

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Wallace Cameron (Wal) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1133>

### Tape 1

00:38 **O.k. Wal, we'll make a start now?**

Yeah

**So give us a bit of an introduction to your life story.**

Yes, certainly. Well I was born at Greenvale a place out of Melbourne. And then the father had just returned from the First World War he was in the 8th Light Horse, he went up to Highlands

01:00 that's outside of Seymour and from my memory as a young fellow all I can remember of the place was millions of rabbits we had to chase them away to set the traps. And the father and the mother they ran a poultry farm up there and all they seemed to grow is those rocks over night. And I remember Dad he had two dogs, which I don't

01:30 see around now, I'm just trying to think of the name of the breed I can't remember from right now on, (UNCLEAR) you call it and they were big dogs, Staghounds, they were Staghounds they were and they go rabbiting and that. And we lived down, we came back to Melbourne and it was after the Police Strike, which was 1923 so I must have been a little after

02:00 5 years old. The Police Strike was on in 23 in Melbourne when they went out on strike, the police. And so Dad in 1925 he joined the Police Force, which he was in for many many years. And he finished up a Public Prosecutor, I remember that and we lived in St Kilda and in those days

02:30 beautiful place and there's vacant allotments all over but now of course she's teeming with millions. And we used to go down the beach when we was kids and swim. The father taught me to swim, I was pretty good but the trouble was I had a lot of trouble getting out of the bag at first when he used to tie it and then I became a good swimmer. Eventually won the battalion, brigade championship

03:00 a few years later. However down there we enjoyed ourselves, the boys when we were fourteen we used to build pyramids and saddle me nag, you don't play them these days because the days are far different. I returned to St Kilda last year and I went down to the spot where I used to play with my,

03:30 as boys, as young boys and as our youth and it was absolutely, they've destroyed everything, where we used to swim is now a carpark and so there's no going back, no going back whatsoever, just you lose it. It's something lost and you just gaze there and you think, to think that I used to swim there and we used to play sports

04:00 there and used to kiss our girl down there on the beach now and again and at fourteen years of age they'd run away screaming. Oh yes so they were the good old days before the war. And like most of us at that day when The Depression was on we went on a track, we jumped the rattler [train]. We used to get on a train, go outside the train, jumped the train,

04:30 one of the old goods train and in Victoria they used to kick you off and bashed you right, kick you right up the backside of course and tell you never didn't want to get caught. And I went and I did a bit of that and I went pea picking at Poowong, I was a champion pea picker at Poowong

05:00 and three bob a bag we was getting. Three shillings a bag that's all. And it was on a mountainside and I'll tell you what you had to lie on your back to feel the top of the place. And the peas were there and they were good. And then I went back to Melbourne and we started a club, we had a ukulele, playing ukuleles and things like that and we thought we's all singers, vocalists.

05:30 And I got a job, no it wasn't a job, we filled doing a place down at when the gallery and coffee lounge opened at Ackland Street, St Kilda, I suppose I was about 15 or 16 and we were vocalist, believe it or not I was a vocalist down there. And we used to sing the songs of the day and take off Bing Crosby before that and

- 06:00 one morning we were coming home late a night, my friend was a trumpeter, was a slush pump [trombone] and he was, years later he travelled right around the world playing his one of the old slush pump, what do you call it?
- Trombone?**
- Trombone yeah, trombone yeah or slush pump, Hall Meley was his name. And we were getting home at, what's the time because we were too poor, we couldn't afford a watch you had to go down to town hall
- 06:30 clock to see the time in those days or go to the pawnshop and look in the window and find out when you pawned your watch to see the time and so he said, 'I'll find out the time,' I said, 'How in the bloody hell are you going to find out the time?' And he started to play, bur, bur, bur, bur, bur, bur on this trombone and lights went on, windows shot up, heads poked out, 'Don't you know it's 2 o'clock in the bloody
- 07:00 morning?' 'Oh that's the time, thanks very much.' But I went on the track and when you're on the track any bagman, anyone my vintage, my age, pardon me while I drink, it's a habit I know that, I'm trying to knock it off, I am, I just knocked it off. And you go anywhere at all to pick up a deener [shilling], to work. And
- 07:30 you go around boxing places, boxing shows, wait til Harry Johns or Sharman would come all, 'Who will have a glove? Who will have a glove?' And then you'd go and you'd get a hiding but you got a quid and away you'd go to the next place and this is how it went on. And I jump the train and I get to Queensland by now, I am on me way up there. Oh I busked in Wagga, I busked at Wagga outside the hotel Australia
- 08:00 and with a guitar and you paid a licence of 1 shilling, a busker's licence, you can busk in the street from 8 o'clock til 5 in the main street and after that you could go around the side street but you could busk in the main street, so I busked in the main street and 28 bob I got, 28 shillings with the singing. I don't know whether they paid me you know the fellow said, 'Here, here's 2 bob, go down and
- 08:30 annoy the bloke down the road.' I said, 'He gave me four shillings to come here.' Anyway I was singing the song, serenading in the night, you know the things. And away we went and I jumped the rattler and I get up to Queensland which the trains up there, the goods trains up there are very slow, used to plant flowers, you could plant the seeds and the bloke at the back would pick them up, shocking,
- 09:00 midnight horrors. And we go up to Gladstone, I was in a boat, it was a flat top trailer, a flat top truck, and there's this yacht and I was sleeping in that and we pulled up at Gladstone and I had a look around and this copper [policemen] came, big moustache, portly chap and he had this Alsatian dog and the Alsatian stood on the boat and jumped up and he's going woof, woof, woof and of course I was buckled along with 3 other bagmen
- 09:30 and so up the hill we went to Gladstone Police Station. So we fronted up and I'm only young and they said, 'Are you working?' And I said, 'I'm trying to get a job.' He said, 'Do you belong to the AWU [Australian Workers Union]?' the Magistrate said and I said, 'No sir.' And he said, 'Well you can't get a job unless you belong to the AWU. I said how do I get a job?' 'You've got to belong to the AWU.'
- 10:00 That fellow wanted to know. I never figured that one out, Queensland. So we did three days in the slammer [gaol] but one of the bagmen much older, he said, 'This is the best time aboard boy, you get your washing done and you get fed and you've got a blanket and a bed to sleep at night.' And Mrs Ward, she's very kind to me, she used to send me messages down the street to get messages
- 10:30 and had 2 Pomeranian dogs, little ones, miniatures and they had this dog kennel and she said, 'Will you paint the dog kennel?' I said, 'Yes I'll do that', I painted the dog kennel red and with a white little picket fence she had around there but the damn Pomeranian dogs got in before the paint was dry, they finished up with red and white on their fur much to the disgust and horror of Mrs Ward. But yeah and then I went to Mount Isa, got up there
- 11:00 worked with a Howlett on the Pub, painting, I met my mate, I met a fellow from St Kilda and he was up there and he befriended me thankfully, much older than I. And there we were. And he used to run the SP [Starting Price] Bookie and of course Mount Isa in those days, she's all a go and they just,
- 11:30 I was camping under the bridge. A little town, you had both towns was a mine town and the mine side over that way and the town side on this way and goats used to wander the streets. And we were there and I was camping under the bridge and low and behold they decided they'd open it, they had a big day, it was just built across the causeway
- 12:00 you know across this creek, I forgot the name of it, I think it's Leichhardt Creek or something, whatever it is. And there they were, they opened it up, and there's knucklehead me, I'm camped under it and the Mayor or whatever he was came out with his robes, that was Mount Isa. And then I came back and I looked for a job in Sydney
- 12:30 and I saw a Bath Attendant required, must have the bronze medallion [swimming qualification], blah, blah, blah so I went down, Rushcutters Bay, Ma Farmers Baths, I produced the credentials and I got a job there in the summer time. And a terrific old show and there was a chap, one fellow, damn good swimmers,
- 13:00 Ivor Wyatt, as a junior he won the junior surf belt and he won the seniors as a junior, he used to go

down there, Georgie Pepper, Ivor Wyatt, Billy Kendall he was Australia's champ at the time, he went to America and they would all swim at the baths. It was mixed bathing, you come and lift the ladies and they both side but after a while,

- 13:30 that's right the women's swim in their own quarters, that's right my apologies and the men swim in their section. And I'd go between, work between the pair of them. And there's one chap, I'll mention his name because no doubt the poor chap's up there, fallen off the twig but Mr Pie was his name and he used to swim 500 yards of a morning. Now
- 14:00 the chappie I relieved or the fellow that was leaving or ex chap that worked there, he said, 'If you swim with Mr Pie he'll give you a couple of bob.' Well anything for a deener in those days, you swim, you walked from here to Guildford and back. So Mr Pie was there and he said, 'Like a bit of a swim fellow?' And I said, 'Yes sir, I wouldn't mind,' so 500 yards each morning when he came down
- 14:30 3 times a week and at the end of the week he just put his hand out and boombah, there was a quid, sometimes 2 quid, yeah 2 pound and I'm getting 30 bob. It was a good job and I was teaching swimming, Ma Farmer, Mrs Farmer, 2 pound, 2 guineas for six lessons,
- 15:00 teaching people to swim and I got one guinea and she got the other. Now they were the East Sydney Amateurs used to swim there for anyone's benefit that a swimmer. And they started out, they had oh the Cavill boys was there and they also had a fellow called Wickham, now he was a Solomon Islander and he was bought over by a doctor or a dentist
- 15:30 bought over, adopted and he held the world highest record for diving in 1914 at the Yarra River and I think the dive from memory was 109 feet six inches, now the people that told me, the tour that went down with him with he they said, 'He had 3 pairs of togs [swimming costumes] on,'
- 16:00 he was a dark boy, a Solomon Islander and he had 3 pairs of togs on and they said, 'Don't look down just look up.' Now where they built the tower which he's going to dive, they built it on this higher cliff so instead of diving what he thought he was going dive, he dived much higher, but he hit the water and they tell me he was unconscious, they pulled him out and he ripped the togs off but that was his name, they booked him as Prince Wickiarma, his name was Alec Wickham.
- 16:30 Now he according to Ma Farmer, Mrs Farmer an elderly lady, it used to be sixpence in the baths to go in and she'd be there on the til, you had a turnstile, go through and she told me that her husband, they saw this Alec Wickham swimming
- 17:00 and Cavill was down there and they said look at that boy swim and Mr Farmer apparently said, 'He's not swimming, he's crawling.' And that's where the Australian Crawl [swimming style - freestyle] came in according to Mrs Farmer, now this is 1908 or something, whatever I don't know. But they had the photograph of Cavill Brothers,
- 17:30 East Sydney Amateurs Swimming Club, Rushcutters Bay Baths. And whilst I was there George Wallace was making a film, he was a very entertainer/comedian, well known and you don't get them these days like they were. And he was making a film, 'Let George do it' and there's a jet in here by and I watched them, the film crew, they had this eight out of
- 18:00 they had a speedboat was to go and go penetrate, smash this rowing eight that was there, it was all shred up for the eight, went out or four whatever it was and out there rowing and this speedboat came towards them and they smashed through the rowing crew, the rowing. But what happened was, when the speedboat went out
- 18:30 and there's the rowing crew there, it was the wrong crew, the wrong boat, 800 dollars worth, 800 pounds worth of boat and the crew.

