

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Henry Nesbitt (Harry) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1101>

### Tape 1

00:36 **O. K. Harry, can you give us an overview of your life thus far?**

Well I was born in Scotland, in Glasgow, in 1918 and when I was about two my mother had me out in the park and I was walking past a swing and I got hit in the left eye with a swing and I've always had a

01:00 weak left eye every since and that's been against me in my army days. But we came out to Australia after the First World War, I was four and a bit and we settled in Brisbane. We stayed at People's Palace when we first came here, that was the old Salvation Army one on the corner of Anne and Edwards Street, we stayed there until we finally got a home at Alderley, at Newmarket in a

01:30 war service home. We lived there for quite a while then moved up to Farring Street in Alderley and I was there until I was 13 ½. I went to Enoggera State School first of all until I was about 6, and then moved to Wilkestown State School and I stayed there until I was 13 ½. In those days you used to go for a scholarship in July and in

02:00 December, and I was due to go to scholarship in July. In June my eldest brother came home and he said, "Harry, there's a job going at the Hotel Canberra" where he was working, the page boy was leaving. He said, "If you go in you might be able to get the job". So I went in and I started work straight from school at 13 ½ and I stayed at the Canberra Hotel until I was about 16.

02:30 I was going down to

03:00 Burleigh Heads Lifesavers as a junior, travelling in the truck, it used to cost us two shillings and where the Post Office is now in Burleigh Heads, there was a baker's shop just next door to it, and we used to buy two pies for threepence, broken pies, and that's what we used to live on as the Juniors. We had a marvellous time while we were a Junior - all the leading swimmers, Tom Boast, who was

03:30 Queensland's leading swimmer at the time, and all the lifesavers, and Neptune lifesavers - the girls down at Tallebudgera Creek. So we used to mingle with the girls from the Neptune Lifesavers and have a great time. And I worked at the Canberra Hotel until one of the boys who was 2IC [Second In Command]

04:00 of Woolworth's in Queen Street at the time said to me, "Would you like a job with Woolworth's?" And I said "Yes, I would". At the Canberra I worked six days a week, started at half past 7 and finished at half past 7, a couple of hours off in the afternoon. So I started work with Woolworth's on the nursery counter and they transferred me down to the valley, 2I/C of the nursery counter in the valley

04:30 and I was there for more or less the start of the war. And I had a bit of a blue [fight] with the manager because he didn't like the way I'd made a display one Saturday morning when we were busy. I said, "If you can do better, do it, I'll bloody leave". And Mrs Miles who was then the staff superintendent for Woolworth's Queensland, came down on the Monday. She said "Harry I believe you've given your notice?" I said "Yes". She said "I don't want you to; I'll

05:00 transfer you back to Queen Street". I said "No, I'll only meet up with so and so at another branch". Which I would have, because he came up to Toowoomba, when I came up to Toowoomba he was managing the Toowoomba store. Then I got a job with the army at Enoggera in the Officers' Mess. And they brought in three months

05:30 compulsory training for everybody that turned 21 over a certain period and I joined the artillery because Dad had been in the artillery and we had three months at Caloundra training and I enjoyed it. We were all 105 Battery. And then I came home and Andy, my eldest brother who was working for

06:00 Electrolux at the time, and I went up to Ipswich with him one day and we just got up to where we had to start work and he said, "Oh bugger it, I'm going back to join the air force". And I said "Well, if you are, I will too". So we both went back and in those days the air force recruiting office was in Creek Street in

- Brisbane and we went up there and I had passed everything else with the
- 06:30 exception of the eye test, my left eye failed me. And they said "Sorry, you couldn't go into air crew, we can put you on ground staff". I said "No, I may as well go back. I can get into the artillery straight away". So I went back and joined the artillery. I went out to Grovely camp and I knew the Artillery Unit 2/10th was being formed and was out there until it was
- 07:00 formed up and then was transferred to Redbank. But the night before I was transferred to Redbank the Valley Hockey Club, who I played with, had given me a night out. It was a bit much and on the road home the sergeant, who we used to call the Black Snake, put me under open arrest for being under the influence and abusing him. So the next
- 07:30 morning I woke up pretty sick and I thought to myself, "I think I got put under open arrest last night". So I went and saw the sergeant major, he was a nice bloke, and I said to him "I've got a recollection of being put under open arrest last night". He said "What for?" And I told him and he said "I'll fix it, don't worry". He went down to the orderly room and came back and said "Yes, you were under open arrest but you're not any longer". So I got transferred
- 08:00 to Redbank that day and joined the 2/10th Field Regiment and was with them right up until the days when we left to go overseas. We spent many, many months at Redbank training and on manoeuvres and so forth but we were the first artillery regiment formed in Australia I think, ready to go overseas to the Far East.
- 08:30 And we were well trained, we went on pre-embarkation leave, went down to Sydney and on the road home there were no seats anywhere, I slept in the luggage rack. But then we finally got our orders to move
- 09:00 and got issued with tropical kit. We knew we weren't going to the Middle East when we got issued with tropical. We used to have half long trousers they were, I can't tell you what we used to call them.
- Go on....**
- Shitcatchers. And we finally got down to Newcastle and they pulled up at
- 09:30 Newcastle and we all got out of the train and the pub was just over the road. You've never seen so many thirsty blokes go for a pub in all your life, downing schooners as fast as they could serve them to us. Got to Sydney, down to the wharf, onto the ferries to take us out and there we were, the Queen Mary.
- 10:00 We were the first troops on board the Queen Mary. It still had the shops that had been there, they were all vacant they weren't being used or anything, and we were in various bunks. I had a bunk in what had been the Garden Lounge and they were two-tiered bunks and it was very nice except that the
- 10:30 Queen Mary, when we left Sydney, we went way down south of Tasmania as far south as they could possibly go, and missed the [Great Australian] Bight. They wouldn't come across the Bite because the German submarines were hanging around, they were afraid. We got to Fremantle, pulled up way off shore of Fremantle, we weren't supposed to go in. Some of them [the troops] managed to get over the side and get on some of the
- 11:00 boats that were close and get away for the day. But I didn't, I was in enough trouble as it was without getting in any more trouble. The Queen Mary was very good, they served up marvellous food. The first day we were there, they called out so many names, "Gunner Nesbitt, so and so and so and so, mess orderlies for the rest of the journey" and it was the best thing that ever
- 11:30 happened because we got food without having to line up. We just used to go in and get our food served up to us and then we could go up to the bar or whatever they wanted to call it in those days and get our beers without any worries, not like the others that had to line up at certain times. So we had a great trip over to Singapore and landed at Singapore.
- 12:00 While we were going with all the other ships that were with the convoy, the Queen Mary suddenly decided it was leaving them and it shot ahead so fast, you've no idea of the speed it went at, and left the convoy, circled it completely and left them. We went on to Singapore; they went on to the Middle East. Got to Singapore, standing on the
- 12:30 deck and looked down and there was a bloke that I knew. I had already said, "I bet so and so's waiting at Singapore when we get there". [His name was Robbie and] He had left before we had, and he was on the deck waiting. And we were moved by train up to a place called Melaka and it was called 'Sleepy Hollow' and we were
- 13:00 moved into what had been the high school. We were three batteries in the regiment, two batteries went into the high school and one went into another school over the other side of Melaka called Tranquira. We had a good time there for quite a while until the hostilities finally broke. They'd moved us from
- 13:30 the positions that we knew, every spot around Melaka where we could put gun positions, and they moved us to the other side of the coast to Mersing where we settled down. The same thing, learn it all and we were living in tents in those days.

- 14:00 I was on guard duty, by this time I was an NCO [non-commissioned officer] , and we used to get English officers sent to us for training and some of our officers would go to the English. I was on guard duty - the headquarters was on one side of the road and our camp was the other - and I was on gate duty. Anyway, this two pipper [Lieutenant] English officer said I
- 14:30 didn't salute him and he called out for the NCO and I had to go out. And he said, "Why didn't he salute me?" And I said "Once you've been saluted by the guard, we don't have to salute officers a second time". And he said "You do me, I'm an officer" And I said "No, sir, we don't salute". And he said, "Where's the Orderly Officer?" So I called the orderly officer and the orderly officer told him in no uncertain Australian
- 15:00 language what he could do. Because the English officers, without being disrespectful, they really had no respect for the troops. They were officers and, boy, that was it. I'll give you a case. I'd be the only Bombardier that
- 15:30 ever abused the Commander of the British Army and the Governor of Singapore. We were in a position where we could have shelled the Johor Bahru Palace where the Nips had their Operations, and they wouldn't let us fire on them. Anyway, I was checking our guns
- 16:00 and I saw this car coming down. We were in Government House grounds out at gun position, and I saw this car coming down with its lights on. I had a rifle with me and I stopped it and they tried to bluff their way out of it and I said "You can't go through here with your lights on". They said "I'm Governor so and so" and the other one was [General] Wavell, and I said "You can't go through here with your lights on, put your lights
- 16:30 out". So I'd be the only one that ever told General Wavell to put his lights out. But that was typical of the English officers, nobody can do anything but them and if they'd let the Australian army work on its own, Singapore would never have fallen and that's the gospel truth. My regiment was
- 17:00 the last guns across the Johor Bahru Strait [into Singapore] . The engineers followed us over and blew it [the Causeway] up. But we had a lot of fun, a lot of strife in our life while we were in the army, lucky to get out of it but I've never regretted it, I learned a lot. And
- 17:30 still have friends to this day that I made the first day I ever met them in the army, and we've been friends ever since, and it'll always be like that.

**There's a loyalty to the men and women that worked alongside each other in war time which is hard to imagine outside of war time, isn't it?**

Very much so, yes, you become

- 18:00 more than friends, you become family sort of thing.

**Stronger.**

Stronger than family, yes, it's part of you that goes when one of your mates passes away. That's another little bit of your life gone. And unfortunately, it's happening nearly every day these days but as long as I keep going, that's the

- 18:30 main thing, for a while.

**Now you were taken in Singapore, is that correct, Harry, as a prisoner of war?**

Yes.

**And how long were you a prisoner of war?**

Three and a half years.

**That's a spell.**

Pardon?

**That's a long spell isn't it?**

A spell, yes. Fortunately, one of the first jobs I had, when we were

- 19:00 taken prisoners of war, we were building a road through the golf course on Singapore Island and one of the Japs that was in charge of us had been out to Australia in a swimming team and he could speak a bit of English. I was
- 19:30 working under him, more or less, and got to talking with him and he taught me quite a bit of Japanese. He could speak a fair bit of English and that helped me quite a lot over the years. Later on when we went up to Thailand I was given a job to build a Nip [Japanese] cook-house with six gunners and
- 20:00 I had to learn, pick up the language pretty quick, because the Nips couldn't speak English and I had to get an idea what they wanted all the time. So I managed to become fairly, not fluent, but able to understand what was wanted and that saved us quite a bit of trouble because I knew what was what.

And then at one

20:30 stage a young Japanese came up, he was a raw recruit to the Japanese army more or less, and we were working on the cook-house and our quarters were immediately behind the Nip quartermaster's store and the walls were only made of bamboo and palm leaves and we used to be able to pull the palm leaves apart and crawl through of a night time and knock off the

21:00 food out of the Jap store. And I used to say to the boys, "Never, ever leave anything in the hut while we're at work because one of these days they're going to discover that their food's missing in the store and they'll search our place". And sure enough they did and they found a tin of condensed milk from one of the bloke's things and we were all lined up, seven of us, and this little nip that hadn't been there long,

21:30 he was a young bloke, he stepped forward and he said "Watashi presento Nesbitta" It meant that he had presented me, but they called me Nesbitta. He had presented me with the tin of milk and that saved seven heads.

**They would have too, do you think?**

Oh yeah, seven heads would have rolled for thieving out of a Nip store. And while we were there in that

22:00 same camp, which was at Hellfire Pass, the Nips used to get pigs and things sent up to them by truck, to the camp, and they couldn't shoot them. They'd have to give one of us the rifle and we'd have to go out and shoot them. They were worse shots than you could ever imagine and we had to kill the pigs and then they'd say, "You can have the head" So we used to cut the head off at the shoulders and we'd take that over to the

22:30 hospital on the other side of the camp where our boys where in hospital and they could get a feed because we were eating enough to keep us going. That was one of the reasons I think that I managed to stay so well. When you cooked the rice it used to be all burned on the qualies, which is the equivalent to a big fry pan, and we'd get the burned rice and

23:00 eat that. Well, we had a full belly anyway even if it was only from burned rice when we were working in the kitchen. You had, I must admit, that I did meet some good Nips. When we left Thailand

23:30 we went back to Singapore and we were in camp there for a while and then we went on a boat to Japan. The ship behind us was torpedoed, we got through without any worry to a place called Moji and from Moji we went up to Nagasaki and from Nagasaki we were taken by launch, barge, out to an

24:00 island in Nagasaki Bay where they were ship building and we were stationed there building the Nip cargo carriers. And I was working for a little Nip on big hydraulic presses and he used to sneak food into us sometimes, as much as he could. It would be dried squid or something like that but at

24:30 least it was that. But I must tell you the funniest story of the whole lot was when we got off the barges that took us over to these islands to join the ship-building yards. As you walked up the gangplank at the top was the doctor, the Jap doctor, an interpreter and Nip guards.

25:00 **You were telling us about walking up the gangplank?**

And you had to tell the Nip soldiers what colour their badges were on their coats. And I'd taken my glasses off and made out, I peered at them and couldn't tell them what the colours were so I got a job in the shipyard sweeping the railway lines keeping them clean, because I was too blind to be doing any other job. One day they

25:30 caught me trying to read the newspaper and then I as put on to this other heavy job on the big bending machines, on the big hydraulic presses, and that was when the little Nip was saving me. But there again I was lucky that I got out of it. I got away with more things when I was a POW [prisoner of war] with luck. Before we'd left Singapore we'd worked on

26:00 building a Japanese Shrine on top of what was called Bukit Timah Hill, and I'd been working with a party building the approach road to the hill. And the first day we started the soldier in front of me slipped and he still had the steel rims on his heels, you know, and one hit me on the shin.

26:30 That's the result of it still, and that was driving me mad, I was in agony with it. And I tried to tell the Nip guard that Watashi ('I') was "tac san biyoki shigodo nai", which meant that I was too sick to work. So anyway, I marched my gang home from the bottom of the hill back to Bukit Timah to the camp and when we got to the camp I immediately

27:00 reported to our army officer and he said "I'll have to tell the Nips". So then I was put under arrest. Luckily for us we had a Nip interpreter who had been in America when the war started and had gone home to Japan and was conscripted back into the Nipponese Army as an

27:30 interpreter. And I told him what had happened and how, and he got me out of that. So, I can't say there wasn't some good Japanese.

**It's nice to hear some good stories, that they are human beings and there are good ones.**

Oh they are, yes. There were good ones. Some of them, even in Thailand, the

28:00 Korean guards were the worst guards of the lot actually as far as beating prisoners and that's because they used to get done over by the Japs and then they'd take it out on us. But there was one Korean guard, we used to call him AIF Joe, and he'd come round, he'd say "Searcho, searcho" meaning that the Nips were going to have a search of all our camp to see if we had anything that we weren't supposed to

28:30 have. We all had time to hide the things we did have. I had a wrist watch in there that my Mum and Dad gave me before I went away, and that was a really prized treasure. If the Nips could get a wristwatch off you, they'd take it smartly. But I used to hide it in all sorts of places and I've still got it there.

**Harry,**

29:00 **I might take you back to your early days and ask you why did your parents emigrate from Scotland to Australia?**

Well I think it was a case of they thought there was more chance of progressing I suppose, in the land. Dad had just got out of the army and didn't have any real job and they told me they came out to Australia on

29:30 I think it was about a ten shilling fare or something like that. And we came out on a ship called the Moreton Bay.

**Do you remember it, you were four did you say?**

I can remember walking up the gangplank to go on it and I can remember the Tamil crew or whoever they were, they were eating their rice with their hands out of their paper, you know.

30:00 Funny little things like that that stick in your memory.

**Why did they choose Brisbane?**

What happened was they were sent up to a place just outside Stanthorpe, Elimbah, which was fruit, grapes and all that sort of thing but it was worse than being in the

30:30 army. The slave driver, he wanted all the family, Mum and Dad and sister and two brothers, I was the only one that couldn't work because I was too young, but he was driving them from daylight to dark and they couldn't stand that. For nothing, you know, the pay was practically nil and the food I believe was nil too and the only thing that they can

31:00 remember, Mum would always tell me about when we were leaving they were taking us away in a sulky, a horse and sulky, and a bull charged the sulky. And that's how we ended up coming to Brisbane because they were getting the soldiers out but expecting them to work as slaves more or less on some of the farms, and that was where they were sent to. Some of them got treated well, others didn't.

31:30 **So when they arrived in Sydney, Australia, they would look for work or the government would say you go and work up there?**

The government would send you where they wanted you.

**I knew about the 'Ten Pound Poms' in the '50s and '60s but not after the First World War. And your father was in the Army?**

Yes, he was in the first landing in the Great War [First World War], in the first shipload to

32:00 land.

**Did he try to talk you out of joining the army?**

No, no, oh no, they realised that we had to be part and parcel of it, if we were going to survive, Australia, we all had to join up.

**So you were the baby of the family and who was born first?**

Andy, my eldest brother,

32:30 he was the one that went into the air force and he got out of that when the medical officer said he had psoriasis. Andy was a very good runner and he'd been running in the races and he'd fallen over and grazed his elbow and when he went in to the MO [Medical Officer] to get the

33:00 elbow looked at, the doctor said "You've got psoriasis, well have to pull you out of the air force. You can't be in the air force with a skin complaint like that". It was nothing, really, they fix it up today with just a bit of ointment. And he had brought it out and that was when he wrote to me and said, "I will try and join your unit over in Malaya" and I wrote back and said "No, we're having a holiday over here" not ever thinking the Nips were going to really get into it.

33:30 Tommy, my brother between us, he had already joined up, he was a 'Rat of Tobruk' [Tobruk veteran] and

it was a funny thing, while we were stationed in Melaka, I went to the picture show one night and there was a film of the 'Rats of Tobruk' and there was my brother in the picture.

**Had you heard from him by**

34:00 **mail?**

No I hadn't, no. All we knew was that he was in the Middle East and things were happening because your mail was pretty well censored. I've got letters in there, and postcards, that I've sent back but I couldn't put anything on the back of them to let Mum and Dad know where I was.

**And what about your sister, is your sister next to you?**

Yes my sister is next to me, that's Nan up there.

34:30 That's my wife up there, no Nan's in the bedroom.

**What was Nan short for?**

Nancy, Nancy Grace.

**And can you tell us what it was like being brought up in - you moved from Brisbane to Toowoomba - was it?**

Toowoomba.

