

Australians at War Film Archive

Keith Jensen (Jenny) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

- 00:41 **We're going to start now and, like I said, we'll go right back to your childhood. You were born in Scottsdale, is that right?**
- Yes. I was a premature baby born in the Scottsdale Hospital in 1919.
- 01:00 I only weighed three pounds and of course in those days they didn't do nearly as well as what they do today, babies. And not, a few months after, it may have been a year, I don't know, my parents went back to Hobart. And my mother had been a Hobart girl, and my father had gone down there in the building trade.
- 01:30 I wasn't very healthy. As a matter of fact I was one of those raised on cod liver oil and Arnott's milk arrowroot biscuits, of course, being a prem [premature baby]. And round about six, five or six, I was having that much, not thriving, and the old doctor
- 02:00 told my parents to send me back to Scottsdale to my grandparents because he thought the country life would be a lot better for me. So I went up there and I didn't stay there very long, a few months, but I loved the farm, and they were farming people, and learnt to drive, ride a pony and all that sort of thing. And that stayed with me for
- 02:30 the rest of my life. So I came back to Hobart and shortly after that my father was contracting building and moved down to Huon. At nine years of age, my grandmother had died some time previously, and when I was nine my grandfather came down and stayed with
- 03:00 us. Now, I had an elder brother and a younger sister. I had a cousin who was ready to start school and where the farms were, it was some distance from Scottsdale, I think it was seven miles one way. And four miles away there was a
- 03:30 small school, one of those one-teacher schools, one room, and from grade one to grade seven and 15 children when they're all there, so you can just imagine what the education standard was. But my young cousin, who was just ready to start school, had nobody to go to school with and
- 04:00 it was decided that I'd go up and, being nine years of age, he'd have somebody to go with; and that went on till I was 13. Now, the Depression's on at this time; the big economical Depression that lasted for about 10 years started in 1929, so this would be around 1932.
- 04:30 I had to go home, back down to the Huon. My father, the building trade had completely collapsed. My father started a sawmill, a box mill it was, really, and his had got burnt out, and of course with the Depression on there was no money anywhere and I had to leave school and go and work as sawdust boy and odd things around the sawmill.
- 05:00 Well, that, I was only two months over 13 so I missed all that schooling. My brother, he went to the Cygnet School, and that was quite a big school, and he was also a very brilliant boy so we had that bit of a problem later in life.
- 05:30 My father, about 1934, '35, the building trade picked up again and my father went back to work in Hobart. And of course the Depression hadn't picked up and I took the opportunity of going back up to Scottsdale. I was 15 at the time and I got a job on a dairy farm, but a few months later my father died,
- 06:00 that was in early 1936, and I had to come home again. And my brother had a job in Hobart, he was two years older than me, and I got a job with a timber company and I stayed there until I joined the army. During that period
- 06:30 we were very, I was brought up in a very religious family. You know, like most families in those days, the people went to church, and every church was right and the other one was wrong, I suppose. I was brought up in a very narrow sect. And I went to work with a, mainly around the docks in Hobart and the

wharves to, they were an exporting company and the timberyards were

07:00 down there on the waterfront and timber came in by rail, and I had the experience of finding out how the other half lived, which stood me in good stead later on. I found that some of the roughnecks had hearts of gold. I remember fairly early in the piece, I got the sack

07:30 one morning and one particular chap, he was always in a fight every weekend when he got drunk, he used to come to work, he was a real roughie, and as soon as the foreman sacked me he said, "Righto, Paddy, you'll sack me, too. I was later than what the lad was." So I piped up and said, "Well, Paddy, when do I go home: tonight or now?"

08:00 All I got was, "Get to so-and-so work." And from then on every time I got in strife, which was a couple of times a year probably, I got a two-bob, two-shilling rise, which was very good. And you must remember that wages then were on the average under three pounds a week and two shillings was quite a good rise.

Why was that, why did you get your rises?

08:30 Well, I don't really know, except Paddy possibly felt that he should in case I did go home. I found out afterwards that my mother went to school with the managing director's family and sisters and brothers, so that was probably how I got a job in the first place. But

09:00 I had to do the work. During this period my brother had, he'd joined the 12th Field Ambulance, militia, that's a voluntary militia unit, and he talked me into it, I suppose, and I joined. We did a couple of camps,

09:30 one camp under canvas at Brighton. That was the Brighton, it was the era of the military camps and, just after the war started, in the Christmas, just after Christmas, we had another camp where we had a lot of trainees; it must have been some sort of a compulsory training period brought in.

10:00 And they had, by that time they were building the buildings and had a lot of them up and Brighton was, of course, converted into what it ended up being. I was promoted a corporal. My brother was a sergeant. We did also training up at the Anglesea Barracks during certain times during the week and

10:30 I was quite familiar with the protocols of military life and the profile. In the Christmas camp we had hoped to go away as a complete ambulance unit, so quite a lot didn't join up. I was one of them for that period,

11:00 but then when it fell through of course we, it was a different story. One, you've got enough of my family part, have you?

No, we'll be going back, but I didn't want to interrupt you.

You should have done. I'm trying to think ahead all the time.

OK, all right. I wouldn't mind going back. There were a few interesting things that you said there. I mean one of them, for example, was the very small country school that you

11:30 **went to. Can you tell me a bit more about those school days, and what it was like going to school with a small group of people, and who the teacher was and...?**

The thing I liked about the school, I suppose, really, was the fact that I could be late and miss out on mental arithmetic and that sort of thing, which was

12:00 generally the first subject. The teachers never stayed very long, nothing to have two in the one year. They were young girls. All of them were, girls that I had, sent out for their first schools, that sort of thing. And the other thing was the four miles was through

12:30 mainly forest area and we might strike somebody driving a mob of cattle or something like that and we'd go along with them, get to school a bit later still. It was a very free and easy life and, whereas my brother was, studied all his life, I was the opposite; I wanted the practical side of things. And

13:00 the school itself had been going, one room with all the classes in it. For instance, I think I was their grade seven, had one child in it. I think grade six had two and that sort of thing. We didn't really learn much, but as country kids you have a lot to learn. You've got a lot to learn at home and you've got to learn about nature, a lot

13:30 of, you know all the things that take place on the farm and they are the things that really interest you. If you're not interested, well, you only end up a, "townie" as we used to call them. But any more questions?

So the kids that you went to school with, they were local kids, a part of the community?

14:00 All of them from farms, purely a farming district.

Was it a poor district?

No. Country people are never poor the same as what city ones are. There's always plenty of food, for instance, there's always plenty to do. People are never unemployed on a farm; there's always work to be done, there's no sitting around, and

14:30 that sort of thing kept us occupied. And we must have been poor but I never knew it, but I knew it when I lived in Hobart later, but, you know, poor people put up with it. But it was a totally different life. They entertained themselves. Now, at home there was an organ, grandfather played the violin,

15:00 chap that worked for him in those years he played the melodeon and there was sing-songs, and grandfather would get on his horse and go off to another neighbour's place and they'd have a musical session and it was, you know, the life was a social life and [people] helped one another. Bit early to give you an example on

15:30 my farm, wouldn't it?

No, go ahead.

To give you an example of, when I started farming after the war I was going, I'd got married in October and I took the farm over and I was going to cut hay. I cut the hay and got it ready to cart in. Now, going back now to 1945,

16:00 and everything was done by horse as a rule, most things were done by horses. Tractors were around but they didn't come in till after the war. I went up the paddock and there was a white horse tied up at the gate and I thought, "Gee, I wonder what that is?" There was a chap standing there and I introduced myself and he introduced himself and I said, "What can I do for you?" "I know, lad." he said,

16:30 "I heard you were going to cart in today." he said. "There's no labour around and." he said, "I've come to help you." and I'd never met the person before. Now, that was typical of your country neighbours in that period. I'll just give you that as an example.

So during the Depression, for example, when, you know, family were hit hard, was the community supportive?

Yes.

17:00 You see the money value that we've got today, all this value? Rubbish, compared to what it was then. And you could, a lot of people were, I knew married couples, or married then, working for 30 shillings a week and their keep, the house, not their food keep. But the house meant a lot of things. Everybody helped everybody in the country,

17:30 and it's gradually died out, but it was a community life. The only thing I saw anything near it was the kibbutzes [Israeli communal farms] in Palestine when I was there, when I went back. We'll talk about that later.

So can you recall

18:00 **instances of when your family was helped or you helped other families?**

I can recall one instance in particular at my grandfather's. A chap turned up one day on, I was only a boy at the time and listening to everything, a chap turned up on a pushbike, and I'd seen him at church on the Sunday, and he and grandfather

18:30 were having quite an intense conversation. And I overheard, or I saw my grandfather give him some money and overheard him say, "I'm very sorry, I can't give you any work, but this will help you." and the chap took the money and, well, just broke down and mentioned how he, what a wonderful thing for his wife, and got on his bike and away he went. I never,

19:00 ever saw him again, never saw him in church again either. But that was more typical, it was typical of the spirit during the Depression days. We had people call in, swaggies [swagmen - itinerant workers] call in, and they always got a meal before they went on their way, and today you wouldn't even invite them inside because you'd think they were going to rob you or something, I suppose.

19:30 **Was that frequent?**

Yes, that was very frequent. And if you asked somebody to help you for anything at all, just pay was never discussed, it was done. It was a totally different spirit. That existed, it still exists in some farming communities today, but that's their way of

20:00 life and it's not taken as anything unusual, whereas I don't think anybody hardly ever in the cities think that way.

So when the swaggies would come to the door your mum would welcome them in?

Yes. Not much

20:30 food would be handed out unless they knew them slightly or something like that, but help was never refused, as I remember it.

Would they work on the farm as well?

If there was any work to do, chop wood and split the wood up or something. It was a desperate period, of course.

So

21:00 **going forward a bit, when you left school you worked in the sawmill, is that right?**

Yes.

Can you tell me a bit about what that was like and the work that you did? Was it a big sawmill or...?

No, it was only a small sawmill. It was more or less a mill that, this particular mill was

21:30 just cutting timber for apple cases and a lot of it was done on a labour pay-back basis. The orchardists come and worked in the bush cutting trees down, and the billets and that sort of thing and they'd be dragged in by horses, and during the slack period my father and

22:00 my brother and me would quite often go and do work on the orchard property, so there was no money passed by, cause nobody had any money anyhow, partly. The dole [unemployment assistance money from the government] wasn't like it was today. The dole was the thing that people were too proud to get, for a start, and I think it there was very, very little of it. And also in the slack period, if there was a building job done,

22:30 needed doing, my father used to contract, for instance schools were being painted. I remember one situation he didn't get the job and he knew the person from the Department [of Education] quite well and he said, "I couldn't give it to you, Jim. You couldn't make any money at that price." So somebody who put in a higher tender got it. Now, you wouldn't find that today, either.

23:00 Apart from that it was all work and everybody got in and did things and

Can you just explain that to me? I didn't quite get it, I'm sorry, how it worked with the, so there were farmers that had orchards, apple orchards and

23:30 **needed the apple boxes?**

There was busy periods and there's slack periods in farming of any sort, so they'd come in and the mill would operate in the slack period for the orchardists right up to it, and it was fitted, they fitted things in, helped one another to help themselves, sort of business. There was also mills operating still, paid wages

24:00 where they got enough money orders to keep going, but that was the way the box mill worked, some of the time, to a certain extent.

So the orchardists would pay the mill back when, after they'd sold the apples?

I think the companies used to advance money to them, probably. See, most of the cases were cut for around about a sixpence a case. I think they got

24:30 down as low as fourpence-halfpenny and that's cut all the material for it, not to make the case, only cut the materials, see, and it was delivered. So you can see fourpence-halfpenny I think was the lowest ever quoted.

And what was your job at the mill, what did you do?

Mainly early in the, sawdust, that's cleaning out the sawdust

25:00 and doing all the odd jobs round the place, barking logs; and then quite a lot of time I'd be driving the horse to drag the billets in and they were cut into, I just forget the length, it was five feet-something, because it's worked out so what you, how many different.... See, an apple case

25:30 has got several different sizes of timber in it. And they'd be dragged in and there was only a header-in, a tailer-out and a boy, the sawdust boy that ran the mill.

So you said your dad went broke, the mill went broke, is that right?

They didn't go broke, they didn't go bankrupt.

26:00 They were broke, they didn't have any money. You could be owed money from building trade and you'd be owed money and he'd owe money and so you've got a thing that you can't get out of. That's what a Depression does. It's something like a shopkeeper: he's got his stock but he's not selling it so he hasn't got any money so he can't buy, pay people because people can't pay him.

26:30 It's the same sort of thing, and that's what happens in a Depression. Credit dries up, firms can't afford to have, they'll go broke, too. Everybody goes broke.

Must have been hard for your dad.

Yes, it was very hard for him. It was very hard for everybody, but in the city it's a lot worse because in

27:00 the country we help one another and barter and all that sort of thing.

I guess at that point your dad was supporting five people in the family?

Yes.

So what, how did he deal with it, I mean what did he do, what were the plans that he made when he realised that he had to close the mill?

27:30 I wouldn't really know what he, I really don't, wasn't old enough to know exactly just what he went through. But the point is we might have been dead. All of us in the district might be, well, nearly all be poor, but you weren't poor because what did you compare it with? All of you, most of you are in the same boat,

28:00 so poor is a state of mind, really.

I'm just trying to get a picture of, I'm imagining that his income, as small as it may have been, that your father was able to get from the mill, suddenly dries up, you still have to eat and you've got the local community probably supporting you and you're growing your own food. But

28:30 **what was he going to do, what did he do, what did he go and do when he could no longer run the mill?**

Well, of course he, the mill didn't, he didn't close the mill down for that purpose. He got work again. He went to Hobart building again. He was working for a builder this time.

29:00 When I was farming I was a dairy farmer, and because the food, when there was no money coming in, I was never in debt, but you sort of got credit at the stores, sort of thing, but you weren't poor.

29:30 You weren't conscious, the fact you had no money doesn't make you poor until, you just live along, but if somebody come along and said, "Right." Mentioned or wanted to tell me something I couldn't buy it or anything like that, but it doesn't make you poor. Poor's a state of mind.

So you then went to work at the docks?

30:00 No, the people I worked for were exporters with, exported timber to New Zealand, Ford Motor Company in Geelong, South Africa, dunnage and that sort of thing. And I worked around and I saw the poverty when I was in Hobart

30:30 working, great queues lined up to get what they called "dickie birding", that was to work on, stevedore would pick so many men, and I used to go home, well, nothing to do. That doesn't happen in the farming areas; there's always something to do, even if you don't get paid for it. It was totally different altogether.

31:00 **But you came, OK, yeah, I understand that.**

Now, you're working around the docks, you see a few fights and brawls and it's probably, some people have a pretty rough life, you know.

Well, can you tell us, can you paint a picture for me of what life was like working around there for you? You were a young boy really, weren't you?

Yes, I was only young, and I sort of, say, church on Sunday and

31:30 work all the week. I got so that I was very familiar with people. There are so many different types of people. Most of us stay in the clique and we don't know how the other half lives, so it was a great education for when I went in the army, early in the piece, because

32:00 most people will tell you this, the first lot that joined up were mainly the people out of work or looking for something and you get a lot of, what shall we say, people that haven't had much future and most of them - well, no, not most of

32:30 them, quite a lot of them - are not very good characters, to put it that way. Now, I've known a lot of people to be very shocked when they first met with these people because they were so different to their own culture. You've got to try to think of people differently from how we live today.

33:00 Now, in those days we didn't have the television. If you had enough money to have a wireless, the wireless was about the only thing you had, of course you had pictures. But you, it was horse and carts, Hobart had a lot of horses and carts working when I was working there. All the timber companies had them, they came in handy because they done,

33:30 most of their stuff was done from railway onto docks, barges coming up the river from down Dover and

Catamaran and those places, with timber. That would be unloaded, loaded by horse and carts and taken to the timberyards which were in, round the wharf area or round the tip area, really, along the waterfront to the....

- 34:00 And the mills in the town itself, they were fed by horse and carts from the yards, timberyards, much shorter distances and it was a different society to what we've got today, different. I'm not explaining this very well.

I'd like you

- 34:30 **to take yourself back, and it's a great sort of general picture of what, but your personal experience. Tell me, to start with, what exactly was the work that you did?**

I started off at 16 working in the yards, timber racking, and a chap stands on top and builds the thing and you pass the timber up to him.

- 35:00 And that was too heavy so then, having been a country boy, I was given a timber cart to drive, a horse and timber dray. You'd go down to the railway yard and there'd be a tally clerk there or a worker from the office, and
- 35:30 you'd load the timber from your, you'd be on the truck and you'd load the timber onto the cart and he'd just straighten it up, tally it up and take the load out to the yards and you'd take it off. And you'd do eight loads of that a day, he inspected your eight loads a day. A load would be about a ton, so you'd shift about eight ton of timber a day, in Collins Street behind the hospital, lower Collins Street, when the firm I worked for
- 36:00 had yards there, and certain timber would go there. That would be the four-by-twos, three-by-twos and the building timber, like frames; not timber that had to be dried. The boards would go to the racking yards. You'd, it'd come from them, certain timber of that would come to your planing mills where you dressed it, flooring weatherboards and that sort of thing,
- 36:30 so that would all be carted by horse and drays, a short distance, more effective and much cheaper to run than a motor vehicle. We did have one motor vehicle a bit later, and then of course today it's all motor vehicles. Now, we had, my work, I think it was about five drays and one truck.
- 37:00 And they, we didn't have, we didn't join the union. The old union man used to line me up at least once or twice a year and say, "We're going to join the union, boy." and I'd say, "How much am I going to get?" He'd say, get this little thing out and say something. I'd say, "I'm getting more than that now." It was an unspoken rule. I never heard it come officially, but everybody seemed to know it, that you were quite at liberty to join the union
- 37:30 but you would join, if you joined the union you got union rates and you got union rules. We all got a little bit over the basic, the wage for.... When I say basic wage, in those days you never got full wages until you were 21, you weren't a man until you were 21, and there was ages, you went up with your age, small rise.
- 38:00 And where did I get to?
- You were carting wood around. Anyway, you're talking about the union.**
- The way we worked was occasionally there'd be nothing to do, so you'd have a game of cricket. If you were running a bit late getting rid of your load or your load was running to
- 38:30 after five o'clock or after knock-off time, you didn't get any overtime; but say you finished up a bit early you'd, didn't give any docking [i.e. reduce wages], whereas up at the mill, a lot of the mills, at the big ones, you clocked on, you clocked off, and they would. They were a wonderful crowd to work for.
- They were a wonderful crowd but a bit of a rough crowd, too? It sounds like there were some characters there.**
- We had some characters used to
- 39:00 come to work with black eyes and skin off. "What happened to your eyes?" "I got drunk and I fell down the stairs." or "What happened to you?" "I fell through so-and-so's window but we never got caught" and got round the corner and thought "Another one." But we had a character called Pat Appleton. The Appletons were famous around the wharves and Pat was a boxer, a good fighter, and Johnny came to work one day with a beautiful black
- 39:30 eye and I said, "What happened to you, Johnny?" He said, "I said to, Pat was going to fight the Alabama Kid." Boxing used to happen in, especially in Hobart those days, at the City Hall. And I said, "What are you going to hit him with, Pat?" and he said, "This." he says, "the rotten cow knocked me down, he did that to me." And it was a different life.

00:31 I used to tease him quite a lot and he didn't have much of a sense of humour, like being a most, very serious chap, you know. He left; he must have left school then. But I remember the head teacher was Major Anderson and I remember he and my father saying one day, "Well." he said, "Ted, I can't teach him any more, he knows more than I do." That's the sort of person

01:00 he was, though. He was, you know, meticulous. Ted was a meticulous, he kept account of everything.

01:30 **So for you to end up working on the wharves while he was off having a very sophisticated education...?**

No, he wasn't at that stage. He was working for another timber crowd in Hobart on a special what's-its-name. And, see, we both had to support Mum, well, help support her, until he decided to get married and just walked out and left me

02:00 with it. But that was his right. That was the Christian thing to do.

So where was your mum at that point? Was she living in Hobart?

She was, yeah. The family were living in Hobart with my father. He'd gone back building and they'd moved up to Hobart. And Dad died very suddenly.

02:30 I don't know much about the, what the position was, but we went to live over his shop. But Mum's brother was a businessman and he had this bread shop and had another one in Lipwell Street, and I don't suppose Mum paid any rent or anything cause her nephew ran that shop up there. He was single. I never

03:00 ever knew.... Mind you, we weren't poor at that stage. We were both working, if ever we were. I don't know, this "poor." business always amuses me because, well, it was something like being in the prison camp, I suppose, really. You never had any changes of clothes, I suppose, or anything much; and what you don't have,

03:30 and if you've all got the same, well, who's poor, I reckon? Because to be poor you're comparing it with something, aren't you, and if you're comparing with the same as what you've got, well....

Where was your sister? Was she living with your mum?

Yeah. She was four years younger than me so she was just left school, I think, when I

04:00 went away to the war. This is off the record, too, but the reason it was possible to go to the war was the government was quite generous in one respect for the times. A private soldier got five shillings a day. If he had a dependant he made three shillings over to the dependant, and the government would then pay another three shillings

04:30 which brought it up to six shillings a day, so six sevens is 42, or seven sixes is 42. Now, my mother would have been getting a widow's pension, which would be a small pension, my brother getting married and walking out. But we wouldn't have been any worse off when I would have joined up because of the money I was

05:00 getting, the government gave her, and a pension, than what she would have been if you'd stayed, so it didn't make any difference, probably in her favour a little bit. And when I got promoted to corporal I made another two shillings or three shillings, not sure which, over a day too, so that brought it up and above it, you see. And she never went short of anything because of that, and plus the fact that,

05:30 I'm pretty sure I never ever heard if they paid any rent to Uncle Jack, surely they didn't. He was quite well off, anyhow. And so, you know, me walking out didn't, me joining up didn't affect her. It was only to her advantage, really.

So just getting back to your work on the wharves, and

06:00 **how long were you working there for before you joined up?**

I didn't actually work on the wharves. I worked for the timber company. I was there for four years. I was there from the time I was 16 till I joined up. It's the only job I had there in Hobart. And you've got to remember the wharves in those days was all done by manual labour. Now, the

06:30 boats would come up from down the Huon in the apple season with apples, and trucks would come in and the trucks would unload, but the apples had to come from the boat in to the wharf and be stacked, was actually a gang of men carrying them on up and like all the time, you know, something like we saw in China, it was. Carol and I went to China once, yeah. And

07:00 incidentally, in case I get tangled up later on, Carol and I are on our second time round. Our previous partners died and we knew one another and we got together and got married; and the family, my daughters up there, they belong to me but not Carol, and Carol's up there, they belong to her, so in case I confuse you later on....

07:30 There was a lot of people employed at the wharves. It was casual labour in the main and the docks had

barges and they were down in Hobart. They got the old May Queen, they'd just be running it like the permanent workforce now. There'd be probably half a dozen barges. And the sawmills down the Huon, where all other big timber was,

08:00 and around up the north-east coast a bit, they'd go in at reasonably high tide in a lot of cases and they'd load and float off the next tide. Sometimes there was a jetty there, sometimes there wasn't. They'd cart sand the same way and load her up from wheelbarrows on planks, you know, and when the tide came in away they'd come,

08:30 they'd come up and unload. But it was all manual labour and there was a lot of people getting this casual, most of it was casual work.

So it was pretty easy to get work there on the wharf?

Not easy, no, because there was always a lot more people than what were required. You'd see these [queues], couple of hundred yards long

09:00 you had sometimes, blokes looking for work. And the same went a lot with unloading: stuff had to be manhandled. We didn't have the, things weren't mechanised like they are today. It was a different world. Little

09:30 petty criminals. I remember I had the 'flu [influenza] one time and a chap started....

Tell us about the petty crims.

I had the 'flu once, and there was always somebody to step into your job, you see, and this chap was there and

10:00 I came back and he was kept on for a few days, for some reason. Anyhow, I was talking to him, elderly bloke, and he had a notebook and he's putting down things. "What the heck are they?" He said, "They are the such-and-such a shop." he said, "That's their code, and." He said, "We're going to rob that soon." And he said, "When you're going to steal

10:30 things." he said, "You've got to know what the value is and." he said, "You've got to know the code." And I thought it was a great joke, gee, but it was only a week or so later or a month or so later he was in jail anyhow, he got caught. He was dinkum [telling the truth].

It was the safe code?

No, it was the code that the shop had. The price was on but there was also a code; or the price

11:00 wasn't on, there was a code, and he wanted to know the code so that when he stole it he knew what it was worth, it was good quality. I thought it was all baloney. But he got caught. That's the sort of characters, you know, you had around the place.

Did you get yourself, find yourself involved in, you know, any

11:30 **incidents that...?**

No, no. I had a manufacturer wanted to bribe me on stuff I was delivering, but he got worse stuff instead, he got what he paid for. But no, it's.... And one of our chaps got sacked for selling timber early in the morning

12:00 before people got to work, and there was a frost. The foreman noticed that there was no frost on that stack and tracked him down. No, things were pretty good, really.

Many fights down there?

Yes, you'd see occasionally one on the wharf, but of

12:30 course you didn't stop, you didn't bother to find out who it was; you just watched it. Fighting and wrestling was one of the entertainments, sports. They used to put on a lot of shows, you know, and people used to, I used to go to the wrestling and didn't bother about the boxing much. At the City Hall we had Chief Little Wolf and

13:00 Francois Fauche and quite a few of those prominent wrestlers would wrestle over there. Now you'd better ask me some questions.