#### **And they sunk the wrong rowboat?**

Yeah they sank the wrong boat, of course much chuckles and jokes and mirth going on, yeah let George do it that was those days. And of course we came back and not long after I'd go

- 19:00 down the old St Kilda beach we had yeah. At time I was working at fur skin dressing and dyeing, all the furs, Australian Furs.

#### **How old were you by this stage, Wal?**

Oh by this time I'm 19 years of age, 19. Battered around since I was 15, up and down and me brother he took off to South Australia,

- 19:30 he jumped the Rattler over there, he was with Ragged 13 he said, he boasted about it to me. Yes in those days. And he used to do a bit of boxing too, he used to train at a gym before he went, me uncle was a Welterweight title holder, Vic, Jack Cameron 1927.

#### **So did he teach you?**

Oh yeah he used to teach, yeah he taught me and later on he

20:00 joined the army too but he was at 2/2nd and I was at 17th Brigade in the 2/6th Infantry Battalion and Uncle Jack he went with the 2/2nd Field Artillery however right we getting up to though we're jumping ahead ourselves a little bit, you don't mind if I have a slurp, do you?

**No go for it.**

No thank you so much, it pays to advertise if you've got the goods.

20:30 So the war breaks out which was September, I remember it well it was a Sunday and I got this girl, I had this girlfriend, charming girl, well she said she was good looking I don't know and we were at end of St Kilda pier at night time and lovely night, nice and warm and she said, 'Looks like war being on' I said, 'Yeah' she said, 'Are you going go?' I said, 'Yeah I'll go.'

21:00 And low and behold I took her up for a feed of hamburgers, I'd just sold some empty bottles so I had some money with me and we went up there, up the esplanade and there was a hamburger place, and so [Robert] Menzies [then Prime Minister of Australia] had just announced that England had declared war on Germany and therefore

21:30 we're at war, so he did this on his own bat and my girlfriend said, 'What are you going to do? And I said, 'I'm going to join up.' And weeks later Australia tried to join and we finished up joining at Flinders Creek railways station, we signed up and they showed us a letter report to the drill hall down in St Kilda and then from there we went to Brighton, Lancock Street

22:00 20 of us lined up. I don't know whether to call any names at all because it may bring back and cause distress for some of the people that I joined up with be their parents or something like that, I don't know whether to do it or not.

**Well you can tell us about their personalities but you don't have to mention any names.**

Right. Well the Chappie, there was 20 of us went down this hot day, it was a Friday

22:30 the 20th of October 39 we went to Lancock Street, in Brighton. And you had to go for your medical and I know we were there and the Doctor said, 'Righto drop them,' and he went cough, cough, cough, cough and, 'open your mouth,' and he had a look at your tonsils or whatever you looked at. And one blokes looking at your tonsils with his finger down your throat

23:00 and the other bloke is facing the other way, coughing away and I heard a mother escorted one of her boys down, came down with one of her sons who was enlisting and she said, 'You're not going in there boy they've all got colds,' of course he eventually came in and they gave us our numbers. You're now VX's, oh we had to be sworn in twice because one of the fellows said

23:30 instead of saying, 'I shall resist the Queen's enemies, the King's enemies,' he said, 'I'll assist the King's enemies.' And you signed up for a job for the duration of the war and a year later, a year after.

**Why did you want to sign up so readily?**

Oh well adventure, it wasn't about King and country. It was adventure and most of it was young and silly and stupid I suppose

24:00 adventure, it wasn't til later that the solid men came in. And well, call them deep thinkers whatever you like but oh no we went away, we had, there was a Depression on and it's a pitiful thing but it also developed an Australian character and you don't get them now, they

24:30 the character's gone, lost forever.

**Can you describe that character for us?**

Well, today helping hand. Hand of friendship, you don't get it. Talk to you, cut will you? You right, the Depression?

**Yeah**

Well yeah

25:00 well in the Depression years when we were kids we never had two pennies, we never had two halfpennies to rub together, you'd go around picking up empty beer bottles and taking them down to the yard to sell them, Bottleo to sell, a sixpence a dozen and sometimes the Bottleo would go around and he'd get halfpence and they had Bottleos going around the street, 'Bottleo, Bottleo,'

25:30 men, you had rag and bone people going around, anything to make a deener, anything to put bread on the table and the susso [sustenance workers] of a Saturday morning down at St Kilda Town Hall I used to see them, as a young fellow not realising, I was a kid, nine years of age, 10 years of age, 32, 29 the Depression occurred and lasted until 32, well it was still on

26:00 in 38 let's face it, not as severe. But 29, I remember my father he was in the Police Force I remember money was plentiful 27, 28 nothing at all, plenty of food on the table and come the Depression in 32, 33, 34 and that

- 26:30 and you'd see them down the susso getting their meat handed out to them, the men lining up, and getting their food issued to them and us kids going to school and it wasn't nothing at all to see kids in bare feet. Yeah those days and
- 27:00 all of a sudden of course the war broke out and things came, started to pick up, men joined. The unemployed had a job and we went there health, so you had to be fit and there was a height limit those days, you had to be real fit, in fact one fellow tried to join up, the joke went around that he tried to join
- 27:30 up he had a broken finger nail and they barred him, things like that, you had to be real fit, an ingrown toenail. In the finish of course they were taken blokes with one leg and no arm and gave them a job licking stamps down the post office, that's what they tell me, I don't know. But we went in and as I said we joined
- 28:00 they took us on the bus, not on a bus on a van, twenty of us out to the showgrounds in Melbourne and the show had just been, a recent show, the Royal Show had been over and they still had quite a bit of the exhibits still on show. The Centenary Hall we camped at, No 12 Squad and we went in there
- 28:30 20 of us and on the oh I think, this was the 20th a Friday and later on through the week they formed us up and said, lined us up in the showground and they said, 'Right you are now 2/6th Infantry Battalion, who wants to be what?' And I said to me mate, 'What do you want, do you want to be a driver, do you want be
- 29:00 this, do you want to be a signalman, want to be that?' And I said, 'No all I want to do is carry a rifle.' And he said, 'So do I.' And they said right you're in now, so that was it, '2/6th Battalion' they said, 'now.' And of course we had AIC Instructors, Australian Infantry, Australian Instructional Corps they were and they were brilliant, good men, very good men.
- 29:30 And they were our instructors for twenty in this group. And they said, 'Righto fellows,' after about a fortnight they brought a rifle in and of course they let one man carry it, of course he was the enemy, and we'd look at him and go yeah, yeah you know and when it came your turn to carry it you know your chest swelled out with pride, you felt about 10 feet tall
- 30:00 although you were in a hole, and away we went. And so damn this, so we went and got, had broom handles, cut mamma's broom up and got the handle and there we were with these broom handles, sticks walking around, the mob, sticks on us.

#### **So you only had one rifle for the twenty of us?**

Yeah and that went around and when you go on sentry, 'Halt who goes there, stop or I'll fill you full of white ants, you know

- 30:30 you yell out.' And for a two-inch mortar, they had two-inch mortars, they bought down a downpipe, now this is a two-inch mortar and they present this downpipe and you'd throw a stone down for the bomb. You had a stone, here put it in, that was a shell. But the AIC men they were very good instructional there and Centennial Hall
- 31:00 we were at. And [General Thomas] Blamey came to see us and as he's walking around, they had Tom Blamey he was a General of course and also Commissioner of Police. And they tell a story I don't know whether it's true or not but it was very widely, went around Melbourne, spread around Melbourne like the plaque and said they found
- 31:30 his hat inside a bordello in Little Lonsdale Street, that's what they said. Of course you can't take it as the truth. But when he came in to Centennial Hall we all hid everywhere, no hope the Generals coming in so we all tried to hide ourselves, didn't want to front up, afraid I suppose. And he said, 'This place looks like a brothel'
- 32:00 and of course you've got men from the Depression and he said, and you hear this voice yell out, 'You ought to bloody know.' 'Where's that man go and search,' you may as well look for where the wind starts. Yeah Blamey, he had men sleeping in pigsties, yeah. So one day they said, 'Right
- 32:30 off you go.' They took us down in the vans and put us on the train and took us to Seymour Railway Station and we marched the 6, or 7 or 8 mile, whatever it was, the more I talk about it the longer the distance gets but I think it was about 7 miles anyway and we marched down in the hot sun and we went into camp and they were still building the place.
- 33:00 **Which camp was this?**
- Puckapunyal. Puckapunyal means, 'Debt to the Eagle'. And the wind blows 350 times a year, 350 days a year, it works overtime. And a lot of people thought it's the land of the wind, it's not. It's debt to the Eagle and there it is.
- 33:30 I haven't got it, I thought I had it, wait a minute, no, anyway it means Debt to the Eagle, and it's the 17th Brigade, Puckapunyal. And they bought it so they tell me for 6 quid an acre, that's what I heard. And the army seems to have a funny peculiar habit of bunging you

- 34:00 putting a bloke way out of sight, way out from anybody in the hungriest looking country there is. You couldn't run a rabbit through an acre up there all hills and that. We made ourselves there, and the huts were going up, they tell me they built them for 60 quid, 60 pounds, 20 by 60 huts they were, gal [galvanised] iron on the roof.
- 34:30 And they trained us left, right, lefting on a parade ground they flattened out and we were known as 2/6th Battalion, nothing over us Col's own, George Col who was GJ Coles he was our patron and he still had his, he boasted he still had his truck drivers
- 35:00 licence and he came to the battalion, to the officers mess of course and he donated a car to the officers and a colonel of course got the car but when he used to go to Melbourne, the fellows used to know, the batmen used to tell, 'Right he's going to Melbourne tomorrow is he?' Right a few of the fellows would get in the boot,
- 35:30 they'd open the boot and they'd travel down to Melbourne with him unbeknown to the colonel, whether he knew or not I don't know, I never asked him. But he's a First World War digger [veteran], a good bloke. And a Geelong man. And we trained and trained and trained there.
- And what other things would you train apart from your left rights and...?**
- Hmmm?
- What**
- 36:00 **other things would they train you there in, what other things did they teach you?**
- Oh they taught us field craft, how to avoid and we got our rifles and they taught us everything. Anything you wanted to know about it, withdrawals, form attacks, hiding, soldiering and
- 36:30 it was really good, we moved as one. And years later although I jump a little bit now, I jump now, when I was an Instructor in National Service and you saw the Nashos [National Servicemen] come in and some had this is in when they started in the fifties, sixties was it? Fifties, yeah
- 37:00 and they came in long hair, beard on, everything guitar playing, something like that and you say, 'Oh Christ, Christ speed the bloody plough, I've got this bloody mob here and the way they came in.' And when they moved out with their hair cut after ninety days you were proud of them. And then you'd think oh another bloody lot coming in.
- 37:30 And it befell my lot at one stage, I had Dame Edna Everidge, Barry Humphries [Australian comedian], real good, funny man, go to the mess pour a bottle of tomato sauce on his head, and say, 'I'm a hot pie, I'm a hot pie.' Barry yes real good, explain at 2 o'clock in the morning, what happened was this.
- 38:00 I'm orderly sergeant, orderly corporal whatever I was at the time and I go into the hut and here's this soldier he's in bed and I said, 'What are you doing? And he said, 'I've got a broken toe,' or something, yeah he had a broken toe, he had a leave, he had a chit, anyway he had a pass, a medical pass and there beside him was this bottle, beer bottle, big one, had this wire coat hanger
- 38:30 which had been twisted around into a fashion of some damn design and I said, 'Who's that?' He said, 'That's Private Humphries sir.' I said, 'What is it?' , 'Oh' he said, 'It's a work of art.' I said, 'Well you tell private Humphries to get his work of art in that garbage bin by the time I come back and I'll be back in later.' , 'Yes sir, I'll tell private Humphries.' Yeah that was my first attempt at Private Humphries thank you very much.
- 39:00 Yeah, but however back to the war I suppose.
- Actually Wal we'll just pause there because we're going to have to switch tapes around.**
- Yeah good.

