And they had their winter gear on then, the cloak and there was a little fellow,

35:00 about five foot one, an Australian and he had a bayonet on and he was trying to bayonet this fella and because of this thick cloak he couldn't get it into him and his mates yelled out "Shoot him, shoot him" so he did that. And the next morning, the brigadier come up, the English brigadier and mainly in our area there was about a hundred and fifty dead, so it was a pretty hectic old night for a while.

35:30 **What was that like for you to shoot somebody in the dark? Was it night time?**

He was right next to him, Bill had hold of him.

I mean could you see properly?

Oh yeah, yeah, reasonable, reasonable, yeah.

Was that the first time you'd had arm to arm combat?

Really, really that was the first big battle I'd ever been in. That was,

36:00 that was, cause we lost a fair few too, we had a fair few killed but we never had a hundred and fifty like they did, but we were in, we had a hole, we had a trench.

What is that battle known as?

Chongjin. And then we moved up a little bit further to get near the other river and they were camped and the colonel he said "Move me tent up

36:30 here somewhere" and they moved it and he was a lovely fellow, Charlie Green, Colonel Green from Grafton. The shell hit the top of the tree and just went in, killed him, just one man, that's all it killed. Nobody else was killed, nobody else was injured, I don't think. Charlie Green, they reckoned, the brigadier

37:00 who always had his photo on his desk many years later.

Did Charlie die straight away?

He died about three or four hours later, yeah, which if you're going to die, the quicker the better at any rate, especially from stomach wounds.

And Charlie was an Australian?

37:30 Yeah, yeah, oh yeah, he was the youngest colonel in the last war. He was only, he was a colonel in charge of a battalion and I think he was only about twenty five, twenty six and he left school when he was fourteen, yeah, so he worked his way up, from a private right up. He'd been over in the Middle East though, he'd been all through the whole lot of it.

I think I've actually heard of him before.

Mrs Green, Olga.

Mrs Green, he was married wasn't he?

Yeah, Olga, she was a lovely lady.

38:00 **Did they have any children?**

Yes, yes, one or two, maybe two, I think. A little girl I know that, but I don't know about. One or two, I'm not too sure, yeah.

What did Mrs Green do? You say, is she famous in Australia?

Only to us because she was Colonel Green's wife and she had a lot to do with the Battalion,

38:30 3 Battalion. Yeah, we had a big reunion here, for fifty years since the war finished this Anzac Day and it started on the Thursday night and we, the Lord Mayor put on a dinner, like we didn't sit down like, had pick up food and free beer and Mrs Green was there and I met her and I had my photo taken with her and that. The next day, Anzac Day, after the March we all went down to a, sort of a place

39:00 where they have wedding receptions, along the river, on the other side of the valley, on that side there. I forget the name of what they call that now and that was free beer all the afternoon too and we're all there. They came from all over Australia for that. Yeah, it was great to see all your old mates, yeah.

When was that reunion Blue?

This Anzac Day, last Anzac Day.

39:30 Yeah, yeah, Mrs Green was there, Olga.

So where was the place that Charlie was killed, further north than Chongjin?

Yes a little bit further north of Chongjin. I just couldn't, I don't even know where. I think it was just the side of a hill. I don't even think it had a real name, but they still say Chongjin where he was killed.

Chongjin. And were you there in the camp when he was killed?

We must have been close to him somewhere. We must have been close over those hills.

40:00 Battalion headquarters well you don't get anywhere near them.

Are you meaning the officers?

Yeah, yeah, the colonels and the brigadiers and the whatever, all those type of people. That's the brain of the battalion, all the radios and all that sort of thing. So after that we knew, the next thing the Chinese hit the

40:30 Americans so we started to go south and went back to Pakchong again. We went through Pakchong and we're going down and we could see 77 Squadron strafing behind us and we thought "Hhm, here goes". When your planes are behind you strafing the enemy but they did a great job. They kept them away from us a lot.

Tape 6

00:35 **Okay Blue, now you were in the battle of, well, at Chongjin. Which was with the North Korean, can you just give us as much of a detailed picture about that battle and what you experienced in it, from whoa to go, just to kind of?**

Well we were right there, I'd say we took turns leading off, one day

01:00 it was the middle section, the next day it was the Scotch and then the next day it was the Australians. It was our turn to lead, it was always on a Sunday and it was always seemed to be on a Sunday when we led, we always run into trouble. I think it was round about eleven o'clock when we reached this place where the enemy was and they were in the trees and on a small ridge, not very big and then we had to take this ridge and we did loose men going across there. And I'll always remember

01:30 as they do in the movies, when a man's shot he always falls over. Well Val Hurd didn't, he just sat down and our officer he run forward and he got a medal for it, which he deserved. He grabbed hold of Val and dragged him back on the, down behind the, in safety. He was our first one shot. We didn't lose a real lot taking the ridge.

02:00 There was 10 and 11 and 12 Platoon, our Company across ways and on the other side was A Company. A Company, they had tanks and they had the T34 which is a pretty big tank, from the Russians and Jack Stafford, that was in A Company, and he seen they had all the petrol because they'd were retreating. They must have been carrying the petrol on the sides so he just shot at the petrol tanks on

02:30 the T34, and it burst into flames. Well they had to get out because being all steel they would have

roasted. Well they picked them off as they were coming out of the tanks. They then got the Sabres in and the other American aircraft and they strafed and bombed them and that sort of thing, so we took the hill there with not much troubles.

03:00 But back that night they come back and that was when the big battle was on, in the night time. They over run us, they went straight through our lines, especially our Company, there was that many of them. And that went, then they got through to BH

[Battalion Headquarters] but by that stage they were running out of men and they'd just about had it, so they come back through us to escape. And then the next morning well they found mainly in our area about a hundred and fifty dead.

03:30 **They even bought the brigadier, the English brigadier come up to have a look.**

What was it like for you Blue? I mean this is your first sort of big battle I guess?

That's right, yes, really fair dinkum one, yeah, yeah.

Do you remember what you thought at the time when the enemy was getting a bit close?

Well when they run through us. Yeah, well I thought "Umh, we'll be irrigating the Gobi Desert by the look of it, we'll be prisoners." More so when the Chinese come into it I thought of that. When they come into it, yeah.

I mean the Australians did well, pretty much across the board, in terms of keeping their casualties pretty low.

Yes, yes.

But I was just wanting

04:30 **to know on that daylight one, you're on your advance during the day, how, did you get a fair picture of how many North Koreans were actually there?**

Oh we knew there was a fair few of them but then when they got into planes I knew that they were in trouble and they bugged out. Most of them all just took off.

How were they in trouble at this stage?

05:00 Well with these aeroplanes because they could strafe and bomb and use that terrible weapon, napalm, which is a terrible weapon.

Were they using that a lot at that stage?

Yeah. And they were using special, to shoot at the tanks, they have special, the way they shoot at them, heavy calibre machine guns or weapons, heavy calibre and we had tanks too,

05:30 we had American tanks. But they were not as good as the Russian tanks. Not as big either.

And what was I guess the chain of command or organization like within the ranks of the Australians during that daytime fight?

Ah, well we, being just a, you had your lieutenant, like the platoon sergeant, the platoon commander and then the sergeant and then

06:00 every section had a what's it's name. I was not a section leader at that stage. I was on the two inch mortar and the, so that was the, and then you had your, back at BH

you had the battalion commander, the CO. Yes, everybody was a little bit scared.

06:30 **It's only human nature naturally. You do want get home and have another beer.**

Naturally. Was there, could you tell, I guess everybody would have been putting on a bit of a brave front, but could you tell the other fellows around you were a bit scared?

No, I don't think so, it's in yourself and you don't show it either.

07:00 Nobody likes to loose face, do they?

So how would you, what would you do to hold yourself together Blue in that sort of situation, so you did save face?

Just keep going, just keep going. Don't be to, dropping back too far or getting in a ditch too often. I just hoped for the best.

07:30 **And what was, I guess mateship on the battlefield like?**

Well as I say that big reunion here fifty years after, you seen all those mates of yours that you knew and it's very binding. You never forget it. It's like your brother, just like your brother.

08:00 Yeah, you never forget it.

How did your training hold up, actually in the field?

Well that's the main thing. Without that and to operate your weapons very quickly and that sort of thing, that is the training and also taking cover and those sorts of things.

What kind of cover could you take when you're trying to

08:30 **take a hill?**

Yeah, that's what a man said to me in hospital, an Australian war correspondent. He said "Did you fix bayonets?" I said "You're joking." Fix bayonets, taking a mountain was just about what we took. That one there wasn't though, that was a ridge, not too high. I think he'd read too many books, this fellow, about the First World War.

So what was the kind of terrain that you were actually

09:00 **covering to take this ridge? What was it like?**

Up to the ridge we were pretty well just flat ground, just about flat ground and they retired to the next ridge behind and that's when they come at us again that night, from there. But all that time there was an exchange of shooting between the two ridges, where they were and where we were,

09:30 mortars and that sort of thing.

Now you and a mate of yours were on mortars during that, while you were taking that ridge?

I was the mortar, the mortar man. Billy and I were the mortar men, the mortar fellows but only like a little one, a two inch mortar and yeah.

Were you loading or aiming? What was your?

Ah, you haven't got a real lot of them because

10:00 they were pretty heavy things to carry. With them that's it, you've only just got to aim them and get a fair clue how far. It's not like a three inch mortar where you got all the mechanics on it and the special people to aim it and fire it in the distance, but a two inch, it's pretty hit and miss. You might hit and you might miss and they use a lot of them in the night time. Mainly in the night time for flares, for to light

10:30 the countryside up, mainly that's what the two inch mortars for.

So how did, this is a really technical question, might be a bit obvious, but how would you and your mate handle this mortar as you're advancing towards this ridge and firing? I mean who would, would one of you carry it or both of you carry it or?

You took turns carrying it but I was lucky, I had a fella six foot two, so he did most of the carrying.

11:00 Only the worst thing would be with him would be building a bigger trench, so I said "You're six foot two, you should do most of the work." He didn't agree with that.

And what was, Blue what was your impression of the North Koreans as fighters?

Not as good as the Chinese, because the Chinese were attacking most of the time. These fellows were retreating

11:30 so they'd been badly mauled all the way from the 38th parallel all the way, nearly up to the Yalu River. We weren't far from the Yalu River. They were still would have a go if they were in a position and had enough of them but a lot were surrendering, a terrific lot were surrendering

12:00 When the Scotch attacked one place, Sarawong, they come in from the north. I don't know how the hell they ever did that. They must have swung around and come in from behind them and they had all that winter gear on. They had it on already, the Scotch and the North Koreans run out and said "Ruskies, Ruskies" because Joe must have told them, Joe Stalin, "That we would come and help you if you get into trouble" and then they

12:30 got right into the city, into Sarawong, and then an officer walked out and he said "British" and then the Scotch fellow said "fire" and they shot back some of them. They thought they were Russians because they had these funny looking, they had their winter hats on.

How were the Scots and the Southern Highlanders and that like to fight alongside?

13:00 Number one, first class. Always had a good name, the Scotch.

Why was that in your opinion?

Brave men, they've always been brave men, very brave people.

How did they differ, I guess to the Australian?

Only in talking, hard to understand some of them.

13:30 Much the same, not much different.

And once you'd captured the ridge Blue, did you think it was kind of, that part of it was all over?

You dig in because you always, always, once you take a position you dig in because they'll always counter attack but I thought the North Korean had just about had it then, just about in my opinion.

14:00 But these fellows must have been very keen officers or something because they did come back that night, stacks of them too.

So were you and the Company able to dig in much of a position before nightfall?

Pretty well, yeah fairly well. You don't dig too much until you hear mortars coming over the top of you and then you start digging alright then. You don't

14:30 need no officer or NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] to tell you "Hey, come on dig that, don't sit around down there smoking." You don't need anybody to tell you to start digging then. You make your shovel work overtime.

So what happens or what happened within the Company once you'd sort of taken the ridge and the North Koreans were on the retreat and you're watching them getting strafed and they're bugging off?

Yeah.

What were all you guys up to at that stage?

15:00 **Once you'd taken the ridge, what happened after that? Before nightfall?**

Well we just stayed there and dug in and waited for the counter attack and that's when they did counter attack but we didn't think they'd come back, after the aeroplanes and they'd just about had it by then the North Koreans.