**When you were a child?**

No, when I first came home I didn't know what I was going to do and I went to,

35:00 I suppose what would be the equivalent to Centrelink now, it used to be the employment thing and they said "There's a job going at Victoria Barracks and it was night watchman and caretaker on the various army camps as they were being vacated". So I went and applied for it and got it and I was made superintendent. I don't know

35:30 why, but they picked me and said, "You'll be the supervisor." As the army and the Americans got out of various camps, I'd go out and put in caretakers or watchmen or whatever was required and I'd have to go to the various homes and tell them they were wanted for jobs. That was how I bought my home in Norman Park. I went out to

36:00 Norman Park one day to tell a chap that he'd got a job as a watchman/caretaker and the old girl that owned the home said "You don't know anybody that wants to buy a house do you?" And I had no intentions of getting married or anything then but I said "How much do you want for it?" She said "Eight hundred pounds" and I had a look through and eight hundred

36:30 pounds wasn't bad. I said "Yeah, all right, I'll buy it". So I went and phoned my wife up and I said "We'll have to get married". She said "What do you mean we'll have to get married?". I said, "I've just bought a house". And when I told everybody we had to get married, of course they all thought, "Uh oh, he's put her up the duff". [pregnant].

**In those days you couldn't move in together without being married, is that right?**

No, that's right.

37:00 Very much so. Well, you could if you liked to stand the strain of all the public comments that would come your way. My wife's sister, Alice, who turned 90 only a few days ago, I phoned her up and she came down and she did all the catering at home when I bought the

37:30 house, we'd cleaned it all up and put new furniture in it and that. And as the staff of the hospital came off duty, they were all coming out of a night time after their shifts, and of course we were going all night. And I woke up in the morning and I'm in bed with my wife beside me and I said "How did I get here?" That was a great wedding night wasn't it?

38:00 **Did she like the house?**

Yeah.

**Was it three bedrooms?**

Yeah, three bedrooms.

**That would have been quite luxurious in those days?**

Yes, it was a nice home and there wasn't a garage but we didn't need one because it was up on stumps, you know, you'd just drive under the house.

**Did you stay at Norman Park for most of your life?**

Until I moved up to Toowoomba, yes, I sold the house and moved up to Toowoomba.

**When did you move to Toowoomba?**

In 1950.

38:30 **So that was still quite a chunk away?**

Oh yes, I had no idea. I couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to do. I had got my job with Electrolux because the manager that used to be at Electrolux before the war, Gerry Grant, he was a Lieutenant Colonel in Victoria Barracks when I was working there for the army as a civilian and he phoned me up one day and he said

39:00 "Do you want your job back with Electrolux?" I said "Yeah". "Righto" he said "you start in a week's time, service manager". So I went back and I was service manager for Electrolux for 3 ½ years until I decided that - I couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to do. I had a chance to go to New Guinea to a rubber plantation or whether I'd - I'd always had an

39:30 inkling to be a publican. I saw this ad in the paper for a pub outside Toowoomba, went and had a look at it, came to terms on the lease and moved to Toowoomba.

**Was Nancy happy about that? Sorry that was your sister. What was your wife's name?**

Martha.

**Martha. Was Martha happy about that?**

Oh yes, yeah. She was always called Mickey.

**Mickey?.**

40:00 Yeah, even in the army. So I became a publican and just to add to it there was a place just outside of Toowoomba, Wyreema, which had had the original Nestle's milk factory out there until it closed down years before and Adam's family

40:30 were there for donkey's years [a long time] . I'm sitting in Woolworth's up here at West Burleigh only on Monday and I'd taken the Missus up shopping, and I saw a bloke walking along and I said "Hello" and it was Alan Adams who'd lived in Wyreema, who was one of my best

41:00 customers when I had the pub, him and his cousin Ray. And he's living down here at the caravan park, the other side of Burleigh, so he's been down here for donkey's years too.

**It's funny how people tend to come back to the area they were happy in. We'll need to change tapes now, Harry.**

## Tape 2

00:35 **Harry can you give us a bit of a picture of what Brisbane was like during the Depression for you?**

Yes, it was a pretty grim old place with getting the equivalent to the dole. You

01:00 used to have to go up to the local store each week with the, I'm just trying to think what they used to call it, you'd get so many value of that in groceries. And the paper, the newspaper was only tuppence [two pennies] and you used to have to go through and see if there was any jobs going. But

01:30 we lived at Alderley and the tram in those days only used to come to the edge of Newmarket, do you know Brisbane at all?

**Yes.**

It only used to come up to the edge of Newmarket and then gradually came up as far as Newmarket school and by this time we had moved from Alderley to Newmarket just opposite the school so if we wanted to go

02:00 to town. All we had to do was 200 yards down the road and we were on the tram, a penny for kids. And I'll never forget Mum and I were going in the tram one day, this is when we were still living at Alderley, we used to have to walk about four miles to get the tram and I must have just turned 5. I was going to school, and the tram conductor came along and

02:30 said "Have you got to pay for the boy?" And Mum said "Oh no, he's not five yet". I turned round and I said to my Mum "That's Miss Stewart, my teacher there". So I gave the game away, but she still didn't pay for me. Jobs were very hard, you took any job you could possibly get. As I said, I worked at the Canberra Hotel six

03:00 days a week and it was run by the Queensland Temperance Society. There was no drinking allowed by the staff in those days, but of course the old Canberra's gone now. But it was one of the biggest building in Brisbane when it went

03:30 up in 1932, I think it was.

**And what was your particular job there?**

I was a page boy. Of course there was no such thing as PA [public address] systems or anything like that. If Mrs Jones was wanted on the telephone, Room 203 or whatever it was, I'd have to go through the dining room or up in the distant lounges

04:00 calling out "Mrs Jones, Room 203, You're wanted on the telephone". And I'd have to go for the mail and I had to go to the Tivoli Theatre in Albert Street, the Regent Theatre in Queen Street, the Wintergarden Theatre in Queen Street, back to the GPO and down the lane to get the mail out of the box, the private

04:30 boxes. I used to leave the Canberra Hotel at 7 o'clock at night. My train for Alderley left at 7.30 and the guards would be waiting there of a night time and they wouldn't blow the whistle, they'd have the back door open and as soon as they saw me running down the street, they'd start waving the flag and blow the whistle. And there used to be a Methodist minister, he was always sitting in the

05:00 last carriage, too, in the last seat. He'd be waiting with his head out of the window, waiting to see me coming down the road. Things were pretty tough but you got by.

**How did your parents make ends meet?**

Dad was on relief work for quite a long

05:30 while and Mum used to take in some washing and ironing. We used to take some of the guests' stuff from the Canberra Hotel home. There were men, single men, who wanted their shirts ironed and washed and Mum would do it, for nothing at all practically today, in today's terms. But you had to work hard

06:00 and my brother worked in the brickyards, and my sister worked at a place called Thomas Browns making clothing and

06:30 it used to be long hours for very small pay. But she bettered herself by studying, the same as I did, I did a correspondence course when I was at the Canberra to help because I'd left school early. Nan did a correspondence course on typing and so forth and she ended up being a reporter for the

07:00 "Courier Mail" at some stage. So we all made our way somehow or another in life and got there.

**Did you get on with your brothers and sister when you were growing up?**

Yes. We all got on very well together.

**What did you get up to, as kids?**

Oh, I played

07:30 hockey a lot. Tommy, my brother, played soccer. Andy played a bit of table tennis, but you made your own fun in those days. When we were growing up, still going to school, we'd go over - the back of Alderley was bush, we'd go over there and build ourselves a

08:00 bush tent and go and pinch the spuds [potatoes] out the shop. My friend's family had the shop, and he'd send his mother and father out the back while we got a couple of spuds each and we'd go and roast the spuds and the onions in the coals. We'd spend Saturday night away, you know, from home. We didn't worry about snakes or anything in those days. We had great fun.

08:30 Learned a lot in life, how to exist on small things and do things for yourself. The local policeman, I had got myself a car and the

09:00 policeman tried to catch me one day but his car couldn't go fast enough for mine. It was a French car a Doney Adele, you wouldn't have heard of one of them I think there was only about six came to Australia. And my eldest brother actually bought it and then I got it from him .

**What was the copper [policeman] after you for?**

09:30 Being out at night time without lights. But the police were different in those days. They would give you a lesson, give you a kick up the bum and send you on home "Don't do it again". And you didn't do it again.

10:00 They were pretty good in a lot of ways. The local boys used to run the local SP [starting price - illegal] betting up at the pub, you know, they knew it was going on but they never raided them. I wasn't interested in betting in those days but Tommy my second brother was.

**Did you get up to much mischief?**

10:30 No, not really, we tried to keep out of trouble. The most mischief I got up to was when we went away on a hockey trip.

**What would happen on hockey trips?**

Well, Warwick hockey girls used to go away at the same time as the Valley Club did and we always had a great time together,

11:00 yes.

**Lots of girls to choose from if you've got a whole hockey team?**

Between the Warwick hockey girls and the Tallebudgera Girls' Swimming Club we had quite a little class to collect.

**Did you have any favourites?**

Oh, a few. No, I

11:30 don't regret my life. I'm sorry I missed 3 ½ years of I suppose what would have been the best part of my life, growing up from 21 on - but I'm here, that's the main thing.

**Harry did you know much about World War I as you were growing up?**

Not a great deal, no. My Dad used to talk a

12:00 very little about it. He always had a bad ulcerated stomach from it, from his part of the war, the First World War, and he always used to say, "Don't go to war, look after yourself". But we did go to war but Dad didn't talk much about the

12:30 First World War. A funny thing, when we were in action, we were issued with some tins of bacon that were from the 1914/18 war, and that bacon was still as good as the day it was put in tins.

**That's extraordinary.**

That's a fact.

13:00 Food was getting tough to get in Singapore and this had evidently been in stores for years, donkey's years there to come out then.

**Did you know much about Hitler before the war started?**

No. We used to listen to Dr W. G. Goddard

13:30 on 4BC [radio station] I think it was of a Sunday night, and that was when everybody had to be quiet. Dad wanted to listen to Dr Goddard and he'd talk about the war and how [we needed] 5, 000 planes for the defence of northern Australia. He was always one that said that Japan would attack Australia. That was going back and that was when I was kid

14:00 only growing up, 6 or 7 years of age. This Dr W. G. Goddard would come on and talk on a Sunday night and talk about the war and what was going to happen - Japan would eventually attack Australia. So he wasn't wrong, was he?.

**No, so that would have been late '20s early '30s.**

Yes.

**That's incredible.**

14:30 **Harry, what sort of things did you get up to at the Lifesavers Club?**

Oh well, we were only very young in those days , we didn't even drink because we were only 15, 16 you know.

15:00 But the seniors, they used to play up and of course there was only the two pubs but there wasn't the crowds that we get today. The boys would go up to the Burleigh Pub, the one on the beach, and be very welcomed by a lot of the barmaids and enjoy themselves. You could walk home without getting pinched in those days.

15:30 As young blokes we'd go out, we'd go to the picture show or something and come home. Of course there were no bunks or anything, we all slept on the floor with blankets; you took them down with you for the weekend, and you'd come home and your blanket wasn't there - the seniors were down on the beach with one of the girls on the blankets. You'd have to wait till they came home

16:00 before you got your blanket back.

**Did any of you try to emulate the seniors?**

No, not until later on in life. No, there was a wonderful thing, I had a funeral I went to yesterday, there was

16:30 some of the old original members of Burleigh Heads Lifesaving Club that were members there when I was only a young bloke, you know. I met some of them, some of them remembered me and it was really good to go back yesterday; it brought back a lot of memories.

17:00 The Club has always been able to stand on its own two feet. They've always had staunch supporters. They want to build a new club house, trying to see whether they can raise the necessary finance, because the government doesn't support them with the amount that they should get.

17:30 **Do you remember what you were up to the day that war was declared?**

Where was I? I was driving somewhere in the car and I had the car radio on.

18:00 And I remember the Prime Minister coming on the radio. I was driving over the range, I forget where I was going up,

19:30 and anyway the radio came on to say that we were at war. Australia was at war.

**What did you think?**

I didn't think I'd be interested in it. I thought, "We're at war, that'll be the

20:00 permanent soldiers" - but it suddenly dawned on you, that eventually they were going to have to call in the Militia. And being just at that age when they announced it,

20:30 those that were 21, by a certain age you had to go in for three months camp. So in I went to three months camp and came out and decided we'd better join the army.

**Now you were already working for the army at this stage, weren't you?**

Yes, as a civilian.

**And what made you go for that job in the first place.**

Well I had a

21:00 friend who was working there and he was saying how good a job it was, the conditions and so forth. And I thought, "Well, it won't do me any harm" and I didn't live far from it, you know, and then I became friendly with quite a few of the WO1s [Warrant Officers] and that they were coming up to that training school and I ended up in the

21:30 army with quite a few of them. When I joined up they were just being drafted into the various battalions and artillery regiments and I ended up with a few that I had known at Enoggera Camp.

**So you had a bit of a window seat to how the army worked before they called you up?**

Yes, I did.

**So if you'd had a choice, do you think you would have signed up?**

Yes, I was glad I ended up in the artillery.

22:00 When I was in that camp at Redbank my sister was going with the 2I/C of the Air Force in Brisbane. And I used to go home of a Sunday, change out of my gunner's uniform into civilian clothes,

22:30 get in the car and drive out to Archerfield, where the air force was stationed in those days and go into the officers' mess and live like a lord and go up and get a flight over Brisbane in a Tiger Moth, learn how to fly. I learned how to fly a Tiger Moth at the air force's expense. And while we were in Singapore, this might sound far fetched but it was a thought we gave a

23:00 lot to. We were stationed at Bukit Timah and the Nips had an aerodrome down at Tanga and we'd given it a lot of thought as to whether we would try and get down there and pinch a Nip plane. I reckoned I'd be able to fly it if we got there, but then we thought, "We'll more than likely pinch a plane that's got no petrol"

23:30 so we gave that idea away. I think it was lucky because more than likely we'd have got lost or crashed it. But that was definitely an idea that we would try and pinch a plane and get away.

**Can you tell us about learning to fly the Tiger Moth?**

Well we used to go with

24:00 Frank, he'd go up there in a two-seater. I'd just get in the back, he'd be in the front, the pilot, and take over the controls and he'd tell me what to do and how to do it and so forth and so on. The only thing I couldn't do was land it because you would have been in the sight of everybody else. I could do practice landings outside but couldn't land it at

24:30 Archerfield [aerodrome].

**So what was that like going up in a Tiger Moth?**

It was wonderful. When I first came down the Gold Coast here and I was playing golf at Burleigh, time one of the blokes there had his own pilots' licence. We used to go up and hire a Tiger Moth out here and we'd go out for a run on a Sunday.

25:00 It was wonderful to go over the Gold Coast in those days, 40 years ago, you know, to see the development and what it was like. It didn't cost you much and the aerodrome was only out on the road to Robina in those days. . But, no, I don't know whether I would have made a good air

25:30 crew man or not, but I'm not sorry I ended up in the artillery, I made a lot of friends.

**What was your initial couple of days like in joining the army, compared to just working for them as a civilian?**

I more or less was prepared for it because I knew most of the

26:00 blokes from being in the Militia. We were 105 Battery in 5th Field Brigade in the Militia and we all joined up and we all became the second 10th Field Regiment. So, you know, we were friends right from the start. It would have been a lot different for those who came from up north and joined us at Redbank, they were real

26:30 strangers. We all got on well together. There's a book over there with a photo of the Battery and all of us that joined the 2/ 10th Field Regiment, together when we joined up.

27:00 The army had its right and wrong ways to do things.

**Can you tell us a little about some of the wrong things?**

Well, some of the wrong things I used to have to put up with, when we were at Redbank I was the only one or a few that had their own car.

27:30 I always had weekend leave because I used to take the sergeant majors and the sergeants down on leave, so I could almost guarantee that I had weekend leave. And I had an old Pontiac about 27/28 Pontiac. It was a tourer, canvas hood, running boards, I used to take 13 down in it, pile them in,

28:00 sitting on one another's laps and coming up the hills they'd have to get out, half of them, and I'd have to reverse up the hill because it was such a load it couldn't go up under low gear. I'd have to reverse up the hill. In those days it wasn't any trouble because the traffic wasn't bad. But by the time I left

28:30 Redbank there was no running boards and no hood on it. We used to go into Brisbane, park outside the hotel on the corner of Adelaide and Creek Street, and it wasn't registered so we'd put a tarpaulin over it, making out it was in case it rained,

29:00 and there was no registration on it. It had run out and I wasn't going to renew it before I went away. And when I went home that was the first thing I looked for, my old car, but some bugger had pinched it. It used to just stand on the road outside the house at Newmarket where we lived, Mum and Dad lived, and somebody had knocked it off at night time.

**29:30 And what was the difference for you on the ground, going from the Militia into the regular army?**

Well, the only difference was that you didn't get home as much as you would when you were in the Militia. Once you were in the army, especially when we were up at Caloundra.

30:00 I had a friend there up at Caloundra, he had an old Austin two-seater with a pointy back and he used to take one that would sit beside him and I'd be sitting on the back, hanging on to the back. That's how we'd come up and down to Caloundra,

30:30 because the train only went to Caboolture, and it was long way in from Caboolture to Caloundra, so you'd get down any time you could on leave. The army was reasonably easy to get on with.

31:00 Some days on manoeuvres they were pretty tough. You had night marches and route marches and so forth and so on. For twenty four hours you'd be going without any break from it.

**For how long?**

You'd do twenty four hours - if you were away from camp, you'd do route marches. We used to do all around Esk to Toogoolawah all around there from

31:30 Caloundra you see, we'd go out and Maleny.

**Marching up to Maleny would keep you fit.**

Yes. You went on long marches, route marches, up to Ipswich. The funniest thing that ever happened, it's a hard one to believe but there was a Bombardier with

32:00 me, he didn't drink or smoke but he had a motor bike, and we decided we wanted to go to Ipswich. We didn't have leave and we went up to Ipswich and he said, "How are we going to get through the gate guard?" and I said "Just tear straight through the gate guard, it doesn't matter what it is". He said, "What are we going to do with the bike? They'll start looking for

32:30 the bike". I said, "I know where to put the bike". I'd been on kitchen duty the day before and I knew they didn't lock up the cold room. So it was straight round to the kitchen and straight into the cold room with the bike. They couldn't find the motor bike, they looked everywhere for the motor bike but they never thought to look in the cold room, and that's where we had it. The next day we got it out and it was all over and done with. We had to

33:00 get it out in the sun to warm it up. But no, that was part and parcel of life in the army. Jack Foreman was his name, he didn't drink or smoke. He wanted to go up to Ipswich to see his sister and I went up with him.

33:30 **Was there a lot of that sort of thing going on with the new troops?**

A fair bit. When we went to Redbank the camp was mainly occupied by infantry, infantry and sigs [signallers]. We just had one little corner of it.

34:00 Then the infantry went away with the 6th Division, 7th Division. You used to have to go up to camp, if you didn't have a motor vehicle you had to go by train, you had a fair walk from the station to the camp but you had to pay, or were supposed to pay your fare

34:30 every time you got on the train but of course 9 times out of 10 you didn't. You'd just jump off the train and blow through [run away], the porter would be on the gate but you'd go round the back of the train.