## Tape 2

- 00:31 **Training at Puckapunyal versus the training you had in the Middle East, which was a lot harder?**
- Oh Middle East, we trained to minute. We'd be the fittest troops that went into action. Are we on here?
- 01:00 **Yeah we're rolling.**
- Yeah we'd be the fittest troops ever went into action. We trained in the minute; with 20 mile marches and in fact when we, after Bardia when we had our first battle when we were at Tobruk we marched 75 miles in 72 hours
- 01:30 and one bottle of water a day, that was then. But we were well-trained, very well trained, good officers, well led and our first battle of course, Bardia.

**Well before we talk about Bardia can you tell us when you finished doing the training at Puckapunyal?**

Yeah

**How long was it until you were sent to the Middle East from finishing training?**

Oh well we joined in 39

02:00 and it wasn't until when was it 40, 41 when we went into action.

**So what was the ship's name that you went over to the Middle East on?**

We went over on the Urania, there was Urania we called it the neuralgia and there we were with the hospital

02:30 with us, the nurse and that they were with us and there was 3 ships and we were escorted by a big ship the Ramillies and the Sydney, HMAS Sydney and when the Sydney left us in the Mediterranean or just before the Med the Suffren, a French Ship, war ship came and took us over. And we had a band, the 2/6th Battalion

03:00 Band and that used to play music at times and lovely. And when you go through at night time on the sea you see the phosphorous in the water and the flying fish play and we sailed through and we called into Colombo, we had 2 days, oh before then may I back track. When we set off from Port Melbourne nobody

03:30 was suppose to know but most of Melbourne turned out I think and half of Sydney also, there's millions down at the wharf to wave us off, secret of course, it's top secret.

**That's the picture before that you showed us, that big picture.**

Yeah.

**That we'll take a picture of.**

And

**That was April 1940.**

Yeah April 40, April the 14th. The better the day the better the deed, Sunday

04:00 it was, we sailed and some of them cried, some of them got seasick, a hell of a lot got seasick and we had to go and clean them up so I went down below to avoid all this, I went down below where we used to stow our hammocks down below, got down there to avoid being detailed on any duty, a couple of us went down there. Oh it was good over, they used to have quiz competitions and entertain our

04:30 selves the jolly way you could go. And there was a game on at the time; I've just forgotten what it was. And you played, you had these little dike men type, I've forgotten what it was now but we found out that you could eat them and of course the game whatever it was finished up with no men, we used to eat them, it wasn't housie housie or anything like that

05:00 but I just forgotten what it was. And south of the border was this song, it was him. Oh we called into Western Australia and this was more or less where I was first introduced into the bordello district,

**In Perth?**

Rowe Street, Perth.

**Fremantle?**

Yeah Rowe Street, in Perth, Fremantle. Got the train up there and it was 10 shillings which was the same in Brisbane, the same in Melbourne

05:30 I mean you had a wholesale business it was 10 shillings and so down we went in Rowe Street, yeah.

**So hang on you would have been only 20?**

Yeah, 20. I was twenty.

**So were you a virgin?**

I lost it at 14.

**You didn't?**

I did, I was seduced.

06:00 **You're kidding?**

I'm not kidding.

**That's very young for those days.**

No, no way in the world. I was backward.

**So you were a virgin then.**

No, no I wasn't not by no means, 14. 15, no I'll tell you what it was, this is fair dinkum I kid you not; I get no money for telling you lies. It was Melbourne Cup day 1935 when Marabou won the Melbourne cup.

**So you would have been 15.**

Yeah, 15 I was,

06:30 on my fifteen birthday instead of she couldn't buy me any lollies because she had no money but she said righto love away we went and took me down to Katinni Gardens, down St Kilda, she did and I tell you what I didn't enjoy it much because I was wet, the grass was wet. It was and I don't know about

07:00 it but again I did, I went back and did it again.

**How old was she?**

Oh god she was much older than I was, I think she was about 13.

**She was not.**

No she'd be 15 or 16, the same age, I was madly in love with her. You know I used to go around and sing her songs and oh yes that was the world you know at the time, the light of my life.

07:30 **What happened to her?**

I don't know I think she joined one of the mob. No she, I don't know what occurred, very nice girl and then another one of course came along and then more came along. And as we were want in those days.

**So are you saying Wal that you were a bit of a ladies' man?**

No, no a parents' man, no,

08:00 no. I don't know, no about 4 or 5 that's about all.

**So 4 or 5 before you went to war?**

Yeah, yeah, I suppose that yeah. But association, you're very close, you know you become real friendly, none of this just in and out knock them down sort of business not

08:30 a fly by night job, oh no you had to be taken home and introduce your family, you had to sit down, they wanted to see how you used a knife and fork. They wouldn't shoo the dogs onto you and things like that. No they were nice girls, they were nice girls, we were nice boys, family brought up and oh no that was it.

**Were there any girls before you left to go**

09:00 **to the Middle East that you thought you may marry?**

Yeah the three of them. I used to write to three.

**What hedge your bets?**

Yeah and of course they fell in love with somebody else, I don't blame them and one fellow used to write home to his girlfriend, I don't like writing he would say and dear what ever her name was and then he'd say, he'd start cutting

09:30 parts out, he'd cut them out, the sensor, made out you know the sensor and he'd put on the bottom, the sensor been here. You dear something, I'm at boom, how are you and all of them, that's what he used to do, that's how he wrote home.

**Because he couldn't be bothered writing the letter.**

Yeah. Couldn't be bothered. And one fellow, his mother wrote to him, this is honest. His mother wrote home and said, 'Since you've been gone,' we'll call

10:00 him Daniel his name wasn't Daniel, it doesn't matter. Yeah, 'since you've been gone the grass has grown, the back yard is full of weeds and I can't get a man because there's nobody around, able-bodied man around, they're all away at the war and so and so and my back's playing up and I do miss you, your loving Mum.' So he wrote back,

10:30 'Dear Mum, leave the garden grow because I've got rifles buried there which I stole from Puckapunyal and I've also got Bren guns and ammunition down there and grenades, do not tell anybody and don't touch the grass.' Weeks later he gets a letter back, 'The army has been so kind son they came in and



dug up all the yard, it's lovely, thank you

11:00 very much. '

**Cause he didn't sensor it.**

They got onto it, yeah real good.

**Did he get in trouble for it, do you know?**

No, no, got into trouble by this time it was long gone, long gone. Oh yeah she used to go to the Salvo, used to go to the Salvation Army hut, she used to write there when we had one, but that was it. Oh

11:30 some got Dear John letters [letters informing them that relationship is over] of course and that was most distressing when they got that. And one chap became a father when he was over there and he got a telegram, he became a father but he never saw the kid, he got killed. And we all celebrated with him that night you know took him down

12:00 and had a few to wet the baby's head [had a few beers] as it were and that was it, yes that was those days. That was it, what else?

**Well tell us about leaving Port Melbourne and going overseas, you said that there was a lot of people seasick, what did you, how many men did you have in one cabin on the ship?**

We had a whole battalion, what's

12:30 that 700 men.

**And what 4 to a room?**

On the ship and the nurses, 2/2nd I think it was yeah AGH [Australian General Hospital] or CCS [Casualty Clearing Station] whatever they were. We had them on board, oh no Australia and there was plenty of room to move about, we slept in hammocks, dash up and stow, we slept in hammocks and you'd have to dash

13:00 them up of a morning and stow them right down below and below the water line. And down you'd go when you'd put your hammock back and you had to get a back and crack it upstairs and swing it up and get in it. And it took a while to learn how to sling the hammock and sleep in the hammock and a lot used to sleep upstairs on the deck because of warm nights, very warm nights. And I often used to sleep up there meself, myself

13:30 And it was nice going over, we called into Aden on the way over after Colombo, we had two days in Colombo and they loaded up with coal and that was by hand.

**You had to load it up?**

No, no the boys, the Colombo fellows in baskets, was that Colombo or Aden? Anyway

14:00 yeah they all the coal passed from hand to hand in baskets and loaded up, I think it was Aden, yes that's where it would be at Aden. And we landed at El Qantara in Egypt on the Canal when it was Suez Canal, it was flat country all the way and landed at El Qantara and a Khamsin [wind that blows for fifty days] was on. Now a

14:30 Khamsin is a wind that blows throughout the desert, it lasts for days and it's hot and the dust, the sand and you can't see. What they do, the Arabs they just pull down their venetian, down their, they also covered

15:00 their donkey's eyes and you'd turn your back. Well the Khamsin was blowing when we landed at El Qantara and the food we had there was sausages and potatoes and that seem to be the mash right throughout. Now they put us on a train when we entrained, they've got no toilets like we have

15:30 you have a hole in the floor with a tap behind, that's what they had to do, they wash.

**This is in Egypt?**

Yeah. That's right throughout the Middle East. And of course you're going along and away we went this was our introduction. Now the party that they introduced us to then when we land at

16:00 place called Beit Jirja, Middle East and the party that they introduce us in there, it was as hot as billyo and they had their greatcoats on and they said by crikey it's cold today, cold today, jokingly of course. Our advance party, we should have known, Australian humour. Yeah they were, by crikey it's cold today, it's cold today and

16:30 that's how we were. And of course we greeted a new arrival the same way, go down with a greatcoat on, 'By god it's bloody cold.' Taking off that was it. In the desert, oh we mysteries of the East as they said and miles from anywhere but we used to get leave,

17:00 we were at Beit Jirja and we used to get leave in Tel Aviv, I don't tell a lie, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

**Can I ask you before you tell us about Jerusalem, in the desert would the men wear**

Some did, some did,

**Scarves?**

depends where you were.

**Did the army issue the men with scarves?**

No, no.

**So what would they use?**

Dust, oh we had nothing, we'd just

17:30 nothing, pull our hats down, use the hat.