Can you tell us Blue, what that night attack kind of sounded like and?

15:30 Pretty noisy, very noisy.

How so? Can you describe it for me? What you see and hear around you?

Yeah, well there's a lot of us shooting and them shooting and they also were using mortars too, dropping them on us, so

16:00 there is a fair bit of noise.

When did you first know that they were on the counter attack?

It was dark, it was definitely dark. It was, I'd say about eight o'clock in the night, it was definitely dark. Because that was only the end of summer then so the days were a bit longer then, but their summer was ending.

16:30 And you could just see them coming.

What did you see?

Well I see them coming through our, getting through our platoons because they were in front of us. Being a mortar you're always in the middle and you could see these figures in the night running through them and I knew it wasn't our fellas because our fellas were dug in, they wouldn't leave their holes for

17:00 nobody.

So what did you do when you realised what was going on?

Well night times, that can be scary. You don't know how many mores going to keep coming.

Do you remember what the first thing you did was Blue,

17:30 **once you realised they were coming?**

Well we did get down in the trench, as far as Billy could fit in there, six foot two of him. I think I had more of the trench than him. Cause we knew they were under attack, because we could hear the fellows in front, our platoon. But I think,

18:00 of all of our fellows we all got a surprise because we thought they'd had it by then. They would have packed up and moved backward further, which they did the next day. They did move back towards the Yalu River but by then they would have known the Chinese were moving in the hills behind them. Maybe that's why they got a bit cheeky then because they knew the Chinese weren't far away.

And were the North Koreans,

18:30 **I mean I guess in the middle of it all, were they doing anything of a good job, in their encounter attack? I mean did they look like they knew what they were doing?**

Yeah, I don't think these fellows were amateurs by a long way. They knew, they had a fair clue what they were doing alright.

19:00 Yeah, oh yeah, they were good soldiers in that respect.

It's amazing Blue that they came right through the front line infantry, through your Company and back again.

Well they hit BH

and they were loosing them by then, well when you count a hundred and fifty and they were mostly in our platoon and the other, I don't think

Company had hardly seen anybody on the right hand side row and

19:30 the next platoon to us got a few but not many. It was mainly they hit at one area and maybe that's the idea of it to try and get through, break through that area and then they could get behind us. I think that more than likely was their idea.

Trying to do what MacArthur did?

That's right, yeah, at Inchon.

So how close did they come to you Blue?

Well my mate grabbed

20:00 one and had a good wrestle with him and it turned out he was an officer too. I don't know what rank he would have been, I don't have a clue. They had stars like the Russians. And he had pictures, photos, of his family on him, which does make you a little bit sad.

And would you often check for photos and things like that on the dead?

20:30 No, no, no, no. It all depended on the situation. Whether you stayed or stopped or whether you kept going but we were there the next morning because they bought a bulldozer up and dug a big hole and buried all them fellas there. And the British brigadier come up and had a look too.

21:00 **Did he say anything about what he saw?**

Oh yeah, as the English say "He was choofed".

How long did the, I guess, counter attack last during the night time?

I'd say from the

21:30 time when they hit us about, I'd think it would be about an hour, an hour and a half or something, by the time they attacked, got through us and then come back again to try and escape, cause when they got through us, our platoon and us, the few stragglers, they more or less thought they were in the open, they were safe, but BH

was behind them. I'd say about an hour and a half

22:00 **from go to whoa [start to finish], but my memories not real good.**

And when they came through the first time were they in closed ranks or were they fairly spread out?

They were all over the place, wherever they could get through. I think that was the idea of it, to get through, to get behind us and to see if they could cut us off

22:30 or something. I don't know what they, I think that would have been their aim. Maybe to cause panic of us too. But I couldn't see, I think it was pretty suicidal myself. They must have had a clue that we had tanks and aeroplanes and everything the next day.

Can you describe for us what you saw the next morning, once the light?

23:00 We just, everybody just got up and had a look around and seen all these dead bodies. They were everywhere, stacks of them, and then the Yanks had some sort of bulldozers put on tanks or something and they come up and our colonel got them to dig the hole. And you sort of get a,

23:30 afterwards, the next day, I suppose when you're still alive, and we lost a few there. I wouldn't have a clue how many was there of our fellas, nothing like them and you sort of get a bit of exhilaration.

How so, why do you think?

Human nature I think and you're still alive too, I suppose that's a big

24:00 plus too.

That feeling that you've made it?

Yeah, made it once more.

Were there any kind of words said for the fellas that you'd lost?

No, you don't dwell on that, that's one thing because if you start dwelling on those things, well they cover them up or

24:30 they carry them or they bury them or if they're wounded get them out pretty quick. Seeing as we were winning we had no worries in that respect and the other battalion behind you, the middle six, well they'll help you too. They'll send up medics and all that sort of thing. Everybody helps everybody and yeah, if it was a pretty close friend I think you really would feel it,

25:00 if it was one of your best buddy's, best mates, you'd feel it.

And what was the feeling like, I guess, amongst the Company when you realised how many Koreans you'd actually got as opposed to how many Australians? You actually did very well.

Oh yeah we didn't do, I don't know whether

25:30 we lost five that night killed. I don't think there was more than, I think it was round about that five. That's out of our platoon, there was other platoons too, say A Company too on the other side. We found it hard to believe. It was really suicidal, but I don't, still the officer must have been a bit, the Korean officer must have been a bit gung-ho or something.

26:00 **And what did you, did you know anything of the Chinese at this stage?**

No, no, we didn't know. We thought it was home by Christmas but they didn't ask Mao Tse Tung, he changed that. The word had gone around. After this though,

26:30 around about, not long after this that we'd be home by Christmas, everybody would be, it's all over, the battles won.

So did you have any sense of how many, I guess Koreans were, I mean the Koreans that had kind of come through and disappeared but survived, did you know where they'd buggered off too? They'd retreated to another ridge had they?

Yeah, they'd retreated to another ridge and I think they just kept going because

27:00 they, I mean we moved up the next day, straight up and that's where Charlie Green got killed and we were in trucks and that and I don't think they were too worried cause we had spotter planes all the time and we were lucky in that respect and that's the far north as we went where Charlie Green got killed, Colonel Green got killed. And then the dirt hit the fan then.

27:30 We got chased.

What was the first news you heard of that? I mean you'd actually had a quite good advance, you'd done pretty well?

Well we knew, word come through that the Yanks were in trouble, right near the Yalu River and then we about turned and started to go south again and we'd made it alright

28:00 until Pakchong, and then we went through Pakchong and then we seen them, our planes, the 77th Squadron, attacking from behind, dropping napalm, from behind us. I thought "Oh this is nice, usually in front of you dropping napalm [jellied petrol used in bombs], not behind you." And they were in the valley there, and that afternoon, we were still on trucks, we

28:30 got out of the trucks and A Company they put in an attack. The Chinese by then had taken this hill and the Argyles were still inland. They were still about seven miles or so away from us, inland, and they were in trouble and A Company did it. Now we went up in another bigger hill and we never heard nothing and then it got dark.

29:00 They took the hill, A Company, had casualties and then C and B Company, like along the river, a river and a road, and then the Chinese hit them that night. Now we lost Charlie, Colonel Green, we were then given another colonel. He was over visiting, I won't say his name but everybody knows who it is. When the

29:30 Chinese were hammering A Company on top of this hill and B and C Company had all the bugles blowing, he panicked and he withdrew in the night time. You never withdraw in the night time. As soon as you withdraw they'll come straight through with you. One fellow was counting them and I think he was counting Chinese. They weren't going to say anything. As long as they could closer to the thing, the easier to bump you off.

30:00 **So Blue how did all the men react to the order of withdrawing at night time?**

One officer he said "Pull the plug." one of the platoon commanders, but he was an old soldier from the last war, see experienced. He said "Pull the plug, we don't need these things, we're not moving." But the other one was a young soldier and I think the officers had been either killed and the sergeant I think took over and

30:30 they did loose a fair few fellas there, that was A Company and we could hear all the shooting, we could hear all the bugles but nobody come near us, right on top of the hill.

Was it just bugles? What else were your hearing apart from the bugles?

Oh the bugles and drums and mainly bugles, mainly bugles, yeah, yeah, and that was scary even though we weren't

31:00 involved. We knew the Chinese were into it then. Don't ask me how we knew they were Chinese, but we had word at any rate that it was Chinese, word had passed down. So we withdrew early in the night and what happened to my mate and I and the mortar, nobody come and told us and we woke up in the morning and we're the only one's left on top of the mountain. I'm glad the Chinese didn't come up. We would have been Christmas.

31:30 And just on dusk, on daylight, it was still a little bit dark, we wandered down and again experience, my mate started to yell out A Company or D Company, well we were D Company. I said "Hey, don't say that, if our mob here you they might think you're Chinese doing that, the Japanese used to do that". And I said "Hey keep quiet, don't say anything, you might get shot by your own mob." and you can't blame them.

32:00 And we got down the bottom of the hill and then we rejoined the Company. Now that colonel come down and the brigadier come up by then and he told the Yankee tanks who were coming down the road, he said "You won't get past the us, I'll blow you off the road". He said "I've got seventeen pounders on both sides of the road." He said "You're not withdrawing past here". And he told the colonel to get back up there and they had to re-attack A Company and take what they'd

32:30 already lost, so that lost more men. So in, I missed that bit, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the night, so A Company really got it bad, but B and C, down on the river, they were alright. They didn't have too many casualties. It was mainly A Company. Cause that's what they wanted, the higher ground, naturally.

So D Company was there alongside A Company as a bit of a back up?

Yeah, but the Chinese never come up, so they mustn't have had a lot but they were attacking B and C

33:00 on the road near the river, in front of the river and they were attacking A, so I'd say, yeah, they never come near us. So the brigadier said to the, the brigadier said to the colonel, our colonel "There's your jeep, don't stop until you get to Pusan". See how bad leaders can get you killed? He was a bad leader, he should have known you don't withdraw of a night time.

33:30 That's a no-no. Even I as a baggy old corporal knew that. He was a colonel. He should have gone to school and learnt those things, at Duntroon.

Now did his withdrawal cause casualties within A Company?

Mmh, mmh, yes, yes, in the withdrawal and then trying to retake the hill. They had to retake the hill because the Argyles were there, they wanted that, the Chinese wanted it,

34:00 but we wanted it too, to get the Argyles out. It would have been nice, the Scotchmen would have never talked to us again, would they if we'd lost them half their Battalion or something? So they escaped alright, no worries.

Cause A Company got it all back?

Yeah, they got back up there.

And did you have any sense at this time as to how many Chinese you were facing?

No, no, I wouldn't have a clue. I didn't, I was

34:30 really thinking about irrigating the Gobi Desert that night.

What were you thinking about?

Irrigating the Gobi Desert. That's way in Mongolia. I thought that's what they'll use us for. Slave labour. And then after that we went to Choonaroi. Now this was the famous, nothing to do with us. The American General said to our

35:00 Brigadier Cody, the Englishman, "We want you to take that hill." the fellows that fought the Indians, the Cavalry, the Cavalry, "That the Cavalry lost". Not good soldiers, not good soldiers, the American Cavalry. They weren't John Wayne's them fellas at all. So he said "No, you've got your trouble, you get

yourselves out of trouble.” So he said it to the Turks and the Turks made bayonet charge

35:30 after bayonet charge. They had over a thousand killed in that battle. The Yanks said “We’ll give you artillery”. “We don’t want artillery”. They were mad the Turks. How fellows ever chased them out of Egypt, I don’t know. And that was the battle of Kunari and then when we left there they had the bagpipes and they spread them out amongst us, and every company had a bagpipe, so we marched out. The Yanks

36:00 were running and we marched out. Typical British, stiff upper lip and all that.

How did that feel?

Great, it was terrific, I was wishing Cinesound News was there, the old days of Cinesound News. You might remember it? No, you wouldn’t remember it. No, a bit before your time.

I know of it though. And what can you tell us about, I mean the US were a lot more chaotic?