**And would you find that if you were in uniform they would give you a bit of leverage to get away with things like that?**

Sometimes, some of them wouldn't.

35:00 As the war progressed and the services became more essential, the general public let servicemen get a lot more than they would in the early days.

35:30 **Was that because support for the war effort kind of grew?**

Yes, the Committees and that were formed, the Comfort Committees, in each unit back home they would collect money and they would send over parcels to the different battalions and so forth,

36:00 the Comfort Fund. They sent us a lot while we were prisoners of war but we never got them. The Japs got them.

**Did you know that they were even arriving?**

Yes, we knew that they were in the Jap store. All the time, in the 3 ½ years I only ever shared in one comfort fund parcel and that was shared between six, one

36:30 comfort parcel. It was Christmas cake. But the Nips had all the rest of them [the parcels] and they used to send them over quite regularly

**What was your role in the artillery?**

I was an artificer. I had to keep the guns in

37:00 working order, and anything that went wrong with them I'd repair them and make sure the sights were O. K. And I more or less had free range, once I was artificer I could never be put on duty, never guard duty or anything like that. I had to be always available in case an emergency came up.

37:30 And that was one way I was lucky. I can say thanks to the Militia for that because I'd become Number 1 gun layer in the regiment and that automatically made me the most experienced of them. So when they had to replace their artificer, I got it.

**What was the gun that you were working**

38:00 **on, when you became Number 1 gun layer?**

Four-point five Howitzer. When we went into action we went on 25 pounders [field guns] . We'd never even seen one and they just switched us over from 4. 5s to 25 pounders and I had to learn it all out of books.

**So they didn't structure any training?**

No, no structure.

38:30 **Here's the gun, here's the manual?**

It wasn't that much different, you know, but it was like a new car against an old car.

**We'll have to pause there because we have to switch tapes again.**

## Tape 3

00:32 **You mentioned that your sister was also in the service, what did she do?**

Yes, she was in the air force.

**In the air force, RAAF, what were they called?**

Yeah, they were.

**WAAF, Women's Australian Air Force, that's right.**

WAAF, yes. And my wife was an AMWA.

**I get them confused,**

01:00 **WRENS, WAAFS, AMWAS and there's another one. It will come.**

Army nursing service was the other one.

**Did your sister tell you much about her experiences?**

No, not a great deal, no. She got pretty sick as a matter of fact, she got

01:30 chest trouble so she got boarded out.

**And she married and stayed in Brisbane did she?**

She married, yes, but it didn't last, her marriage broke up and she remarried and it broke up.

**Some people have luck and some people don't.**

But I'm fortunate that I'm still very good friends with the family, you know,

02:00 both hers and my brothers. They ring me more than I ring them. I forget to ring them and they ring me to find out if I'm still alive.

**Do they actually say that "Oh, hi Harry are you still alive?"**

Are you still going? I rang my sister and as I said my sister-in-law she turned 90 last Sunday week I think it was. She still lives in Laidley.

02:30 **She's going strong.**

Yeah, although she can't see, she's nearly blind but she can hear all right and had a good conversation with me on her birthday.

**Now you mentioned before about your left eye being weak and it caused let's say problems later on in the army.**

Yes.

**Did you mean that because you were doing that very important**

03:00 **job of the weapons, looking after the guns, what caused you a problem then?**

It was not so much when I was in the army but after I got out. The right eye is good but the left eye, when I go for driving tests and that, it's US [unserviceable] I can see, but I can't read or anything with it. I can see you but other than that -

03:30 that's what knocked me from the air force, I couldn't more or less define any real object with my left eye so that wiped me out. That was why I tried to get away when I went to Nagasaki to say I was blind because they held a hand over that eye and "watashi nai".

**Except when they saw you trying to read the**

04:00 **Sydney Morning Herald or something?**

Yeah, it was a newspaper.

**Harry, you mentioned that you played a lot of hockey when you were young, we'll talk about**

**what happened to you and the fellows going into the pow camp in a second, but did you play sports to keep up the morale while you were a prisoner?**

You couldn't, we didn't have any

04:30 chance to play anything or do anything like that.

**So you weren't allowed any social interaction?**

No, no.

**Cards, nothing?**

No the Nips issued us, when we went to Nagasaki, with overcoats and

05:00 trousers -

**Overalls?**

No, we never used to have them until the Yanks came here - what do you call the trousers down to your ankles?

**The ones with pockets?**

Yeah.

**Khakis?**

Yes.

05:30 **Cargo pants?**

Yes, cargo and that sort of thing and they issued it. We could wear them inside but when you needed them when you went out in the winter, freezing, you couldn't wear them then.

**What would you wear?**

They had issued us with a uniform which was made out of hessian, green trousers and a coat and that was all you had

06:00 except I had got myself a bit of blanket and I made that into a singlet. Put it over and just cut armholes in it and had that on underneath, and that's what kept me warm. After you'd come back from work, when you were in Nagasaki, whoever was in charge of the room, which I was, there was 48

06:30 in the room, 24 each side, the Nip sergeant major would come along and you'd have to get outside and give a report. I'd have to get outside and I'd have to tell him how many was 'biyoki or ichi ni' you had to tell him in

07:00 Japanese, the number who was able to do light duties and those who were fit to go to work. When you were finished you used to have to say "Ichi Nos". Instead of that you'd say "Ease your nuts".

**Ease your nuts?**

Yeah.

**But they got the general meaning without getting in trouble?**

Yeah, they just thought

07:30 we were making a mistake in our Japanese.

**I had heard that the Japanese were very stringent on the Australians having to speak Japanese, that you weren't allowed to speak English when you spoke to them. Was that true?**

No. A lot of Japanese wanted to speak English if they could

08:00 talk to you and gain a little bit of English. They wanted to learn just as much as we wanted to - as I wanted to learn Japanese. To be able to speak in Japanese was worth your weight in gold, it got you out of an awful lot of

08:30 trouble.

**It sounds like it from some of the close shaves that you had.**

After we'd been in the ship yards they brought us back to the mainland and took us up north of Nagasaki just on the outskirts of it in the coal mines. I was working down in the mines for a while and then

09:00 Bob Laws and I got mixed up with a crowd of Javanese and our job as the skip comes up from down below loaded with coal, we had to tip it over into the big heaps, into the piles. If we were a bit slow in

doing it I could always tell when the Nip was going to do his turn and I'd say to Bob, "Quick, round the other side, he's going to do his  
09:30 turn". And we'd go round there and the Nip would be yelling out and he'd be bashing into the Javanese with a stick, a big stick. That was only because I was able to understand the Japs and their thing. But that same Nip had the audacity, when the war was over, to come down to our camp where we  
10:00 were and look for Bob and me. Bobby Laws was still trying to catch him I think, if he'd have caught him he'd have killed him.

**You must have seen quite a lot of cruelty in that time?**

Oh yes.

**Can I bring you back to the first time you went on an operation. What did you know about the Queen Mary before you boarded her?**

Not a thing.

**She was**

10:30 **quite new then.**

It was very new, yes. As I said before it still had what had been the dress shops and hair dressing salons and everything, it was still there, still with all the equipment in it but empty. But it was so well set out, you know and the

11:00 cabins were beautiful. Of course the officers had the cabins. And the final few days that I was on the Queen Mary, I was on duty, once again I was lucky here, we were on guard duty at the stairs up to the

11:30 bridge. We were on duty there a couple of us, and a couple of the sailors said, "Would you like some beer?" So we got a beer on the side, even though we were on duty. And then one morning Russ Savage and I were sleeping in the Garden Lounge in the top bunk, Russ and I, and I said, "I'm not

12:00 going out on early morning parade this morning, it's too bloody cold. They won't miss us" and I stayed in bed. When we went out on the next parade and the WO [Warrant Officer] said, "Nesbitt and Savage, mess orderlies for the rest of the trip". That was our penance we had to pay. and that was the best thing that ever happened to us.

**The penance was a perk?**

Yeah, a real perk.

12:30 **Did you manage to do much, the Queen Mary had a swimming pool didn't she?**

Yes.

**Did you manage to do any swimming or sports?**

No.

**What did the officers do to keep you guys fit then, keep the men fit?**

We used to do PT [physical training] work on the deck, PT but no swimming.

13:00 You wouldn't have been able to get them all into the pool - I suppose there would have been 800 of us on the Queen Mary at least, plus all the crew.

**So would they get you to do marches or marching around the ship for instance?**

Oh no, it was just physical exercise, PT . You couldn't march.

**Like star jumps and push ups?**

Push ups, yeah,

13:30 all sorts of things like that.

**Were you a pretty fit fellow?**

Yeah, I was only 10 stone 7 but I was as fit as you could get.

**Ten stone seven sounds quite a lot though - how tall are you?**

Five eight and a half. Don't ask me to put it into -

14:00 **Not imperial, metric.**

The only way I can tell what I am is if it's on the driver's licence.

**You don't have to pay me for today.**

Height 175, sex M.

14:30 **What happened when you arrived, did you say that you arrived in Singapore, and that was where you were disembarked.**

Yeah, disembarked at Singapore.

**And how long did it take to get from Sydney Harbour to Singapore?**

I actually forget now

**That's O. K. - roughly around 4 weeks?**

No, it wasn't that it was about 3, I think.

**And how did you find Singapore; what were your first impressions of the place?**

Singapore was always clean, very clean and it still is.

15:30 The food was not the best to our standards, you know, but we enjoyed it. Luckily for us we went straight out of Singapore on the train up to Melaka and somehow or other my little group, who we'd all been in the Militia together, we met up with the

16:00 English Chief of Police - he was the police chief and we got friendly with him and he used to take us home to his place for dinner at night time. He took us down to Singapore and of course we weren't allowed, gunners and NCOs weren't allowed into the

16:30 officers' mess or anything like that, the Singapore Club, and he being the big police chief he said "They're friends of mine they're going in". And in we went.

**What was that like?**

Beautiful. You get into the Café Hotel and those places, really beautiful, the service you got, you know, was fantastic.

17:00 **And what would you eat? Would you eat like a stir fry or duck?**

No, you'd eat duck or WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK [chicken] and we could have Malayan or English food, whatever you wanted.

**It seems like such a far cry from when you were a PoW and you were eating burned rice. Did you fantasise about food?**

17:30 That was all you thought about although my main thoughts while I was away were how lovely it was going to be to be able to get into bed with clean sheets. That was my main thought always, how lovely it was going to be to get home and get into clean sheets.

**I just have to ask you now what was it like when you got into clean sheets?**

Oh fantastic.

18:00 **Did you find sleeping on a bed hard to get used to?**

Yes, for a while I did, yes. I landed in Sydney, when we came home they took us from Nagasaki, they took us over to

18:30 an island by an American boat and when we landed it was only a matter of weeks. It was a fortnight nearly before they found where we were, before the planes came over and started dropping food to us,

19:00 even after they'd announced the war was over. And then it took them quite a while to get us down to the wharf and get us over to this island. By the time we'd got there the Yanks had built a Coca Cola factory.

**That's 3 or 4 weeks?**

Yes, they'd

19:30 erected a factory manufacturing Coca Cola.

**I wonder if it's still there?**

No, it was only temporary And e we were there for about a week and then they flew us from there to Manila and we were in what had been an air force camp in

20:00 Manila, eight to a tent, and we used to get a ration of beer, a stubbie of beer a day for every man in the tent and I was the only one in the tent that drank, so I had all the beer I wanted. Some of them went through from the camp, and went down to

20:30 Manila and got on to the wood whisky, the stuff they were brewing in the various places outside which

sent them blind.

**You mean they distilled the whisky in wood or they made the whisky out of wood?**

Well it was just a brew, you know an alcoholic

21:00 brew they were making and it sent you blind if you drank enough and they used to get full on their leave and they lost their sight.

**When you say "they" do you mean the Aussies?**

Well it happened to everybody, all the English and the whole lot. Anybody that went down and got on the jungle juice, that's what it was.

**And that was at the air force base was it?**

No, that was in Manila

21:30 itself. They used to go AWOL from the base, you know, sneak out and get a ride into Manila.

**And go and drink this stuff?**

It was the only thing that was available other than the beer allowance that we'd get in the camp.

**When you first arrived in Melaka how long were you kept there?**

In Melaka we were there six months, at least.

22:00 **And what were you doing there?**

Just training all the time.

**O. K. Now this was the first real heavy training that you did as a soldier?**

There again we went and we marked out our gun positions. Should the Nips land at such and such a place we knew exactly where we'd put a gun. Then, when the war started, they shifted us from that

22:30 coast over to the other bloody coast. So all the hard work we'd done was really wasted.

**This is where you learned about the 25 pounders?**

Yes, this is when we went into action, we got the 25 pounders.

**When you were training in Melaka did you learn about the 25 pounders, was that when you learned about it?**

No, we were still on howitzers. And when we went into action we got the 25 pounders.

23:00 **That was a bit late in the day wasn't it to just give you a new gun?**

Yes.

**So what other things did you do there in Melaka for that six months, was it part of doing a lot of combat training?**

Yes, manoeuvres all the time, you were on manoeuvres and that. Oh Melaka, it was 'Sleepy Hollow' it was called, it was originally a Portuguese settlement

23:30 with old churches and so forth there.

**It sounds beautiful?**

It was a nice town and there was a picture show there where we used to go. That's where I saw Tommy in that "Rats of Tobruk". And they had cabaret next door to that, and we used to patronise that pretty well and our dance girls.

**Now when you say dance girls is that all they did?**

You paid them, yeah.

24:00 **You paid them?**

To dance.

**To dance. O. K. I thought you were perhaps going to tell me something then.**

Well you didn't do that there, but there were places where you could pay.

**In Melaka?**

The only trouble was when you were going down the back streets the rats were as big as cats. They were Chinese girls mainly.

- Can you tell us about that. Did the Aussie blokes frequent those places?**
- 24:30 Oh yes, naturally.
- Did you happen to come across any of them?**
- I might have kicked a rat.
- Can you tell us how it worked? Was there a particular red light district in Melaka?**
- Yes there was the red light district and there was also a red light place where you went to if you happened to have frequented one of them, you went and got treated before you went back to camp.
- 25:00 **So it was like red light base 2?**
- Yes and that was the same in Singapore.
- Was it set up by the defence services, the medical place?**
- Yes.
- Now these mostly Chinese girls they were obviously, you know, in Melaka to.... ?**
- Yeah, they were there, they were on the game and some
- 25:30 of these Asians are the most beautiful girls you could imagine especially in Singapore, you'd eat them.
- And so what would happen if you went to one of these - if one would perchance go to one of these places how did it work? Was there a madam?**
- Yes, there was a madam
- And the men would just wait and choose a**
- 26:00 **girl, or would they just be issued one?**
- It depended on where you went and how much money you had; but you always had to go to the red light and get fixed up after you'd been there, get checked.
- Oh so get checked because sometimes you wouldn't know if you'd got something.**
- No, you had to go and get the works
- But didn't they wear condoms in those days?**
- Well, they weren't
- 26:30 issued, but they were hard to buy too in those days; but normally they didn't wear them.
- So the women would just douche themselves I suppose, so as to not fall pregnant?**
- Well it was part and parcel of life in those days.
- Sure, I don't mean to be too intrusive - for the archive this is very**
- 27:00 **important because we need to know what happened.**
- No, you always went and got fixed up after a visit.
- And were you all right?**
- Yes.
- Did you know any blokes that had a problem?**
- Never, never.
- See it's interesting that in Vietnam they actually, I think they issued condoms?**
- Yeah, well they would have then - but in our day, no.
- Maybe it was something you could get on the black**
- 27:30 **market?**
- Oh you could have I suppose if you went to a chemist shop but there weren't too many chemist shops around but I never frequented them much.
- Can you tell us what the reputations of the Aussies were at the brothels? Did they like the Aussies?**

Yeah, they were

28:00 always well liked. You used to get a few stray ones, but on the whole the Australian troops nearly always behaved themselves. Much better than the English.

**Do you know any stories about the Brits then?**

No, they were different, even though I'm a Scot and that, the British

28:30 they're brought up different to us. We stand on our own much more than the English do or, you know, in a mob they can become stirred up a lot more than we can. We would hold our own with anybody but we didn't get into as much trouble. That might sound funny but we

29:00 didn't.

**Do you mean that an Australian bloke would go out with just a mate and a Pom would go out with a whole group?**

More than likely.

**And what would happen, I suppose it's like those soccer matches, there'd be a brawl or something like that?**

Yeah that can easily happen, yeah.

**And did you come across any Poms [English] that were causing a problem?**

No, not really no. We didn't have a great deal

29:30 to do with them. As I said, our main trouble was the few officers that we had on exchange duty and my clash with General Wavell and Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of Singapore, no less.

**So the six months there that you were in Melaka did you get used to the temperature and the humidity and all that kind of stuff?**

30:00 Yes, much better. Melaka wasn't too bad, Thailand was harder to put up with than Singapore, as far as temperatures. You used to freeze at night up in Thailand.

**And in Melaka, would they send you on bivouacs and things like that?**

30:30 We used to get quite a bit of leave and there were quite a few mines and that on the outskirts of Melaka and they'd take a load of us, a lorry load of us for a trip up to them and the coal miners, they'd entertain us, you know,

31:00 give us free grog and give us a feed and so forth. Melaka was, as I said to Andy when he wrote over and I said "Don't worry, we're only on holidays here" which we thought we were.

**You had no idea of what was to come I suppose?**

No. Well it turned out that there were so many Japanese in and around

31:30 Malaya and Singapore, they were actually Fifth Columnists [spies], they knew every move we were making which was being reported back to Japan all the time. They knew where our gun positions were and where they weren't, and when they turned up and went into action those Nips, these blokes that had been there turned out to be high army-ranking blokes

32:00 in uniform.

**What do you remember mostly of those days in Melaka?**

We played a lot of sport in Melaka. We had a hockey team in my unit and we were nearly all ex-Queensland representatives or Brisbane representatives, so we were a top team. We played the

32:30 Indians and all that and we used to go away and play them and beat them. That was funny that there were so many of us that when we joined up and when we started a hockey team and found out we were all ex-representatives more or less.

**What position did you play in the hockey team?**

I played left wing.

**So you were a bit of a runner?**

Yeah, I was in those

33:00 days?

**So when you say the Indians, do you mean the Ghurkhas?**

No, the Indian army.

**Right. And what were they like at that were they like at cricket?**

They were good. The Indians in the old days were recognised as the best hockey players in the world.

**Truly, not now?**

Not now, but pre-war they were recognised as the best hockey players in the world.

33:30 **And what other troops were there. Did you say American troops were there in Melaka?**

No, no Americans.

**So it was just the British?**

Yeah and the Indians.

**And the Indians, so it was like a Commonwealth contingent?**

More or less, yes, and the Ghurkhas came in. But the poor little Indians that were sent over to us when the war was on, well and truly,

34:00 they had never had a rifle, never had an army boot on. They were real raw recruits, they didn't know a thing, they didn't have a chance. And when the war finished I was actually out with a patrol from my troop trying to find where the telephone lines had broken down and when we were going

34:30 through the Indian lines I could see a white flag hoisted up. We were well and truly into enemy territory and we saw a white flag and found out then that the surrender was on. We had to turn round and get back to our own troops at Tanglin Barracks.