**Or maybe a handkerchief?**

Yeah anything at all, turn your back, hankies yeah, a few did, put a hanky in your mouth. She was real blowy, are we on?

**Yeah.**

Yeah and the Terreg of course you've got the different tribes, a lot of different tribes over there and

18:00 we went and we saw, we went to Beersheba where my father was in the Light Horse when they charged, as you well know that was the last charge of the Light Horse at Beersheba and they charged across to miles and they found that the Turkish hadn't lowered their rifle sights therefore they were firing over their head. Well we went to Beersheba and we saw some of the graves and 19 year old English and things like that and

18:30 we saw the whole place, Beersheba. The men there, the Arabs are real proud and there they were with their fine steeds and they had their swords, their daggers and a sword beside and they had their beards, I don't know whether they were Terregs or what they were but they real, they felt you know by crikey these are the sheik or Arabia and all that type Sheik of Arabia

19:00 but they were real oh yes and fierce fighter, you can put it down to. And you thought oh yeah they'd be a power, they look real good.

**Whose side were they on?**

Oh they were on our side. Our side, my word they were. And we went there, Beersheba had a day there, had a look around. And they complained because somebody had knocked off some grog.

19:30 But the Arabs would steal you know, they'd knock anyone off, they're worse than our wharf labourers they really, they were, thieve anything. Take the eye out of a needle and give you back the lid they would and I think they would even rob that. Well somebody knocked off some grog and the Arab came up and was going crook and we had an interpreter and our RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] or sergeant major

20:00 our CSM said, Company Sergeant Major, 'Right some of you bastards have knocked off the grog, step forward,' and two blokes appeared, you go back, you go back, you're the only one that's done the grog,' and of course about 5 or 6 of them had knocked it off. And the sarge major said later on, 'Right to you fellows' when we moved out of town, 'Right now let's have the rest.'

20:30 Yeah he wasn't claiming, he didn't want to know all. The Arab was pleased. I have a bronze, yeah bronze little figurine of an Arab on a camel and it's just exactly the way they were.

**What about the local civilians, what were they like?**

Oh they were quite good

21:00 they never interfered but we lost a lot of rifles, they were thieves and but oh no they were quite good, they were on our side. But they used to fire off a midday gun when they had Ramadan, had just finished, Ramadan where they don't eat between daylight, they starve and after the sun goes down they get into it. Drink and make merry

21:30 but they don't have any food through the day, now this lasts a month and it just finished I believe now. And they used to fire off this gun, this was in Gaza those days and the gun often the action the back used to fly out, I've just forgotten what it was, the bolt, the oh the breech would open up and it would kill

22:00 the person behind it because the breech boom and it would fly out and hit him in the chest but they used to volunteer to do it and the Brits let them go ahead and they'd fire this gun, it was only, no projectile just the gun, just the boom, they'd put the charge in and let them go and they'd fire it off and that's when they'd knock off feasting.

22:30 **But that person would be killed?**

Sometimes they got knocked off, it was an honour. And so the Brits built a wall, a brick, to protect the guns, the person that fired it, they put a string on and so they could pull it with a string but they had a couple killed before but it was an honour apparently to them. And we went to a place called Nablus, which is in the news right now,

23:00 we went up there and the Turks raided there in oh heavens knows when, they raided there and that's where Jacobs well's was there, now in the bible, Jacob had a dream, remember when descended down from heaven the ladder, we went down to Jacobs well, we drank the water, cause it cost you money to look at all these biblical places,

23:30 they were forever after the money, the police. And we went there and we drank the water from Jacob's well and a fellows got, they were selling photos, biblical holy stuff, holy pictures and things like that but a lot came away that never paid and the

24:00 Arabs that were down there running the place complained that we was a lot of thieves. I've still got some have some of them from Jacob's Well, in fact I sent some water home to my mother from Jacob's Well, they were selling little bottles, but we never paid for them. Yeah look at that over there....

**What was Jerusalem like?**

I've got photos,

24:30 but Jerusalem was nice, nice place Jerusalem and the bordello's there were very nice.

**Tell us, were the bordellos there different from the ones in Fremantle?**

Oh yeah the bordellos over there they were terrific they were on a like, what do you call it, quick, quick, like Henry Ford, on when his motors, what do

**Production line?**

25:00 Yeah, and the girls used to get there, and they'd cost you, now the Pommies, the English, I shouldn't say Pommies but they had it down to 5 bob and some knuckled Australian went and gave them 10 bob, so therefore the prices went up, the wholesale business went up to 10 shillings and away they'd go they had Rosey and all the rest of it, oh yeah she was a, she was real

25:30 good, wanting to meet your mates that's where you met down there.

**How did it work, Wal? Did you come in and get a number or could you choose a girl?**

Oh no you went there, you picked a girl or you went up, upstairs, 'Righto you're room number four off you go.'

**So you'd just go and sit in a room and then somebody would come in?**

Oh no she's in there, cubicles, they had cubicles and you pulled back the curtain, some of them and others were rooms. But this particular

26:00 one and the offices were upstairs, they were upstairs and not supposed to, a different door they went in and this day I'd finished whatever I wanted to do and I saw the Padre and he shot upstairs and I thought, 'That's the bloody padre,' so I went to the fellows and I said, 'Hey the padre's in there.' 'Oh he's not,' I said, 'He could be bible bashing up there, giving them, you know, leading a girl, trying to get

26:30 the woman away from this terrible life.' And we said, 'Yeah,' so we went up the 8 of us and we crept around upstairs and there was this curtain, we pulled the curtain back and there's the old padre he's enjoying himself very much and we sing, 'Yield not to temptation,' and close the door and ran for our life.

**What faith was the padre, Catholic?**

27:00 Oh no he was one of our mob. Wasn't he, no he was proso, Presbyterian oh yes he's enjoying himself there yeah.

**Was he angry?**

I don't know, we don't know, we took off. And we had two brothers and one played a joke on one and while his brother was going along enjoying himself the other one crawled under the bed

27:30 and started to go like this and the girls said, 'Help, help, there's a man under the bed.' 'You bloody thing, what are you doing?' Oh yes those bordellos yeah they were good.

**What was it sort of the girls different to the girls in Australia?**

Oh yeah well they were darker put it that way. And

28:00 but they always had, you always had to have Condy's Crystals, always after you had a wash, you went to the ablutions and you went to, what did we used to call it, oh there was a blue light and they gave you

Condy's Crystals [sodium permanganate, a disinfectant] to pour down and all the rest of it. You went to the blue light outfit, signed your name and the time and the date and signed your name on the book.

28:30 The Poms used to have a shower book. The Poms when you had a shower you had to sign the book.

**What were the Condy's Crystals were they?**

The Condy's Crystals washing down to prevent...

**So it was like an antiseptic like Dettol or something?**

Yeah, yeah, to stop from getting any V.D [Venereal Disease], to prevent it, you went to a blue light outfit. But most of us used to go there first and get condoms

29:00 and put them in. As a matter a fact in New Guinea we used condoms to put our tobacco in to stop, otherwise it would go mouldy.

**Because of the humidity?**

Yeah. And some used to even use condoms to put over their rifle barrels but the trouble is the rifle barrel used to sweat so they stopped it. But you could always fire through it, the condom, it didn't worry. But oh yeah

29:30 the condoms yeah we had them. But over there you'd go to a Blue Light outfit, you always took precaution, my word you would because the whole joint stank of East, full. But the girls oh no they, see wherever the British Army goes they established bordellos but they're inspected by the doctors go along,

30:00 when I say establish them, they don't but if there's a bordello nearby they make sure they send their medical staff through before the boys go. As a matter a fact we was on duty one time, you could tell our lot and twenty of us and a picket Cairo, picket the place, stop the fights

30:30 and things like that and you walk, you went around with a bayonet on your side. And there's four of us left and a major said to us, 'I have the most unsavoury task for you chaps, you've got to picket the Brothel.' 'Oh no sir, no, no not that.' , 'Yes, I'm sorry but you must.' And that was to the brothel, to the bordello, picket,

31:00 unsavoury. God speed the plough.

**Did the four of you actually end up guarding the brothel or going inside?**

That's where we went but they had Burka in Cairo, and they had the battle of the Wazir [?] in the '14 - '18 war [First World War] according to my father and it's recorded in history,

31:30 the brothel, they went down there and fought with other troops or other nations. Well we had the battle of the Burka, that's a brothel in Cairo, well I'm upstairs and I'd say she's as big as this room, the Newbroom she was and she'd entertaining me by singing and dancing and I'm only what 20, no,

32:00 yeah this is before we went, doesn't matter and there she was and I look down below and this fight started and there was this Scottish, Polish, Free French, you name it and I saw a slouch hat get knocked off and I thought I'll go down then and then the mob descend and away they came and I looked out the window, I better get down and help me mates and this

32:30 lady thankfully grabbed hold of me and pulled me back, 'You're not going down there,' that's what she said but in her language not mine and, 'You're not going down there, you'll get hurt.' Now this is what the battle of the Burka and it finished up hundreds were involved, yeah. And so after it was all over the court-martial

33:00 and one fellow went in, one chap went in, a corporal he was, he came out a captain, he's a medical officer, he was a medic, he was a doctor and he enlisted and he didn't want to join, he wanted to be fighting, he was a student or something and he finished up our Battalion Doctor years later.

33:30 And he was a boxer, amateur boxer and he was a good fighter too.

**Did he survive?**

Oh yeah he got, oh yeah he survived right enough. But he went in and he was a corporal at the time, oh he had, there was another chap with me he was a student doctor with us when he joined

34:00 but he went for the infantry and the only swear word ever, the only word you'd ever hear him say is, 'struth.' That was the only foul language, 'Struth that hurt,' when he got hit. Bloody bullet, have a look at this, 'struth'. That's what he said, 'struth'.

**So are you saying that this medical officer was in the brawl?**

34:30 Yeah he was involved, oh yeah the whole street was in the brawl.

**What was it about?**

Well I don't know but the girls were throwing pots, you know the jerry pots, they were hurling them down, they were throwing down everything down below, all in the mob

**Pot plants?**

Yeah, everything was going out, throwing it down there and she hadn't hit it, that's all it was, oh yeah she was on for young and old.

- 35:00 And the coppers of course they'd run for their lives, they wouldn't come near. Not while it was on, the Battle of the Burka, oh yeah she was a beauty, French, Dutch you name it they're all in.

**Now were you supposed to have been guarding the brothel at that time?**

No, no, no, I was only visiting I had a call card, you know pop in. Drop in and visit that's all I was, that's all I was doing there you know. Summing up the land.

- 35:30 Took in the situation. I was going to wash; I was going to be a short time towel wash in the bordello, what's wrong with that?

**I believe that. What about the night that you were asked to actually mind the brothel?**

Oh this was the daytime, day, daylight, oh yeah.

**Oh so that was all right**

- 36:00 **you just went up and down the street?**

Yeah, picket, you picket the place, make sure that no one fights and this was our duty and you'd go into the room and made sure that the girl wasn't fighting, wouldn't you? You have to hold her down to stop her from fighting. Oh yeah, Larry the Bat he was the major.