It was a debar, what’s the word you say? Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow [reference to Napoleon Bonaparte’s failed invasion of Russia in the early 19th century],

36:30 from then on till we got right down to the South Korean border, the Yanks just bashed their way through road blocks, lost men after, hundred of men. If you were unlucky you got killed, if you were lucky you got through. They just drove through roadblocks, Chinese roadblocks. It was terrible. We were lucky we never got caught on any of that.

And why not? Were you retreating down a different path?

37:00 At different places, yes, yes. We got back down to Pyongyang and then we went through that again and then we kept going south. We were lucky, well like all wars, some people are lucky and some people aren’t lucky. The Yanks they really, they really give them a hard time and we had not transport. We had to ride on the duke trailers of our 4.2 inch mortars and anybody else we could what’s it’s name. We had

37:30 men out all the time so in the night time they’d say “3 Battalion here”. It was well organised, our colonel who took over. Major Ferguson was then a colonel. They made the major up, Major Ferguson to a colonel and he should have got the job in the first place. There would have been no panic then, amongst the Battalion. He was a good soldier. He had a decoration from the last war. Then we got down, not far from the South Korean border and any rate

38:00 we did a rear end. You know the last, see the last people through overnight in this area, near a river, and then as the Americans transports got through it and in a certain time, in the daylight, we had to pull out. We had transport then, we had our own transport. About five o’clock in the morning down comes the biggest, fattest Yank with a kit bag on his shoulder, no rifle, no gun. All the transport had just about

38:30 finished. Behind this transport is the Chinese, so this fellow he was still fighting the battle of the Civil War. So I walked out, we were sort of hidden, and I walked out on the road and I said “Hey Yank, what mob are you from?” He looked at me and said “I ain’t no Yank, I’m from Texas.” They were fighting General Lee still, cause they’re not Yanks, they don’t believe they’re Yanks, the North are the Yanks,

39:00 the bad blokes, they fought them in the Civil War. I nearly died laughing. It was the funniest thing I’d ever heard. I said “Well Yank, you’d better keep going.” So we picked him up and took him with us.

Tape 7

00:32 **You were just talking about the Texan bloke and you took him with you. Where did you take him?**

I don’t know. He went to BH

so whatever they did with him, I don’t know, battalion, when we caught up with the Battalion. What they did with him I don’t know.

So what happened then Blue? Did you retreat all the way back into South Korea?

Yes and we were at Christmas, we were getting close to Christmas and

01:00 we were getting close to a place called Uijongbu or Uijongbu. Now retreating with us madly was all the South Korean Army and they were taking off. They were nearly even throwing their boots away I think to go faster and they usually carried sandshoes anyway and they had sandshoes on. At any rate at this place, this afternoon, as the trucks were going along, the Chinese were doing anything to try and stop the convoys, to try and cause

01:30 mayhem and that sort of thing and they were firing on the trucks, but from a long distance. They were on a hill not far away. The Aborigine officer, Mr, lieutenant, no he was captain by then, Saunders, great fella, good soldier, been through Greece, Crete and all that,

02:00 he was A Company, he rounded up a few men and he attacked and took that. As he did that, we had all Negro truck drivers, and he had a BAR semi-automatic weapon. He fires on our fellas. Saunders comes down and Reg Saunders was pretty dark and he looks at this driver,

02:30 he knew it wasn't us, and he said to the driver, he said "You black bastard, what are you doing shooting at my men?" Well we fall into, things were serious up to this stage, that broke us all up. Reg Saunders calling somebody names. Ah gee I laughed and he was a great soldier, a great man too.

03:00 And the Negro said "Just testing man, just testing." Like hell he was, he was trying to shoot whoever was on top of that hill and it was our fellas by then. They'd driven the Chinese off by then or killed them. Saunders was a great soldier and we moved on then and got to Uijongbu and they give us two bottles of beer. Where the hell they got this two bottles of beer? And that was Christmas Eve, so Billy Fox and I we put the four bottles outside, and when we got up the next morning, it was all split.

03:30 That's how cold it was by then. That's like putting it up in the freezer, twenty five below.

You're kidding?

So we're sitting there with a dixie [cooking pot] eating a what's it's name, but alcohol don't freeze. All we've got is ice.

So that's all you got on Christmas Day was a bit of dirty ice?

Dirty ice, that's right, that's all it was, out of the beer bottle.

And where did you sleep,

04:00 **in a tent?**

We did have, by that stage, we were gradually getting, no, no we had no tents. I don't think I ever slept in a tent in Korea. I'm positive I never slept in a tent in Korea. We had sleeping bags, American sleeping bags and I was lucky, I got an English one and it was, oh that had feathers in it. You can't beat

04:30 feathers, that's the best. And then we got back down there and we did the rear guard in a certain area of Seoul, so that night the Chinese had just about caught up with us, early in the morning and Buck Buchanan got shot in the chest. He was at the end and he was the sergeant. The Chinese come up and of course in the dark they weren't too sure they were some of our fellas, they didn't want to shoot our fellas and of course

05:00 Buck got shot. He was the only casualty. We withdrew from there into the city and it was so eerie to drive through a city and all you see is the scallywags running around the streets and not many of them. The whole city's stopped and it's all quiet.

Which city is this?

Seoul.

And did Buck die?

No, no, he come back to Kyogle, he come home from there. Now on the other side, the

05:30 Ulster's they'd arrived by then, another British brigade arrived and as they were retreating the Chinese were jumping in the trucks with them, so we got to ride to some parts of Seoul. That's what I say, sometimes you're lucky and sometimes you're unlucky. A lot of them got captured, taken prisoners, the Ulsters.

Where are the Ulsters from?

That's from North Ireland.

06:00 From Northern Island, yeah, yeah and then we then went across the Han River and all the bodies in the river and all the poor people retreating, they were just dying. They were throwing their babies in the river because the babies were dead, because of the freezing weather. They were retreating and a lot of them were North Koreans, they'd just escaped to get away from that terrible regime in the north, the Communists.

06:30 But a lot of them died. All you'd see was the white thing in the snow. Then we went as far down as what we could just about go and then after that we started to come back up and we started to attack them. MacArthur got the sack and Ridgeway took over, General Ridgeway, and from then on he did a better job than MacArthur. He was a younger man too and a last War officer too, but a much younger man than MacArthur.

07:00 And that's when I met my Waterloo [my downfall].

Can you tell us Blue what happened?

We were on top of a hill, we slept on top of that hill and then the next morning A Company moved off first to take a ridge and we were going to back them up on that ridge. We were going to go up behind

them. They got half way up and got stuck. The Chinese were waiting for them. It was daylight by then and they were mortaring them and shooting them and they were losing a few jokers,

07:30 so they said we've got to go over on the next ridge and try and get around behind them and that's what we did. And as we went down everybody was laughing, it was hard to believe but we were laughing and joking, all this slippery dip, just sat on our backsides and went down, all this snow. They still call it the slippery dip. At any rate Lieutenant Minette said,

08:00 I was a corporal by then, a section leader, he said "Well you lead off, and you take your mob." Well I had a lot of reinforcements by then because of sickness and all that sort of thing and the casualties, and I wasn't too sure who these fellas were or what they were or what they knew, so I said "I'll lead up." so I was first up the hill and first back.

What happened when you went

08:30 **up to the hill?**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, went up the hill and all I can remember seeing these fellas, two there was, but they got the drop on me. They were waiting for us, they were watching us and as soon as we got close they let go, and one hit me in the leg and one hit me in the head. And

09:00 I was laying there and of course they were just waiting for somebody to just try and get me, so they could pick them off. At any rate an Englishman, Peter Holliburn [sp.?], he got up and got hold of my foot and pulled me down towards him where there was more protection. I was protected then and I'll always remember what he said. You'll excuse me what he said but this is what he said "Oh shit." because by that stage blood was pouring out of me head, but I said "Peter, I can see, I'm alright,

09:30 I can see." I knew that I wasn't, it wasn't in me brain or anything. It only bounced off the side and

What were you wearing on your head?

Oh the cold weather, those funny, we didn't have steel helmets or anything like that because of the cold weather. It was too cold. We had that, with the flap over the side, and then Nugget Dunque come up, he was our

10:00 medical orderly and they got me on the what's it's name and took me down the bottom and that's where all the casualties were laying there. Now we laid, we stayed there till about, we didn't start moving off till about three o'clock in the afternoon, like the medical people are looking after you. Father Joe Phillips said to me "I never thought I'd see you there Blue." I said "Neither did I Father." He stayed there three years he stayed

10:30 there. He volunteered to stay there three years, strike a light. I think he must have been offering up for his sins. And at any rate they started to carry us. Well the Yanks they were attacking all along the line and the Canadian then they had to take down further. It was their first battle and we moved off, I'd say about three or four o'clock in the afternoon I think

11:00 and then they had to carry me all night, these poor beggars. Then we got to the Indian Casualty Clearance station about eight o'clock the next morning, yeah, and they were the Indians.

Could they do anything for your wounds in between that time?

Oh yeah, they were looking after us, oh yeah. We had all that, we had a doctor, we had the doctor there and all that thing but see they couldn't get the helicopters because they were too busy, yeah. And then we

11:30 taken to MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] and the next bed next to me was a Chinaman, one of the prisoners. I thought "Thank you very much."

Where did it get you in your leg?

Yes. See in there [indicates], went in one side and out the other. Went in here, I don't know, somewhere there.

And out, so went in the upper inner thigh and came out the outside of your thigh.

Yeah, yeah, I'd say, lucky no arteries,

12:00 otherwise I would have been dead and no bones, lucky in that respect.

Someone was looking after you?

They were, my Mum was saying her prayers.

And how long were you in the hospital then?

We finished up at the MASH and then we were sent down to the hospital at Pusan. I suppose you could call that another MASH too and that's where that fella said to the Yank, he said "Just to get you out of me hair, or

12:30 I'll send you back to Japan." He had no hair at all this.

Can you tell us that story again for the tape because you told us that when we were having a cup of tea this morning?

Yeah, we're all laying in the ward and first of all they come around and give out all the Purple Hearts. I said "Not me, I'm not an American." And at any rate this Yank he wanted to get back to Japan, he didn't want nothing to do with Korea and they were arguing, him and the doctor. And the doctor finally said "Just to get me out of me hair

13:00 I'll send you back to Japan." And he was as bald as a pigeon, as a billiard ball. Well the ward broke up, everybody started to laugh.

Did he have a good laugh at himself?

No, he didn't. And then we went back then to the Indian hospital in Kure and that had been there all those years, for a while. It was there, I got me appendix out there

13:30 in the Occupation Army, there by an English doctor.

So what happened? Did your appendix burst or something?

Yeah, that was in the Occupation Army. I got a pain and I got crook. I got crook up in Tokyo really first. I was in hospital there and I heard a funny thing there. I'd never seen women wearing slacks, like back in them days women didn't wear slacks and the nurses, who were lovely people, they wore slacks. And we were having dinner one day,

14:00 in the queue getting our dinner and these three nurses went past and one was a little bit and this Yank looked at her and he said "All meat and no potatoes". Well I'd never heard that before and I've never heard it since. Only the Yanks could say a thing like that.

Yes, it's good wearing a skirt. What were you feeling in the hospital? Were you thinking 'I'm

14:30 **going to die, I'm going to be okay'?**

Oh when I was evacuated in Korea? Oh no I was alright cause I could see, and they told me at every place there was no worries but I reported it because you never know what after effects, many years later or something like that. But me legs been good in that respect. The worst one is me left leg.

Where you weren't shot?

Where I was shot

15:00 this one is alright.

Funny how life works out?

It does, yeah. If it had of been this one that went I would have been a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated], wouldn't I? All that money I missed out on.

So was that it for you for Korea?

That was me finished, yeah. I went back to Japan and then I'll tell you a funny thing that happened there. I was there in Japan for a far while in the what's it's name and then we went over to Miyajima, they had a big hotel there for all us fellas,

15:30 all the casualties and that and we were there the day of the big battle of Kapyong. Not really funny, this was terrific, a lot of fellas took off, they said the Battalion's in trouble, they got on Yankee planes and went back to Korea. They would have had to go back sooner or later, but as soon as they heard the Battalion was in trouble, wasn't it great? That's a soldier for you.

Which battalion was it, do you know?