Were they local wrestlers, Hobart wrestlers, or...?

No, no, international ones. Chief Little Wolf came from the States. Francois Fauche I don't know where he came from. He stayed in Hobart for quite a while and went into business later. And Zarbo and

13:30 Leo Jensen. And no, you see, you didn't have entertainment, the home entertainment you've got now.

What sort of reasons would the fellows fight down on the wharves about? What would the disputes be about?

Well, I don't know. Probably "he got a job and I didn't" and

14:00 that sort of thing, or probably cut in on him or goodness knows. But today, of course, it would be about football, wouldn't it? And there was feuds, family feuds. There was a couple, I'd better not mention names, but there was a couple of feuds, families feuded down there, and they both worked on the wharf.

14:30 **What were the feuds over?**

Goodness knows what, but rivalry, I dare say.

I mean, the wharves are notorious for, you know, for scheming and scamming for people, you know, having all sorts of deals going on and getting....

Yeah, well, there was also stuff came in I liked to know. I remember I bought a tapestry for my mother down at the wharf. The chaps would be flogging watches, get off the boat,

15:00 they worked on the boat and I dare say it was a lot of thieving stuff, it was theft and that sort of thing. You didn't ask questions of course, but it was part of the life at the time. I remember another chap I knew, he was a night watchman down there, and he was a boxer,

15:30 he was a lightweight boxer. When I came back I was on, the trams were still running and I was on the tram, and he was a tram conductor. I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I got belted up too many times down at the wharf." He gave up the night watchman's job but why? I dare say he was stopping somebody pinching something.

16:00 **So when did you join the militia?**

I joined the militia, I must have been about, I was probably about 18. I don't remember exactly when I joined, but, what age I was. The reason I joined a medical unit mainly I think [was] because

16:30 my brother had already joined it. He talked me into it, I guess, might be trying to reform me. They were a great lot. Quite a lot of them were, well, most of them would be secondary education chaps, some of them went to private schools and....

17:00 But of course this is another thing: being brought up in the church environment, you were used to that type of people. The churches did a lot of good inasmuch as the

17:30 environment was of a good social what's-its-name? Not like the crowd, like the ones I worked with. And of course we had quite good, we had doctors and

18:00 we had to do all sorts of medical, first aid and all that sort of thing. And [we were] sent down to the hospital, shown how it worked. But of course it was still working horses too. We had horse-drawn ambulances, for a start. We had all kinds of horse what's-its-name so it wasn't a mechanised age, and of course that

18:30 actually made it easier when I joined the AIF [Australian Imperial Force].

So [in] the militia you were getting trained part-time, were you?

Yes, all, it was part-time with annual camps, and I only went to two camps, two annual camps in that time. We got to Anglesea Barracks, I just really can't remember how often, but during

19:00 the week away, that might have been twice a month, I'm not sure, I can't remember. You had uniform, a different uniform, and we'd practise marching. Of course everything's done to an exercise, or to something like music. The same [as] people sing to music, well, you do drill and everything to certain movements,

19:30 naturally, you, that's part of the what's-its-name, the form, the force, that used to be the way we used to do it, and various marches and various things, something like you see on the television sometimes. And then we'd do the bandaging and

20:00 treating people when they fainted or bring them to, and epileptic fits and all this sort of stuff, how to apply splints. And you got a very good voluntary training [in] what takes place during war.

What about weapons, were you trained in the use of weapons?

No, we weren't trained in the use of weapons,

20:30 which I found rather embarrassing at different times later on, and we were there to treat what the weapons did. And various ways of picking people up and carrying them and, you know, we learnt all that sort of thing.

21:00 **So was there a particular technique to driving a horse-drawn ambulance?**

There's a proper technique to driving a horse, full stop. No, the drivers were taught, but the horse technique, that was different: certain people taught that. But of course I'd grown up with them, had no worries. See, horses are very intelligent animals,

- 21:30 more intelligent than humans in a lot of ways. They have instincts that we don't have, of course, exactly the same as the birds have instincts that we don't have. If you call it "intelligence", well, if it was in humans you'd refer to it as intelligence, wouldn't you? One example was in the First World War they
- 22:00 discovered that people died of tetanus, and they discovered that in some cases it was because, or the source of it, rather, was horse manure and a broken leg or, and say the skin was broken, sometimes they'd
- 22:30 use anything they could get, but they'd put horse manure on it so it wouldn't press too hard on some, you know, as a packing. Now, this goes back to when what Louis Bombfield wrote in one of his books I read. In the South of France people used to go in to pick the grapes where they grow a lot of wine
- 23:00 all down the South of France, and tetanus was very prevalent by the people that came in, but the people who were raised there didn't get it, and that went straight to the horses where the horse manure was a carrier of it. And this was discovered in the First World War, where everything was done with horses,
- 23:30 so that, you know, they're just some of the sort of things you learnt because we had horses till then, but we didn't know there was going to be a war break out, and that's just an example.

So how were the ambulances set up?

How do you mean, "set up"?

Well, what did they have in them?

We had stretchers and first aid boxes

- 24:00 and that sort of thing. They were rough old things, of course, iron wheels on them, and of course I didn't go to the First World War, I wasn't born, but they were relics of it that we were using for training. Of course you still had horse cavalry too, you know, when war broke out. They didn't use
- 24:30 it as cavalry, but even the British had in Palestine a cavalry unit up there, horses and all of that.

So were you trained in, were you taught about the various diseases that you would expect to come across in a...?

Yes, the various diseases and the cause of that, and how important hygiene was.

- 25:00 **So what were they? I'm curious. What diseases were you taught about, what were the most common things?**

Well, the most common, I suppose the most emphasis was made on the insect-borne ones, malaria. We had to be able to recognise the type of mosquito which was the anopheles; dengue fever which is aedes aegypti.

- 25:30 Now, we had to recognise, mosquitos are different and the larvae lies different. Now, for instance, one - and I forget which one it was now, too - one, you've seen the mosquito larvae in water, haven't you? One of them will stand up like that and the other one's like that, so immediately you'd know what type of mosquito it was. You know how
- 26:00 malaria got named? Malaria started just outside of Rome, malaria was prevalent out there. It was a swampy area and it was a "mal" area, it was a bad area, and they thought it was the area causing it, then it was later on found out that it was mosquito-caused, that was carrying it. But the reason the mosquito carries it, when a mosquito bites you, the proboscis
- 26:30 he projects each side of the nose, it's got two tubes and they inject a little serum that stops the blood coagulating, and they draw it up. And it's only the females cause all the damage. The female has to have blood, animal blood of some sort, the protein to develop her eggs which she lays.
- 27:00 And the male, he doesn't do any of that at all and he doesn't bite you. Now, when that goes into the body you, mosquitos, when she injects, rather, this fluid, she injects the disease, the malaria which she carries, and that goes into your bloodstream and they build up and build up
- 27:30 and then you get a big fever and the fever kills. You wait till the next lot builds up and you get another fever, in the bloodstream. Now, you've got to protect people from the mosquito and mosquitos are confined to certain areas. We don't get the anopheles mosquito down here, it's too cold.
- 28:00 We get them in Queensland. Sir Ray from - what was his other name? - and his wife, they did a lot of work on this up there. Ray Phelps [actually Ray Cilento], I think, it'll come. And now we've got to do something about this, so you've got a pool and it's got mosquito larvae
- 28:30 and you can smother that with oil. There are certain sprays we can use, and then there's the Atebrin tablets and things which you take. Now, they caused a lot of trouble in an area where, for instance, in the tropics and that sort of thing.

Did you have, did they have Atebrin available when they were training you in the militia?

Not then, no. That came later during the war.

So what

29:00 **sort of treatment did they advise for malaria when they were training you?**

We weren't trained as medicos; we were trained as hygiene. Our job was to work on the mosquito, work on the cause, not the disease. But you understood it was a, how the whole thing worked. Now, in Egypt you've got this other fever. What did I say it was a minute ago?

29:30 **Dengue?**

Dengue. I had it, as a matter of fact, there. That is caused much the same way, by the mosquito, it spreads it, but it's a fever that lasts and goes. Some people get bad attacks from it. And there were several other things that were carried by specific mosquitos in the world, but we didn't do them;

30:00 we just learnt, you know, heard about them.

Well, what were the hygiene techniques that you were taught to deal [with] or prevent dengue fever?

Well, exactly the same for the other. We were able to recognise the mosquito, recognise the larvae and stop [them]. See, they don't live long; they live long enough to multiply and cause some damage. And of course mosquito nets were brought in and that sort of thing.

30:30 **Were you having this training before you joined the AIF, was this part of your militia training?**

No, no, the militia training, that was only one aspect of it. Another aspect of it, you see, the water, we were trained to test water and fix it. You

31:00 would work on chlorination and flocculation. For instance, you can have muddy water and treat it with alum, [which] brings the particles together and they sink to the bottom, then you'd treat the water itself with chlorine and then you can drink it.

31:30 When we get onto the war we'll talk about this one, talk more about this, as [it] was my duty during the war.

OK, all right. Well, let's get to the point where you enlisted, like how that came about.

Well, that was quite civil. One day I decided, "Well, I'm not going away, I'll enlist." So I had to

32:00 go up to Anglesea Barracks in Hobart, and as I was going past, one of my mates from the militia days - he was a corporal and I was a corporal and we were mates, and he was also my boxing partner, you know, we'd put the gloves on occasionally for fun, just fun - and he was working on his motorbike and he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going up to enlist." He said, "Well, wait, I'm coming with you."

32:30 He said, "I've been going to enlist, too. I've got to wash my hands." so he went inside, washed his hands and we went up and we walked in. And I'm one of those people that can always land a job, and as soon as I got in there they gave me the thing to put the numbers up. Each one had, and the numbers went up, you see, so I was last through and that was it. And I forget just which day it was,

33:00 it was only two or three days later I got notification to go into Brighton, so I go into Brighton. I'm now "TX2317, private." See, you've lost your title, you've dropped back to private again, you see. And about the second day I'm detailed to go over and work in the, there was one, there was three dormitories and when they built Brighton they put long huts,

33:30 dormitory huts to sleep in and you'd sleep down each side of it, like goodness knows how many, quite a lot. It was quite musical of a night-time, you know, snoring. And they had mumps, measles and influenza outbreaks. There was quite a lot of people in Brighton, mind you, and practically nobody had gone away by then. Training camp it was, you see, and I'm detailed

34:00 to the flaming isolation area as a male nurse or orderly; not nurse, orderly. We had a sister, Sister Parker. She was a theatre assistant. She was in charge over there and I became the next, and then we had other orderlies as well, three or four, and I'm working away over there.

34:30 I suppose I'd been there probably three weeks or something like that and who should come over but the boy I'd joined up with in the militia. He came over - and he always called me Jenny, Jensen, you know; he was Mac - and anyhow, he said, "I've got in a unit." he said, "And it's going away, rumour is."

35:00 And he said, "There's three or four more of our blokes out of the militia in it, too." And, "Gee." I said, and he said, "And I saw the CO [commanding officer] and I said, 'Are there are vacancies?' and he said, 'Yes, there's still one.'" And he said, "Look, I've got a mate, I'll go and see him." He said, "Bring him down, then." So he said, "I've got an appointment at such-and-such a time for you." I said, "Good." so down I go,

- 35:30 whenever it was, and I got accepted into the unit. And then I discovered that the other bloke's ahead, and then I'm sent back over to isolation, you see, and I worked there for quite a bit. And I told Sister Parker: "Oh, no." she said, "Don't join that." she said, "I had you picked out to be my sergeant when we got to the
- 36:00 LGH." you know, not LGH, the hospital, field hospital. I said, "Oh, no, I've joined this."
- You'd better tell us what you actually joined: what did you join, what unit?**
- 2/ 3rd Field Hygiene section. It was going away and that's all that mattered. And that was in July,
- 36:30 then the, I can only remember doing one day's training with them, but they had to get me replaced over at the other place, you see. I'll give you one on Sister Parker, this is rather rude, this is, but we had a chap there, I think he had measles I think it was, and one day he said to me, "Look." he said,
- 37:00 "I've got pubic lice." I said, "No!" He said, "Yes." he said, "I'm sure of it." He said, "I don't know where I got it." So I had to report to Sister Parker. "Oh." she said, "I've been a theatre sister." she said, "I've never seen these." Now, this chap was red-headed, I'll never forget him, and he's lying back, pulled the what's-its-name off and his face was as red as anything, and she said, "I can't see them." and she gets her pen out and she's scratching round amongst his pubic
- 37:30 hairs trying to, you never saw anything like it in all your life, you know. But that's the army for you. Poor old Sister, she'd be dead now. She was a lot older than me, she was.
- So how did she treat the lice?**
- I think we shaved him, I think, that's right, if I remember rightly. It became
- 38:00 quite a common thing later on in a prison camp. Now, I was getting onto what's-its-name. I only did one day's training in that and that was priceless. Now, this is the hygiene training, and hygiene, which was four staff sergeants and six officers when it was full strength, now, ours was
- 38:30 full strength at the time. And this is my particular mate, he was a Bachelor of Science, was actually a metallurgist, did his what's-its-name degree in London, or Scotland, rather. And the septic system there was big tanks and water went round all the time, and he took us over there to show the purification of water, chlorinates, several ways to make it drinkable,
- 39:00 and he gets this glass and, "Now." he said, "Put the chlorine in it and test it. Now." he said, "That's got two parts or three parts per million free chlorine. He said, "That's right cause of the litmus paper test I think we're using still here." One of the blokes said, "I bet you're not game to drink it, Sergeant." and he looked round and everybody laughed, you see, and he drank it.
- 39:30 He never swayed and he stood the test. But he told me after, "Oh." he said, "I felt crook." That's the only thing I remember with any training I did with them. Then I was sent on five days' leave in early August.

Tape 3

- 00:31 **So, Keith, you've told us that you've just joined because the 2/ 3rd Hygiene unit was about to head off overseas?**
- Yes. And I was then granted five days' home leave, which month?
- The dates aren't that important, really, just the, you know, the experiences, as opposed to**
- 01:00 **exactly....**
- That was a pre-embarkation leave. We moved off to Launceston, got on the boat and we went to Melbourne, was a pretty rough trip going across and was the first time, of course, for most of us young blokes to even go to Melbourne. We were encamped out on the Caulfield Racecourse.
- 01:30 The CO didn't know what to do with us, so one day he sent us off on a march with Staff Sergeant Ramsay Bull. We marched for quite a while, and then on the nature strip on the middle of the highway we pulled up to have a blow [rest], and what should happen but two lovely, old, elderly ladies, they'd only be middle-aged but elderly to us, came out and said, "Would you boys
- 02:00 like a lemon drink? We've got lemons going to waste in the yard." So we said, "Yes." and I suppose there must have been about 20 of us, and we went in and drank the lemon drink, had a chat and they decided they'd give a small party. And I'm not exactly sure when it was to take place, what time of the day, but
- 02:30 of course I didn't go to it. I was at another, I had a date actually, the girl in the Tarrick's Bar [?] in Melbourne, I'd won it on a bet, but Ramsay.... And we were going on a cruise on the Yarra [River]. That

was a bit of a failure because she was a heavy smoker and, boy, oh boy, did she smell of tobacco!

- 03:00 Anyhow, quite a few of the boys went to the party and Ramsay, it reminds me of that song, you know, Some Enchanted Evening, because he crossed the room, he saw this beautiful young lady and somehow or other he must have
- 03:30 got her address because we were only in Melbourne for around about 10 days and we didn't go out there again. We embarked on the boat to go overseas.
- So, Keith, before we head overseas, that must have been, you said that was your first time out of Tasmania, wasn't it?**
- Yes, most of them, yes.
- And for you, what did you make of that, coming to the "big smoke" [city] up there in Melbourne, and what sort of struck you about that experience?**
- 04:00 We were quite fascinated with Melbourne. There was one cable tram even running still, and it must have been because I've got memories of it. The whole situation, of course, was how big Melbourne was, how busy it was,
- 04:30 but of course we didn't have much time there. We only had I think about 10 days, and then we embarked on the HMTS II which was a Dutch liner known as the, named the Christiaan Huygens , that was after a Dutch scientist. We sailed off,
- 05:00 well, before we actually sailed off there was a bit of a conference. We had nursing sisters aboard as well as a full load of troops, and my CO, Captain Bruce Carruthers, was the chief medical officer and he set up the RAP, that's a Regimental Aid Post, down in the bows of the boat. It was a
- 05:30 liner and he called me up and he said, there was two or three nurses there and he said, "What about being, you'll be medical orderly?" I said, "What?" He said, "Yes." he said, "You're medical orderly. They need an orderly for the night service." and I thought, "Gee, this is not too good."
- 06:00 And he said, "You'll share the cabin with my batman." "Well." I thought, "That's pretty good." because I quite, I'd seen some hammocks. And one of the sisters said, "Oh yes." she said, "I know some of your relations. I come from the north-east coast of Tasmania, too. I'll do the night sister." so that fixed that. And
- 06:30 it made a great trip for me because the batman he was a very good boy. He was a Mormon and what he couldn't thieve out the kitchen in the morning wasn't nobody's business. He put a towel over his arm, went in there to get the CO's morning cup of tea and his what's-its-name and always got something for us. We shared this,
- 07:00 we had this cabin and it wasn't many days before we were both arrested. The provos [military police], I'd better explain how this happened. I only had to attend one parade a day and that was the early morning parade. That's just to show I was still on the ship, I suppose. And we got arrested and we were marched down two or three decks,
- 07:30 and we're going past the RAP and my captain's there and he said, "Where are you taking my men?" and they told him, and he said, "I'll try them myself. What's the charges?" And we hadn't worn our identity discs, what we called the dog tags, which we wore around our neck; we'd hung them on the bedpost. And I think there was cigarette butts found in the cabin,
- 08:00 but I don't think either of us were smoking, it must have been some of the boys that came. Anyhow he had this on my record sheet, "severely reprimanded". I said he had a twinkle in his eye when he did it and course that was it. We didn't get tried by the bloke that had the tough reputation at all. I stayed on night duty.
- 08:30 And we called in at Fremantle. We had our first patients, I remember. We had a young doctor aboard, and I'll never forget this: we had a chap with terrible pains in his stomach and doctor was up to him looking at him several times during the night, and next morning he was perfectly all right. All he had, he'd had far too much to drink and he wasn't used to it, probably, and he thought he was dying
- 09:00 all the time. Next stop was Colombo, no, Sri Lanka, and we went ashore there as well as at Fremantle. I remember walking into an emporium-type store, and everybody was either on their knees or squatting and off looking the other way, and I thought, "Gee, this is funny."
- 09:30 but of course they were Muslims and it was prayer time. I just walked out again. The ship then sailed on to the Suez Canal. By this time a few unfortunate communicable diseases were showing up, of a sexual nature. Not many, but
- 10:00 there were a few. And of course both at Fremantle and Colombo at the shore leave the boys let their hair down, or some of them do. But when you got to El Kantara we unloaded all the troops, or practically all the troops bar the drivers and those that would go onto Haifa. I was selected from

10:30 our group to go to Haifa because I had the Red Cross box, in case anything happened. We landed there on my 21st birthday. We didn't unload till the next day but we actually landed at Haifa on my 21st birthday. Now, the last time I'd seen my father was the Hobart Railway Station, I'd seen him alive and he made me promise him one thing.

11:00 He said, "You'll keep out of hotels." he said, "Till you're 21 and you've grown up and you know what you're doing. You promise?" I said, "Yes, I promise." so I never had a drink of beer till the night before I was 21. We picked up our transport there and gear and....

Sorry, Keith, can we just talk in a little bit more detail about that trip? Your birthday, for example: obviously, you know, as your

11:30 **father had said, you know, "Don't drink till you're 21." What was the celebration like that night?**

I think everybody enjoyed drinking with our little group, drinking my health, but I don't know whether I really enjoyed it or not because the conscience was pricking me a bit. However, we survived it. The next, we unloaded and we then drove down to Beit Jirja. That was, and the ones that got off at El Kantara

12:00 in the Suez, they came up to Beit Jirja so the unit was then united again. I was immediately put to work with a chap from the sister unit, 2/ 1st, I think they were New South Wales, yes, they were a New South Wales lot, they were contemporary to me, and we were sent around the countryside

12:30 mainly at Tel Aviv checking what they call "Tel Aviv pits", which was the way of the distribution of the sullage water. These were pits specially built very deep, bricked, but water escaped from bricks. And that filled in my time, most of the time.

13:00 I never, ever worked with one of our chaps. But I was sent off then to a school at Sarafand. Now, that was a British recruit training depot. I think that possibly was because I'd never done any training with the unit when I was back in Tassie [Tasmania].

So you hadn't done any training, but had the unit had training prior to your joining it?

They must have had

13:30 something, because they were there while I was over at the other place working.

On the isolation unit?

Yeah, in the isolation unit.

Because how long were you in the isolation unit?

I wasn't in it very long, but I went in, in June and we got shipped out in August, but not all of that time. But, see, it was five days' leave I think in between, and anyhow we still had to be at Jirja. And I

14:00 did the Sarafand course and while I was at Beit Jirja once again I got put on a charge sheet, but this is not recorded. Doug Macallum and I pitched a tent. There was about, I think there was about four or six of us to a tent, but we pitched our tent and one of the staff sergeants came along and commandeered it. Unfortunately I told him what his future was

14:30 and he put me on a charge sheet. I went into the CO again. Well, this particular staff sergeant was one of those lazy blokes who didn't do anything anyhow, and once again he severely reprimanded me but he couldn't keep the smile off his face when he was doing it. After Sarafand....

So, sorry, Keith, he commandeered your tent?

15:00 Yeah, we'd pitched our tents, you see, but he was too darn lazy to get his done, so he just demanded it. But the senior, I was still a private....

So had you refused, what was your misdemeanour, what was your crime then?

I told him where he came from and where he was going in plain English, and he objected to it: "insubordination".

15:30 Anyhow, in the January I got promoted to corporal and Doug got promoted to corporal and another one, I just forget who got that one, and we were corporals again. And then we moved to Egypt. I think it was Ikini Maryut, a suburb of Alexandria, and....

16:00 **So, Keith, you've gone a bit too fast for me, I'm having trouble keeping up. So you went from private, you went to corporal. What were sort of the circumstances that led to that? Why were you? You'd only been there for a short while.**

This brought us up to strength. We were three corporals short and the unit consisted of captain, four staff sergeants and six corporals and 18 other bodies, most of whom incidentally were tradespeople

16:30 of one sort or another. Of course, the ideal unit covered quite a field of just getting rid of stuff and

making stuff and all that sort of thing as well as the health side of it.

So if, most of the privates then were, had some trade background?

Yes.

What were the skills that you had that they deemed appropriate for the Field Hygiene Unit?

We were trained in hygiene,

17:00 as hygiene inspectors or health inspectors, a version of health inspectors, but just specialising in what was applicable. Where am I?

Well, you're in Egypt but you said there was training with the British at Sarafand?

That was a school. That was mainly hygiene

17:30 training as well.

So this is the first substantial training you had?

Yes, this is the first substantial training I had, yeah.

Can I ask what that involved?

That involved water purification, sewerage disposal, general hygiene utensils, your body, malaria control or

18:00 insect control, we'll put it that way, of all sorts. Mainly things to stop outbreaks of diseases which naturally would go through very rapidly.

Is that where the staff sergeant put the...?

No, that was back at Brighton. One of the staff sergeants, for instance, was a builder,

18:30 Ramsay was a science graduate so he naturally did the health one. Another one was administration and the other chap was one that didn't seem to do anything. Anyhow, I got sent, when I was there, I got sent out; there was trouble out at a tip.

19:00 The contractors to the army's camps, something like the garbage people here, they cart rubbish away. And it was more primitive, of course, and it was, they were Arabs, and somebody must have put a complaint in and I got sent out to check it out. When I got out there, there was a couple of trucks there,

19:30 and when I say trucks, you know, they had things about two or three tons, the small ones, like was of the times, had quite a few men and they were loading on, getting on to go. And I saw the bloke in charge and his, between it. I had a book of interpretation of the language and I told him that it wasn't satisfactory;

20:00 it had to be buried. They had been, it had been scooped out but they were just leaving it open. But he wasn't having any. I said, "Better leave some men behind [and] do it." I said, "Otherwise I'm going to report it." And he left two men,

20:30 was it two or three men behind, forget just which, and they were very.... Then they drove off. And these people were very solemn, very unwilling to work. And I had a cut lunch with me. Of course I was out there for the day. And I'm up on top of a mound, about, I suppose, 20 or 30 feet away, and a shovel came through the air,

21:00 one of those short-handled shovels, aimed right at me. It was thrown like somebody would throw a boomerang, sort of thing, you know; only it was a little bit off-line. And I grabbed it and I thought, "Righto, you want it...." I wasn't feeling too good about it but I knew I was on the spot because I thought I could see what was going to happen: they'd do me in [kill me] and put me [into the pit], and then they'd fill her in. And this went on

21:30 for probably quarter of an hour. And in the distance there was a troop, some troops out on route march, and they were coming towards me and I waved my arms and signalled, and they came down and I told them what happened and they left a bloke there with a rifle. And they went off and they said, "We'll get in touch with your unit." They did, and

22:00 anyhow I was never sent out again, never heard any more about it, either. That was the first bit of strife really I got into.

