

Australians at War Film Archive

Harold Hunt (Jim or Young Snow) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **OK Jim, perhaps we can start off by, if you could just tell us your life story from birth to present day?**

Well I don't know much about the birth side of it, I was a bit young. Grew up in one of many places because in the Depression years when you couldn't get money for rent

01:00 you did what was called in those days a moonlight flit. The week you're paid, you had to get, in the next fortnight you had to get enough for the deposit on the next house. You with me so far? Good, and which meant that a lot of young people, families, were going from suburb to suburb, sometimes street to street and school to school, but there always seemed to be enough just

01:30 to go around. Mum remarried again when I was about 10 and we moved to Kangaroo Valley. That's where I saw a funny looking animal. My uncle always had horses, dealing, bottleohs, props, anything to sell they'd sell it, and I saw these funny looking creatures and they had horns on their head. "What the

02:00 bloody hell?" "Moo cows." "What do you mean?" "Milk." "How do you get the milk out of it?" "The udders." The udders, oh Jesus, they're playing me for a, but they were fair dinkum. You did, you milked them. It didn't come in a billy can at all. It come in a compact. From there one of the things I do resent are these shit-arsed things today protesting about this and protesting about

02:30 that. I settled down to study and I had an old digger, we used to go up to milk his cows for our milk for the family, and he gave me some very good background and he said, "Use your brain, son, study." So I did. We, two of us in that school, Kangaroo Valley, two of us in that school

03:00 netted 90 per cent of the marks, bursaries they called them in those days, but how do you get two fellows from Kangaroo Valley, and there's no bus service, up over the mountains to school in Nowra or Moss Vale which was further to get a bursary. The bursary would've paid for our books and our fees, no clothes. "How do you do it?" "You don't." So that

03:30 put a chip on my shoulder. Through football, through cycling, and I once met Dunc Grey in Kangaroo Valley. He has relatives in Kangaroo Valley, the famous Dunc Grey, and he gave us quite a few tips. Anyway Norm was there and he said, "Hey Norm, what am I talking to them for?" They were riding mates. Norm my pal and Dunc Grey were riding mates, so I

04:00 thought Jesus, you know, all of a sudden Norm went up 10 feet in my estimation. So football and along comes a whisper in about '38 something's going on and Norm, all the old diggers they were putting two and two together very quickly. We just accepted the fact that it's, and the way we were told made sense.

04:30 "Fight the bloody war over there, don't bring it back to Australia." "That makes sense, good." Resentful, very resentful of the history of Gallipoli compared to the win at Beersheba which was first, then on to France, the wins they had there. All they talk about, they follow the Pommy idea. Now I can recite to you The Charge

05:00 of the Light Brigade, and into the valley of death rode the gallant 600. Do you know what? They got their arses kicked. 121 come out of there but they charged the guns up there. Now why am I talking about this? They should've charged the guns there. They were the ordinary captured. England seems to glorify their defeats. You think about all of them, the Battle of Dunkirk. Well they got,

05:30 338,000,000 troops got their arse kicked into the canal, a defeat, and numerically in France and Czechoslovakia, Poland was about one and a quarter allies to one German but they had better gear and knew how to use it. Now this'll come out a bit later on in your interview. Tobruk, not only were we the first people

- 06:00 to hold the Germans and we can't claim a victory because we did not sally forth and kick the shit out of them, but we stopped the blitzkrieg and that happened when Edmondson, the very name this club's named after, our battalion. Now why? Why is it these gutless mongrel politicians, is it because there's
- 06:30 not many left? Is it because, now you take Howard and the show pony, what's his name? Major General, he looks a show pony as well as that, never been near the front line in his life. Now Howard's over there waving and shaking hands on the back of the efforts done by the soldiers. Now I'm going to show you a photograph of that monstrosity in Macquarie Street
- 07:00 where our country went in backwards. I've got the article there. Now,
- I'd like to read that later on, that would be really interesting. So you got up to**
- Now getting back to lifestyle
- Yep, you got up to there were rumblings of the war starting in '38.**
- Well the way, see they knew what they were looking for. They'd been there and done that. They were our tutors, our mentors, and they joined the Light
- 07:30 Horse, joined the Militia, and I thought oh well. He said, "Get a few bob behind you", he said, "Go down and get on the war." So I pulled my time and away I went, and I went down to the very, it's not there now, the very place where our Colonel, our 2IC [Second In Command], Mackell MC [Military Cross] who was with that charge, he led it, and Edmondson all followed the RSL [Returned and Services League], Merrylands drill hall, and he said,
- 08:00 "Look mate", he said, "They're going to put us out somewhere." "What do you mean?" He said, "Ooh, don't join the Militia", he said, "Wait and go in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]." The first bastard I struck inside the door when I walked in was him. "He's gone", I said, "Well" he said, "That's what we were told." He joined up the battalion at the same, there was quite a few of them, but funny little things to laugh about, Ingleburn. Left right, left and we were learning how to form
- 08:30 threes.
- So Ingleburn was where you were doing your training?**
- Hey?
- Was Ingleburn where you were doing your training, right?**
- That's where we were marched in after we enlisted in 1940.
- OK.**
- But the main consensus of opinion amongst the troops, and me included, unless the bastards get us out of here and over there we're going to miss the war, and I tell you what there was, they were really offside with the army. Here we are four months in Ingleburn
- 09:00 and we're going nowhere. "March up and down", that's fair enough. "Yeah, OK, but when are we going away?" And they made a poem up, someone, it was World War I, When Are We Going Away? Now
- Can you remember that poem?**
- Not really. I wish I would've got a print of it or a copy of it but anyway the digger come back after Flanders and he says something about,
- 09:30 "Oh, where have you been mate?" Up till then it was "When are you going away?", because they were, as we were training, he's overseas for two and a half, three years and he comes back. "Oh, you've been somewhere", and he said, "Oh yeah". "Oh well, the others had just left", and it goes on and wherever he is he's got one leg off, a few fingers off this hand, When Are You Going Away? B Company, be here when they went and be here when they
- 10:00 come back. But one thing I'd like to express, and remember there were about 10 or 15 in the battalion of my age and further on up to old World War I diggers, I've got a nice story to tell you about an old digger, two wonderful old diggers. But we heard about the Domain. Now all you had to do was have a box, stand on it and you could say what you liked. Democracy in action,
- 10:30 and one of the jokers that went down with us, on the consideration we kept our hands in our pockets and did what we were told, "What do you mean?" "Well just do it." "Here they are", we were five bob a day murderers. We had no right sailing overseas to come over and fight somewhere in that country. Why should we go over there and fight? "Silly
- 11:00 mothers, shut up." "Yeah, yeah righto." And we come back with very antagonistic and we finished up the canteen private across there was Seventh Day Adventists. Now they don't believe in war, don't believe in this, don't believe in that. Anyway they put on an act about putting meat in a hamburger or something and the unit that followed us in struck them
- 11:30 on the wrong side in the first week. Second seek there were no more canteen, it accidentally had caught

fire.

So where was this? This was

Ingleburn.

Ingleburn, right.

On the main highway at the very end where our battalion was, it's now a beautiful highway, road, beautiful and lights, ooh, everything, but we were at the last lot and on the corner opposite to our top corner was

12:00 this canteen, general store business. They used to try and hand us out pamphlets why we shouldn't go to war, and if we hadn't, if we hadn't what sort of a mess would this country be in? Because here's something I want you to understand. Do you realise the Australian servicemen are the only servicemen in the world, big

12:30 statement, think about it, to have fought, fought and beat all the King's enemies in World War II? No other country in the world did that, including the Poms.

So just remembering that we're doing the short summary and then we're going to come back 'cause I really want

Away you go.

to talk more about the training that you went, but we'll just move on now. So where did you move to after Ingleburn?

13:00 Oh we were heroes, we marched to Bathurst, but therein lies another story. They wanted the camp at Ingleburn for more incoming troops presumably because we sailed the 7th Divvy [Division]. There's a trick question, "When did the 9th Divvy sail from Australia?" It didn't, was formed in the Middle East, so watch out for that one. Anyway they decided they wanted Ingleburn right? There was a camp being built at Bathurst

13:30 but it's a fortnight from being completed so some rotten bastard came up with the idea, in the middle of winter, we were gonna march to Bathurst but we were gonna take 10 days to do it, and I thought I knew cold country but the Vale of Clwydd at Lithgow, Jesus. Smart young fellow, you know, I raced out, grabbed the dish for first wash next morning,

14:00 out in front of the tent, and there's about that much ice on it next morning. I didn't have first wash. But we, oh when we got to Bathurst, dismissed, yackety yack, showers, ooh, hot showers, ooh and you know, and there's only two sides complete as seen from the road, and from the road up there. The rest was

14:30 open. The big tank was on top, yes, but it wasn't hooked up, was no heat in it. Now you imagine diggers slightly sweaty from the last march in Kelso, Limeburners Road up to the camp. Hot water, you bloody beauty. Turned her on, let her run for a while. The longer it run the colder it got, so good old army organises things.

15:00 **So what happened after Bathurst?**

A con job. Now if you are not back, now why would you give, there were some country boys but a lot of city boys too. You had to come back from Bathurst after your pre-embarkation leave and the Company Commander lined us up, "Now if you're not back here at a certain time you don't sail". "Shit,

15:30 oh no, we wouldn't, no." I tell you what, I don't think, there was two or three yes, there's always two or three bad apples in every barrel, but they did want them back sooner or later and we then came back to Bathurst, got on the train the next day and came back to Sydney, quite a, yeah I know, but they were paying for the warrant so it didn't matter. I board the Mary [Queen Mary] and we

16:00 were watching over the side and you hear the motor start, the big, we're not moving. One of my mates had come over this side full of shit, and the whole of the bottom of Sydney Harbour is being churned with the big four props on the Mary and this beautiful green harbour we're used of, and when we went back over that side it was doing the same on that side but this was a bit shallower. That's how many troops she had

16:30 on board, oh amazing.

So what route did the "Queen Mary" take?

Sydney, Melbourne, Fremantle, India, oh then we went up to, up near Poona where the British Officers, holy shit, no wonder they never won a war. We were marched over past it and one of the Poms were telling us about it.

17:00 Do you, I'm not kidding you, you get on to any old Englishman or people of our years, they'd sit them up in bed with a cup of tea, right, the nets are down, yeah. In comes the tea wallah, next would be the shaving wallah and he'd do about six every morning, they'd pay him. They'd sit up in bed and get shaved and then in would come another one,

- 17:30 little Indian with their boots just polished. They'd help them get dressed; check all their buttons and everything, on parade. Then after breakfast they ride their horses around the parade ground. What a way to fight a bloody war. Anyway we marched up past that, saw our first above ground burials because that's the way they do it, and you could smell it. "Hey, who dropped their guts?" "What are you talking about?"
- 18:00 We were within 100 yards of the burial ground so from there we came back down, 'cause Deolali, Poona is up in the hills, Bombay down there on the sea. The Rhona, R-H-O-N-A, "Rhona" was the little tub, after the Mary, up the Red Sea. The whole idea of this we
- 18:30 learned later, see it's wonderful to be intelligent later but you don't know it at the time, on the Horn, if you look at the Red Sea the bottom of the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa comes out like that and in that area there the dagoes [pejorative slang for Italians] had an air base and a naval base, and there's a good story I want you to ask me about.

We'll come back to that, yeah.

And I'll tell you the name of it, one of the ones they sunk.

- 19:00 Bartolomeo Colleoni, Australia, and why I remember it that way, World War I the [HMAS] Sydney sunk the Emden, no Sydney, the Sydney sunk the Emden and made the Kaiser swear. More modern cruiser but still, I know, stick to one subject at a time, yeah.

So where did you go next?

That was why they loaded us on to the smaller vessels, they wouldn't lose as many, and they couldn't risk the Mary or the

- 19:30 Lizzie [Queen Elizabeth] later on. Up the Canal, they off loaded us along the Canal and we took up the great job of which was a kick in the arse, we were guarding water stations and little stations and road junctions. Headquarter Company is up at Suez at the top end of the Suez having a ball, and they used to bring our rations down. "What's it like up there?" "Bloody awful mate." "Oh". "But we can swim in the
- 20:00 canal." The boats used to come through there slow and I tell you what, unless you've seen it you'd call me a bloody liar, but if you're away from the canal particularly on the low side and here's these ships almost stopped, fairly slow, and you say, what are they? You can't see the water, it's down there in this canal, and they're sailing through the sand, amazing you know, woo.
- 20:30 Didn't take us long to find out being Aussies, sticky beaks. The greatest sticky beaks in the world Aussie soldiers. "What's in there?" "You can't go in there. You can't go in there". "Why?" "Because." "Oh, because." You give them a reason because in the army you don't thieve. Get that through your pretty little skull. Don't thieve in the army unless you're caught and proven, then you're a thief but if you don't get caught you're scrounging. Just went looking for a bit of extra
- 21:00 stuff to eat. Oh, it was a very favourite past time in the army. I must tell you a funny story about; make a note of that, herrings in tomato sauce. Oh jeez, I've never eaten a bastard since. Anyway from there 6th Divvy goes into action and we learnt what other soldiers could do. They
- 21:30 captured Bardia, into it, most of it captured in two days, completely captured in four days and captured 42,000 dagoes, 3 battalions and one in reserve, half a dozen Pommy 25 pounders which was a magnificent gun but hasn't got the length of 88's, you know the big German stuff, and we had Itie [Italian] tanks, 6 mile an hour is their top speed. They were built
- 22:00 to protect infantry. Holy shit, now we followed them up the desert, a couple of weeks difference, we took over from them end of six weeks up past Benghazi, a place called, come back to that.

That's OK.

- 22:30 It was only a company of the three battalions and the brigade at, no. In that six weeks they captured 142,000 Italians and they weren't the full division. They pulled them back to go to Greece. Originally the 7th, that's why they cut the divvy in half and
- 23:00 built around it 7th and 9th, and Blamey said, "No fear", he said, and we were up the desert for advanced training, lasted a couple of weeks. We took over in the March and we were back in Tobruk in April. That's how long we stayed up there. We went up for advanced training while they went to Greece and did a bit more fighting. Rotten bastards, they're getting all the good things but we didn't realise what was coming in Greece.
- 23:30 Again those, that division wrote themselves into history because after they slaughtered the German paratroopers the Germans never again in World War II used paratroops. They copped such a caning. They got more out than was expected including a nurse which, well, she came of Greece, Crete to Greece, and from Greece,
- 24:00 they couldn't, didn't have enough vessels to go straight through to Alex so while there was a spell they'd unload them, Greece would pick them up along the line, whack them on to Crete. Now say, right, the other side we'll pick you up.

We might just stop if for a second for a sec Greg. OK. Rolling again.

We're coming back from

So what were you doing at

24:30 **this point? You were in Tobruk right?**

No, no, no, right of Tobruk. We were up, oh jeez I hate forgetting names. Anyway we were up there advanced training and the battalions were back from and this side of Benghazi and down the track came these horrible monsters and we were forward, we were forward platoon.

25:00 One of the jokers says, "You won't believe this mate." "Why?" "You won't believe this." Oh, they're pulling my leg again. Young fellow, you know. So I snuck in behind him and hear this clank clank clank going on. We now know it was a half track. You see the two wheels and then you see the, and they were about the size of two Bren gun carriers. There was two of them and behind

25:30 them, these massive great bloody monstrosities, tanks. Now we'd seen 25 pounders and anti-tank guns. We look up over a mile away and here's this great big bloody, oh. You looked at the rifle, looked at a Bren gun and we two or three mags and one Bren gun, looked at that and I thought "Oh Jesus, are we in, we in trouble." So they rings through the

26:00 battalion, "Get out of there." but they were going parallel to us. For some unknown reason they come in behind us, had a shot at the 2/5th in our brigade and they copped it, then pulled out to go on further down and we were the lucky battalion. So helter skelter and by the way, if ever you hear someone talking about 9th Division retreats from, they call it the Benghazi

26:30 Handicap, it was only a brigade up there. All the rest were strung out like Brown's cows, three battalions, 2/13th, 2/15th and the 2/17th. There's a funny story there too. A Pommy officer, that was before we got to them, we didn't see him shoot them, I mean I could lie and say I did, but what good is it. This Pommy officer pulled up and

27:00 asked for directions and he's sending some down there and some down there where we were heading see. Somewhere on the line he must've twigged to a word out of place or something military that he should've known and didn't. He was a German officer dressed as a, when I say Red Cap, Military Police. They call them Red Caps in the English Army, he's directing traffic, sergeant, you know, big fellow.

27:30 And the, I'm told, we saw the trucks all gathered around it and they got three or four others as well, he just pulled his pistol out and bang, said, "That's a German." and he bloody well was, and the ones they put down there, the tiger tanks are waiting, sitting up there with their guns up, "Come on in fellers, come on in fellers, the war's over for you."

So what happened after that?

We headed for

28:00 Tobruk day and night. Dig in of a night time, first stop, fill them in or leave them next morning and skelter on again, you know. Now we would've still been buried in the desert if the dagoes had've been men. They left their trucks and scampered. Now could you imagine running away and leaving a big diesel behind you? No, anything that would hold them up. If it wasn't for the captured trucks in Bardia,

28:30 Tobruk, Derna, further up, we didn't have any quality trucks or quantity of trucks. They were using them to tow guns, they were using them for this and troop carrying, big diesels. They didn't have the petrol to bring their tanks out of Fort Machilli. They left them there. One of our drivers came back and he was irate. "Pommy bastard." "What's wrong Danny?"

29:00 He said, "I offered him our load of petrol and the Pommy bastard looked me up and down and he said, Aussies, I'm talking about tons not gallons." He said, "Well they'd have got a couple of tanks out." He said, "No, I want tons", and they just hadn't, they were that confused and ignorant because we were told through division that there would be no, they

29:30 told, we knew the Germans would ultimately come in because the Italians were embarrassing them. "Oh no, can't possibly come in June, July, maybe August." This is May, March. They were six months ahead of their time down the track. The panic was on and it was a panic. The assault started on, we went, there is confusion

30:00 about what day the actual action took place of closing the back door and you are isolated, but I can tell you that a name from a German diary, one of the first actions straight up the Bardia Road, shut the back door and they're heading into Tobruk because once the tank, all over Europe once the tanks got in the infantry run away and Morshead, made a point of it, "There will be

30:30 no surrender here. If they come through let the bloody tanks come through." He said, "We've got 25 pounders and anti-tank guns. We'll deal with them, you deal with the infantry." "Well that sounds alright, that makes sense." We hadn't seen tanks come in in number but it made sense and it worked, but the first real slap on the face that Fritz got

- 31:00 Rommel, El Agheila was that place I was talking where we went up and relieved the 6th Divvy, El Agheila, I knew I'd think of it sooner or later. He sent one of his light armour divs fast up the Bardia Road and it's a name you won't forget, Pritt, General Prittwitz. They'd apparently very methodically they'd gone
- 31:30 down the road before they put the tank traps and the hunks of cement in and they'd marked it out from the gun to where this was and that was, and a 25 pounder is one of the most versatile universal weapons around. It's just a bit short of the 88 which originally was, believe it or not, anti-aircraft, and Rommel said, "That would go well on tanks", and it did. Bong, another tank gone. Anyway
- 32:00 they're steaming up the Bardia Road, like towards from Bardia to Tobruk, artillery opens up, one two scout cars, bang, one half track, boom, one Prittwitz, General Prittwitz, and a bit.

So you were there for this?

No, no. This is from

So where are you at this point?

I was around the corner in the, with the battalion, with the battalion, brigade. We were in the trenches waiting on them.

- 32:30 **So what happened next?**

Edmondson VC [Victoria Cross]. That was their advance party. They took the patrol out and they killed over 30 in one fell swoop, but it was the prelude to the battle that followed, the Easter Battle. 37, 7 twice, no 34, twice 7 is 14, 34 tanks came in through the wire,

- 33:00 headed into Tobruk to take you know, headquarters, and they just closed in on them. They pinned him into one gully, they call them waddies over there, down the dry gully, boong, and once they stopped the first or the first two, they started piling up. Now 34 tanks came in and 17 went out and 17 stayed there. About 250 killed,

- 33:30 over 200 taken prisoner, tank crews shot, you know. Anyway, but it was the best thing ever happened because the other battalions, "Hey, if they can bloody do it so can we", and the word went around the 30 odd mile perimeter. Now there was 10 battalions,

- 34:00 nine infantry 'cause you've got three brigades, three battalions per brigade and the Pioneers traditionally when needed always followed as infantry, and you got the rest behind you, you know. Machine guns, yackety yackety yack, and it spread around, "Hey, if they can bloody do it so can we." And the whole, 'cause up till then we were a bit disillusioned, this going up the desert and then getting

- 34:30 chased back by the first lot of tanks you see wasn't the idea of winning a war, and I kid you not, the spirit rose, and after that, oh they had three or four more shots and they did get into the hot spot called the Salient. 49 Yards is the distance between trenches. Here around further around where we were originally 4,000, 5,000, further around 2,500, so you had

- 35:00 a bit of a stroll before you got near them and it was a gentleman's war up to then, after in the Salient.

So what happened next?

Well he stayed there and we couldn't get him out and we lost a lot of men. Now to proceed with your history and chronology and order we were told we would get relieved. Now there was brevity by name and nature, got his arse kicked. I've got

- 35:30 a, somewhere in there I've got one.

We'll have a look at it in a break if you like.

Yeah, righto. Now they dropped pamphlets on us, "Surrender yackety, yackety, yack, we're going to bomb your ships, we're going to do this", because they reckon they were going to go through the Salient but they didn't. We held them out at that one and a few others. They were getting more guns in, more troops because he's on his way down to Cairo.

- 36:00 To be successful in any business and any war, any ship, any endeavour you've got to be a bit arrogant, you've got to be a bit over confident, and Rommel was because up till then he kicked arses from Poland right through and he had his pick of the Afrika Korps. They were big men, they were well trained, but so were we, and the longer it went the cockier

- 36:30 we got, and I've seen jokers, I've seen jokers that almost got themselves killed by being too lackadaisical, too complacent. They see a machine gun spit and he'd say, "Nowhere near us you mug." "You see the little blinkety blink just like a tail light only smaller at a distance. You hear putt, putt, putt. You're getting close." "Yeah but I know he fired like that last night and the night before, he's

- 37:00 right." "Jesus, you're a bit over confident mate." It happens but to be successful you need to be, and we used to love scaring the shit out of the dagoes.

So you were relieved from Tobruk?

Now let's get, I'll give you the three

I might just get you to sit back in your chair because when you lean forward we can't see your face on the camera.

In other words don't get too

Yeah.