3 Battalion, that was 3. We were all in 3.

16:00 It was 3 the first twelve months, was all 3 Battalion. There was no other Australian battalions there. You could get on, cause the Yanks would take you anywhere and a fair few of these fellows left, never even reported back to the hospital, but just went back down and got on a plane and went back to Korea, because they heard the Battalion was in trouble. We heard it was worse, we heard it was half wiped out.

16:30 Well it wasn't half wiped out but I think they had sixty killed by then, of the Australians.

Did the Australian battalion get there in time?

Oh yeah, that saved, it was the last big push by the Chinese. They thought "This is it, we'll push us, all the Western world right out of Korea." And if they broke through there they would have, our mob had retaken Seoul by then and they'd had a big, General MacArthur and everybody there and all that

17:00 and that would have been, but the crew, the British brigades that lost us, the Argyles and the English battalions and the Ulsters, they stopped them coming down. That was the main route always, even back

in Genghis Khan days, they used to come down those valleys, down that way, and it was the easiest way into Seoul, into South Korea, and

17:30 that stopped them. And they held them there and they never did try that again. So it was just like the First World War then, they had one hill, and we had this hill and they all dug holes and there they stayed for the next two years till they finally, didn't sign a peace, but a sort of a treaty. They're still at war, South and North Korea.

Did you lose any mates in that battle?

18:00 At Kapyong, yeah, Lenny Leno and John Carter, dear old John. He was in the Occupation with us, yeah. John was killed, big tall, oh lovely man he was, big tall fellow, young boy. He come up to us as a reinforcement in Japan. Yeah, Johnny was killed, Lenny.

Where was John from?

From Sydney, would always tell you about Arnott's biscuit factory.

18:30 Yeah, I can always remember him, Johnny and his Arnott's.

And you lost your good mate, Lenny?

Yeah, me fighting mate.

How did Lenny die?

Straight through, yeah it was quick anyway, that's one thing. If you're going to die, if you're going to die, it's best to die quick, isn't it?

It is.

I never met his Japanese wife back home, no, what happened. Hard to say.

Well

19:00 **that must have been a terrible loss for you Blue?**

It was, yeah. Poor old Len and then they named a place out here, outside Brisbane, and they asked all the people, so we all went out there, about thirty ex-3 Battalion fellas, who knew Lenny and some who didn't know Lenny too, but they named something out there. Some hall but I don't whether it's a scout's hall or something and they called it "Lenny Leno".

19:30 They called it after him. They asked the Battalion, somebody from Korea and Victoria Barracks, somebody's name who'd died, who'd been killed in Korea, so that was nice of them, wasn't it?

Had you been on the machine gun, you may have lost your life too?

That's a possibility because they were the ones they were after, because they were the ones that did all the damage.

That's right.

20:00 **I'm sorry to hear that sad story.**

Poor old Len, yeah.

So what was it like coming back to Australia, again?

But I was going to tell you about this, all these wounded fellas

Oh yes.

And I was a hero and they were nearly all K Force [Korea Force - People who signed up just for the Korean War] and they were, they had a big English boat there and the English had a boat, not a real big boat, the army used to use it. It was like employed by the Government to carry soldiers

20:30 from Kure over to Pusan and at any rate there was about seventy of our fellas and I could hear them when they were going. I could hear clink, clink, clink and the wounded were going back and they'd been living a few days the hero and on the grog every day and night and everything else but they were treated well because they had to go back and finish their time. They took them down to the boat

21:00 and when they went on the boat they had, in charge of this boat they had a picket, the English Army fellas and a warrant officer and he had a big pay stick and because they were all half drunk, he poked Sullivan in the ribs with it. So Sullivan flattened him and so here they are fighting, so the picket run down to help their officer, the warrant officer and here they are fighting on it, and it was on for young

21:30 and old. Cause all these fellas were drunk and they were wild fellas, all that K Force mob. At any rate they run up the general and he said "Stop the Kiwis" because they knew as soon as they come down, they'd be on our side to fight the English. And the captain come down and he said "See them, get them off my boat and I'll never carry them again. I'm not carrying that mob anywhere." So they took them off

- and that night they put them on planes and
- 22:00 flew them back. That's been kept secret.
- What about you? Where were you in all of that?**
- No, no, I wasn't going back, I was still at Hero, I was going home. The doctor said "I'll think we recommend you go home."
- Did the Aussies like the English?**
- Yes, no this fellow just poked him with the, he shouldn't have never poked him because they'd all had a few grogs. He should have
- 22:30 known that he'd retaliate. He got a shock. There were no charges. The general said "No charges, just send them back." and nothings ever been said about that. It's always been kept very quiet.
- No, I'd hadn't heard about it, not that I probably have that much experience yet but, and what about the American's, the Yanks, did you find that they were big drinkers?**
- Never try and drink a Yank under the table with whiskey, they'll beat you all the time, they love whisky, they can drink that stuff.
- 23:00 **I'll keep that in mind.**
- But we can drink them under the table with beer. They couldn't drink beer. They couldn't drink it here when they come during the war and I know my brothers and they mainly told me that too, the old soldiers, with the Yanks. They'd get them on the beer and they'd get drunk very quickly but they could drink whisky.
- So you came home, you were discharged, for on medical grounds, were you?**
- No, no.
- Or just sent home in the hospital?**
- 23:30 On medical grounds, yeah and I was sent back and then I went to 4 Battalion and we were training soldiers to go to Korea. All those and they're coming through the recruit training and they were coming to us and we'd teach them and then we'd sent them up to Canungra, after they'd trained at Ingleburn.
- Did you want to stay in Korea or did you want to come home?**
- No, I was quite happy to come home.
- 24:00 You could press your luck too far, can't you?
- And did they, when you got back to Australia did they say "Oh listen Blue, we want you to go and train younger fellows?"**
- Yeah, train the fellows, yeah, yeah. We had a fellow who had two DCM's [Distinguished Conduct Medals]. Should have got a VC [Victoria Cross], see but pretty hard to get a VC off the English and he had two DCMs. It's the next thing to a VC, for a soldier, a private or corporal or sergeant and
- 24:30 he was throwing, and to make it real fair dinkum we had sticks of dynamite and waking these fellows up in the middle of the night and throwing these in amongst them and the damn thing went off and blew his hand off. He sat there coolly and smoked, the ambulance come up and they said "Get on the stretcher" and he said "No, I'll sit in the front." no bloody hand. Hell he was a gay fellow. If it had
- 25:00 of been me I would have been sound asleep, I would have passed out. He had no fingers, no nothing. Well a stick of dynamite in your hand, that's got to cause a bit of damage. Now that was, I can't remember his name, isn't that terrible? I know he was a sergeant but I just can't remember his name. But he had two DCM's.
- You wonder how Australian's get such a tough reputation and you hear those stories.**
- Yeah, till they took him into, what was it?
- 25:30 In Sydney, the big army hospital, out at Strathfield? Concord, Concord Hospital, yeah.
- Where did you train the young fellows that were being sent to Korea?**
- Way out in the bush at Ingleburn, yeah at Ingleburn. There's plenty of bush at Ingleburn. I'll bet it's not there now, it's all more likely houses.
- Did you like doing that, did you like training the men?**
- Oh yeah, good.
- 26:00 It was great, yeah, yeah.
- And did you train them in exactly what you had been trained in?**

Exactly the same thing.

All those years before?

Yeah.

And were you proud of them? Did you hear any news about the men that you trained?

Oh I think, the Australians, they must have done alright because they all had good names, right to the end of the war up there when they all come back,

26:30 all the Australians. They all had a good name.

So how long were you back in Australia before you went to sea again? You were at?

Then we were there, and then I heard they were going to Malaya and my Battalion again, 3 Battalion.

Always in trouble.

It was like home to me and back I went to 3 Battalion. I put in for a transfer

27:00 out of 4 Battalion, the training battalion and back to 3 Battalion and I knew all the NCO's and the senior NCO's and it was like coming home again. And we had two years in Malaya, but that good, that was good, pretty easy. Nothing much happened up there and they were Communists. CT's [Communist Terrorists] I think they call them, Communist Terrorists. They nearly won the battle there in 1951, but we didn't

27:30 go there until 1957. The English nearly lost it there. They killed the Governor General, the English Governor General. When they were fired upon at Fraser's Pass and he did the right thing. He just straddled his wife and he took all the bullets. Died just to save his wife, a brave man. That was the Governor General of Malaya because they were under the British then.

That would have been a surprise attack?

28:00 Yeah, the Governor General. Oh they didn't have to go looking for them in 51, 52, 53 in Malaya. The CT's were looking for the English.

What was it about the English that the Malaysians hated so much?

Well these were Communist and they wanted the English to leave Malaya. Well much later on, about two years on they got

28:30 what they called "Merdeka" [literally - Liberation] and that's home rule, their own, the English left and that was only two years later, so they achieved what they wanted but it wasn't Communist, it was the Malaysians who run the country then, the Malaysians with the help of Chinese. So we didn't see any action. Went out the bush a few times just for to break the monotony, more than anything. And that's where, we were taking

29:00 stuff up, I was in the stores by then and we were taking the stores up to these, the Battalion and we had fellas to carry them right up the mountains, real little men. I forget what they call them and all they had was a little lap-lap here and a little lap-lap around there, around their backside.

Pygmies?

Yeah, they were a type of pygmy. They were the original people of Malaya. The Malaysians are not the original people, these people are

29:30 and the Malaysians drove them into the jungle and that's where they've lived ever since. And afterwards, they do the job for you, they ask you to drop them in the village and you just leave them there and they'll go around for a while and they'll buy all the pretty things, cause you pay them and I thought "I'd love to drive into Lismore with this mob." Everybody would run out of the city. They had blunderbusses and bows and arrows and shotguns and

30:00 rusty looking old things.

Where did they have them if they were just wearing lap-laps?

Yeah, that's all they had.

Where were all the guns? Just on their shoulders were they?

Yeah, just carried them and I sat in the back with them and my boss was in the front and I was sitting in the back and I thought "Strike a light, I hope they know what they're doing these fellows, I hope it don't go off accidental or something." But they were quite safe. No, I can't think of their names.

30:30 But we had Ebarns [Dyaks?] there, they were the head hunters from Borneo and they used to take the patrols out, which I didn't do, because I was getting a bit old and everybody looked after me then and said "You have an easy job in the

Store. [

uartermaster's Store]" And all I did was get on the rum. Used to get an issue a night, they'd give me the rum and I'd issue it. I drank more than I issued.

How old were you then?

31:00 **Thirty one?**

Yeah, yeah, just about thirty one, thirty two, something like that.

Oh gee, that's not old?

No, no, no. Yeah, but I'd had a bit of service, so that's why they looked after me.

Well that would have been fine with you anyway, wouldn't it?

Oh yeah, yeah, I'd passed the stage of walking over mountains and all that sort of thing. Yeah, I thought "I'll take it a bit easier."

Sorry, you were telling us about those head hunters from Borneo.

Oh yeah, the Ebarns and if you were, and they'd go

31:30 out with (UNCLEAR) my mates were telling me about this, some of the fellows that were in Korea with me and they were there as corporals and sergeants in the infantry still there in Malaya. And they said if they said to go that way, and your compass said that way, you went that way. If you went that way you'd get lost. Don't take no notice of the damn compass, those fellows lived in the jungle. They knew what they were doing and where they were going. They lived in it.

Did you find them friendly though?

Yeah, but I didn't

32:00 like a lot of attitude of our fellows to them. They were nice little fellows. I couldn't see much wrong with them. There was only one or two smarties. I didn't like that attitude. They were pretty nice little fellows. I liked them. They were nice people, only they used to get their breakfast, that's their egg, bacon and Weet-Bix and put them all on one plate and eat them all together. I'd never sit at their table. I used to go elsewhere.

32:30 I couldn't stand that. They had it all in one go.

I suppose it all ends up in the same place?

Well that's right, when it goes down your tummy, so that's right. I suppose they're not, just the thought of it with me.

And how was it being in Malaya for two years without, well did you have, you tell me, did you have female company at all?