**So the brothel worked day and night?**

Twenty four hours. You name it, 24 hours, they had shift workers. Oh yeah, and wherever you went

- 36:30 to in the Middle East and Australia, anywhere on seas, Queensland suppose to not be, it was 10 shillings right over Australia from Queensland to Perth, Melbourne, Little Lonsdale Street, Sydney up the [Kings] Cross, where was that Palmer Street, was it, Palmer street the Brothel, the bordello there and Melbourne, Little Bourke Street, Rose Street in West Oz [Australia], I never got to South Oz, worst luck my brother did but I didn't and

- 37:00 Queensland at the Gap, at the Gap at Mount Isa, 10 bob, but I never paid there at the Isa, I used to do a bit of boxing and when they had the boxing up there, I fight and I had blonde hair, long blonde hair, much younger in those days and much better looking. The Arabs told me face, they told you. The said they like me, the girls used to like me, come over the Gap

- 37:30 and I'll do that and away you went over the Gap, it cost me nothing other than the walk.

**Where was, I live in the Gap, where was**

This is Mount Isa.

**The gap, you don't mean in Brisbane?**

No, no the Gap was in Mount Isa,

**Oh o.k.**

Over there, over the hill. And the girls used to come, now boys ran the town you might as well say, there was an open air theatre and then the aborigines they had a fenced off area, those days.

- 38:00 And the girls used to come to the fights and they had a fight once every six months or something like that, you know some boxing troupe would come in and I, I don't know but I was up there twice, I fought there twice. So I don't know when they came around, I was up there a few months before we hit the track. And I used to go, they used to invite me over for a bit of practise, you know run over there

- 38:30 it was, I'm getting fit you know,

**Of course.**

on the track when you're running along to train and that's where I used to train over there. Pushing up exercise.

**So how long were you in Egypt until you went to Palestine?**

Oh we weren't long in Egypt, we just sailed through there, we got the train and we went to Beit Jirja, that's in Palestine, Beit Jirja

- 39:00 and that's where they told us and we trained there and trained and trained and as our brigadier said,

'He's never seen any fitter men,' and then we went up into action at Bardia.

**O.k. sorry Wal, but how long were you in training at Palestine before your first conflict at Bardia?**

Oh, I suppose, the time we enlisted is 39

39:30 we went til 41, we had 18 months, 18 months training up there in Palestine when we were there we were as fit as fiddles, oh yeah. Fit as, real fit, and every one of us. And trained to the minute, we were exercising with battalion, companies, battalion, brigade and we had what they call a box formation and one battalion would

40:00 go forward in the box and the other battalion would come behind in a box formation and you'd have men up on the hills shouting. See some of those sand dunes, which in the Middle East you'd think they're, some of the sand dunes are miles long, 50, 60 miles long, 300 feet high and when you have a company, which is, I know this is above,

40:30 shouldn't be done because on the skyline, you never show yourself on a skyline but when you're moving and they had scouts blocking in between, you want one company going forward you have a connecting file, what they call a connecting file, several men, they're keeping that company in sight and they're keeping this company, the other company supporting in sight also and they're the connecting, what they call the connecting file.

**Maybe you could, sorry Wal for**

41:00 **interrupting but perhaps you could explain that in more detail on the next tape because we'll have to switch now and I don't want you to get cut off half way.**

Good.

## Tape 3

00:30 there were bloody thousand bloody filthy thing.

**Wal can you sing us On the Good Ship Venus? In tune?**

Oh you don't want filth.

**Come on.**

We're not on yet are we?

**We are actually.**

We're on now.

**We are we're going.**

Right I used to play as I said I got the uke [ukulele] in there but it's not tuned up at the time now but On the Good Ship Venus.

**mmmm.**

'It was on the good ship

01:00 Venus, by Christ you should have seen us, the figurehead,' that's horrible I've got to get the tune back, 'the Figurehead was a whore in bed and the mast is a ramping penis, the da, da, da, the skipper robbed this lugger, a ship for letting bugger, he wasn't to shovel the dirty rotten bugger, trip the door to Mabel whenever she was able would fornicate

01:30 with the second mate up on the chaff room table. Oh the skipper's other daughter she fell into the water the panic we'll reveal the kneel that found the sexual quarter oh the, Oh on the Good Ship Venue by Christ you should have seen us. We sailed from Buenos Aires we buggered all the fairies, we caught the ship at Teneriffe and the clap at the Cannaries, Oh the Cannaries, Oh

02:00 the cabin boy would nipa, trip a, a saucy little nipper, he filled his arse powder glass and circumcised the Skipper. Oh on the Good Ship Venue, by Christ you should have seen us, a figurehead. On the Good Ship Venus all about the keyhole in the door, by Christ I saw her do it through the keyhole in the door.' The old times songs, they were good old times up there.

02:30 **Now you were letting me in on another one in the break there Wal?**

Down South of old Rose Street?

**South of old Rose Street, the one with the foreskin below?**

'South of old Rose Street, down West Aussie way, that's where I met a crome and took her home, one summer's day. She wanted 10 Shillings but I

03:00 couldn't pay because I was a soldier on 5 bob a day. Then she sighed as she chuckled by banana, I never dreaming that my heaven, with a light at my banana because on tomorrow never came. South of Old Rose Street, I'll go back one day, there I will meet my crome and take her home and ask her to play cause I was a soldier and I couldn't pay cause all I was getting was 5 bob a day. Boom, boom, boom, boom.'

04:00 **You've got a beautiful voice.**

Those days, they were the good old days, they were .

**They were. If I can ask, if I can plead with you to do one more song. There was a few verses that you were singing to me in the break, the one with the, in the verse there was something about foreskin hanging below your knees?**

Oh that's

04:30 foreskin, that my lady was a dressing. That's 10 inch kidney wiper.

**That's it 10 inch kidney wiper, can you give us?**

You want that, you want that.

**Yeah well we're not going to get it any other way.**

Right. 'My Lady was a dressing, a dressing for the ball. When she saw a big Australian, a pissing against a wall, with his 10 inch kidney wiper

05:00 and balls the size of feet and half a yard of foreskin hanging below his knees. Oh she wrote him a letter and in it she did say, 'I'd rather be done by you dear than my husband any day.' With your 10 inch kidney wiper and balls the size of feet and half a yard of foreskin hanging below his knees. Oh he mounted on his charger and far away did ride with his bullocks on his shoulder

05:30 and his penis by his side. Oh he went into the gateway and onward to the hall, god spare us said the butler he's come to shag us all. With his 10 inch kidney wiper and balls the size of feet and half a yard of foreskin hanging below his knees. Oh he shagged them in the kitchen, he shagged them in the hall but when he shagged the chimney sweep it was the dirtiest trick of all. With his 10 inch kidney wiper and

06:00 the ..... size and half a yard of ....hanging below his knees. Oh he .....and he shagged them and they did ride and when he came the twentieth time the poor old bastard died. With his 10 inch kidney wiper and balls the size of feet and half a yard of foreskin hanging below his knees.'

**Wonderful. And where would you sing**

06:30 **these songs mostly?**

Oh in the mess, anywhere, all over the joint, we'd sing them. And I'd play that, play the uke and another bloke had the banjo going and away we'd go. And of course we were much younger in those days, very young and very fit. All filthy, you've got to have filthy ditties you know and you make up songs about

07:00 all different ditties in those days. What else mamma, foreskin what else do we know, shagging and business or shagging. I didley I, di, that one, yeah.

**What's this one?**

They were shagging in the haystack, and shagging in the hay fishing off the bridge. What was that Irish one.

07:30 Those days, good.

**O.k. Well turning a little bit more, a different story now, can you tell us a little bit about those days leading up to Bardia? The Bardia campaign?**

Oh well we went in there, we took a patrol in,

08:00 we went on patrol and we were fired at and my mate, he didn't know, it was a cold morning, very cold morning, very cold, we had our greatcoats on and we had mittens, they sent us over, in the Red Cross and they sent you out gloves so some of us had mittens. And my mate who was

08:30 a St Kilda boy he got shot and his finger was blown off and he didn't know, he felt this and boom, 'Hey I'm bloody cold,' he said and he looked, 'My finger's gone the bastard, my fingers gone.' That's what he said to me and we bandaged it up for him and it was enemy patrol. Anyway they

09:00 ran away they took off and we came back. Well he became, he won the high jump later on at Haifa where we did sport at inter-service sports, Poles, Free French, free everybody was there at Haifa up in

## Jerusalem in Palestine

- 09:30 up there and he won the high jump 5 foot 6 he jumped and he was untrained I mean he wasn't anything and he's army and I won the swimming, 50 metres. And when I was there after the swim being young and good looking as I was before the Arabs stole my face I told you, they came up to me,
- 10:00 the fellow with the cameras and that there and they said, 'We'd like to make a film, do you want to be in a film?' I said, 'Yeah' this was the department of bloody war whatever they were department of information, so I said, 'Yes I'll be there.' And they said we're taking it down in Jerusalem and, 'I'm at Haifa,' I said, 'How am I getting there?' They said, 'Well I'll write you out a leave pass and we'll take you down, we're going there.'
- 10:30 And so what happened was my mate and I who lost his finger later we went down to Jerusalem and what I had to do is stand up in this alleyway, there was narrow gutted alleyways in Jerusalem where the people have their different tradesmen all down there and I had to stand against the wall with one leg, put my leg against the wall,
- 11:00 put my hat on one side, throw out a cigarette butt and then turn around, hitch me pants up push me hat on the one side and walk down this narrow gutted alleyway. So I must have been a pretty good actor because Olly took about 40 shots to get it right and he said, 'Right cut she's right.' , 'When do I see it sir?' He said here's your leave pass and here's 5 pound and so he gave me four days leave pass
- 11:30 and I went back to the battalion and I told them, showed me pass and they called me Clark Gable and all the rest which I wasn't. So I don't see what's on film, so we get up, going up to New Guinea and I've just forgotten where we were, whether it was in New Guinea or here in Australia, up in Queensland when the Department of Information film came
- 12:00 there I was blaring, we were all lying back with the water bottle, with a beer bottle as a cushion behind our neck watching the film. 'V.D'. and then they showed you me and they said look there, look, look at this, yeah that's me , and they all cheered and V.D. V.D watch out for...

### **You ended up in a V.D. Film?**

Yeah. There it was in big letters coming up. V.D. V.D.

- 12:30 and there I was walking down.

### **They must have known a bit about you before they came?**

No. This is them, I thought I was going be....yeah real good, V.D, V.D film. And another time.

### **Actually Wal can I bring you back to the desert for a bit because I'd really love to hear your experience of the battle of**

- 13:00 **Bardia?**

Oh well we went in...