Brevity was the first one that got its arse kicked,

37:30 then there's Battleaxe and did it get blunted. This is over a six month period by the way. Then Crusader was the one that came up. Now by that time we were getting pretty crook and oh, Blamey and the Poms, it was fighting left right and centre. They even involved our own government, home here Australia. Why should our, because at one stage of the game the only casualties come out from around the Med, because the 7th Divvy had been in action against

38:00 the Vichy French, not the Free French, Crosses of Lorraine. Now Greece, Crete, there's, if you want to attach the Australians that got damaged there was no other casualties coming out.

So Jim, just so

And Crusader was the one that

Yeah.

got to us and opened the corridor up

OK.

and by that time there was only one battalion left because

38:30 the destroyer they were going to come out on, Laytona or Kingston,

So where were you at this point? 'Cause I guess part of what I want to find out is where you were and what you were doing with your

I was infantry.

Yeah. So where were you? You were relieved from Tobruk?

Yeah.

And then what happened?

We went back to Kilo, Hill 69, had a bit of a couple of weeks there and we got the job of being policemen up in Syria,

39:00 but the beauty, oh I tell you what, unless, being a bit crude, unless you've seen men drunk on Arak, you ain't seen a drunk. Oh, it's clear liquid, mix water with it it goes white like milk, and I don't know what cow or bloody camel it came out of, but boy did it have a kick in it. I never drunk it but you'd watch them and boy do they go arse over head. You can drink it all night providing you stay where you are.

39:30 If you're warm don't go out. If you're cold don't come in. Any alteration in temperature they just seem to go pst.

So this was a drink particular to Syria was it?

No, all the Middle East countries had their own version of it.

And what was it called?

Arak, ouzo.

Oh ouzo, right, yeah.

It was known in the area, but that's what, they deliberately shut their eyes to a lot of things the boys did to let them recover because we'd lost two, one and a half

40:00 to two and a half stone. An old mate of mine run the Spy School,

I might just stop you there because we've actually finished a tape.

Yeah.

So we'll go on with that story.

00:31 **We need to start again, OK?**

I want to show you what we wanted in Australia instead of that shit house thing Australia Backwards, and I'm gonna show you that film even if I've got to kick your legs out from underneath you before you go, but the one in Syria, 2/4th Field Company, they were the ones that built the diggers' monument at Morshead's request, and the request from was a request.

01:00 "Do it or else", and by that time we trusted him, you know. Now in Syria they built some of the small gauge, the tunnels and the railway line and all that, and the 2/4th Field Company they were graphic artists and artisans and they were tradesmen. So they decided they would patch up the arse end of the old brewery. I don't know where they got the supplies from but

01:30 they got them until Morshead stamped his feet or one of the officers stamped their feet. They called it Panther's Piss, and Nipper being Nipper, he later on finished on Z Force believe it or not, so he was a hell of a feller, he designed a label for it and there was very few bottles got out before the shit hit the fan, and he had a big tub and this big panther,

02:00 big black panther, beautiful big thing about twice as big out of proportion, and here they got their bottles and they got their hands on his you know what and they'd squeeze him and fill the bottles up. "Next bottle, Panther's Piss". Anyway one of the Brigadiers must've been told about it and all of a sudden it went off the market and so did the brand, but I'd love to have got one of those back as a souvenir. I've got a good souvenir there,

02:30 it was dropped on us in Tobruk, a surrender pamphlet and they wouldn't believe that, and that's what I was telling that fellow outside about the searchlights. We had the Dagoes, now I kid you not and this, I'm proud to talk about this bit, when they go through and that, I'll bring it up at the next interview, it's by Chester Wilmot who died in a plane crash

03:00 in 1943 but he was equal to Bean, who was the top gun reporter in World War I, and Chester Wilmot was all the diggers' way, you know. But at one stage of the game after things settled down to a siege mentality there was seven divisions of Dagoes and four divisions of Afrika Korps,

03:30 and the Germans would not allow, because they put them in there once and they run out, in the Salient, that was the hot spot. It was just like, you know, a little peninsula. He wanted it, we wanted and we met half way, but

So the Germans wouldn't allow the Italians to be in the Salient?

They couldn't trust them.

Because they'd run away previously, had they?

04:00 Oh yes. They, now I know one occasion but in that book if ever you read it, Tobruk and El Alamein by Barton Moore. "Sit back you bastard!" "Yeah I will, righto." Rommel made application to the general high command, German, went over all the in-betweeners everywhere, went right to the high command. Permission to shoot Italian officers and Italian servicemen, soldiers that turned back before firing an angry shot at the enemy.

04:30 Of course they said, "No", but he wanted it on record, and he used his tanks to get even with them, and every time they run away, the one time I know about it we were sitting in the trenches, it was early morning, Stan too, and then something started and you could hear the, you could hear them. They've got a peculiar sound the big tiger and you don't want to mix it up with your tanks or Bren gun carrier, that's a tiger. You, you know, you

05:00 can't lose your bet on that, that's a tiger, and we ducked our heads but by this time we were old soldiers. There's no, nothing going overhead, nothing out in the sand there. "What's going on?" So me being me, had to have a look, and with their guns, nowadays they've got a ratchet

05:30 besides the main armament and you can shoot, the gun can be shooting that way and they can be shooting that way, but in those days they had to swing the main armament around, and the gun's not facing towards us. It's facing the other way. "What's going on here, you know?" And we hear the rattle of gun fire of machine gun, it's not coming our way. They brought the Dagoes in, a couple of thousand of them and they turn

06:00 around and scarpered, and he said, "Turn the guns on them." Now whether he killed any or he just frightened the shit of them I don't know. But Barton Moore said it happened three times. I can't say that, I know it happened once, and if you stick to what you know you haven't got to lie to cover up a lie. That's my motto. Right.

So we've got you in Syria?

Yeah.

What actions were you involved in there?

There was no action. We were a police, we were policing what the

06:30 7th Divvy had taken when they were going home, they're on their way home and we were acting as Occupational Forces and didn't we give the Turks a bit of swish 'cause we were right on the Turkish border and there was a bridge over the Ruhr River, a ravine, and they'd come across to do their trade in Aleppo and other places that we, you know, other names I've forgotten, and jeez, 'cause we were the border guards

07:00 plus the MP's [Military Police] and the Pommies, "Eh by gum chum, don't do that." "Never heard you, you bastard." "You little pin headed little so and so's", because we wanted to have a scrap with them to square up for Gallipoli.

You wanted to have a scrap with the Poms?

No, with the Turks. They were neutral but there was a good reason, I think they were coming in on the German side where they'd been in World War I but they

07:30 didn't. They could've marched, if they'd had German equipment they could've, 'cause we were that spread out you know, but we used to give them a bit of swish regularly.

So what do you mean by a bit of swish?

Insult the bastards. Call them gutless little cowards, anything you could think up, anything you could compose in English we would've thrown at them.

And what did they come back with?

Nothing.

Do you think they were aware

08:00 **of who you were and why you were doing it?**

Oh, they knew who we were.

And they knew why you were doing it?

Yeah. I mean let's face facts, Ali Baba Morshead and his 40,000 thieves, there's another story if you've got time to fit it in, how we got our name, the Rats of Tobruk and who gave it to us. Now I can't tell you his name, he was not Sir Alexander, Sir something or other, and he was the prime mover, head of the Nazi Party in England.

08:30 Did you realise that they had a fully operational voting for parliament down to earth Nazi Party in England before the war?

Sir Oswald Mosely?

That's the man. I can never think of Mosely. Now his lieutenants, he had about four, but his top lieutenants used to go England Germany, Germany England, diddly bump. Comes the revolution, looks like going on. They decided

09:00 the war was getting close so they interned the bloody lot of them except a man called William Joyce. He'd gone to Germany to bring orders back to Mosely and he didn't get interned, and he worked in the Department of Misdirection Misuse Propaganda. Now you'll hear them say Goebbels was Lord Haw Haw. Never. We called William Joyce "Lord

09:30 Haw Haw" because he was like a donkey's bray, you know. He was always bellowing, but I'll tell you what, a lot of it was true. He told us that the commanding officers, captains, the name of a destroyer that were coming in. He nominated the battalion, 32nd. He nominated the destroyer they were coming in on and time, and it arrived. That's how, but there's another, I've got another book in there,

10:00 The Best Kept Secret in World War II, was kept under the Official Secret Act for 30 odd years. An Aussie went to England to research it because some other battalion claimed where he'd been, El Alamein. But getting back to Tobruk

Well getting back to William Joyce.

William Joyce, Lord Haw Haw.

And how he named the Rats of Tobruk.

Yeah. He sarcastically referred to us, coming out of our

10:30 holes blinking of a night time to scrounge up tucker which we are not allowing them. "We are going to blow them into the sea." "They hunt like rats, they live like rats." Anyway one of the jokers says, "Hey, you're a bit of a rat are you?" And it slowly caught on from troop to troop to troop and it stuck and that's in my pocket, no, ever seen the Rat of Tobruk

11:00 badge?

No, I haven't actually.

It's got my gold card in it and I had to find it once. Someone wanted to know if my driver's licence is gold. No, that's not it.

Well look, show it to me later anyway.

No. I'll show it to you now before I forget. There's the card and that's my cunning kick, always keep something in your cunning kick.

11:30 Oh shit, oh, I'll file the pieces up the back. Here you are, now turn it over and have a look at the number on it.

On the back it says 303.

And what does that remind you of?

A rifle.

Yeah, and we are redundant like the bloody rifle. That's my story.

So the badge says, Rats of Tobruk Association, and it's got a crouching kangaroo.

And that's

12:00 what eventuated from William Joyce. Now

So when was the Association formed?

By Nick Woodward in 1945. He came home disability and refused a discharge and he was crazy but he was an Aussie. He wanted a better effort. Formed it in New South Wales and he died over, Nick Woodward died some years ago

12:30 over at War Vets.

Right. So he came back and formed the Association before the end of the war?

No. They started it, yes, they did start it because I was in Uralla Hospital with malaria and he came around.

Sort it out later if you like?

There it is. No, I can talk, I can do more than one thing at once, no, two things at a time, you know.

You're multi-skilled.

I don't know about the skilled part of it,

13:00 but now I'll tell you another silly story you'll say bullshit. William Joyce, Lord Haw Haw, was both shot and hung. Comment?

I'd heard he'd been shot actually. No, I'd heard he'd been hung, that's right. No, I'd heard that he was hanged at the end of the war.

That's right, but he was shot first. He was trying to escape into Spain,

13:30 and they, along with a lot of others they were trying to get onto. They shot deliberately low and hit him in the hip, so they put him in a hospital, patched him up, made him well then tried him. They hung him for treason because he was travelling on a British passport, a German citizen, some of the stories, but

But look, let's just

14:00 **now get back to Syria, that you were basically doing police duties there.**

Yeah.

How long were you in Syria?

About three months. Well you can work it out, right December 7 down there and I'll tell you something about that in a few sentences.

OK.

December, January, February, March we were on the

14:30 move again up the desert. We thought we were going home and they said, "No, you're going up the desert for a picnic." Was some picnic El Alamein.

So you went to El Alamein?

Now we came from Syria down to El Alamein. The other divisions had gone home and we thought we were on the way home. We were going up the desert for a picnic.

So once you got to El Alamein what happened then?

It was on.

- 15:00 They were within 60 mile of Alexandria. Our brigade was pushed up the road, only the, now you've got to visualise this. You have a road 10 foot above there, right? Now down there and further into the Qattara Depression you're below sea level. The road literally, with its various run offs, kept the water and the silt and the shit
- 15:30 from the Mediterranean from flowing in and when you say gunk and goo and mud, that was there, so they pushed us up into that to cover the road and Jerry's on his way down. Well we did after a lot of confusion and one of our other brigades had two battalions forward and I think it was the
- 16:00 Light Sussex Regiment, green as grass. They even had cold weather kit with them, and they broke and run and they captured two companies, 2/4th, 2/23rd, 2/24th and a company, the 43rd I think. They were just giving up, you know, I mean they should never have lost them, but then they decided they'd fight in little pockets and that didn't work, but they left us
- 16:30 on the coast and through us,

Hold on, let's get that out later. Let's have a look at that later.

It was the best kept, there was three VC's won in that and they couldn't put down only infantry action of why and that's, it was the capture reminded me of it, capture of Hill 621 I think it was, Rommel's long range, mid range and short range radio intercept. Up till then

- 17:00 Rommel was one step ahead of us all the way. You'd get moved overnight to there and you'd look up, "Shit, where did those tanks come from?" He was one step ahead like playing chess, but once he lost his intelligence section and the houseboats on the Nile, would you believe sitting up on a beautiful houseboat on the Nile was a espionage ring?

A German espionage ring?

Yeah.

- 17:30 **That was his intelligence or part of his intelligence?**

Part of his intelligence company. There was three actually, different, up the Nile, and they got three of them after, but that was Aussies.

So once they got his intelligence section?

No, we're at El Alamein now. Where are you, where are you up, where are we up to?

You know you were just starting to say, but once they got Rommel's intelligence section.

Well we're on a level playing field, and the Poms were using counter-intelligence. They'd turned a few of the

- 18:00 agents over, sort of. Now I won't, I won't really put pressure on you but when you cock a 45 or a 38 it makes a sharp click and when it's stuck up your nostrils you may decide to turn over and forget about the Jerries, and the Poms were expert at that. We never questioned name, unit, where are you from, what are you doing? But once the Poms got the Germans

- 18:30 or any captive they sat and talked quietly to them. They always got what they wanted.

In terms of intelligence?

Mmm, and once the level playing field, but don't, don't start running into any misapprehension, we had more killed in the first battle than the second battle but we had more wounded in the second battle.

- 19:00 It, oh talk about rain, it was terrible you know.

Now I just want to place you back on that road because that was when you last spoke about what you

Yeah, up the, towards El Alamein Station and Tel El Eisa Station. Now we held that. He flowed around us a bit but not much and in one of the records captured, or after the war by his son Manfred, he commented, "Oh, not those bloody Australians

- 19:30 again", but we held him. Then the build up came and this is one of the disgusting things about Churchill. Churchill was an impatient man that wanted a fix immediately. Not tomorrow, yesterday, and now the only two troops in the area, no matter how many the others apart from their artillery, the Royal
- 20:00 Horse Artillery 104, the two we remember are Chestnut and Rocket, Tobruk. Hadn't have been for them we'd have been mincemeat because they kept the tanks off our back. Now Montgomery literally learnt from Morshead and VC winner World War I, New Zealander, jeez I must be getting old

- 20:30 and stupid. VC winner, he won it at Gallipoli in charge of New Zealand Division. They were the only two divisions on the battlefield apart from the artillery machine gunners, but you can't count them as front line soldiers. They do their job, don't get me wrong. Anyway Monty formulated the idea what he was gonna do, and he more or less stood Churchill up and said, "Well,
- 21:00 we know that they've got so many tanks from the intelligence papers, we know what they've got", and a copy of them was sent straight home to England, and he just said, "No". I think it was the first general that really stood up to Churchill. No.

So what were the consequences of that for the Australians including your unit?

A bit more training, a bit more familiarisation, a few more

- 21:30 patrols, a few more casualties, but run of the mill, you know.

For what approximate period?

Hey?

For how long?

Oh well, the whole, we were standing around I suppose in and out relieving for about five or six weeks. That was, we had about five or six weeks between the two battles.

And then to keep the story moving, moving into the second battle, what was your involvement in that?

October

- 22:00 23rd, infantry as usual, and I'll tell you a funny story about that. Do you know how the signal was given for the first salvo? It's unbelievable when you think of it how easy it was. Two Bofors guns protecting two searchlights, right, there and there. About a third of the way in from the sea, a third of the way in from the Qattara Depression. At a given
- 22:30 signal they burn their lights, flashed them up and just over in front of the allied guns or the, you know, they were just in behind the infantry, we had to look backwards to see it, two lights focused and slowly, very slowly came together. Now you've got 900 guns waiting on that command. If ever you approach
- 23:00 the photographic section, historical section in Canberra they've got three plates and there's one flash of gun fire from there straight down the line, 900 guns, and that's what it was as those two circles imposed upon each other one master gunner all fired, and I'll tell you what, it was the most impressive
- 23:30 thing I saw in the whole of the war, but it also scared the shit out of me and a few of my mates. I was sitting there next to Lofty and a few of the others and he said, "Jesus, what do you reckon about that?" I said, "Oh, isn't it lovely?" For once we got plenty of this. He said, "Yeah, but there's one thing." "What?" He says, "They ain't started to fire yet. "No, he's knocking them out." He said, "How about if he don't and they've got
- 24:00 just as much as we have?" "Oh shit, are we in for a pasting." "Oh, are we gonna cop the curly end of the pineapple." But they'd done their work, survey work and their pin pointing work good because, I know what we were gonna mention in the same breath, digging your graves. Every truck we moved out of there the night before
- 24:30 we advanced. Only things that came, and there's a bare field. Now we're underground, rattling cane, yackety yackety yack. We're in our graves, we're planted, and there was a, the idea was to fool him into thinking there was a battalion further over there and there was another one over there they knew of, but we'd pulled out to reinforce the new attack down there.
- 25:00 And they'd even moved tanks down there and left them, left bodgie ones you know, mock ups.
- Now just because you did speak off camera before about the digging of graves, could you give me a more kind of detailed account of that?**
- Well two nights before the actual 23rd we were told that, we were given a rough idea of the scheme, and the idea was
- 25:30 to make us invisible with no support vehicles in the area and we'd pulled out of there for somewhere else, but a couple of hours before we were moving forward on the 23rd, the night of the attack, "Righto fellows, here's the, get your tucker, bully beef and biscuits", no, I think we had a bully beef stew. You always had a change in the army. You either had bully beef and
- 26:00 biscuits or biscuits and bully beef. Now I mean that's 50 50, and Jesus, didn't you lose some weight too. But righto then, at the given word extra stuff was brought up and start line here we come. Then the barrage went off, then we went in and we did it fairly easy for a while, then we got a few casualties. I think they, the Jerries were punchy.
- 26:30 I really believe that because they just didn't behave like we knew them to behave in the past, but after

the first night the shit hit the fan and they really shovelled it in to us from then on in, and one of the boys that was a bit more observant than I, they never let us leave, they stood us down and I'll give you one lot of casualties. Now A Echelon, B Echelon, English Command.

27:00 A Echelon is your front line, B Echelon is about 150 men of that battalion under a major, a couple of captains, a couple of lieutenants, a couple of sergeants and troops. Now if that battalion gets wiped out they can form the battalion around the nucleus, hey, it's a good idea. Now, so that's 850 out of a 1,000 right, 150. The 2/24th

27:30 and the 2/43rd were the two. One after 11 nights was down to 51 men on the battlefield and the other one was down to 57. There would've been all sincerity, there would've been a couple of hundred likely wounded that would've come back.

Now look I just want to return us to this,

Yeah.

What do you mean digging our graves? Could you say that again?

Well we dug single trenches, one man, a few

28:00 of us snuck in once you got talking to your mate on a V section but you weren't supposed to. Literally we camouflaged ourselves is the best way of putting it by digging holes, and covering it with rattan. Rattan was the word used, that was it, yeah. That's mesh.

Yeah, it was a kind of bamboo wasn't it?

Yeah, the rattan came and went down first. Hessian, hessian.

Hessian, so you put rattan cane covered by hessian?

Covered by

28:30 sand.

And you were actually hiding underneath?

Yeah.

So you regarded them as kind of surrogate graves?

Yeah, well that's it, but I tell you what, at least we didn't have sergeants bellowing on. We had 24 hours all to our cotton picking little selves.

So how many of you were in each pit?

Some one, some two, 1,000 men.

And what were you actually doing there? Were you waiting for the Germans?

Just rested. We were safe and sealed until they come up with trucks with our tucker

29:00 after dark the next night. "So here you are, I'm giving you a 24 hour leave pass. You can't go anywhere, you can't do anything but look at all the sleep you're gonna catch up on."

What if you wanted to answer the call of nature?

They didn't tell us that, the sergeants, but a couple of fellows that couldn't give a stuff about anything, they wanted the porcelain, they climbed out and they were frowned upon but they said, "Well, so there's a couple

29:30 of diggers walking around, so what?"

So you hid down there for how long?

24 hours.

And at the end of that 24 hours?

Had a feed, moved up to the start line, Bob's your uncle, she's on, go.

What was the aim of concealing you there?

Basically I think was to not give them an idea of the build up and where possible given the confusion, an empty paddock as it were, they'd move them out somewhere else so there's a gap between that battalion

30:00 and that battalion, so they're not holding that part of the line and they gave the inference by the dummy tanks the build up was over there.

So they knew the Germans would be watching?

Oh they knew, they knew that the, you know.

How were the Germans watching? Were they sending over aircraft?

Aircraft regularly, long range, mainly before that was their intercepts.

30:30 They were reading our messages and we didn't know they were reading them. You wouldn't believe it but it was true. They knew more about us than we did, and when it come back to a level playing field we played a hell of a price for it as you can see by the names in that list. But, there was a Pommy officer came

31:00 up with the AISC, ASC, Army Service Corps, Transport Section. "Hurry up, do this, do that", and I heard this from another fellow that knew Big Red Robbie, 2/24th. "Come on, I've gotta go", and all this stuff and we're in all these new trucks, yack yack yack. "Hurry them up, go and tell your officers". He said, "We haven't got any officers bar

31:30 one" and he said, "He won't talk to you". "Well tell him this, tell him that". He said, "Listen you dirty little stupid Pommy bastard", he said, "That is the battalion, the whole 51 of them." You know what, he never said any more that Pom, but it would be a bit of a shock, but because we knew what was going down, the casualties and we were coming closer and closer and closer to cover the front, you knew you were having trouble.

32:00 But it's Australian way of life I think to accept the inevitable. You've got a grin on your face.

No.

Come on, spit it out.

No, I was just, the Australians,

32:30 **you know, I was just laughing at, you know, I was appreciating the, you know, knocking the English, yeah.**

Well put it this way.

OK, you were about to say the Australian way of life.

Accept the inevitable, cop it sweet, and we had a certain, you can see it later on, I think we were a bit egotistical but we had a lot to show for, reason

33:00 to be. We did the impossible when other troops couldn't do it. When you can belt the shit out of the best the German army's got, the Afrika Korps. When your 7th Divvy belts the shit out of the famous Foreign Legion in a fortnight, one battalion went through two battalions. They ruined my childhood. I used to love reading those books when I was a kid if I could get them.

Which books?