You could go to Penang pretty often and you'd get in the truck in the afternoon,

33:00 Friday afternoon and say you'd get Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Not every weekend, oh no, about once a month and you'd go to Penang which is a holiday place, as you would have know and you stayed and it was just wonderful. All I worried about was, we all used to get on the grog and just party on. They had special hotels for us. By the time you left where we were in the city, Kuala Kangsar and got to Penang, you'd be

33:30 wet three times, cause that rain, all the tropical rain in the back of a truck, but that didn't worry you because once you got wet five minutes later you were dry. And you had your army shorts on and what's it's name, but once you got there you could dress in civvy dress. You had your own trousers and shirts, civilians, and just wander around town like that. And there was a mad sailor one day and all the bars were called Sydney Bar and Melbourne

34:00 Bar, because the soldiers were good drinkers, so they made plenty of money and the Chinese were pretty astute and this mad sailor was picking up all these ashtrays, souvenirs, and putting them in, because they wear those tight clothes, putting them down and he missed the top step and he went down and I guarantee there were forty steps on that and when he hit the bottom all these trishaw fellows, that drive the trishaws and ashtrays flying out everywhere. Well they were in hysterics, they were. He never hurt himself, drunk see.

34:30 When we got him back he said "You've got to have me back, the liberty boat, the last liberty boat, or whatever they called it in Australia, it leaves at eleven". So we got him down there about ten to eleven and the other sailors were there. They said "We know who he is, he does it every damn port". Get full as a goog.

Lucky he had some fellow Aussies there to take care of him?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we made sure because the army

35:00 and the navy stick together. If you're navy, you've always got a drinking mate. It's always been, not so much the air force, always the army and the navy, always drink together and knock around together. Yeah, they were great the sailors. One had a big crucifix tattoo on his back. It must have cost him a fortune.

And it would have hurt?

And one night,

35:30 when we did our training in Malaya, we were at a place called Kota Tinggi, I think it was and that was the British, that's where they trained their troops to go up in the jungle. You all had to go through Kota Tinggi and I was in the store, I was in a tent, no, I was in a place and all big slats. So you had a big gap because of the heat. You couldn't lock things up because of the stinking humidity, even of a night time.

36:00 And this tiger was loose and you could hear him roaring, and these workers who worked around there, they were a little bit up from us in a tent and they come down and they said "Sahib, can we sleep here?" Because you could here this damn tiger, he sounds pretty close but he, I believe you could here it about three miles, travel three miles and he'd roar and he'd been wounded, they'd shot him. He was eating the cattle but after he starts eating the cattle, he starts eating people.

36:30 Specially as he's getting old and cranky and you could hear him also. I said to these fellows, they said "Can we sleep around here Sahib?" I said "Yeah, come on, you here, you here, you here, you here, you here and me in the middle." I was hoping he didn't leap when he landed on top of us. I was very chicken.

You obviously survived that one?

Yes, yeah.

How far is it, your

37:00 **quartermaster's store?**

Yeah, yes, Company

uartermaster, yeah, Company

uartermaster, yeah.

How far away from the store from to Penang were you?

Oh when we finished up at Kuala Kangsar, oh that's what I say, I say by the time we went from Kuala Kangsar to get to Penang would take over three, maybe three hours at least, cause we're only in trucks, they don't go very fast, do they, army trucks? Yeah about three hours,

37:30 maybe four hours, yeah.

How would you get into have leave then, on a bus, would you take a bus?

No, the trucks would take us right to Penang and over on the ferry, over the Penang and (UNCLEAR) island, over to Penang Island and then you'd all get out there and then they'd pick you up on Monday afternoon. We had Saturday, Sunday, Monday, yeah. A lot of married digs there though, there were married quarters everywhere,

38:00 so I had a lot of friends by that stage that were married and I used to go and stay with them, visit them and that sort of thing, yeah. But that was about the most exciting thing in Malaya, getting on the grog.

Did that, the grog, become an issue for you later in life?

No, I was lucky. It never got hold of me, no it never. But again a lot of times, I always liked playing sport

38:30 and when I got too old for football I played soccer and then I played tennis and I played golf, so I kept occupied so I didn't drink a lot in the daytime, in the camp and that.

And what happened at the end of Malaya then? Can you tell us what happened then?

We got on a boat and then come back, yes, but going up we run into an oil tanker.

39:00 We were on the New Australia, twenty thousand ton and we hit an oil tanker, twelve thousand ton, that's on the way up there. I missed that bit and lucky it had diesel fuel in it because our anchor tore away all their super structure and it did leak a little bit of oil, but it was all diesel so it didn't explode. We were all in having a few beers, in our lounge room, and not much on a boat. Maybe an hour and that's it, you'd have a few

39:30 beers and I could see this thing coming towards us and all of a sudden it cut across us. There was a big court case naturally, but who, it was Norwegian or something I think oil tanker, but who got the blame I don't know. But Billy, he come from TI [Thursday Island], he had size sixteen feet. He come from TI and it was right opposite TI where we hit them, just up north

ueensland,

- 40:00 **so they gave him three days leave in TI. He was happy, see Mum and Dad.**
- It was fortunate for one person.**
- Yeah, one person, Billy, Billy, yeah lovely man.
- You certainly had a few close shaves there Blue?**
- Yeah, I'm glad it wasn't petrol in it.
- That would have been the end of it.**
- And the funny thing was, they shut the doors but in the door you've got a little door and of course as soon as it happened they shut all the doors,
- 40:30 and everybody goes to their decks, they train you. Naturally in the army carrying soldiers they can do it, not like passengers, they train you and we knew which deck we had to go to because we'd done dry runs, what they called dry runs. Everybody went to their deck and opposite us were these Military Policemen and there was this big fellow there, he was over six foot and he had a big blonde wife and he collapsed.
- 41:00 And all the Diggers they were saying "Throw that bastard overboard." his wife was fanning him. Don't know why he collapsed, we could see TI Island over there, it wasn't far away.
- That would have been a funny picture.**

Tape 8

- 00:32 **Okay Blue to bring you back to Australia again, now you were training up the National Servicemen before Vietnam kind of broke weren't you, back in Australia after Malaysia?**
- Yeah, but when we started training the Vietnam people, to go to Vietnam, the soldiers to go to Vietnam,
- 01:00 I was in the store, I was in the store. I was in the Training Battalion but I was in the store, yeah and one day one young kid come in and he was fat and the other kids next to him, to my mate, and we're giving them the uniform and when my mate said one thing, I said the same thing, exactly the same time. I said to the skinny kid "You'll be right, you'll put on weight here" and this fellow said "You'll be right, and you'll lose weight". Well they died laughing, these two National Service kids.
- 01:30 They couldn't have worked better if they'd been on national TV, like acting, like play acting but they were great kids. They were the pick of Australia, oh gee, they were nice, nice young men, really nice men.
- How did they size up in the service as kind of conscripts I guess?**
- They all took it pretty well, but they were really, really, like in Vietnam I had one working for me and that,
- 02:00 they were good young boys. They accepted it, which I wouldn't blame them, they were angry and I wouldn't blame them if they tried to get out of it. Even in the last war, all those conscripts they sent to New Guinea, they couldn't send them anywhere else. They would never have gone to Vietnam in the last war. Not the Militia, no, they could only use them in Australian territory, yet those poor kids were sent to Vietnam,
- 02:30 miles away.
- Were you happy to be back home in Australia after Malaya?**
- Oh yes, yes, we finished up, where did we finish up. I've got to think, the few trips we did away. We finished up at Enoggera and that's the best camp in Australia. That's great there.
- Why is Enoggera so good?**
- Right next to the city.
- 03:00 **That's why it's so good?**
- That's right. It was great.
- So it's all about the time you can get away.**
- Yes.
- When did you first hear about, I guess, the Vietnam War?**
- 03:30 **Or what did you first hear about it?**

Well I was always a reader, I read books and I always read the newspapers, so I knew all about the French and the Dien Bien Phu when they got kicked out of North Vietnam then I followed a little bit of the South Vietnam when the Americans went in there with the first lot, in 1960 I think it was, early 60 and then they put more people in and more people in and

04:00 then gradually they put thousands in there. And then Australia then started to send up only advisors, but then they went up a bit more and a bit more and they finished up with battalions.

Being as well as well read as you were, keeping your finger on the pulse of everything, did you think it was, at the time, did you

04:30 **think it was a war for Australia to get into?**

Yes, like North and South Korea and I thought yes, they can have the North and we'll have the South. Well it was pretty corrupt the South, South Vietnam but they, oh, but I never agreed with sending National Servicemen there.

05:00 No, volunteers yes, but not National Servicemen.

At the time you felt that?

Oh yes, I never agreed with that. Call them up, train them for two years, I agree with that but ask them to volunteer. If they volunteered, and a couple of National Servicemen said to us "If we'd have known when we come we got War Service Loans and all that sort of thing, I think a lot of us would have volunteered." More likely fifty

05:30 percent at any rate and then they wouldn't have any of that terrible trouble back here and in America and those places because they send the young boys up there against their will.

So can you tell us about first arriving in Vietnam because you ended up in Saigon, didn't you?

Saigon, yeah, yeah, and the Free

06:00 World Building there they call it and we were living in a hotel, like for a soldier it was first class but it was just an ordinary hotel but it was first class for a soldier. And then later on we moved into a real up class hotel, a really one of, one of the new buildings. It was in Showsan [Cho Lon] I think they called it, a suburb of Saigon and it was all Chinese. All the

06:30 Chinese were living there and that was good, everything was brand new just about. And then we'd get in a bus and go to work everyday, to the Free World Building and I was in the store there.

What were your main duties in that store?

Not a real lot there because most of those people were

07:00 just pen pushers. They were just pure typewriters and all that sort of thing, but there was a stack of them there, a lot of Australians there, working in that Free World Building. But we used to send stuff up country now and again to the advisors and that sort of thing, so we had a bit of work there but it was a pretty cushy job.

07:30 Pretty cushy.

Now Blue, you volunteered to go over to Vietnam?

I asked for it, I did, I did. I was at Singleton then in the National Service. I'd got out of Pucka, finally got out of Puckapunyal and went up to Singleton. That was much better because it was closer to Sydney and then I asked, put in for it, and the colonel, I knew nearly all the officers by that stage. I'd been that long in the army and they were all pretty friendly

08:00 and they got me a posting up there. They'd have these posting officers come around and talk to all the different NCO's and that, so he got me in the Free World Building, so that was good.

And can you tell us why you wanted to head overseas again?

Yeah, that's a good question, no brains I suppose.

No, there's got to be another reason?

08:30 Oh dear, I was in the army, so I thought oh well. It's hard to say a reason, isn't it? I think all army fellas they like getting overseas. You come home and you like going overseas again and I knew I had a pretty easy job so I didn't

09:00 have much worries.

Had civvy street, or life in Australia kind of changed very much in the times you were away?

Yes, yes, I think so. I think it's a hard one to say, for me to answer that one.

Let me put it another way I guess.

09:30 **Did you, because you were away so much, did you find it a bit difficult to settle down?**

Yeah, I think that keep moving on. I think that's why I wanted to go back to Vietnam. Stay in one place for a couple of years and away you go again, away somewhere else. It sort of breaks up the monotony of living. I think that had a lot to do with it, I think.

10:00 Sorry, when you're overseas too, the army's a lot more relaxed too, do you follow what I mean? You're not left, right, left, right round a parade ground all day, every day and doing guards and all that. That's why I think. Not that I did much of that because by that stage I was in the

at any rate and I didn't do many of those types of things.

10:30 **So how did, I guess, I know this is a very broad question, but how did I guess, Vietnam differ for you to Korea?**

Well like was in the

11:00 infantry in Korea, like this place then it was like a holiday in Saigon, out on the grog every night with the Yanks and all that sort of thing. But later on after I'd done twelve months there, and I said "I've always been in infantry overseas" and I always wanted to say don't matter where I went in the Wars I was always in infantry.

11:30 So I knew the posting man in charge in the Free World Building and I said to him "Any chance of getting up in the 7 Battalion?" You know why? Because 7 Battalion was nearly all there NCO's had come from 3 Battalion, all me mates. He said "Yeah, no worries, we'll fix this up". So I went up to, left the easy life in Saigon in a hotel and went up to join them. Went up there for six months and stayed with 3 Battalion.

Fantastic.

12:00 Yeah, again I was in the

Store and I only did a few patrols and they weren't very far. Mainly get a bit of exercise more than anything I think.

Can you give us a picture of Saigon then Blue? What was it like around you and what you got up to?