### **And just how that went?**

And well by this time we're fully trained troops and we went in and we crossed the start line. Now they have a start line and they told us what was going to happen before we went in. They said the air force and the navy is going to bombard the place, the navy shall shell and the air force will bombard, drop bombs and things like that

- 13:30 and you cross the start line at 5 o'clock in the morning, it's as cold as a mother-in-law's kiss and we wearing Greatcoats and we must have look tremendous cause some of the fellows were 6 footed and all that and when you're bulky with a great big greatcoat on. Well we cross the start line, well the start line was tape, the engineers had been there before us and laid out this tape, stretching for miles I suppose, I don't know.
- 14:00 But we cut a piece of it, ordinary bit of tape about 2 inches wide, right and we went in there. Now it's just exactly like, we used to train, exactly like training but this time instead of firing blanks we were firing real live ammunition. And as we were going in, we got there post 9,
- 14:30 post 11 as you were and we had a bit of resistance, not much, we had to go through a barbed wire fence down to a Wadi, a Wadi is a gully, a dry gully and it took us about oh 10 minutes more to cross it, more than that, oh well in the battle it took us hours to get there but when the Wadi was down we had to crawl through this barbed wire fence
- 15:00 go through there and they had their defences in concrete, they'd been there for years, the Italians, reinforced concrete, men lived in it, 300 hundred men lived in these places under. And there they were on this gully and the pillboxes have got, like that covering one another so we quietened this one down. And then
- 15:30 they said to me, the Sarge Major said, 'Go back and get a case of ammunition.' So I had to go back, crawl back this bloody valley and go back there and bring up 1248 rounds into a case. So I'm carrying



the ammunition along but in between times shots would be firing, shells

- 16:00 fire coming into the gully and I saw three men come down, Joe Gullett was one of them, later on became a member of Parliament, and he's a speaker, no in the house with Menzies, he
- 16:30 and two more, Bernie Dam and Vick Maloney. And Bernie Dam had lost his brother up there, they were two boys from one family in Queensland and he lost his brother and his brother was dying, we grabbed hold of his brother and his brother said, 'Remember me to the family.' And he died.
- 17:00 Years later, I'm up in, on a reunion in the battalion I just forget where I was at the time, it might have been Maryborough it could have been Bundaberg, I think it was. When the Dam family came down, father and mother and his sisters came down and they went to our
- 17:30 president and they said, 'Oh Wal will know,' and they sent to me because I was the only fellow that knew about it and they wanted to know what happened and I told them. And Bernie and I was in Greece at the time and the Germans were swooping down real low and bombing, shelling the place, strafing
- 18:00 and the big planes started to bomb and we were in this kind of a cut out where the water was, wash away was of the creek bed and we were sheltering there and there was too tall about 7 feet tall, the bank was and we're crouching in this kind of a covert affair, whatever you like to call it and I said to Bernie, 'Get up and have look where the bloody bombs are coming from.' 'No' he said, 'you get up' and so he bumped me up
- 18:30 and I saw them, I could see the bombs falling, you could watch them fall and I thought ah they're not going to hit us, they're going to go close and sure enough away it went and it drew you inside, you seem to go in and then it blows you right out with the explosion, that was then. But anyway up in New Guinea, I saw Bernie again, he was a different company and when
- 19:00 having to go up there, a few actions up there and the last time I saw Bernie I was in the Fire Brigade and I'm testing fire alarms and he's working down the wharf, St Kilda Wharf, down the wharf in Melbourne working on the wharf and I went across and we went to the pub, nearby pub and we stayed there for a fair while talking about the old times, then he went on his way.
- 19:30 I've never seen him since, but I saw his parents up there when they came up at just wherever it was, Bundaberg or somewhere. And they came 60 miles in to connect up with the 17th Brigade, what was left of us, our reunion, yeah. Going in to Bardia, it's early hours of the morning and
- 20:00 you don't worry so much, you go forward because you're mates with you and we weren't frightened, well I don't know about frightened, I suppose there was some fear attached, we weren't exactly going into a party and they put us a stiff resistance and Don Company went in on our left before, we created a diversion, they went in on our left, they lost 13 men
- 20:30 in, when they got down in this fortress affair, which they had dug, they had cooking and sleeping for 200, 300 men. All the way along, they had these forts, they had built against the Liberians when they took over and there they were along so there was post nine and we were in eleven. And nine was where they were and
- 21:00 Heel the official painter or whatever you like to call it, artist for the army and he painted them as they were, he came in and took a photograph, this is after, took a photograph of the men lying there, 13. Now
- 21:30 when I came back with ammunition and I saw the boys getting out Joe Gullett and that, wounded I got back and we had Northumberland Fusiliers they had heavy machine guns, MMG's [Megan Machine Gun] they had, they were with us and they were machine gunning away and what happened was they had a periscope the Italians, when they were firing
- 22:00 when they was firing they had this periscope and they could see but the machine gunners knocked down the periscope, this was after I came back, they knocked down the periscope so they couldn't see us and they couldn't see down this valley, this wadi [a rocky water course]. Now some of the wadis of course, they're big, it took us 6 hours to cross
- 22:30 Derna Wadi, 6 hours and it's not sand, it's rocks, trees, shrubs and things like that and way up high. But Bardia, but after Bardia we rounded them up and we met one fellow I met he came across and he said, 'The bloody war's over and I haven't fired a shot' and he pulled his trigger, squeezed his trigger
- 23:00 of his gun, this is in the battalion. And then we went into, and I went to Tobruk but before that we went out to El Adam airdrome where I went in and got all these airdrums, there's 52 planes on the ground, Italian and they had the paintings, good paintings, lovely paintings
- 23:30 and I went round souveniring.

**What did you pick up?**

Yeah I got me bayonet out and cut them off, oh they had nice paintings, each pilot's are I suppose Italian, bit of romantic what ever it was, had his girlfriend had painted on or a religious painting on and

away I went.

**Did you have any trouble with any of the surrendering Italians?**

24:00 Oh we had a bit of trouble, no surrendering; no we used to chase them away.

**What do you mean?**

Chase them away at night. They'd come in, after we went in at Tobruk we took 45 bloody thousand prisoners and they used to carry our rifles, you'd have a batch of 200 prisoners, the more you go along the more would join and they'd vote for Wally Cameron and all this in front and all this oh yeah. And

24:30 here carry the rifle, now if you don't behave yourself I won't let you carry the rifle and that's where I learnt the songs. The Italian songs, they taught me to sing in Italian, popular songs and I thought you know this is all right and bugger me boots what was it now, 'bop bah diddle diddle bop bah, and lay pah lah

25:00 La par noala bella, to say la orginella, to say lay ump,' and I'm singing this bloody thing and the brother comes over when I meet him and it's the Fairy Boat Serenade, that's what they taught me. And they had one, 'Arum bat alum ba j adore to reche shi clo too le palo aram bat alum ba j adore ah col la dung clamelo,' yeah that's it, 'the Ambassador's arrived on a camel, yeah and he's got a feather in hat, and that' what they taught me, 'swannee swannee per may, swannee swanne per may,

26:00 over ling a ting gana you know porta penda catoo le more le ju of chi le afre,' oh we had them there yeah 45,000 you couldn't lead them away on a piece of string so a knucklehead of mine about, we were at El Adam aerodrome we're there and this bloke he came from Moorabbin and he said, 'He was starting to learn how to fly' and there was this

26:30 Cant, it's a fighter and it's in this hangar, all the rest are out on the drome he said, 'What we'll do, I'd like to fly this, it's a fighter, an Italian fighter, you turn the prop.' So knucklehead, I'm there turning this prop and he's in the cockpit trying to start it, now if that feeds the plough I don't know, doesn't matter he's as silly as I was. And bingo he can't, it doesn't go

27:00 so then we hear this brrrrrrrrr overhead, and lo and behold it's a Hurricane and it lands at El Adam and out of it steps this pilot, a well built fellow, a handsome chap, in short khaki and pistol there, he's an Australian, he says, 'Where's your officers?' I said, 'Over there sir.' He said, 'Well I just brought down an

27:30 Italian Red Cross plane, I offered him down and he landed about 15 miles away, I was going to fire on it but the guns froze and I saw with the cross but they're down there and they've got troops onboard and I thought your officers should know,' and I said, 'We're trying to get this up.' He said, 'If you had have got that up I would have shot you down.'

28:00 **So you were lucky?**

Yeah, oh bloody mad. Mad.

**What did you reckon of the Italians as enemy?**

Oh they were all right. A lot of men, we met a brother or I met his brother.

**What do you mean?**

We had a fellow the name I just can't recall, I'll think of it in a minute but he was

28:30 Italian born and he came to Australia, he had a fruit shop in High Street, St Kilda, Tony, doesn't matter. Well he was with us, he joined as a reinforcement, now he met his brother after many many... What happened is this a lot of Italians went back to Italy to visit relatives

29:00 from Australia and America and [Benito] Mussolini grabbed them, you couldn't go back and he grabbed them and therefore there's a hell of a lot spoke English and they said to us, 'We knew you were coming, I never fired a bloody shot, I knew you were coming,' they gave us extra wine and we all got pissed and something like this. But we knew you were coming. And Tony heard about it and his brother knew he was there and away he went

29:30 and he eventually found and met him. We had 15,000 locked up, there was 45,000 of the bludgers, we had 15,000 in the compound near us. And I used to take three out to Tobruk. Now in case your history's very neglectful, Tobruk around those places were the feed bowl, when Julius Caesar

30:00 and Italy in those days and that's where they grew the wheat, the harvesting season was there and all that. And they had these caves dug in oh go for three hundred yards inside, well that's where the Italian Army stored all their gear. 45,000 troops and there they were all the wine in the bloody world. So they sent us out to take a stocktake and no one ever completed it.

30:30 **A bit too drunk by the end of the day?**

Cognac, Cognac and we had this Chianti or whatever you like to call it, in straw bottles, covered bottles and you'd go along and you put a keg of bloody cognac on your shoulder and as you carry it and you sit

down you just tip it upside down, ah, ah. And away you went.

**Did any**

31:00 **of the fellows hold a grudge against any of the Italians because of the casualties that you had in Bardia?**

No, no, no. Not, we never held a grudge against the Italians or the Germans. No they were fair fighters but the Jap, they were different. Mongrel.

31:30 He was different, different cup of tea altogether. The German, the Italian they were fair. When I say fair if you can be fair in a fight, like if you can kill one another, I mean if you call that fair I suppose. But oh no they never cut you up, they never cut anybody up or sliced anyone to bits, nothing like that.

**But that Bardia was**

32:00 **your first taste of...**

That was the first yeah, we had 21, yeah 21, no 22 killed and 53 wounded, that was Bardia. And they sent us up, the closest I got I had a haversack on and they took the buckle off the haversack. I was lying down like this, I was supposed to be field sketching

32:30 go up and field sketch, you do field sketching you know with the business and the bloody artillery started to land, shells on us and our bloke got onto them and the artillery and he said, 'Raise your bloody sights 500 they're landing amongst us,' and the bloke said, 'No they're not.' He said, 'Of course they are,' he said, 'I can even read Maribyrnong written on every bloody one.'