So you were never armed doing...?

No, no I wasn't armed, no. I had that shovel and I was quite confident.

So what happened in that sort of interval before the, with the troops marching, came along?

They sat down there and glared at me and I stood up and glared at

22:30 them.

So what were you building, they were digging the pits that you were talking about?

That was to bury the garbage. It had to be covered, you see. You'd get flies and you'd get everything and that was part of their contract, and the complaint had come in that they weren't doing it. And they sent me out to inspect it and when I get out there, of course I got there just as they were clearing out and put a stop to it, and they didn't like it. That was too

23:00 bad.

So these were Arab companies, teams, that were...?

Yeah, they were Arabs. Actually, I don't know if they were Arabs. Back in Beit Jirja I had the Red Cross box still and I used to treat the boys round, the Arabs that worked round the camp, and I got I got invited over to have, they called it tea. It didn't taste much like tea as I knew it, but [with] the chief, the village chief

23:30 at Beit Jirja, I sat on the floor with my legs crossed and drank this brew. But that was, I used to, they had sores, I'd use gentian violet or aquaflavin or that sort of thing, unofficially. But they used to call me the akima, they said that was doctor, I don't know whether it was or not, just because, you know, I couldn't see them getting around like that

24:00 when you had the stuff to treat it.

So what were they suffering from that you were helping with?

Mainly sores. Now, you never see an Arab unless his face is covered in flies, around the eyes and that, or you didn't in those days. Course things were pretty primitive still and I'd just, you know, put gentian violet on it or

24:30 aquaflavin, a disinfectant. And, well, from, we weren't in Egypt long when we struck our first dust storm. When you walked outside the tent you fell over the tent ropes because you couldn't see them. They were thick. We went and saw the Sphinx and saw the Cheops Pyramid, things like that.

25:00 Next thing we knew we were transhipped to Tobruk. Tobruk had fallen. The campaign was going up there and we went up on the ship called the Knight of Malta.

Sorry, Keith, this is after the allies had taken over Tobruk?

After they took, Tobruk had fallen, yes, and we went up to clean it up. We were on parade as usual, every morning on parade getting, our CO's giving a bit of

25:30 a talk and we looked up, we heard a plane and we looked up, and we were watching him and he had his back to it and we saw it dropping some bombs. Did we disappear! The old man was left on his own without a word being said. And that was the first time we ever got bombed. And one of my jobs there, I was....

So, Keith that's quite a, you told us about the experience of,

26:00 **about the stand-off with, you know, with the rubbish.**

That was in Egypt and this is in Tobruk, in Libya.

That's right, yeah. So this is like the first air raid or the first bombing?

The first air raid had struck, yes.

So tell us more about that. I mean how close did you guys come to being hit?

We'd, what you do, what we'd been told to do is put our hand out in front of them and put our finger up and line it up with the plane, and that would give us, give you

26:30 an idea of whether the plane was lined up to get to you. But, as I said, none of us had the peace of mind to wait to do that. We took off.

So took off to where?

Into a concrete building. The buildings were, we were in, Tobruk had been an army post for the Italians. There were concrete buildings and stores

27:00 and they had a big store there full of Vichy water. The cellars [were] dug out under a lot of the buildings. Obviously it was a soft rock; a story about that in a minute. Anyhow, the next job I was given, I was given a gang of prisoners, and they were good blokes, too, all quite happy, too,

27:30 their war was over. And I had so many days to get the bakery cleaned up and there was rotten stuff everywhere, there was flies and goodness knows what. And I found a case of, I suppose you'd call it creosote blocks, so we got to work and melted it and sprayed all the grounds round it and cleaned

- 28:00 the whole thing up and got it ahead of schedule, which the old man had the pleasure of giving me right compliments for. The next job, or one, another job was I had my prisoners out, and I forget what I was doing, but included digging a big trench and one of them wasn't too good,
- 28:30 and I said to the bloke, one that spoke English, "What's wrong with him?" and he said, "He's not well." he said, "He's not used to work, either." He said, "He was a bank manager." and so I took him down. I said, "Look." I said, "He tells me you're not well. Go over there and sit in the shade and sit down. You haven't got to work if you're sick."
- 29:00 And, you know, they were good blokes, and some time later in the day he came across and the chap interpreted for him. He said, "My friend wants you to know." he said, "If you're taken prisoner, he will look after you." And it was a funny thing, I said: about a month later I was a prisoner with the Germans. I thought it was like a prophecy. I never forgot it. Anyhow, at another job we
- 29:30 did, we did several jobs, but another one I remember well was most of the buildings had a dugout underneath them and there was a lot of wine there, vino, vino everywhere originally. It soon disappeared when the boys got there. And I said, when they discovered this small amount of wine down there, "Vino, vino."
- 30:00 I said, "Yes." And I said, "If you get this job done quickly." I said, "We'll open a bottle." and of course we opened several; and I'm still a teetotaler, basically, and when I went to take them back they had to take me back. We were in what had been Italian barracks, big long concrete dormitory-type buildings, and
- 30:30 when we got back the guards met them to take them to their compound and I went back to our quarters, which was nearby. And the captain's outside, and apparently I gave him a big smile and salute. And each night we used to have a report on the day's what's-its-name. "You were drunk today, Jensen." I said, "Not me,
- 31:00 Sir." "Not you?" he said, "You saluted me. You never do that when you're sober." and that's all he said about it, had a good old laugh about it. We'd sobered up by then because we'd had our meal and we'd been drilled and that. But another thing I remember is a gunboat was supposed to come from the Yangtze River, it was an English one, and it got sunk in the harbour and the sailors,
- 31:30 we were called, some of us were either called out or volunteered I'm not sure which, it was night-time and we're out on the water trying to rescue these people and rescue (UNCLEAR). There was oil everywhere and that sort of thing happens when these things go up, and I remember we pulled one chap out and he was in shock, bad shock, and I remember nursing him back in the boat.
- 32:00 I don't think we got any more than one in our boat and I believe he died later, but I always put that down to, I was blooded, as far as the war went. What, between the, first the bomb dropped and then the casualty, that's when I grew up. And we were there for a very short....

So, Keith, so what was it about that experience that made you grow up so quickly?

- 32:30 Just the fact that, seeing what can happen, bombs, the prisoners I had working for me, and this chap, nursing him. He was shaking like a leaf. I was told he died when we got him back. But you realised how serious it was, what it was all about. I did, anyhow. I can't even remember how we got back to Egypt. We shot back to Egypt.

How long were you in Tobruk?

Was only in there

- 33:00 possibly three weeks or something like that. I don't really know, but couldn't have been long because we're back to Egypt - and we got a new captain, a new skipper, Captain Jim English; actually he was another doctor from New South Wales - and we're preparing for Greece. We were only....

So sorry, new captain?

Our, he was,

- 33:30 we changed our commanding officer. We only had the one officer.

So it was Caruthers before?

Caruthers, and now we've got English.

Why the change, do you know?

I don't know. Caruthers was promoted, I know that, but we didn't even know then. Now we were getting ready for Greece almost straight away and....

I can tell you

- 34:00 **when that was. That was March '41, back to Egypt in March and off to Greece, April.**

Yes, it was towards the end of March. Now, got our stores and everything, and I'm put in charge of the stores, given Private Hackwell as an off-sider, sent off two days before the rest of the unit

- 34:30 to the Alexandria wharf. Still there in the marshalling yards two days later when the troops come racing past in the train and wave to us. I'm supposed to be on the boat by then with all the stores. There were three small units and we were shunted up one line and down the next and we couldn't get to the wharf.
- 35:00 We're in railway trucks. We'd run out of food, we'd run out of money, so one day, I think it was the third day, it must have been, it might have been more, I just forget how long we were there, but we got together with the other two chaps, two from other units, and we decided we'd, after we got
- 35:30 unhooked the next time we got shunted, we'd hook her back on again, which we did: took the attention of the bloke that was doing the work and he signalled them off and away we went. And we ended up down at the wharf, or at the piers. It's quite a big harbour, a big wharf, and he shunted us up a line, a little side line, unhooked us and away they went. We said, "Right, there's boats there and there's
- 36:00 boats there and boats there." and once again this is horse-drawn era, there's the cotton wagons, two beams along, with, they put the two bales of cotton on and two horses pull it. Now, they are the ones that were unloading from where the railway trucks were and taking the gear up the wharf to the boat, so we tossed and I won the toss for the three of us. So I got the blokes
- 36:30 in, loaded the stuff on, followed them up. We said, "Greece, Greece, Greece?" They understood. Up to this boat, way up into the fairly long concrete wharf, and the sling came down and we....
- We'll just take it from when you came to Alexandria to the port and word was you were going: did you know at that point you were off to Greece?**
- It's hard to say, really.
- 37:00 **What were you doing there with the stores? What was your job at that point?**
- My job was to get the stores to Greece, get the baggage to Greece.
- For?**
- For our unit. Each unit has its own tents and equipment and that sort of thing.
- Right, so tell us that story again from the top?**
- 37:30 **So you came down to load the stores, to take them...?**
- Yeah. So to where we were shunting or on the wharf?
- Let's go back before that, just arriving at the wharf.**
- When we arrived at the wharf we saw a couple of wagons. The old cotton wagons,
- 38:00 because it was a cotton-producing country, Egypt, had two beams along the length of the thing and a couple of horses pulling it and four wheels under it, and that was it. I tossed with the other two blokes with their baggage and I won the toss, so we beckoned them in and we said, "Greece, Greece?" and pointed to the boat and, yeah, that was right.
- So what was**
- 38:30 **the toss of the coin for?**
- See who was going to get the wagons. We wanted more than them, you see, and we won it, I won it, and this enabled us to get unloaded first, because you never know if we were going to get shifted off again with the shunters. So anyhow, they take us up into the wharf and there's a bit of stuff going on. A sling came down and we started loading the slings and up the
- 39:00 stuff went and into the boat. So Angel and I, we then walked back to the end of the wharf and saw the English bloke there that was in charge of the movements and shipping and one thing and another and told him who we were, and we're on the boat. He went bananas and he
- 39:30 was very upset and being fairly broad in one of the English dialects, which was pretty hard to understand, too, but Angel, he was a Cockney, he understood it, and it appeared that we weren't supposed to be on this boat; and went out in the hold, like it was only just started loading, and that didn't go down too good either, so he had to let us on the boat then.
- 40:00 So a convoy started off either the next day or the day after, I'm not sure, because there was quite a lot in the convoys. We were escorted by patrol boats, destroyers and that, and we head off and end up at Piraeus, which is the port for Athens in Greece. This was a very interesting stage
- 40:30 again, because the ship didn't get in until afternoon and inquiries, they told us our stuff wouldn't be off till the following afternoon. We didn't have any money; we'd spent that in Egypt feeding ourselves while we were waiting to get on. We knew the troops had gone off in a convoy ahead of us, our lot, so
- 41:00 we managed to get our hands on, I won't tell you how, some bully beef tins, tins of bully beef, put our overcoats on, put them in our pockets and first place I came to I needed a haircut so I went in and

showed the barber the tin of bully beef and he cut my hair and gave me some change in drachmas, which was pretty good. We went uptown, saw a picture theatre so we went in and we did same thing

- 41:30 again. I don't think whether we got any change there or not, but we went in on bully beef. And it was Gone With The Wind and of course the story was an English thing, the speaking was in Greek but, you know, what they put up, and we followed it right through. We came out of that and Angel was getting pretty thirsty and he said, "Oh." he said, "it won't hurt you, I'll look after you." I said, "That'll be good."
- 42:00 And we met up with some blokes in uniform....

Tape 4

- 00:31 **OK, so you'd gone to Gone With The Wind.**

And we decided we'd have a meal and something to drink, so we went into this café and [there] was a couple of chaps there in uniform and they sort of were quite friendly. We ordered a meal and we paid for that with bully beef and they bought drinks and

- 01:00 we bought drinks and we got drunk. And Angel kept telling me, "She's right, I'll look after you, boy." He was a married man much older than me. So eventually we got back to the boat that night, and the tide had come in and the gangplank looked to be going straight up and I remember we went up it on hands and knees, crawled up it, and I had to look after Angel; and we lay down on the deck in our overcoats and next morning
- 01:30 we couldn't get up, at least I couldn't: we'd lain in some tar and it had melted enough to hold me down. I thought, I didn't know what was wrong. A while later, round about I suppose getting round about midday, Staff Sergeant Ramsay Bull turns up. "Found youse. We're moving north this
- 02:00 afternoon." "But." I said, "We can't get the stores off." "No." he said, "We've bought all new stores." He said, "We've been waiting days for you blokes to turn up." So we go back to where the, he takes us back to [where] the rest of the unit was, climb in the back of a truck and away we go north. We go right up to the north of Greece, and I can't remember the name of the place, and
- 02:30 tried to get settled down. I got sent out to find a water supply other than a town one, if there was one possible, and I came across a Greek shepherd. Actually, it was a corral built out of thorns round this place and had these sheep in it, and in the corner was a thing, not much bigger than a dog kennel sort of thing, and the chap was in, came out of
- 03:00 that, and he was all grins and signs and he disappeared again and he came out with a tin mug type thing and milked one of the ewes, gave me a drink of milk. He had some, too, and sort of drank it, you know, like drinking a toast. I thought, "Gee whiz, this is rather queer." Anyhow,
- 03:30 I did find a supply of water and next day reported to the CO that it was found, and others had been out scrounging around, apparently. We dug a slit trench and my mate, Doug, had been down to the village and he'd bought some eggs or pinched [stolen] them, I don't know which, and came back,
- 04:00 and just as he got back an aeroplane popped over the hill. And Greece has got some very steep hills. This bloke came from around behind, flying fairly low in a fighter plane. And I was down a bit further, I never made the slit trench, but he let fire with his machine gun, and he was that low he looked out the side and he grinned at me.
- 04:30 I'd never, first time I'd had a smile from the heavens, you know. Doug, he dived into the trench: as I say, he was close enough to get into it. I was a hundred yards away, I suppose, probably more, and he lets out a scream, "I've been shot, I've been shot!" And what had happened was the machine gun, the clay had dried, the machine gun had hit some of that and one of them went in and hit Doug. But what Doug had
- 05:00 done, he forgot he had the eggs in his shirt and he dived in and he felt all this stuff and he thought.... He never lived it down, I can tell you! But he was the only chap I ever heard say that he had a dream in psychedelic, in colours. Anyhow....

The dream of that incident?

No, no, no, of something else. That was the only chap I've ever heard claim that, too. But this happened to him.

- 05:30 Well, I don't know how long we were there. It was only a matter of days. I remember seeing General Blamey under a tree with his staff around him doing something around that period and the retreat's on; chaos, looking back on it. We're well north and we're told to get out, so we get
- 06:00 in, of course we travel in the back of trucks, and we head south. After some time travelling, probably the second day, I wouldn't be sure, we came to a place that we christened Bullfrog Flats. It was flat and had a creek running through it and the frogs were croaking so we've always called it that. We

immediately dug our own little one-man trenches.

- 06:30 There was absolutely no air cover for us and the German planes could do as they liked and they came over periodically, and one of them, I dug probably 20 feet from the edge of this creek which was very deep, probably 15 feet down to it or something like that,
- 07:00 didn't have much water in it, my little shelter, and a plane came over and I dived in this and the next thing I didn't know whether I was dead or alive. He dropped a bomb that was fairly opposite me, but it was right in the creek and I was covered in water and gravel and stuff. No metal, was only water and gravel, and that was as close as I got to that lot.
- 07:30 We embarked, we stayed there overnight and away we went the next day, and every now and again we'd pull, the convoy, when I say "convoy" we were all scattered but we were all on the road, we'd pull up. And one of our boys went to pieces, and he'd race off and see if he could find where a bomb had dropped down; he said, "They won't drop two in the one place." and we'd have to
- 08:00 go and get him and drag him back. This chap was a big, strong fellow, he'd been a boxer, and he died a few years ago. Anyhow, we eventually got down....

So it sort of got a bit too much and he...?

It got too much, his nerve went.

So how was he, what happened to him after that?

We'd have to go back and get him in the truck and get moving again, and we'd have to do that about two or three times

- 08:30 or more. And we were harassed by the planes. Eventually we got down to the south of Athens. I don't know how long it took us, but to where there was a boat supposed to pick us up or we were supposed to embark, and when we got there we found that the boat had been run aground at the wharf, kept going by the Greek pilot,
- 09:00 and we had to watch while a Stuka [German dive bomber] came and bombed it till he got it and blew it up. We went out on the wharf and one of our men, he was an older one, a married one, the tide was out - I think they had pretty good tides there, mainly Piraeus and this place - the tide was out and must have been about 10 feet,
- 09:30 might have been more, but [there] was a motorbike going out, type thing, and this bloke's nickname was Badger, he jumped onto it and he landed and he got away. They told us then to go to another point some miles away, or it seemed miles away we marched, and we'd be taken off that night; so we got over there and after dark or at dusk we
- 10:00 lined up, was several hundred of us and in threes, formation, file, three files deep - there's another part of the story I've got to leave out here - and the barge, a barge used to come in. I don't know how many barges were operating but I only saw one, but that was in,
- 10:30 and they were ferrying them out to warships to take them off to Crete, take us off to Crete. We ended up around about, I suppose, it'd be no more than 10 paces away from the barge when it - I'll tell you why after - it was discovered that
- 11:00 it was the last barge that was in, just coming in. The information was given to our little sect, to somebody's lot there and somebody's lot there and there and there, way back, it was the last one. And the boys took off, or some of them did. One of them argued that we shouldn't break rank, and it only took about
- 11:30 30 seconds, I reckon, and it was too late. The ones directly in front of us didn't get on. Some of them did but all of them didn't get on, and of ours, eight didn't get on; there was eight. We then walked. That was it, that was the last barge. And it was night, and it gets very dark over there, too, at that time of the year.

So that

- 12:00 **information or that rumour was correct?**

It wasn't a rumour.

Yeah. So where did the information come from, how did...?

I'll tell you after the tape goes off.

Don't you think it's kind of...?

No, you'll see why. And we marched, the whole lot of us marching back to where we decided we....

Thanks. So we were at the point where

- 12:30 **you've been marched a few miles out of Athens, told that the barges were, there were going to**

be boats to take you away, so can you pick up from there again, please?

We were lined up in a long stretch, three files, three deep, and I'm to be up on the front file, behind, and I was probably about 10 paces back, we were, from the lot in front of us at this stage. And

- 13:00 two majors were in front of me and looked at the others, and I heard one of them say to the other one, "I think we better go up and check." So I thought, "Well, if you blokes can go up and check, so can I." so I followed them up. It was dark. And the movement control chap said, "If you don't get on this boat, Sir, you won't get away." so "Cripes!" and I raced the few paces back to our chaps
- 13:30 and I said, "Blast! This is the last barge, I just got the news, heard it." and in a matter of seconds half of them disappeared and [we] ended up with seven of us. I stayed because my mate, the staff sergeant, he was saying
- 14:00 "We mustn't break file, we mustn't break file." and, you know, we're trained that way, and of course that, it's only a matter of seconds and it was too late. We went back into the, marched back into the shore, or into hinterland, this is on a bit of a sort of a nick out where we were, into an orchard or citrus grove you'd call it, because
- 14:30 it was an orange place. And there was a rocky outcrop in it and we settled down there and woke up next morning, [there] were bullets had been flying off the rocks, and cripes, the Jerries [Germans] opened up. They knew where we were and they'd opened up just to get things moving. So we took off down through the grove and we met the eighth
- 15:00 member of our, what was eventually our prisoners lot, and he had his shirt full of mandarins. "Oh." he said, "I thought I was the only one left. I got out into the water and I couldn't get on the boat, the barge. God, I'm glad to see you blokes." So anyhow, we decided we'd go back to a village that we knew was in the vicinity, half a mile or a mile
- 15:30 away. And we got along the road and we're pinned down by rifle fire, and there was an old culvert there; well, it wasn't old, was still, the road was in use; but Greece was an old country and this was like an arched bridge over a waterway. And we crawled in and we got in under that, and there was a well with a stone coping
- 16:00 I suppose 20 yards away in the creek bed, and we had water bowls and we gathered up various things so we could lower one down, and every time we drew lots and every time somebody had to get water, we had to drink something. There must have been about 20 of us there. We drew lots and whoever got it had to go and get the water, so you
- 16:30 went like mad up this thing and dived in behind the coping, which was about two feet high or three feet high, over it, put the thing over, let it fill up then pulled her up then dived back again. And this went on till late afternoon, and every time we did it they opened fire on us, and of course we knew we couldn't move. Well, some time in the late, very late in the afternoon,
- 17:00 the firing.... I'm ahead of myself here. Planes were coming around all day. Now, there was a steep mountain, or we'd call it a mountain, a steep hill behind, and the planes used to come round and they'd circle every few minutes, and we didn't know of course it was only two or three planes, but they were just keeping us pinned down all the time. Chap came along
- 17:30 carrying a handkerchief or something tied to a stick and he said, "We've surrendered, we've surrendered. You've got to come out with your hands on your head." and we had to gather some in groups, and just at dark we all formed up into one. And we [were] marched for several miles
- 18:00 back to what I believe was Argos, put into a yard with a wrought-iron fence, you know, the old fashioned wrought-iron, about six foot high. When it was full up they closed the gates, locked them. Some time during the night somebody must have fallen down because we woke up next morning, there's legs and arms and everything everywhere, or when you did
- 18:30 wake up you couldn't move. They took us then into a schoolyard, and the schoolyard was the school building there, and that's where we were for the next week. But during the, about the second or third day we found a piece of three-ply [wood]; we still had our pocket knife. And incidentally, back at the well, before we came out, we put our cameras and all
- 19:00 our things we didn't want them to get down the well, the whole lot of us, which was a bad mistake, really; we could have bartered them later. And when we found this piece of plywood, Ramsay said, "Righto." he said, "I'll teach you to play chess." I said, "What?" I can remember I was sitting in the sand, we were squatted there. He got a pocket knife and he cut all these little squares, about
- 19:30 half an inch or might be a bit more than an inch square, and he had an indelible pencil still, and he marked what they were and made the board out of it; and being three-ply we could cut it with the pocket knife and break it. And that's where I learnt to play chess. German, young German doctor came along. Incidentally, the troops that caught us, captured, were different to the ones that look after you later. They know what it's all about, too, and
- 20:00 they treat you differently. And this doctor came along before we left there and he said, "Ah, Schach."

and I believe that's the word for "chess", and he was taking an interest in it every day. How the hell Ramsay ever taught me I don't know. And he apologised to us on the last day: he said, "Well." he said, "You know, you folks have only had equivalent in stew to one tin of bully beef for the week."

20:30 We had a bit of other stuff, but mainly what Greeks had thrown over the fence and that sort of thing. We were then entrained and we went up to....

Keith, can I hold you there for a second? Again you've told us, that's a lot. I'm hoping we can slow it down a little bit and get a bit more detail because it's all really important. From, there were eight of you, only eight of you left in Greece?

Yes, yes.

And that's of all, is that

21:00 **English and Australians or just the Aussies, or...?**

No, there was hundreds of us; was eight of our unit.

Eight from your unit?

Yes. I'm speaking of me and the unit, you see.

So when the...?

There was hundreds. There was Egyptians, there was from all the islands around the place. There was South Africans. There were those very, really black ones from, Sudanese.

21:30 There were Jews, Cypriots, New Zealanders, English; it was a great combination.

And who'd all been trying to get on the boats out of Greece?

Yeah. You didn't go in.... We had Maoris. You didn't go off with nationalities. You went off in countries, you know, your units of your country,

22:00 like troops of your country. You formed up in that, so that's how you would be.

So, sorry, so after you were there with the seven other blokes from your unit and you're talking about the well and getting the water and all of that, was it just the group of you or there were...?

No. At this stage we were scattered, you see, so whatever could get in got in, and that was it.

22:30 Every man for himself gets to, you see, there's another thing I should have told you there. Clyde Skinner and I, during this period we'd been carrying a case of Boyce anti-tank rifles for a bloke, and that night, when this failed, he shot himself. And we'd carried that for a couple of days for the coot, and he turned round and did that to us.

23:00 We should have left it in the first place, shouldn't we? It was pretty heavy.

And there'd been no sign that something like that would happen?

No, we never expected anything like that to happen. But it got to him. He couldn't face....

So that must have been, I mean being stranded there and not knowing what lies ahead?

It was chaos, just chaos. You can just imagine, everybody's

23:30 for himself and, but he's got to stick with his unit as well as mates, if he can. You know, you're, put it this way: you belong to a group but you're an individual as well. And a married man is worse, more than a single man. He's thinking of his family, he's got to get back.

So at that point when the barge was about to, how was it that it was group of eight -

24:00 **or the seven, then you found the eighth - how was it that you ended up on shore and the others...?**

Because the others shot through; and the sergeant was arguing we shouldn't break rank and they didn't break rank, and it all happened so quickly they didn't have time for second thoughts but they just accepted it. It's all, you know, you don't break rank.

You didn't break rank?

I did, yeah. I went down and had a look and came back, like a silly idiot. Instead of getting on a

24:30 boat myself, I went back to tell them. I was waiting on getting on the barge that was just coming in. It was a bad mistake. That's life. That's what Ned Kelly said: "Such is life." But....

Sorry, so the other men who were left behind, had they made that conscious decision as well, or was it...?

They didn't have time to make a decision.