All you'd hear was all those put-put bikes and when we moved in the second hotel it was right opposite two movie houses. Well those people loved movies and they all had put-put bikes, so you never went to bed before

12:30 twelve o'clock, all the noise of these put-put bikes. Yeah, it was a pretty clapped out city to me. It was war time, I suppose that's why,

In what way clapped out?

It looked pretty old. The French had been there and then they'd left and the buildings

13:00 they were all pretty grubby and that sort of thing, compared to our cities, but it was war time. And all the people from the North were allowed to come down to the South. So there was a big influx of people into Saigon. But the Yanks had plenty of nightclubs and they'd darken them all, when you went in there, everything was dark.

13:30 few little lights on, that was it.

Oh really, what?

They must do that back in America, I think, why it is.

And what would go on in the clubs?

Oh just grog, grog because it was yeah, booze mainly, it was all booze.

Would they have bands or girls or?

I never seen any, you wouldn't say there was not to my knowledge any dancing girls

14:00 or any other girls either. Yeah, that's a good question. You could get something to eat there naturally, frogs legs if you wanted it because the French used to be there. I enjoyed the stay there,

14:30 because it was an good job, easy job. And then Saturday afternoon we used to knock off at Saturday dinner time and one day I don't know, somebody said to us something. We used to go with the Korean bus, we all had buses, not trucks, buses and I don't think we had an Australian bus then. I don't know how we got home, must have walked home because it wasn't that far.

15:00 At any rate we used to go home with the Koreans and anyway somebody wanted to do something and

we didn't go. And just as their bus pulled up outside their hotel, a little old lady dropped, those things on their shoulders, and two baskets, just dropped them and kept walking. And as they got out of the bus, bang, bang and wiped out about thirty of them and a fair few injured. They must have had a stack of dynamite in there.

15:30 Yeah, so we were lucky there too.

How far away were you at this time?

No, no, but we were alright because we didn't go on the bus but I think we would have been quite safe, we would have been still in the bus because that was at the Korean hotel and we weren't getting out there. We never got out there, we went down further, but it wiped out a lot of Koreans.

Were there a lot of those kinds of things going on?

In Saigon?

16:00 **Yeah.**

Yeah, right opposite us this fella pulled a pushbike up and these fellas used to play, if you did a thing regular, they'd wake up and then they'd say 'this is where we'll hit them.' then. And they used to play tennis, I think it was, these Americans, and this fella just led a pushbike there and it had a stack of dynamite and bang, up she went. It didn't kill them being a pushbike but it wounded a lot of them.

16:30 They had a girl riding on the back of a bike early in the morning because the young soldiers admired what's her name, because they'd never get up for breakfast. They'd have a bottle of Coke for breakfast, but not me. I'd always go to the American Hotel and get breakfast, I like my breakfast. Anyway this girl in a beautiful pyjama, you know the way they dress in Vietnam? They have lovely dress the women and she was sitting on the back of a Mawser pistol

17:00 and then she'd mainly pick off mainly someone who looked like an officer or something, so you always had that in the back of your mind too.

What did she do?

Bang, a fella on those put-put bikes or motorbike, more often it was a motor bike or a put-put bike, yeah and bang, and early in the morning. They never caught her as far as I know, while I was there at any rate. But a lot of Americans were on drugs then. Oh gee,

17:30 you could tell, you could tell by their action.

What would you see?

Smoking and I think putting it in your arm, oh hell. You could tell in the mornings there at breakfast. They had a PX [Post Exchange Store] where you could get breakfast too and a lot of them were on drugs. So sad, so sad, cause you could get it for next to nothing in those places, right near the Eternal Triangle there,

18:00 where all the drugs come from, Burma and those places.

And was it just the American servicemen or?

I never did hear of any Australians but I'm not saying they didn't but I don't think they would. Maybe a regular army man might have but not a National Serviceman, I couldn't, I don't think any of them would.

18:30 **And Blue, did you see anything of tensions between the black and white Americans in Vietnam?**

Not in Vietnam but as I say in the Occupation Army in Japan they had them in Srinigar , they had clubs for dark people and the clubs, most of the other clubs just for the white people.

19:00 Sinigar Railway Station they had one there and we used to go there to the Negroes and they would never let a white American in their club. They couldn't get in their club but they'd say "He's an Aussie, he's alright." And we'd go and drink with the Negroes. They were nice people, real nice people.

And I'm just curious Blue, why would you go to the Negroes clubs and not to the white American's clubs?

We found they were more friendly,

19:30 they were nice people, yeah. That's all, I'd say, that would be a lot to do with it. That was in Japan, yeah, but they didn't have that in Vietnam. Everyone was together. You'd see some of these big Negro men. I got a Negro brother-in-law, one of Mandy's sisters married him. He can't get under that fan. He's about six foot five.

20:00 Pat, he's a nice man, a real nice man he is. I don't know how he come to be in Australia but anyway, Mandy's sister married him and he's a nice man.

Now Blue, when you're in Saigon and there's, I guess, for want of a better word, terrorist attacks going on, how did you learn or adapt to live with them so you wouldn't actually get caught up in it?

20:30 **You were saying before that you would avoid doing something regular?**

Yeah, yeah, that's right and they used to have it on the TV. The Yanks had their own TV there, "Don't congregate at bus stops". That's to tell not to wear (UNCLEAR) clothes, you might get a hand grenade rolled at you. Don't congregate at bus stops, it did happen, it had happen, so spread out. You've got more chance of maybe living.

21:00 Cause they had bus stops for different buses. You could even get on a bus and go around. I used to make a cup of tea and all again because of all these fellows that I knew in the army all the advisors, there wouldn't be hardly one of them that I didn't know. And they used to say "When you go down to Saigon, see Blue and get your cup of tea". So they'd come down from up country, Da Nang,

21:30 and all them places where they were in all the rough areas, working on the Vietnamese people, and I used to do it and right opposite was the Buddhist temple. Now you didn't know what side they were on, some of those Buddhists, or maybe people were making out they were Buddhists, Buddhist priests or not, I don't know. But at any rate about three days before this incident they moved the

Store where we used to congregate

22:00 **at, this was in the Free World Building, inside, just on the outskirts, not in the main big building. It was a big, big building and there was a little hut there and that's where I used to have me store and make cups of tea for the boys and about three days before they moved the**

We had to move around that way and three days later after we moved three claymores, they had them in the Buddhist temple, but I'm not saying it was the Buddhists, they went straight into the Free World Building.

22:30 **The Vietnamese girls there said "You should have seen some of these fellows there, they were under the tables, under the dash". They were laughing. They thought it was rather funny myself.**

Sorry Blue can you describe again what exactly happened?

They had claymores, what are they, convex or what ever they are, that way and all full of little pellets and they were in the Buddhist temple and they let them go and they shot them straight into the Free World building, straight through the windows and the walls, all full of little pellets,

23:00 little steel pellets. They're a fairly deadly sort of a weapon too and the Vietnamese girls were in fits of laughter laughing about these fellows.

Why was that?

Well all these, cause we were too, all these shiny bumps in there must have got a shock. I said there'd be a few running to the toilet I think. Cause us fellows were always having a go at these fellows who had the easy jobs.

23:30 **You were having a bit of a joke at the?**

At their expense, yeah. It was rather funny yeah. I don't know if anybody even got wounded there, I can't remember now. I don't think too many because it did a lot of damage and scared a lot of people but they were there.

What was your impression of the Vietnamese themselves?

They weren't Japanese by a long way. All they wanted to do was take

24:00 you, like they wanted things off you all the time, which you never hear a Japanese do. They were proud people but the Vietnamese would try and get everything off you, ask you for it.

In what way, I mean was this at markets or?

Money or anything, money, yeah.

Men and women or was there a difference?

24:30 Yeah well we used to go down and play tennis and we had a tennis court there. A few of us used to go every night and play tennis under lights in Saigon. I suppose the French built it. And they got real upset because they used to come down there and pick up the balls and because we wouldn't give them money they got angry with us and they were getting real angry.

25:00 They were getting nasty so we never went back playing tennis.

What do you mean by nasty?

Oh they were angry but we didn't ask for them, we didn't want people picking up the balls but they were doing it just to get money out of us.

Did you have any favourite spots in Saigon over that twelve months?

25:30 All American clubs because you got to know the Yanks and the cafes. A lot of French cooking because the French because you see in Australia a lot of Vietnamese bread shops because they learnt the French how to cook bread properly. I went up to Da Nang to

26:00 the advisors, as I say I knew a lot of them fellas and we used to eat in the officers' mess and they said "When you go in don't take no notice of the guard. If he salutes you just salute him back." cause I was only a corporal and most of these fellows weren't officers, they were warrant officers and they, all advisors were warrant officers. But warrant officers in the American Army can eat in the officers' mess. They said "Don't take any notice of him, just salute him back and nobody takes any notice of you."

26:30 Cause we'd be in civilian clothes. Were we? I'm not too sure now. I can't remember but that was pretty rough up in Da Nang because that was right on the North Vietnamese border.

Is that where you joined the 7th RAR? No, you were just visiting?

Oh no, that was in Vietnam, 7 RAR was at Nui Dat,

27:00 yeah, Nui Dat where all the Australians were, yeah and just after I left they had that big attack. I think they call it the Tet Offensive, the Vietnamese got in all the cities and attacked all the Yanks and there was big battles raging on, in Saigon too. I was lucky I was just out of Saigon, I was home by then when it happened. And I think that was the final battle. The Yanks said "Give up"

27:30 and come home. They said it was a waste of time. But they were good soldiers, the Vietnamese. I'll give that into them. They could dig holes.

The VC [Viet Comg] or the South Vietnamese?

Oh the Communists, the Communists yeah. If you seen that picture Platoon, that's pretty true, yeah.

28:00 They'd go down miles, I think, digging and digging and digging, so the big planes that went over they didn't cause much damage because they were that far down.

So Blue can you tell us, I guess about going up to join the 7th RAR at Nui Dat, what you found when you got there?

Again, because I knew a lot of the fellows, it was like coming home again, because a lot of them were ex-3 Battalion fellows who went when they formed 7th

28:30 they took a lot of their NCO's and senior officers, like warrant officers and that, so I knew a hell of a lot of them and that helped. Then I moved into the headquarters there, again I went into the

store there and that was a good job, easy job.

What were you actually doing on a day to day basis?

Well you

29:00 changing gear for soldiers and all that type of thing. Again we were in headquarters so they make up packages and all that sort of thing. The fellows out in the field might want something and so you make it up, what they've ordered, like new clothes or new, maybe underwear even or something like that.

29:30 And sometimes we'd go out and work with the helicopters, loading the helicopters, or bringing them down, that sort of thing. But that's right at Nui Dat though. But I had a few rides in helicopters, they used to say "Let the old fellow sit in the middle". These young kids would just sit there, just the way you're sitting, hanging out of the, their legs would be hanging out of the door, only the ground below, just hanging on. Not for me thank you, I've got a seat. I said I'm not going in a helicopter unless I was sitting in the middle.

30:00 So you were regarded as a bit of an old fellow at that stage?

Old fellow then, these were only young kids, especially National Serviceman, they were only nineteen, nineteen years old.

And were they in much conflict at this stage? Had they actually seen much fire?

Well what I could see nearly all those battalions that went there were pretty well occupied.

30:30 Mainly chasing them and them chasing us and that sort of thing and ambushes and that sort of thing. Oh yeah it was pretty hectic up there for the battalions, for them fellas, not me, them fellas. Yeah it was very hectic.

What did you see I guess of the effects of what they were going through? I mean you were in stores, how do you think what they were doing effected them,

31:00 **fighting enemy and being quite young?**

Yes, well our fellows were good soldiers and that if it come to an out an out battle, all the young fellas and that sort of thing, but the point is these fellas were good on ambushes and that sort of thing, and they'd hit and then go,

31:30 cause the casualties and that's the last you'd see of them and it was that sort of warfare, which suited them, but not us. Yeah, they caused the casualties and they were very good at ambushing. You'd walk into a trap or something like that.

Blue, what was it like for the fellas, given that they were fighting the VC and the NVA [North Vietnamese Army], but not having a front line and a back line, it was just kind of all over the place?