33:00 Maribyrnong was where they made them so I can read. Yeah oh they were landing right amongst us, not you know oh about 40 yard in front we had them bogged down til they blow up. Not so much explosion what the fragments.

**The shrapnel?**

No, no, the Italians used shrapnel, they had shrapnel and that was the last, never more used, shrapnel. Because you time,

33:30 what you do with shrapnel, they time it and it's suppose to burst about 40 feet or so above the ground and they put the nose cap on so whatever they do, they time it so that it goes so far and it burst about 40 feet above the ground and these little shrapnel bits pieces of metal, ball bearings whatever they sprinkle right over you and kill and inflict

34:00 enemy but the trouble was with shrapnel, it hit the ground before it exploded, it exploded on the ground it wouldn't do any damage and so that went all by the board. And so all you got was splinters and so the shell would burst up in fragmentation and that's what happened. But they had shrapnel early, the Italians, they had shrapnel.

34:30 **After your first taste of battle at Bardia were you still interested in staying in the army?**

Oh yeah, well right through, we marched through, we went to that Tobruk, we took Tobruk and that was an open city and that's where this 45,000 troops got the money. A bloke, an Engineer blew the bank

35:00 and when we went through, there's money, we didn't think it was any good and they're as big as the Sydney newspaper, some of them, 5000 lira and things like that. Now there's 300 lira to a Gippo [Egyptian] pound, a Gippo pound was worth 25 bob and 300 lira to a Gippo pound and we were cooking our billy's, cooking our tucker, Dixies [all purpose cooking/eating pot] cooking food,

35:30 burning them, we never realised they were any good until we got, we captured a few, put a few, my overcoat pocket was full and my other pockets were full too of money. And we went to Barce and we found out they were good tucker yeah. Yeah beaut.

**Now was the engineers...?**

No, no they blew it, we didn't, no nobody knew and they said, 'Anyone found with looting will be consider a looter over so much.'

36:00 **But they weren't supposed to loot, blow the bank?**

No, no well he did, he wanted to have a look at it, they were getting watches and rings, they had one for each finger. And the whole town lit out, most of them, they lit out for the cactus you know. Grabbed a handful of a moving box car and off they went to cactus. And we walk in to the town, of course no grog of course you don't think of that.

**What other sort of things did you scrounge**

36:30 **up along the way?**

We were done up like Christmas trees, we were. I went for the rings and other fellows went for watches

and other fellows did, oh they and another time we went to Barshee, that's further up and we found, I got in amongst this group and

37:00 they had fencing, you know the foils, they had all these foils, they had all this sporting equipment there and I'm looking for I had a left hand glove or a right hand glove but didn't have the left hand glove, they only had one glove apparently in fencing and I'm hunting for the others. And I couldn't find them. And there's a dead Salusi, a black chap, he's lying

37:30 on the middle of the road and a pig came up and started to eat him. So I looked at him and away I went. And I get down there and a fellow said, 'I just shot a pig, would you like a pig?' 'Not me I don't want no bloody pig, no thank you.' That's where Bob Menzies came; he came up to welcome us

38:00 he's a Prime Minister and we had to wait for three quarters of an hour in the bloody blazing sun, thank you very much. And when he came there he said, 'Men I've just flown over your recent victories whatever man gotta to say about it I heartily concur and we said, 'You bastard we marched all the way.' And then they said to me, later on we went back and about the pig, oh a bit of pig, and I told them after they'd eaten it I told them this is the bloke, the pig that ate

38:30 the (UNCLEAR). But the funny part of it was this poor dead bloody wog, a truck would go past and run over his leg and up would come his head and another truck would to past and run over his head and up would come his leg and he was like this until the pig came, he was, stiff as a board. Oh real good.

**And what did all the fellows say when you told them they'd been eating a pig....**

Oh they

39:00 chundered their heads. But you know that was a bloody burr and that they went. When we got to Benghazi..

**Actually we'll stop there Wal because we're going to have to change tapes again.**

## Tape 4

00:30 **Now Wal do you think that there's any truth to the rumour that Australians were a bit wild during the Second World War?**

Oh, I wouldn't say wild, I'd say it's the Australian way of life, free and easy and perhaps we were a bit different to the British, they were a stiff upper old sir, didn't have the stiff upper and all the rest of it. And

01:00 brrrr, I'll tell you a story, rather humorous, we're in Ceylon, when we're coming back they stood us in Ceylon because the Japanese attacked the place, we were going to go there and we were there with the British and this is when their Prime Minister said, 'Send the Australian troops home,' well we were there. Now the Duke of Edinburgh

01:30 was coming visiting, coming to visit Ceylon, this is weeks before and so they called, they detailed a few of us for a guard for the Duke. Now they put us under this Pommy RSM, now they only wanted twenty and they brought 60 of us along to train to pick out the best.

02:00 So away we went and this is hot days in Ceylon as it was known then, Sri Lanka now and there we were drilling and this Pommy Sarge Major, 'Now don't forget, I'm telling you now he's the second highest man in the world, he's the next brother of the king and you've got the honour, you've got the honour of meeting him, I'll telling you he may even shake hands and to think how

02:30 proud you'll be to be able tell your mothers and fathers you shook the hand of the second highest man in the world.' Left right, left, right, left and so in the bloody hot sun and everything drilling and the fellows said, 'Bugger this I'm giving it away.' And so they dropped out, they kept dropping out, this went on for days. So they're sending us out, the ranks and I came to and I said

03:00 to me mate he was a corporal also I said, 'Bugger this I'm giving it away.' He said, 'So will I,' and so away we went left, right, left, right, left. 'Now don't forget this is the brother of the King of England, only the most powerful man in the world and this is his brother and you'll have the honour of meeting him, what a gentleman he is, and he may even shake his hand. And you won't go, you won't wash

03:30 it after he shakes it, you'll take it home and you'll show your mother, this is the hand that shook the hand of the second highest man in the world, left, right, left, right, quick march.' Then he said, 'Right who wants to drop, who wants to default?' and the two of us stood out. And he looked at us, 'I had the greatest admiration for you two. You two corporals you looked the

04:00 brilliant and you want to drop out, you want to drop out?' , 'What for?' 'We're just sick and tired.' 'All right you can drop out but just for that you won't see the old bastard.'

### **As if you cared?**

And when he did come he drove right past in the car doing about 15 mile an hour, boom, like that and all we saw was dust.

- 04:30 We were there with our rifles presenting and all the rest. But years later he became Governor General and he didn't last long because of his pompous way, this is the Duke of Edinburgh but we had a cook called Brownie, oh the Duke of Gloucester rather, sorry, the Duke of Gloucester.
- 05:00 Well he had an impediment like the king had an impediment too in his speech well he had impediment well he came out to Australia as Governor General and I just forgot his aide-de-camp when they went to Canberra his aide-de-camp and that they do this and do that well the tradesmen refused to deliver, that's how
- 05:30 it was. And they stood up when they walked in and they did the Hitler salute in Canberra that's how. Anyway he didn't last long, I'm just trying to think of his aide-de-camp's name, he disassociated himself from all the public but what happens is this, we had a cook in the army Bob Browning was his name I can name him now because
- 06:00 he'd like it, he could fight like the thrash machete, he was the SP Bookmaker for the battalion he had 400 pounds under his pillow, he used to tell anyone comes there their dead if they take it, no one would take it, he was a shearers cook before he joined the army and he was so good a cook the officers grabbed him straight away after a while. Well after the war was over, he was cooking for this sheep station, which was a top grade sheep station
- 06:30 no name, no petrol and the Duke of Gloucester and his party went there to visit the place because they went down and they told the shearers about 40 odd shearers there, 20 are anyway big station and they said, 'Right the Duke of Gloucester's coming down we want you to behave your best right good.'
- 07:00 Now Brownie had a cockatoo and he had this cockatoo in the mess with him and as they passed by the shearers getting their food, Brownie was dishing it up, the cockatoos sitting up there on the perch with no chain, free to fly away. And Brownie could swear like a trooper because he'd been shearing before and also in the army and here comes the Duke of
- 07:30 Gloucester came with his retinue, with the party and he looked at, he saw the bird, he saw the men they thought, 'Oh we'll take the duke down and see how the men eat,' they had a special feed that day. And oh yes associate with the mob and the Duke said, looked at Brownie, looked at the bird, 'Can can that that b. b. bird bird t. t. talk?' And Brownie said, 'If it couldn't talk better than you I'd ring its bloody neck.' And with that
- 08:00 they sacked Brownie and the mob, the shearers just walked out. And the station owner or whatever rushed up to Brownie, 'Look it's only while this bastard's here, it's only while he's here, come back, come back.' And so that was the Duke of Gloucester and his aide-de-camp caused a bit of a blue down there at Canberra.

### **Wal, can I**

- 08:30 **just bring you back to the war for a second?**

Yes.

### **What do you think was the army's idea of sending you straight from Bardia to Greece, what had happened in that time after Bardia that you went to Greece?**

Well I think it was...No we went right through the Middle East, we got to quick, quick, quick it was amob, when we last went up to, we went through Bardia,

- 09:00 Tobruk, Derna, Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi

### **Benghazi**

Yeah Benghazi, we went to Ajdabiya we went up there.

### **Now you weren't in conflict the whole time it was only Bardia is that correct?**

No, Bardia, we did Tobruk, fought there and we fought at Benghazi.

### **Well goodness can you tell us about what happened in Tobruk and in Benghazi?**

Well we just went there, see

- 09:30 it wasn't, lets face it there was no hand to hand combat, not there, not in the desert, it was open clean warfare and a lot of the Italians didn't want to fight, they were conscripted I'll admit that but a lot did, some didn't
- 10:00 and they tell the colonel at Ajabiya he came out firing his pistols at the attacking forces and some put up a bloody good fight it wasn't a matter of just lay down was there, go on in and going out, just walking

- in and walking out business some of them fought like ferocious. And of course we're bleeding ourselves,
- 10:30 we're learning as we go. And when we got to Bardia, right after Bardia we felt a bit proud and we go on and with the challenge that was going on all the fire rocket and everything becoming more experienced and more worldly wise you may as well say. And we went to Tobruk and
- 11:00 then we went there, met a bit of resistance, well there was resistance there and we took that place, then we went on, where else, Mersa Matruh no I've forgotten the places name and we finished up at, oh we finished up at Benghazi.