25:00 I didn't, either. I didn't imbibe my second thoughts. I thought, "I've got to tell them." which you do, you're mates, you're part of a group and you're lined up. It's not like as though you're scattered or anything. You're lined up for a purpose, to get on the boat, the barge, get away, rather. It was a barge, not a boat.

So, because you were corporal at that point, weren't you?

Yep.

So it was a matter of going back to

25:30 **the privates?**

Yes, it was my duty; it was my duty, put it that way.

I just want to get a very clear....

As I say, I didn't know anybody realised until I was at a reunion and I went to the bar, and one of the other blokes that was caught was telling me, or started to; very early in the piece he saw me and he shut up.

26:00 I heard him mention, he said, "Keith's the one that...." and I just sort of shook my head and walked out again. He's dead now, Killer Dillon that was, and I didn't know.... Incidentally, he was a prisoner, too. But he was only just joined up and meeting up when he started telling....

26:30 They must have been discussing it or something about getting away, and I found out and he said enough for me to know that he knew, but I never, ever mentioned to Ramsay, my mate, because he's the bastard that finally got caught. Well, all of them; none of them should have got away because they got, there was still chaps formed up in front of us that they took the place of

27:00 by getting on ahead of them, jumping the queue, that's what it amounted to. And young Clyde, he must have went after 5 seconds or 10 seconds behind the others or something, because he only got in the water. As a matter of fact, I didn't know he was in the water until a few months ago. I rang him up from Hobart or from here, I'm not sure which, I rang him anyhow, and I, that's right, I asked him if

27:30 he knew we weren't, I'd only just discovered we, our, Tobruk wasn't on it. I rang him up and he said, "You know." he said, "the thing [is], I can still hear your voice when you were calling my name when I was out in the water." I didn't know I'd done it, but apparently he must have took me for somebody else. Now, where did we get to?

Well, let's take it, so the first camp was at a school,

28:00 **basically a schoolyard? So what was the first encounter with the Germans like? How were you treated?**

Good, as well as they could. They were soldiers. We found that when you got to where it was home guards and that sort of thing, or chaps, not, didn't always really about, they were the ones that

28:30 were worse than, active service blokes were all, you were, they treated you on the same level sort of thing, you know. You become just a motherless love child, sort of business. Nobody owned you, nobody loved you, nobody wants you. I mean, in real prison life

29:00 you're nobody, you're nothing, put it that way. You're not nobody; you're nothing. But that's just the current of the thing, you know. You can imagine that, I hope.

Well, I'm hoping that you're going to paint us a picture.

Anyhow, we're finished at Argos now and we're taken to a proper, a military camp at Corinth, which is not far away. It's just over the canal.

29:30 Now, the first thing I heard in Corinth is, "What are you doing here?" they were cousins. One of them had been in our unit and transferred, so he's not in the 8th. The other one was still in it and he'd got captured and he'd got into Corinth before us, and when his cousin walked in his cousin said, "What are you doing here?" and he said

30:00 "Influence, you dill, influence." I'll never forget that, it was so perfectly done. Well, Corinth was a Greek camp, and it was full - well, not full; it had a lot of Italians in it. Now, the Greeks and the Italians had had - incidentally this is part of history I read later; I didn't really know so much about it - but I knew the Greeks had captured

30:30 these Italians from Albania. In one of the things I'd read about the war [it] was Mussolini said, "Righto, Hitler's going down into Greece. I'm going to have Greece, not him." and he decided he'd take it first, but the Greeks beat them and stopped them. They had these prisoners down there. And they demanded our boots. They'd run out of footwear and of course we, it was going

- 31:00 to be right, so they didn't get them. I had a watch, my watch, and made contact with different things, mouth to mouth, contraband, you know, food and I had a watch and I swapped it for a bunch of spring onions worth about one shilling as against, but that didn't matter, we ate them. Anyhow, we watched the raids on Crete.
- 31:30 The planes flew over. The Junkers would go over and they'd have a glider tied on behind, but once we saw one come back with the bloke still hanging onto the tail of the, he never made it. His parachute got caught or opened too soon or something and he was hanging out. We were out in the open the whole time we were there and we all got lousy,
- 32:00 and we - well, I say the whole time, almost all the whole time we were there. There was people from all, seven or eight nations there, countries there, of course in the Greek campaign. Our main rations was bean pods, broad bean pods. Jerries had the beans and we had the pods. Made a good soup, black, very black.
- 32:30 We didn't have anything, we couldn't change our clothes but we took them off a lot and went through the seams and crushed the lice in the seams of the what's-its-name and got the eggs. We were lousy all the time. And Himmler came, well, [it] was reputed to be Himmler, I think he was, came over the PA [public address] system. I'm getting ahead of myself. We lined up in hundreds, five deep,
- 33:00 ten long, and you'd be there, you'd be there, that lot, that lot there, and they had us all in the hundreds because they were all in the metric system; we weren't. And came over the PA system we were to line up in our groups because one in 10 would be shot, on account of the atrocities committed by the Australians to the people on, the mutilations on Crete. Apparently
- 33:30 they'd done all sorts of things, they'd castrated them, maltreated, did all, this is the stories that went round, and we stayed there all day this day. Been there some time now and they came on and said, "Now it's been confirmed that it was the Cretans that did it, not the Australians." or not the troops, included all the other troops as well,
- 34:00 and more or less apologised, so that was that bit. Now they issued a blanket and there was, they issued five blankets, I think it was, to every hundred, but they didn't issue them. They came, guard had these numbers,
- 34:30 blanks and things with a cross on them, and there was only eight of us and we got two blankets and I got one of them. When I pulled mine out there was two tickets stuck together and one flew, fluttered away, there was a bit of a breeze blowing, and I saw nothing on it so I thought, "There it is." and sure enough it was. One of them got sick, this one on the note, and the other one that's alive still, and Angel
- 35:00 and I, we hid this blanket and we were put in, they'd started to shift them out. We're in a concrete building now, on a concrete floor. Not as good as the sand to sleep on, I can tell you, nothing underneath you. And we got each side of him and we cuddled him all night for about three nights till he recovered. But the blanket, it really saved us.
- 35:30 Quite a few were dying at this stage. We were allowed out to a well in the vineyard once a day to get enough water to wash with and do your face with and to drink. We had as much olive oil as we liked. We picked grape leaves as we come back as a rule and soaked them in olive oil, and we all had a tin bowl to eat out of and a spoon and
- 36:00 soaked them and got some twigs and we had a fire going, cooked it a little, heated her up and cooked them. They were all right to eat, too; and rubbed them on your boots and rubbed them on your skin, the olive oil I mean, and, well, it was good. We went after they'd started to move out and, as I say, a few died. There was quite a lot of gastric trouble, dysentery
- 36:30 trouble. The latrines were open, just a ditch dug and a bowl put down to sit on to stop you falling in at the back when you sat, that sort of thing. We went, entrained, we went to Athens. Now in Athens we struck another remarkable thing. To me it's remarkable. There was a big guard standing there and there's another one say there and another one there, and we're lined up on the station to get on the train
- 37:00 but we weren't getting on straight away. And the guard said to me, "Hope you blokes." in English, "Hope you blokes go to Austria. A lot better than those so-and-so Germans." and I looked at him. He said, "I lived in Australia for quite a while as a boy. I even went to school there." he said, "During the First World War. After the war my parents were sent back to Germany, back to Austria, deported."
- 37:30 And I said, "Yeah?" and he said, "Yes." and we nattered away. I can't recall much of the conversation but that's what he said to me, and he whispered it, it was all out the corner of his mouth, quietly, you know. And I, sure enough, we entrained for Salonika or Saloniki or Thessaloniki,
- 38:00 whichever you like. We called it Salonika, but it's not mentioned on the map. And to get to Salonika on the way down the Allies had blown the tunnels so the railway was out, and there was a mountain we had to cross, a mountain range, and we had all sorts of different things. But it took us all day. And the German guards were now in the hands

- 38:30 of the second grade soldiers, health-wise, you know, home guard sort of stuff, they had to march with us. Naturally, a few blokes shot through [departed], tried to shoot through, and some succeeded, and I know one bloke that got through the other side and changed his mind chased us up and caught us again. I don't know him but I saw him, I knew of him.
- 39:00 Now, we marched up the mountain, then we marched down the other side and then we marched across a great, flaming long plain to Larissa. Larissa they were good enough to turn the hydrant on, that the train takes the water from and we walked under it, and we saw the most cheerful thing we'd seen for a long time. The German guards, these old blokes, 40 and 50, that sort of thing,
- 39:30 they sat on the coping round the well. All the wells seemed to have copings round them, I'd say to stop the kids from falling in, and when they got out and walked the blood squashed up out of their jack boots, which come up to about there, and the water in them was red, and we cheered. Poor blighters, you know. Some of them didn't make it. I mean, there was a motorbike and sidecar behind us and
- 40:00 they'd take this to various groups like this over others. I know they picked out, one of our guards up. We get on the train and we get to Salonika. Now, Salonika was an old Macedonian, that was a part of Macedonia originally, I believe, in the days when they used to have all those wars up there between Turkey and all of those countries, and they were very old buildings. Our first one, we were in an upstairs
- 40:30 part of one and we were in that condition that I used to come, and I wasn't the only one, come down on my backside; I couldn't step down. Head would go giddy, dizzy. I wasn't there long and we were shifted down to a, these old barracks and they were falling. You slept on the floor wherever you could find a place. And if you had
- 41:00 to get up during the night it had a sort of an apology for a toilet. I don't know if there was a toilet but I know there was a trough, and you had to try and pick your way amongst legs and heads, you know. And the bedbugs used to come out at night. Boy, did they warm us, it was loaded with them. We had the rottenest guard you've ever struck in your life
- 41:30 in charge. A bloke, we christened him Oscar. Hope nobody's named Oscar. When I was a little kid I had a bull and they called him Cuthbert, and the old [property] valuer, I was talking to him one day, and I was talking about Cuthbert, and I found out his first name was Cuthbert. He was known as Pat. But no, Oscar was an absolute sadist, and he was the head,
- 42:00 full commissioned bloke.

Tape 5

- 00:31 Salonika was, as I say, a terrible camp. It was very old. And in no way did we enjoy it except for one thing. It was there that, across the window in the building was a suitcase held up with "Germany's declared war on Russia". And of course we thought they were allies. They were last time we'd heard of them. We
- 01:00 thought, "Oh, that's good." And we already had the Yugoslavs in Salonika they had [the] kitchen. They had the game sewn up. Rations of course were very poor. I remember one day, soup was a great thing, and one day the meat in, my portion of the meat out of the soup was an eye, an animal's eye. Now, I looked at it and I said, "Well,
- 01:30 I'm going to eat it." but do you think I could chew it? Not on your life, so I swallowed it. Normally was generally lungs and stuff floating on top, the offal made the soup. And another time I was out working, loading chips from an upstairs storeroom, and there was dried cabbage, bags of it. They were old sacks. They were one of
- 02:00 the ingredients we were loading, and of course you worked your fingers in till you got a hole big enough, that you carried down the, downstairs and out onto the ship. You'd eat as much as you could. And that night when I went back to camp I had a big drink of water and I thought I was going to die. My stomach swelled up: pain, you've got no idea. But it was the stuff was dried and I ate as much as I could of it while the going was good, and that wasn't too good. And all sorts of
- 02:30 things like that. There was escapes were tried, and I remember one particular one. These chaps were going to be met on the outside of the wire. Actually, I think it was where a water pipe went through, if I remember, and they were going to be met. And they were, and they were shot, and their bodies were brought back and put on the parade ground, which was in the middle of
- 03:00 the big square, in the middle, and we stayed there nearly all day, just standing there lined up. I remember I fainted during it. Blokes were falling over, getting, you know, come to and get up again. And Oscar enjoyed that very much. The worst one.

Can you just explain a bit more about that? You said they were going to be met: what do you mean?

They were going to be met by patriots.

- 03:30 Instead of that was people, Germans that met them to shoot them. They were set up, we believe. We've got no evidence of it, all we got was the corpses, but it was obviously a put-up thing. I got on a working party in the camp one day to pull an old shed down. Very, very old it was, it was all to pieces,
- 04:00 and the chain gang was to carry the wood down to the Yugoslav kitchen. I was the second-last in the line and loaded up on my shoulder; and the siren went to get on parade. And of course soon as that went you had to race to the parade ground; there was no messing around with it. And I was about almost level with the kitchen and
- 04:30 Oscar shot round the corner and he fired a shot at me and he missed, and I tell you what, he fired another one. But by the time that wood had hit the ground off my shoulders I'd reckon I'd done 20 yards, around the building. Got on parade and course Oscar never found me. I'd left him behind, bang. I ran to another building. The buildings were built mostly like that, see. But that's the sort of person he was. He loved to kill people.

05:00 **Was he deliberately going after you?**

Yeah. His great pride in life was how many he could beat up, and this particular day he had the opportunity to shoot one. That was the sort of person.... But we don't know what his personal circumstances [were], and what had driven him mad in the first place. Anyhow, enough of Salonika.

Well, perhaps not;

05:30 **how long were you in Salonika for?**

Don't know, we never had any dates. We never had, time didn't mean anything to us. It was only by reading the casualty thing that I got from the army here and all the dates of that are made up anyhow, because they never got notified. At this period of time they never got notified of any dates or where we were or anything,

06:00 because we weren't registered prisoners of war. We were still, what happened to us didn't matter. There was no record of it needed to be kept even or anything, because there was no acknowledgement that we existed.

This was April 1941?

To, I'll see if I can find it.

06:30 July, August; yeah, say August, would have been about then, August.

OK, so you were a couple of months there. So can you...?

It was more than that probably because sometimes you'd go in at the middle of the month and come out at the end of the next month.

So when you first arrived at Salonika what were you confronted with? I mean what was it like?

When we first arrived at....

- 07:00 See, Salonika, there hadn't been anybody in it. It was one of their army barrack places. And there was a goldfish pond and the blokes ate those goldfish raw, they were that hungry. I didn't get one. And there was some snails and someone collared them. That's what it was like at that stage. That was at a stage where I couldn't
- 07:30 walk down the stairs; that's another story. Anyhow, the day came when they started to unload Salonika, and just prior to that we were put into barrack rooms where all the bedbugs were. They came out every night and you didn't get any sleep and you scratched all night.
- 08:00 But they loaded us onto a train. I know I was on a second train; the first lot had already gone, but I don't know how many lots before them. And these were French, First World War trucks, railway trucks that carried either four horses,
- 08:30 I think it was four, and so many men, was [written] up in French, that's how we knew they were French. And they were old; there were great cracks in the floors and that sort of thing. And we were given rations for, I think it was three days, handed out and we set off. I know we were let out twice. There may have been
- 09:00 the third one at Belgrade, but twice for toiletry, I mean go to the toilet, not wash yourself; there was no water. And fortunately the cracks in the floor allowed urination to go out. You just sat on the floor in the truck and they were just filled, so packed. We stopped at Belgrade and we were allowed out at Belgrade on the station.
- 09:30 It was quite a fascinating thing to see women. The Red Cross women, they had hooped skirts on and bonnets on their heads, came down, the old-fashioned ones that, you know, used to exist when I was a boy. We went on then to Wolfsberg in the Austrian Tyrol and then that was Stalag 18A,

- 10:00 and now we were registered. I became POW [prisoner of war] 4955. Easy number to remember, I've remembered it all my life, but I can't remember my ATM [Automatic Teller Machine] number half the time. And this was Utopia. We got a Red Cross parcel. We were put in rooms in a long built, the bunks one tier, two tiers. We had something underneath us,
- 10:30 a mattress filled with straw or something, and we were treated as though we were human beings. The chap in charge there was Stolli. He wrote to me after the war wanting a reference. He wrote to all of us, I think; Ramsay got one, I know. And we were put to work, volunteer
- 11:00 work, peeling potatoes for the Germans. Ours were just cooked in their jackets. Getting back to the Red Cross parcel, when we got the Red Cross parcel we all, I think practically everybody was sick. We ate too much, we tried too much. I got caught pinching spuds [potatoes]. I took some back to camp. What you did, they were cooked. You put them in
- 11:30 your socks and your trousers came over your socks. Unfortunately I got caught and I got three days scrubbing the floors and cleaning the guards' quarters. Now, the guards were very generous with their feelings. They had me down on my knees and they'd walk up the passage behind me and I'd watch him through my legs, and as he got to me he'd kick me in the backside, you see. That was just his pleasure. Not all of them did it, but it was done.
- 12:00 But I used to ride with it and it didn't hurt. Then when I got into doing his, where he slept, his bedroom – or they weren't bedrooms; several to it – I'd find everything I could pinch without being noticed. Say he had a bar of chocolate, well, he'd lose a bit of it, and this sort of thing, so I was laughing all the way too. He was enjoying me and I was enjoying him.
- 12:30 Then one day Stolli came up and said to Jim Newell, a New Zealand sergeant major, he said, "Call everybody on parade quickly." Once again I was where I shouldn't be and overheard it, and he said, "Do not volunteer, because I'm calling for a party; stick around. I've got to get the numbers down and there's something good going to happen
- 13:00 to those that stay." or something to that effect, I just forget his words. The parade went and everyone scrambled onto parade and I managed to get to a few but couldn't get all our own blokes, who were scattered through it. There were several hundred there. And, "Volunteer to go out on a farm." and course they volunteered left, right and left. Four of us,
- 13:30 Angel, Hackwell – his name's Charlie; I always called him Angel – Clyde Skinner and Peter Tabart and myself out of our eight didn't volunteer. They segregated the volunteers and then they brought a chap down from Berlin who'd been in the Olympic Games and naturally, so they said, that's where he'd been, and he was to give us
- 14:00 exercises. Used to, we had to follow him, he'd run round the compound and the buildings, we went to the end of the buildings around the ends there. But we used to cheat and we used to duck down in between the buildings after he went past, you know. Some would keep going with him, he always had some, but a lot of, he didn't get anything like he.... You had to do these things; you had to pit your wits against them, you know. Well, the day came not long
- 14:30 after and we were told we were going to be exchanged in France. And we were put on a train, train stopped at Salzburg, that's in Austria still, if I remember rightly. Incidentally, Carol saw, I told her about this and she saw that when she was on the tourist thing. And we were given new clothes and they were all English clothes. Of course, it's,
- 15:00 a lot of stores get captured, you know, when there's a retreat on. And it was terrific. Back on the train, we didn't stay there, and we ended up down at Rouen, and that's the cathedral city of France, a beautiful place, and a very, very old hospital, I think they said it had been. They called it the Joan of Arc Tissern [Toussaint?] and we were given documentation
- 15:30 to get on the, tranship to England.

I think I'll have to stop you there. I feel like you've really raced me....

I've got a lot to go, a lot to go.

Yeah. You're in this place, you know, and suddenly going all the way to Austria?

The day before, I've had night; I've had day, day before as well.

- 16:00 Just come like that. You see, until we get to Austria we're nobodies. They could take you out and shoot you, it didn't matter, didn't have to record it. This is the big thing on escaping. In fact there's no reason why they had to capture anybody when they were escaping if they weren't registered, but if they were registered they had to account for the body because they were registered under the Geneva Convention.

- 16:30 **So did that prevent you from trying to escape?**

I only had one time. It was night-time and I trod on a sheet of galvanised iron. The lights started to

swing and we'd, Mac – not, yes, we used to call him Mac; his name was Ian McDonald. We got to the ablution block and gave it away. But I'll come to an escape shortly.

But what was

17:00 **that one? What were you trying to do? Jump over a fence, or...?**

We had a place, we'd seen daylight that we thought we might be able to get through and were going to give it a try, but it was a pie-in-the-sky [fantasy] job really when we looked at it next day or some time afterwards. It was worse than what it looked.

What do you mean; you thought you could see daylight? Where were you?

"Daylight" is just a term when you think you can see [where] you can do something,

17:30 sorry.

I didn't know that. That's a really good term.

Oh yes; that's, a problem you saw: "Gee, I can see daylight now." you know. Haven't you heard that one? I'm sorry.

No, no, it's good.

I lived in a different generation to you.

I'm learning a lot, believe me.

Now, let's get on with this because you're going to be here for breakfast.

OK, so you.... All right, so you

18:00 **only knew the day before that you were going to be moved on? How did you hear this information? Who told you?**

The guard. It would be announced or spread. Now, there's another thing. You've got to take into consideration that you get, there's that many rumours always that you don't believe anything and possibly [it's a] rumour; or you would have heard that there's going to be things but we wouldn't have believed it, you see. The only time to take any notice is when they tell you. And

18:30 you get hardened to living that way, you know, about where you get it all from, you know. "Yes, it's right, I heard...." and of course it doesn't happen.

And Salonika was this, you talked about the mix of nationalities earlier?

We had them all the way through, the nationalities, but they're going to get mixed up more shortly.

But in Salonika you had that mix?

Yes, they were. Whatever the people sent to Greece,

19:00 there was always some of them caught. There was quite hundreds of us originally, and we just split up as we go through. And we haven't, shortly we're going to catch up to the, and [when] we get to France we're going to catch up with the Dunkirk people who got caught there.

OK, just a couple of basic things we need to know: you were a group of eight?

From our unit, yes, and....

19:30 **In Salonika you, just tell me about, you know, did you share the same room or, you know, what was the situation?**

No, you happened to be where you fell in. They count off a hundred; that's it. It's not like anywhere else where you, as I say, you were just a nothing and you didn't have any say in anything. But two things

20:00 came to mind while we've been talking. In forest, Salonika, I was going to get out of Salonika. My memories of Salonika are not good.

20:30 Before we moved there was, I was working with Ramsay and two others, Angel and somebody else, but that meant our sergeant was with one part and the other four privates were on their own. So I said to Ramsay, "One of us has got to stay behind." because with the German Army

21:00 they are very disciplined on rank and everything like that, you know, how they respect their own. So I stayed behind; one of the others went in my place, Ramsay organised it so I don't know exactly what happened, and we followed up on the second load. But what I was going to tell you has gone out altogether, so we'd better get up to Austria.

Well, what I want to know

21:30 **is that you said you were divided a hundred here, a hundred there, so...?**

Sorry, I've just thought of it. It's at Wolfsberg, Stalag 18A. We were taken down the village in lots. We showered; we took our clothes off and showered. They fumigated our clothes and gave them to us, and when we come out of the shower we got into clothes that had been fumigated for lice.

22:00 That's how good they were to us.

So that was it?

And that was something, I can tell you. Anyhow, we get on the train, entrained, and we stop at Salzburg and we get down to Rouen and we had our clothes off, we went through that. We get our documentation and find that the whole thing's called off, so they then transfer us to a British camp or what had been a British camp, I

22:30 understand, before Dunkirk. It was Nissen huts. There was a hospital, hospice sort of place built. It had ablutions, it had kitchens, it had toilets. And it was wintertime over there by this time and we're in with another

23:00 big swag of Englishmen or British that takes in the lot, who were captured on the Dunkirk fiasco. The Rouen racecourse had very nice oak trees round it and these Nissen huts are very cold in wintertime, and they also

23:30 had a little stove to keep them warm in the winter. So they got gangs together, or got a team together, and they started chopping trees down round the racecourse, sorted into blocks, sending it into camp on these little spud wagons, they were, really. They had boxed up side like that on a V, either pulled by a couple of

24:00 horses or a couple of cows I even saw come in one day, and they were delivered to the Nissen hut. And that's when I was put in charge of the wood, because I was a Tasmanian, I understand; that's what somebody told me one day. And there were quite a lot of officers. There was a lord or two, there was an international

24:30 lawyer, there was some Honourables, plenty of Honourables amongst the officers because they were British, "By jove, what!" And I told you this - oh, it was off-record, that's right - I had to make my own axe handles when they got broken, which were splitting, and we were split up and so many pieces were issued out to each hut, you see. There was quite a lot of them. And this particular day hadn't,

25:00 while I was temporarily absent these couple of blokes decided to do some splitting and broke my axe-handle, which I'd spent all the, I think, the day before, just about, making, because I had to shave it with an axe and then smooth it with a piece of glass. Quite a job it was. And I rather blew my top at this bloke, who turned out to be General Harvey, he was the senior officer, but he was only in working

25:30 fatigue clothes. I didn't recognise him. I don't think I even knew who he was then, anyway. And he introduced me to a friend, General Robinson. Well, that was the only time I ever told a general off. Anyhow, he worked there every day, just about. The gang outside had an arrangement with Free French or somebody.

26:00 They hid things that were found and then smuggled onto the cart when the driver wasn't looking, and whatever guard was with him they'd have him soaked up, take his attention. Clothes and tools and things came in. And then inside, members of a committee that were set up, the escape committee, they would take them and paint them.

26:30 Jerry [the German] would make a swap for different things. He never found anything, hardly. But we even had a wireless in there that somebody had built or it might have been, it may not; it may have been one of those crystal sets, I'm not sure, I never saw it. But Harvey'd be in the Nissen sheds splitting wood and somebody would yell out, "Air raid." and up would come Count Somebody-or-other, I did know his name, but

27:00 I'm not sure. He'd have his white gloves on and his monocle, a German count. Harvey'd get the jacket back on again and what's-its-name and he'd go out and they'd salute, the old count would take his glove off and they'd shake hands and they'd have a chat, "By jove, yes." and the formalities, and he'd go and General Harvey would get back to work. But we had an interpreter,

27:30 Major Challenger I think his name was. Anyway, his interpreter was named Catt, C-A-T-T, and of course he was known as "Moggie", naturally. Challenger was the sort of the adjutant of the place, you could say. And he'd go down to the Germans, just, and then he'd scream

28:00 for Catt and yell out for Catt, but they'd let him go inside. They were gentlemen, like he was. And they'd talk away in German. He spoke German fluently. He never let it go, never let on, and he absorbed all the stuff and that came back to the escape committee and they had him over to old Blue and different ones that were escaping reciting, because they couldn't write anything down, might get found. This was quite a circus. I didn't find out a lot of this till later

28:30 when the escapees told me how they did it. And the Germans used to take our boots of a night, every night, and guards would come up and put them in a bag and cart them off. There was about 20 Nissen huts or something like that, 10 down each side. That's a guess; I don't think I ever counted them. And if he was a raw recruit we used to give him the works.