The French Foreign Legion. They were Vichy French. The others,

33:30 when I say the cross, I don't know whether you've seen it and I might be telling you something you already know, but the Cross of Lorraine had two bars on it. They were the Free French. The Poles, well they were all piss and wind like a barber's cat. We had them in Tobruk and you read their papers and listen to them talking on radio and television. The Aussies were there to support them but they never

34:00 came in till the end of August, and if you really want to know what causes you to have the shits in a big way, work this one through with me. If everything goes right that brigade is gonna change over with your brigade. They say, "You're going out on patrol." "Oh yeah, we'll take them out." "Good, get them out, get them used to it." "They're gonna relive us." But, there's always a but in all these

34:30 easy things. Only one of the group that came up could talk English, and they split them into two, and they're bloody well armed with rifles and pistols and the inevitable happened. Three Poles, two Aussies wounded, and I've never seen, if they were trying to protect their own boys, Colonel Crawford and Major Bell, you've never seen

35:00 such a bloody, years later we saw the report and they weren't having anything about, "No, no, no, stay, hey, hey, hey, hey, otherwise they won't relive us", and they blamed the overhanging cloud and the slight dust storm, and they blamed this and they blamed that. They tried, one of the corporals stood up and says, "Listen you

35:30 bastard, we were, I was, yeah, bang" and he got one through the calf of the leg, he was lucky. Big dry-cleaning job, oh well. But that would give anyone the shits.

So what was your view of, what was your opinion of the English?

I don't blame the Pommy himself. I

36:00 believe the officer caste and the manner what they work under, they were never allowed to think, and if

you think and you've read any stories of Anzac Cove and Gallipoli the Pommies were around the corner, different name.

Cape Helles?

Hey?

H E double L E S

Yeah, Helles.

Helles, yeah.

- 36:30 Now they were ashore easy compared to the diggers at Anzacs, and the officers, "Oh we'll get orders", and they went down the back around to the beach and the Pommies stopped. Now this, we noticed that a lot.

So obviously the legacy and the strong feelings of Gallipoli were still alive in World War II?

Oh yes. But I don't, I don't blame the Poms. The conditions they worked

- 37:00 under, the lack of pay, they weren't well paid. They treated them like little children or imbeciles.

This is

Unless you had three stripes you were nothing in the Pommy Army.

Is this World War II?

Yeah. That's why I think we never got the guns and tanks we should've had as a complete unit or army corps.

- 37:30 "Keep the bastards out in front of us" because when we got to know the Northumberland Fusiliers, machine gunners and Rocket and Chestnut troops, Royal Horse Artillery, they were as cocky as all get out. "You keep them off our back we'll give you all the firepower in the world", and they did too, have no doubt. They were wonderful gunners.

So what was your opinion of the German soldier?

- 38:00 The ones we hit, now before I say anything we fought a clean war. The only civilians we struck were at Derna, Barce and Benghazi and they declared that open town, so we went around it. But there was no civilians, there was no cities, there was no factories, railways, electrical sub-stations. Basically it was man on man out in the desert, first up

- 38:30 best dressed. So I know you can't say a clean war, but basically we were one army against another army. Forget the Dagoes, they were the greatest cowards in modern history, without doubt. Do you realise, now we'll jump from, we'll get back to that little one in a minute. We'll jump now to before Bardia.

Well I'm, we haven't finished what you thought of the Germans.

Well,

- 39:00 I was going to put it to you why we, they were good soldiers, they wouldn't back off, you had to stop them. Quite often their tanks would be surrounded but they'd still keep fighting and they'd back their way out. If they couldn't turn they'd back out and keep firing. Patrol work, you couldn't fault them on that and we struck a German
- 39:30 Patrol, the only way we slipped them, the way you beat the Germans, they were a very methodical well trained, very methodical, and if you found one group of land mines they were laid in diamond pattern, and once you found one group, and their whole thinking was very methodical. So all, so when we'd hit them like that on a fighting patrol, no backing out that way.
- 40:00 We'd go left or right. Here they are still shooting. "You shoot all you want mate, we're pissing off back home."

Tape 3

- 00:32 **So to take the story on in El Alamein, the last point that we had you involved in was coming out of the concealment in the desert**

Yeah.

and moving forward. So what happened once you came out of that?

That was first, well from then on for 11 nights it was move. In that period of time we made five major

attacks. This is what you learn later. A good liar can sit there in the club

01:00 or sit there and yackety yack. I remember this, bullshit. It wasn't until after the war until I read battalion history I knew that, I didn't know until then we'd been attacked 22 times. I knew we went forward five times but it was just kept throwing stuff at us, OK, so, so they're throwing stuff at us.

So was this 11 days and 11 nights?

Yep.

Constant, constant action?

Constant.

Constant barrage?

Yeah.

So can you just give us a bit of a description of what it was like to

01:30 **actually be there?**

You see, if you read your history and use a bit of thinking about it, it was only planned for a three day effort. Now after three days they changed their plans. Instead of going forward we went sideways and it was on, and as we beat Dagoes, the Germans would pull the Dagoes out, piss them off down that end of the,

02:00 the, towards the Qattara Depression where New Zealanders were sweating on them. Now remember 11 divisions on the battlefield, we suffered 22 per cent of total casualties, our division. New Zealand suffered 8 per cent, but they went through 30,000 Dagoes like a knife through hot butter. They were changing Germans and that and we're copping the Germans and they're copping the Dagoes, but they chased and did they

02:30 chase. But there's something else, OK, I'll go back to that in a minute, but the real battle of El Alamein not only was fought on that battlefield, now I know, "Get back in place you bastard, get back into line", was three fold. Ever heard about the English, the American Torch?

No, I haven't actually.

The landing at Tripoli and

03:00 Algeria? Well that's happening up that end of the country and we're happening down this end near the Suez, we were 60 miles from Alex [Alexandria]. They said the first barrage was heard in Alex, 62 I think it was exactly, loudly heard in Alex, that's how, now if we'd have given way they'd have kicked our arse, they'd have been over the Suez Canal, up into the oilfields

03:30 and if you look at even the country they're fighting on today, Iraq, Iran, now just around the corner from Iran is Russia. So a couple of days travel and they'd have been feeding their own tanks with their, the reason the Russians beat them, they weren't better soldiers, their tanks ran out of bloody fuel. You look at all the retreat of the German Army. They're all on foot.

04:00 Now if we'd have been beaten, zolt, and the Poms and the Yanks would've had a battle on their hands. So we were a decoy for the Torch landing. We also had the job of keeping the Suez Canal open to feed Malta and the other troops, and what really pisses me off is the fact that the teachers in our primary and secondary schools and

04:30 high schools don't tell you a thing about it. They want to forget it. The more the dagoes in Liverpool can wipe out the parks, now they took a park off Edmondson, just under the bridge when you come into Liverpool over the bridge up, was a small park. We gonna call Bradshaw, we're gonna combine it. 1988, Australia about Australians'

05:00 achievements, what they did, a Yank gets in on the act. He took off at Bankstown Airport. Airacobra, didn't adjust the pitch of his [propeller], I knew this through an airman.

Look,

I know.

it would be good to talk about this later because you were creating a really vivid picture of those 11 days and 11 nights.

Well,

What was, how did this involve you on a day to day basis as an infantryman?

All infantry, well when they said "Move", you moved.

05:30 They brought you up ammo, tucker. There was once or twice we had a few hours between moving or you'd hold it overnight, but once you were there to hold they're coming at you. There was movement

somewhere along the line. Jerry wasn't gonna let you rest and settle in. Sometimes you'd break up and you'd get a bit of

06:00 kip. I'll take it, and amongst yourselves, you know, but basically with all the boong boongs going off and tanks roaring around and something else happening, unless you were deaf, real deaf you could hear it, and interrupted sleep but it's amazing what determination will do. You've gone this far, you've lost all these other

06:30 fellows. We're still going forwards, they're starting to fall back and basically the whole idea of it was let the infantry break through their lines, home them up and we'll whack the tanks through, and do you know what? I can afford to laugh now reading all the stories later on. We just sat like dummies for about two days, don't move,

07:00 and years later I thought what the bloody hell good is that, because at one stage of the game they weren't whipping the German tanks, they were just, the Germans were holding them out in the open where they could manoeuvre and use the big 88, the gun that never misses, terboong, another tank gone, and they lost amazing numbers. They never revealed the number of tanks they lost but we are told they started off

07:30 with Shermans, Grants, they were the big front line, there was over 600 on the battlefield commencement. Now it is estimated that more than 300 of those were lost in those, after we did the fighting. We opened it up.

Now look, you've talked about determination, you've talked about the will to keep going. Can you remember how this day by day being under fire, advancing, the odds seemed fairly

08:00 **great. How was that affecting you personally?**

Let me put it another way. You get footballers playing football and he'll get a kick in the head or they'll slam him back down and after the game he can't remember much. He was playing football. "What were you doing today mate?" "Playing football." "Remember that try you scored?" "What try?" I think the noise, the pressure, the burning up of the

08:30 body of, it makes you punchy. That's the only way I can explain it. Robot, you're determined to go, and I'll give you a for instance, and you hear about these chockos up in New Guinea throwing their rifles up in the air and covering 100 yards before it hit the ground. 2/13th our sister battalion went into battle with 32 officers, men, right.

09:00 They were reduced from 32 to 2, but every time an officer went a sergeant stepped up. He got killed, a corporal stepped up and afterwards at one stage of the game there was more sergeants in charge of companies than what there was officers, and they still reached their objective.

Now you used the term burning up. What did you mean by that?

Body burning

09:30 up? Well you're not getting regular meals. The only one meal you're getting is when they can get to you at a night time if they can get to you. You've got emergency rations, bully beef and biscuits for a change, and you seem to be trying to, words,

10:00 the body seems to be working twice as hard as it should and the brain's going about four times because you want to stay alive, but you want to do your job, and I don't know why in the early stages, El Agheila, the name I couldn't remember, we were more frightened of letting the memory and the deeds of the Word War I diggers down. We weren't frightened of Germans 'cause

10:30 they told us, "You're as good as we are, you can beat them." That was the diggers at home, you know, "Don't be worried about them. One on one you'll beat the bastards" but when you heard and read of the achievements of World War I, we were following the footsteps. We trained on one of their battlefields at Gaza. We went through their old training ground on the Suez Canal.

11:00 They told us all about the gulli gulli boys and the Gyppos that appear out of nowhere. "Hey digger, egg?" "Where the bloody hell do they come from?" Wish I learnt there, you know, how they disappeared the way they did, and they were edible too what was more. Only ever had one egg at a time. I don't know where they got the second one but they did.

So to get back to the concept of the body burning up, was there a point when you thought I'm going to lose it

11:30 **here because I'm, my condition's running really low, I haven't had adequate food and I'm just living on pure adrenaline? Was there ever a point where you approached that?**

Yes, but the only way I can say that, you looked after your own. There were a couple of jokers under pressure but you grabbed them in the trench and sit with them, "Say relax, easy". Next day they might be doing it for someone

12:00 else.

What was happening when you grabbed them? What was, how were they reacting to what was happening?

They were gonna break. They were starting to show signs of Nervous Nellies and, you know.

What were those signs?

Shakes, crying, misdirection, uncoordinated movements. "Don't tell me, don't mistake me, if you hear something go bang

12:30 you'll hit the bloody deck before you even know you're down there." You're that well, you're not, you're mentally trained. You see, I'll explain it this way, there are two types of discipline. Any bloody sergeant, officer can make you form two deep and form single file and at the halt facing right from platoon, quick march, left right left, but they can't instil in you self-discipline. You do that yourself, and every enemy that

13:00 the Australians have fought, including the Pommies that watched them, acknowledge the fact that the Australians had something they wish they had, battlefield discipline. You kept moving forward, and that's what got us out of pride. It started with we couldn't let the memory of the old diggers down.

You also used the term robots.

Well that's how we felt we were

13:30 moving. I mean we weren't, didn't have much zest in us. We weren't actually bubbling over with joy. You do, you finish up punchy. That's the best way of putting it.

What do you mean by punchy?

The noise, the hammering in the ears, your tweety birds, you're not comprehending as quick as you did a few days back. We were looking forward to it a few

14:00 days back and then we were looking, "Let's get out of here, when are we going home?"

And this went on for 11 days without a break?

Anyone says it didn't is a bloody liar or a fool, and the closer we got to the end and particularly in two or three spots, in the Saucer and Thompson's Post named after one of our officers dug his feet in with a patrol and he's hung on until the company got to him, and

14:30 God knows how many Germans were around him but there was a lot, a lot more than a company. There was some wonderful reactions in there because the Germans and English were operating side by side. "You're German, I'm English or Australian, you're a doctor, do your bloody job", and they were in the Saucer. "Righto, he's a German, move him out that

15:00 way." "What's he?" "Oh, he's an Aussie, push him off over there." You know, they were, it was well recorded, same as Tobruk. We had a, they told three but I know of two, we had a cease fire and a pick up your dead, sort them out, because they're starting to stink. The padres, one of our padres could talk German

15:30 and he went out with a white flag and had a meeting and I think we had two hours non-combatant. Truce, that's the word I was looking for, but that was in the Salient.

To keep the story moving on this 11 days,

Yep.

you said towards the end, and you mentioned the Saucer, what was the end of that particular operation?

The tanks going through. We got through

16:00 but the Germans were starting to get a little desperate shall we say, and they were throwing everything at us, and it was a case of either now we've got a hold now, and it's like winding the spring on a clock, started off bad and got worse. It's the only way I can describe it, but they threw everything at us. Once they slowed down with armour

16:30 Monty says, "Righto you bastards, they've done you over, now go", and the tanks went out every, but even as I said,

Can you explain that? What was happening here?

Well we had a clear infantry, engineers clear the mine fields, other people did their work, signals run out and everything, but once the tanks, we went that way see, the other battalion's holding here. Now he spins tanks over there to get around us,

17:00 between us and the sea. He split his tank force and once the split appeared and the 25's and the big guns got onto it, and the bombers. "You passed the infantry? Yes, good, we've got, now we, tanks."

You've opened the gate, the tanks do their work.

- 17:30 They got off a bit lightly than we did, they had a bit more armour around them, but the only way to describe the battlefield apart from being punchy, a bit torn up, everywhere you put your hand, you couldn't walk without stepping on shrapnel. It was everywhere like confetti, because towards the end they were using the big
- 18:00 88. Now remember me telling you it was originally designed as anti-aircraft? Now they had AP armour piercing for the tanks but they also had flown in, in the early days they didn't use them as HE, high explosive. Now towards the end when the split looked like happening they threw all those guns in with HE and the air burst for about 100 to 150 above you and you'd just hear
- 18:30 that bit of a whistle, boom, hit the ground, but it's coming down on you and you can't hide from it. All you can do is hope you're not in the wrong place at the right time. But there was a lot of our boys come back wounded lightly, a couple of weeks in hospital, a week in con camp, and then the biggest incentive of all, the word spread like wild fire, the troop ships are at, they're down the end of
- 19:00 the Suez, they're on the Red Sea, they're taking you down by ferry fellers, and they decided to really make a rush for them and they sent two convoys of English drivers in English trucks, they went down along the Suez Canal, along part of the Red Sea in one massive big convoy and we had the little ships as well, so get them out of here, but it was touch and go whether we'd ever come home. Now to finish that
- 19:30 section, you can go back to it in a minute and I want you to go back to that one I've asked you notes. "Do you realise this is the welcome we got back after two years and four months?" A strike by the mongrel seamen's union, Waterside Workers, on feeding troops that had had survived on the last fortnight on two meals a day. Now when that Patricks strike was on
- 20:00 and the Federal Minister, his name starts with an E, I got in touch with his office. I said, "I'll give you the truth about that". I said, "You've got the mouth from the south", he was a joker from Victoria, he only fought in New Guinea. He's yackety yack about everything, but I said, "We, they refused us tucker." "Oh, I don't believe that." I said, "They took the boys
- 20:30 in, the mature men." I said, "I got barred and about 10 others got barred, you'll go looking for a fight, won't you?" "Yeah", and they said, "Oh no you don't, you go ashore mature." "Oh shit, I'm not mature yet", I thought I was, and I kid you not, they loaded the ferries up and the wharfies are there threatening them. Something like the Dagoes and these Muslims, what they're going to do to us. The Indonesians pull your heart out and oh, he's the wildest pup.
- 21:00 **So where, which port are talking about when this**
- We're talking about Perth. The big vessels, now I said, out, the ferries out, because of the size of those big transports, Aquitania, Mauritania, Elizabeth, you stopped out in what they call the roads and the ferries brought passengers in and tucker out. Now that's our welcome home.
- You must've felt fairly strongly about that.**
- 21:30 Well, I tell you what, for the first time, I'm not political, I hate all the bastards, Pig Iron Bob, Mark Latham another gutless wonder, and I'll tell you a comment I made to him on one Anzac. He always goes to Anzac, dawn service.
- Could we stick with the arrival in Perth, yeah, yeah? I said you must've felt pretty strongly about it at the time.**
- Well I did, and I realised then when they were talking, why jokers join the Communist Party.
- 22:00 I didn't believe in it, I still don't, but I could see the logic in it, and do you know they did exactly the same thing in reverse when we left Australia eight months later. Waterside Workers wouldn't work after 12 o'clock at night. We were on liberty boats. Now I don't know whether you know how many vessels were sunk off the coast of Australia. Ken drew me a map and checked the record, 42 vessels were
- 22:30 sunk, and the navy wanted to form us up at about midnight, or as close to it, and get us moving, get us out where they could protect us. They wanted triple pay which meant they earned more in one night than we earned in a month.
- So your comment about joining the Communist Party was that you felt they were on a fairly good touch?**
- No. I could see the logic people would use because whilst they
- Could you**
- 23:00 **explain that logic?**
- Well, you've got Pig Iron Bob, you've got the Labor Party. Now you're not getting much out of them.
- Out of the Curtin Government?**
- Yeah. We were worse off in Australia than what we were overseas. We had less feed; at one stage of the

game we were short on bandages and first aid kits. Now both give you

23:30 nothing. Now along come these left wingers, and yackety yackety yack and they were good talkers. You though well jeez, I'm not getting much off them and I'm not getting much off them, let's give this a go. Logic, if you're thinking that way, but what satisfied me about that, I'll conclude and you can go back to what you want to, once Russia came into the war there was a complete change.

24:00 All the left wing trendy school teachers and sheilas, "Yack, yack, yack, yack, yack." "Oh shut up." All of a sudden they changed 360 degrees and "Fight on, do this, do that." I'm sick and tired of the way the AIF from then till now have been abused, misused,

24:30 misunderstood, mismanaged, forgotten. I mean why would you forget Australia's first VC winner, and I had the privilege of Mark Latham, Federal MP, was before the boys fell off the perch, big Danny, I've seen him there contemplating

Actually could we talk about this later?

Yes.

Because I think this comes in in a more recent part of the story.

Yeah.

We've got you

25:00 **coming back to Australia from El Alamein.**

Yeah.

Once you were in Australia what did you do then?

Leave of course, cattle train to Atherton Tablelands, one of the most, I like the South Coast, but Atherton Tablelands was beautiful, beautiful country.

I've heard that actually, yeah.

And there's going up to Atherton, the Barron Falls and the big volcanic lake, but there's a beautiful little station

25:30 on a slope of the hill, the whole of the side of that mountain has been bred ferns in it, even on the station itself, everything you could hang a pot of ferns on you can and I forget the name of the bloody thing.

Would that be Kuranda? Kuranda's a station on the way up there anyway.

No, no, no, that don't sound right, but healthy country.

And you trained up there I presume?

Yes, three days out.

26:00 We, at one stage they were talking to Aboriginals up there and they couldn't comprehend where we were, where we'd been. We were going further out than Aboriginals had been and that's supposed to be their own land so I often have my doubts about this native, you know, foot on the ground, that's my land.

So you were on the Atherton Tableland in bushland

Yeah.

that the Aboriginals basically didn't know about?

Yeah, and basically it was similar to New Guinea but

26:30 not as dense, and we trained and boy did we train. Didn't matter what it was, if you fell and broke your leg you had to make other means or you waited till they brought a stretcher out and four of youse carried him back. They couldn't get trucks to us which I liked because it made you independent.

So it was good training for New Guinea?

Oh bloody good training for New

27:00 Guinea.

So for how long were you training on the Atherton Tableland?

Five, five or six months, and that's where a division almost, I'll use the word 'shit its nest' because it's the only way to put it. They almost lost the 9th Divvy in morale, effort, the Yanks are getting everything and we're getting nothing. They're treating us like kids. We're getting

27:30 chocko bloody officer that are 90 day wonders and they're telling us how to be old soldiers. We had a

strike up there about tobacco and I kid you not, and he's still alive today, my number is NX20760, his is 59, he's one senior to me. Now he was behind the corporals when they marched off and he

28:00 stopped. They made no attempt to bring any stuff into us, so the next day they brought out bloody pipe tobacco. "Now there's your two ounces square", they cut it in half, "One for you, one for you", and because I'd put my name, I'd stood up and got counted they knew I didn't smoke. I had to buy my one once, I thought "I hope to Christ, hope to Christ selling, who wants, why don't we smoke?" Oh it

28:30 was vile, real rough bloody pipe tobacco.

For how long did this bad morale situation continue?

Well over a month, now

Was this because you weren't going anywhere?

No, it was because of the attitude, lack of tucker and the burning down of an officers' mess. We have posts, trees which you sat upon, not to shit but to eat,

29:00 and they're building an officers' mess and thatching it. They had one night to organise it and they have their, all their officers all ready to go on and have the opening of the mess and somehow or other it caught fire, and that is in battalion history that. You can check that one out. There's still a few boys and that about, and one of the boys, and he got the order of the boot after that, cold shoulder,

29:30 came out snivelling. He's got the best job in the bloody army, I'm in the officers' mess, I'm a steward and I've only had two nights at it, oh Jesus. They were sitting down to all the grog they could drink and our fellows couldn't, 'cause I used to, I didn't drink. Beer issue would come in, I'd grab it and who

30:00 hasn't, oh yeah, which mates, "No, that bastard sold me a raw prawn, he's not getting it."

So was there any information leaked out as to how the officers' mess came to burn down?

Well I thought I knew most of the fellows in the battalion, and even as late as about six years ago, one of the toughest men in our battalion was Jackie Wilson, and I said, "Now listen Jackie, I've been wanting to

30:30 know the answer to that for years." He said, "What are we talking about?" 'Officers' mess.' He said, "Oh, we never did find that whisky." I said, "I'm not talking about whisky." He said, "What are you talking about? The mess, I thought you meant the night we raided it before they put the roof on." They'd snuck in after training and between them they pinched a full case of Johnny Walker Black Label whisky. Knowing they'd be on,

31:00 there's the, about eight or ten possibles, they went and walked out about a mile from the camp, dug holes, buried them, and do you think they could find the bloody things. They lined up the wrong tree, they lined up something wrong, and Jackie said, "We never did find them." I said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "The Officers' mess." He said, "I got suspect, but", he says, "I don't talk unless I know." I said, "You weren't, you're not." He said, "No, we were out searching

31:30 for our whisky." But they never really did find out, if it was, it was the best kept secret in the war.