35:00 **So when you were taken PoW you were taken with the Indians?**

Would have been, we got back to our own camp in time to be with them, you know, at the actual surrender. We had to surrender by 5. 30 I think it was on that night.

**Sorry, Harry, but before you surrendered you were involved in conflict?**

Yes, oh well and truly. That was why I was out with the signals trying to find where the

35:30 line had broken down. Being a free man, I could give anybody a hand, but if it hadn't been for the Indians raising their flag, we wouldn't have known the war was over. We would have been well and truly into the enemy territory.

**I wonder how the Indians knew so quickly?**

Well they were the first to go. They were the first to go and they were the

36:00 first to turn to the Japs when the war was over. The Indians went on the Japs' side and they used to be guarding the camp at Changi, the outskirts of the camp, they were on guard there.

**Can you tell us about after the training at Melaka why, if they were getting you used to the west coast of Singapore,**

36:30 **after six months of training they stuck you over on the east coast?**

Yeah, the 2/15th Artillery came over and they put them into our position and put us on the other coast where they thought the Nips were going to land, if they did land because

37:00 we were more experienced in actual gun emplacement than the 2/15th Artillery. They'd been formed in New South Wales and these were English orders, not our commander's. If they'd have

37:30 let him take charge it would have been a different story altogether. First of all there was the English commander, the overall commander of the troops, he was buck teeth and a real Pom. He came visiting our camp and

38:00 we'll never forget him. If ever there was a Pom needed a kick in the bum that was him.

**This was [General] Percival?**

Yes, the English officers were born into the family tradition and they had to become an army officer. It didn't matter how good they were and they'd become Lieutenant Colonels.

38:30 Our Subalterns would know more about the army than they would.

**You're not the first person to say that?**

No, and I won't be the last.

**I wonder why the intelligence, the Australian or British intelligence I should say, thought the Japanese would arrive on the East Coast?**

I don't know. They

39:00 had the guns in Singapore, they had them so that they could only fire out to sea and the Nips came down the coast. They didn't land at Singapore, but they could have turned them around. They just didn't have that defence system to get them turned around. When the Nips were landing up the coast at Endau they could have had the

39:30 fortress guns turned, but they didn't, they still had them turned out to sea.

## Tape 4

00:31 **I just wanted to get you to tell us about Singapore. When you first went over there were you briefed at all on what you'd be doing?**

Not really, as I say we were only in Singapore long enough to get a train up to Melaka

01:00 and when we went to Melaka we went to what had been their high school and that was our living quarters for the next six months. All we did was manoeuvres and plenty of training; but we never expected to go to war. And we were at

01:30 one high school and one of the other batteries was at another high school on another side of Melaka and we swapped over so there'd be a change. Tanquira was the name of the second place and that was also the name of a house of ill fame, it was right next door to it, it was well patronised.

**I bet it was.**

Not by me.

02:00 But we enjoyed life in Singapore - as I say, our officers were always easy to get on with. There was no hard and fast rules as long as we obeyed the ones that we were supposed to, we got on very well.

**Was there much talk amongst you all**

02:30 **about the fact that you had been diverted to Singapore and not gone on to the Middle East?**

At that time they were withdrawing troops from the Middle East. We ended up getting troops that were on the road home from the Middle East, they were diverted to Singapore at the start of the war and the poor buggers only landed there in time to be captured. Some of them were only there a

03:00 day.

**That's bad timing isn't it?**

Yeah. And others were caught over in Java and that was it. The overall command of the army was so wrong in its judgements of how to treat the troops and withdraw them, or anything like that. Even in the

03:30 treatment of our Australian force in Malaya by the British force was so wrong, it didn't matter.

**In what way particularly?**

They'd issue orders and our commander in chief, [General] Gordon Bennett, he just had to abide by them because the others were senior in rank to him. And those were the orders - if we wanted to do something and he'd try and get it done, he'd be ordered not to do it.

04:00 Back down the peninsula from Endau and Mersing we could have stopped and fought, but they wouldn't let us.

04:30 **I'm curious about what you knew about the Japanese before they landed, what had you been told?**

We hadn't been told anything, whatsoever. The first thing we knew was when the Nips

05:00 landed in Hong Kong, I think it was. That, and then the two British warships [Repulse, Prince of Wales] were coming down the coast, that was the first warning we had that the Japs were about to attack - that, and they attacked Pearl Harbour at the same time. So the various commands were so

05:30 ill-informed, they didn't know what was happening.

**So what was the first thing that you were ordered to do?**

We had to move out from where we were from Mersing up to Endau and get into battle positions there, which we did, and got the hell bombed out of us by the Nip planes.

06:00 **Can you tell us about what you saw and what happened?**

We were in position and we managed to get a few shots away, but then the bombardment from the air became so strong that we just had to withdraw from the positions we were in otherwise we would have all been bombed out because they knew

06:30 exactly where we were and they just kept coming over.

**How many planes?**

I wouldn't know for sure just how many planes, but probably 2 or 3 came over at a time and came down on us. We had a few places we had to come through. Nithsdale Estate was one where we stopped and

07:00 tried to put on a rear guard action, but it didn't last for long, the Nips kept coming down. And they did something which just showed you how well they were advanced. They got lorries and put railway wheels on them so that they could drive down on a rail line where they couldn't drive down on the

07:30 roads because we had them covered with troops. That's how much they were ahead of us. They knew exactly what size the trucks were and everything to fit the wheels on and just drove down the line.

08:00 And Gemas was where the 2/15th, the other artillery unit, put up quite a stand. Jap tanks were coming down the road and that was one of the best stands that we, the Australian army, was able to put up.

08:30 **Can you tell us in detail what you did and how you went?**

We came down and we had to retreat all the way

09:00 - and we got to Singapore Island and we were the last over and then they blew the bridge. And we went into action, we could have easily fired on the Johor Bahru Palace where the Nips had their headquarters

09:30 observation post, but the British wouldn't let us.

**Any idea why?**

They said it would affect the Malays, they wouldn't like it if we shelled their palace, that was the answer. Yet the Nips were using the palace as an observation post and they could see everything that was happening on the

10:00 island. That's a fact and that's when we were in Government House grounds and we could have shelled the hell out of it.

**It doesn't make a lot of sense does it?**

No. And then we were moved from there up to just to the side, near the Causeway. Even though it had been blown the

10:30 Nips could still come across in boats, and we were fired at quite a lot there until we were told to withdraw and we withdrew into around Bukit Timah. The Nips still kept coming; and we got orders and we went into our final position where we were when the

11:00 surrender came through.

**Were the Australian forces suffering casualties by the Japanese?**

Yes, we were getting strafed and bombed from the air very heavily. I had the greatest fright of my life while we were there. We were getting done over by gunfire and

11:30 we had gun pits and dug outs and I jumped in and big Ted Collette, he was six foot odd, followed me in and jumped clear on my back and I thought I'd been hit by a bloody bullet. That was Ted Collette that hit me, he jumped right on my back. But no, we had no

12:00 chance at any stage of doing any good through the inefficiency of the British command, that's all it amounts too.

**I think you were about to tell me about a place where you tried to dig in on the retreat down the peninsula to fend off the Japanese?**

That was at Gemas, my unit wasn't in it,

12:30 it was mainly the 2/15th and the 2/26th Infantry. The Japs were coming down in tanks and the 2/15th held them off for quite a while and the 2/26th, which was a Queensland unit, they did a very good job too; but there again they had to withdraw back to the

13:00 island because the Japs were just outnumbering us. They'd go round the side, our troops would be here and they'd just infiltrate round the side and come out from the back.

**Was it sheer numbers and firepower on the part of the Japanese, or was it strategy as well?**

- Strategy as well. They were well and truly
- 13:30 told where we were, our positions, you know, the population, with the exception of the Chinese, the Chinese were on our side but the Malays
- 14:00 were the Japanese way and they , the Malays, were giving our positions away all the time. But the Chinese, even when we were prisoners, the Chinese were the only ones you could depend on, you couldn't depend on a Malay they'd put you in.
- 14:30 **I'm just curious about your duties within the unit on the retreat. Are you assigned to, are you moving from gun placement to gun placement, making sure that everything's working?**
- Everything was working, any troubles or anything like that or if anybody was short, the sigs wanted a hand or something like that, I'd go and give them a hand. I kept myself employed all the time, in one way or another. There was always something to do
- 15:00 and if a gun was short of a gunner, well I'd take his place for the time.
- So you were constantly on the run?**
- We were constantly on the run and you've got to take your hats
- 15:30 off to the infantry, they did a marvellous job under the circumstances. The Gurkhas were good, they said they would never draw their kukri, which is their knife, unless they drew blood even if they had to prick their own finger, they'd draw blood once they drew the knife.
- Did you see that?**
- Yes.
- 16:00 They didn't go with the Indians, they didn't turn like the Indians did and act as guards. The Gurkhas would have killed the Indians if they possibly could.
- So what were the Gurkhas doing during the retreat down the peninsula?**
- The same. They couldn't do much, but there again they weren't
- 16:30 well trained, they hadn't been in the army long. That was the whole trouble, they sent inexperienced soldiers be it Indians or whatever they might be, they were all just new recruits and the poor Indians they were only young blokes, boys
- 17:00 more or less, they didn't have a chance.
- This was your first experience of real conflict as a soldier in the army. What did you make of everything that was going on at the time?**
- Well we just used to get so annoyed. We knew what was happening was wrong as far as we were concerned.
- 17:30 We still think that when we were moved from where we were to the other spot, it was wrong. If we'd have been left in Melaka, where we'd been doing all the gun positioning, we knew exactly where to go all the time. Instead of that they put the new 2/15th in and sent us up the coast
- 18:00 thinking we had more experience. I'm sure we did but we still would have been better off down on the other coast, where the Nips came down in force.
- So there was a feeling if you'd been given a chance to dig in?**
- If we'd been given a chance to dig in properly we could have defended. The only trouble was with Singapore,
- 18:30 they ran out of supplies. There was no food, nor anything there hardly. Once the Causeway was blown no food could come from the country up north and ships certainly couldn't get in, so that was really what caused the surrender. Lack of equipment, lack of
- 19:00 food, lack of supplies and bad management.
- Was there any strife between the Brits and Australians because of this?**
- No we got on pretty well. We were fortunate we were more or less apart all the time. The Australians had their own barracks when we were in Selarang and even
- 19:30 in Changi, we were all in our own barracks away from the Poms. They were in a different area so we didn't have to mix much with them.
- I've heard and read that the Japanese were pretty fierce on the way down and their treatment of the Chinese to start with. Were you**

20:00 **seeing much of that on the retreat?**

On the road to Changi, marching from where we'd surrendered at Tanglin Barracks, marching out to Changi, the Chinese that had been killed by the Japs were lying on the road and this was really horrific.

20:30 **Can you describe a little bit more about what it was like?**

Well the Chinese were accused by the Japs of helping us, and that's what it was all about. They weren't given a chance, just like our blokes that were taken into the prison.

21:00 They'd just have their head lopped off without any worry at all. You only had to look the wrong way. We were working in the godowns as they were called there, which were actually warehouses

21:30 when we were first taken prisoners. You'd march home to Bukit Timah with a tin of condensed milk stuck up between your legs. March about four miles with a tin of condensed milk stuck up in between your legs but you'd get it home, no trouble. And I was in one godown

22:00 where there was meat and vegetables, tins of meat and vegetables, and I still had an army knife and I opened a tin and was gulping it down by the handful and one of the Nip guards came in and luckily the boxes were on supports off the floor. I was able to throw the open tin underneath it and gulp a whole mouthful of meat and vegetables

22:30 down in one go - I nearly killed myself doing it, but I got rid of it. That would have been a head gone if I'd have been caught on that. We used to be able to get away with a lot of things; it's amazing what you could get past the Nips when you wanted to. Like for me to get through with the watch,

23:00 I've still got it in the drawer in there.

**Can you tell us what you saw or just the feeling and everything at the actual surrender, before the march to Changi, what was going on?**

Well, we couldn't believe. When I got back, as I said I was out with the sig boys trying to find a broken wire and got back and

23:30 they said, "The surrender's on and everybody's got to be here and all the alcohol that we've got on the trucks or anything has got to be tipped out, so the Nips can't get it". Unfortunately, we'd managed to get onto quite a bit on the

24:00 road down and it was a shame to see it all wasted.

**So you were collecting it on the way down the peninsula even though you were retreating and under heavy fire?**

If there was anywhere there was spare beer or anything, we'd collect it. Even when we got onto Singapore we got into a couple of places where they had plenty

24:30 left and had been vacated so we got into that. Some of the houses where the rich Europeans had been living and they'd escaped, got away, they just walked out and left their house completely as it was. Everything was still there, there'd be fridges and everything, so we got all the stuff that we could out of

25:00 the fridges to keep us going. But they were lucky they got away.

**Were you all expecting to make a mighty stand on Singapore Island?**

Yes, we thought we would. We thought there'd be a real stand; but when they blew the Causeway that cut off everything. We couldn't get any support.

25:30 Well we had no air support, old Tiger Moths and that, that's about all the air force had over there and the Nips had their modern aircraft coming over. I think we only saw about six of our planes in the air at any time if we saw six.

26:00 **So how long were you there before word came through that you were going to surrender and it was all over, you had to lay down arms?**

**Well we didn't know until we got back, we didn't have any time at all really. As I say when we were coming through we saw the Indian with the white flag up and that was the first idea - we thought**

26:30 **they were surrendering themselves and we got back to Tanglin Barracks where we had our guns and got word through that I think it was by 5. 30 at night I think was the time that we had to surrender by, cease all action.**

**And what was the reaction from you fellows on the ground, what did you think about it or talk about?**

Well, we couldn't

27:00 believe it, couldn't believe that that was what was going to happen. It was just so wrong that it should

happen because as I say we Australians felt that we could go on and I'm sure we could have.

27:30 **And what did you observe in your commanding officers, given that they had to do what the Brits wanted?**

They didn't like doing it but they had to do it and our own officers were pretty good. We had a few stray ones, but most of them were pretty good

28:00 and they mixed with the men, which the English officer would never do.

**What was first thing that you saw of the Japanese once the surrender was announced?**

When we went on the march to

28:30 Changi was the first time we'd come face to face with them.

**And so what did you think, what did you see?**

Army Nip guards with a bayonet on his rifle, and don't do anything wrong or you copped a bayonet. The march out to Changi was pretty strenuous march because we were all

29:00 bugged from action. The worst part was seeing such atrocities that had been committed on the civilians by the Japs.

**What sort of things did you see if you don't mind?**

Just dead Chinamen lying on the side of the road and that sort of thing - bayoneted for nothing.

29:30 When we did get to Changi we were lucky, we were allocated into what had been officers' homes and there were so many of us put to a house and we were there, that was quite good. And then they moved us from there over to Roberts'

30:00 Barracks which was in the middle of Changi and things weren't so good there.

**What were Roberts' Barracks like?**

They'd been the army barracks and there was hundreds of us cramped into it. If you had a blanket, you just slept on that because there was

30:30 nothing else to sleep on.

**Can you give us a bit of a picture of what the layout of Changi prison was like and where you were in relation to the Japanese?**

We were in the barracks and the barracks had a big barrack square, big two-storey buildings

31:00 on each side of it, and then there was officers' quarters on one end of it. I've got a photo there of myself when we went over in 19??

31:30 I'm sitting in the officers' mess, what had been the officers' mess and I've got the Roman Catholic padre who was a very good friend of mine. I'm not a Mick, but he was one of my best friends and we got on very well together and we were sitting in what had been the officers' mess and he's sitting between two women and I had my

32:00 camera with me and I took him. I said "Now I've got you, I'll be able to blackmail you for the rest of my life. I've got you with two women sitting in a pub". Father John Brendon Rogers, he was a marvellous man. He always said if I died and he survived he was going to bury me, but

32:30 unfortunately he went first. He was older than I was but he was a friend to everybody and as I said, the days of bigotry between the different churches has gone. Yesterday, the Roman Catholic padre made it

33:00 part and parcel of the ceremony, and the Uniting church minister was the main one; but the Roman Catholic boy joined in and he comes to all our ex prisoner of war meetings or RSL meetings so it's good to see.

33:30 **In Changi now, what sort of things did you talk about in those first days or two?**

Oh, how could we escape - some of them did try, some of them got away,

34:00 very few.

**Can you tell us what happened, how they did it?**

They just got down to the sea and managed to snaffle a boat and get away. Some of them got caught at Java once they'd got away from Singapore. But a few got home to Australia and some of the blokes that were

34:30 on ships that were sunk and were picked up by the American submarines - they got home before us, about twelve months before us. They were on the way to Thailand when they got sunk and the American submarines picked them up and brought them home. But they were six days in the water,

35:00 some of them.

**I did speak to one fellow who was on one of those vessels that sunk and he was in the water for about three or four days?**

Yes, well Joan's husband, the one I was just speaking to, her husband was in the water for days. The ship behind us got sunk and we were

35:30 on an old cargo vessel - it had already had the side of it blown out and it was held together by big railway girders welded down each side of the boat and there were 400 of us in the hold. The ship behind us got torpedoed; luckily there was no prisoners of war on them, we were in a convoy.

36:00 Then we ran into a typhoon and we got behind an island and managed to ride it out, but where the girders were welded all started to split. So we were lucky that we actually got to Japan in it. We called that the Bioki Maru because 'biyoki' is 'sick' in Japanese so it was the 'Sick

36:30 Ship', it was really sick.

**It must have been hard to live with 400 in the hold?**

Yes, you get up a ladder to look out and see what was happening because you weren't allowed up on deck. If you had to go to the toot [toilet] you could go up to the deck and you had to climb out over the side of the

37:00 boat. It had a little bloody landing there and you just squatted there and had your bum wiped off by the waves. That was the only time we could get out of the hold.

**What about all the vomit, where did that all end up?**

Well, that was there. There was only, I'm not kidding, there was two of us out of the

37:30 whole hold that was capable of getting up and down the ladder to go to the Nip cook house to get the rice to take down to feed the lot that were in the hold. So you had as much rice as you liked because the others were too bloody sick to eat it. And there were only two of us that could do that. They even got sick on the Queen

38:00 Mary going over there, you know, and it was just like sitting on this floor.

**The smell must have been bloody awful?**

Yes, it was, more than awful I can tell you. The boat was that old and rotten we punched holes in the side of the boat and let sea water in so that we could have a

38:30 wash and then plugged it up with singlets and a piece of wood to stop the water from coming in again. Then when it was time to have somebody to give them a wash, we'd just take the plug out and let them have a wash in sea water and that happened all the way over on the Bioki Moru.

**Extraordinary**

Oh yes, you had no worry about having

39:00 toilet paper.

**You just had to squat for long enough?**

Yeah, just until enough waves had come up.