32:00 Yeah, yes, yes, you never knew the fellow, because they wore black pyjamas too, the people working in the paddy fields. He could be there working in the day time, working in the fields and the night time, because the CT's [Communist Terrorists] all wore black and you wouldn't know and then in the night time he'd take up a gun. I think which did happen because

32:30 if you went against them in those villages, you were dead anyway because they'd kill you. If you Vietnam and you tried to be on our side, you were dead. They'd get you. The CT's would kill them. There was nobody ever game to go on the American side. They'd just their throats, and their family too. They'd cut the whole damn lot, so nobody was game to go against them. And that's pretty effective, isn't it?

33:00 It works, but it's a pretty cruel way to do it though.

A lot of the local villagers were under a lot of threat.

What was that?

A lot of the local villagers were under threat.

Oh yeah, yeah they wouldn't be game too. The few that did try to go on the American side, they didn't live very long, so you can't blame them, that you went with the other fella, do what he tells you.

33:30 He's got the gun and he's living in your village, not the Americans to try and save you. See in Malaya, in the what's it's name, they moved all those people, put them in villages and put guards around them to stop the Communists from getting the food in Malaya and you couldn't do that in Vietnam. There was too many people. You'd need an army of three million or something and they were very far scattered too.

34:00 **A lot has been written up about the Vietnam War as being a dirty war, is that something that you kind of felt at the time, given all the experience you'd had or was it different to that?**

Well I thought it was a dirty war back in Australia and America. That's where all the parades were happening and that sort of thing and the people were getting. I know a taxi driver here told me he was

34:30 a National Serviceman, he walked into a pub, him and his two mates, walked into a pub in Brisbane and about ten or twelve fellas took to them and bashed hell out of them and they were National Servicemen. They were forced to go there. If they were regular army fair enough, but not those poor beggars. They were forced to go, which I thought was very unfair.

35:00 **So did you get to know many of the young blokes?**

Oh yeah and they were good fellows there, great, well we used to call them kids, great kids they was, good soldiers. They were great kids, first class but I heard if you went down, if your were called up and they said to you "is your Mum and Dad divorced?" and you said "Yeah."

35:30 they'd say "Don't write to us, you wait till you hear from us" and they wouldn't call them up. If they'd been in trouble, anybody been in any trouble with the police or anything, no they wouldn't call them up. They'd only call up the ones that who had good steady families and that's why they got the best of them, it's true.

36:00 Where in the army if you got a few scruffy fellas back in the 1940 army, war, well they got in with the good fellas, well they'd get good fellas too. It was a good example of what these other, these soldiers were showing them, they'd change their attitude. I remember one fella in Korea, Tex Campbell, he come down,

36:30 what was it the Bodgies and the Widgies? He was a Bodgie or something, Tex was a terrific fella. He had a Zoot suit, with the big chain down here somewhere. Yeah, the Bodgies and the Widgies, old Tex. See they, he come up to the level of the fellows he was with, they bought him up. He got away from that element, the Bodgies.

And do you think the fellows you met over there in Vietnam, the young National Servicemen,

37:00 **were actually up for the task of what they actually had to do?**

Yes, yes, even though they were conscripts, yeah.

Were they trained enough?

I'd say so, yeah, I'd say very well trained. Australia had a real good nucleus of instructors then because of the last war, like a lot of my mates they went right through, or half way through the last war and then they went to Korea, Malaya, so they all knew the job they had to

37:30 do to train these fellows. Yeah, they were well trained and they had good NCO's leading them too. Like that battle at, I knew a lot of them fellows, Bob Buick and I forget Paddy's name, Jack Kirby, all those fellows had been in Korea and Malaya and those places, so they knew what and that was that big battle at Long Tan. I knew a lot of those fellows.

38:00 And boy, did they do a good job and that was in Vietnam. There casualties, the Vietnamese, I know we had artillery on our side, I'll admit that, because they were close enough to the camp and I guarantee for every Australian killed in that Long Tan battle, there'd be twenty Vietnamese dead, easy. Those National Servicemen put up a terrific fight there, under

38:30 those, see those fellows had all experience of war, what it was all about.

Did you ever see any fellows on edge from what they were going through?

No, but, see because as I say in Vietnam I had a pretty easy job.

I know you had an easy job.

Yeah, but the fellows all around where I was, they had all good jobs

39:00 like they weren't there doing the fighting. I wasn't in the platoon or a section. I think a lot of fellas, the nerves would have got to them because I think in any warfare, in the last war there was some fellas who, I remember a young boy in Korea, he got up a tree and the NCO's and the captain tried to get him down, so they went and got the Padre. And the Padre tried

39:30 to get him down and he said back to the Padre, he was a corporal, the Padre said "Come down out of the tree" and the corporal said "Padre, you go and find your own tree." But he was alright when he come home, I know him and he was alright. And I don't hold that against anybody, if they break down. I knew a couple that broke down in Korea, but they were mostly the young fellas, not the old fellas.

Tape 9

00:32 **Blue, the whole Vietnam experience for you do you think that paled in significance for compared to what you went through in Korea? Because it was so much easier for you in Vietnam than what it was?**

Oh yes, for me, but those soldiers in those battalions in Vietnam, they had a hard time. They had, I think, you fight in a jungle and there's a lot of pressure because you can't see what's

01:00 around the other tree. Well in Korea you can see them coming or whatever. Yeah, I'd say it was a very, for nerves, because you'd never know what was going to happen.

But what about for you anyway, just by being in Vietnam, were you nervy just being there?

No, no, I think I was too much full of grog.

Rum.

Rum in Malaya and just the

01:30 Filipino beer in Vietnam, just that type of stuff.

Can you tell us about coming home from Vietnam?

Yes, you'll laugh about this. If you want to, I'll tell you how to get drugs into Australia. We all come back and of course the Yanks were all coming down here then, on holiday, on R and R [Rest and Recreation leave] as they called it, rest and recuperation and we were all on the plane

02:00 and certain planes they'd pick out and they'd say "Righto you come with us." they were waiting there, the customs men. And they'd take you into a room, take everything out of your pockets, take all your clothes off, bar your underwear, and they'd come down and check you because of the drugs. See the drugs were coming down with Americans and they were having drugs here. I'm not saying they were selling them, they were just using them for that, I forget how many R and R they got. They were down here for a week I think or something like that.

- 02:30 We all went in and I put my gear there and all the others put their gear there, where we could keep an eye on it, and I had a pair of rosary beads. He said "They your's?" And there was mates of mine there, like there was a few of us. He said "You can go". Didn't I get heaps off all me mates, "You and you bloody hypocrite, you never said a bloody prayer in your life."
- 03:00 So if you want to get drugs into Australia, carry rosary beads.
- Once again somebody was looking after you. What about R and R when you were in Vietnam?**
- I went to Hong Kong.
- How was that?**
- Oh great. I'd been there before because we called in Hong Kong going to Korea. And I think going home from Korea, I think, I think. I know I'd been there a couple of times before.
- 03:30 Yeah, that was great, five or six days there, yeah that was real good. We stayed in a hotel on Kowloon, not on the island, in Kowloon, yeah, that was great. Cause you could buy all the presents for everybody.
- I was going to ask you if you bought a duty free camera, or anything like that?**
- I think I, between Malaya and Vietnam and those places
- 04:00 all my relations, my sisters and everything, they all had what I got, Omega watches and those things because you could get them at about a third of the price in those places and all the kids they all had those Japanese ones. I forget the ones that they made, the watches. I think all my nieces and nephews had a watch.
- What about the seedier parts of Hong Kong, did you and your mates go round the seedier parts**
- 04:30 **when you were there?**
- Well I'll be honest with you, if there was seedier parts there I never seen them but we used to go to the Waltzing Matilda Bar and so you'd meet a lot of Australian tourists there. Everybody heard about the Waltzing Matilda Bar and there was a Chinese lady there and she could use every dirty, rotten word that Australians ever used or thought of, by hell she could swear. I don't think she knew what half of them meant.
- 05:00 But she knew she was intriguing people by this bad language because everybody would laugh. I forget, they had a nick name for her, something Mary, I think it might have been Bloody Mary, like the drink I think.
- Or rude Mary?**
- Yeah, she was rude. I don't think she knew what they meant. And I was with three English soldiers that were camping in Hong Kong and I was having a beer with them one night and then we went down to a café and had tea
- 05:30 and had a few more beers but in the Waltzing Matilda Bar we met this Australian fellow from Perth. To us he was getting on a bit. He'd just retired and we got him on the grog and he was on a boat on the harbour and they'd just pulled in there and they have a few days to let everybody see Hong Kong and his name was hang your head, Tom Dooley.
- Tom Dooley?**
- So we're all drunk singing "Hang your head down". That was his name, yeah, Tom Dooley.
- 06:00 And then I looked down and I thought "There's something going on here". Poor old Tom Dooley had an accident in his trousers. I said "Lets go out of here" in this nice Chinese café in Hong Kong. I thought "Oh crikey let's get out of here."
- Did you take him with you?**
- Yeah, we took him back and put him on the launch back to the boat. Poor old Tom Dooley. His wife had died and something to do with he went on that holiday so he could get the pension. He had too much money or something,
- 06:30 so they said "Go on a holiday, then you get the pension." Tom Dooley, I never thought I'd meet somebody called Tom Dooley.
- Now there's a pub in Brisbane called Dooleys.**
- Oh yeah, being an Irish pub, that would be an Irish pub.
- So you didn't come across any of the brothels that were in Hong Kong at the time?**
- There were plenty there but I'm, there were plenty there.
- 07:00 Like all those places, all those Eastern nations, there's always plenty of brothels.

How was the Australian public to you when you came home from Vietnam?

Ah, I suppose, with me being older, I suppose they never even thought I, that's one thing about it, you never wore your

07:30 uniforms. Once you went out of camp you went out in civilians so nobody ever knew who you were at any rate, or where you'd been or anything. But when I got my ribbons made up, when I got discharged, I put the Pacific Star, the Korean one and all those associated medals in the Pacific, and the Korea ones, the two ones, the War Service Medal and the Korean Medal.

08:00 I don't wear Vietnam medals. I don't even wear the Malayan ones.

Why is that?

Oh I just don't.

I know you don't want me to ask you but I'm intrigued to know why. You certainly served there and you went there.

I know, yeah, yeah. Well I just don't.

If that because of the way people treated?

Yeah.

08:30 yeah, the way they were all upset with you and that had a lot to do with it and I never did agree with sending National Servicemen there. That might have had a lot to do with it.

It must have been very unfair of the public to take out their anger on the men?

They were forced to go those poor beggars and most of them were National Servicemen. The NCO's only made up a very small amount of people there.

09:00 Oh there was regular army of course, a few regular army.

So Blue you flew back on a

antas [commercial airliner] flight as well I take it?

Ah, I'm just trying to think. Would have left, I think it was Ton San Nhut airport, yeah, it was

antas, well the Government just used to, well they paid for that anyway,

09:30 **for**

antas to go there, yeah, that's right.

And where did you go when you first came back to Australia?

I was in Sydney, I know that much and then they put me in ordinance. They moved me out of

10:00 the infantry and put me into ordinance, out at not Ingleburn, that other camp. I forget the name, it's a real big camp on the other side of the river, in Sydney and I wasn't there very long and I didn't like it at all. I asked them if I could have my discharge so I got discharged, yeah 1970.

10:30 **How was that coming out into civvy street? How many years was that? Twenty two, twenty three?**

Yeah, I got a pension but you didn't get much. And then I went a job at, I'll tell you the truth, I got a job at the railways. I didn't like that much either and then I saw an ad for Ford Motor Company and I went out there and I stayed there fifteen years. We had forty different nationalities there and they were a lot of nice people,

11:00 a lot of nice people amongst them.

Before I ask you about the civvy street episode and meeting your wife, can you tell me, you said something to Chris and I just in the break then about going back to Malaya with the British Army?

Yeah I did.

Was that after Vietnam?

That was after Vietnam, that's right

11:30 I did, so I joined the British, attached to the British Army and I went to the Headquarters there and I was with the British. I was not a bad player of badminton and I was always fit and I was better than any of the British officers and I used to go and play badminton with them and the British troops used to look at me. But because of what I had here

12:00 they never said anything, they just took it but I knew that they were, they didn't have that, the British officers would never mix with the ordinary soldiers but I think it had a lot to do with that I was an old soldier. But I could play badminton, but them and their wives. It was handy, you could go down there and they had all the sandwiches and everything, it was nice. Another nice people, I like the British.