From Atherton Tableland, can we just look at the steps that then gets you up to New Guinea?

We went to Cairns for invasion training where we were the first troops to work with the German, with the, shit on the Germans, with the Yanks and that we learnt together. They had never done invasion training

32:00 before. We had their dicky little boats and that was where we were the first troops to go in against, what's the wording? Offensive attack, I mean you can go in on a beach there and you might see two seagulls, but we knew where we were going in were bloody Japs, Finschhafen.

So was the invasion training at Liberty Beach? On the coast north of Cairns?

32:30 North of Cairns? Liberty doesn't ring a bell. Red Beach, Blue Beach, some bloody beach, about five mile out of Cairns anyway. We were camped back there for, then "You're on your way." Why, does Liberty Beach ring a bell with you?

It's been mentioned by a couple of people actually.

Has it?

Yeah.

Oh.

So the, your objective, your destination was Finschhafen.

Lae first, Lae, where we,

33:00 I've heard many descriptions of this and I couldn't get a 7 Divvy to back it up or tell me about it. They reckon the biggest fight at Lae was 9 Divvy against 7 Divvy. They're coming in from Nadzab, we're

coming down the coast from the sea both heading for Lae and boom boom. One time, I remember one joker saying "That's a bloody 25 pounder", he said, "Well look at all the ones they captured in bloody Singapore you mug."

33:30 "Oh shit, I should've thought of that". "Shut up Jim", so I did.

So was there an actual fight between the 9th and the 7th Divisions?

Well, they're shelling that and we're heading in and shall we say I think later on they told us there was a few friendly fire, but, and they pulled us out because we couldn't find the Japs. We bloody well, oh, I got sick of climbing up and down hills, but we found the bastards in Finschhafen. Ooh

34:00 Jesus, did we find them, and did they find us, but I didn't rate them near as well. They were determined, they were stupid, but they tended to do the same thing over and over. I'll give you a, for instance. You may have heard this from some of the other fellows. 6th Divvy, we were our instructors part-time,

34:30 advisers is a better word, they didn't instruct us, they'd sit with us and talk with us, you know, and one of them said to a group of us, he said, "Look for something that should be there that isn't, or look for something that is there that shouldn't." Well that's sounds, philosopher. Anyway off the beach at Finsch we soon found out what he was talking about. They used to climb up the palm trees and they'd bring the leaves

35:00 so far up, sort of hanging down like a coco, coconut palm. They'd bring them up level or up higher and you couldn't see the Japs planted up there, and they'd let half a dozen go past, boong, boong, but all of a sudden someone must've lamped it you know. "Hey, who's got the Bren gun?" "Hit that up there with a burst,

35:30 and once you see it done, once you think Jesus, fancy suckering us like that", but you weren't looking for it. I mean would you normally go looking up a palm tree if you're trying to look along the ground, are they standing up, are they, and you hear boom. "Where the bloody hell's that coming from? Didn't see anything." They were experts and

36:00 this is one reason, OK, I'm Aussie, I'm biased, I'm a racist, call me what you bloody like, but I've got something to be proud of, Aussies, because not only did we learn to beat the Dago we then learnt to beat the bloody German which took a lot bloody more. We come home, now I'll give you the name of the book that says it all, the first book, army, five bob it cost us and they was

36:30 printed after the war, Active Service, Soldiering On, (Two Years Right), Khaki and Green, (Khaki the Desert, Green the at night, Jungle Warfare, and the last one I never ever found out. I don't know whether it was even printed, it was supposed to be Bayonets at Rest. Now that tells you the expansion and

37:00 the various places we were in. You think of it Germany, Greece, I'm not just talking about one division, I'm talking Aussies. Syria, uphill downhill with donkeys, and I reckon that the 8th Divvy was sacrificed. There's something else, did you know pre-war we paid for a big part of the graving dock

37:30 and the Singapore Defences? England, Australia and New Zealand in that order, for our own defence. And do you know this, and you remember this if anybody ever has a shot about Aussies, Churchill, and that's why I wanted to get that thing, Churchill while he give us a good rap and he wanted two divisions of Aussies to hit the Normandy Beach

38:00 was prepared to give Australia away at the time of Singapore, and get them back after the war. "Stuff you Joe, I'm alright." Now often I wish that they had landed on Australia. When I see these scungy bloody pinkos, yack yack sheilas with bandannas on. They come to this country because they want to. It offers them something they haven't got.

Just taking us back to World War II,

38:30 **what was your opinion of the Japanese as a soldier? Can I have you sit back as well?**

Yes sir, three bags full sir. Fanatical I think would be the best word. No matter what you threw at them if they were in a pillbox there, they were told to stay there, they'd stay there. Hygiene filthy. They'd be in the same trench

39:00 as a man eight, ten days, at Buna and Gona where the 6th Divvy hit them, oh some of the stories they told us we found out later on was true. They would run, they would, instead of carrying you on a stretcher, eh, all they had to do was two poles. They'd get one pole, they'd tie the wrist that way and the legs that way and here they are trotting up the track. You'd be bouncing around like a bloody yo-yo. That was their idea of

39:30 getting you back for treatment. It doesn't suit my book. Just imagine ooh.

00:30 **And it's rolling.**

The old shit shooter will think there's someone strangled it.

Jim, we were talking about, before the break we were talking about

I was going to tell you about a good old army saying.

Oh yeah, what was that?

"No eat no shit, no shit die", and that's one thing we were frightened of. That had us more scared than anything else.

Not shitting?

Yeah. "No eat no shit, no shit die". This idea of dying for nothing. Now there's another good one, you can put this on your tape later on.

01:00 When these, all these bastards we've got out here today, and they're gonna fight and they're gonna do this and England, Churchill, one of his favourite sayings, "Fight to the death, fight to the death". Morshead said "No, we won't surrender, we'll fight our way out of here as a group." Now he also said privately and the brigadiers handed it around to the colonel privately, "Don't take

01:30 any notice of Churchill. You fight to live to fight again tomorrow, and on that day you fight again to live to fight the next day." This standing, all standing up like, some silly bastard, and when you think of it that's the best philosophy you could think about.

That's a great philosophy.

Yeah.

Yeah, it's a good one. So just before the tape, tape

Yeah.

we were talking about

02:00 **you were in New Guinea and we were talking about your impressions of the Japanese. Can you just tell us a bit more about what you thought of them?**

What was that adjective you, I was searching for a good adjective, filthy, undisciplined in hygiene. They shit where they were in trenches. Now you get them pinned there for three or four weeks, could you imagine the smell? Yuk. You wouldn't

02:30 do that in the Australian Army, and that's one of the things that kept the diggers, 8th Divvy, our 2IC I told you about, he went to the 2/2nd Pioneers because he was an engineer and that was thing he was very hard on, discipline. Even if you've got to do it dry, scrub your dixies and everything out with sand, then blow the bloody thing off or wipe them off, but clean them. Now Japs didn't do that.

03:00 I can give you the, I keep getting the wrong word, it was the track from above Sio in the back way to. I can never remember the bloody, I keep coming up with the wrong word. Anyway it doesn't matter. They'd get shot, either aircraft or infantry fire and they'd leave them where they were laying. When we took a patrol out,

03:30 Masana, Mawa, Mawa, no, no, stop guessing, you could smell it a mile away. You knew you were in the area, but don't pick a blue, just observe how many's coming down so we'll know what reinforcements they're getting. Dedicated no, fanatical yes à la the Muslims. I mean who else but a stupid bloody idiot would

04:00 believe he's going to the angels because he blows himself up. That doesn't, that doesn't compute with us.

What did you think of the Japanese as fighters?

Fanatical but no brains. I mean they'd walk in and if you had enough ammunition to keep shoving at them you were going to win.

Were they a hard enemy to fight?

No, predictable,

04:30 stupid. We out thought them, we out, we learnt their, the same thing that kept us, got us through the Middle East. We sized the enemy up, what was his strong points, now how do we beat that? Flank them out, but patrol them, scare the shit out of them which we used to love doing. I almost got my shells to shot one night.

05:00 We were in the wagon lines and there were one big tough bastard, big Alan Lackey. Oh Solo Mio, and he's singing his, "Oh you beauty, and the clouds opened. Oh you're go, oh, don't you pull that trigger you snowy headed bastard", I like that song, wait till he finishes. "Oh Jesus Alan". You do, and he's

standing with a rifle, you do. He didn't set me, he just gesticulated 'cause

05:30 he didn't need a rifle, all he had to do was hit me with his fist and he would've broke my neck. O Solo, I can still remember it, O Solo Mio, and by the time he stopped singing the bloody clouds had gone over again and we couldn't see him. About 600 yards away, I thought I'll try myself, I got the sights nicely set you know, about 600. There's a way if you know it, measurement and finger and so far and all that twaddle, you know, you can guess, guessomatic.

Actually I don't know. Can you

06:00 **explain that to me, you're, how you gauge the distance with your, just your fingers?**

Well your joints, now you determine the height of a man is about between 5 foot 7, 5 foot 10. Now if you line that up there and he fits between there and there he's so far. Now if you take the full thumb up he's closer. When you're leading them you lead by fingers. If they're going across this way, now what's he

06:30 covering in distance. It's a guessomatic, but it gets you pretty bloody close. We didn't need, I knew what I was like with a rifle 'cause I'd shot bloody rabbits on the run when I was hungry and we used to, that's what, we'd go out Saturday afternoon and what we shot as kids we had for Sunday dinner, and I'll tell you what, when I found out I could shoot bloody ducks, you only get one shot and you've got to get the other one in quick because they're up and going.

07:00 And they're swimming around, they'll come down, there's the rocks there and the break in the creek and they'll circle there because any drifting down is nice and dead by the time it gets to their water log, dong, easy. You say, "I got you", boong, and Teal ducks are the ones we used to get in the valley, they make good eating. So I knew I didn't need a finger stuck up like that.

07:30 **In New Guinea were you using a Bren?**

Yep.

Yes.

I liked a Bren. The only one thing I could say against a Bren, too accurate, but if you kept it on repetition you could annoy the shit out of the enemy. On the rifle range somewhere in the Middle East we made our own, made our own assault corps. We didn't need commandoes, they trained us.

08:00 We had our own butts and at 200 yards one of our best rifleman put five rounds one after the other through a circle like that in the target. I could get to about there, but he, he literally froze still, didn't move the whole time he was firing and that's how he did it.

So I don't understand

08:30 **why being accurate is a disadvantage for a gun.**

Well for rapid fire, now the Vickers gun had a cone, just think of it as an ice cream cone. Now the Bren gun your cone would be that big, your Vickers gun at the same distance the cone would be that big. Now you get that over 2,000, 3,000 yards you've got a cone of fire this wide. Now, and I, we learnt this, and if we

09:00 could send a runner back to either the artillery which never always had shells or the Vickers gunners, we'd come in under their cone of fire. I'll tell you what, you'll see them and the Germans are following you in and all of a sudden the Vickers start chattering, they stop. You say, "Good, we're going home nice and easy." I kid you not. The Lewis gun, World War I, was even bigger. It used to chatter and throw them everywhere. It depends on the rifling and the

09:30 production of it, you know.

Did you use the Owen in New Guinea as well?

Yes.

Which one did you prefer out of the two?

Two different, two different purpose guns. I'll tell you something. Do you realise, oh stuff the camera.

So what were you saying? You were saying that, you were talking about

We had three fellows in our battalion and one, oh did he abuse, did he do the nana

10:00 later on. They pulled him off, either off the boat or off the wharf, but he was just about on the boat, Jesse Owen, our battalion, and that Owen gun has a 22 mind you, before he put the 7 millimetre, yeah, millimetre, was carried to Bathurst in a sugar bag on his pack, 'cause he didn't want anyone to, and he, he, that man they stuffed him.

10:30 They bled him dry, they stuffed him about something shocking because it wasn't, before we came home from the Middle East that gun was made and I tell you where, Howard's, Howard's Rotary Hoe, top side of Parramatta up past the old woollen mills. Woollen mills on that side, Howard's Rotary Hoe was up

there and they were doing war time production. Now some of the work was done there and some was done at

- 11:00 Port Kembla, and that gun was at that time, to that period of time was the only gun, you could even piss down the barrel and it would still fire. They put it in mud, they put it in sand, they shoved it in the sea. They didn't want it and you know why? They had a big contract with the Thompson sub-machine gun. They were £100 and something each. He was producing the Owen gun at an estimated
- 11:30 cost of £17. Now I've heard lighter, I've heard bigger, but the gun worked and it had a good slow rate of fire. Whereas the Thompson sub, at one stage we refused to take them out in Tobruk. There was 45 stoppages on the bastard. You never knew when you had it. I mean if you pull it back and she goes, err, I tell you what, it gives you a very funny feeling in the pit of your stomach.

- 12:00 Give me a rifle for Christ's sake. We wouldn't take them out. I think they were all show, like the Yanks, all show.

So getting back to the Japanese.

Called comparison.

Yeah, yeah, for comparison, yeah.

Comparison, Aussies in front of course, I'm biased, I'm a racist, but I put the German well ahead of the Yank. We had the Yanks with

- 12:30 us in New Guinea and they weren't worth a squirt of piss, cold at that. Whereas you knew the German was coming at you. Certainly we had a fairly clean war in no civilians, no that, and was even Stevens. If he had more tanks than us and could use them, if we had more patrols out of a night time and used them, we squared it up, but they'd fight
- 13:00 and when you, there's something you want for your tape. The Bulletin, after Bardia and they've got a dot up there, infinity on your camera, you know about infinity. They're disappearing up here. Now remember I told you 40,000 odd come out of Bardia and they've got the typical digger, hat on the back of his head, shirt open, one sleeved rolled up and
- 13:30 one down and no laces in his boots and underneath there's a caption and this went around the world twice and it was printed in the Bulletin, "Listen Tone, you dirty little Dago bastard, if you drag my rifle in the dirt once more", and he's rolling a smoke, "I won't let you carry it." He was walking along and Tony was, little Dago was carrying his rifle while he rolled a smoke
- 14:00 'cause in those days you didn't buy tailor-mades like them, you rolled your own, cheaper, and that was typical of what we thought of the Italians, but you bring Germans in, if you had three or four Germans you'd have at least three infantrymen around them, and once a Provo, you hand them over to the English or Australian Provos they'd always have one extra man so if they broke and run
- 14:30 they could still be one on one and they'd wait until he got clear and shoot him. Yeah, you might've captured me but you ain't got me in the POW [Prisoner of War] cage, and they'd talk to us in English.

So what about the comparison between the Germans and the Japanese that you fought in New Guinea?

No comparison. They were, the Japs were more suicidal, we'll put it that way, fight for the Emperor and all that bullshit. The German, when he

- 15:00 used his brains, "Well now if I poke my head up here and he's got that thing on fixed lines I'm gonna get shot so I'll poke my head up here." They were very, they were reared and not only that it goes back to their history. You can go back, what's the German name for it? The Queen and that, royal family was
- 15:30 way back then after Queen Victoria, after, yeah after Queen Victoria, she married Hapsburg, Hapsburg? [actually means Windsor]. They were all military people. Germany has been a dominant military player in Europe going back to well before the, around about the time of the Ark. That's an exaggeration, but they were military people.

So getting back to Lae,

- 16:00 **what did your, what did you do in Lae?**

Nothing.

Did you see any battles there?

No, only we heard the fire of the 7th Divvy. We climbed a hill and went down the gully and climbed another hill and down the gully and we were split, the battalion was split into two forces. They went one way, we went, and we couldn't find them. They hit the toe, and Jesus, we were, see we never actually landed on the beach at Lae.

- 16:30 We landed the other side of a river which almost drowned some of us and we had a couple, three or four mile walk into Lae. So we're trying to find him going in, then we spread out and he weren't there. I

don't, I can only say from where we were, now whether anyone else in the 20th Brigade saw Japs, there must've been some in the town but the 7th Divvy beat us into Lae. We come second, bad.

17:00 We got beaten.

Now, so from Lae you went to Finschhafen.

We went back to Milne Bay and a bit more training and a bit more yack yack, loaded up on the beach, in we go. Now we were the first troops, Australians, to land against a defended position since Gallipoli, and by jeez didn't we pay a price for that too. The

17:30 Yanks put us on the wrong, and I remember someone saying after we got ashore, "Bloody Gallipoli all over again." I said, "What's he doing, Gallipoli? He's punchy, he'll settle down." But he was right, a big long beach, and that end was known as That Beach and that end was known as Another Beach, and when you get landing craft, the little ones, but the big ones have got the ramps on them

18:00 which means you're slower getting off and they dropped them on to an area that was rocky and you talk about worrying? When we found out after we got back, Col had got a burst, one in that leg, two in the guts and one almost, and for the next five or six years they operated on him regularly, and the last time he got operated on was in Liverpool.

18:30 Farmer, the surgeon's name was Farmer I think from memory and he said, "Mr Martin", he said, "We'll reinforce with a, oh, medical treated yackety yack, mesh", and he said, "If that doesn't work". He said, "What are you talking about?" "Well", he said, "You've got two, you can last with one." He said, "Well what are you going to do with that one?" He said, "We'll use that to patch you up."

19:00 That's how bad the, it had opened up to.

And he got that wound landing at Finschhafen?

Coming down the ramps on to the beach at Finschhafen.

So can you walk us through step by step what happened that day, right from, you know, the landing?

"Who brung you to this party?" "We're at Finsch now are we?"

Yeah.

19:30 Jimmy Dick, ex navy, commissioned officer from, through the ranks, he kept three barges on line and you can tell the Yanks were hanging their arses over the side and shitting, they would. They were, they were shit scared. And he said, "Song River, that way." Song River, Red River, Scarlet River? Anyway that's where we landed. Now, between putting us in the wrong spot,

20:00 and now remember the landing craft and some of them were all oerlikon, American oerlikon, some were twin and some were single but they're point 5. Now you, as your offside there said when he saw the badge 303, well instead of 303, point 55, and that's the difference in them, but you've got a lot more stopping power and a lot more driving power, and there's the Yanks flying over

20:30 our head. I was lucky I was a bit further up, but those two companies that were landed down there, the Yanks are firing allegedly at the Japs, who pinned us on the beach and the Japs are saying, "Oh good, we'll shoot their, oh."

So what happened, what was happening to you at this point while the other ...

We just went ashore and struck some Japs, like you know, you've got a set rate of advance and we'll go to there and stop and then we'll try and get some,

21:00 we'll try and sort them out, but we slowly but surely

So you landed on the beach and then what happened?

Moved inland, later on Kumawa, but the biggest, now I'm going to jump from then to a couple, 10 years back.

Could I just get you to, 'cause you mentioned that you landed on the beach and then you came under enemy fire at that point,

Yeah.

can you describe what happened 'cause I just want it to be clear for the tape

21:30 **what actually happened?**

Whilst you're fired upon we weren't pinned down, that's the best way of putting it. We could still advance and we got as far as the objective designed for that day or that night. We got to our objective and so did Jimmy Dick with his three barges. They lost a full mortar, half a mortar platoon. One of the Jap

22:00 barges must've either thought he hit a sand bar or did scrape it and he got off that and there's 30 foot of water under his keel. He dropped the front gate, you know, landing ramp, and I don't know whether you've ever seen a mortar, the base plate is about yay wide, about roughly about 50 pounds, your tripod is about 30, your mortar

22:30 is a bit lighter, then you've got all the, and they call them bombs, I don't know why, the ones you put down. I suppose you go poop, they were strapped on them.

What, do you mean strapped onto their bodies?

Yeah. They were their normal gear. Whatever you took ashore was extra on your 40 pound a soldier normally carries, and they went clunk down into 30 foot of water and stayed there. They

23:00 couldn't get it off quick enough, see.

So they drowned?

Yeah, half our mortar platoon. That put us on a handicap.

So were those men on your landing craft as well?

No, those men were up further than us.

So how many were on your landing craft with you?

About 24, 25. Depends on what wave you were in, what extra stuff they were bringing in. I mean if you were on the fourth or fifth wave you know full well

23:30 there'd be, if you're going in they've got it secured, you know.

So your landing craft landed on the beach, did you come under enemy fire immediately or did you have to

Sporadic. That's, I learnt that word years ago, sporadic. There were a few casualties but very few really to be honest with you, very few. Saw it again when the map started coming our years later,

24:00 2/2nd Pioneers were there, 2/13th is there, 2/17th is there, 2/5th. For some unknown reason I picked the little scale up down the bottom of it. Hang on, wait a minute, so I went in and got my fancy set of rulers and, shit we had, in times we had something like a mile, a mile and a half between companies.

24:30 Now in the Middle East you didn't have that between battalions, you were closer than that, and how, to be honest with you, how we ever won and that. See the Yanks turned around and said there was 2,000 Japs at Finsch. Some bastard rubbed an O off the end, so we were going in with two battalions, 15th, 2/15th in reserve, and later that afternoon they whacked them in

25:00 and they were, all the brigadiers were screaming, "For Christ's sake get us some more, you know, we haven't got", and later on they brought in the 24th Brigade, so that's six battalions, so that's a bit different from two, isn't it, just a bit, and we still didn't cover the ground. Well they should've been able to wander through us on to the beach, headquarters. We should've had our arses kicked right off the beach to be honest with

25:30 you. Gallipoli again.

So after you'd landed and you were coming under sporadic enemy Japanese fire, what happened next?

Some we shot, cleaned them out, and you've got an objective. You are going so many paces, then we'll dig in or they count around the order we'll swing left or swing right, whichever is applicable. The battalion

26:00 formed up again, they sorted that mess out down there on beach, and some places we held, other places we attacked. It was a very, it was a different war altogether than the Middle East. I mean you knew who the enemy was, but we had to learn.

So what else was different about being in New Guinea?

Little groups, and you found out, hey, we're better in the bloody jungle than they are.

26:30 All the bush boys, we can scout that out. And I'll tell you what, you want to see these yellow eyes pop out when instead of being in front of them you're beside them going boong boong boong. We killed a bloody sight more of them than they ever killed of us. Later on when the maps come out and years later when the yack yack come out, we had part of two divisions against us. We killed off so many and they brought

27:00 in another lot. Overall, and one of them, one lot we struck, Kumawa, I've got to think of this, when I say Jivevaneng, Jivevaneng. I think that's the way it's, something like that anyway. Whistle it twice and you'll get it right. We struck the

Sorry?

Imperial

27:30 Guard.

Oh. Is it a

And I tell you what, when you look up at what you think's a Jap and you can look up in the air, you think shit, what have they fed him on? They were all Koreans, they weren't Japs at all.

So when did you come across the Imperial Guard?

About half way through. We were there four months. We had a couple of days on the beach and then we went up the coast to Sio.