**O. K. We'll hold it there.**

## Tape 5

00:34 **Would you be able to tell us how each day was run like a day in the life of being there in Changi?**

Well I wasn't in Changi for very long but while we were

01:00 there it was just a case of keeping out of the Japs' road. We didn't have any work to do or anything at the initial stages. Later on they did develop a garden in Changi, a vegetable garden, and they were tending that. But I went out on one of the first working parties so actually I wasn't in Changi for very long really. Our

01:30 first camp was at Bukit Timah and from there we went to different jobs.

**You mean after you were in Changi for a while . . ?**

Moved us out.

**Moved you out O. K. - well, if we can just stay on Changi before we get to Bukit Timah. Can you tell me what were your first impressions of the camp when you arrived?**

Well as I've said we originally arrived at

02:00 Changi and were stationed in what had been officers' homes, so many to a home, and that was good. But then they moved us into Roberts' barracks which were real army barracks - old concrete, cold - and so many hundred to each building and you all slept side by side on the floor and kept out of the Japs'

02:30 road. The Japs just had their guards walking around the place. We didn't have any actual work to do while I was there except do our own physical PT. Then one day for some

03:00 reason or another, the Japs put out a form that we all had to sign, that we wouldn't try to escape. We refused to sign it. And the whole of the barracks were all confined to the square, we weren't allowed into our own huts or wherever we were,

03:30 with the Nip guarding us and no toilets or anything. It was a hell of a mess for a couple of days and then we eventually signed them but under duress with the acknowledgement by the officers that it was signed under duress. Otherwise there would have been more people dead

04:00 because a lot of them had dysentery as it was then, and that was in the early days.

**How did they have dysentery so soon in coming to the camp?**

It was a case of it only needs one person to get it and it's transmitted from person to person, all having to use the toilets and it wasn't a case of normal toilets it was just latrines dug in the ground.

04:30 That was the main trouble, dysentery and lack of good food, but then as we were moved out into work parties those that were left in Changi were moved into the Changi Jail, instead of being in the barracks,

05:00 they were all moved into Changi jail and that was pretty horrific. I myself was never in there except when I went back to Singapore, I went and had a look of it. But some of them never left Changi, some of them were in Changi for 3 ½ years.

**Were they the sick ones that were left?**

No, some of them were fit, it was just how you happened to be picked out in your

05:30 troops and so forth and different ones, different party. You might be all going together and then one party would be split up by the Nip guard, they'd go to one place and the other party would go somewhere else. So your mates would be split up and you wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

**The men that were left behind at Changi while you went out on a party, what were they to do there at Changi - were they to do gardening?**

06:00 Mainly looking after the vegetable garden and that, and some were sick - a lot of the doctors looked after them that were sent back from work parties and eventually were too sick to go out again with the other work parties, they stayed behind. The medical staff, doctors and orderlies and so forth did a marvellous job.

06:30 It didn't matter where they were, whether they were in camp or in Changi, they put themselves right down to the last minute to look after you and try and keep us all - how they did it was beyond comprehension, how they stood up to it. The operations that they did without any true instruments, just they'd do anything to try and do it.

07:00 **Now was there a little clinical hospital for the men that were there?**

In Changi there was, yes, for a while.

**And were they Australian doctors?**

Yes, Australian and British doctors.

**And did they treat all the prisoners there at Changi?**

Yes.

**And the prisoners that were there in Changi when you first arrived there were the Australians, the British and the Indians?**

Indians, yes.

07:30 **Anyone else, any other nation?**

No, not that I know of. A few New Zealanders eventually ended up with us.

**What were they like, the Kiwis?**

They were alright. There was only a few of them. They were unlucky to be caught, to be sent over there, you know, there was only a few sent and they just got landed.

**Do you think it was the dysentery that was the worst thing about Changi?**

08:00 Dysentery was the worst thing in all the camps. It was something that it didn't matter how good you tried to be in keeping the camps clean and so forth, it was something that spread very quickly. And Changi had its share and up in Thailand we had it too, well and truly.

08:30 But the Changi boys, they got it a lot easier than those that did on the work parties. They didn't have the Nip guards standing over them all the time, the guards in Changi were concentrated in their guard hut and they just did rounds, but on a work party the guards were standing over you all the time.

09:00 **We were talking before Harry about the ABC-TV series "Changi" and I was going to ask you what were your thoughts about that?**

It was so wrong, so full of bullshit that it doesn't matter. The impression that it gave really made all the prisoners of war that had actually been through it so mad that they could have wrung the producer's

09:30 neck. It was so wrong.

**What was the main thing that they got wrong?**

Oh, the marching and the singing and all being well dressed . We had the bum out of our pants.

**And you weren't singing?**

You weren't allowed to sing I can tell you that.

10:00 And as to how they addressed the Japs we'd have had our bloody heads lopped off if we'd have spoken to some of the Japs the way they did. . We couldn't get away with what they got away with. It was so wrong it didn't matter.

**What was something else that they got wrong - meals?**

Oh, meals, yes. We never, ever had

10:30 meals like they spoke of. You were lucky if you got enough rice to keep you going but it was so wrong and the way the officers commanded the troops and that, it never happened as a POW.

**Do you think it's justified that a lot of Australians, well I can talk about my**

11:00 **grandmother for example who died in July, she was born in 1914, she could forgive a lot of things about the First World War but she couldn't forgive what happened to the Australians in Changi and the Japanese war camps. Do you think Australians had a right to hold on to that for so long, are they still holding on to that?**

Well, yes, we'll never forget. We can forgive but we can't forget and

11:30 what makes it worse is that they are not telling the Japanese children of today of the atrocities that they carried out during the days of the war. It's not even mentioned in Japanese school that there was such a thing as the war.

**Do you think it's a cultural thing because they lost?**

That's it, that's the whole thing, they don't want to

12:00 admit that they started the war and lost the war. And I went back to Japan when I was President of the Repatriation Commission trying to get money out of the Japs for ex prisoners of war and to build a

12:30 hospital and so forth up north. This all happened through some of the legalities in Japan, they started the idea, they came out here to Australia. They were all for trying to get money out of the Japanese government for reparations and I went over there at their expense and I was well

13:00 treated while I was over there. But the actual up and coming young Japanese do not know a thing about the war. It's not spoken of and it's not in the history. That's how it is, and when you go on Anzac Day March round the

13:30 towns down here now you see Japanese standing on the corner, waving, all friendly and everything. They're young and they don't know anything about the war and they're quite a different race today I think than what they were in 1939-45. It was purely the Emperor, everything was for the Emperor. Every

14:00 morning when they got out on parade they all turned and faced towards Japan and said their prayers for the Emperor and then they'd bash us to get us working again.

**It doesn't really make much sense does it?**

No, but no you can forget but you can't forgive.

**Were the prisoners allowed to practice their own**

14:30 **faith. I mean if you were Catholic were you allowed to have a mass for instance on Sunday morning?**

Not really.

**So it was the Japanese way or none at all?**

None at all.

**And did they make the prisoners actually join in ?**

No, we didn't have to join in with them but the padres that were there, they did a marvellous job trying to look after them.

15:00 A lot of them unfortunately were sent on the Sandakan march and died. The force I was with, we didn't have any padre whatsoever with us. The

15:30 Americans, when we went to Nagasaki, the island of Nagasaki to work in the ship yard, the Americans there were all from Wake Island and they were all prisoners who'd been sent to Wake Island and were taken captive by the Japs and they were the greatest thieves of all. They couldn't even leave their own meal on the table or it would get knocked off

16:00 by their mate, or supposed mate. So between them and the Dutch, not the Dutch, the Javanese more than anything, we didn't have a very good time - being together with them, we kept strictly to ourselves, the Australians.

**This is when you were sent to Wake Island?**

No, to the island in Nagasaki Harbour. The Americans had been taken on

16:30 Wake Island and they were a bad crew.

**I'm sorry for asking if this is unpleasant, but did you see Australian prisoners being punished by the Japanese guards at Changi?**

Oh yes, yes,

17:00 many times.

**Can you tell us about that?**

Well it was a case of if you looked the wrong way sometimes you'd just get bashed for no reason whatsoever.

**With their fists?**

With their fists or bayonets or whatever they had in their hand, wood, a lump of wood, anything.

**Were men killed?**

Not so many killed on that actual thing but a lot of them were put into

17:30 prison and died in there through lack of food and dysentery and so forth. . And they were put into the prison for just some little tiny thing that was wrong, but they killed the Chinese more than they killed the prisoners of war.

**What would**

18:00 **happen when an Australian soldier died, would he be buried by the Australians or by the Japanese?**

If it was possible while we were working up on the line, we had to cremate them. We had to put them on a fire. In one camp that I was in I had the unfortunate job with

18:30 Tom Uren, that's the Member of Parliament [later Federal Labor MP]. We used to have to take the dead bodies around and put them on top of the funeral pyre.

**Why couldn't you bury them?**

Because there was nowhere to bury them. In some of the camps we were able to bury them but when we were working up on the railway line

19:00 there was no place to bury them on their own. It was better for them to be cremated, at least we had a record of where they were and what happened to them, that went down in army records.

**That would have been a horrible job, Harry?**

Well, it was one of the jobs that you had to do.

**And did the Japanese issue you with - was it petrol that you used?**

There was no such thing as petrol, no.

19:30 **Well how did you light the fires?**

Just lit the fire, that's all, matches.

**With kindling?**

Yes. There was no shortage of firewood or anything while we were up on the railway line, plenty of wood, plenty of stuff.

**That must have been very hard for all the men because where there's smoke there's fire so there would have been a lot of smoke?**

Oh yes, it was a very, very hard - Hin Toc, that was

20:00 actually the last camp that we were in, working on the railway line. From there we moved back down and we were in a hospital camp with [Dr] 'Weary' Dunlop as the CO and of course we were all pretty emaciated by that

20:30 time. Then from there we started to get sent back to Singapore.

**The job that you had of cremating the Australian servicemen, did that happen a lot?**

Not a great deal, only when they died from dysentery and so forth. And that was the

21:00 safest way of making sure the dysentery didn't spread.

**Did you get dysentery?**

I had it, yes.

**Does it come back, do you have a relapse?**

When you first come home we still had it for a little. I think I'm back on the line occasionally now.

**It's contagious isn't it, so did the government issue any warnings to the wives?**

No, no.

21:30 No, no, but when we came back we were in Greenslopes Hospital for quite a while and they treated us there. I was in Greenslopes for quite a while and before you're discharged we had to appear before the CO of the hospital and tell

22:00 him if you had any complaints. And I said, I was being discharged and I said, "Yes, I've been complaining of pains in my right side ever since I've been here". And he said, "What ward are you in?" And I said "3". And he said "Go and report back to 3". And the next moment I was down the X-Ray room, stones in my kidneys and yet I would have been discharged if I hadn't complained, and I would have had to have

22:30 proved that I had stones in my kidneys.

**That's very painful though isn't it?**

Yes.

**And you had to have them taken out?**

No, I've still got them to this day although they don't worry me anywhere near as much as they did when I was on the line or even when I came home. When I first started playing golf I'd be on the tee and "Oh!", I'd have to stop for a while, the pain would be there. They're still there but they

23:00 don't worry me.

**What is the cause?**

Lack of water was mainly the cause of it.

**Dehydration?**

Yes because that was a scarce commodity, water. We used to have to try and get the water as it came off the attap roofs, catch it, and that was the safest way to get water to drink.

23:30 **How did the Japanese soldiers treat other soldiers, how did the Japanese treat their own men?**

If I was superior in rank to you I could belt the daylights out of you and if somebody else was over you he could belt you. So the poor old private he copped it all the time and they used to take it out on us then, you see.

24:00 And that's what happened, they'd even beat the doctors up. The doctors would try and get somebody to be kept from going out on a working party who was too sick and they'd say, you know, that he was "Bioki, tac san biyoki", very sick. And the guard would bash the doctor up and that's how it went

24:30 on.

**That's crazy isn't it?**

Yes. And then they'd do the same with the Korean guards you see. The Jap soldier could beat the Korean guards because they were conscripts, and then the Korean guards would take it out on us.

**It's hard to respect a man that beats you?**

Oh, yeah, yeah, but as I think I said before there's good and bad in everyone. One of the Korean guards who we called RAAF Joe,

25:00 he'd come round and tell us if the Nips were going to have a search so that we could hide anything we wanted to out. He'd say "searcho, searcho" so we'd know to get rid of anything we shouldn't have.

**Do you think the surrender started off a ball of low morale for the men?**

Not for us, no. I don't think the Australians ever lost their morale.

25:30 A few of them may have given the game away but on the whole most of the Australians stood up to it better than any of the other armies because we were more independent. We were used to a different type of life. The boys from the bush out in the west, they were used to being on their own living it

26:00 hard, same as we were brought up in the suburbs of Brisbane even. We had to learn to live hard in the days of the Depression and we learned to live with it and stand it. And we led a different type of life to what the English did, you know, completely different.

**Did you see a lot of Englishmen die?**

Yes, a lot died.

26:30 Yes. We had a lot of the Scottish Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, they were prisoners of war, and they were a pretty independent mob too. They stood up to

27:00 it better than the English. I think it was because a different type of leadership. That's all it amounted to, whoever was in charge, be it a doctor or a warrant officer, he set the tempo to which you lived and you had to live by it. He kept your morale up.

27:30 **How did the Australians keep their morale up, was it through humour?**

Yes, through humour, you could always have a joke even if it was on yourself.

**Can you remember any such occasions?**

It's a bit hard to try and go back now.

28:00 I can't remember an actual joke but one thing that will always stick in my mind - in the camp at Bukit Timah we were right beside the main railway line and the bridge over the road that led from Singapore up over the Causeway and we had

28:30 hidden a lot of ammunition and stuff in the scrub beside the railway line. The Nips started to do a search of our camp and I happened to be up near the officers' mess and they knew that I was one of the few that had been hiding the stuff, but with their permission. .

29:00 They said, "Nobody knows anything about it". The Nips never found it, they thought it was in our camp, instead of that it was beside the railway line.

**How did you get the ammo in the first place?**

We were working at what had been the Ford Motor Company, their workshops, and there was a lot of

29:30 Indians living around the place and we gradually picked up bits and pieces, a rifle and ammunition and so forth because we always thought some day we might be able to break out and to this day it could be still there.

**Was it hope that probably kept you alive as well?**

Yes, there was always hope, always hope.

- 30:00 Hope and fellowship amongst one another was amazing, the standard that was set in the Australian army. Nobody ever died on their own, there was always somebody with them.
- 30:30 **What had you heard about the Sandakan, it actually didn't happen until later did it?**
- No.
- 1943 wasn't it?**
- Yes, '43, and that book there, "Moriavia", he was one of them that was in Sandakan and it was a terrible thing. The last survivor who was out of my regiment died only a couple of months ago.
- 31:00 **So now you were taken in '42?**
- '42, yes.
- So it wasn't actually until liberation that you were out of the camp?**
- That's right.
- So how long all up, Harry, did you stay in Changi before you moved on?**
- I'd only been in Changi I suppose
- 31:30 three months, four months was about all, and then we started getting sent out on different work parties and it was better out on the work parties in a lot of ways than it was in Changi because you could quite often
- 32:00 thief something here or there or help along the food line.
- Were you ever in a situation in Changi where you were aware of men dying already?**
- Yes, yeah.
- In those three months?**
- Yes.
- You must have thought, well, if we all stay here that will be the end of us?**
- In a lot of ways it would have been too because the food shortage
- 32:30 in Changi was bad. At least while we were out, as I say, we could pinch [steal] stuff to help.
- What would you pinch, I'm curious?**
- Whatever was going. If you were working somewhere and there were mangos growing or something like that, you'd take a risk and jump for them and get one or
- 33:00 even pinch something out of the Nip cook house.
- What would they do if they busted you getting a mango?**
- You'd get busted well and truly.
- You wouldn't be killed would you?**
- You could be, they never had to answer for what they did.
- So they didn't go along with the Geneva Convention of treatment of prisoners?**
- No, oh no, anything but.
- 33:30 They never signed the Convention so that was it.
- You said that during that time, the 3 1/2 years you were a POW, you only got one [Red Cross] comfort package to share between -**
- Six of us.
- you and the other blokes - what about when you were in Melaka, did you get anything then?**
- No, nothing, we got nothing.
- They thought you were having a holiday, maybe?**
- No, the Japs just didn't give them to us.
- 34:00 They were coming over but they were never issued out by the Nips, they just kept them for themselves.

**You were talking about being 10 stone 7 at the beginning of the war, what were you at the end?**

Six stone.

**Geez.**

34:30 Yes, skin and bones, that's all we were. Once we started to get back on food it didn't take us long to put it back on.

**What about water, did you get enough water at the camps?**

No that was half the trouble that was why I had kidney stones because you couldn't, you could only drink boiled water

35:00 because if you were to drink the ordinary water that was all full of dysentery and you had to drink boiled water and sometimes you couldn't boil it.

**What about the Japanese what did they drink?**

They had to drink boiled water. When I was in charge of the Nip cook house when we were up on Hellfire Pass I had to boil all the water and they had to

35:30 be issued out to the Nips. But we used to try and do the wrong thing; we'd pour a few buckets of ordinary water into the boiled water before it was taken down to the Nip and we used to give them the shits.

**Literally.**

Yes.

**The other question I was going to ask you**

36:00 **at Changi, did you remain with another person, another fellow, for the remainder of the 3 ½ years you were a PoW?**

I was with one bloke mainly, Bobby Laws, and he died only a matter of months ago. But he and I were together all the way through and we were about the last of the two survivors .

36:30 **Where was he from?**

Brisbane, Wavell Heights.

**Did you know him before the war?**

Only through the army, being in the army, I met him then. And I had another friend of mine who was in the army with me, we went to school together, Eddie Johnson, and he was the sergeant.

37:00 He came home, poor bugger, and was only home a matter of a month, gone. That broke my heart more than anything, you know. To get through 3 ½ years and get home and then only last a month and there was nothing they could do to save him. There were quite a few went very quick, once they got home.

**Do you think they were mainly**

37:30 **hanging out to get home to die?**

That's right, yes.

**Do you know what they died of?**

Mainly it was malnutrition. Originally they were so down in health that there was no way they could be revived . When we came home they tried to do the right thing in hospital by us as much as

38:00 they could. You were in for quite a while and then you went out. We were out for three months, I think it was, and then we had to go back in for another fortnight or so to be checked. But they weren't always right in their decisions, some of the doctors were only young doctors,

38:30 you know, hadn't had the experience, but on the whole the nurses were pretty good.

**What about psychological nurses and doctors after the war?**

You never saw such a thing.

**Things have changed now.**

Yes, the difference between the way the Korean boys have been treated and what we got as

39:00 prisoners of war coming home, is miles and miles apart. They've been given all the assistance possible but we were just out of hospital and that was it, go and find yourself a job. No such thing as go along and see a psychologist or anything, no.