- 29:00 For instance, one time, there was always somebody around that could speak German too amongst the British, and one time, one I remember particularly, brought the boots back and this bloke blew tripe out of him [yelled at him] in German: they hadn't cleaned them. And he didn't know he had to clean them, because he didn't have to clean them either, of course, and he took them back down to guardroom; and then up comes the officer and blew tripe out of us. Another one had, Lofty Arnold, he only had one leg.
- 29:30 We had several with only one leg. A lot were wounded or were, you know, weren't going to see the distance [survive the war]. That's how we got on Repat [Repatriation pension]. And the guard brought them back and counted the boots out and he's one short. "Where's the other boot?" Lofty's lying in bed up the other end of the Nissen hut. So great arguing went on and [they] sent him off to find the boot. Of course there wasn't another boot; Lofty only had one leg. And these sorts of things, we were up to tricks,
- 30:00 playing up all the time. Now, through the wireless, I understand that's how it happened, how I was told it, they got in touch with Britain so we were in touch, they could somehow get it out. And they conned [tricked] the Germans into changing the store. I think it was wood wool store, what they call wood wool. I don't know if you're familiar with it? Used to be what used
- 30:30 to be in Tasmania used to pack in the apple cases, stop the apples from getting bruised on the wood. So we emptied, quite a lot of palliasses were emptied - that's the thing you sleep on, mattress - in a heap. That was right. But we had tools, we had a box of tools in our, I'll tell you the story of that first. We got Red Cross parcels down there and we had a cardboard box
- 31:00 and put it up on a shelf made in the Nissen hut and we pinched blankets out of the store - we didn't; some thieves did - and distributed them round so we, instead of only having one, we had two, a lot of us, I think most of us; I did, anyhow. And we hung it up at the door so that you pushed a curtain aside when you came in. That was to keep the cold air out till you shut the door, you see. So they had a raid one day, the Germans
- 31:30 raided everyone, and they were looking for one thing and that was blankets on the beds. They pushed the blanket aside, came in, counted them, checked all our beds, took the surplus blankets, pushed the blanket hanging over the door to keep the what's-its-name out, out; and sitting up on the thing - and of course they were German, they obviously didn't understand English - was a Red Cross box with "Tools" written on it. And we're there, "Ooooh,
- 32:00 gee." you know. They were very focussed on everything they were told to do, but not otherwise, I think. Yeah, we got back to this wood wool. I got the word to go up to Geoff Taylor, the electrician's hut. We weren't allowed out of our own huts of a night; but this night in case I was wanted and the escape was on. Now, in the meantime -
- 32:30 there was a long fence, you see, and then there's, it's about as high as this ceiling and then there's three rows of barbed wire and then there's two rows on top of it, and there's a guard the other side of it, so they'd been educating the guard to keep him down that end talking, saying nice things to him, that sort of thing, somebody, in German, you know - and they managed to cut the main wires in the fence,
- 33:00 And I don't know how they did it, but whether they did it that way or not.... Then they were going to put greatcoats on the wire and push them down and a certain number were to escape. Now, it was only limited, I just forget how many. Anyhow, I remember going up and somebody lit the what's-its-name and a plane came
- 33:30 over and sirens went all round in Rouen, I don't know how many planes came it was, the aeroplane was, and sirens went up, flames went up, distract all the attention. Escapees took off - and of course when they'd cut the wire they put it back and wound burnt silver paper round, which was the same colour as the barbed wire, just about, and it wasn't noticed -
- 34:00 put their coats on. The ones who were supposed to go, three, one of them had only one leg, he went and Angel went, our bloke, one of my blokes, yeah, that was all in that lot. Angel, he got back to Italy from Rouen, which is a pretty big track from North of France down into Italy, got
- 34:30 on a submarine and taken back and he was, he stayed in the army, I think, joined the unit, I think, because they stayed there for a while. He got killed under a truck after he got discharged: he jacked it up and it fell on him. The three that weren't supposed to go, I don't know if any others went, we got those back up into Lamsdorf 8B, next camp we go to. And
- 35:00 the bloke with the wooden leg, he broke his plaster getting out, and of course originally the last one out was to try and pull the coats out, you know, and they put them in a wheelbarrow. This is the story they told me, right from the horse's mouth. And they went to go across one of the bridges, a lot of bridges in Rouen, and they saw guards at the other end so they turned the wheelbarrow around and come back
- 35:30 and went around another way, and they met a chap who said he was a Free Frenchman and he was going to help them. He took them home, settled them in and got in touch with the Germans to come and arrest them and that's how they ended up in Lamsdorf, or that's how I got the story, because I got to know a lot of them because I was in charge of the wood and they had to come and, they came to me for their wood and that sort of thing. The others got to

- 36:00 England: two officers or three officers, they got to England. Now, the Germans then decided they were going to shift us out to somewhere else, so I got on a train and we moved out and across France, into Germany, up into Poland, Stalag 8B Lamsdorf, Upper Silesia, Poland.
- 36:30 Well, that was the purpose-built camp. It's well and truly believed that there was, 10,000 it could hold and there was 20,000 attached to the plant. I read a book by another chap not so long ago, a Tasmanian, and he had the same figures, that of the 20,000 and 10,000. Now, the
- 37:00 Germans are very organised people. The compounds had four dormitory buildings, A and B ends and A and B end and it was all joined up to one building, but each building was, but that was the ablution area and A went to it and B went to it. There was four of those, which held a thousand men.
- 37:30 There was 120, there was 250 in each building, 120, 120, 120, you know. It had a toilet in it of 40 seats, going into a big concrete swimming pool underneath, and that was pumped out every so often by the German bloke to put on the fields as fertiliser, nothing wasted.
- 38:00 We were locked in every night but I was in the A end of the first one inside the gate, and in that one the Germans had a little office, the German in charge of the compound did. He was equivalent to a corporal, I think, old Bok. We had a chap from Western Australia, Jack Rosser, who was called "the German". The lock used to be picked every night
- 38:30 and they could read off who was, who had to go down on working parties and let them know the next day. Now, of course you couldn't safely get out because the windows were shuttered, hooked up on the outside, and the door was locked. And in the end of each one of them was a sawn-off barrel for toiletry.
- 39:00 Now, they'd patrol the thing by dogs of a night. Now, the compounds all taken from the kitchen in the area. Nearly everything came in in what they call keybals [german word]. It's like a copper, only it's made out of steel, and two things and you put poles with things in slipped in the handles, and chap that end and chap that end,
- 39:30 and eight of those would come in for each end, A, B, A, B, A, B, and that'd be the soup for the day; and the bread would come in and it was generally around about seven to a loaf, which was, they'd call it potato flour. Goodness knows what it was, I'd never seen anything like it. But there was one good thing about it: you could toast it and scrape it off and make coffee with it with the scrapings. It was quite good. Of course we managed
- 40:00 to tap into the electricity, we had chaps that could do anything just about, and boil water and blow all the fuses around the place, but that didn't matter. We found an excuse for that somehow. They never got onto it, anyhow. From that camp people would go out to work. See, it was no trouble to get out to work. Nobody wanted to go, of course, or a lot of people didn't. Now,
- 40:30 you're down to go out to work but you don't want to go, but you know Colin [interviewer] wants to go out to work so you become Colin and Colin becomes you, so out he goes. He gets back into camp again as you, but he - hang on, I'm getting it tangled up. You swap and then they swap and then he swaps back again
- 41:00 and he comes back and he's somebody else and goes out as somebody else, and it gets about four times removed from the poor bloke who went out first. He comes back into camp and he can't find out, he can't come back to who he was because he can't find out who he was, who's got him. Look, there's blokes going around saying, "Do you know So-and-so?" "No, he's out working." "Oh, I'm him, or I was him before I swapped with so-and-so."
- 41:30 and this sort of thing went on. We got a shower about twice a year, I think, something like that. We were marched down. The compounds were very orderly. And then we got to, we didn't get any Red Cross parcels up there but we lived very frugally, I'll tell you, mainly sauerkraut, potatoes, and everything nearly was in a soup form. Then we got the Canadians in from Dieppe. You've probably read about the Dieppe fiasco,
- 42:00 when they landed, and what's-its-name was going....

Tape 6

- 00:35 The Canadians that get captured at the failure of their landing at Dieppe were credited with tying the hands of a lot of the Germans and throwing them off the cliff, that was the story that went round, so the Germans decided they'd put them in handcuffs when they got them up in the prison camp,
- 01:00 and the Canadians very smartly worked out a way of picking, or undoing it. And the funniest one I ever heard about this was the German officers were making an inspection or entourage, and they walked into the ablution blocks area between the two what's-its-names and there was a Canadian stripped naked with his handcuffs on. And they scratched their head and questioned him

- 01:30 and he said, "No, no, no, I'm sorry I can't tell you this. This is my living." or something to that effect. They picked him. A good story. But all the time they got round all the time with their handcuffs unlocked and wearing their overcoats, they just had their hands in the pocket when they saw a German, but they didn't have their cuffs on. The cuffs were just hooked onto the pockets too, and they weren't handicapped in any way.
- 02:00 One particular one, Hank, I got to know quite well and he was the only chap I ever knew that used to crawl under the wire from compound to compound. There was one, I don't know, I never had one, but there was two or three books somehow got into the camp, and of course Hank was a great reader and he'd find where they were and he'd go under the wire, the dividing wire between the compounds, till he got caught. And he got
- 02:30 caught. The guard they had in their compound, different to ours, and one day they decided they'd fix him. Somebody got some cigarettes from somewhere, probably sent in a private parcel I should imagine, and the guard turned up, arrested Hank. They all crowded around. And the guards always rode pushbikes, and of course there's long
- 03:00 distance between, you know, to get A to B, compound to compound, I should say. And anyhow, they got around and, while he'd locked the gate up, and they crowded round him and they slipped some cigarettes into his coat pocket. It was all planned. Hank gets on the pushbike and takes off, rides down to the guy down in the guardhouse and gives himself up and the guard comes
- 03:30 running down again. It's a long way to go, there's about two or three compounds to go past, and when they asked him how he'd come to come down he said, "I gave him some cigarettes and he said, 'You ride the bike and I'll walk.'" And as soon as the guard got down there and arrested him, he searched him and found cigarettes in his pocket. That happened. We played up as much as we could. I got caught,
- 04:00 yeah, Bok caught me. Now, I was telling you - this is where I interrupt myself - I was telling you stuff came in and we used to nominate a confidence man and as soon as he got fraternising too much with the Germans we'd sack him and nominate somebody else within the barrack, you see. And this particular period I'm confidence man, and I had a bit to do with Bok and we could understand one another,
- 04:30 and Clyde Skinner was a tinsmith by trade and he made a little thing, a little furnace out of a couple of tins and a bootlace for a belt, the fan, and you put only had to put about as much wood as not much more than a matchbox in it and blow on it and you'd get.... We picked some, I had some fat hen growing outside the wire we got and you could cook it, you see. And I had some of this and I'm cooking it
- 05:00 in my tin mug I ate out of, and it was forbidden, and Bok made a raid but he didn't catch me. He called everybody on parade, the whole thousand of us, to find out whose it was, and then he confined it down to our barrack, our A and B. "Now," he said, "you'll stay here all night till the bloke gives himself up." Well, I was on good terms with old Bok
- 05:30 and he used to give me the key to unlock the compound to get, go round to collect the food from the keepers and take it back and lock up again and then just give him the key back again and get out of his what's-its-name, and I said, "Oh well, I'll do it." "Don't you do it. We'll stay here all night, don't do it. Don't give him the satisfaction." I said, "Oh, yeah." so I stepped forward you said and old Bok said, "You."
- 06:00 I had to go and see him in the morning, see, that was evening, so when I went in next morning in German, I could speak a bit of German then, (in German: "daider gees Bok ishfeeld, sillablewacka arebyden" [phonetic]) and he said, I said, "Very good." I said, (in German: "ahh shlavenmakendye"), "Plenty of sleep now." no work, you see.
- 06:30 And he's looking at me, see, and I said, "This is going to be a holiday." sort of, you know, inferring it was, and all of a sudden he said, "You'll stay here and work." He had, the night before he said, "Dratak." and what do they call it? Anyway, three days in the boom, you see. And in the boom, where the boom was, was a what's-its-name, there was a well, and I'd seen them,
- 07:00 they'd spend all day pulling water out of the well, emptying it and another bucket in and a bloke standing over him making him do it, you see, so he told me I was going to stay and work, and that was what I wanted. They fell for it. When I told him I reckoned I was in there for a holiday, not have to work for him, he gave me the punishment and booted me out to stay and work.

So why did you want to work?

Because I didn't want to go to the boom because I knew what they did.

- 07:30 So I told him it was a good thing I was going to the boom and he, course I didn't have to stay and work for him, and he said, "You're not going to the boom, you'll stay here and work for me." Yep, what I'm telling you is fair dinkum. And that's about all of Salonika we'd better have. I went sick. I'm down to go out in a working party so, "Righto, I'd better go sick." and I used to black out occasionally.
- 08:00 I only had to lean too far forward and I'd just black out. So Canadians got cigarette parcels in and Hank had given me some cigarettes. I went down and I smoked like mad till just about before I, you know, you

lined up and you'd go in. So I raced round the compound, the building, and I went in and there was German doctors and British doctors,

- 08:30 and the first thing they said to me was, "Put your arms out." I was standing up, you see. I put my arms out in front of me all right but I collapsed to the floor and I didn't know anything about it. I was out without, you know, no act. So then they examined me. Now, the orderly told me this so I don't know whether it's right or not: he told me, "They reckoned you wouldn't last three months. You were suffering from protein beri-beri." whatever that is.
- 09:00 I know what beri-beri is, but I hadn't heard of protein, must have been lack of protein which caused that. The next thing I knew I'm on exchange. We had heard rumours of an exchange and I was on it, and a big trainload of us were put on a train. We're down to Dijon, the train travelled mostly of a night,
- 09:30 not a lot of time in daylight. Any time, morning or night, there was a big air raid on. Boy-oh-boy, did they bomb, you know. The carriages were going up and down on the railway lines and they were quite a way away. There were searchlights everywhere. Never saw a show like it in all my life. Then to Lyons, Dijon, down to Marseille, in the south of France now, and we got on a, that was
- 10:00 at night, I think it was about midnight or something like that, we got on a boat and we went to Barcelona in Spain, was two ships actually and one with the hospital cases and the other one like fit ones, and we pulled up beside the wharf and their ship pulled up that side of the wharf and what happens then? The thing falls through
- 10:30 or sights a hitch and we're there up on what's-its-name. "How the heck are we going to escape from this one? If we dive in here we can get onto the pier." and all, you know, blokes were all, I couldn't swim so I didn't, but we did all sorts of scheming. Saw some of the most ragged army I ever saw in my life. The Spaniards came down dressed in all different things, all had a pistol on their belt, and I remember the
- 11:00 queen of society came down apparently and there was one on, one had a cloak, one woman. The women came down. That was worth seeing, too. The officer would salute and they'd take her hand, kiss her hand and salute again and we'd cheer them on, you know. We're up on the ship and they're down. Then one of them came down and she said to her chauffeur, "Off." and he came back with a different cloak and it wasn't the right one, and she stamped her foot
- 11:30 and away he went again and he come back with another one. We enjoyed this, you know, it was as good as being in the pictures. Anyhow, they fixed everything up. There's the wharf, we're here. We come round this way and get on this ship, our two ships here, and they go round that way and get on there, the ships that we came over from. They went out in the evening. The whole of
- 12:00 Barcelona Harbour was lit up. There was people singing and Germans were singing, several German songs, and the last one was Auf Wiedersehen. It was beautiful; it was magnificent, just like being at the opera. And away they sailed. We went out the next morning. There was one man and two kids to see us off and I understand it was Sir Samuel Hoare, who was the ambassador, and his two boys.
- 12:30 Written underneath the end of the pier when we turned around at the end was, "Viva la." that was that big, "Viva la Churchill." When I got to Egypt I read and it was exactly recorded exactly the opposite way round. They had, they went out quietly and we went out with a what's-its-name, couldn't believe it. On the ship, this was interesting, there was hammocks, we all slept in hammocks.
- 13:00 Must have taken about two days, I think, to get to Alexandria, but the Spaniards gave nine bottles of beer and one bottle of wine to each 10, and I was with all Kiwis [New Zealanders] and I had the bottle of wine, and I can tell you what: I got in the bunk and fell out the other, the hammock and fell out the other side. They eventually got me into bed
- 13:30 all right. Incidentally, talking about, people's minds go a bit, when I was in, I'll go back a bit to Corinth: when I was in Corinth I was walking around the compound, we'll call it the compound, it was a big area actually, and there was some Israelis, Jews, and they dug a place about that deep and they were sleeping in that. See, we were all sleeping out on the ground,
- 14:00 or most of us were. And they invited me in and gave me some plums, and there was an old Jew, not an old Jew, he must have been nearly 40, anyhow, we chatted away in English and later on I met him and he started off, he said, "I thought you were one of us." "No, no." I said, "I'm...."
- 14:30 When I was in, got to Corinth, not Corinth, to Rouen, one of the Poms raced up to me and he started talking to me and I said, "What are you on about?" and he said, "What's wrong with you?" he said, "You're my brother in law. Don't you know you're married to my sister, what's wrong with you?" I said, "I'm not your flaming brother in law." and he was round the bend,
- 15:00 not me. When I, just before we got on this thing at Lamsdorf somebody got, I don't know what it was, mallit [?] or something and they made some Australian badges, the rising sun from, made a mould out of something, and I got hold of one of these and put it on, only had the one, and put it on
- 15:30 my collar; and Tony Clark and a Kiwi came up and he blew tripe out of me: "What's wrong with you? Ashamed of the fern, are you?" I had a fair idea what was coming. "Well." he said, "I've only known you for a couple of years." he said, "I thought you were one of us." Now, to top all this off, I walked down - I

remember telling Carol about this – I walked round the block in Launceston one day, it's only happened the once, and three different people spoke to me and each of them called me

16:00 a different name, so I've got a very common face in this universe. Where did we get to, where are we?

You were still on the train.

Yes, we're exchanged. We sailed to Alexandria.

Do you know anything about, because I haven't heard anything about the exchange of prisoners before, do you know anything about the way it was set up or

16:30 **how it came about?**

No, I only took part in it but I don't know how; it was all done diplomatically, I dare say. There's a lot goes on between countries that's never put, and we notice that going on even today, don't we, the enemy becomes our friend and so forth? Look at Turkey and England and all these other countries. So we get to Alexandria and we disembark and there, there was something else I'll never forget

17:00 the rest of my life. We all line up off the pier and up on the road and there was a lot of English service girls come along and other, probably Red Cross, some of them, and that sort of thing, and they talked to us; you know, just to hear another woman speaking your own language was wonderful. The whole jolly lot of us fell in love with them, I can tell you now. We talked about it for days.

17:30 Gee, didn't it sound good! See, we hadn't much, well, some of us since we left home over three years before, and speaking their own what's-its-name and it was music. Right, get away from that. They put us in tents and we, this is late

18:00 October, I think, I'll have a look at the date later, and they had Sudanese on guard and those blighters can see in the dark. Anybody coming back into camp after dark wouldn't see him till they got a rifle jabbed in him or something like that, you know.

18:30 We had leave. One of the first leaves, Ramsay and I went to – Clyde and Peter, was only the four, five; there had originally been five there, that's right; Angel....

Angel escaped?

Yeah, but there was to be nine of us originally, I must have miscounted. Anyhow, we'll forget that.

What happened to the others?

19:00 They went out on working parties, four of them or three? Ramsay, no, was only three went out on the working party. Five of us went, stayed together as far as Rouen. Yes, the Red Cross, through the Red Cross, that's where we heard, were told or invited, we were invited to

19:30 go to a dinner [that] was being put on by the governor of something or other, an Englishman anyhow, some barracks he was a governor of in, must have been in Alex[andria], yeah, so we got talked into it. And when we went, there was, I suppose there was about, somewhere about 30. There was South Africans, there was New Zealanders, there was mainly surplus people from different

20:00 countries, and where there were odd sexes there was female partner, male, you know, sort of thing, and there was this great big banquet laid out and it was about five courses. Now, you can just imagine: we'd been eating with a bowl and a spoon. And I'm left-handed and I'm sitting down and I looked at these: one, two, three, four,

20:30 five, I'll never forget it, one, two, three, four, five and I've got to swap the whole blasted lot of them over, and I've got all these people and I'm self-conscious as anything. Never forget that; but I got through it. I don't know how I didn't faint at one stage. And they entertained us, and then Ramsay wanted me to go to the museums

21:00 with him, so we went to the mineral museums, we went to the King Faroud museum, we did all sorts of things. And then I walked through a riot and that was the only time I was ever on my own. Peter and myself and Clyde, we'd bought tickets in a lottery and it was to be drawn the next day or the day after. Anyhow, the day after it was to be drawn

21:30 we decided we'd go and see if we'd won anything, and we couldn't find it so we actually split up because a lot of streets, you know, going in all directions and they all look the same. But we were going to meet at the building that stood out, tall building. And I got up a street and I decided I'd go back, and going back I took a wrong turn, and I'm coming down

22:00 and come over a bit from the rise and there's all the noise in the world, that was what attracted me down it, I suppose, and there's Arabs all across the street and they're bashing the windows of jeeps in and any British stuff and I suppose, goodness knows how many there were, but I thought, "This is worth looking at." you know, "Nothing's going to happen." but that's me.

22:30 And first one I saw I hid it to him, saw it as good day and then if you go on you say, "Goofarlick [phonetic], how are you?" "Mob suit, mob suit, very well." sort of thing or equivalent, you know, and I

knew quite a bit more than that actually. And anyhow, and you grin, you must smile. That will disarm you anywhere, help a person anywhere. And course you automatically do when you see something funny

23:00 like this, windscreens and side windows getting bashed in. I come out the other end and Poms grabbed me, the redcoats, the military police were following it but they weren't doing a darn thing about it. They said, "Where did you come from?" I said, "Through them." "How did you get through?" I said, "Walked." you know. But I look back on it, you know, I was as silly as a two-bob watch, I suppose. But nobody's going to touch you if you're not

23:30 showing aggression, as a rule. You can't pick a fight with a person who won't fight. You can't pick an argument if they won't argue. One-sided, isn't it? Anyhow, we moved from there up to Palestine. We saw the Church of All Nations; it's supposed to be in, if I remember rightly, in the Garden of Gethsemane; went to the great mosque there in Jerusalem.

24:00 This is up in Palestine now, or in Israel it is.

Can I just ask you what officially were you meant to be doing?

Waiting for a ship to come from Australia to pick us up. And nobody owned us, that's what we were, and we waited there for almost two, from the end of October to just at the beginning of January

24:30 of the next year.

What year was it?

1943, October '43 to '44. I was two and a half years a prisoner, yeah. And we saw the Wailing Wall, we saw all the things to do, and then we went up to Sarafan and I rode a mule in a hurdle race. They asked five of us Australians, and a bloke called Bob Smith

25:00 from Western Australia rode one and I rode one. You rode them bareback, stirrup thing to hang onto and a ring mount. As I say, there was still a bit of cavalry around. That was the training up there, they followed the horse. The horse jumped the hurdles and your mule jumped then. They were only about that high. But I didn't know that the race was only halfway around the course. I won it and kept going and the mule crashed

25:30 on the next hurdle and I came off and I had to walk all the way back, half this darn racecourse. Was I sore! Bareback it was, but it was fun. What else did we get up to there?

Who were you with, who was the group?

Ex-prisoners of war, just ex POWs. We got in our own little groups but there was all other, we joined up with other groups.

26:00 We were entertained by the Mayor of Tel Aviv to orange juice in a big marquee, and that was quite good because there was an old nurse there - gawd, she'd be 40 too, I reckon, and might have been 45 even - and she said, "You boys, don't you take any notice of these girls. They're only after boys." We thought she was an old dragon.

26:30 Now, I forget where we camped up there. We saw the old camps and they were kibbutzim, that's, you know, Jewish camps. They were terrific. We went while we were in Jerusalem, Harry Forrester was with me there and he was another mate, and we're sitting in a little park just off the footpath, just a small park.

27:00 I don't know, we were probably eating something, I don't know what we were doing. Anyhow the Jew joined us, Jewish man joined us, and he said, "You boys interested in making some money?" or something like that, I forget just the words he used. And he put a proposition to us: if we married a Jewish girl - there was a lot of Jewish men in Australia but not enough brides - if we'd marry one, and

27:30 it was only marry, it wouldn't be consummated in any way, but she'd have a passport then to get, as our wife, to get to Australia and we'd divorce, we wouldn't see her again and we'd be paid for it. And we said, "No, thanks." That was the strength of it. It was a longer story than that, but that was Harry and I. And anyhow eventually came, we were to,

28:00 went over to Suez and we were, the ship had arrived. The Wanganella had arrived from Australia and we were to get aboard it, so we lined up on the wharf. I'll never forget this one, either. Some people are lucky, and I told you I was born lucky. A corporal came down and he said, "I want." I think it was five, it was either five or seven, "corporals, volunteers."