28:00 They bunged him in, Warrigo [Wareo], it's not Warrigo, but it sounds something like Warrigo track. I don't remember I couldn't remember the name. That was the track that led from somewhere near Sio down the back way and it was a well worn track, you know. The Warrigo, it's not Warrigo but it sounds something like Warrigo, and they were bringing in reinforcements. You know

28:30 same in the Med, same in World War I, same with the Yanks in the Pacific, "Oh we're king of the sea", and you'd say, "Well if they're king of the sea how come Jerry's getting all his tanks in if you're shooting everything down, sink and that, and how come you're getting Japs in with new uniforms, because you start to see someone coming at you and his uniform's a different colour or brighter, you say hello

29:00 reinforcements. How come he's getting the reinforcements in?"

So what was it like? You mentioned what it was like to fight, you know, what you thought of the regular Japanese Army. What did you think of the Imperial Japanese?

Oh they were, they were a cut, they were almost as good as the Germans, they were. They didn't want to take a step backwards, but we were lucky we only struck battalion of them

29:30 and it took us a while to clean them out too, I can tell you that.

Where was that?

Kumawa. Kumawa or Jivevan, Jivevaneng, whistle it.

Can you, can you, can you describe the situation around the event of coming across the Imperial Japanese?

Well we had dug in and the night before they'd hit us with a ton of fire and they started again, and "Hello,

30:00 hello, here they come again." They opened up again and they were in close. I mean you can't always fire a gun laying down particularly an Owen, you get a Bren in the hip you can make the bastard talk if you know your gun, and I stood up as a few others had because if you haven't got a Bren, and I used to souvenir them off all them, the fellows that got hit or

30:30 got, went out sick. You're only entitled to two hand-grenades but I had at any time up to six. They're the best little thing ever made, you can use them in that many different places. And the others were standing up too. "Let them come a bit closer and we'll share this among them." You can't throw that laying down. You'll hear fellows talking about it, "Yes, and I threw it." "Bullshit, if you can stand up and throw it you get a better direction and you get a more positive

31:00 target." You hear them say, "I lobbed that within 10 feet of him." He can share that amongst his mates. And we knocked them back. They come in again later on but that was when we first saw them, and we looked at them after we'd killed them, you know, Jesus, they're big fellows, well dressed, well rigged.

So what was going through your mind when you came up against?

We were in trouble. We were in trouble.

So there was fear?

31:30 Apprehension. I'd say if you're on your own or got caught short, a couple of you out on patrol, you might've had fear, but with your own boys, a group of you, you know you're going to stick together because those that were left from the Middle East, you knew their qualities and they'd watch your back if you watched theirs.

32:00 I don't think I ever really felt fear, a bit scared at times, but not bone. You get someone that's really scared, they're non compos mentis [not of sound mind], they're, you know, short of a quid, like 10 bob. I suppose I'd been close, I'd been blown up a few times. I got shot a few times. I

32:30 shared a bit of ammunition and shrapnel up. Matter of fact when a joker's talking about shrap wounds, "Now you see that, that's, see the grey colour?" Now when you first get it that's almost black, but over the years 'cause it's very finite little bits of metal but they're burning hot. Now that one there must've been a damn sight hotter

33:00 than that one. "Make sense?"

Yeah.

But it didn't burn enough so it must've been smaller but they took that out at Uralla I think, but

I'm really am, I'm really keen to hear more about your injuries because you were shot a couple of times weren't you?

Yeah, I got, I know the one, the story you're after. I told that lass there.

Is that

33:30 **something to do with the family jewels perhaps?**

Yes, yes. Out of, hello, these ain't my normal pants. My other ones pull up a lot easier. Now you look when I flex it.

Oh yeah.

One, two, three.

Yeah.

Right. That's the prongs on a teller mine and the bastard didn't blow up, and I didn't know till after I'd got back that I'd

34:00 even, we were under fire and you couldn't, see this is one of the reasons you don't appear to be scared. "Oh gee, gee you'd make a bloody good sergeant major, get up. You'd make a platoon sergeant out of you." It's the only thing I can put it down to, the distance between it and they, now healed up or appeared to heal up then one of them came a bit like

34:30 a boil. I had boils when I was at home, it'll get better. I left it. Anyway Vic Ray, he had been in our company when we went up the desert and they found out that he was a highly qualified theatre sister, male but highly qualified. So the doctor says, "Oh no, I'm in, I don't care what you think you are, get up here into the RAP [Regimental Aid Post]." I don't think it was on

35:00 or when we went near him you wanted advice, he was coming, he used to come around the trenches whenever he could like, what dressings and anyone do with it. I'm sitting there and I went across to get him a cuppa or something and he said, "Hey Snowy you're limping." I said, "A bit sore." "How long have you had it?" "I dunno, but it's been a bit sore." "Drop the tweeds." I said, "Here, come off it." "Drop them."

35:30 So I drops them. I says, "It's my knee", and he looked at it and he just went like that. I thought shit, what's going on here, and there's a red line from there down here, straight up there, straight through, and you know that sign outside of a pawnbroker's shop? Ever seen an old time pawnbroker?

Three balls.

There's three big

36:00 balls and that's what I had, and he said to me, "Pack your gear, you're going back." I said, "Oh no", I said, look 'cause at that stage of the game we were within a week, we thought a fortnight, but it was about a week. We were just about to be relieved to go into reserve to come out.

So hang on a sec. What, so what was the dressing for?

Septicaemia.

Right. So that was an infection from your wound?

It was also vital it didn't go too much higher.

36:30 It, septicaemia was, when I got back, wasn't, we never had the stuff we have today. You're D-E-A-D and Vic knew it and he's giving me a hammering, "If you don't", and he told me, "The first time I ever heard Vic say it", he said, "If you don't report sick I'll report you sick", he said, "And you'll come in." "Oh Jesus Vic, give us a break, we're going out." He said, "I want to see you back in Palestine alive, not dead." "I don't

37:00 want to go to your, oh Jesus." Anyway would you believe up till then it hadn't hurt much, but from a couple of hundred yards we were back to the RAP, oh Jesus it was aching. So he said to the doctor, "Have a look at this doc", and he's running his hands straight up under the you know whats and he had a feel. He said, "He's got three of them", and I thought, I still

37:30 thought they were joking because of my age, and they used to con me. "Jeez I wish you were a bit older Jim, you'd, no, you're not got that rely [?]" "I'll go out on that patrol, I'll show you." "No, no. Wait until you're a bit older Jim." "You stinking bastard." I used to get conned left right and centre, and I thought they're doing it again, but the doctor and Vic were fair dinkum.

38:00 I finished up at CCS, Casualty Clearing Station. The same day I'm back in Tobruk Hospital which was in the tunnels.

Woops.

I didn't do what I almost did, and I've got a surgeon hitting me with a needle and starting. Jesus bloody Christ, what's he gonna do? And in those days we had sulphur, sulphanilamide, seems to

38:30 ring a bell, sulphanilamide. Anyway he's putting it in. By this time whatever they did to it is, was like that. I was limping then. "Jesus, I am in trouble." Anyway I wasn't, I got better.

So just to make it clear, that was actually in Tobruk was it?

Yeah.

That wasn't in New Guinea?

That, no, it was in Tobruk, not New Guinea.

Yeah, right, right.

Right on the death. Matter of fact I'm still arguing with my mate.

39:00 I must send down to Melbourne one time for my papers, my medical papers. He reckons I didn't go out with the battalion, and I said, "Well I must've went out ahead of you." "No", he said, "When you", he, if he's right I was in Tobruk Hospital when they sailed out of the harbour, and I went out a couple of nights later on one of the other destroyers as carrying wounded. I couldn't even walk, and you say on a stretcher. "Oh yeah, fair go doc."

39:30 "Well you're better going up the gang plank than hobbling", and he said, "They take you off in an ambulance at the other end." "Where?" He said, "In hospital." I said, "When do I get out?" He said, "When you get better." "Jesus Christ, what did I do this time?" I didn't believe them, but once I got back to Gaza, our own Australian Hospital, one of the, I sat down one night

40:00 with one of the sisters and she, "Can I have a word, Sis?" "Yeah." I said, "What is this I've got?" She said, "Don't you know? You're blood is poisoned." Anyway she went a great length and told me all about it and I started to realise that I could've been in trouble. Up till then it was just they're taking the mickey out of me, but

Jim, we're actually going to have to leave it there because we've just finished a tape but we'll

40:30 **continue on with that story tomorrow.**

Right, now before you go.

Tape 5

00:31 **Concerning your return to Fremantle when the wharfies were on strike, you wanted to take them on didn't you?**

They chose to pick the mature married men that they knew would be a bit more, but the younger fellows we wanted to get ashore and have a go at them because, I mean let's face facts, a week, 10 days prior to that we were on two meal a day, small ones at that. The Poms didn't want us to go home, they wanted us

01:00 in India. So there's political pressure there, you know, but gets back and would you believe we got the same leave in Australia, six months later when we were going to New Guinea. They couldn't get triple time after 12.00 o'clock they'd go on strike and the navy wanted to get us out, herd us up like sheep which they did a wonderful job at before dawn to get us out and get us moving they had more chance.

01:30 No, not with the wharfies. We went out in stone cold motherless day light, and some of the boys that, cause they, they do cut, they do you, keep you away from a lot of the truth in the army. The least you know the least you can worry about. So they say.

So what truth were they keeping you away from here?

They didn't want us to know about the wharfies going on

02:00 strike for triple pay after midnight because we should've been going on board about 11 o'clock.

So when did you find out?

About dawn. Anyway some of the boys disappeared and they came back and I said, "What did you do?" "We just give them a warning if any of our mates go down and we lose anyone we're coming back here and we won't use rifles, we'll use hand-grenades and we'll blow

02:30 all you bastards up." There was nothing that was done about it, this is what shit me about it. If it'd been me or some of the thinking men they'd have conscripted the bastards and put them in Port Moresby in the army. I wonder they'd gone on six bob a day.

So what did the wharfies have in mind? Were they wanting to keep you on the ship indefinitely, were they?

They wanted more money.

But what were they actually doing? Were they keeping, were they refusing to allow the ship to berth?

They were, see there were a mixture

03:00 of loading parties, conscripts that didn't want to sail, conscientious objectors, there was the Seabees, the American Seabees, Construction Battalion. They were loading for a certain amount, then the wharfies were loading up to 9.00 o'clock or somewhere in that area but they wanted them to work longer past midnight, and they said, "No, if we work past midnight we want triple

03:30 time." Anyway they couldn't get the OK and this is fart arsing about and ended up we sailed at the dawn which meant, I think I told you about the number of ships sunk off our coastline didn't I?

Yes, you did actually. But, so what were the wharfies doing that was going to stop you arriving back in Australia?

That was at Fremantle.

Yeah.

This is when we were leaving from Cairns?

Leaving from Cairns. There was another wharfie strike there, was there?

Yeah.

OK. But in, OK, going

04:00 **back to**

You couldn't differentiate between

No, I didn't. I asked you about Fremantle and you gave me an answer relating to Cairns.

Yeah, that was tucker coming out to provision us.

In Fremantle?

Yeah.

OK, yeah.

They were on strike so nothing, nothing around the dock moved, they said so. And they'd have got some of the younger fellows ashore hungry, they'd have got Larry Dooley but

What, some of the younger guys would've

04:30 **given them a bit of**

Belted the shit out of them. I mean we were hungry, let's face facts, and that doesn't, you know, it doesn't wash.

So how was that situation resolved?

Well they took some of the mature men ashore, 50 or 60 of them, they picked them, hand picked, and we were told afterwards, right or wrong I don't know, I can't authenticate, never heard,

05:00 but those that went ashore they said, and it came from Morshead himself 'cause he was in Sydney, and he said, "Tell them that I don't want trouble but if trouble starts make sure they bloody win it." That'd be Morshead.

Why did the mature men go ashore?

No, they took the mature men. They didn't want the young hot heads ashore 'cause we'd have gone looking for trouble. Let's be honest about it, we'd like to have a bit of a swipe at them.

So what were the mature men doing when they went ashore?

05:30 Well they chose married men, mature men, corporals and that because they said "We want the tucker, and we don't want a blue, so just go in and take it", and they had other, Provos were there armed, and they were just standing back. They didn't want no, they didn't want to tangle with the wharfies, but that was kept under raps.

So the mature men did come back to the ship with food?

Oh they come back with tucker, three, two ferries loaded up.

06:00 In through the hold, you know, oh Jesus weren't we happy then, ooh tucker.

So they obviously didn't pick a fight with the wharfies?

No.

But if the young guys had gone in they

Well they gave the impression or they most likely said it too, knowing some of them, "You start the bastard, we'll finish it", and the wharfies backed off because they knew it wouldn't take long for a ferry to hit and it'd be 150 on board the ferry coming back in.

I mean

06:30 **you personally must've been really riled at that?**

Everyone aboard the vessel was. We were on the Aquitania so there'd been what, 3,000 odd, at least 3,000 odd troops all heading for Sydney and Queensland.

Anyway so you sailed for Sydney.

When you think of it that's the welcome Australia gave us after two years and four months overseas. Not a nice welcome home, is it?

So from Fremantle you sailed

07:00 **to Melbourne?**

Some got off at Melbourne. They were half a day there unloading, around to Sydney and I tell you what, you could see them all, all the big so called toughies and they're looking at the Heads opening up and when you come in at a certain angle which they brought us in at deliberately, if you just come up you've got to make a left hand turn and you don't handle a big ship that way, but if you get off at an angle you can watch the Heads open up and welcome you home in the harbour.

07:30 Beautiful sight, and I know some very tough boys, a few of them from Manly, a few from the country and they said, "Well that's that." I said, "What do you mean that's that?" "We're not leaving again", and we had about a dozen, something we never had in the Middle East, was desertion. They said, "No, that's it, let some other bastard fight the war, the Yanks are getting all the praise", and I kid you

08:00 not, there was more Yanks around the towns than there was in the bloody army almost. We go up to New Guinea and they're sitting back in Australia. They're getting the good tucker, we're getting bugger all.

So when you arrived in Sydney you found some of the places full of Yanks did you?

Oh yes. The saying at the time was, "over paid, over sexed and over here". Apart from that they didn't mind them, but they used to boast

08:30 about it. They'd be walking down the street with white women on their arms, you know, yackety yack. "We sorted your lot out". Of course it didn't take the boys long to work out an answer to that, "Mate, you haven't sorted them out, you just, you've just sorted out the shit, you keep the shit, we'll keep the others."

So did you ever get involved in a dust up with any Americans at all?

Oh yes, regular as clockwork.

Over what sort of situations?

Anything.

So could you give us a typical example?

You walk in to see,

09:00 I mean I didn't drink then, but you'd always head, you knew what pub they'd be in and if you were in town that day, head for the pub, and as you're walking down the street, "Hey Aussie, move over." "What, for a bastard like you?" And someone was walking the other way with his darling wife and you know, "Look, here you are, I'm out love." Into it. You never left a digger posted, you know. Know when a blue started and you'd look up, you'd see a uniform.

09:30 **So a guy walking past with his wife would suddenly get involved in a brawl with another**

No. He'd see some of the others start it. He'd been a perfect gentleman and the moment he see a blue starting, about three or four Yanks go on one Aussie, "Here love, hold my hat." But they finished up

after the first fortnight we were home; they confined them to their camps. That's how many went in hospital.

What, these are Aussies taking a swing at the Yanks?

Yanks.

10:00 **From the 9th Division specifically?**

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. How many blues did you get involved in yourself?

A couple.

So you'd head for the pub, you'd head for the pub to find them there?

No, you'd head for the pub for your mates.

For your mates, yeah.

And you'd sit there. They'd be drinking and talking. I think a lot of it is you don't fit back into civvy life like that. You're lost. I know quite a few jokers had two and three kids,

10:30 they'd take the kids out in the morning, take them home at dinner time and head for the boys, and they didn't drink either. Just to see how your mates going, how's this, how's that going.

So they'd go to the pub just to see their mates?

Yeah, just to yarn, otherwise they were lost.

And that was where they were guaranteed of finding them, in the pub?

Yeah. Oh the Yanks wouldn't come into your pubs. Oh no. They'd have other pubs, you know, where we weren't.

So just, can you recall one particular brawl that you might've had

11:00 **with the Yanks?**

Yeah. The very day we came, the very day we were on leave the first time. Eddy Avenue, it started there at about 11 or 12 o'clock and finished up at North Sydney Station 2 o'clock in the morning.

What happened?

Oh well, whenever you saw a Yank, bang. Because let's face facts

So you walked from Eddy Avenue near Central to North Sydney whenever you saw a Yank, what happened?

11:30 Well, some of them were going home and they got off the train, saw some more Yanks. "Bugger them, let's, we started it, let's finish it." Oh, it was on for young and old.

So these are guys from the 9th Division who've just come back and they were wanting to take a swing at the American soldiers?

Well we were told to behave ourselves. "Yeah, we will, yeah, yeah", and the Yanks are like dagoes. They've got a big loud mouth and they love poking shit at you. Well,

12:00 when you've been away that long and they haven't seen an angry shot fired and they're taking the mickey out of you, you've got to be kidding. So you've got to teach them a lesson.

So what did you do?

I just stood there and held their hats.

I don't necessarily believe that.

It is, isn't it?

You held their hats? That's very nice.

Well sounds good.

No, you were wading in there, weren't you?

Of course

12:30 I was.

And so you with a group of mates went from Central to North Sydney

Literally half the battalion. They were all over Sydney our boys. You name one pub in Sydney they

weren't in, and there was a beer shortage on and that made it worse 'cause the fellows that like their sherbet, "Where's all the rest?" "Oh, we've got to keep some for the Yanks." Of course

13:00 that was the worst thing they could've said. It was on then. Not only are they grabbing our sheilas, they're grabbing our beer and our tucker, and they were getting bacon, bacon, ham and we were getting nothing. Oh the Yanks had everything. Do you know what, they were going along, I kid you not, it was quite an article in the paper, later in camp at Warwick Farm somewhere, one unit Yanks, and they wanted telephones and they said "Well we haven't got

13:30 any at present, as soon as we get some." "Oh we'll fix that." So they just hopped into a jeep, went around to all the corners and ripped the bloody telephones, public telephones out of the boxes into the jeep, took them back and installed them in their camp. I mean let's face facts, Aussies would be cranky and that because they didn't think of it. But

So you're saying that the Americans were eventually confined to quarters 'cause so many of them had been beaten up by Australian soldiers?

Yeah.

14:00 They were confined to quarters until our leave was up, we returned to camp at Narellan, we were there two days and they said, "Now let's get them out of here." Cattle trucks up to Atherton Tablelands. Then they told the Yanks they could go about their business. The best one I know was in Western Australia because some of our boys were West Australian, and he come back from the Atherton Tablelands and he said, "I've got a good story for you mate." He said,

14:30 "Mama, she's up the duff, eldest daughter, she's up the duff, second daughter, she's up the duff, third daughter, she's up the duff", and he said, "Well who was to blame? He said, "One Yank". He was doing the whole family.

Is that a true story?

Well he said it was, and he lived not far from where they were living, but there

15:00 was bride ships later in the war. They were getting free passage back to America, and here they are industrialists and they've got great big properties and one lass had kicked up that much of a, a group of them, but one was outspoken, he finished up in a dirt farm in Tennessee, Hillbilly country, and she said, "Where's the big farm?" "Oh, it goes down there and goes

15:30 across here." "What do you do?" "Oh", white lightning was Tennessee you know, Hillbillies, and she said, "Stuff him". So she finished up back in the Australian Embassy wherever, and she wasn't moving until they sent her back home and they did to shut her up.

So you're saying there's a percentage of Australian women that were conned?

Oh left right, they had a good smooth line, but they had good pay. Their uniform was twice as good as ours

16:00 looked, looked good. They had more money than we had and they spent it. "Come in sucker", some of the girls said, you know. Others said, "Oh isn't he romantic." Yeah. Anyway that's that.

So

The only thing we were shitty about instead of us going on dancing, dancing with our own sheilas or sheilas we knew, they'd married the Yanks. It was amazing some of them.

16:30 **So did you have a girlfriend at this time?**

I was engaged at the time, by verbal you know yackety yack. When I came back home I found out that other sheilas were doing exactly what she did. She was going out with a tram driver because he didn't have to join the army. And Lofty was with me when we met and I was winding one up and he said, "Don't you dare."

17:00 "Yes Lofty, you're so right." Anyhow as it turned out she did me a good turn.

Why was that?

Well I met her years later, I was driving a speed boat in Parramatta River, the club there, speed boat club and she's sitting on the bank whinging at her husband, couple of kids, if you hadn't done the boat properly, yackety yackety yack. And I thought, jeez that's Nancy, and I

17:30 never acknowledged her. I just zoosh up into the showers, cleaned up my diving gear and left. I thought Christ, she did me a good turn.

Had you been writing to her while you were away?

Yeah, once a week.

Had she written back to you?

Yeah, a few parcels, a few this. But Rossy was the one that used, Ross used to send me a cake once a fortnight. Oh yes, I had to behave myself with Rossy. That's my cousin like, nursing sister.

18:00 **Was Rossy keen on you?**

No, Rossy was my cousin.

Yeah, that's right. But she was keeping an eye on you was she?

Yeah.

Yeah. In what kind of way?

Paternal. 'Cause Rossy would be 10 years older than I was, until I blotted my copy book with the other thing that I told you earlier. Now change the subject.

Well OK, was the family in Kangaroo Valley at this time?

18:30 Oh yeah.

So did you go down to see them?

Yeah, went down there for a while.

How was your homecoming there?

Oh, locals, all of them were Light Horsemen, World War I France, Gallipoli. Quite a mixed bag, you know, from a small country area. Into the pub, "Righto, fill them up." I said, "Not for me." Old Billy Cox, he drove

19:00 the milk cart from, not cart, wagon, correction, from Kangaroo to Nowra or Bomaderry was the milk station. "Yet they didn't teach you to drink Jim?" I said, "They would've if I'd have let them." I said, "I'm silly enough sober, I don't want to get drunk." "Well we'll drink it for you", and they did. Anyway, May, his wife came down to see what, 'cause he was taking me home to his place at the edge of town for tea. She hopped in the

19:30 old car, the Buick, come looking for her. She said, "Bill, you've found a new way of getting drunk." She said, "Any excuse is good enough for you." He said, "Yes love." But oh well back home, you know, it was bit strange. I mean when you've been, particularly when we came back from New Guinea, you knew everyone in the company and half the battalion in the Middle East 'cause you were

20:00 moving. You have sight, line of sight, but in New Guinea anyone out of your own section of seven or eight men, now you'd see the others when you changed over, you didn't know anyone else but your own platoon, and any strangers come along and you'd look at them, and you'd look and everyone would shutup, you know, say no, I thought jeez, this is a bit strange, but that's they way it worked.