**If you feel that, for want of better words, the mythology of Changi, why is it Changi rather than all the camps, what was it about Changi - do you know what I mean?**

Well Changi, it was

40:00 because we were all herded into Changi, at the end of the war when the surrender was on everybody went into Changi so Changi became the place where we were all taken and it's always remained as Changi. Even though most of us spent more time out of it than in it, everything still remained known as Changi. Even when we go back there

40:30 it's still going back for a reunion at Changi.

**So it's kind of like Ellis Island in America in New York, where everybody arrived and then they moved them out?**

That's right, moved them out.

## Tape 6

00:30 **You mentioned a couple of times this morning about learning Japanese. Can you tell us a little bit more about how that came about?**

The first time I had anything to do with it was with the Japanese guard when we were working with the Japanese roadway through the

01:00 Singapore Golf Club and he'd been a swimmer who'd been out here to Australia and he wanted to learn a bit of English and I wanted to learn a bit of Japanese. We got on reasonably well together and I started to learn from him. Then the interpreter at the camp that we were in was an American who'd been caught in

01:30 Japan when the war broke out and been forced in the army and I used to talk to him and he spoke to me and told me how to go about learning Japanese. And then when I worked up in the Nip cook house up on the railway I learned from the Japs, who I had to cook for, and the young blokes that were there

02:00 that wanted to learn English too, so in the end I learned quite a bit of Japanese through them, enough to get myself out of trouble and help others out of trouble at times by being able to explain to the Nips that they were sick or something and it was wrong. And when I came home I went to Toowoomba, I had my own electrical shop and I had a chap

02:30 working for me who had been in the occupational forces in Japan and he was quite fluent also in Japanese, so he and I used to talk in Japanese and it was good because it kept us both up with it. But since I've been down the coast I've had nobody to talk to and I've got to remember hard to try and talk Japanese now, I still can a bit.

**What were some of the words or phrases that you found**

03:00 **most helpful to know?**

Well, 'watashi' means 'me' and 'watashi tac san biyoki' meant 'I was very sick and I wouldn't be able to work'. 'Shigodo nai', means 'no work'. So you'd say 'Watashi tac san biyoki, shigodo nai'. Whether the Jap believed you or not or let you off work was a different thing altogether.

03:30 But I had to learn it also so that I could report to the Japanese Warrant Officer who was in charge of the camp. When we were on the island off Nagasaki you'd have to go out at night time and tell him the number of the room and how many were in it, and how many were sick, and how many were at work, and how many were too ill to go to

04:00 work, and so on. You had to get it off pretty well and it became a necessity for my own sake that I learn it and learn it as quickly as I could.

**And how did the guards treat you, given that you started to know a bit more about their language?**

04:30 It was good because they could communicate with me better, and get things through to the group that I was in charge of, or working with, and it made it easier for them if they could explain what they wanted and what we had to do. It saved a lot of misunderstandings and a lot of beltings, especially up on the railway line.

05:00 As I say, all the Nips weren't bad, some of them were very, very bad, but there were some good Nips amongst them. I will have to give them that.

**Was there a particular act of kindness that stands out or generosity?**

The Nip interpreter at Bukit Timah, he was the one that saved me when I marched the group that I had

back into camp without

05:30 permission. He saved me from real trouble when I explained to him that I had tried to tell the guard that I was so sick and couldn't stand, and he wouldn't listen, so I just marched the whole troop home. So he took over from me and got me off it.

06:00 We used to call him 'The Yank' and if he hadn't been there, it would have been a different story.

**What do you think would have happened?**

Anything could have happened - there mightn't have been Henry James Nesbitt sitting here because I disobeyed a Jap guard.

**And how about Bukit Timah camp that you went to after Changi, how was that different to**

06:30 **where you'd been?**

Well, at Bukit Timah, it actually had been Bukit Timah village, and it was all shops which had been occupied previously and behind the shops was a hill and there used to be gooseberries and raspberries growing up on the hill behind it, so you'd nick up there and get some of them when you could. And

07:00 we'd be pinching the petrol out of the Nip trucks and selling it to the Chinese. 'Yank' who was the interpreter, he was in the business too of selling it to the Chinese, so he saved us. He never put any of us in because he'd have had to put himself in.

**What would you sell it to the Chinese for - I mean what would you get in return?**

Well, so many tikels

07:30 which was Japanese money, and then we could spend that on whatever we could.

**Like what?**

Even though we were in the Japanese camp they still had a sort of canteen where you could go and buy extra stuff if you had money. We were still getting 10 cents a day in pay out of the

08:00 Japs and you had that bit of money and you could always save that up and have a bit extra because the Japs didn't know what you were actually spending it on, or how much you were spending. It was a Chinese that was running the shop.

**So how would it work then, getting 10 cents a day from the Japanese. I mean physically how would it work?**

Oh, they'd pay it in to the officers and the

08:30 officers would pay us.

**So they wouldn't sign the Geneva Convention, but they'd pay you money.**

Only ten cents a day, that was only for a while, it didn't last long. That was only in the early stages, we never got anything when we were up in the railway line or anything like that. The journey up to Thailand in the rice trucks was hard,

09:00 30 odd crammed in to a little rice truck. There was only room to sit, there was no room to stretch out. If you wanted to pee, you had to pee out the door.

**Did you have to shuffle to the back?**

Yeah.

**Just going back to the canteen at the Bukit Timah camp, what sort of things were for sale, what could you get?**

Coconuts were something I'd get, a bit of coconut or maybe even some

09:30 rice, extra rice or something like that. That wasn't openly sold but you could get it through them. There were different things that you could get - coconut was the main thing. If you could get a whole coconut with coconut milk in it, you could put that over your

10:00 rice and that would help your vitamins very much.

**What was the day to day at that camp like? What would you be required to do?**

Oh, pretty hard. We were working, as I say, on this building and monument. We had to take the top

10:30 off Bukit Timah Hill and made it into a saucer shape and the Nips then were building a monument to their dead. And I was in charge of one party where we were building the road up, the main road up. That was where I had this shin that was all infected, that's still the scar from it that I marched the

11:00 group home from. But we could get away from the Nips and get down the side of Bukit Timah hill where the Indian population lived and you'd be able to scrounge a bit of extra food out of some of them too, and get back up and join the party before the Nip missed you. The

11:30 Ford Motor Company was there and the Nips took it over but it was an easy life compared to any of that on the line, Bukit Timah.

**So the days are getting progressively harder?**

Yeah.

12:00 **What was the average work day at Bukit Timah, like in terms of how long?**

Well you'd do about twelve hours a day – six to six or something like that depending on who was on and how many the Nips wanted on a job. Sometimes it would depend on who was on as to whether you'd be able to say that so many were 'biyoki', couldn't go to

12:30 work, and whether they'd let him stay home, or whether he had to go. They wanted 50 men, they had to have 50 men whether we had to carry one.

**Did that happen a bit?**

Yes, you'd have to help him, carry him along. They had to have 50 men on parade, we'd have to get him there.

**And**

13:00 **what would they do if you were one short, if you pulled up one short?**

Go back and belt the daylights out of the bloke that wasn't there. So that was it.

**As a way to look after yourself would you, if you could get away with it, rotate who you could if they were**

13:30 **sick?**

We always tried to look after those that were ill. We'd try and keep them off the work parties if it was possible. As I said, if the Nip wanted 50 men you had to put 50 men out.

**And would you get any breaks during a 12 hour day, how would it work?**

It depended on the guards as to how hard they

14:00 worked you. Some of them would give you a bit of leniency, but others it was "Speedo! Speedo! Speedo!". That meant you weren't going fast enough, you had to break up more rock or shovel more or whatever you were doing. and that's when they'd start cracking out with the stick, belting you, "Speedo!".

**Would they break bones?**

14:30 Yes, oh yes.

**So they'd incapacitate you, so you couldn't work?**

That arm there, I had an abscess around the bone and there's no such thing as anaesthetic or

15:00 anything. It was a Dutch doctor, this is while we were at Bukit Timah, You went into what was the hospital ward in the camp and two of them held my arm while the Dutch doctor opened it up and took the abscess from around the bone; and there was nothing I could do but just lie there and cop it.

15:30 It happened to a lot of them, you just had to take it, without anaesthetic. But the worst part of it was the toilets that we had. They would just be cement wells and they had to be emptied and if you were 'squashi biyoki' it means you were light duties, it was your job to bail out the toilets. Then from the mainland they'd come over with

16:00 barges and you had to put the buckets on a pole between you – I'd have this arm in a sling and the bloke on the other end of it would have his leg in a plaster cast or something - and you'd be yo-yoing these buckets down. You'd tip them in the barge and they'd take it back over to the mainland and use it as fertiliser for their farms. But it wasn't a very pleasant job, I can tell you, because it would be splashing everywhere.

16:30 So that was it, "yo-yo". You used to hate the word – and that was carrying the buckets on your shoulders and trying to use one arm to empty the bucket and then with one leg. But we survived. That arm, occasionally, you wouldn't think it, but I still get

17:00 feeling through it.

**As if the abscess was still there?**

Yes, because they cut muscle, yes.

**So did you lose certain use of it?**

A certain amount, yes, but we had trouble sometimes when we came home - even up in Toowoomba when I was there, my normal

17:30 doctor was away and he had a relieving GP [general (medical) practitioner] there and I went in to see him one day and he said I was a 'bludger' [pretender], there was nothing wrong with me. And when my own doctor came back and I told him he said, "Well, he'll never get another job in Toowoomba I can guarantee you that".

18:00 And then my kidneys were really playing up. And the same thing happened when I came down here from Toowoomba, I went to a doctor just this side of the bridge, going over to Southport, and I told him what was the matter with me and he

18:30 said, I think I was on 17 per cent pension, he said, "You shouldn't be on that, there's nothing wrong with you". I went and saw another doctor and he sent me to a specialist in Southport and he said, "I'll have you on a 100 per cent pension tomorrow". That's the difference between the bloody doctors - and the young ones couldn't understand, they couldn't understand

19:00 there was anything wrong with us.

**So it was both times that they were younger doctors?**

Yes, he got me on to a hundred per cent pension and once I got on to that I immediately applied for TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] . TPI without any worries, but this other bloke was going to get me reduced.

**It's incredible. Did it make you angry?**

19:30 Oh yes, but they couldn't believe what had happened to us as PoWs.

**As in he didn't believe you?**

Yes, he didn't, he thought it was all baloney, what we said that was going on with us.

**Did you feel like punching him in the nose?**

Yes, I did.

20:00 **How long did they keep you at Bukit Timah?**

At Bukit Timah we were about six months I suppose.

**And was it just the levelling of the hill for their monument that you were doing?**

That and also we were working on the roadway through the golf course in between times. And some of the other boys that were

20:30 on a different work party to us, they moved into what had been all the top housing on the island for the Europeans who used to live in Singapore, and they lived like lords for a while - until the food ran out. Well, we got into some of the food from the homes but they had good quarters to live in, not bug-ridden

21:00 places like we had.

**These were other PoWs?**

Yes.

**How did they manage that?**

That was just where the Japs put them.

**Pretty fortunate?**

But in Bukit Timah, the bugs.... . .

**What sort of bugs?**

Bed bugs - they'd bite you and the place was lousy with them.

**Are they like fleas or were they big bugs?**

No, they were bigger than fleas,

21:30 about the size of your finger nail I suppose and they really bite and they stink if you squash them, the smell was terrible. But that was one of the things you had to put up with.

**The Chinese to start with -**

- 22:00 **where were they on the pecking order and how were they treated where you were. You mentioned that they were running the canteen?**
- It depended on the area they were in too, and who the guards were, on what the Chinese were actually doing - like I went down on the beach one day and I
- 22:30 found six of them had been shot, for what reason nobody knew, but there was six Chinese that had just been shot. They did the same with the nurses.
- Did you guys know about that at the time?**
- Not at the time, no.
- So from Bukit Timah,**
- 23:00 **that's when you were marched up to the railway from there?**
- We went back to Changi and then from Changi we went to the railway. We were only in Changi for a little while.
- Before you were working on the railway you**
- 23:30 **were in Kanburi for a week - another camp, you were left alone?**
- Not Kanburi it was, Tarsao, it was a hospital camp. We were there for a while before we were moved out into the actual work parties.
- 24:00 In Thailand we had quite a march from there to Tarsao and that was all done at night, right through the night. And a lot fell by the wayside.
- Can you tell us about how that march worked, I mean you were marching all night,**
- 24:30 **how many of you started?**
- There was about 200 in our work party I think it was, originally D Force, and mainly made up out of my unit - a few 2/26th Infantry, mainly Queenslanders they were, and then gradually we got
- 25:00 merged with the Victorians, an anti-tank regiment. But it was a pretty tough march, just like Sandakan; if you fell out it was too bad, it would be the end of you unless somebody could pick you up and carry you, which we had to, help them along one, one each side, to keep him going. I was pretty fortunate,
- 25:30 I got dysentery but I was never at a stage where I was going to pass out or anything like that. I had dysentery badly but I could always manage to get by. I suppose luck was always on my side.
- 26:00 **What was the terrain like that you had to march through?**
- Well, it was a mixture, of mainly old tracks, old bullock tracks - pretty muddy and pretty wet, because it rains all the time up in Thailand, and the mosquitoes. The
- 26:30 Nips kept you on the move all the time, kept you up to it.
- Would they let you sleep through the day?**
- You never had any time to sleep.
- They were marching you 24 hours?**
- Yes, you kept going. A bit of a rest and then it would be "Speedo!".
- How long were you marching?**
- I think we marched for about 24 hours.
- So it was a full day's march,**
- 27:00 **all undernourished to start with?**
- We'd just got off the train. When we first got off the train at Kanton Buri we didn't see a Nip. We had a day off practically, it was like heaven. We'd arrived and they hadn't expected us and there was no Nip guards there or anything to look after us, so we had a day of
- 27:30 freedom before they started us on the march.
- What did you think had happened?**
- We thought it was heaven - a day without Nips yelling 'Speedo', or 'kura' or 'mutagoi'. That's what I used to dread when I was in charge of the cook house "Nesbitta, kura, mutagoi". I used to say "Oh, struth what's the matter now!". That meant, "Nesbitt come here!".

28:00 Something had gone wrong, and I always had to be the one to get the blame for it.

**Why was that?**

Because I was in charge of them - I had to explain why they'd done it and how it had happened. I was lucky later on when the young Nips came up on the

28:30 line - when we were caught with one of the boys with the tin of condensed milk that he said he'd presented it to me. "Watashi presento Nesbitta" meant that he'd given me the tin of milk. I even had to take the blame for that, because it wasn't my tin of milk but because I was there, I was the hanchō,

29:00 "Nesbitto hanchō".

**You had to take the blame for accepting it?**

Well that's what happens all the time.

**There was an understanding among the Australians that they would never let anybody die alone?**

That's right. We always tried to have somebody with them.

**How would that work if you were in an intense work party or on a march where the guards were over you?**

29:30 You could always more or less drop by the wayside with them and you might get belted, but you'd be there to hold his hand. We never let anybody die on their own, if we could possibly help it.

**30:00 Were there any fellows that you know of or that you actually held the hand of?**

Yes. .

**Any fellow you could tell us about in terms of what happened to them.**

Mainly it was from dying from dysentery, they were there, you had to be with them. And you knew they were going

30:30 and it was peace for them, the pain was over. Just like this friend of mine that we buried yesterday. He'd had cancer of the belly and he was in terrible pain for months and I hate to say it but it was a relief to see him go, and that was how it was with the prisoners of war.

31:00 They just couldn't stand it any more, nothing would help them. Didn't have the doctors, didn't have any medicine or anything to give them. The doctors did a marvellous job trying to get them through. When we were working in the cook-house we'd take whatever we could scramble from the Nips. What they didn't eat we'd take over

31:30 to the working party the other side of the road to the hospital over there - some burned rice and all that. And as I told you before, we had to shoot the pig; the Nips couldn't shoot the pigs and we'd have to shoot them and they'd give us the head so we'd take the head from the shoulders and take it over to the hospital and let them cook it and feed the boys.

**32:00 I know you saw one fellow that you helped there. What you could say to him or what you did say to him?**

You didn't say much, you just held his hand and sat there with him

32:30 because nine times out of ten he was beyond understanding, and he was too far gone to really know that you were there with him. He'd feel your presence, that's about all, but he wouldn't be able to understand what you were talking about and they'd just reached that

33:00 stage where the body wouldn't carry on any more. The worst part of it was the boys that went down first were the big strong healthy blokes that had been the lifesavers and that, you know. Where I was ten stone seven, they'd be fourteen stone or something like that and they were the ones that went

33:30 first because their body didn't get enough nourishment to keep them going for the size of them. Whereas the skinny little buggers, we could get by on the little food that we were getting. A lot of the boys from down here at Burleigh Lifesavers, Bill Long, and all those, they were champions but they went first.

**34:00 How did that affect the morale of the rest of the fellows?**

Well, we got to the stage where you didn't get affected any more; it was just a case of another one gone, nothing we could do about it. You'd just hope that it wasn't you the next time but it

34:30 broke your heart to see some of your best friends that you'd known for years go west [die]. In a couple of those photos I'd be the only one left out of the whole lot.

**How did you deal with that?**

It's just one of those things - I suppose He looks after you.

35:00 I've never been a religious bloke but He's always looked after me. I got out of more scrapes than I should have I suppose, even after I've come home.

**I guess you've got some luck.**

When I first went into the hotel and I was a city slicker and the big

35:30 country bumpkins came over there and started to try and stand over me. By this time I was back to ten stone but I wasn't afraid though, I never was afraid of anybody - I'd just say "Righto, outside". I knocked one bloke clean over the veranda and two blokes that came out from Toowoomba, they started putting a real turn

36:00 on. I went out and thumped the daylighters out of both of them and they went down to the local copper [police officer], down the railway line, about two miles down the line, and complained to him that I'd beaten them up. And he said "Well, if Harry beat you up you deserved it, because he's his own policeman".

**That's pretty good.**

Yeah, but as I said,

36:30 ten stone seven, I was never afraid of anybody.

**Were the other PoWs that were there, like the Brits for example, did they survive as well as the Australians?**

No, they didn't. Their survival rate was nowhere near as high as the Australian survival rate.

**And why do you think that was?**

37:00 Just their style of living, they were nowhere near as clean and hygienic as we were. We made sure that hygiene was practised, where the Poms didn't. They were nowhere near as particular as we were in their washing and boiling and dipping their food articles in the

37:30 boiling water, you know and that. So they suffered a lot more than we did in that way only because we were very strict in hygiene.

**Was there a difference in mateship among the Australians, as to mateship among the Brits?**

I don't know - I suppose in their own way they got on together, but the Australians kept to themselves pretty

38:00 well and didn't bother too much about the Poms. Some of my best friends out here now were in the English Army but they've altered altogether since they came out here to Australia. They've become Australians, they know the difference. They say we couldn't go back and live in England

38:30 now.

**We'll pause there, Harry.**

## Tape 7

00:33 **I was wondering if you could tell us if any of the PoWs wrote to the families of some of the men that died in the camp?**

They did, yes. When we got home some of us contacted people, the families that we knew their sons had died and told them where they were and what was what and that we'd seen them.