28:30 and of course I volunteered, Harry volunteered and several others; took us up, up, up, and there's a glassed-in area up on top. And he was a corporal and he was in charge of who went in and allocation, and he said he knew how hard a corporal has to work; he picked corporals to go in. And we had deluxe accomodations you know, it was the prize; it was

29:00 all the way back to Australia. We called in at Colombo on the way back.

So why did he choose...?

Because he was a corporal and he decided corporals are about the most overworked blokes in the army, and he could only have either five or seven berthed up there and he decided to give it to corporals.

So what was it like?

- 29:30 It was terrific. It was, you know, it was deluxe. I don't know where the others were. We didn't worry about them. They'd be in cabins, I suppose, or, it was a hospital ship; I don't know what the set-up was on them. But we had a lovely trip back to Australia. We called into Colombo and I brought some boxes of tea, at least one box and some other presents for when we got home; and we called into Fremantle.
- 30:00 And we're back to Melbourne and it's now, don't know whether it was January or February, it's still January, that's right. They put us into, I don't know how many went, but I was taken to Stonnington and checked out and then we came back to Tasmania
- 30:30 on the boat, us four Tasmanians, that's the sergeant, myself and the two, Clyde and Peter, to Launceston. We were entrained down to Brighton, I don't know if we stayed overnight there or not, then home on leave. Then we went up and saw our CO, who was
- 31:00 now a colonel or lieutenant colonel, the original one that took us away and we were his musketeers. Ramsay was a Launceston boy and he was still in Launceston (UNCLEAR) Hobart and we used to go up there. We used to meet all sorts of officials. He always introduced us as "his boys". And what happened next?
- 31:30 Peter decided to get, not Peter, Clyde decided to get married. He had a girlfriend before he went away but he didn't know how serious it was, and she got well and truly in with his family. His father was the chief fire officer, he lived on the fire premises for Tasmania and, in Hobart,
- 32:00 and, well, they had, the wedding was all organised by the time he got home. He didn't know he was that serious about her and he said, "Gee, I didn't know I was going to get married." Anyhow he went along with it. And I was groomsman, Peter was best man and every time we went back on leave we celebrated it. I can't tell you this one little bit, it's off the record, the next bit, about the fire engine.
- 32:30 I used to go down – yes, I will. I used to go down to the fire station quite often and I'd go home on a fire engine. I was starting to make my name for myself at this stage of the game. Sorry, I've jumped ahead of myself, and, doesn't matter. And I'd ring the bell, you see, till the neighbours complained,
- 33:00 early hours of the morning, the fire engine. Anyhow, back to Brighton. That's right, I went back to Brighton for a short period, few days. They sent me off with a revolver and two prisoners to deliver, I think it was Conara I had to deliver them to Conara. I ended up at Conara, anyway. This bloke had escaped several times, or had previously escaped when they were trying to
- 33:30 escort him. And I had another chap with me, there was two of us and two of them, and I had the pistol and he's looked at me and he said, "I'm going to escape." I said, "Are you? Good luck to you, you'll need it." "Oh." "Yes." I said, "I've got a pistol and I'm going to shoot you." He said, "You wouldn't do that to me, you wouldn't do that to me." I said, "Where I come from that's what they did to us and I can't see anything wrong with it."
- 34:00 He didn't even try to escape. I delivered him. I was the only one who'd delivered him. And I wouldn't have shot him, either. He didn't know.

Where was he from?

He was Tasmanian but he was up, he'd taken up to the boob [jail] up there. They'd deliver him up to the boob.

What job?

I don't know. I always got a job. Every time they looked at me they gave me something to do. Right, back to

- 34:30 Melbourne. They gave us armbands to wear and we were to go to Ballarat to the convalescent camp, just Ramsay and I. Peter and Clyde had got married and Peter had gone back to Queenstown and he wasn't going back. Now, Ballarat Convalescent was where they'd brought the psychologists down and any other bod [person] that wanted to examine us, and we were
- 35:00 physically examined and psychologically examined but they didn't know whether to declare us sane or insane, I don't think, the way we carried on. Then we went to get on the train. We had a carriage reserved for us. There was only about four or something in a carriage, I think it was, and the train was full up and three service girls couldn't get in, couldn't get one,
- 35:30 walking up and down and looked in and, "Anybody...?" So I invited them in. We said, "Well, as far as we know this is a reserved coach." and other people are in.... Three to go, and they were residents – one of them was a resident; I don't know about the others – and she told us her parents had a tennis court and it wasn't far from the convalescent camp, gave us the phone number to ring up, so that was good. So we get down there and we

- 36:00 gets our dinner, then ding-dong bell, Ramsay, myself and Harold, that's right, it was decided we'd try the tennis court out. Nobody would ring up so I rang them up, and I said, "I'll ring it up." and we got the lady of the house and she'd heard about us and I said, "What about some girls to play with?" and didn't she freeze on the other end of the phone!
- 36:30 Bad, saying "play with"; I meant "play tennis with", you know. Anyhow, it was quiet and I thought, "Gee, what have I done?" Tone changed, everything, you know, from when she answered. "No." And anyhow we went. I got into some trouble over this, too: I went to collect the tennis racquets from camp.
- 37:00 They'd sent an officer down from New Guinea was going to tame us, we'd been playing up that much, and the tennis racquets were round at his house. He told me where the house was but he didn't give me permission to go, and I walked all the way round the lake and got them and got into a bit of trouble over that, but that's all right. We went down and they had decided - I think it was two days later or something, it might have been longer - they had
- 37:30 decided that they were going to invite us in for tea. Tennis, so we had our game of tennis amongst ourselves, and we were invited in. They were a very wealthy family, we didn't know. They had four cars; one of them was on producer gas. There was grandma, the two daughters in the family and the parents, and there was a big table in a big room, was a grand piano in that room there, we saw the door open.
- 38:00 And we sat round the table, the four of us, and there was grandma, missus, the father and the youngest daughter, Midgie and us four, and grandma said to Ram, he was sitting alongside of her, that side of her, and I was sitting this side of her, and she turned to Ramsay and she said, "And what do you think of the Americans?" and of course they'd already told us what
- 38:30 they thought, more or less, in the conversation. Ramsay praised them up pretty well; got out of it, anyhow. Goes round to Harold and he took up the same thing, come round to "Dingy" [Bell] and he did the same thing and, when she got round to me, like an idiot I said, "I think they stink." Well, the old man clapped his hands. He said, "We've only ever entertained American officers here. Thank goodness I've got a mate." After I said it I thought, "You idiot." I said to myself.
- 39:00 I said, "What I was thinking after listening to all this other baloney?" Well, you know, I became grandma's favourite for some reason, and after that we dined down there a few more times. We even went down and played tennis and Midge used to play with us and that sort of thing. And the daughter that was in the services,
- 39:30 it was later on, we won't jump that far. And while we were there they gave us PT [physical training] instruction and we laid on the ground, wanted push-ups. We didn't do them, the blokes used to shoot through all the time. And it was very, there was only about three corporals and we were on duty every third or fourth day, you see,
- 40:00 with blokes being arrested for misbehaving. You'd take them in, you'd fear what was ahead and you'd tell them what to say, sort of business. And I remember one particular couple ran for bashing a chap up and the story was that, and this was the story they told, too, they told me and he told him: this chap, they met in the pub and had a few beers and he invited them home.
- 40:30 And his wife went crook about them being there and a big row started, and he attacked her, so they beat him up, and she called the police and they, of course, they were up for that; but, you know, it'll take too long to tell it all. Psychoanalysing: I'll tell you this one. Everybody got psycho

Tape 7

- 00:31 **You said your brother speaks four languages. It sounds like you've got a bit of an ear for languages yourself. Did you pick up much of the languages as you travelled around?**

As my wife will confirm, I'm a mimic.

You do good accents. But what about, how much German can you speak, and

- 01:00 **French and Arabic?**

I had enough to teach the French working on the wire, "Parlez-vous français, monsieur?" "Oui, where are you going?" I said, "Ne comprehend, ne comprehend." and he'd go "whoof". And the German enough, you know; understood more than what I spoke, you know. "Ich frue kranken" [phonetic], "I feel sick", and that sort of thing, you know, things to, like that.

- 01:30 I learnt to say "good day" in Arabic, "sieda" [phonetic], in Yugoslav, "dobradam" [phonetic], and a few words with lots of meaning in that. French of course, "Bonjour, monsieur, mademoiselle",

- 02:00 and all the English ones and Welsh. All you had to do was say you didn't understand them and you were right. Actually it fascinated me, but Scottish was the worst, you know, "Ach, my God, tre na day."

What was that?

02:30 You're talking to, like what you're saying, "Go and throw yourself in the river", you know, "Ach." what they say, we say "Ouch!", and.... But I was more of a mimic than anything.

You had Indian POWs in the camp too?

Yes, we had Sikhs and we had, what were they?

03:00 I've forgotten what they were but there was companies of those. And of course we had South Africans and Africans, dark Africans, Springboks and just was a great, great variety of people, mainly some

03:30 joined up from European countries. We had Dutch. And I met a Dane with the same name as me.

Were your family Danes?

My grandfather was born in Denmark and, well, you know army, they come from all parts of the world, especially the way the British Empire was. I mean, the Empire was spread all around the world, and they went in.

04:00 **I noticed there was a story which I don't think you told us about. You had a pet cat?**

That was Indians, they did. They had this darn cat, you know. They were in the place, next billet to us sort of thing, and they'd come out and they'd feel the cat and they'd stroke the cat and they'd feel the cat, and then one day the skin's pegged out on the what's-its-name and, "Oh, we eat him for fat when he got good."

04:30 They had to put a bit of meat on him first, they reckon, yeah.

Just got another one or two quick questions about that time, just to sort of fill a few gaps. I was wondering if,

05:00 **you said that there was, you had a wireless at some point in the camps: was that...?**

That was in Rouen. Well, we must have had some because we could, they would receive and the message would go round. I only presumed we must have had a wireless or a crystal set or something, but there was communications, I don't know, it could have been by some other way. But the story was we could receive.

05:30 But I do know there was all sorts of clever people there and they, for instance - gee, I didn't tell you about one of the escapes, did I? When they shifted us out, two officers stayed behind, a lieutenant and a captain. Now, how they came to stay behind

06:00 was in the middle of this hospice part there was a stove on tiles. Well, they shifted this thing aside of a night and worked by filling up Red Cross boxes with the dirt. They dug a room out underneath that they could hide in. Somewhere along the line they got a disused old wind-up gramophone and somebody made

06:30 a fan and put on that; they took that down to keep the air stirred up. The story I got from one that got caught and came back to us, a lieutenant, and when we went to board the train we were two people short and, after this other escape had taken not long before, they counted us and recounted us and, well, they just had to go without them.

07:00 Some, I suppose it'd be a month, probably, later, it was weeks anyhow, later the lieutenant turned up at the camp and I happened to know him enough to have a chat or two with him beforehand, and he told me the story. When, the night before they moved out

07:30 they went down underground, got in the thing and everything was set, and they stayed down there for several days. So he decided to come up and just lifted up, aside, and pushed the stove aside and then get out. Well, he got out and somehow or other he must have bumped the stove pipe, it was off balance too far and it fell down, just the pipe, and next thing he heard was a German coming in so he dived under a

08:00 couch they made for the sick ones to sit on. He said, "I'm sure my head was out one end and my feet out the other." he said it felt that way. And this chap came in and he scratched his head, he said, "Fairy." something about the fairies, because a lot of people are superstitious and he was there on his own, apparently, just keeping an eye on things. And anyhow he eventually went out so he said, "I got back down again."

08:30 It was either the next day or pretty soon after, the two, that's right, the two of them were still there. They decided to get out so they put a plank across the wire and got out, and they split because two of them missing would be suspicious even though they had partly civilian clothes on. And he said, "I couldn't make the rendezvous."

09:00 he said, "I got lost." He said, "I went on for several days and." he said, "I was getting nowhere so I gave myself up at an outpost." He said, "You know what they said to me? They said, "You're going to the Russian Front whether you like it or not. You don't get out of it by making out you're a flaming Pommy."

or an Englishman rather, because he could speak German fairly well. And he said, "I had all the trouble in the world convincing them."

09:30 They reckoned I was trying to pull one [deceive them] to stop going to the Russian Front. "Anyhow." he said, "There I am." and that's the story he told me and I quite believe him. He had no reason not to tell me the truth.

You mentioned there was superstitions, was that amongst the POWs?

No, that was the Germans.

What examples of that did you hear?

10:00 You get superstitions amongst our people the same as them. Just little superstitions, you know, I can't recall any at the moment. But that was one; this bloke scratched his head and thought the place was haunted by fairies [who] knocked the pipe down, as he told it.

So did you have any involvement in those

10:30 **escape committees that you...?**

Not on the committee; my involvement was purely to make sure the some of the stuff coming in wasn't unloaded at the wrong moment, and [to be] put on call at the, up at the electrician bloke on the night of the big escape. That's the only involvement I had. It was very secretive, the escape.

11:00 **What exactly do you mean by your unloading or the timing of that, what...?**

Well, the stuff came in on wagons with the wood, you see. Now, you had to get it. We didn't even want our own people to see this because....

What stuff?

Clothing and tools.

So civvy [civilian]?

Yeah, civilian stuff, yeah. Not a lot of it but just the odd items, odd items, and they build up, you see,

11:30 and the committee kept them. They were preparing the escape. Challenger, as I say, was going down there, couldn't speak a word of German, had to call for his dolmich [?] or the interpreter all the time, Moggie, Catt, while he just sat there and soaked up everything they told him about where the troops were, when they were discussing them and all this sort of thing. And this went on for months, for weeks, months, in fact, and of course that was all

12:00 came back and given. I didn't tell you just about, or did I, about the day I went for a walk around the what's-its-name with the lord, a baron? And a Pommy sergeant charged me when I got back. He said, "You know who that was?" I said, "No." He told me. He said, "You've got no business talking, walking with him and talking with him." I thought that was priceless, too. He was only a bloke.

12:30 **What about entertainment? I mean what, were there any shows put on or anything? We've heard some stories of shows being put on and....**

No, we didn't get any shows put on. We had cards, must have come from Red Cross or somewhere, I learnt to play bridge and, yeah, we got the cards down in Rouen, I think. Don't think we had them before then.

13:00 Learnt to play poker. But that was the only recreation, entertainment we had apart from playing tricks on the Jerry. For instance, by various scraps we made up a rope which would go between the two, in Lamsdorf, up between the two buildings and there's a window there and a window there

13:30 and the rope would go along out there, and somebody would get out and light something and make a smoke about the time old Bok would come down on his pushbike, come in through the gate. Now, he'd come down but he wouldn't come up this way; he'd go round so he could come down here and catch them. As soon as they saw him come through the gate, the signal was to disappear and he'd ride his bike up and charge down and they'd just pull it, bom, over he'd go and then he'd fire his pistol.

14:00 That was entertainment. We worked that one a few times over the 12-month stay.

Any other?

No. There was no, we wouldn't allow anybody to fight. Tempers get frayed. You see, the bunking of these A, these compounds, in all these dormitory

14:30 blocks was one, two, three, four. That was the bottom layer. There's two there and two there, all in one you see, and then there was another four on top of them and then there was another four on top of them, and there was a gap about that far in between and you went up sideways. And, you know, to pack 120-odd into one room is pretty good going, to sleep.

- 15:00 And there was another gap down here and that's where we, there's the floor there. I'll do the bunks, will I? The bunks were done so that there was four men on the bottom here, up here, head to foot, on top of that another four and on top of that another four, with a gap of
- 15:30 around about that wide in between. It was a very narrow, I remember you had to go up side and you climbed up. We were on top, unfortunately, but we had an end one but it was only a half-sized one and there was only two, four, six. No, yeah, that's right, but the rest of the building right through was in these others. There wasn't enough room to put a full one up there.
- 16:00 The things were such that we couldn't allow people to have, to get to the stage of having a fight. We had an epileptic, he occasionally took a fit, but in the main things were kept as much as possible, when chaps got under control. When chaps got a bad letter saying the wife had, in one particular case I
- 16:30 remember one of our syndicate on the (UNCLEAR) on food was, he was married to a French girl and she'd written, through the Red Cross, a letter telling him she'd left him and she had married beneath her in the first place. She was now with a Frenchman. Stories came like, back, for instance, I remember another chap telling us what a wonderful wife he had. While he'd been away she'd adopted two children
- 17:00 and he couldn't quite understand that one either, we couldn't, the way things were in Britain. But of course with brides or wives and people leaving their husbands, you know, it was....

Did you do anything to help those guys? Obviously they'd be pretty down.

Yes, they were pretty down. No, you'd say things to cheer them up if you could.

- 17:30 And chaps who their fiancées had married somebody else, well, we encouraged them to put their letters up on the, so everybody could read them if they felt better that way, and a lot of them did. But it didn't only happen in the prison camp. I remember after we came back, when we were down at Ballarat, one chap, he said, "Well." he said, "I got home." he said, "and I went round to the back of the house." he said, "And my wife knew
- 18:00 I was coming, obviously." he said. "She threw a dish of water over me and said, 'Get out.' Another chap had taken over. And things like, you heard some very sad stories. But in the prison camp we tried to make light of them as much as possible. Two chaps would have a disagreement over something and we'd naturally try to calm that down. I remember two very good friends, they
- 18:30 had a blue [argument] and they decided to go and have a fight so they were going to go over behind the toilet block. And they came back great buddies. They never had the fight; they realised how stupid it was, which just goes to prove it takes two to have a fight.

One more question: was there music? I mean obviously you had, you said earlier....

- 19:00 Yes.

that you had voices over there that were allowed, mainly. Did they play music or...?

Yes, they did in Corinth, and there was some musical instruments allowed into the camp. I don't know the story because I didn't have one, but there was, whether the Red Cross got them through to us, most probably I should imagine, was a saxophone and a few things like that and a ukulele,

- 19:30 and there were a few musical instruments. But we didn't have any concerts in the camps I was in that I can recall.

Would there be some singalongs or anything like that?

Yes, the Maoris loved to sing their Maori songs. The English managed to sing army ditties that wouldn't be

- 20:00 for general distribution.

There is no rating on this, you know. This can be R-X [extremely obscene].

Because quite a lot of them had served in India and were recalled, and they used to sing like The troopships are leaving Bombay and those sort of stories, but there wasn't much in that line at all. There was a fair bit of card playing

- 20:30 went on. As a matter of fact, I got quite good at contract bridge.

Did you keep up the chess that you were talking about?

I've still got an electronic chess in the cupboard there, too.

Can you remember any of those ditties for us, any of the sort of more colourful ones, perhaps? We'd love to hear them.

No, I can't at the moment. They might come as I go. No, no, I just can't. I remember

- 21:00 one about a boxer.

Like limericks or things about the Germans, perhaps, that you guys came up with?

No,

21:30 I can't at the moment. My mind's off.

Well, if it comes up, then let us know.

Yeah, it might come up, yeah. When you try to think of things sometimes you can't. But there were quite a few ditties, but there's one about "in the era of the boxer" I can't remember about that one.

22:00 **OK. Do you want to get back to Ballarat, psychoanalysis?**

Yeah, that was priceless. Everybody that seemed to go in tried to be very smart. For instance, I remember one chap came out just before I went in and I said, "What did he ask you?" and he said, "He asked me

22:30 what would happen if I had my ears cut off." And I said, "What did you tell him?" and he said, "I told him I'd be blind, of course." I said, "What do you mean, you'd be blind?" He said, "He said, 'What do you mean, blind?' I told him, 'My hat could fall over my eyes, I wouldn't be able to see,'" and that sort of thing. Nearly all of them they had something or other. So I, anyhow, when I went in he said, "What did you miss mostly as prisoner?" I said, "The

23:00 voice and company of women." and he looked at me and he said, "You're the only honest bloke I've had in here today." He said, "That's what I'd miss, too." I didn't put anything over him at all. A general came and I can't think of his name, he was a general, was either one that was admitted in Singapore

23:30 or, well, it was at the Fall of Singapore, I should say, or one that was in the crowd that didn't get out of Australia. Anyhow, we were all assembled and he told us a great story about our future, you see, and a bloke called Athol Neitz[?] from Sydney, New South Wales, he couldn't take any more and he told us, "You know." he said, "you're all potential

24:00 NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and officers." Neitz, he swung up, he said, "Bullshit." and immediately MPs [military police officers] raced in to remonstrate with him. General said, "No, no, no." he said, "I think that man's told the truth." But the way, you know, there was dead silence, and the general says....

24:30 But Ballarat was good. We had plenty of leave and blokes shot through and sent telegrams back not to travel on the - what was it? - not the "Overlander" [train between Adelaide and Melbourne]; the "Spirit of Australia", I think it was, one between Sydney and Melbourne, the one that was there, the "Spirit", yeah: "no spirit in it" or something like that. And it was really fantastic, really.

25:00 I'll tell you this one, this one was good: this bloke that came down from New Guinea that was going to straighten us all out, I was duty corporal this particular day, seemed to be a thing I was nearly all the time at it, and it was payday. On the Sunday, because of misbehaviour, they'd cancelled all leave, nobody was to go out,

25:30 so that was the Sunday before payday. Sunday came and of course we had no leave and we're all marched around for church parade, and Ramsay, my mate, was in charge, he was staff sergeant. And when an officer said, "Right, all those non-churchgoers, fall out." Ramsay stepped forward and said,

26:00 "Left turn, quick march." I just remembered I didn't tell you why it was off. It was off because earlier in the week I was duty officer, duty corporal, and I was told to take the men round and the padre was going to give a talk on the stars. Now, we always took them round past the latrines because they'd go free on the tram and they'd break,

26:30 a mob would shoot off. "Now." I said, "I want at least 20 to stay." Well, I only had five or six, I think, something like that. And I got round there, I saluted the padre: "I'm duty corporal today, sir." He went and checked up and found out we weren't, and that's when the leave was cancelled for the weekend. Now, payday came and this bloke from New Guinea, he was,

27:00 that came down to fix us up, the boys decided, "We'll fix him." So he's inside in the office building the pay what's-its-name and we were all lined up outside, you see, I suppose, I don't know, a hundred or something of us, and as duty corporal I'd have to call their names. I call their names, no answer. "Name!" No answer, no answer. And then some bloke said, "Oh, you mean me?" After

27:30 he'd come and go out, the next one, "Who did you say, corporal, who?", and this was going on. This bloke inside, he's getting ropable [very annoyed]. It's late afternoon and it's taken many times longer than, each pay, so he said, "What's going on, corporal, what's going on?" "Well." I said, "It's like this, Sir." I said. "They're paying you back for what you, cancelling their leave last what's-its-name."

28:00 He come out and apologised and away they went. Mind you, it went on for an hour or more trying to get things.... That's the sort of thing they got up to, it was completely unruly. Did I tell you about the, when I came back to....? I was out of the army,

28:30 I was on King Island, I came home, came over to Launceston and I went to the pictures, and this

corporal that I told you fixed us up on the Wangenella, I ran into him. He recognised me. I soon woke up to who he was. "How are you?" I said, "All right." "Are you sure?" "Yes." "Oh." he said, "I thought the whole bang lot of you would be in the asylum, the way you behaved."

29:00 **So Ballarat was, you were on duty at times, but they had you there as POWs, they wanted research?**

They had us there experimenting, finding out what the effect was on us, I think. They shipped us up to Darley from there and we weren't much better. We still got plenty of leave at the weekend and....

Why Darley, what did they want to do with you there?

29:30 Get us out of Ballarat. I don't know really, to be honest. And my mate, this girl he saw way back when we were in Melbourne before he went away, we'd caught up with them. I had to go along with him all the time. He's a chap that was always studying, no girlfriend, you know, I did the tutoring. I became more or less a member of the family.

30:00 Well, Uncle George and Aunty Alma are the parents to me, as far as that went, that sort of thing. And he'd go courting. We'd go up to Melbourne at the weekend and I had to go too because they had a bed out there for me in the spare room, and when we, we'd get off the train and we'd walk over to the place, they'd drop us in Melbourne. And outside there used to be a flower stall, not where the fruit stall side, on the other side,

30:30 and he'd buy a bunch of violets and hand them to me and I'd carry them out, and when he got to the gate out at Oakley he'd take the violets and Uncle George would drive us all round the country and we had a wonderful time, big family of uncles and aunties, and got to know them. Definitely became a member of the family, you know, still am. And anyhow

31:00 we went to, have we been to Coogee yet? Where am I? I haven't got there yet. When we went to Coogee anyhow, and he stayed in, after he went up and got sent back from the, his division, he stayed and I went on the other. I'll come to that later. Anyhow,

31:30 where am I? We're still in Melbourne, aren't we? And from Darley, that's right, this is where the next lot of trouble I got into, was that before or after? I'd have to have a look in my notes to find out, I think.

32:00 Yeah, from Darley I got sent to Coogee and did the hygiene course there in conjunction with the university.