That was you when you came back from

20:30 **New Guinea?**

Yeah.

Yeah, but that wasn't you when you came back from the Middle East?

Oh no, more outgoing because you know, we weren't, there was no confinement whereas in New Guinea you were confined. If it wasn't raining you were getting wet crossing rivers. If you go higher up you get in fog, but the amazing part that I could never work out in New Guinea, wet wet wet and more wet.

21:00 If you want to work with perspiration you work with rain or across the river, but no one got, no one got pneumonia or coughs or colds. All you did was get malaria, beri beri, and the worst of old was the scrub typhus. They didn't know what it was and there was fellers dying from it. Ooh, I didn't like that.

Was it cold, you were saying no one's getting colds; was it ever cold up there?

Oh yes, bloody cold, but it didn't seem to, it didn't seem to affect you. If you were

21:30 as cold as that in New South Wales you'd have the flu, but we never got the flu. We never got a cold, never got pneumonia, but you got malaria.

So just sticking with the homecoming, you were obviously given a bit of a welcome by the family and the friends around the district in Kangaroo Valley.

Oh yes, the locals, yeah.

How long did you stay at home?

I think I had 21 days leave, about 18, 17 or 18 'cause I'd already

22:00 met her ladyship and been given my marching orders.

She hadn't told you until you met her?

Until I got back home.

Was she in Kangaroo Valley itself?

No, she was in Sydney, Auburn. But, oh I, as I'm with the country up there so we were working, working bloody hard, but the country up around the Atherton Tablelands, Barron

22:30 Falls, it was beautiful country, really lovely country.

So I, yeah, I've actually been on to the edge of that area, just up behind

Barron Falls.

Yeah. I've been past, yeah, I've been past

A lot of that is under water now. Where we had camps they tell me there's a big lake. They've, I don't know what they did but and we came down to a, we were training for fitness

23:00 for New Guinea. We knew where we were going, there was no secret about it. We came down to the beach at Cairns for invasion training and the Yanks had never had it. They had their barges, we're choofing around in them but they'd never landed anyone on a hostile beach. So we learnt and they learnt and hoped to Christ they gelled, but it didn't.

So you were training with the Yanks at the beach. Were they training with you up at Atherton Tableland as well?

No, no. It was just on the beach.

23:30 **Were they using LMS craft?**

No, landing craft, L, LCT, L, Landing Craft Troops.

Yeah, and so can you tell me the range of training that you did up there on Atherton?

We were there for about four, four and, no, it might've been longer, about four to five months from, you know,

24:00 but

And what types of training were you doing there in the jungle?

Jungle training, adaptation, how to get over this and if you haven't got that, making do, how to conserve your tucker which we were experts at, how not to thieve, we were experts at that too.

24:30 But you don't call it thieving in the army, that's scrounging.

So what was the morale of the 9th Division there at Atherton?

At that time, up the shit bonza. I'll give you a for instance. We were winging about tucker, they were whinging about tobacco and they fined three jokers £5, 28 days and all we got was

25:00 rough pipe tobacco, one ounce each, no papers. You didn't ask for papers. Another instance, we were winging about greens and tucker and they got beetroot. Now I don't know about you, but most country women cook beetroot beautifully but if you can stuff something up give it to an army cook and he'll show a better way of stuffing

25:30 it up, and as we come past, whatever the size of the beetroot was, that size, that size or that, on the plate, but when you got a big one you could gnaw your way around the outside and the centre was still uncooked. The little ones they were nicely cooked. That didn't go over too good, and I told you the other day about burning the officers' mess down. That was the pride and joy of everyone.

26:00 Them bastards were the same, they're back to scratch with us. But

So the morale was pretty well down at this time?

I don't care who says what and whether he's a Major General or a Captain, if they could tell you that we had good morale 'cause we had beautiful morale in the Middle East, we were doing a job, we were gonna come home and we knew where we were heading, and then you come and strike

26:30 all this that was going on here. The Yanks were commandeering everything, you got second best. You were treated like rubbish because we had a lot of 90 day wonders, junior officers. "I'll make a soldier out of you." "Yeah, pig's arse you will." How we never got more shoot-throughs I

27:00 think it was the fact that they must've had their trains well guarded or patrolled or something, I don't know.

Now there was a certain point when you came back to Australia that you went AWOL [Absent without official leave]. When was that?

No, the only time I got pinged for AWL, overnight Uralla Hospital, it was one of the nursing sisters that

dobbed me in. One day stoppage of pay and five

This is after you came back from New Guinea was it?

Yeah.

Sorry, one day stoppage of pay and?

One day

27:30 stoppage 'cause I was away and £5. I got fined £5 and stoppage of pay, in hospital mind you. If they'd have pinched me for some of the other things I'd done I would've, I wouldn't have complained.

So what were the circumstances? You were in hospital and

I went out, went to Gran's place at Auburn, and we got yarning and she said, "Oh look, I'll put the alarm on, you can go back next morning."

28:00 So I was back in the, before reveille and one of the sisters had come through on the night shift and noticed me, 'cause I thought the boys would rough it up a bit, oh he's, 'cause we did for the others. Now someone missed out. "You weren't in your bed last night." I said, "Why wasn't I?" Anyway she pointed out to the oncoming shift and I got two nursing sisters against me. I was lucky to get away with what I did, and he said, "Colonel

28:30 there, administration", and I said, "Well". "Talk, started talking". I said, "It was 2.00 or 3.00 o'clock in the morning and Gran said, I'll put the alarm on, have breakfast before you go, you'll get the first bus up to the station." I said, "Goodo", I didn't think I'd get missed. I mean they were going and shooting through like bloody trams, trains out of Central.

29:00 No one worried about it. I just got, she must've had, I don't know what she had, but whatever she had, she had it, and when I told some of the other fellows in the ward they said, "You're joking, jeez half the ward was out last night." I got pinged that's all. That's the only mark I ever had in my pay book, out of hospital. Anyway

I might just move slightly. I

29:30 **noticed I tapped the edge of the cord there, yeah, yeah. So from the Atherton Tableland, oh, after that?**

Went to Milne Bay, a bit more training, embarked, beach landing a couple of mile out of Lae. Couldn't find the Japs, found the 7th Divvy, then we were told "They're gonna take that, you can go back." All that up and downski for nothing. For a change we went uphill and for a

30:00 change we went downhill, and couldn't find Japs anywhere. They tell me there was some in town but one of the other units struck that, we didn't.

In town being Lae?

Lae.

Yeah.

But back to Milne Bay, loaded up again, a bit more gear and around to Finsch, where they put us on the wrong beach. Actually continuation, that end it was known as That, and that end was known as That,

30:30 and for a while it was hectic, but the funny part of it was years later the battalion in the newsletter put out maps, folded up and put them in the envelope with your newsletter and you started looking at the gaps between this company, that company, the Pioneers were over there and you look at the scale of miles

31:00 and Jesus, they were two mile apart, they were a mile and a half apart. They could've come through us like, you know, scary stuff when you find out years later. Thank God we didn't know about it at the time.

Now you said you got there and it was hairy there for a while, what actually happened?

Well they veered off thataway instead of putting all of us in concentrated, 2/17th there, 2/13th there,

31:30 everyone was going which way.

Sorry, can you be more specific? You say they veered off thataway, who was they?

Veered off to port, the Yankees in charge of the landing craft, and it was commented on by one when we hit the beach, "Bloody Anzac Cove all over again." I didn't know what they were talking about until I was told later on.

Were you fired upon as you landed?

Bloody oath, there was a lot of whistling going on over your head.

Were any

32:00 **of the guys around you getting shot.**

Yeah. I told you about Col Martin, hernia for the third time and the doc says, "Well we need extra skin to patch that up." He says, "Do you mean [makes gesture]?" "Yeah." "Oh gee, I'll tell you what", all of a sudden he stopped doing funny things. But he got shot one in the leg, one in the guts

32:30 and one in the, just near the family jewels, and he on and off had hernias for about 30 years on that. He only had to do something a bit wrong or lift something the wrong way and she'd open again.

This is one of the men that landed with you?

No, he was on the same wave, but he was on the end of our wave. I was up this side.

So once you got ashore what happened then?

Moved in, consolidated, dug in

33:00 and then we started fighting, really you know, but we didn't realise until we got ashore, somewhere the Yankee intelligence had fallen down and they had to bring the 2/15th in and it wasn't until a couple of months later and that they brought the other brigade in, because that's where Diver Derrick stood out coming up the back of. If they

33:30 hadn't have brought the brigade in we'd have copped a hell of a belting. We were copping a belting until they brought the 15th in, that cleared the beach up a bit. There was remnants, various units and remnants of two American, two Japanese Divisions and we're gonna clean them up with two battalions. Optimistic somewhat.

So what happened? Was that achieved?

34:00 Four months later it was.

Were you there all that time?

Yeah. Then we marched up the road

Hold on, can we just deal with that period 'cause we're looking at four months? What were you doing on a day to day basis during that four months?

Digging in, staying dug in, patrols, 'cause didn't patrol too far before you struck someone, and it was boring, really was. You never got warm, you never got a good feed

34:30 and it was two blanket country and you only had a ground sheet. Everything got shot away because when you're going up and down like that and you're doing a lot of mileage, they were even, I tell you, I kid you not, they were even cutting the handle, half of the handle on their toothbrush, knife and fork, no hang on, that's right, knife and fork and you sharpen the edge of your dessert spoon so you could cut with

35:00 it and pick it up and you could still, the knife and fork got the order of the sword.

This was because you were trying to save weight on everything?

Save weight.

So could you describe the terrain you were moving through here?

Yeah, up and down, level you didn't have.

We're talking about huge mountains here?

Mount Hagen was about, that wasn't where we were. We had it better than the Golden Staircase, they had the higher mountains but they were going

35:30 up all the time.

What was the Golden Staircase?

Kokoda, the track, and that one you read was at Myola, which was half way up the track.

Yeah. So dealing, dealing with your campaign, was this the Sattelberg Battle?

Yes, but we never took Sattelberg. They brought the other brigade in and they took it. We took Kumawa, Jiveva,

36:00 Jivevaneng, I've gotta think.

So what, just to give me a typical day of what you're actually doing as an infantryman, what, were you meeting Japs for instance?

Patrols, sometimes they'd come in and it was there somewhere around that time we struck the Imperial Guard, the big fellers, the Koreans. They'd patrol, we'd

- 36:30 patrol, you'd clash, and it was probing, probing, probing all the time you know, but it was, whole companies got lost. There's a good story about one of the smaller aircraft, and they're flying over and written in the sand on the riverbank, they'd written SOS, 2/2nd Pioneers. So
- 37:00 he come back or when he finished whatever he was spotting for and dropped the information of where they were, where they shouldn't have been and how to get back to the unit and they dropped them some tucker, and that's where the Biscuit Bombers came in. The old Dougs [Douglas DC3] , and that's why they were called Biscuit Bombers 'cause they were dropping stuff to them.
- So talking about a general picture here, but I'm just trying to get a sense of what you on an average day was doing as an infantryman.**
- 37:30 I am gonna frown at you in a minute. I'm trying like all other fair dinkum soldiers not to talk in the singular. I like to talk plural, the company, the battalion or the division. You get these jokers, I did this and I did that and I was there and I was here.
- Look no, I can see where you're coming from there.**
- Yeah.
- That's fine, but we're wanting to get**
- 38:00 **the individual experience as well as the collective experience, yeah.**
- I appreciate that, I appreciate it, I really do.
- Because you're telling me a lot about what lots of people were doing and the battalion and this and that, but we also want to place you in the picture as well.**
- Well if I can tell you I was there, I was there. So
- Yeah, I don't doubt that. I don't doubt it for one moment.**
- If they were shooting rifles, I was shooting rifles. It goes just, you know I mean, it's not embarrassing
- 38:30 in the full sense of the word but you go, I've been to unit gatherings where you get invited to another unit, you knew someone and they said, "Next month come down there", and I've heard jokers stand up and tell you about Tobruk and Nipper, he was later on in Z Force, Sergeant, and I looked at him and I said, "Nipper", and he said, "Don't say a word, he said, he never got, never left Australia until we went up to the islands.
- 39:00 And he could tell a better story than I could, so you know.
- What was his full name as a matter of interest?**
- I was that bored, I didn't, but he was with the 2/4th Field Company, Nipper, he was with Nipper's mob.
- 2/4th prior to going into Z.**
- That was Nipper.
- Yeah.**
- He went into Z. Matter of fact if ever you
- 39:30 get the book by Lynette Ramsey Silver, Jaywick and Rimau, you turn to the back of it and then 'cause while at sea, navy, he was there, while army jobs be done, army, and it worked wonderfully and you'll find that Sergeant Russell was once in charge of that little fishing vessel and they wouldn't believe him.
- 40:00 But anyway Lynette Ramsey Silver got in touch with him 'cause she knew he was on like from record.
- On the Krait?**
- On the Krait, and towards the end he was in charge and he was going in with the incursion teams, you know.
- We're actually out of tape on this, so we'll just change the tape.**
- Right.
- Yeah.**

Tape 6

- 00:34 **Right, now what was your view of MacArthur, General MacArthur?**

For the tape. A self-opinionated, arrogant bastard who surrounded himself, this came out in history, not only my words, he

01:00 surrounded himself with yes men that told him what he wanted to hear whether it was right or wrong and all he wanted to do was protect his landing craft because his one idea, I shall return. Didn't matter that he was 2,000 miles down the track here, how about winning this battle first. All he wanted to do was get up there, and as a result

01:30 an officer seconded from the 2/15th I think, and I commend you read this book, Bravery Over Blunder, it was written by Major General Coates after his time in the army but while he was in the army he did massive research and at the end of the book someone referred to me because they've got little letters here and a little number there and

02:00 someone said, "Well check on that one", and he compared Australian patrols to the American idea of patrols. When they are on aggressive patrols, and they dug their holes around, God knows why, but when they were aggressive they'd lean forward in their slip trench. That was the extent of their aggressive patrols.

Now you've got something their to read, that you

02:30 **wanted to read from I think it was Eleanor Roosevelt.**

Yeah.

Do you want to read that to us?

Yep.

Could you tell us what it was before you read it?

It was published in a local newspaper in the war years when she visited Australia and to me after reading about the Yanks and all their bullshit, to me it was sincere and well meant. "Dear Lord, less I continue my complacent

03:00 way help me to remember somewhere out there a man died for me today. As long as there be war I then must ask and answer am I worth dying for?" And yet here we are coming back to our own country getting the shitty end of the stick.

Who was giving you the shitty end of the stick?

03:30 Army, civilians, bludgers and let me add straight after that do you know that over a quarter of New South Wales police were draft dodgers, because if you join the police force and I struck four in the fire brigade and didn't I have some fun, they joined the fire brigade or the police force, mainly police force, it was better pay, and that same

04:00 attitude went on for many many years.

They're draft dodgers because the police force and fire brigade were essential services?

Yep, they were protected industries which meant they didn't have to join the army. They might get killed.

Now you've read this prayer by Eleanor Roosevelt, when did you first

It's not a, you could call it a prayer I suppose. A comment, I

When did you first become aware of that?

04:30 Someone cut it out and sent it to us somewhere or other. I think it was mum sent it to me. She said, "I wonder how many people have this sentiment." So I added a preamble to it sort of and when I read it I thought well how awkward.

And she sent that to you during the war, did she?

Yeah.

When you were in New Guinea?

Either New Guinea or I could've been in hospital. I don't know but it was about that time. All I know it was about that time because it was when they were out here.

Jim, if you could

05:00 **put that on the floor now if we're finished with it 'cause it'll just make a rustling noise. Now you've mentioned MacArthur, what was your view of General Blamey?**

The early stages Blamey, I must remind you of this. World War I, Blamey was not, as the Yanks say, combat, or we say front line. He was an administrator, brigade division,

- 05:30 and how he got his rise in rank, they gave him a brigade that was being shot up badly and was being reformed and they had to have command of a brigade for X amount of time. Now 'cause they were out of the line and they were reforming his time went up and he went back to division and another brigadier come and took his place. As a staff man
- 06:00 he was brilliant, there's no doubt about that. He organised the retreats from Greece. Now I don't know, I think what caused him to fall apart because he become an obnoxious drunk and you can check on that with Kenny Cunningham. I can't remember his phone number 996, no, give it away. Generally I'm pretty good on phone numbers.

What caused him to change?

- 06:30 The attitude back here, the politicians welcomed Blamey as the saviour of Australia because we'd just been told that Churchill wasn't going to give us any more support after they lost the two capital vessels off the coast of Singapore and that was a crying shame too, major vessels like that, no aircraft support. The aircraft carrier run aground somewhere and they proceeded
- 07:00 without her.

To stick with Blamey for a moment and your opinion as to how and why he changed?

Well the attitude in Australia was "Where were you Mr Spick and Span before the shit hit the fan?" It was panic supreme. They looked on MacArthur as the saviour of Australia. He got whatever he asked for and Blamey rightly so

- 07:30 said, "Hang on, I'm senior to him. I've seen more bloody action than he has yet you give him the command and make me 2IC [Second in charge]." He was answerable to MacArthur yet in theory he had more front line experience. He was a brilliant planner. He surrounded himself with very competent officers too and they weren't yes men like around
- 08:00 MacArthur. I suppose the rank he had, the time he held it, to see an incompetent, arrogant bastard like MacArthur come in and say "You'll do this." MacArthur tried to belittle the Australians going over the Golden Staircase as incompetents, not advancing the way they should and what's he doing? He's sitting up in bloody
- 08:30 Melbourne criticising them. Anyway Blamey waged a war on him through the papers and he had, I wish I could put my hand on it, where he admits. Remember I showed you one and I said, "That's Alpha, the equivalent of Enigma?" Well that was saying our army did the fighting, his didn't. Our
- 09:00 air force was practically half of his aircrew. Our navy led by [HMAS] Arunta, one of the very modern vessels was running up and down the slot as though it was a trip around the park, and he admitted that the Australian people did more in that period of time than the Americans did.

Now moving on to another person that you have very strong opinions on,

- 09:30 **and that's Edmondson VC. I believe you knew him before the war.**

Yes, I first met him at the drill hall at Merrylands, not there now. Again Eddie my old mate, he wanted me to join up with him. We both knew each other in the country and I was gonna become a chocko and someone said, "Hey, if you do that you won't get in the army. They could send us anywhere." "Yeah, pig's."

- 10:00 But I knew him vaguely. I didn't, I won't say I was a buddy buddy. I mean that'd be a lie but I knew him through, well he was a corporal at the time and they more about it than we did.

What sort of a person did he strike you as?

Very quiet, very gentle type person, well mannered, very well educated. He had quite a few different; he was a wool classer,

- 10:30 he was also a, one of the stewards at the Liverpool Showground when it was on and he was also, would you believe, an organist at his own church, he could play the organ. One of the lasses there playing for years taught him how to play it and he was quite good at it. A reserved man, a quiet man, but when the shit hit the
- 11:00 fan he was there, and it was saving Mackell and he knew Mackell pre-war because Mackell was junior to him.

So could you give us a description of how he won his VC?

Yes. There was a, approximately 60 men as an advance guard and they were to clear the way around the pits,

- 11:30 otherwise through the wire, right? And Mackell was given the order to clean, clear them out. He picked his men and out they went, kaboom kaboom, hand-grenades and rifles and just how many was killed varies between about 25, 26 to over 30, but they denuded them of a couple of machine guns, couple of trench mortars and they brought

- 12:00 back in later on, but it was the prelude to the Easter battle. They were cleaning out the corridor for the tanks to come through and they got their arses kicked and he got, when Mummy Mackell, Mr Mackell bellowed out that he had one on the ground and I'm just trying to think of the citation, another one was bearing down
- 12:30 on him, had one hand on him and pulled the pistol out and he bellowed out to John, John Edmondson and he raced over and whacked one across the head with a rifle butt and run a bayonet through the other, but prior to that as they were coming in he copped a burst, and they wanted to try and get him out because as I said, a lot of people do not associate the Easter Battle and
- 13:00 the patrol. It was only about an hour and a half, two hours apart, and once it started they just, they'd have been slaughtering stretcher bearers trying to get him out. He was wounded on the 13th, died on the 14th as I showed you in that book, 14/4/41. You couldn't forget that.

Do you remember him in the Middle East?

Well he wasn't there long enough. Prior to that,

- 13:30 why I can't say I knew him that well because your various companies were given different positions to guard along the Suez Canal. Now that went half way down the canal in a matter of what, 10, 20 miles. Something's up that end of the Suez Canal, some

So you weren't actually near him at this time. Obviously John Edmondson means a lot to you as a war hero. Can

- 14:00 **you say why he means so much to you?**

Well A, he did what he did and he got the first VC, but why I am very irate about it is the amount of people that want to gloss over him and forget him. I'll give you a for instance. Would you believe that two men, one was in, I'll give you the names, Symes,

- 14:30 Don Symes, and shit, Don Symes was, and the mayor was his mate, he never left Australia. They took a park from Edmondson which was under the railway bridge, combined it with the dump which they filled in, levelled her off, made a beautiful park out of it. As you're going over the bridge, or coming in more so, you can see it's a very
- 15:00 nice park. Now Bradshaw, the mayor at the time said, "You have my word." Now such was the strife in the Labor Party they said, "No." They wanted to name it something else. Now a city mayor, not to get pre-selection in the branch to stand for the election, in other words they cut him off with the water supply, and we never got, it's now Light Horse Park. Now when you take
- 15:30 something like that at the same time, 1988, they're building a park for a Yank, Kansello, which ultimately cost \$400,000. All he did was take a plane off, forgot to set the pitch for the prompt and doong. "Oh he was a war hero, he died fighting for Australia." "Well how about our VC winner?"

OK, why is John Edmondson so important to you?

Well one,

- 16:00 he was in our battalion. Two, he was Australia's first VC winner, army, and it also, at that time, it caused the Esprit de Corps of the Australians to rise, the "Hey, that battalion down there's been into them, they can beat them, so can we", and it lifted the moral of the troops. Then we got the pamphlets dropped over us,
- 16:30 "Surrender or else". The reply to that was, "Well come and get us you bastards", which they tried to but they didn't succeed.

Were the pamphlets being dropped by the Germans?

Yeah, aircraft.

Yeah.

I only wish I knew as much as I know now to have one of them as a souvenir. Boy, what, wouldn't it be worth something?

Just moving onto, back to the New Guinea, time of the New Guinea. What was your view of the Japanese as an enemy?