So that was back in Malaya?

12:30 Yeah, that's me last trip away overseas, that's right, that was me last trip away overseas. That's right, I'm not thinking too well.

That's alright, it's been a very long day and you're doing exceptionally well.

Thank you.

So you went back to Malaya after Vietnam and how long did you stay that time in Malaya?

13:00 Terendak closed down, the British got out because it was too much money and they give the camp to the Malays, so we pulled out, the British pulled out I should say. All the Australians went home and the battalion, they had a battalion there and the Kiwi's went home. They went down to a place in Singapore, so they said to me "Do you want to go back to Australia or Singapore?" and I said "Singapore." of course. People pay money to go there on holidays, so I went to Changi and joined

13:30 1 Battalion and then I was with 1 Battalion until my time was up and then I went home and that's right. That was good, that was great.

How were you there, in Changi?

Oh I'd say, I know we were in Terendak about fifteen months, about nine months or something like that, yeah about nine months. I thought "Here's a chance to see Singapore" and that was great there.

14:00 Oh that was a real holiday camp that one and that's the old buildings, they were built for the British Army in 1939 and of course you know what happened, you know who finished up living in them. I mean the Japanese took them over but when Malaya capitulated and the Australian 8th Division they put them all in those barracks at Changi and that's where they were until they when up to the Burma Railway, the poor people.

14:30 **Did you have a sense of that when you were there in Changi?**

Yeah, you thought a lot about them. I did a lot because as I say I read books and I read a lot of books about Malaya and the 8th Division and that sort of thing and not much I didn't know about when they lost the battle there

15:00 and that sort of thing, the sadness of it all. Yeah, that was the leaders, they lost it. It wasn't the poor troops.

So after your second stint in Malaya and finally after Vietnam, you were home?

Yes, and that's when they must have sent me to the what's it's name, the ordinance. Didn't suit me and I asked for discharge and I was offered a discharge.

15:30 Yeah, like I was over me time then, I was twenty two years, so I could get a pension. Not a very big pension, but it was still a pension and when I was working for Ford [motor company] and that sort of thing, and at Ford all you were doing was overtime, to work a lot of overtime but you never got much money. Well factories can't afford to pay too much but they were lovely people there at Ford, really nice people. We had forty different nationalities.

16:00 **Isn't that wonderful?**

Yeah.

What made you go to Ford in the first place?

Well I was working at the, just when I got out I went and got a job at the railways, but I don't know, it just didn't suit me. I just didn't like it that much and then I seen them advertising and I thought "I'll give that a go and see what it's like. If I don't like it I'll always get money coming in to pay the rent." I had no worries in that respect, but I went there

16:30 and stayed there and stayed there and I paled up with a lot of old soldiers and a lot of Yugoslav fellows, not Yugoslav, Polish, Polish fellows and that sort of thing and they were nice people and I used to go to their houses. The South Americans, that place where that terrible war's going on at the present time? Bogota or Bogata or something, Columbia I think it is, yeah

17:00 and I used to and they used to get a what's it's name and they'd get a goat or a sheep and they'd have a barbeque. Don't know what the neighbours thought of all this? But they were lovely people the South Americans, these people, yeah.

That's funny you should pal up with some old soldiers and they all sort of ended up in the Ford factory?

Oh I didn't know them though.

17:30 Like when I say old soldiers they were Polish people who had been in the army, I mean that's what I meant, not Australian Army, they were Polish. One was a prisoner of war after Poland fell and he worked on a farm and there were three of them working on this German farm and he was a real Nazi this German and just towards the end of the war, the Germans were always methodical. If you had to do anything

18:00 you had to put it down on paper and they wanted to kill a pig and they had to get permission and the man had to come out and give you the permission because of rationing I suppose. See Germany towards 44 or something like that, towards the end and anyway the farmer was there and the three prisoners were there and the man come down and the farmer said "Heil Hitler" [reference to salute given to German Chancellor, Adolph Hitler, during the Second World War] and the authority man, the man who was signing the bit of paper, said

18:30 "Where is the swine?" And he winked at the Poles, he knew the war was just about over. Where is the swine, this fellow didn't wake up. It would have been off with his head if he'd woke up to what he meant. Hitler was the swine.

How did you deal with life back in Australia and not being in the army?

Yeah, I think some people had problems but I don't know, I didn't have any

19:00 problems, yeah, yeah.

Were your mother and father still alive Blue when you got out?

No, Dad died in fifty six and he was just on eighty which was a pretty old age in those days. That's like living to ninety today and smoked all his life but they smoked tobacco, not that ready rubbed stuff, like cigarettes. Mum died in sixty four, yeah sixty four, yeah.

19:30 Yeah and she lived to be eighty too and she'd had a stroke though.

So what was it like coming back and meeting women and going to parties and socialising?

Yeah, well one of my sisters was a, her and her husband, she worked because they had no children and he worked and she was a nursing sister so they had plenty of friends and there was a couple

20:00 from, there was one from Bangalow and she wasn't married and the others weren't married so I used to go a lot with them. We'd go to races and then a few of me army mates I found, you know the fellow's I'd been in Korea with and looked around on Anzac Days and found out where they lived and paled up with them and the first time I was trying to get a Ray Wilson, he was a particular

20:30 friend of mine. Big, handsome man he was, could have been a film star and blonde hair, about six foot and I knew his initials were RW, so I rang up, can you imagine how many Wilson's there are in the phone book? Bloody thousands of them and there were five RW's, so the first one "No, my husband wasn't in the army." second one "On no, he was too young and wasn't in the army." the third one "Oh yeah, he was in the army, oh yeah".

21:00 I said "Well my mate's nickname was Smiley." Ray's name was Smiley and she said "He hasn't smiled since he come back from New Guinea." I couldn't stop laughing, well I couldn't get out to Ray to tell him quick enough and the next one was Ray, I got him, him and his wife, she was a lovely lady. Yeah I used to get, then I used to just about live at their house in Sydney.

21:30 Have barbeques and that and army fellows, we all go out to Ray's on Sunday and have a barbeque and go to the footy with him and all that and he'd come to the races with me and me sisters and that and him and his wife. It was a good life in Sydney, Sydney was a lovely place. I'd never go back now, don't like it.

Why don't you like it now?

Oh, never hear English spoken,

22:00 pick the Aussie. I'm a bit racist, aren't I? Especially married, definitely not racist, because of my wife, I'm not racist.

I was going to say, yes, now I believe your wife is from New Guinea?

Yes.

How did you meet Amanda, Mandy?

Well three little dark girls moved in next door, and as her brother says "Jim picked the pretty one."

22:30 One was from Bougainville, she was very dark and the other one had frizzy hair and she was a real New Guinea person, where Mandy's not, she's got mixed blood too. She's got Indian in her and besides New Guinea and one thing led to another and we finished up getting married.

Can we just go back a little bit? How did you start

23:00 **dating Mandy?**

Taking her to the movies and if you said "Be there at one o'clock." they'd arrive at three. New Guinea time is always two hours slow.

And you'd miss the movie?

Just about, go to the five o'clock then. Oh they were terrors, the whole three of them. Yeah, I used to take them to the footy and all that. They were lovely girls, yeah.

How did you manage to get Mandy on her own?

Oh yeah, we used too. We used to go into the city and go to movies

23:30 and have what's it's names and that sort of things.

So did you propose to her on bended knee?

I thought she'd died laughing.

On your good knee?

I thought she'd died laughing and she said "I'll think about it" and she come back to me and said yes.

Oh that's lovely that you found a partner later in life.

So late in life, yeah.

24:00 **Better late than never, as they say.**

Yeah, that's right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Have you been back to New Guinea to see Mandy's family?

No, because they come down here to see their families. They all, like they, a lot of their relations come down all the time from New Guinea, but you'd never go back there now, it's a terrible place, dangerous, very dangerous, yeah.

I've heard that.

Sad, very sad.

24:30 **Where did you get married Blue?**

Mandy had five brothers. I said "What do you reckon Mandy? We head for Perth?" I didn't know at all how her family would take it so we went to Perth on the bus. I rode the bus all the way over to Perth from Brisbane, blimey but we stayed three days in Adelaide, and we got married over there and when I went down to church, and I thought "Some old fellow will say, go away" and it was an Irish priest and

25:00 I thought "You beauty, no worries here." and he said "Just come in me lad, yeah no worries." I knew an Irishman would have a bit of sense. And he wasn't old either, he was a young fella.

So Mandy's family didn't come to the church then because you got married all the way over in WA?

In WA, yeah.

So who did you have as your witness then?

Two army mates, Paddy Pollack from North Ireland and

25:30 George from Perth, yeah. I keep in contact with both of them still. We ring up and talk and they always want to know how Mandy is and that.

Did you phone them up from Sydney and say "I'll meet you over there. We're coming over there to get married"?

I might have met them on Anzac Day over there or something like that or somewhere along the line. I wasn't there very long before I met them. I did start looking around for army fellas.

26:00 I did start looking around, yeah.

Can you tell us about Anzac Day, Blue? Do you march?

Oh yeah, never miss, yes. I still march too, I can march all the way, all the ladies here in the village say "We seen you Jim on Anzac Day". As long as the police didn't see me I don't mind.

Now you've been in some many wars, I have to ask you, who do you march with?

Oh 3 Battalion.

You still march with the 3 Battalion?

3 Battalion,

26:30 yeah Korea, is my main Battalion, yeah, not the last war because I only got up there when it was nearly finished. I did go in Sydney, I went to the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion reunions but they had what they called "The Last Hurrah". I got a piece of paper here somewhere, they sent it to me and the Last Hurrah and they were an Adelaide battalion and they had the last one about,

27:00 no more marching or reunions over in Adelaide, that was about six or seven years ago I think. Yeah, they're too old now, they're all too old now.

Are there many blokes left from the 3rd Battalion?

On that reunion we had at the end of August we had it at the Bookmakers Club here, it's managed by a very nice chappie, Fred Casey. He's an ex-boxer and

27:30 I looked around and nearly all the fellas now are the younger people. There was a few Korean fellas there but not a real lot. It used to be all Korean when they first started the Association here in Brisbane but now it's mainly Malaya, Vietnam and those people, places. And there's not many last war fellas. Only one or two of us I think that go there

28:00 now, yeah.

And how do you feel now, looking back, do you think "Gee I spent a good part of my life in the army and maybe I shouldn't have" or do you think it was a great adventure?

A great adventure and you made some great friends and seen a lot of the world for nothing, took a bit of a risk but that's life. You get killed walking across the road over here if you like.

28:30 What would be your advice now to a young Australian who was thinking of joining the army?

Well my nephew joined and I told him "No". Thank the Lord I did, that I told him "Think about it". And at any rate he joined and that was it.

He had a mind of his own?

29:00 That's right and that was his prerogative yeah.

Do you think Australia will become a republic in the future or remain tied to the Monarchy as it is now?

When I, when they put that to the vote I voted for the

ueen because those people up there, two hundred thousand of them, while that

ueen's on the,

29:30 **wherever they have her today. They don't have her many places, they used to have her in the Post Office and that sort of thing, they know if they take us own, they're going to take England on too, and I'm sure the English would help us if it come to a push and that's why, that's the only reason I voted, because of that. Because we're a little lonely island here with not many people have we? Twenty million, there's two hundred and something million of those people. They could row across to Darwin and take that on a Saturday**

30:00 **afternoon, couldn't they?**

I hope not.

I hope not either, too.

We'll have to stop for a minute. Blue when you look back now on your adventures in the army do you think that, let me ask you what are your thoughts about the discipline for the army? Do you think it's a good thing for young men to have?

30:30 Oh yeah, yeah, yeah and have it while they're young too. That's why I agree with National Service but not to force anybody to go to war unless Australia's in danger, Australia, yeah. Disciplines everything I reckon.

Well Blue, you've been an absolute gem today. Thank you so much for all your energy and insight.

31:00 Thank you Heather, that's very kind of you, very kind of you.

INTERVIEW ENDS