01:00 **What about you did you write to any of the blokes' families?**

Yes I did.

**I think it must have been nice for the families to hear somebody who knew them?**

Yes, it still is. Even today I had a widow of one of the PoWs who came home but he died and she'd phoned the widow of this one that I went to the funeral yesterday and she said,

01:30 "Harry, I just had to phone you, I hope you're coming up to the 2/10th Reunion in February". I said "Well, I hope I am too but it will be by train, I'm not going to drive up there anymore".

**Where is the reunion?**

In Brisbane, it will be at Wavell Heights more than likely, the RSL.

**An hour and a half away?**

Yeah, yeah, the train's all right, it's a good train ride.

02:00 I may as well go, I'm going to where they're erecting a monument to all prisoners of war, going right back to the Boer

02:30 War, just outside of Melbourne, about an hour and a half drive out of Melbourne.

**Bendigo?**

No, it's Ballarat.

**Ballarat. Bendigo is where the pottery is.**

03:00 **It's about in March we think - it's got the names of all the prisoners of war from the Boer War right up through and then they've got another section for the Korean War, another section for the nurses and the other wars right through. So quite a few of us will fly down for the**

03:30 **official opening of that.**

**Can you tell us about the day the Japanese issued guns to some of the Aussie soldiers to go and shoot the pigs. Did they choose the soldiers to do it?**

No, it was just Nesbitta Hancho.

**Was it just you?**

I didn't do the actual shooting of the pigs, one of the other boys who was a better shot than me, he came from

04:00 out west, Johnny, I've got his photo there, he used to shoot the pigs.

**Just with one shot?**

Yes, that was all it needed. But that was all - it was no good shooting the Nips because you had nowhere to go. We could have escaped anywhere, anytime, but you had nowhere to go and if you did escape you'd have been dobbed [betrayed] in by the Thais straight away, as soon as they saw you.

04:30 **And then you would have been - was that the execution of choice, beheaded?**

They just used to do it, bend down and bang! you were gone.

**So they didn't hang prisoners?**

No.

**You weren't witness to any beheading were you?**

No.

**Did that happen amongst the troops when you were there?**

Yes there were a lot, a lot went west.

05:00 **There's all these metaphors for death. The other day we heard "He'd gone to Gowings". "Going west" is a new one for me. Chris [interviewer] didn't ask you about hiding your watch?**

Well I always managed to - even if it was in my cap or hat, or anywhere, but it was never on my wrist when there was a Nip around. Some of them knew but

05:30 if there was an inspection on, this is where the Korean guard would come around and say, "searcho, searcho" you knew to get your watch out of the road and hid it up in a bamboo log, up in the bamboo somewhere where they didn't know to look. As I said, I carried a tin of milk home between my bloody legs so you were never stuck for somewhere to hide your watch, I can tell you.

**I can think of some other places where you might**

06:00 **get away with it. When you went back in 1985 for the 50 Year Reunion, did it all look the same to you, Changi that is?**

Oh yes, it had changed a bit, I've got a photo there with me with the Catholic padre, sitting in what had been the officers' mess

06:30 with a woman each side of him and I've got his photo and I said, "I've got you know, I'll blackmail you, drinking with the women". No, it was still Changi sort of thing, you know. They're going to knock the Changi chapel down, I don't know whether they went ahead with it. There was a big protest going on with the

07:00 Singapore government about them knocking it down because that means a lot to a lot of people.

**When did that go up, the Chapel?**

That was there all the time but used it - there was paintings and that in it by

07:30 prisoners of war, murals and that. It would be such a shame to see everything destroyed. They can knock the prison down but they can't knock the chapel down.

**Did it bring back a lot of**

08:00 **memories for you, being there for the memorial?**

Yes it did, yes, very much so, just to go and see it and I went up to Melaka while we were there too, where we'd had our camp, army camp, the old high school was still there but

08:30 Singapore will always be the same. I went to one café while we were there and got talking to a woman and she had been there while we were prisoners of war, in Singapore. And she started talking all about it and it brought back a lot of memories.

09:00 I've been in Singapore three times since it happened - on trips you know; and I've passed through Singapore when I went to Thailand and when I went to England and Scotland. But it's a funny place Singapore,

09:30 very strict, you can't drop anything on the road or spit on the road; and you've got to be very careful how you go, the Chinese are the only ones you can trust over there.

10:00 I never had much time, ever, for the Javanese, they would do you in quicker than look at you to the Nips. When you were on a work party, if anything went wrong the Javanese would always point at the Australians that were doing it. They were the worst offenders of the lot so I never have any sympathy for them.

10:30 **Is Changi a tourist place now?**

Not really, I think they have trips out to it but not as a tourist place. A lot of people don't know anything about Changi now, the young people.

**They're younger than us.**

Pardon?

**They're younger than us, the young people.**

11:00 Well the school children.

**I wanted to talk to you about going into Thailand. The Thai/Burma railroad, is that still going?**

Only a small portion of

11:30 it, they cut out all the rest and they just, I should be able to remember, but only from Tarsao to Hin Toc, no

12:00 there's only about four miles of it left. It starts at Tarsao. It was a pity that so many lives were lost and then it was not carried out, they didn't carry on with it. That was a wonderful

12:30 feat of work - all we had was a 'chunkel' which is the equivalent to a hoe, and pick and shovel and the occasional stick of dynamite and everything was hard, really hard work. The Nips didn't even know what they were doing half the time.

**This is what I was going to ask you, did you have any engineers amongst you that could organise it?**

13:00 No, not really.

**So it was just up to the laymen to work it out?**

Yes, that's right, yes.

**Despite the treatment that you received and your fellow PoWs received, do you think there's an element of pride in the work that they achieved during that time?**

I don't know whether you'd call it pride.

13:30 You'd call it, well, I don't know, I can't say satisfaction, just say we're bloody lucky to be here.

**Yes, I mean you did get it made, you did build this railway?**

Oh yes, we did, I suppose you can say we made it, we got there, we did what they

14:00 wanted even if we didn't want to do it.

**Do you think also Australian men buried themselves in the work so as to forget what was going on in a way?**

Not really, you'd never try and get away from it. The only thoughts that were in your mind were, "Am I going to get home? Am I going to get in between those

14:30 clean sheets?".

**When did you start getting a feeling that the war was actually turning?**

Only when we were in Japan when we were working in the coal mine did we get the first indication really.

15:00 The first camp I was in was on the island and they made air raid shelters, they were supposed to be air raid shelters, but we found out after that they were to be our graves. If there had been an impending invasion of Japan by the Americans or

15:30 you know, we'd have been put in there and the doors shut and bombed and that would be the end of us, that was what they were there for.

**How did you find that out?**

Just by learning that from the Japanese, from some of the Japs. Eventually they told us. And then we moved from that island we went up to the

16:00 other side of Nagasaki, from the coal mines, and we didn't have any air raid shelters there but the huts we were in weren't too bad, the accommodation wasn't bad as far as weather wise, but there again it would have been just a case of, if Japan had been invaded, there

16:30 wouldn't have been any of us left, they'd have just shut us down the mine, the coal mine.

**I suppose that's a cheap way of eradicating you all, throwing you all in there rather than using bullets?**

That would have been the way they would have done it, it was all prepared.

**So you went from Thailand back to Japan before you were liberated?**

17:00 Yes.

**When you were building the railway, did many men die by the actual making of it?**

Oh yes, yes.

**Did it break them?**

Yes, hundreds died, hundreds and hundreds died on the railway and there was more

17:30 Malay and Thai labourers died on the railway than there was allied soldiers. Their hygiene was non-existent and they were in separate camps all together and they just fell like flies, where we tried to keep clean

18:00 they didn't think of it.

**I have heard that the Australian soldiers didn't like the Dutch because they would dob the Aussies in or be a bit two-faced in that regard. Is that true?**

That's very true. Hopfrodommers, Hopfrodommers - that's what we called the Dutch. No,

18:30 they would, they'd dob you in.

**But why would they dob you in?**

That's just self preservation, blame anybody else but them. That was just the same as the Javanese, you see, Java was under control of the Dutch for years and years and it was the same for them as it was for the Dutch, if you're going to get caught blame somebody else, dob you in.

**If they did do something wrong, let's say by the Japanese rule makers, they'd just blame the Aussies?**

If possible, if they thought they could get away with it.

**Were the Australians punished accordingly?**

It would all depend on whether you could talk your way out of it or not. Not always, sometimes the Dutch or the Javanese were caught up in their own mistakes.

19:30 We were able to prove that it wasn't us and then they'd get the blame put back on them.

**Did you think the Japanese guards showed any favouritism towards any nation there like the Australians?**

I don't think so, I don't think there was any favouritism.

20:00 **Maybe if anything it would have been in our way because I think, more because a lot of us were able to explain things to the Japs a lot better than the Dutch could. I don't know.**

**You mean by using English?**

Yeah by using

20:30 English or being able to even talk Japanese to them, 'watashi nai', the Dutch were flat out talking, you know and they couldn't master Japanese too well.

**So the Australians didn't fraternise with the Dutch at all?**

Not to any great extent, no. Even when we were on the ship building yards we never fraternised with the Dutch

21:00 or the Japanese or the Americans from Wake Island, we kept strictly to ourselves. We had one area of the camp that was Australian and we stayed there.

**Do you think the Japanese worked the men so hard, the PoWs so hard, to kill them?**

Yes, they did.

**So they were in a**

21:30 **way hoping that they could get rid of the PoWs?**

Yeah, it didn't matter to them whether one went west or not.

**Do you think it has to do with that philosophy of theirs, that being a prisoner was lower than scum?**

That's right, yes, and especially that we capitulated as a group made it

22:00 even worse.

**We've heard stories about when the Australians would take Japanese prisoners they would commit suicide before they could take them, because it was more honourable to kill yourself?**

Yes, well, that's quite correct. The Japanese think that

22:30 to be taken prisoner is so wrong it doesn't matter but you shouldn't be taken you should kill yourself. They reckon we were all gutless to turn ourselves in.

**Which is ironic considering the Australians didn't want to?**

Well that's right but that's the Japanese philosophy,

23:00 if you surrender you're weak and you should never give in.

**Inn Thailand, were you on the cargo trucks or walking, because at some point in your biography I was**

23:30 **reading about - were you on rice trucks?**

Going up to Thailand?

**Going up to Thailand, yes?**

Yes, we were in rice trucks.

**Could you eat the rice unboiled?**

There was no rice in it, it was just us and every now and again, you'd pull up somewhere along the line and we'd get some rice. One of us would have to go and collect the rice to issue to the

24:00 van and that was it. But they were very cramped and there was very little rice. And we pulled up at one place and we were able to get out. Where they've filled the engine up with water we got underneath and all had a shower out of my van because we were right

24:30 beside it. But a lot of the others couldn't do it. No, it was a case of just eat it or starve when you got the rice. It wasn't all that palatable dry rice, sometimes you'd get a spoonful of

25:00 soup or something with it, but that would be all and a bit of vegetables or something; but on the whole it was mainly rice and rice and more rice.

**It's amazing that they kept feeding you considering they wanted to knock you off?**

Well they never overfed us, I can tell you that.

**Can you explain Hellfire Pass?**

25:30 Yes.

**That's the colloquial word for the Thai Burma railway?**

Kanyu Cutting, that's my group, it was solid rock and the railway line had to be cut through it. As I say it was all done with what we called hammer and tap, which was

26:00 sledge hammer and a drill. One held the drill and the other hit it with the sledgehammer and you'd drill the hole. And then later on a Nip would come along put a stick of dynamite in and blow it and then you had to dig it all out with the chunkel, which is like a hoe, and put it in a basket and carry it away between you

26:30 down the hill and dump it where it was. There was no such thing as wheelbarrows or anything like that, it was all done with just a sugar bag or a bag stuck between a pole. And you filled that up and carried it, yo yo is it, down the hill and put it on the embankment.

**It's amazing that these men survived, malnourished working so long?**

27:00 We had to. I was lucky to this extent that I worked on it for a while and then I got called out. I didn't know what was going to happen but it was to go over and build a new Nip cook house. So we built the cook house and when we finished the Nip sergeant was there he said "Nesbitta, mati, mati". That meant wait. So I waited and he said

27:30 "mati, mati, your men". So we were then in the cook-house, we became Nip cooks. I cook good rice.

**I hope you don't burn it?**

You had these qualies you used to call them and you had to burn the bottom of it really to cook it

28:00 properly and then you'd scrape it off and we'd eat that and send it over to the hospital, but it was good. It was hard, very hard work those that were working really, there was no sympathy shown to anybody that was sick by the Nips. That was the hardest part about it. I worked there

28:30 and then when we finished the Hellfire Pass job that was when we moved up to Hin Toc and that was where Tom Uren and I were on the burial party. And that was the last camp we were in as a working party. We then came back to the hospital ground and that was where 'Weary' Dunlop was and

29:00 we all tried to recuperate and get over it. Some did, some didn't.

**Do all Australians call it 'Hellfire Pass'?**

Most of us who were over there, yes, that's what it's known as now. Kanyu Cutting is actually what it's true name is but

29:30 to all of us that were over there, it's Hellfire Pass.

**I can't believe the Japanese didn't have the tools to help all these men do this. I mean, it would have been in their best interests to have this done as quickly as possible?**

They had nothing and they were just ordered by their heads

30:00 and that was it, "Speedo". And that was where they took it out on us. We had to get it done within a certain time, it didn't matter how many men died as long as the work was done.

**And did the Japanese do work as well?**

No, they just made sure that we were working. Their work was to make sure that we were working. "Speedo"- you heard that, you'd better duck down, hide, if you

30:30 can.

**What about animals. For some people during the war having an animal or a pet around actually helped them get through it?**

We couldn't, no way in the world could you have it, never anywhere at any time. Even those in Changi, they might have had pet mice, but that's about all they'd be able to keep. Some of them did have dog to

31:00 eat, but I couldn't come at that.

**Did you know it was dog though did they tell you?**

No, they knew, those that were eating it knew it was dog but there was no way in the world was I going to come at it.

**I don't know what I'd do in that situation?**

No, well, it was a case of survive.

31:30 **Did the Japanese get to know everyone's face to their name?**

No, no. You couldn't, it was just a case of the number, you had to number off in

32:00 Japanese, ichi, ni, until you got up to 50 or however many they demanded in the work party. As long as you had that number it was all right, but if you got to 29 instead of 30 and there was one missing, there was hell to pay. So you'd have to go and get one of the sick blokes to fill in and make up the work party. And that's where the

32:30 doctors copped it, they'd try and argue that the man was too sick to go to work and they'd belt the doctor.

**How silly is that to get a sick man who can't do anything anyway?**

You couldn't get that through to the Nips because he'd been told by his superior that he had to have

33:00 30 on that work party, otherwise he'd cop it you see. As I said, as long as I'm superior to you I can belt the daylight out of you.

**Can you tell us, after Hellfire Pass, about going to Japan?**

Well we went back to Singapore, didn't go to Changi, we went to

33:30 another camp, I was only there for a matter of weeks, we didn't do any actual work when we were in Singapore at that time until we were told we were going on to Japan and we went down to the "Biyoki maru"- oh, what a

34:00 ship. We didn't know where we were going or what was going.

**This is the ship that you put a hole in the side to have a shower?**

Yeah, yeah. It had had the hell bombed out of it previously and as I said there were big railway girders welded down each side that held it together. And when we ran into the typhoon, these started to lift, all the welding started to lift.

34:30 We didn't think we were going to make it but we got there, got to Moji.

**And what happened from there, Harry?**

From Moji we got a train to Nagasaki, it was actually a passenger train and we had a seat while we were getting to Nagasaki and then we got

35:00 there and were put on the boat to take you out to the island, to the ship building yards.

**Had you seen any women in all that time?**

Not really.

**What was it like, did you see a woman in Japan?**

When we worked in the dockyards we all used the same toilet. You be standing there having a pee and a little girl would come in and she'd squat down and have a pee beside you.

35:30 **So you did see one?**

Yeah, but that's a fact.

**Was that the first time you'd seen a woman for 3 ½ years?**

While we were in Singapore we used to see Chinese going up and down the road, but not to speak to or anything. I hadn't spoken to a woman - and the little Nip girls, you couldn't speak to them.

36:00 **Why? Because the Japanese didn't want you to?**

Yes, they wouldn't let you.

**So now you were down at the dockyards and this is where you met those Americans is that correct?**

Yes, that's correct.

**Now, why were they just a pain in the neck?**

Well they were all ex-cons from Wake Island which was a prison where they were sent, you know, like Santalina was here in Hervey Bay, well that's what Wake Island was

36:30 for Americans. They were all sent out there to prison to do their term in prison on Wake Island.

**So when the Japanese took Wake Island they took off with the prisoners?**

Brought them all over to Nagasaki and they were in the same camp as us, working in the dock yards. Fortunately, we worked as separate

37:00 parties.

**They were just aggressive, were they?**

They just couldn't help themselves, they'd thieve off one another. It was just built into them.

**Were there brawls between the Yanks and the Aussies?**

We never had much to do with them. We kept away, well and truly, from the Yanks as much as we possibly could

37:30 and the Dutch, we kept to ourselves.

**When did the Dutch stop blaming the Aussies?**

Well they never did.

**Even in Japan?**

They never had much chance of blaming us because we worked as separate parties more or less, and even in the camp, we didn't mingle. We used to have separate parades even.

38:00 That wasn't our fault, that was the Japs kept us all separate more or less.

**Has there been any acknowledgement since the war from the Netherlands about what happened to the PoWs?**

Not really, no, there hasn't been. I went to

38:30 Canada to try and form this reparations committee and there was people from Holland there then, but we never got it off the ground properly. It was a case of the

39:00 Nips just wouldn't be in it. They said they would but they wouldn't. And the Nip legal fraternity tried hard to get it for us, they could see the error of what had happened but no way was the Japanese coming into reparations of any description.

**Do you think they still don't want to acknowledge what**

39:30 **happened?**

They still don't, they just want to forget it. That's why I say the school children know nothing about it because it's not mentioned in any of their history books or anything like that.

**Which is very different to Australian school children who are being taught?**

Yes, now they are, it took a long time for them to get it through.

40:00 Now the Australian children are getting a much clearer picture of what actually happened and they're attending the parades and well and truly now. Anzac Day and all those days, Remembrance Day, school kids turn up now under a teacher. And we go out to a couple of the local schools down the coast here on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day

40:30 and one of us will give a speech.

**What kind of questions do the kids ask you - did you shoot anyone?**

No, they really don't ask you many questions; they let us do the talking and ask are we well, or anything like that. They don't really know until they get to about

41:00 12 and then it starts to sink in, just what atrocities had occurred and they read all about it. Now, we don't give flowers or anything like that, we give a book about the war to the schools on anniversary days and that sort of thing so they know - it's in their library.