- 17:00 Filthy, no hygiene, no self discipline in hygiene, robots. A bit like the Muslims you could say, they've been brainwashed, they've been told they had to die for their Emperor. Now we've got the same in the Muslims. They're going to be angels and Allah's going to look after them fi they blow themselves up, and that was like identical
- 17:30 practically approach. Now you don't throw your life away like that. I mean what do they achieve?

So for you in New Guinea, did you see many casualties?

Oh yeah, quite a few.

What were, was there any kind of common factor among those casualties?

Ours or theirs?

No, the Australian casualties.

Well we'd get our casualties out as soon as we could to the beach and they'd be well looked after by our nursing sisters. First of all you'd go

18:00 from battalion dressing station, RAP in other words, Regimental Aid Post à la English terminology. Then you'd go to a Casualty Clearing Station and depending on how far back it was you might go to a second Casualty Clearing Station distance and time. If they couldn't take you right through, you know, and then they'd get you back to

18:30 the rail head in Alex or somewhere down that way and you'd be heading towards Gaza, around not actually Gaza itself, but in that area, Kilo 89, Hill 69, Crostina, Julis, all names of the group together there. Then we went to from there, some of us that weren't too bad we went to a, I was looking for

19:00 a map the other day, no, I'll give it a miss, I can't think of it.

Where, in your experience where would you have seen the greatest number of Australian casualties?

Oh El Alamein, without fear of doubt. More killed in the first battle because it was more concentrated and we never had the expansion of troops.

Don't worry, you keep on looking over there but the audience is going to be a bit confused when they see you

19:30 **looking over there all the time, so.**

No well, what I was trying, I may have forgotten to bring it in. I wanted to show it to you. One of the best kept secrets in World War II was the 2/24th, the 2/43rd went through our lines, straight up to Tel El Eisa, they were out, I think they, the orders were given by someone that knew and they captured the whole of his intelligent

20:00 company, maps, literature, orders, procedures and that made the playing field level. All of a sudden Rommel hasn't got the edge on us any more, and that was kept secret for over 30 years and the only way the joker that wrote that book or that small book as an addendum to battalion history,

20:30 he had to go to England to get it from the records.

Now during your war experience what would you say your most fearful moment would've been?

Fearful. Seeing the guns at El Alamein go over us and saying, "Jeez, I wonder what he's got", was one of them. I think early as

21:00 green troops the biggest fear we had, not the Germans, not the Dagoes, will we fill the footsteps of the first AIF because they were legends, and there's something you may not have heard, Field Marshal Foch, officer commanding the whole of France, English and everything and he said after the war was over, divisional parades,

21:30 and he said, "Thanks to the Australian troops that won the battle of Amiens, Amiens, and are with other battles are the saviours of France. The French will never forget you", but he gave them a hell of a rap. If I'd have known I had an opportunity of putting that in I'd have got the letter written by a member of the 1/17th World War I, our parent battalion.

22:00 **So if you had any fears it would be that you wouldn't measure up to the footsteps of the first AIF.**

Yeah, well I was at a disadvantage. I was younger than what they were, footsteps of men. Was I going to live long enough to grow up to be a man and would I equip myself well? Well I think I did that.

Did you, you were a little younger than the average

Yeah.

member of the battalion. Did you suffer any disadvantages

22:30 **because of that?**

Yes. Within a fortnight they had us parade before, there was seven of us and he pinged two of them but the other five got away with it because all big healthy young fellows, and he put the tape over us and he knew what he was looking for.

What was he looking for?

A reason to get rid of us because we were under age. Didn't matter what the papers said, he knew. I mean you can't fool a doctor like that, but he let us through and

23:00 later on he was wounded where, first battle of El Alamein, got a bullet in, now he's a surgeon so the right arm. He had a stiff right arm. Finished up in South Australia in charge of a hospital there. Before El Alamein we were moving some stuff and I said, "Hey Doc, I lasted a bit longer than you thought I did, didn't I?"

23:30 But I felt sorry for doctors because they had to keep you in the line. Oh by the way, remember me talking about a senior nursing sister. She learned her trade in Bathurst, married Danny and served in one of the hospitals here. I said, "What's this septicaemia?" She said, "What are you talking about?" "Where, you haven't got it now have you?" "No", so I told her. She said, "Jim, at the time it was one of the most

24:00 dangerous things you could get." She said that, "They didn't have the drugs." She said, "They used to cut pieces out and cut it all out." I said, "But my leg." She said, "Oh, they'd have shortened that." I thought, oh boy, so I was a lucky boy.

Were there any other disadvantages in being younger than the average member of the battalion?

Yes, getting conned. Now listen, if you were only, "Look, we're going out on a bit of a raid tonight, we're gonna go over to the dump or we're gonna go

24:30 there to thief some, you reckon you can sit still and shut up?" "Yeah, of course I can." Well if you weren't sure... "We-e-l-l", then me, "I'll have a go!" Come in spinner, hook line and sinker, they've got you. Took me a while to wake up to that. I was volunteering for a lot of things I needn't have volunteered for, but it was one way of growing up and there's no doubt about it, as I said, there was

25:00 five of us that finished up. I'm the only one left now. No, I'm not. Dougie Foster was on the bayonet charge. He's over at North Sydney. Somewhere over the North Shore.

You say five of you which finished up, what do you mean five of you?

Well he, remember I said they took two away, they sort of ruled two out? No, they're definitely too young.

The remaining five were allowed to stay?

25:30 Dougie Foster, he was on the bayonet charge, Edmondson, Mackell. Now somewhere along the line he had an infection, whether it was sugar diabetes or gas gangrene and he now has both legs amputated. The last time I heard of him he was in a wheel chair and not doing too good. Now he'd have been about the same age as me give or take a couple of months, but it was one

26:00 way of growing up. You either shaped up or you cracked up. Simple, you had a choice.

Did you know of many men that cracked up?

Temporary, yes, there was a few temporary. Those we were talking about before you know, but you looked after your own. The doctors couldn't do a great amount. They had to keep you in the front line.

What were the symptoms

26:30 **of that temporary problem?**

Maladjusted in direction, maladjusted in thinking, hesitant, a little bit wacky, sort of which is left and which is right. Some of them got over it within a couple of hours, some took a couple of days.

And what sort of circumstances would bring this on?

Getting too close to bang bangs, particularly in the Salient where they had enough of the four

27:00 inch mortar and we only had three inch. They out-gunned us. That was a bit hairy.

So for how long would these psychological problems continue?

Depending on the fellow. If you had the guts to stand up and say, "This isn't gonna be", you might still be a bit punchy and that's the best way of putting it, punch drunk because you see a punch drunk fighter, he

27:30 walks on his heels and he's shaking his head, you know, and I've seen a few fellows like that but they shake it off.

No long term cases, people that had to be shipped home?

There was quite a few finished up at Morisset at that time was an army hospital years ago, and they were on electric shock therapy, and they literally burnt the memory

- 28:00 out of them. Danny Lyneham at Panania was a boy I knew well, and I haven't seen for a few years. I went down to visit him and he didn't know me. Didn't even know the battalion, didn't know what I was talking about. Didn't have a clue, and I said to his wife, "I think I better leave." She said, "He knows you're here." She said, "He just doesn't know what you're talking about."
- Did he recover long term?**
- That was, that's only about 20 years ago.
- 20**
- 28:30 **Years ago. So how was he after that?**
- Never improved. He's dead now.
- So, had he carried really quite vivid painful memories from the war years through to about 20 years ago?**
- No, they burnt them out.
- They'd burnt them out.**
- Electric shock.
- When, how soon?**
- That is the most barbaric thing they ever thought up. They don't use it now.
- So when did they do this shock treatment on him?**
- It was in the wartime. He was in Uralla
- 29:00 Hospital and they had an insulin therapy. They used to literally, they'd go out for 24 hours sleep, you know, knock them out with insulin. He didn't respond to that so they hit him with electric shock. Electric therapy they called it. Some therapy.
- So they literally burned all memories out of him?**
- Well put it this way, you can boil an egg or fry an egg and I reckon they
- 29:30 were frying their brains.
- That certainly sounds barbaric.**
- Same as, hey, similar to the Chelmsford incident.
- The deep sleep cycle therapy.**
- Yeah, that was one of them, but they also used electric shock there too.
- Now moving back to New Guinea, weren't there a few incidents about the Japanese playing dead?**
- That was a trick they'd, they caught a few of us, but after a while you soon woke up.
- Did you ever**
- 30:00 **experience anything like that?**
- I never actually saw the explosions, but I've been close to them. They'd go sticky beaking which Australians are pretty good at, and if they were lying on the track or beside the track you never turned them over because if you did their grenade would go bang. They'd get killed but they'd take a couple of you out with them so you just left them there, or if you wanted to 10 or 15 yards away
- 30:30 once through the head and you made sure he was dead then, but they didn't, didn't take them long to put the word through the battalion, I think we were warned about it before we went in.
- Did this happen to anybody that you knew in the battalion?**
- It happened to a lot of D Company boys and a couple, I think a couple of A Company boys got it. Yes. What happened,
- 31:00 they were inside, they must've been, they'd gone to ground and we'd pulled up and that was our perimeter and we were in the middle but we didn't know they were there. Anyway next morning someone sort of saw someone in the half light and they were both on the ground and they were gonna sacrifice themselves and they both went up. I forget the officer concerned, he said, "Well you caused that mess, you bury it."
- 31:30 And I thought well, that's a good way, nice and tough, keep them going. You don't give them time to worry. It's

When he said, you caused that mess, who did he actually mean?

Well he, those two fellows they'd been slightly dusted off a bit but they rolled them away from the grenade and it killed them, killed another fellow there and two of the three or four that went out

32:00 to go through their pockets, I know what they were gonna do, souvenir them, and the Japs just couldn't get out of the perimeter.

So who did the officer accuse of causing the mess?

It it was just the way he put it. He said, "Well they pulled the pin, you caused it, you turn them over, now you bury them." So in other words, "Keep your nose clean in future."

He said that to the survivors, did he?

Yeah. You caused the mess, you bury them. One good

32:30 way of learning, you know, there's no way better than the school of hard knocks.

But don't you think that was rather callous attitude given that he was in command?

No, not under the circumstances.

He was in command in the first place though.

He was the platoon leader, yeah, but the point is this, it makes you think a second time before you go sticky beaking, doesn't it?

Certainly does.

Well the school of hard knocks mate. If you can pick yourself up and dust yourself off and you've still got two legs and two arms, jeez, I won't

33:00 do that again, will I?

Not necessarily, no. Listen, the other day you referred in passing to being shelled by the 7th Division in Lae. Can you give us some more details on that?

I said there was shelling coming in. Now whether they actually hit them or it was a furphy but they were bombarding Lae, and basically the idea was to have two divvies at Lae,

33:30 but somewhere on the line their communications broke down because you, I mean we were going in and so were they. Now I don't know who met who but they were 25, once you've heard a 25 go off you never mix it up with anything else, you know, and someone said, "Hey, they're 25's." "Jeez, so they are", I wonder, must've been captured at Singapore

34:00 because they took a lot of guns there. Was the 7th Divvy, so they immediately ordered us back out, up the track, uphill downhill for a change and we couldn't find the Japs. They'd shot through but we found them at Finschhafen.

Were any of the Australian soldiers injured as a result of this shelling?

I couldn't say, not, I don't say I saw this, I saw that if I didn't. I personally did not see

34:30 any. There was rumours, but then again someone always stretches the elastic a little bit, you know.

Now you referred a moment ago or a couple of minutes ago to the soldiers wanting to souvenir things from the Japanese bodies. What sort of souvenirs were soldiers usually after?

They took a lot of stuff from the Yanks in Corregidor and Batan and wherever they'd struck them.

35:00 Now they had some beautiful American pens. They also had about that big imitation ivory, that was their seal when they were writing home. Buttons, some of them had, the more elite battalions they had tags and little pads, shoulder pads. Some of them had

35:30 money belts on. You couldn't spend the money because it was Japanese but it was a good souvenir, little things like that.

So it was a mixture of what they had themselves and what they'd souvenired from the Americans in the first place, a percentage of them?

But they had the three toe shoes and a couple of fellows took them, but as I said their hygiene wasn't very good.

Now we were talking about the attack on Finschhafen,

36:00 **no, the Sattelberg Battle before.**

Up the hill.

Up the hill. I don't know that we finished that in any detail.

We did because the brigade coming into the other side plus the tanks, they had four tanks, four tanks, five tanks, our armoured corps, they cleared the road and I have an idea that they,

36:30 they stopped us at a given point because coming up the back way they'd got in behind them. They had a hell of a fight, it wasn't easy, don't get me wrong, but they finished that job.

So what happened?

That was the 24th Brigade.

24th Brigade, so what happened to you immediately after that?

A couple of days on the beach then up the track to Sio, up the coast road.

What was at Sio?

37:00 An old German mission, small town, big guns. It was situated on high ground obtainable, the beach was further up the other way and they'd made a strong point out of it, but we had, I had a few parties left behind you to slow us down a bit but basically,

37:30 apart from Malaria it was a lot easier than we expected.

So was it a mopping up operation against the Japanese?

They'd only be a few along the way to try and slow you down. That's all there was. There was patrols out into the, away from the seaside. They hit a few but I don't think there was any casualties on our side. They were on the, they got hit in the toe

38:00 in other words.

Now you referred to or you described using your weapon in the Middle East. You know, how frequently were you having to use your weapon in New Guinea, you yourself as a infantryman?

Well it was two or three months all the time, you know, daily, 'cause you never knew where they were coming from and if he wasn't shooting at you, you were probing 'cause that, I don't know who thought of it, but however they thought of it was a case of

38:30 "If he's not shooting at you, go out and see where he is." That sounds, makes sense.

So after the first two or three months was it as frequent?

No, it slowed down a bit because once the extra troops come in, diversified them, plus they were getting casualties from the Wareo, it's not Wareo but it's similar to

39:00 that. Remember me saying that the other day? The big track from the other side of Sio down the back way? It was being bombed and machine gunned by aircraft and they were playing, you know.

So I asked you a question before about casualties and we were talking about Australian casualties, but where would you have seen the greatest number of Japanese casualties?

39:30 Between the beach and Kumawa. In the first month they came at us pretty heavily two or three times and we beat them back. After that it was more sporadic because you couldn't see around the corner there and if you got amongst heavy shrub you couldn't see around that way and you might only get two or three of them and two or three of you. You were shooting

40:00 but whether you hit them or whether they hit you, you knew they didn't hit you because you weren't bleeding. Different style of warfare altogether.

Tape 7

00:31 **So Jim, you were talking about the different style of warfare that you experienced during the war. Can you talk a bit more about that?**

Yes, put it this way, in the Middle East bigger numbers, closer in in attack, but you had openness and this is where originally the 1,000 yard stare come from, he had a fixed look on his face, 1,000 yard stare.

01:00 You could see what was happening. You could see the dust from the attacking tanks or whatever, whereas in New Guinea all of us that were up there would say that the nerves were a bit more dinga danga danga danga because you come here and you turn around the corner and there's a couple of Japs. They could get closer to you without being seen.

01:30 We'd get closer to them. It was a case of whose nerve lasted the longest, simple as that.

So, it sounds like you know, you must've been on edge the whole time you were in New

Guinea.

You were every time you were in the front line,

02:00 but I repeat what I just said to your mate earlier, it amazes me now looking backwards the adaptability of the human body. If you've got to you can adjust, adapt, succeed. "Do you want to?" "Yes." "Well good, go and do the bloody job." It was wonderful what the human body can put up with. I've seen men live that you wouldn't

02:30 give them two bob. I've seen others die that you'd say, "Well he's been operated on, he's cleaned up", or a report come back, "Yes, he's on the way to base", you know, he'll, next day he's dead. Now what did they miss? I don't think they did. It's just how much the body can take, you know.

Did you ever, we talked a bit about this before we started today, but that whole idea of,

03:00 **you know, faith and or fate. Like did you have any particular belief about, you know, why some people lived and why some people died?**

Accepted by most old soldiers, the older the soldier the more determined they get, when your ticket's up it's up. When the guard punches your ticket coming through to say you're on the train,

03:30 yeah, you're on the train, hooroo. It's just luck. Some say luck, some say your luck run out. I don't know, but looking back you think of some of the men that did buy it and die, how much more they had to offer, civilians or after the war and that, and some of the others fellows that staggered on from, you know, everything, came back with

04:00 hardly a scratch on them. It just, the more you think about it the more it doesn't justify. Simple as that, I think, and if you're gonna worry about it's gonna upset you, so if you accept it when it happens, it happens, but if you sit down and start to worry you are not going to be very good.

You mentioned

04:30 **before that a lot of old soldiers would say that they had some sort of faith in God.**

Well it was accepted by a lot of old soldiers that there is a supreme being. There must be otherwise Hitler wouldn't have got his just desserts which he did in the long run. They have their own idea of faith sort of. There is a supreme being.

05:00 We respect him but we're not gonna go overboard in this worship bullshit. I'll give you a sermon, give me some money. Because a lot of us went around Jerusalem, Stations of the Cross, Garden of Gethsemane, the Hill of the Skull, Golgotha, and we also saw where

05:30 Christ preached one of his sermons under the very old olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now all of his preaching, all of his lessons, all of his gatherings were outside. The modern churchmen of the day want on the biggest and the brightest and the best church. Why don't they follow the very man they're supposed to be following?

06:00 **Yeah.**

That is why a lot of respect was had the Salvation Army Ministers, padres as we called them. They'd come to you on the front line on. Now they didn't need a bloody church to preach in. They could sell you the same service as they did years later in churches or on parades.

What kind of interaction did you have with

06:30 **the Salvation Army people?**

As a front line soldier they'd always visit you, have a yarn to you. If there was any Salvation Army paper or letters, like writing paper, they'd give you a couple of sheets each if they had it, cut a pencil in half and you and your mate shared a pencil, but it was more the fact that they had enough respect to come around and visit

07:00 because you get awful, after seven months you get awful bored with the same group of faces, and someone new coming in, oh, he looks different, don't he? They always looked clean and tidy and they always appeared to me, and I'm saying my own experience, they always appeared to me as being very sincere. To wear

07:30 as well as they did, month after month, to have the dedication they did, because remember they were with tough soldiers and if they were hypocritical they'd have pinned them back.

Did you ever have reason to confide or seek, seek out a padre to talk about your experience at any point?

No.

08:00 I wasn't, as a slightly younger fellow, I couldn't do that in all respects. I had to grow up, put it that way, and you don't grow up by whinging. "Cop it sweet", the old army saying, cop it sweet and grin is about

the best philosophy I had, and it worked, and let's face

08:30 facts, if I firmly believed the bible I wouldn't be here today because the bible tells you three score years and 10, which equals 70. I'm a little bit past that so I'm on borrowed time, bonus. That's the way I look at it. A lot of other fellows did too.

Now tell me, you mentioned before that you talking about one of your fellow

09:00 **soldiers who had lost his taste for beer while in New Guinea. Can you explain, can you retell that story for us?**

No, that wasn't, that was in Tobruk.

Oh was that in Tobruk? Sorry, could you retell that story, 'cause that was quite interesting I thought?

Heading for the NAAFI, we're gonna have a feed. They had sausages, egg, tomato, chips, that was about it, a nice plateful, and that slowed us down something shocking, we couldn't eat that, and someone said, "Oh, the beer's on", so I grabbed

09:30 my Lady Blamey, a couple of them, and I brought, I didn't drink but I knew they enjoyed it and they were mates and I plonked one down in front of a fellow called Jackie Wilson. "Get out of here." "Oh, what's wrong with him?" And basically after a bit of talking to him and talking to other fellows, about four of the hard heads sitting around that

10:00 table had lost the thirst. They'd been dry that long in Tobruk, some of them had drank cognac, ooh, that's a rough brandy, very rough, and basically they dried out and no desire, no taste, no yearning I suppose, that'd be the best word, they'd lost the yearn for it and it took them months to get it back

10:30 but when they did, did they make up for lost time, but as his wife used to say, "Jack, you've found another bloody way of going out and getting drunk." He could think up different ways than anyone else, but it never affected him. He lumped sugar, worked at CSR, worked on the electrical lines

11:00 up and down the coast, worked damn hard, as well as his little farmette, four or five acres, but someone said, always happy.

Jim, you just mentioned that you were drinking from the Lady Blamey, can you, because we've heard different variations of why, what this was.

Yeah, as I know it, as I know it, the bottles at that time

11:30 were a long necked ladies', ladies', not ladies' waist, that's a glass. Anyway long necks, Pilsener bottles, and either by dipping a piece of, a length of wool in metho and looping it around twice tight, lighting it and the moment the fire went out you dropped it, just whoop into the cold water and she'd

12:00 crack. Now sometimes it'd be successful, sometimes it wouldn't and all you did was sit and twiddle it in the sand and take the burrs off it because let's face facts that was all you had to drink out of. There was no beer mugs over there. The Gyppos didn't know what beer mugs were. They only sold it in little things like that and that wasn't good enough for Aussies but the beer tasted alright so they tell me, but that's

12:30 what's called the Lady Blamey.

And why was it called the Lady Blamey?

Well one story goes that she wanted to edificate the troops and them drinking politely. The other one was it reminded someone that saw her, "Jeez, that looks like Lady Blamey", because she was very thin and skinny whereas the old man he was, you know. That's two stories,

13:00 take your pick of which one you like.

That's a funny one referring to her figure. I like that.

Hmm?

That's a funny one referring to her figure. That's a good one.

Well she was a skinny looking, very skinny looking sheila from what I'm told. We were never that close to the rear echelon to see, because anyway the more you're up there the less chance you had of getting in trouble back there,

13:30 and you could get away with a lot more up there because the senior officers didn't like visiting. They might get hurt.

Now tell me, did you have any access to any sorts of, any sort of entertainment in New Guinea at all when you were there? Was there any concerts or?

I don't know about New Guinea. I don't, could've been but I, we had a unit party in Tobruk.

14:00 Spanky MacFarlane dressed up as a sheila and he put on a good show, but in other parts of the camp

when we were out of action there was Jim Davison, Jim Davison, Davison's Dance Band and Gerald, Jim, something Gerald. They had another travelling party

14:30 down the theatre and they'd put on a show, but we did have one or two, now whether there was two, we were out of the line anyway, we were in reserve and my (UNCLEAR) was well done here, it looked it too, but it was a bit of relief. That's

15:00 the best way of putting it, took the tension off for a while, but oh it was quite well accepted and we did have, I can, I can never, I, can never remember myself any time in New Guinea, I don't think I would've liked to have seen them, particularly the women coming up there because they wouldn't have the same

15:30 protection as the nursing sisters would.

Did you, sorry, I was just reading a note that Graham passed me. I was a bit distracted there. Graham just passed me this note. He said in regards to Chester Wilmoy?

Chester Wilmot.

Wilmot sorry.

Yeah.