32:30 And we had a wonderful Professor, Professor Harvey Sutton, who died a few years ago, but he's got a son, I believe, [of] the same name, still a professor. And the night before the, that's right, I got up to this before: the night before the exam I went for a cruise on a boat, forget all about study and I came out very well in the exam the next [day].

33:00 **So what exam was that?**

This is down for a hygiene exam, hygiene and sanitation exam. The, having a, doing away with a section, having a lieutenant in each brigade and corps just came in. I understand I came second in it, but that's off the record,

33:30 but I was told that just from there before. I went to Canungra, a jungle training school, and that's not on the records but I spent about a fortnight probably there; and that's where I saw my first platypuses there, too, in the river that we used to have to cross on the swinging, flaming thing. And I didn't have to do much of the,

34:00 that sort of duty but I gave a couple of lectures. I came back down to Darley and was there, and one of the boys who was a bit backward had, it was a women's training depot as well for the AAMWS [Australian Army Medical Women's Service], I think it was, one

34:30 of the boys there fell in love with a girl who wasn't much brighter than himself. And he'd been, he knew me quite well when he was in the same camp, and he came to me and he said, "We went to Melbourne." he said, "and we couldn't get married." He said, "What do you think we can do about it?" I said, "Ask the Padre." Oh, he couldn't do that. "Well." I said, "I'll ask him." He was a young padre and I went along

35:00 and I said, "Would you marry a bloke?" "Too right I'll marry you." I said, "No, you won't." I told him who he wanted and he said, "Bring him over tomorrow." so I took him over and he asked her what her name was and he said, "Flo." He said, "No, no." he said, "I want her full name." and he said, "I don't know." You wouldn't believe this, but it's dinkum [the truth]. And anyhow, we sent for her and we got her over and he got all his particulars, and he said, "Oh." he said,

35:30 "I'll have to have a camp wedding." But the trouble was we couldn't have a camp wedding because we got general orders, we were within the Bacchus Marsh church area, so many miles, you see, so I saw the CO, Colonel Good, and - or he saw me, I think that's the way it went - he ordered me over and we decided it was to be a camp breakfast

36:00 because there was all these women there, they wanted the camp breakfast, so I was given time off to do the organising. I bought the ring for him and everything, went down to what's-its-name (UNCLEAR).

And anyhow, the upshot of that was the wedding went off well. I had the sergeant major give him away. The colonel and his wife were at the wedding. That was held at the, the breakfast, that was held in the camp. And

- 36:30 the next day I was ordered over to the, asked to come over to the orderly room and he said, "Righto, corporal." he said, "you're going selling war bonds." He said, "I've got too many engaged couples in here to have you around the place any longer." "Yes, Sir." and that's how I come to go [to] war loans. Now, that was when I came back, so I went selling war bonds with the war loans. We offered
- 37:00 the loans from 339 - no, what's-its-name House: gee, I know it well enough; I wrote it down yesterday. Manchester Unity building, that's the building, up on one of the floors, and
- 37:30 I booked into YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association accommodation] just over the river in what's-its-name. And they had a service person, sometimes two, with a salesman. I was on my own with, most of us were, with the champion salesman of National Cash Registers and had a trip to America we won out of it and one thing and another. Tom Paton, he was a nice bloke.
- 38:00 So we'd go into, say, a garment factory or toolmaking factory or woollen mill, we went into all sorts of, mixed food one, and Tom would generally give the speech and he'd do the men and I'd have to do the women. They'd be at their desk, or what they do, and you'd go along and have a wad of
- 38:30 bonds and they could take 10 pounds, 20 pounds, I think, the money they wanted and that would be taken out of their wages over a period, so much a week, and they'd go away and sign it, you see, wonderful money-raising. And that was going on and the, somehow or other I went out to
- 39:00 Heidelberg on the Sunday to see some of the boys, anyway, that were out there - I forget, somebody must have asked me to go out or something - and they knew one of them that had been put in jail in Russell Street, he was driving through or something, so I thought, "Well." and they said, "Well, you'll have to do something about it. Somebody had; we can't." Nobody down at the camp knew. So I
- 39:30 rang up Russell Street and went back on the Sunday night and I went and saw him and found out what he was in for and had a few words with him, and he told me where his brother was, so I rang his brother on the Monday morning. He was working at the Post Office and was sorting what's-its-name. He said, "I can't go." he said, "I've only just got this job." He said, "We're flat out." he said, "I might lose my job." His brother had been to prison with him as well,
- 40:00 as a matter of fact, and I said, "Oh, well." Monday morning I appeared up in Russell Street. I knew what time he was coming, they told me, so I think it was 11 o'clock or something. And I'm sitting in the back of the court room and [there] was a couple of, I realised were police people, they were a couple in plain clothes, obviously detectives talking. And I said, when they read his charge out I said,
- 40:30 "What's he going to get?" "Oh." he said, "he's gone for months." I thought, "Oh, by Cripes, what are we going to do about this? He's only just got married, too." This is the bloke that, as I say, he wasn't too bright. And anyhow I said, "Well, look." and he's standing up there and he couldn't answer anything; he was just tongue-tied and tied up. I said, "Can I speak for him?" and he went up and saw the prosecutor and he said, "Yes." and I went up and he went out of the box and
- 41:00 I said, "Look." I said, "He's only just come back from being a prisoner of war." I said, "He's never been assessed, really." I said, "He's a mess, I know he's a mess." and went on that line a bit, and you know what the old goat said? He said, "Where were you, sonny?" He said, "I was one myself in the First World War." very quietly. And all, after a few questions, all of a sudden the prosecutor let out a roar: "The witness will address the court." and so
- 41:30 I finished, I stood down. All he'd done, he got sent off for some treatment; he never got.... I reported to Manchester Unity next morning and there's a message there for me to report to 339 Swanson Street, which was known as Jensen [?] House, that was the name of the thing. But in there, there was a sergeant major that didn't like me. On the war loans I used to have to
- 42:00 pass there occasionally there with Tom, and I wore shoes....

Tape 8

- 00:36 I went up to see the sergeant major. I beat him to the lift. I go up there and the old boy is, the major, is sitting behind the desk. "Ah." he said, "I'll deal with you in a minute." and he was on the 'phone.
- 01:00 And he got off the 'phone, he said, "Well." he said, "this is going to give me great pleasure." But when I was told to go up there I ducked over to the YMCA and got my pay book, name badge and (UNCLEAR) because I thought I was going to be fined for being absent the day before, you see, and when he said it was going to give him great pleasure I thought, "You old so-and-so, you're going to fine me." And he looked at me, he said, "Well." he said, "your commission is approved, lieutenant." I thought, "Oh, my God,

- 01:30 I'm a lieutenant." I didn't know there was a commission involved in it; and that was a jump from corporal through all the ranks, sergeants and staff sergeants, sergeant major to lieutenant and commissioned. "Now," he said, "go down town and get yourself a Sam Brown [belt], some pips and put them up and order your uniform,
- 02:00 your officer's uniform." and he described the things, and he said, "By the time you get back, I'll have your papers ready for you to go to Darley. You're going back tonight, this afternoon." So I went down and I got the pips, got the Sam Brown, raced over to the YMCA, took the stripes off, and of course it's faded a different colour underneath, and worked on that a little bit and pressed her up a bit, and I went back and the sergeant major saw me and he come down and all of a sudden he saw the pips
- 02:30 and he nearly filed out. He put his, he had hobnailed boots on tiles. He skidded. I thought, "This is lovely!" So I went up and I got my papers and I went back to Darley and I got in, in the evening, there was a car arranged there to meet me and take me to camp, and went up to camp. And the chap, orderly of some sort, met me and he took me down to the officers'
- 03:00 quarters, carried my case, or I didn't have a case; I had the kitbag, I think, don't think I'd brought the case in. And he said, "Would you like coffee or tea in the morning, Sir?" and I said, "I'll have coffee, thanks." He said, "Put your shoes out." he said, "they'll need cleaning." I thought, "Gee, this is all right." And next morning I get out and I go to the shower and who should come in but the captain
- 03:30 that had control of us in, when we came from, he reckoned we were the worst lot he'd ever had. He said, "I'll fix you." he said, "this is officers' quarters." I said, "Yes, but I'm an officer now." So then he still had, he was still in his birthday suit until then, he had soap in his hand. He must have spotted me and come in to hunt me, you see,
- 04:00 so he covered me with soap. "Oh," he said, "she's good." So I went to the mess and I was received at the commanding officer's table, the colonel's table, which is an honour. I didn't know, but it is. He'd been keeping an eye on me, apparently. As the bloke said, "(UNCLEAR), mate, did you sober up??"
- 04:30 Yes, it must have been breakfast time, and he cracked a weak joke and I got a beauty over him and nobody laughed, and I would have expected they'd roar with laughter. A bit later on this captain that had charge of us when I was a corporal, he gave me a thing on mess etiquette. But before that I went over to the
- 05:00 orderly room and the girls were all lined up, gave me a peck and Flo, she just about cried, thanking me for keeping Harry out of jail, yeah. I had to, I was only there for probably less than week, three or four days, I think. A captain came up to me. Now, he was a medical officer.
- 05:30 Now, doctors went in as captains automatically. And he come over and he said, "Excuse me, Sir." and I'm lower than him. He said, "How come you were at the colonel's table?" This is how I come to realise how important it was. He said, "You come straight in and you're at the colonel's table; I've been here so long." he said, "I haven't been invited yet." I said, "Well." I said, "I'm an old soldier. I've been
- 06:00 in the game for a long time." "Oh, that's it, that's it." he said. "We were wondering, several of us were wondering." I felt highly honoured. Not much else I don't think went on there. I was sent off; I got my papers and everything to go through to Atherton Tablelands in Queensland, a posting to
- 06:30 the 20th Infantry Brigade, and after quite a lot of travel and a stopover, I remember we were stopping overnight at one place and they asked me to sign some leave passes. Every bloke [who] came in I gave him a leave pass and I wasn't, "I won't be here tomorrow; they can worry about that." They were a very pleased lot of chaps, I can tell you.
- 07:00 I got up there. It's just out of Herberton, it was, which is not far from Atherton, it's on the Atherton Tablelands, in time for the evening mess, or a little before evening mess it was. I got in and settled in, probably had a shower, I don't remember, and we were seated at the mess and the brigadier, a famous Sydney QC [Queen's Counsel], is up the top end of the [table]
- 07:30 and I'm down the bottom end, quite a big table because on headquarters you have officers from all the various sections and might be 20 of them, might be more. And the brigadier gets up, "Mr Vice [vice-president of the mess committee]." and sat down. "Mr Vice." I think he called it three times, and a bloke jumped up and said, "Gentlemen, the Queen:
- 08:00 charge glasses." already charged, they'd charged glasses when he said "Mr Vice", and there was a lot of silence, you know. In between times this bloke got up and said to me, he said, "You're supposed to do that." He said, "You're the junior flaming officer [ie. the vice president of the mess committee]." Because I'd never been in, I'd been in but never had a meal or anything in the sergeants' mess, let alone the officers' mess, I didn't know the protocols
- 08:30 or anything. Next thing I knew, after two or three days, word had gotten round that Ramsay had been sent back from 26th Brigade. I was called in and the colonel said, "I'm sorry." he said, "You can't come away with us." He said, "You're an exchanged prisoner of war. They cannot go back under Geneva Conventions." and I think he told me that Ramsay from his counterpart at the other end had to send back....

- 09:00 So I'd had the conference with my immediate boss and he said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I'm not going to stay at home just round." you know, "town or anything like that." I said was the boat in, and I think he's in, somebody told me he's gone to the beach group and he wanted to get to 9th Div, "Oh." he said, "we might be able to make a swap." so that duly took place and I
- 09:30 went down to the 2nd Aus Beach group and he turned up to the 9 Div. So I thought I'd better make a clean breast of it, so I saw the colonel, a Colonel Codman, an Englishman, he was. "No." he said, "look." he said, "I've got all these blokes." he said, "and none of them have had any war experience, practically none, most of them." He said "You're welcome." and he said, and this time we worked out it was a
- 10:00 different enemy and Japan wasn't under the Geneva Convention, which had never been mentioned before. So I stayed there. And my boss was Major Hamilton, he was a hell of a good bloke, he was an Adelaide doctor. And we got into action and I had the use of the padre's motorbike to go up and see one of my mates I was prisoner with
- 10:30 up at Caloudra, top of the pass. The old bloke used to make home brew and they'd get me full as a tick [drunk], fill my shirt up with pawpaws and push the bike off with me on it and I'd ride on home, fall off in the sergeant lines and sergeants would pinch most of the pawpaws, and one of them would take me home and put me to bed, or help me. Christmas Day I'm duty officer. Now, this is good, I must tell you this, there was a lot of things there, but
- 11:00 yeah, I'll tell you that one too in a minute: and every time I had to go to sergeants' mess and the ORs [other ranks] and that and of course the officers', and do my rounds, I had to drink all these darn toasts and the result was I got, you know, pretty sick. It didn't take much to make me drunk, either. So they decided they'd, my tent was right on the beach, on the sand itself,
- 11:30 and I shared it with a provo captain, and they chucked me in the water to sober me up and the provo captain rescued me. He said, "I think you were going to drown, you useless thing." Anyhow, we got through that one all right. Now, they made me secretary of the mess and it's the biggest mistake they ever made, and we used to rely on getting meat and stuff. Everything was rationed for the mess.
- 12:00 The mess had to live a bit better, you know, than anybody, the ordinary, the officers did. And the abattoirs up on the Tablelands, I could get a bit of stuff up there, and there was a butcher shop in Cairns I used to be able to get a bit. Trinity Beach was just out of Cairns. And anyhow I arranged to take a girl there to the pictures, and it so happens on the night we're going I'm on duty officer again. And we had an Englishman there,
- 12:30 Tobias Lewis, from the, one of the, Cambridge or Oxford, Oxford I think it was, University on bomb fragmentations, one thing and another, and Tobias and I were quite good mates. Tobias would do anything for anybody, I thought. And I told him. I said, "Cripes." I said, "I've got a date. There won't be any meat." and he said, "I'll do it." He said, "I'll do it till you come back."
- 13:00 So away I go. I had a jeep, borrowed one of the jeeps, and got in there and the rains came down, come out of the pictures and what happened? The road's closed because up there, you know, they never put bridges on a lot of what's-its-name, there's bitumen under and she goes over because they go and come sort of thing, and we couldn't, we weren't allowed, I wasn't allowed through. And I got my summer glamour rags
- 13:30 on, you know, my white suit. I go back and I get into the officers' club. I managed to get a bed. I said, "Cripes, I'd better ring up." so I rang up and the bloke on the 'phone, he said, "Oh." he said, "we can't find the duty officer anywhere." I said, "I am, but." I said, "Tobias, Toby Lewis is doing it, Captain Lewis." He said, "No, he's not." He said, "Somebody else said that, but." he said, "no." he said, "he's not duty officer. The units are flooded out, some of them, they're ringing up everywhere."
- 14:00 He said, "By gee, you'll be in trouble." "Well." I said, "That's it." Next morning, or must have been mid-morning I got through, the sun's all shining, you know, I go in dressed in, and I run into the DOQMG [Duty Officer, Quartermaster General], he was a major, and he said, "Right." he said, "you'll be a sergeant tomorrow." I said, "Well, cripes, sir, that's crook." They didn't know quite all the story, and he was gloating over it because
- 14:30 he'd heard, one of the boys called me Keith and his name was Keith, and he said, "Who was he talking to?" and I said, "I don't know, he might." I said, "It wasn't to you, was it?" And that didn't go down too good, either. And anyhow, he said, he went down and saw the colonel in his tent thing he had up and he said, "Your colonel wants to see you."
- 15:00 Of course I knew the colonel wanted to see me. What they didn't know was I took a message to the girl who was colonel's girlfriend, who was AW, I won't say her name, haven't got to, and on his date, you see, she was on what's-its-name, and that's the reason I had the jeep and that's the reason I couldn't very well get out of going. And that was all right.
- 15:30 I went down to the colonel and gave him what her reply was, I just forget what it was, and told him what happened. "Well." he said, "when you go out." he said, "look as though I've reprimanded you." I said, "Yes, yes, sir." So I went out and my major said, "What happened?" and I said, "I'm in trouble, I'm in trouble." and he said, "I'll fix it." and he charges in. His name's Huggle Hamilton and he could fly. So he goes down and he came back, "I've fixed it, Keith, everything's

16:00 right." "Good." I said, "Thank you very much." It's marvellous what can happen, you know, if you have got a bit of trick in you. But then of course we went off not long after that. We trained down there then we boarded ship and went up to Morotai, which is in the tropics, in the Celebes area of the sea, I think.

16:30 It's up there somewhere, anyhow.

So you're with the...?

2 Aus Beach Landing Group, I've come from that 20th. They only had me for three or four or a week at the most. And we reorganised there.

What was the purpose of that unit?

That was this group, the unit that lands them. It was half navy and, well, not properly, was navy and army, and we're responsible for getting all the stores ashore and

17:00 all that sort of thing and the water, because they had big problems, you know, you've got a few hundred men or thousands of men, there's a lot of logistics with it. And we reformed and we went up on a merchant ship. A lot of them towed barges with vehicles or landing craft, just a small landing craft for personnel, and then there was the bigger ducks and

17:30 the navy and [went] to Tarakan, and of course they went up, enormous gunfire, you've got no idea, tops off coconut palms and that, you know, and under the cover of it we climbed down the, these little craft pulled in alongside, this netting, there's boat netting, you know, that steps, we climb down onto these boats. They

18:00 form up and they charge in, front drops down, off you go. Some will have a jeep and cannons on, all sorts of things. And it's a continuous thing. I had to go in very early in the piece, I guess around about the third wave I think or fourth wave, something like that, and, as I remember it, there'd be a duck [amphibious craft] in there, already in with signallers.

18:30 Now, as blokes got wounded I had to organise them going out, being evacuated and decide which ship they went in and all that sort of thing, which wasn't much choice, but I was the co-ordinator. And, well, later, must have been on the first day, a couple of Yanks came in and

19:00 they took their tin hat off because they had a bakelite one on underneath and they reckoned they were all right; both of them got hit. One got hit in the head and one in the stomach, I think. But the bullets were newly spent apparently or the way they hit them, I'm not sure which, and course what are you going to do with the Yanks? So I would send them back to a warship.

19:30 I forget. Anyhow, I authorised it and said that's where they're going, but we didn't know whether they'd go back to an Australian ship or what they'd do, where they were. When they were gone I was told that, to headquarters, congratulations came over for the officer on sending them out to, where to send them to: "Send them to us." They went back to an American ship. And a bloke off the other beach

20:00 who was in charge, there were about three beachheads in each of the landings, well, then I'd, the first night I'd be a runner, and the pioneer (UNCLEAR), Henry Liston he'd be a runner too, we'd take out the messages verbally because we didn't know where the enemy were. We didn't know whether, if it was in writing, whether, what would happen. We had two signals companies with us to get the lines out and one thing and another. Things were much more primitive than they are today. They were running the lines

20:30 on telephones. And I finished up, after the second night I finished up, doesn't matter. Anyhow, that was my job for a start. And then in the early hours of the morning I got called to a well. They wanted to see if it was poisoned or not, water.

21:00 **Sorry, how long had it been that you were co-ordinating the evacuations first up?**

It all got landed in the first day.

That was?

Yeah, we got all the stuff. The big shed was established.

Were there many casualties in that period?

No, no not very many early in the piece. Fortunately the barrage from the navy put them all back pretty well and disorganised them and so nothing much happened. I think I only put about

21:30 probably two or three blokes, but each flotilla that came in would have one landing craft personnel thing with the George Cross on. That was mine. The next lot would come in. He'd go back and one from them would stop. That was just for wounded if anything happened.

So the boat that you're with isn't actually taking them?

No.

But you're sort of first point from...?

I've got to make sure everything takes place

- 22:00 because you don't know what, how big it's going to be. You've got to have it co-ordinated. The second night I didn't get sleep till early hours of the morning, second night. I was up all night first night. The chap said, "Oh." he said, "stay here at headquarters." "Oh no." I said, "My batman will have something fixed up." I said, "I know where it is." It was pitch black. It gets pitch black, dark up in the tropics when
- 22:30 it gets dark, and they'd gone round the hill and into a banana plantation and dug little slit trenches. But my bloke he didn't dig any. He didn't do any washing, either; he always got me new clothes. He was an auctioneer's clerk; he was a gangster that way, terrific bloke to have as a batman, though. But on the, I knew the track, I had passed it during my duty during the what's-its-name. I'm going in
- 23:00 and all of a sudden I got prodded in the stomach with a "Halt!" and things were going like that. It was our warrant officer, chef, cook, bloke in charge of that, and he had a harelip, by the way. He was a hell of a good bloke. He's the bloke helped me, I told you about burying the bloke, he was the bloke that helped me do that. He said; don't know if it was an automatic
- 23:30 gun he had, he said, "I don't know what to do with this thing." he said. I said, "Well, don't pull the trigger." And I said, "Where are they?" and he told me, and of course he couldn't see who it was; I couldn't see him; it was only [by] his voice that I knew who it was. And I get up, found the boys and found my gear and sitting under a banana palm and didn't, I had a ground-
- 24:00 sheet or something to lay on. All of a sudden mortars started up. Enemy firing, you see, and they're going over the top of us and going over the hill, but everybody that was laying down dived into this little slit trench. But this is in early hours of the morning and they'd filled up with water and you ought to have heard the language. I'm laughing like anything. I didn't have one and I'm sitting under the tree. But next
- 24:30 morning where I was - they'd told me I could, not to go back to sleep - one of the mortars had killed a bloke, one of them come over and landed and killed him, blew him up, so I was a bit lucky, wasn't I? I told you about the two shots fired at me, didn't I, when I was shifting the doctor up to another end?

This is in Tarakan?

Yeah.

- 25:00 **On camera, I don't think so.**

I did try a bit of that sort of job as well as my own.

You did tell us but that wasn't on camera.

If I was going past, now, one day of course Huggle, my major, was more or less a very senior medical officer as well and he said, "I want you to go to such-and-such CCS." that's Casualty Clearing Station, "and get

- 25:30 Doctor So-and-so and take him up to what so-and-so, he doesn't know the way." because I knew practically where everybody was, as a runner in between times. And I went and got this chap and we're walking up and, shoo, went past - God, the heat of it! - past my face. One of us must, he must have been slightly behind me or something. He felt it but not as much, you see. And here
- 26:00 was a tank the other side. A sniper had had us in his sights, so that was one close go, and....

How did you get out of that? If he took a shot at you he could take another one. How did you, what did you do?

Moved very quickly. You don't stop in the same, stop still. If he fired straight away, because I suppose he was waiting to see if he hit us, I suppose, before he let another one go, I don't know whether he

- 26:30 let another one go because we moved, and if he did, he didn't hit this tank, iron tank he'd hit. So that was one narrow squeak I had. I was talking to the old man. I'm still in Tarakan, aren't I? Yeah, we've just landed at Tarakan, didn't we, yeah. Tarakan was over very quickly for us.
- 27:00 We didn't, don't think we got bombed there. I get these two islands mixed up because they were so close together and they were so similar. Well Balikpapan is on Borneo itself. We came back and we regrouped, re-equipped and we repeated the same thing at Balikpapan. At Balikpapan the colonel came ashore while I was still there and we were talking,
- 27:30 and there must have been a sniper somewhere because there was "sssss" and a bullet went about that, a couple of inches in front of me under, in under my foot. The old man looked at me, always called the colonel "the old man", you know, the old man looked at me and, "Gee." he said, "I think we'd better move a bit." I was very busy there. We had a, it was a bigger landing and
- 28:00 the first big job, of course, was the engineers and the Pioneers set up the water. Now, there was a creek

and it had been disturbed quite a bit. The tanks were canvas tanks with a kapok ring on the top, a big kapok ring, and as they filled up they come up like that and so that

- 28:30 they held their water in, and they put the pumps in. And water was a very bulky thing, you can't shift much of it, so we get onto it as quick as we can. First of all we flocculate it because it was yellow, disturbance. We use alum and that takes all the particles to the bottom,
- 29:00 and then we chlorinate it, chlorine, to kill any bacteria in it, and we leave just a few parts per million of free chlorine (UNCLEAR) which is what you can taste, and that got [it] going pretty successfully. I think we ended up with three tanks and we had a job to keep the water up. But she broke down and there was no engineers around and there was no, only the blokes
- 29:30 operating it, like, responsibility for, so I went down and had a look at the foot valve. There's a flipping big python, it's dead and a lot of meat showing. He got, blocked it off, he was getting sucked into it. He got bombed when they, with artillery, or something got him, so we cleaned him
- 30:00 off and we learnt he wasn't poisonous and we were chlorinating, so we just managed to keep going. But the chaps would come along before it had time to really be settled and dying for a drink as they went past, going crook about the chlorine, you know. Quite funny it was, but anyhow, it worked out all right. The,
- 30:30 this is where the chap I was telling you about was, died, buried. That was Balikpapan and....

Do you want to tell us any more about that?

No. And when we, I was kept very busy and I wasn't afraid to, you know, step out a bit.