**It's a good idea. All right, we'll need to switch tapes again, Harry.**

## Tape 8

00:30 **The work that they were getting you to do in Nagasaki, in the camps, how did the treatment that you were getting in Japan differ to the treatment that you were getting back in the**

**islands?**

Much the

01:00 same. In Japan the Kempeitai which is the military police, were much tougher on us than the guards. We had to be more careful of what we were doing otherwise you would run into trouble with the Kempeitai and they were worse than the Jap guards.

**In what way did you have to be more careful?.**

Well don't be doing anything wrong

01:30 because they were patrolling the ship building yards all the time, and they could override a Nip hanchō, so you made sure you steered clear of the Kempeitai, they were pretty tough. We had marched to the ship building yards from

02:00 the camp we were in and there used to be a big mulberry tree growing there. I'd say to the bloke that was in front of me "Move forward" and the bloke behind me "Stay behind for a while" and then as we were going under the mulberry tree I'd take a running leap at it and grab them, pull down mulberry leaves and take them home and dry them and then we'd smoke them.

**Was it a good smoke?**

Well it was better than nothing in those

02:30 days, but you could put them in your pocket and it was only a leaf you know, and nobody would know any difference . And because I was up and down I'd have made a good Australian Rules footballer, taken a high mark.

**And what about the local Japanese, what were your impressions of them?**

Some of them were very

03:00 good, they would try and be kind to you if it was possible, you know.

**In what way?**

Well, even just by talking to you in a civil manner, if they could speak English . As I say, when I was caught trying to read the newspaper and I

03:30 was put on the big heavy hydraulic press, the little Nip hanchō used to try and sneak in food, bits of anything at all, you know. It was something for us, extra, to eat and you really appreciated it. He was in trouble if he was caught doing it for us. As I said, they weren't all bad, there were some good Nips.

**Would he**

04:00 **come up to you and give you the food or leave it somewhere?**

He'd leave it somewhere and he'd say "Food, over there". It'd be behind the press or somewhere, you know, just leave it and I'd go pick it up as I went by. But that's how it went on and the

04:30 worst job of the lot, which fortunately I never got, was working on the big furnaces because the stuff came out red hot from the furnace and the poor buggers are swinging a sledgehammer belting the plates into shape, you know, that was a terrible job. How they put up with it I don't know because I could never have stood the heat and the swinging the sledgehammer all the time.

05:00 It was bad enough on the press having to lift the heavy plates.

**It sounds amazing to me that any of you could even lift a sledgehammer at that stage?**

Well, yes, but you had to. It was a case of do it or cop it. It's amazing what you can do when you've got to do things.

05:30 But on the whole Japan was better than being in Thailand by a long way.

**Why was that though?**

Well your quarters were better. At least we were in quarters - if it rained we didn't get soaked through and it used to be so many to a room and you only had that

06:00 much each to sleep. But at least it was off the floor, on a platform, a two-decker, and you had the ablution block down the end of the thing. You had to be careful going down there of a night time that you didn't run into the guard. You had to be able to tell him where you were going

06:30 because otherwise he'd think you were trying to sneak out. "Benjo tatan, speedo!" That meant you wanted to go to the toilet in a hurry.

**So would you share that language around so that all of you had a few phrases that would get you out of trouble?**

Yes, most of them knew what banjo meant, that was toilet, and speedo was speedo and tacsan was big.

07:00 **So 'tacsan speedo'?**

"Speedo, banjo".

**You've mentioned the hydraulics and the furnaces, but what other jobs were going - were there any preferred jobs that you would try to get?**

No, well,

07:30 there were riveters and that was a cow of a job, I didn't want that because you were on a platform on the side of the ship riveting the plates into position and I didn't want that one.

**Why was that a cow of a job?**

I'd have fallen off the platform, off the bloody plank. But, no,

08:00 I dodged that as much as I could. There was all sorts of jobs going and even the cleaning up and that, you know, was bad. I had the best job until I got caught out.

**How did you survive the winter there?**

Winter was

08:30 freezing. You'd get out there at six o'clock in the morning for roll call in only this hessian jacket and trousers and you'd be freezing, honestly. You'd set off then and march down to the dockyards but you couldn't

09:00 wear your overcoat or anything outside during the winter.

**Why not?**

You could wear them inside, but you couldn't wear them outside.

**Why's that?**

They just wouldn't let you spoil them. And you couldn't smoke in the room. Every now and again they'd give you a packet of cigarettes,

09:30 but you couldn't smoke in the room. You had to go outside and smoke outside and those that didn't smoke would sell their cigarettes for a bowl of rice. So they'd give up their rice for a packet of cigarettes. It didn't worry me much,

10:00 I smoked for donkey's years. All the time I was over there we used to get what we called Thai weed - it was greasy and it was all the colours of the rainbow and what we rolled it in was the New Testament, that was the best cigarette paper of the lot. And you'd take a puff of it and hold your

10:30 head on - it was that strong, oh God it was strong. And I smoked for donkey's years and one day I was working down here on the coast. I got up and I only had three cigarettes left in my packet and I thought, "Better not have a smoke until I've had

11:00 breakfast" And I thought, "Now I'll have wait and I'll have it when I get in the car, " and I'm driving down to work - I used to be living at Marian and I'd drive down here to Burleigh, I was working for GEC. And I kept putting it off all day and we had a bloke that used to do the deliveries of the cigarettes, we'd buy a carton of cigarettes for five dollars. I bought a carton of cigarettes, took the carton home and the

11:30 three cigarettes in the packet and threw them on the table to my wife and said "There you are, I've finished". And I haven't had a smoke from that day to this and yet I had tried everything that was possible prior to that to give up smoking and couldn't. Yet I just made up my mind like that, and I haven't had a smoke from that day to this.

**I was wondering if there's anything that stands out in terms of the way that you were treated or others were treated that stands out as particularly bad, that you saw or experienced?**

To me, I was lucky, I copped a

12:30 few bangs and so forth but I never had any major bashings myself. I've seen a few for no real reason at all, basically done over well and truly. And had some funny experiences, rolled over a cliff and given a jackhammer, never used one in my life and told to use it building the

13:00 railway line, building it round over a big river actually, and I had to use a jackhammer for the first time but, no, the Nips were real - you had to be very careful because some of them bashed you for no reason at

13:30 all. I bashed one Nip myself working on the golf links at Singapore. He was giving me hell, he was

hitting me with a piece of wire, fencing wire - I wasn't working hard enough, I wasn't doing the right thing. Anyway, I'd had enough of it and I turned around and I went whack and I knocked him

14:00 flat and I disappeared into all the rest of the PoWs that were working. They're still looking for me, they didn't know who did it. I knocked him as flat as a pancake.

**He didn't recognise you when he came to?**

No, he didn't have a clue who it was because we were all dressed the same, looked alike, had the same caps on. There was a

14:30 bit of a stink at the camp but nobody knew who did it, only me, and I certainly wasn't going to own up. And that's the only time I've really done my block [lost my temper] while I was a PoW and that was early in the piece and I was still in reasonably good shape, you know.

15:00 **If there is one thing that stands out, the worst of working on the Thai/Burma Railway? What was the worst of working on the railway?**

The treatment that was handed out and the lack of medicine that was available to treat the dysentery patients.

15:30 And to see them, the conditions that they were in, the dysentery wards, and they'd just be here today and gone today, some of them. But there was nothing the doctors could do. And that was the whole trouble, the lack of

16:00 medical supplies which the Nips could have got if they'd wanted to, but they just didn't. The doctors pleaded with them to try and get medical supplies through but, no, that was just another one less to feed. And as the line was getting closer and closer to the border, you see we

16:30 worked northwards and they had a gang working from the other end and we met and that was it. We were back to Ban Pong.

**Was there sabotage being done on the work on the railway by the crew?**

Yes, when we were building these

17:00 viaducts you'd cut the bottom off the stump that was supposed to be going in the ground. Instead of it going in three feet it would go in about that far, and we'd do all sorts of things. And when we had to come back over this viaduct, we all nearly had to have clean pants [we were afraid] because we knew what was going to happen when the train went over the bridge.

17:30 We'd short changed them all the way along, doing all the work we could to make sure the bridge wouldn't be a success and we were the first to use it on the way back, and luckily it held up. That's one part that they did have to replace and that's still part of the line that they're using

18:00 now.

**But they did have to work on it?**

Oh, they had to work on it, yes.

**How long did it last do you know?**

No, I don't know how long it lasted. I had a photo, I've got a photo in a calendar there, Won Po Viaduct it was called - that was where I had to use a hydraulic jack for the first time building it.

18:30 The skill that was shown for a lot of bloody old dumb clucks [people] like us, that got the bridge up and running, short changed them all the way, it was amazing. No, you had to

19:00 admire the medical staff for the way they tried their hardest to save everybody. Everybody talks about 'Weary' Dunlop and his name became known better than the others, but all the other doctors did just the same job as Weary but Weary was better

19:30 known because he was a Colonel. Some of the other doctors were fantastic. They put themselves out to save you.

**Did they ever get punished for doing so?**

Yeah, many a doctor got the daylight belts out of him

20:00 trying to stop sick men from having to go out to work. He'd go out there and argue with the Nip in charge of the gang, you know, "Men, speedo, tacsan biyoki, shigodo nai" and he'd end up getting done over.

20:30 Some of the men that worked as orderlies for the doctors, they did a fantastic job too. They risked getting infected all the time with all the diseases that were going on. They worked and worked and worked.

**Were any of the doctors every killed?**

Yes. See,

21:00 those, they never actually properly healed up, that's the result of the heel in the first working party.

**Harry, if I could take you back to Nagasaki was there any kind of feeling that the war was coming to an end before the bomb was**

21:30 **dropped?**

Not really. No, only that we knew what we'd been told by one of the Nips that the air raid shelters we were building were not just for air raid shelters, that was where we were to be herded into if there was an invasion by the Americans. That was the only indication that we had that things might be happening, you know. And we

22:00 could hear planes going over and the occasional bomb go off somewhere around when we were in Nagasaki. But we didn't know what was actually happening, you know, until it actually happened.

**Can you tell us about that day?**

Well, we were all lined up ready for work and all of a sudden "All

22:30 men go back to barracks". And so the next shift was due to go on, still no work, and all of a sudden we were all called out, lined up, and this was two days after the actual surrender, the Nip in charge of the camp lined us all up and said "America and Japan shake hands, the

23:00 war finish" and that was it.

**What did you think?**

Pardon?

**What did you think?**

Well we didn't know what to think because we didn't know what was going to happen except we went out and tried to get any food extra that we could from

23:30 Mikamo, which was the village we were at. Then we had to wait days and days before the Americans found us to drop food to us. And you had to stand well clear of your hut, out in the open, because the food would be in two 44 gallons welded together

24:00 and they were on a sort of a framework on a parachute and they'd come out of the frame and hurtle down to the ground and you had to stand clear to make sure you didn't get hit. Some were killed by them falling on their huts in the various camps. You wouldn't read about it, but that's what happened to some of them,

24:30 killed by food being dropped.

**Did you lose any mates that way?**

Pardon?

**Did you lose mates that way?**

No, I didn't, Japs mainly. The food they dropped to us was chewing gum and that sort of stuff, you know.

**Anything else?**

Not a great deal - there was some

25:00 chocolate and stuff that we hadn't seen for years, and some pudding and that sort of stuff. But it took us about a fortnight to get out of that camp.

**In the days between when you realised that it was over and the Americans came by, you were able to go out of the camp?**

Oh yes, yeah.

25:30 **How were you received by the locals?**

Some of them were good and others were frightened that we were going to turn on them, but we didn't.

**And what happened to all the Japanese guards that kept you?**

They blew through [ran away] except the one who - the guard who was the one that worked on top of the line with

26:00 me, in charge of me. He had the audacity, as I said before, to come down to the camp looking for us.

And Bobby Laws, who was my mate who was working with me, he set out after him and if he'd have caught him he'd have killed him. The Jap, the Nip blew through in a hurry.

**Did you feel anything of the atomic blast?**

Only when we were coming back,

26:30 marching from the mine, we had to march into Nagasaki, we had to march through where it had been and all the hillside was bare with the exception of the top, a few trees were still left growing up at the top. But we actually marched through area where the bomb had fallen, it's a wonder a lot of us different get contaminated from it. In fact some of them

27:00 did I think, because the contamination still stayed around for quite a long while.

**So how long after the bomb had dropped did you actually march through the place?**

It would be about a fortnight.

**Have any of those fellows got sick since?**

Yeah. There was quite a few and they

27:30 didn't think it - but we've already said that it was an atomic reaction. Our doctors back here wouldn't believe it, there was no reason why they should have got sick.

**What was the first set of friendly faces or the first friendly face that you saw once it was all over?**

Well when we got to Manila

28:00 we were camped in what had been an air force camp and we met the Yanks who were there. That's when I was saying before, we got a can of beer each person, and there was eight in the hut and I was the only one that drank; so I could look after my mates, as well.

28:30 But as I said before, some of the poor buggers went, in Manila, and drank the muck that was being home brewed and lost their eyesight and were blind from it. Not many Australians, but British and the Javanese, a few Australians lost their eyesight.

29:00 We came home by warship, landed in Sydney.

**What was that like?**

It was a great thrill to be there because my brother and his wife, I didn't know he'd married even, was there to meet me. And I got off the boat and they said when we got off, "Put all your

29:30 luggage, backpacks and everything, in the truck and pick it up when you get out to the camp". So I duly put everything, with the exception of my satchel, and I had it full of cigarettes that I'd got from the Yanks, cartons of cigarettes. I finally got out to the camp two days

30:00 later and that's the last I ever saw of my backpack and all the stuff that I'd got in Manila and from the Yanks - beautiful new American clothing, all went west. The only things that I had were the things that I had with me, my side pack, everything else somebody knocked off out of the camp.

30:30 **That's a bit rich? I was going to ask you if you souvenired anything from Japan before you came home?**

No, as I say, I got my watch and that was about all I came home with and I'd handed out all the cigarettes. I ended up, when I came back to Brisbane, I ended up buying cigarettes on the black market myself.

31:00 **How much did you weigh when you set down in Sydney, do you reckon?**

Oh, I'd put on weight, I'd have been about seven stone I suppose.

**What was your family reaction when they saw you?**

Well we got off the train at, oh, what is it?

31:30 I forget the name of the town in Brisbane - I was skinny as a rake still but it didn't take long to put weight back on with a bit of good home cooking and then into hospital straight away.

**And what you were in hospital for specifically?**

They put us all in hospital, checked the whole lot of us over

32:00 to find all our ailments and so forth and meet up with all the girls. It was amazing how many of us met up with and married AMWAs [Australian Medical Women's Association] and nurses.

**Is that right?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Like you?**

Yeah, yeah.

**And what specifically caught your eye with your AMWA, with Mickie?**

I don't know, I was taking three of them out at one time at one

32:30 stage.

**Cheeky bugger?**

That's a fact. I used to take them home and get off the bus and climb the wall into the quarters, the AMWAs quarters and go take one home. Pick up another one over at the library over the road and take her out. I ended up with my wife, yes, and she was one of the three that I was taking out.

**Did she ever find out about the other**

33:00 **two?**

Yes, she knew, she found out. I got a card from one of them the other day. Her husband died, he was a Lieutenant, not a PoW, but we became firm friends and he died not so long ago and she wrote me a card. And the other one was a big blonde, Peggy

33:30 Crombie was her name. I'll never forget her, the CO used to take her out and I got under his neck for a while but it didn't last long. I ended up with Martha instead. But I had great fun for a while. We used to go to the pub opposite the post office, the Post Office Hotel, and the

34:00 beer rationing was still on. You'd walk in and I forget the barmaid's name but you'd just go in there, you'd go like that, both hands up "Ten". She'd bring out ten pots.

**Where did they come from?**

She'd get ten out and fill them up because, you know, you had to get them before the time went on. So every one of us would buy so many pots and we'd make sure we could see the time limit out.

34:30 So we were very welcome at the pub.

**So it was drinking as much as you could in a short space of time?**

Two hours, yes, made up for lost time we did.

**Harry, did you have trouble settling in after your time as a PoW?**

No, I settled in pretty well. I got the job with the Army,

35:00 a civilian in the Army, looking after watchmen and caretakers and that sort of kept me still in the army, and I gradually settled down until I realised that I could go out and work on my own. That was when I got the job back with my old firm, Electrolux, and then I decided I'd

35:30 go into the pub business.

**Harry, was it a good thing for you to have hooked up with an AMWA, a girl who was a nurse who was in the service who knew a little bit about what you'd gone through?**

Oh yes, yes. It was amazing how many of us did end up with nurses and girls who worked in the

36:00 hospital, because they understood what we'd been through and our idiosyncrasies that we might put up with and silly acts that we'd do.

**Were there any particular idiosyncrasies that you developed because of your war experience, that you could tell us about?**

Oh, not really, only I still was

36:30 making up for lost time, quick tempered and anybody riled me I couldn't stand it. But I got out of it, thank Christ for that.

**How did you feel about the Japanese after the war?**

Well, as I said, you know,

37:00 we can forgive but we'll never forget and I'll never really forgive them because of the younger generation. You've got to let things go, let bygones be bygones because I'd hate to think that

37:30 war would ever happen again. It's a pity that it's on now, you know, it's so stupid. It's religion against

religion and that's really what it amounts to. That's all it is now, Muslim against Christianity

38:00 and what I'm happy about is that the Christian churches are coming together, the Roman Catholics and the Church of England and the Methodists and the Presbyterian, they're all mixing with one another now whereas previously they wouldn't. When we were up at Redbank,

38:30 parade on a Sunday morning, they'd say "Fall out Roman Catholics, church parade". So all of us that were good Scotsmen and Presbyterians, we'd fall out with the Catholics because they went to church and sat down; whereas if we went on ordinary parade we had to stand up in the heat. And so we all became Catholics of a Sunday morning.

**Not a bad way to live.**

39:00 **One final question for you, given your experiences, what advice would you give to a young fellow that came to you and said, "There's a war on, I want to join the army so I can go over and have a bit of a fight". What would you say to him?**

I'd say make sure you're well trained and obey your superior officers because I think the army today is the making

39:30 of young blokes and if they were to put some of them into an army camp and give them the training and supervision and direction that they get in the army, it makes a hell of a difference. Instead of that they just give them the run of the streets and they become hoodlums. And I think the army or navy - I've got a nephew.

40:00 he, on my wife's side, when we first came down the Gold Coast we were in a motel and he came down and he said "I'm going to join the Navy". He went down and he went down to Sydney and joined up and became a midshipman in the Navy. He's

40:30 now just about to be promoted to Rear Admiral.

**That's not bad.**

He's gone over, this is the amazing thing, he's gone over to India right now to a Naval College in India where they send Naval personnel from all the rest of the navies, American and British, to this special college in India, I forget which city it is.

41:00 But I was talking to a navy captain at Remembrance Day and telling him about David going over there. He said "Oh yes, it's one of the highest colleges that the Naval personnel can go to, they send them from all over the world. It's amazing isn't it, India of all places".

**The world's changing, yes, that's great. O. K. We're going to have to pause there, Harry, because we're just about to run out of tape.**