Yeah, and you had quite high regard for him.

16:00 Very high.

Yeah.

He did the design on that map.

Right, yeah.

Now do you want me to hold it up?

No, no. Do a bit of hand modelling.

His reporting was factual. He didn't stretch the elastic, he told the story like it really was and I don't think I've ever met anyone before he got killed in a plane crash, that

16:30 didn't like him and respect him. Went to a lot of trouble to get the true story as he could make sense out of it. He didn't sit back in base like a lot of the, there was reporters in Cairo which is a long way from Tobruk, and here they are doing daily journals and reports for their papers. Army release, whatever the army released they rewrote it and

17:00 become a dispatch. Chester Wilmot didn't. You see in the very early stages, because they didn't think we'd hold Tobruk, they didn't allow reporters in. There was one or two and that was it and Chester Wilmot was lucky he was of the ones, but basically that is why in the early stages of Tobruk not a great amount is written about it, because they didn't think we'd hold it. All they did was ask us for three weeks.

17:30 Then they asked us for five and that drew on a little bit longer and the longer it went the cockier we got. "These bastards can't beat us" and that almost, that almost got a couple of fellows killed too. Too much over confidence.

Now just speaking about information and sort of as an extension from Chester Wilmot, like I believe that there was actually a paper that was

18:00 **made by the soldiers, as you mentioned before, at Tobruk. Can you tell me**

The Tobruk Truth.

Yeah, can you tell me about that?

The Dinkum Oil. What was another one, it was the same one. The Dinkum Oil and the, there was another one they used as the same paper. Only Morshead could do it. "I want a paper published as soon as possible."

18:30 "I can't give you any gear." "I'm told there's a roneo machine there." "Roneo machine?" Or whatever, it sounded like that, and he had the back of Italian requisition forms to print it on, and believe it or not, in an old bombed out building in Tobruk they brought out a paper, one sheet, and by the time it got to the end of the line she was folded.

19:00 You know that old saying, "they were tattered, they were torn, you could see that they'd been worn", the old red flannel draws that Maggie wore. Well that paper was like that, but it always was printed, it got blown up two or three times, they brought in extra ones as they realised we were gonna stay there, they brought in a little bit better. They brought in a second-hand, second-hand typewriter

19:30 and an English roneo machine, roneo? One you pull the handle and wax paper or something, anyway

and you print it, but again it lifted morale.

So what kind of news would be in The Tobruk Truth?

Whatever happened that day, or that couple of days, or week.

Would it be official battle news or would it be,

Yeah, as, as

would there be jokes and humour or?

One sheet, you haven't got much you know, but basically keeping us up with what other

20:00 battalions were doing. "Did the convoy get through to Malta? Where was the battle last night way out at sea? What was going on in the other part of the world?" Only one or two lines maybe but it kept us informed and we didn't stagnate and that was the biggest thing of all.

So just

And Bill,

20:30 Bill Williams was the first editor and only editor of The Tobruk Truth.

Now tell me, just, I mean we've got a few more things, I've got a few more things to ask you about Tobruk but I know that you feel very strongly about Tobruk and the fact that it hasn't been acknowledged as, you know, in the public

21:00 **eye as an important, or as important as other battles that have occurred in history and I would like you to verbalise why you think Tobruk is so important and why we should remember it?**

Well for a start off, right, the 6th Divvy went up the track like a rat up a drainpipe and did a wonderful job but we were the first ones to hit the Germans or to be precise, he hit us.

21:30 It was the first time in World War II the blitzkrieg was stopped. He just didn't roll over. In France, Czechoslovakia, Poland and other countries he ravaged, once the tanks got past the infantry, the infantry gave up, not Morshead's fellows. "You let us deal with the tanks back here.

22:00 Artillery, anti-tank guns, you look after your lot. Now keep your bloody head down", but the tanks go over the top and "You meet the enemy, the infantry, that's your size", and it worked. And it confused Rommel, they didn't get up and run. When that article I showed you about the 37, 34 tanks, that was the first time.

22:30 Now, every time he hit us he used the same idea and it didn't work, but so therefore we can rightly claim that we were the first troops in the world to stop the blitzkrieg because he just didn't roll over us. Now when you think of that, why shouldn't we be given some credit? The siege at Tobruk was a lot longer than

23:00 the early one at Ladysmith. Ladysmith has been relieved. That was many years before end. We came within a week or, depends on when your dates start and finish, within a fortnight of beating Gallipoli, which is one of the few things we didn't want to beat because of our respect for the World War I and the lessons they taught us.

23:30 So when you think of that why shouldn't we get some of the acclaim and the recognition because they didn't win at Gallipoli, they evacuated. We won at Tobruk. When we were relieved we were in the box seat, and to give you an idea just how good the Australian soldiers were

24:00 compare them to the South Africans, Indians, Ghurkhas, brigades, or two brigades of green troops under General Klopper, a South African General, they held Tobruk for two days. We held it for 242 days, quite a bit of difference, isn't it?

It is.

And one of the Scottish battalions was called the Gay Gordons, but gay

24:30 in those days means a lot different to what it means today.

What did it mean in those days?

Witty, flash, perceptive, a bit of a flash dresser. Not the way you describe them today.

No, it's changed, the meaning's changed quite a lot.

25:00 **Now you were relieved at Tobruk on December the 7th. Can you describe that day and what happened?**

No, we weren't relieved.

Oh, sorry.

That was the, that was when Crusader, the big drive from Egypt came up the coast supported by aircraft, supported by tanks, many of them, and navy vessels, and they cleared the path up the Bardia Road to Tobruk. Tobruk

25:30 has been relieved, but it wasn't. They relaxed, took their tanks somewhere else and Jerry come back and says, "Gotcha", and the 2/13th, the last battalion that didn't sale from Tobruk because the destroyers were damaged and they returned to Alex, they put on a bayonet charge and cleared that corridor all within the same day, so that gives us December

26:00 7. Now why shouldn't we be proud to talk about December 7 instead of whinging like the Yanks do? This is when they got their arses kicked at Pearl Harbour. Don't you think we have a greater right to celebrate December 7 than what they had? We won, they lost. I don't know about you, but a big difference isn't there?

It's something to think about that's for sure.

26:30 **Now tell me there was also, you mentioned this the other day, an attempted sinking of a hospital ship that I believe you wanted to go back to.**

Yes. It was an English vessel, a small luxury liner, refitted, painted out and even in black and white films the red cross was distinguishable. Now she, the, she loaded up and she's on her way out through the boom, and

27:00 Stukas, German and Italian dive-bombed her. She was going to sink, or the order was given she was getting light on so they whacked two destroyers, one was the Waterhen and I think the other and I stand corrected on this, I think the other was the Vendetta, got the wounded off and the engineer said, "Hang on", 'cause they had a hell of a lot of wounded on

27:30 on their way back to Alex, and where the plates were buckled and torn then suddenly were almost above water. So they patched her up from the inside and she was towed back to Alex where they re-done her. She paid the navy back at Trincomalee when the Japanese, same fleet that did Pearl Harbour, sunk the vessels and she was in the

28:00 area and they called around as history tells us they were spotting the sailors in the water and they stopped, and with the forward wave carrying them on some of them, they weren't damaged, some of them finished up in the vicinity of the propellers, hauled them on board, took them in. Where, I don't know where they took them to but as some of the old salts said, "Vicker" has paid her debt

28:30 to the navy, but why those rotten bastards would dive-bomb, she wasn't in shore, let me make that point clear. She was outside the boom, a couple miles to sea moving when they took her on. Now if you can see a red cross and the photograph would've been taken at least two mile away, if you can see it in black and white they must've been able to see the big

29:00 one on deck. An act of bastardry is the only way to describe it, and it made us all the more determined to, no prisoners here, and where possible we didn't because there was nurses on that ship. They were being evacuated from a hospital in Tobruk and they did a wonderful job of getting the boys on to the destroyers,

29:30 covering them with blankets. Then they were taken off too after they'd cleared the decks aboard the destroyers and male staff only stayed with her. So some great acts of heroism was done.

Yeah, the nurses were great ladies.

Hmm?

The nurses were great ladies, they really were.

Well they had, put it this way,

30:00 I have yet to see anyone that was in hospital, particularly in Greece and the Middle East and later on in New Guinea, that didn't have the highest regard for them because to me, OK, they might've taken sympathy on me, he doesn't look too bright, does he? No. They always treated you as they would their brother. They treated you with

30:30 courtesy, you had to show it in return. The respect was always paid to our boys, except for the time when one fellow thought he'd souvenir a bit of her

What happened?

When I told you the story of how a sailor found out that this wasn't a young soldier coming up by any next getting off Greece. Jesus

31:00 Christ, it's a bloody woman, and he was assisting her on board, and there was one thing that men haven't got women have, and he found one of them. I think that's about the tasteful way I can put it. But the respect they had was equal to the task. Put it, they earned it,

- 31:30 because they didn't want to go out to Greece. The, I wasn't there so I don't know, but all the fellows in the base area reckon the nurses going out of the hospitals in Tobruk, they put on a real blue and a Barney. They weren't. Yes you are. Same with, same with the nursing sisters, Sister Bullwinkel for instance. They didn't want to leave the boys in Singapore but they knew what they'd
- 32:00 get at the hands of the Japs and they did get it later on. And there's the stupidity of Australia's so called educated people. Australia Post when they were putting out stamps for the 50th or 50th something or other, they didn't think of Edmondson, Australia's first VC. General,
- 32:30 Major General Vassey's wife got a nod on one of the stamps. Now why wouldn't, why would you give someone that as far as I know never left Australia, and cut out Sister Bullwinkel who was herded with 21 others, was herded into the sea, shot, bayoneted, checked and she was one of those 21, she was the only that come out, out of that
- 33:00 Banka Island. Vyner Brooke was the vessel they were on, and she later gave evidence at the war crimes trial in Japan.

Yeah. I've heard her story. It's a remarkable story.

Now, why would you give a civilian that lived a good life, was in permanent camps, Mrs Vassey I think her name, I think it was Mrs Vassey. Anyway you can ring up Australia Post and ask who was the female?

- 33:30 The show pony got a mention, the doctor, and if you read his story he was the only doctor in Singapore, but he forgets the three that were killed at Sandakan. One survived, that was four. Weary Dunlop I'm talking about.

Yeah. Jim, I'll have to get you to stop jiggling your coins 'cause Graham can actually hear.

You can hear that?

Yeah.

I'll be.

- 34:00 **They're very sensitive microphones. They're quite amazing actually.**

I'll be, no, I apologise for that.

It's like you're counting your money.

No, I just sort of fiddling, you know.

Yeah, now tell me what do you regard as the highlight?

By the way on the, on Weary Dunlop, who did he know? War's commencement he was in England. He got attached to a CCS which is Casualty Clearing Station for

- 34:30 the second battle that didn't get to us in Tobruk. He came out of there and one of the men that knew him and met him later on was, he was, when he left up Major Williams, he then was given Lieutenant Colonel Williams, 2/2nd Pioneers, he was lost in Java, but between getting captured he runs into this fellow
- 35:00 Dunlop. He says, "I struck you in Tobruk." "Oh", he says, "Yes sir, there was no fighting there so I got moved somewhere else." Now when you think of it, OK he's a doctor, big deal, he's only a captain. So he got moved from England to Tobruk, from Tobruk to Australia back to Java, then to listen to him talk he was the only one on the
- 35:30 Burma Railway. How come five doctors went to, four went to Sandakan, or Sandakan, whichever you like, and they didn't live. They weren't amongst the six that escaped. So it's four doctors dead and there's quite a few died in Changi, yet if you read Weary Dunlop's
- 36:00 story he was next to Jesus Christ. He could walk on water. He's got bullshit battle brains, simple as that.

Yeah, now tell me, I want to know from you what you regard as the highlight of your war time experience?

The highlight?

- 36:30 Gee, that's a curly one. I can think of some low ones, no. Highlights? Finishing up still alive after the second battle of El Alamein because we didn't think we were gonna live through the first one because everything was at six, at least we had
- 37:00 more organisation the second one. The first one was a bit tipsy topsy turvey, and we managed to live through that. That was luck, but when you heard of the deployment of 11 divisions and you think well on percentages we copped more, greater, our percentage was 22 per cent of total casualties
- 37:30 in that 11 days, one battalion, one division. Now that's a percentage of 11 divisions. There were 11

divisions on the battlefield, so that would have to be a highlight. You've done the best, you've copped, you've paid your price and you're still alive, and with a bit of luck you're going home. You might starve on the way home and you might have a fight with the wharfies

38:00 about feeding you but we're going home.

Where were you when the war ended?

I got as far as, got as far as Greenslopes I think in Queensland. No, it couldn't have been in Queensland, they'd have kept me on. Must've been close. Anyhow I got

38:30 malaria again and came back to Uralla and I think I just got back to Uralla when they said the war, they say VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day these days, it was never VP Day. It was announced in the papers at the time VJ Day, Victory [over the] Japanese, because there was no one else apart from the Koreans, but it was basically us against them, but now

39:00 it is impolite, politically incorrect to say Japanese, Victory Japanese, Victory Pacific. It sounds so much posher, la de da.

Now you were ill at the time that this happened.

Yeah, rotten with malaria.

So were you well enough to join in any of the celebrations?

No.

You weren't, so you were in bed the whole time?

I was a little

39:30 bit the worse for wear.

OK, well look, we're going to have to stop there and continue the story on the next tape, so

Well don't you tell me I brought that photograph in for nothing?

No, you didn't.

Tape 8

00:31 **So can you describe, just give us a summary of your homecoming? I mean I know you were ill, but just tell us how you got home and how long you spent in the hospital?**

Spent some time down Kangaroo Valley, got welcomed home, had a good rest. Money started to get light on so I decided I'd go and get a job. Came back to Sydney and to say I had itchy feet

01:00 was a masterpiece of understatement. Then I wasn't the only one. We were wondering from job to job, but all the good jobs were well kept down by the B Company, be here when they went and be here when they come home, and we got the jobs they didn't want, wheeling bags of spuds around Paddy's Markets at 4.00 o'clock in the morning. Well human being didn't get up at 4.00 o'clock in the morning.

01:30 So stick it up your arse or go and get something else, and I'd already put in for my CAS [?] training. I was in the first group and I was going to be a carpenter, but I had to wait for the call up, you know, army, hurry up and wait. So I had five or six, seven jobs and I couldn't get one to suit me or one that even was

02:00 any dignity in it. You only got the dirty jobs and I went in and did my CRES [?], and I realised that, because in those days you've got to understand, a tradesman got paid a lot more than a labourer did, and I can still remember my full pay as a carpenter, £12 eight and six a week. A good labourer was getting about £7 or £8. The average

02:30 labourer was getting about £6, he wasn't a skilled labourer, and I finished that then the bloody powers that be decided we weren't gonna have a depression, we were gonna have a recession. I don't know the difference, but it must be something, and there was carpenters walking around with their tool kit, better carpenters than I was. These were men that had served their time before the war, had the wartime experience at building.

03:00 They couldn't get jobs so what chance has me. So I couldn't see me being a walloper, that was the only two jobs around, Police Force and Fire Brigade. A big difference in pay, police was paid better and I went in the Fire Brigade, working shift work wasn't so good until you got used to it, then once you got seniority you went up like steps and stairs in pay,

03:30 and once you had your seniority you learnt more of your trade. It was interesting and I think it suited a lot of, I know that at that time in headquarters there was quite a lot of navy boys. The added risk, the

added bit of adventure as it were into a fire, I think appealed to them. That's the only way I could put it.

04:00 They were always gonna leave but they never did, and that's where I finished my time.

Now I believe that during this time you were married and had some children as well.

That's right.

Yep, and I'm just, I'm also wondering like

A lot of women can't take shift work.

04:30 Police is worse than Fire Brigade in divorce rates because there's more of them, but women just couldn't hack the fact tonight you're home, for the next three or four nights you're not. That's the only thing I can put it down to without getting into the nuts and bolts. But it is pretty well accepted that shift workers have more divorce rates than day workers.

05:00 **Yeah, I've heard**

It must be a strain. Looking back now, I mean it's alright my age getting very smart and clever but looking backwards it must've been a strain on women, just as much a strain on us. Some women I know, Danny, Col, Eddie, to name a quick three, Vic Ray, Sergeant, some have been married 60 years,

05:30 still as happy as the day, until the day Danny died. They were happily married, wouldn't have heard any other way, so it's like putting your hand in a lucky dip, you know. Did you win or did you get the booby prize? Simple as that.

Now do you, just looking back on your, reflecting on your war time experience, can you see that there was any influence of your,

06:00 **you know, from your war time experience on your post-war experience? Was there any psychological long term effects?**

You're a bit more cynical, you're more down to earth. You couldn't get conned because you'd been there and done that, but I'll answer you another, without waiting for the next question I'll answer it another way. These are the words of Vic Ray. They were arguing one dawn service, a couple

06:30 of sour, I dunno where they'd been or if they had been, was it worth fighting? Now Vic turned around and looked them up and down and he said, "Well tell me this, would you have it any other way?" "Oh, what are you talking about?" "Well" he said, "I chose when I was going to get married because we're a democracy. I chose where I was going to live, how I was going to rear my children. It was my choice and my wife's." He

07:00 said, "I chose what school I sent them. If they got the marks I'd get the money to get them further." His son finished up in the army, he was posted to Washington as an aide, and I'll let a little bit of levity into it, his little daughter third in line heard them talking and she said next day, "Oh, I didn't know my father was a left-handed colonel." She

07:30 heard them say "lieutenant colonel" but she couldn't get her tongue around that so her father was a left-handed colonel, but as Vic said, "We had our choice". "We determined what we were going to do", so he said to them, "What would you?" and he turned around to them and he said, "Now what did you do?" When you think of that they're very wise words. Would we do it

08:00 all over again? I think we were back in those days, I think we would have because a certain amount of pride in achievement, a certain amount of pride in the fact that we made it possible, and that's the only thing I'm cranky about, all these towel heads out. They bellow and fart and grunt and snort about bloody democracy and what they're entitled to, but did they win it? It was the men that didn't

08:30 come back and the men that came back not so bright, they were the ones that got democracy. Now a few of the would be dago heroes have tried to take me on in Council and around the town, and my reply is always the same, "What did you do in the war years? Did you have a victory now?" The very people I was telling you the other day Brigada Douglassario

09:00 Spaghetto, they were in the Middle East in the time of the 6th Divvy and the time of the 9th Divvy, but no one can tell me one battle they won against the Aussies. We beat them every time. So that, doesn't that give you confidence, doesn't that make you something to be proud of? Now why should we cop flack from them

09:30 about how much they deserve democracy? Or if they deserve democracy I should get two helpings, if it was ice cream.

Now tell me, did you on your return to Australia, did you become a member of any of the Rats of Tobruk Associations or the RSL?

Well I didn't join the RSL for many, correction, I was in hospital, go from there,

10:00 when, he came around the hospital signing us up, when we were in hospital, for the Rats of Tobruk

because it was formed in 1945 before the end of the war, so I was a member of that. On discharge, very good thinking old diggers, they,

10:30 "You're going down a bit of this and a bit and sign this and take that and sign this and that's your, that's your man power and that's that and there's a digger, what do you want mate?" He said, "Give me five bob and I'll shut up." "What for?" He said, "Give me five bob and you're a member of the RSL" and he said, "We have more chance of helping you than these gutless politicians." "Well, that makes sense", and the line that I went through there wasn't one man that didn't join the RSL. Now

11:00 the same spirit is not in the RSL. When I showed you that one about Bright, we've had enough of him, of Edmondson in Liverpool, we don't want to hear any more. Hardly the spirit of a respect for someone else who fought, but they didn't fight so therefore they didn't, wouldn't know what we're talking about.

What about the Rats of Tobruk Association?

Well that's it. I joined that in hospital. Woodward,

11:30 Mickey Woodward, he died at War Vets home about eight or nine years ago, but he put many years into making, 'cause the New South Wales was the first one that signed up the Rats of Tobruk and for one, two Anzac Days we marched as the Rats of Tobruk. Then the RSL didn't like it because we were getting too much attention, and they said, "Associations can't march as associations." Now they

12:00 all march as associations. We had to go back to our battalions. So a lot of us said, "Stick it up your arse", and a lot of men didn't march.

Are you still a member of the Rats of Tobruk Association?

Yes.

And how important is being a member of that association to you?

Small club, not much in it really. I think it's the pride of saying we were the Rats.

12:30 We were given our name, I think I told you about it, by Lord Haw Haw who was an Englishman travelling under an English passport, William Joyce. He was, hey, remember us, remember us talking about Oswald?

Oswald Mouldy, Mosely, yeah.

Yeah. Do you know what? A relative of his was a very close friend of Bonnie Charlie at the time of his marriage. It was on TV last night,

13:00 and I'm looking there and I thought that even bloody well looks like him. So I still would like to know how Mosely got knighted. He must've done something good, but he was, William Joyce was one of his able lieutenants and he sarcastically gave us that name, but he got shot and hung, but he was shot first.

13:30 **Well,**

Next question.

we're actually coming to the end of the interview now. I know that,

I won't say.

I know that you're probably happy about that. It's been a long interview, hasn't it, so Graham and I

I didn't think I could talk that much.

Graham and I would really like to thank you for sharing your story and for your honesty and it's been a real privilege to listen to your story.

Well where possible I didn't put in any bullshit.

Yeah.

And as you know, noticed, anything I mentioned I had an article

14:00 to cover it or a story to cover it.

Absolutely.

And when you're talking from something that's in print or in history books, we have got a fairly good record in history books, Australians. We're the only troops in the world, and this is in history, we're the only troops in the world to have fought all the king's enemies and been

14:30 first to beat them. You say highlights, lowlights, the lowlight of my campaign was when the 7th Divvy belted the shit out of the bloody Vichy French Foreign Legion, the French Foreign Legion. They went through them like a packet of salts. I grew up on stories, little Boys' Own and little magazines, the wonderful stories of the French Foreign Legion,

- 15:00 Algiers, and in the desert and they marched them this fort to that fort and shot, shoot, and when it came to a showdown they weren't worth two bob, but took the Aussies to beat them. We were the first to beat the Dagoes, we were the first to beat the Germans and slow him down. We slowed him down at Tobruk, we beat him at El Alamein. The 7th Divvy
- 15:30 beat the Vichy French in Syria and the 18th Brigade, the famous 18th were the first to really beat the Japs at Milne Bay, they drove them back into the sea, and some of our chockos they were gone thataway. They left the 18th Brigade for dead.

Well we've come to the end of the interview Jim, and we're going to take that photograph, but that's a whole different

- 16:00 **process so we'll stop the camera now, but thank you very much for your time. Thank you.**

I thank you for listening.

INTERVIEW ENDS