- 31:00 I had trouble with the Dutch, the Netherlands, East Indies something-or-other crowd there, and there was a lieutenant there, and I inspected the quarters of the natives. That was women and children. They were in a big, old storeroom and it was joining one of our areas where we had troops stationed and it was absolutely disgraceful. It was just women and kids and
- 31:30 just a trench with a pole to sit on, two poles for them to sit on, one, the back one, on them and right along, what, 10 feet away from the billets, open sewerage sort of thing, and I was frightened that we could get an attack of dysentery or gastroenteritis or something from flies and that. And I got stuck into this bloke and put
- 32:00 a report in, and the next thing I knew he was going to be court-martialled. But like all headquarters, we had plenty of solicitors amongst them and they said I wouldn't be needed to give evidence, just the evidence I'd put in. I don't know what happened to him, but I wasn't wanting to go that far, but I had to do something. He wasn't prepared to do anything about it and....

So this was, how long was that, because the Japanese had been running the place?

- 32:30 This is in the first fortnight of the landing, I suppose, something like that. One day, I'll only keep this short because I've got a lot to go, one day we got bombed there. I'll give you that one first. Some planes came over and
- 33:00 dropped a few bombs. Now, all my headquarters was, the people on it were mainly in our first campaign, Tarakan, Balikpapan, and they all shot through to cover, go under a culvert under the road, sort of business. They disappeared and the 'phones are ringing and there's only the colonel and me left in the camp, and I manned the 'phones. Colonel
- 33:30 got very irate the way the officers had all disappeared. It was understandable. It was just the fact they were getting bombed, they could see the bombs, you know. Anyhow, we got them back again. We shifted to a sort of an office affair. It was a thatched roof space, all open, where
- 34:00 the officers congregated and clerical work was done and that a bit later. And I was there, called in for something, and a staff car pulled up and some of the redcaps, you know, the high-ranking officers, and course there's a flurry going on around the place. "I wonder what this is about, wonder what this is about?" and they come up and asked for me. I thought, "Gawd, what have I done?"
- 34:30 And this, I don't know whether he was a general or a brigadier or what he was, I can't remember, I was a bit stunned, he said, "Congratulations, lieutenant." he said, "you've done a wonderful job." He said, "The syphilis rate is practically nil." he said, "and it's the first time it's ever been this good and." he said, "It must be a tribute to you." "Cripes!" I thought. He had three or four other staffers with him and
- 35:00 shook my hand and drove off. You ought to have seen the other blokes. I couldn't believe it either, but that was....

Obviously you'd done a very good job. For example, with that, the quarters, you said that the Indonesians, particularly the women and children, what sort of, how did you go about fixing that? What did you do?

I reported it to my senior officer

- 35:30 and he took it from there. But they shifted the troops that were near it further away. We were heading for trouble: it was filthy, absolutely filthy. So anyhow I went out and we gathered up various animals and one thing and another – we didn't gather them up; we took petrol out and burned them, that was during the period – and
- 36:00 that sort of thing. I got blown over. There was said to be a sniper and there was a lot of tunnels in the side of the hill and one particular tunnel there, they were pretty fresh, so we filled a trail of petrol in as far as we could go and lit the darn thing. And we didn't expect the explosion we got. I remember getting knocked over by the pressure coming out,
- 36:30 but I then got....

So what were you describing there? What was...?

Well, we thought there was some blokes in there, enemy in there, we'd give them a hurry-up, you know.

So there was still Japanese hiding?

Yes, well, Japanese or Japanese flunkies, you know, because you never know in those countries. There were still people there, seen there with arms

- 37:00 in that area, and that's where we thought they'd be. And we were making sure of it because we were working in that area, you see.

I imagine there would have been, I mean with the bombardment, would have been carnage and already among the Jap soldiers...?

Well, that fire was not in this area, sort of business. This was a cleared area. That fire

- 37:30 was in the jungle area. Nobody, it was an exposed area, this was. I suppose that's why they had their what's-its-name. Anyhow, the point system came through, a lot of other things I can't recall at the moment, the point system came through. If you had so many points from service, from years of service, you could get immediate discharge because they could see the end of the war was near.
- 38:00 So I applied for it, and I got an attack of renal colic, which I was prone to later on, and so I applied for it and was accepted. So my colonel said to me, he said, "Look." he said, "stay with us till the end of the war. Cancel that and stay with us." he said. "As soon as, it might take a week." he said,
- 38:30 "You're going to be promoted to captain." I thought, "I'm not interested in flaming captain or anything else." I said, "Thanks very much, Sir, but I'm going, I've decided to get out. I'm getting out. I feel I've gone far enough." And so I was put on a hospital ship. I came back to Morotai and from Morotai I got on what we called the "Gooney Bird", it was
- 39:00 a DC3, and we flew back to Biak and from Biak I was put on, we were loaded onto a Super fortress and flew back to Brisbane, overnight at Brisbane, had jungle clothes on and, gee, it was cold. Next day we were entrained, [were] put on the train. This time [there] was a fair lot of us and I was made adjutant
- 39:30 of the train. Once again, I always had to work. And we got to Sydney and overnight at Sydney and we were loaded onto a train, a bigger train, much bigger, and we had a lot more troops. These were blokes out of the what's-its-name, and once again I'm adjutant. Now, when you get on, we had to share a train. An adjutant, the adjutant does the work, the OC trainee, he does the work. When you, each carriage
- 40:00 has a commander, a person appointed commander, to take a roll of who he's got in the carriage and they all put their name and number in, and that comes back to the, to us, the adjutant what's-its-name, and we check that roll off against the master roll of who's supposed to be on. And, well, I suppose [I had] 40 or 50 too many. I've missed one little thing: as we flew over in New Guinea the atomic bomb was dropped. The plane announced it,
- 40:30 first atomic bomb. I'll give you the date of it; I've got it in my blue folder. And this was why I had too many aboard. They were shooting through. "Book us over, move." Well, I walked down through the carriage and I saw a bloke looking a bit guilty and standing up. He had nowhere to sit, apparently. I said, "What are you doing on the train, soldier?"
- 41:00 He said, "I'm shooting through, Sir. What are you going to do about it?" I said, "I won't do anything about it on one condition: can you tell me, have you got any mates?" He said, "I've got quite a few of them." I said, "Thanks, that's all I want to know." So I went back to this flaming captain, I said, "We can't get this roll right, they..." Oh, I said, "Did you put a name in?" "Of course I put a name in, I'm on the train." and the number, it wasn't mine, wasn't his. "Cripes." I thought, "This is lovely." And I went back to this bloke and he said, "We've got to work it out." I said, "No way." I said,
- 41:30 "They're not going to admit it." A little bit later I saw a kitbag go out, the train was slowing into some sort of little town or round the corner some, I forget, and I see a kitbag; then I saw a bloke shoot, jump out, take a tumble and get up. We get to Melbourne and the Adelaide train's in so we go into a waiting room or something there,
- 42:00 I suppose it was.

Tape 9

- 00:33 We're in there, we're trying to get these carriage rolls right with the master roll, and the driver that was to pick us up and they'd already picked the other two from the Adelaide train up, poked his head in the door and said, "Can I ask how long you're going to be?" I said, "Driver, it's your job to wait until we're ready." and off she went. In the finish I won my case and
- 01:00 we went out and there was two and the driver in the front, the three of us in the back, and we're driving along and the driver looks up in the rear vision mirror and she let out a scream, "Aaahh!" and this was the girl that I'd invited in earlier in the carriage to go to Ballarat whose parents had the tennis court. She was,
- 01:30 "Oh, it's you!" Yeah, so anyhow we get out to GDD [General Duties] or LTD [Light Transit Duties] at Royal Park in Melbourne which was occupied, beautiful buildings and everything on it, and she said, "Look." she said, "there's a big party on tonight, can you come?" I said, "Well, I don't know, I've got to get rid of these papers."
- 02:00 and the officers have papers of their own as well. I said, "Yes, I can." I said, "I'll slip this in my pocket, I won't report myself in." "Oh." she said, "I'll drive down the road a bit and wait for you and pick you up." I said, "That's good." So I get rid of my gear and hand the other papers, I've got notes, I handed them in, or one of us did, I forget, and we get rid of it, got in the car and we drove off.
- 02:30 It was like, I admit I was AWL [absent without leave] now, am I? Cripes. Anyhow, we went to a party that night. I woke up on the veranda of a place at Toorak, [it] was an open veranda, on a bed, and I looked at this bloke on a bed alongside of me, he'd been at the party, he [I?] said, "How did I get here?" He said, "We put you to bed." Mind you, it was some party, I can tell you. And
- 03:00 then she said, "Look." she said, "Mum and dad want you to go down to Ballarat." She said, "I'll arrange if dad's coming back up in the car, so he'll bring you back, you can stay the night down there or two nights." and so I got on the train and went to Ballarat and old Les picked me up and, no, he didn't, somebody else picked me up.
- 03:30 And I went there and old Les is up on the ladder, that's right, fixing the curtain up, that's where he was when I got there; he arranged for somebody else to pick me up. And Midgie, the younger daughter that had been engaged to a Tasmanian bloke, she was in hospital so we had to go and see her, and then the next day he brought me back up. I think I had two days and two nights down there, one or two, two I think.
- 04:00 We came back and of course I've got to go to another party, so the daughter then asked me if I'd give her away. The father was a Protestant and a Freemason and her boyfriend was Catholic and he wouldn't let her marry him, and I said, "No way." I said, "I can't do that." I said, "Jeepers."
- 04:30 I said, "That's breaking faith with your family." Anyhow, she didn't marry him, but she ended up marrying her sister's boyfriend, which didn't work out. The next thing, I've gone back, I must have went home then. Jeepers, I'm losing track.
- 05:00 Now, two parties.... Yeah, I went back. No, I went back to Jensen House and I thought, "I might do another posting." so I went up and I asked about a posting. Of course I hadn't been given any particulars much there or they didn't have any, and he said,
- 05:30 "You been overseas?" I said, "I've just come back from Borneo." "Good." he said, "How would India suit you?" He said, "We've got a lot of prisoners of war coming through and we want somebody with a bit of understanding of it." I said, "That'll do, I'll take that." and he gets the stud book out. You know, all officers are in the stud book. He said, "You can't go overseas; you've been a prisoner of war, you've been an exchanged one." And I said, "Why can't I?"
- 06:00 He said, "That's why you can't go." I said, "Well, I've been." "Well." he said, "you'd better come back here on Monday morning and." he said, "This will have to be gone into." I thought, "Like hell it is." I go out to, get a tram, go out to LTD or GDD, and I went to GDD, and they said, "You should be held here." Well, I knew that, too. GDD is general duties, LTD is transit, that sort of thing.
- 06:30 I went over there. He said, "Where did you come from?" "I just come from GDD." Didn't tell him I'd only just gone there, either. I'd been away for about four or five days or something. And, "Well." he said, "that stupid idiot." he said, "they should have let us know." he said. "We've been looking for you everywhere." I said, "Look, when am I going to get back to Tassie [Tasmania]?" He said, "I'll give them to you now." he said. "I'll fix it up and you go tomorrow. There's a boat going." So I went down to the wharf. I had a party that night. I went down to the wharf and the boat
- 07:00 rocked and I was sick and did I feel a silly idiot. Here's me, an officer in uniform; I must be the worst officer they ever had, I think. So I get back to down to, get back home and into Brighton. I had to go to Brighton, didn't go home first of course, and went in there and the first one I saw was another of our unit who had been commissioned. And I said, "Look." I said, "I'm in all the trouble in the world.
- 07:30 I've got to get out quick." "Well." he said, "we'll see what we can do." and in no time I was out of the

army, civilian. You can't beat that, can you? I think I wore my uniform for about a week or something like that. Had a photo taken as an officer, went to the Show, so it must have been

- 08:00 Hobart Show time. I've got the date somewhere, anyhow. Then what am I going to do? Prior to that I'd bought a house in Hobart as an investment, you could buy them cheap in those days, and it had two blocks of land with it. I didn't have a girlfriend. The one I had picked out earlier, she'd found somebody else while I was away so I was lucky, wasn't I? And
- 08:30 anyhow, I went up and stayed with a cousin. I said, "Well, I've always wanted to go farming, I'm going to go farming." so he showed me a farm that was for sale and I went down to Hobart to see the Agriculture Bank about raising the dough. And who should be one of the executives there but the cousin that I didn't know. He was a lot older than me. He said, "No way." he said. "Hold
- 09:00 your settlement, hold your settlement. Wonderful thing: they're just setting it up." I said, "Good." He said, "Don't need any cash or anything, you just go, they'll give you the house." so I made an appointment for the board and I went in to the board and there was two majors on and one of them was a local member of parliament, and old Tony said, "Look." he said, "There's various places on King Island." he said. "We're going to settle, big settlement on King Island."
- 09:30 I said, "What's it like?" He said, "Just picture an English countryside, hedges up the side of the road." he said, "and green all the time." he said. "It's a wonderful place." It was like that between Curry and the aerodrome, that must have been as far as he went. So I said, "Cool, that'll do me." And so I eventually got called up, called in and went down and I had to
- 10:00 pick a place, so a list of names that was going to take trainees. Government paid part of our salary. And [a] bloke that went as a trainee, too, you know, fitters, and he got so much money too, and stuck a pin in the thing and up in the north [of the] island. And then they turned around and said, "No, you can't go there." I said, "Why?" "You've got to go to the Lord Mayor." he said. "We took land off him and he's pretty, not too much in our favour." and,
- 10:30 "Create as good an impression as you can." Well he was the hardest man you'd ever meet, as far as to work for, and you come in, he had to come in four miles, I think it was four miles out. He got a puncture and because he couldn't even mend the darn thing, bloke was up the telephone pole doing some business and he got him to ring through and get the garage to send someone out, and they changed the wheel, and he got another puncture
- 11:00 and same thing happened again, or the thing was punctured, not sure which. Anyhow, I didn't tell you how I got there, did I? No?

You said the story ends in Hobart.

We'd better stop, then. I brought a motorbike. I advertised for a motorbike and I got two answers and one of them was a Harley Davidson without the sidecar, he wanted to keep the sidecar. And

- 11:30 I had a look, went down, and bought the thing. It was foot clutch and hand change, big handlebars, big old pre-war job, you know. So I rode that through to Launceston. I'm getting ahead of myself. Decided to sell the house, had tenants in it, and a woman came up, had, just took the same amount that I paid at the time, and
- 12:00 she come up with the papers for me to sign, she was going to buy the house, like that. So I signed them, drove off, didn't go back inside or anything, drove off to Hobart on Launceston Show day, down to the wharf. Put the boat on the what's-its-name [bike on the boat] and, the bike and me, and we sailed off to King Island. But the boat got in before eight o'clock so we didn't get breakfast. There was some snarers on, blokes going over to snare.
- 12:30 Started to walk up into town and the agricultural officer comes in, didn't know who he was, bloke with several things across his what's-its-name. He said, "One of you chaps Mr Jensen?" I said, "Yeah, that's me." Told me who he was and took me up and got in touch with the bloke that was to come and pick me up and found that he was held up and couldn't come in, so he said, "Come for a drive with me. I'm going out to see a soldier
- 13:00 from the First World War settlement." I got out there and he said, "Look." he said, "I've got to go up and see the next-door neighbour." He said, this old Jack said to me, "Get on the boat, son, and go back." He said, "I took this on after the First World War." they had a soldier settlement there, he said, "They even counted my WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] when I got in debt, when I got behind with me payments." He said, "They're a tough crowd." he said, "I wouldn't touch them. You take my advice and you get on that boat and get out." And
- 13:30 he was also president, acting president, or he was president, fill-in president of the RSL [Returned and Services League] at the time because the RSL bloke, he was away on service and in the First World War. Anyhow, Bruce picked me up, Bruce Wherrit, the agriculture bloke. He was the father of the settlement there really. "Well." he said, "What did he tell you?" I said, "He told me to get on the boat and get out as quick as I can." "Oooh." he said, "I shouldn't
- 14:00 have dropped you off there, should I?" So he took me up to another one, and by that time my future boss had turned up. I'm ahead of myself a little bit. I was in the main street for a little while, Bruce had

to do something else, and I asked a person where the main part of the town was. They said, "You're in the main street." and I didn't recognise it. It only had the bank and the Co-op.

- 14:30 So anyhow he took me up to another one and then I got picked up and taken out, and the lady of the house met me at the back door and she handed me sheets and a pillowslip and said, "Come with me." and took me over to the hut by the sheep yards. That was to be my
- 15:00 quarters. And I thought, "This place is pretty tough." And tea was at such-and-such a time. And they had a girl from Launceston staying there and they were going to a ball that night and I was to come to the ball. So I went into the ball with them, Town Hall, and who should be, bloke came up to me, he said, "I know you." I said, "I think I've seen you before, too." He said, "You ought to have done."
- 15:30 he said, "I got on the ship." he said, "Off somewhere-or-other." I forgot where it was from, a launch, the ship, and he said, "I nearly fell back in again." he said. "You were there and you laughed like billyo." he said, "I've never forgotten you." He was another lieutenant and of course the word went round then that I'd been, I was an officer in the what's-its-name and I got invited out to a party straight after the what's-its-name and I was somebody.
- 16:00 Parties. I'll skip a fair bit now. RSL day came up. Old Dick was in hospital, the president, captain, president from the First World War, and the other bloke was only minding the seat for him till he came back and I was to lead the fray, which I did. And that gave me more notoriety, too.
- 16:30 We went to a funeral, What's-her-name came up to me and she said, "Oh." she said, "They were all in love with you."

They were all in love with you?

Yeah, because of the glamour, you see, with the uniform and, is the tape finished yet?

Very close. Got a few minutes to go.

- 17:00 Anyhow....

Might be getting towards time to wrap it up.

Yeah, well, I stayed on, I married the first boss's niece and she died in, before I married Carol, anyhow. Dates come a bit hard sometimes. And then I'd already left

- 17:30 King Island, of course. I went out of dairying and I went onto sheep work and I'd bought my farm on King Island. I hadn't used the soldier settlement eligibility so I decided I'd use it. The only place I could get a cheap property was on Flinders Island, so I bought a house and a car, sold my car and bought one there and went over, because they weren't going to be ready for quite a while with the bank. In the meantime I had a kidney operation.
- 18:00 That was while I was on King, and I had a few heart attacks, and that was while I was on King. The first time I got under Repat [Repatriation, i.e. medical care for returned servicemen] I went down and I got a tube in there where they cut a bit out. Kidney was all right, was just that things were going through and I was getting poisoned. That's a long story, anyhow. And I went over to Flinders when my block was ready and brought
- 18:30 my wife and a couple of the girls over, three youngest ones, and had a motorbike to go round the farm on, and I did very well over there, as a matter of fact. I set the pace a bit. I introduced a line of merinos, and it's nearly all merino now. They laughed at me when I
- 19:00 did it. I went up to New South Wales and bought them, flew them in as passengers on a little plane, tied their legs and strapped them in. And anyhow I came off the motorbike and broke my hip, broke it right up where it goes in, you know, on that part there that goes in the pelvis. I was way down the paddock and my wife was in town. Fortunately,
- 19:30 a neighbour, the reason I did it was the neighbour had some cattle strayed in and I was getting them out when it happened, and fortunately he came over. There was a big nature strip between us and he only had one paddock over there, and I blew the horn and cooeed. I laid on top of the motorbike, couldn't move. I was in a puddle of water, actually. It was 13th of August; it'd been raining like anything.
- 20:00 And he went up home. It was about, well, I had 640 acres plus the nature strip and I was out the back of it, and the 'phones had just been changed over to this other system.

What system is this?

Not the system we got now; we didn't have the "03" then. But they'd,

- 20:30 and he couldn't remember his 'phone number. So he went, that's right, and then my wife drove in at the right time and I'm away up the paddock, so they got the ambulance and neighbours started coming in and the ambulance got bogged so had to go and get my tractor, and it was way up, half a mile away or more, in the shed, so somebody raced over and got my tractor. It came out and they put me
- 21:00 on the tractor and took me back to where the ambulance was bogged and got the ambulance un-bogged

and drove me into Whitemark, which was six, seven miles away, I suppose, and every time she went round a bend, "Ooh, ooh." you know. And gum boot, got in there and they cut my gum boot off. It was too late to get a plane in. And they cut my clothes off. And next morning they brought

21:30 the hospital plane over, you know, this one we got between, official one. Forgot what they call it.

Flying Doctor?

Yes, Flying Doctor. And it's raining, take me out - you won't believe these things, but they're true - take me out of the drome. Policeman, he was good and that, and co-pilot and what's-its-name, and they put me on the ground because they wouldn't take that ambulance aboard, even though the Red Cross or

22:00 the hospital auxiliary or something had brought a special ambulance stretcher for them. So they shipped me onto that one and brought me over to Launceston. Then they had to send down to LGH to get some stretcher, to St Luke's or St Vincent's to get some stretching gear, so they put me in the stretcher and pulled the leg out, you see.

22:30 And then they discovered I couldn't use the bottle. I never had been able to up to this stage.

The bottle?

Urinal.

Urinal, yeah?

And so now the next day he came in and he said, "Well." he said, "We've got some news for you." And I said, "What's that?" He said, "You're a diabetic." I said, "Well, that's good, put something in me." And they put me on tablets

23:00 and they made me terribly ill, and the food tasted like it'd been put in soap so I refused to take the tablets. And she reported it to the doctor and he came round and he said, "Well." he said, "I agree with him." He said, "If they're doing that to him." he said, "Let him go." So eventually they took, got me to the theatre and they put [in] a big pin that's about that long and goes into the pelvis, and plate that was that long and screws all the way down the, I think four or five. I've got them in

23:30 the cupboard there, as a matter of fact.

We'll have to see them after.

Yes, they're there.

We probably need to wind up pretty soon, I think. We've got about a minute. I think what we need to do, we could keep talking until the cows come home. And I'm sure you've got a story about the cows coming home, but we don't need to hear that today, of course. So we're just hoping you can wrap up on the war and just, in summary, just the way you think the war, you know, changed

24:00 **you as a man, perhaps, rather than...?**

Well, the war made a big difference to my life. In any situation where I had stay calm, when you're crowded in together and all of you are hungry most of the time, tempers get can get frayed very quickly. So we're a lot of

24:30 peacemakers. I'll give an example of that. The same chap that told the general, where it was all, he'd said to this, the sergeant major, that - I don't know what his job was, really, but he had, he was given some position - he called him one day a "four-eyed B [bastard]" over something and this chap was very upset.

25:00 And he asked me, he said, "What am I?" And I said, you know, I said, "You're all right, you're a sergeant major." "Yes." he said, and he told me what he told him. "You know." he said, "I was presented at court. And." he said, "I come here and the bloke calls me, tells me I'm a bastard." And that's one word the British couldn't stand; they'd call you everything else but they'd never call them that.

25:30 And he was that upset about it. You've never seen anything like it. That's because he'd been presented crown, to court, rather. But that was, underneath it was quite easy occurrence. The other thing, you learnt how to thief things, pinch things. I remember after I came home I went up to visit one of my uncles' friends and when I came, I had my brother-in-law with me, and when I came out

26:00 I had his newspaper up my jumper; how it got there I don't know. So I took it back in again and said, "Did you see this?" and he said, "No, I didn't see it." We'd been talking all the time. You get pretty good. I learnt there that a lot of the things that I was brought up with were wrong, as far as religion went. Now, everybody has their own religion,

26:30 but to me there's only one true religion and that's the one you happen to believe in; to you it's got to be if the others are not, isn't it? There's no alternative. And I came back with much more patience. I used to be pretty hot-headed when I was a young fellow. I had many a fight with my brother and he cleaned me up every time. I had a totally different value on life.

- 27:00 You don't judge a book by its cover. We had ministers of religion that got captured, of course. I remember one old bloke, a Church of England bishop, I think he was, he said, "We have tithes in England in our church." he said, "And you see a young couple." he said, "and you think they've gone too far, you put it on them to get married." He said
- 27:30 "Marriage is quite a handy part of our stipend." And I thought, "Gee, what a hypocrite." you know. But these sorts of things are quite acceptable in.... But you sit back and things that didn't matter before matter: the people you can trust and who you can't trust. You learn a lot about, without knowing it, a lot about psychology. Incidentally, that granddaughter up there with the cap and gown,
- 28:00 she's doing her masters, she'll finish her masters this term; and the other boy, the other grandson, another family, he's a computer whiz at Canberra Taxation Department. No, your outlook on life, it does, it changed my whole outlook on life and I'm quite glad for that part of it. I learnt to play chess and I'm quite glad about that.
- 28:30 **Well, the tape's got not far to go, so is there anything, just in conclusion, that you'd like to just put on the record now, before we call it a day?**
- Yes: war is a complete waste of time. If we can go to war and annihilate the nation and then turn round and restructure it, what's the point in the first place? We did that with Japan, we did it in Europe, excepting we
- 29:00 put too many penalties on the Germans through boycotts. I was talking to a son-in-law's father and he had hadn't tasted tea; they used to clip a hedge, because there was a ban put on it after the First World War, and these sort of things. But Japan was our friend in the First World War; now they're enemy. Then we turn round and restructure it. We're doing the same thing in
- 29:30 present time in Iraq. What's the point? Why did we have the war in the first place? Surely, our parliaments are full of solicitors, surely amongst, it's not necessary, or if it is, why is it necessary when we've got all that talent? We've got ambassadors. We've got, well, you name it. Why, what's the cause of the war? Why can't we stop
- 30:00 the causes? Look at the Irish one. They've been fighting there for yonks [a long time] haven't they? Garrisons left there all the time, they've never solved anything. The army wrote to me and offered me a job in Japan and if I stayed two years I could retire with the rank of major. They offered me a....
- 30:30 Forget what I was going to tell you.

INTERVIEW ENDS