**Can you tell us were you ever in a situation where the enemy surrendered?**

Oh yeah they

- 11:30 surrendered right enough yeah. They'd come out with their, we had an Italian with us I told you and he taught us, what happened was this, we heard that the Italians early were having grenades in their hand and they'd throw them down early at troops when they were that side lets say and of course their
- 12:00 grenades were different to ours they, their grenades were made of tin, tin foil like and they exploded on contact with the ground, whereas ours you waited 4 seconds or 7 seconds depends what fuse you had. And ours burst into fragmentation, boom. Well theirs, they had a couple they'd explode
- 12:30 on, they had a pillarbox, what you call a pillarbox and one was a shaving stick what we called, they looked like a shaving stick and the other one looked like a pillarbox, red and they'd burst on, well right, sorry to have bugged this. So the Italian with us, 'Australian mani alto' which means get your hands up high, alto
- 13:00 means high, mani is your hand, mani alto and naprale mani is open you hands and they were the two words we used to use, the two sentences we used to use, Naprale mani, Mani alto

**Cause if they just dropped their grenades, would they kill themselves or kill you?**

No, no, useless they'd only wound you. Well you'd get killed of course. But they come out

- 13:30 but what we used to do, on after 9, after 11 I went down to a post further down, and three of us and we dropped a grenade in, our grenade, 'Anyone there, anyone speak English, here cop the news of the day,' and you threw grenade down and thirty seconds whompa and then you'd yell out, 'Anyone speak English come out and
- 14:00 there was always invariably people that could speak English and out they'd come. 'Right come out with your hands up, unarmed otherwise we'll shoot you.' And you'd have your Bren gun there and he'd be there sitting outside and up they'd come one by one. Oh 40,50,60, 70. You'd line them up. , 'Anyone speak English?' 'Yes', 'Officers?' , 'Yeah' 'Righto, march on fellows now tell them they'll be shot if they do anything.'
- 14:30 But on the whole they were good, didn't worry.

**Now can you tell us how long you stayed in Tobruk?**

Hmmm?

**How long were you there in Tobruk?**

Oh couldn't tell you off hand. It could have been a month, it could have been less than that, no less than that cause we went right on.

**Did you get to meet many of the Rats? Many of the Rats of Tobruk there?**

No, they came after. We took the place.

- 15:00 **So you were the first Australians...?**

Yeah we took the place, we took Tobruk.

**And then the Australians...**

No then we went to Greece and they came after.

**Oh. O.k.**

And they came after, they lost, they were there and all that, they came after, we were in Greece when that was fallen, well it didn't fall, no they were the 9th Division, the 9th Divvy.

- 15:30 They, the 7th Div, see we were 6th Division, we took the joint and then the 9th Division relieved us and that's when Tobruk and all the rest fell but they were coming down. Tanks as big as bloody houses, the Poms said, 'Aye run for bloody lives, tanks as big as bloody houses coming down Aye.' That's what they told. We
- 16:00 didn't know of course this was later. Then we went to Greece, we sailed for Greece, that was in May or

something, no it wasn't, yeah May and we left Alexandria, we went over there, landed at Port Piraeus and unloaded us, on barges because they didn't have a port to hold a ship enough,

16:30 so you've got to go by barge, go onshore, an entirely different area, entirely different from the Middle East to way over there and you're amongst good people. And they're starving for meat, the people there, they'd line up and all the men were up the front line, very few men of able-bodied that is around.

17:00 They were all up the front fighting the German and we landed at Port Piraeus and a girl said, 'You're blonde, you're blue eyed,' Greek girls and I said, 'That's right, that's right.' And away we went to Daphne, a place, a suburb

17:30 when and you look eastward or was it, it doesn't matter which way, there was, you could see Athens, it was 13 miles or so away.

**Wal where did you, did you go from the Middle East directly to Greece, where did you board the ship?**

Alex, Alexandria.

**Alexandria? And what was the name...**

I think we did, no, no, we

18:00 Cairo, was it Cairo we boarded from. I know where we boarded from, they told us we were going today and away they took us down and they stopped us, Cairo, we went from Cairo. And because the next day we read the battle of Matapan,

18:30 now that was a sea battle where the British fleet engaged the Italians fleet and they sank the Italian fleet, the Italian fleet took off. Now and we wondered, I still wonder to this day whether they did it on purpose to let us know that we were sailing and the Italian fleet was coming out to sink our convoy

19:00 and whether it was a trap for the British fleet because we were in to get them. You understand, like the 6th Division sailing off to Greece tomorrow, ah the Italians will take, we'll send our fleet down and they sent our fleet, they sent their fleet down and they didn't, we didn't go and the British went out and trapped them cause they got them at Matapan,

19:30 the British Fleet, so we sailed for Greece the next day after the Battle of Matapan. We went over on the Cameronia thank you very much, Cameron with an ia on the end of it. I've got the ship, the photograph of it, yeah. We went over there welcome as the flowers in May by the people and we gave them tins of bully beef and we were there at Daphne

20:00 and we give them the poor people were starving of meat, they didn't have any meat and this tin of bully beef would get you anything, anywhere. And this girl came along and she said oh this is in Greece itself but later on further up when we got to Daphne this other girl, we mixed around, in this village we were camped and they came

20:30 and had a look, kids and all we give them lollies and whatever you had and things like that and this girl said, 'You are fair haired, you are blonde hair.' I said, 'Yes, yes, yes.' She said, 'Oh I see you tonight, you come.' I said, 'I'm going into Athens, to the Acropolis.' She said, 'I go there and I see you.'

21:00 'What time?' I said. And of course I don't go, I meet a mate of mine. I said, 'Listen there's a sheila up there want to go up there to meet her, will you.' 'Where at?' he said. 'Up there, the Acropolis, get up there, we've been there I've already seen it.' 'All right,' he said. So what happens is this, we're moving out early morning, the next day 4 o'clock cause it gets light early over there and

21:30 it gets it stays light to 8 o'clock, half past eight at night it's still light. And we're moving up the front and we lined up the company which is there and there she is, she'd with a couple of mates and she's searching through the ranks and she brushed aside our captain and our major and she's walking up and down the ranks and she spies me.

**She's what**

22:00 **sorry?**

She spies me, she chased me and she said her mates with her, there was three of them and they're living over just about 50 yards away, the houses. And she said in broken English of course, 'All day long I walk around the barracks square, all day long you no there,

22:30 when you come you send friend for your friend no, but for you yes.' And she gets me and the mob cheered you know.

**Were you not interested in her?**

It wasn't that, I had something else I wanted to see the sights; I was looking at the old sights and the history of Greece.

**But you would have got**

23:00 **some if you...?**

Oh no not at the time, no, no not at the time, not at the time, no, not at the time. I went in the museum there and had a look around the study and all the rest of it. I mean looking around where we started from, where all the, there's a lot of history and I was more steeped in history then at the time. Had she got

23:30 me off half peak yeah but at the time I was steeped in history, wanted the history where it all started from and where Aesop and what's his name quick quick quick and the dogs ate him and the guard shot him, just forgot his name now, quick quick the great philosopher, they all came from there.

**That's unusual for an Australian to pass up a date with this Greek woman?**

No, no not at the time not when you're steeped in that, look at the pyramids, I went through the pyramids and knocked back there.

24:00 In the pyramids it cost a quid to go through there and knocked them back. We climbed them 452 bloody feet high whatever they are, 252 feet, I didn't worry about girls up there, when you got up the top, up there you're too buggered. Climbing up all those stairs.

**Now we didn't talk about, before we**

24:30 **go back to Greece. We didn't talk about what happened in Benghazi? Did you come...**

**Oh Benghazi, I'll tell you something funny. Well at Benghazi they had a boozer, a brewery at Benghazi now they sent one company down to guard the brewery and they all finished up getting Adrian Crisp.**

25:00 **What's Adrian Crisp?**

Pissed. Elephant's trunk, drunk. And they sent us down

**To sort them out?**

Yeah to take over, yeah and the officer said, 'Righto chaps, don't get pissed, drink as much as you like but don't get drunk.' Down we went,

25:30 slurp and slops. The Brewery, yeah real good drinking. So it wasn't long one of our fellows get booked, the Pommies pinch him and they took him, he was rotten drunk and he's fighting outside, so bugger this so I go and buy some sergeant stripes and I get five or six of our blokes and I march on down to the Provo [Provosts - Military Police] joint where the pommies were

26:00 and I said, 'I've come to relieve your prisoner, arrest your prisoner and take him.' 'Oh, oh Sergeant go oh right' and away I, I signed the document, Blamey, General Blamey, T. Blamey; they used to wonder why everybody's name was Blamey or Kelly, Ned Kelly. The wogs, the Arabs used to say how come everybody in Australia is Kelly, Ned Kelly or Blamey. Used to

26:30 sign there and that's what I did up there. And I took him out and back we went to the boozer because naturally we got relieved also too. We got drunk too. And they searched the bloody lines for beer, they did. Oh yeah they came and they searched the bloody lines, we hid the bottles underneath the officers beds. Little weenie beds we packed them all under their beds, they

27:00 searched every tent.

**Wal was that the only conflict that you had in Benghazi? Was the...**

No, no, we had a bit of a fight before we got in there.

**Can you tell us about that one?**

Oh not much. It wasn't that much really because they were taking off, they were in full retreat see the army and all they put up was a bit of a skirmish and none of our fellows got killed.

27:30 And we saw a few of their dead but none of their fellows they didn't put up to have a fight, they were bailing out they only left a skeleton crew behind I suppose. Whether they got them drunk on rum before to make them fight us or not I don't know.

**I'm wondering why they were fighting**

28:00 **when they'd obviously been surrendering down in Tobruk and...**

Oh they had 45,000 look its rather difficult to say, I wasn't on their side but a hell of a lot were conscripted when they went over were a lot of Yanks [Americans] went over there and we spoke to them and they said, 'We knew you were coming, but we didn't know what bloody time and we never fired

28:30 a shot.' But some of them fought like tigers don't worry about that. Some of them fought like tigers and others didn't, you can't, well you don't know. But our men died, they never got run over by taxis, our fellows that got killed and we went into battle. Now we drank for two boys, they came in before we



went in,

29:00 we had our last drink, we were sitting in the tent, what 8 of us, and we were having slurp and slops and his brother called in and he was in the 5th Battalion, he came across to see his brother with us and right now we figured it out but the both brothers got killed approximately

29:30 the same time, one was with us and one was with the 5th and we said what time did you get in, we said, 'Our bloke got in about quarter past seven and what about?' ' We were about the same time.' Because our battalion never believed in having 2 brothers together although they did eventually have a father and a son together but our battalion didn't

30:00 like our commander at the particular time didn't like 2 brothers serving in one battalion although we did have but he never like it and he tried to separate them because in case of death and there they were. And they both boys, good boys, the only two in the family and they both got killed and that was at Bardia. Yeah. Oh yeah we left 22.

#### **At Bardia?**

Yeah

#### **22 killed at Bardia?**

And 53 wounded.

#### **But at Tobruk, how did you fare at Tobruk?**

Oh we didn't lose that many at Tobruk, didn't lose that many, I couldn't quote offhand how many we lost

31:00 there. But in the battalion there was 9000 and a couple of hundred passed through, through the whole brigade and we did have 2 Officers and the only battalion anywhere, we had two officers in the same battalion in what was the name of burb

31:30 in Germany, I'm just trying to think they made a film of it, they escaped from it and they were there..

#### **The Great Escape?**

Yeah well from the big German film well they were the only two to be in this same prison, it was a prison for those that had escaped all the time and they put them in there, in the book. They were the only 2 officers from any

32:00 battalion the same that escaped that in this prison over there in Germany, we lost hundreds. We wiped out companies over in Greece of course, that's where we got caught up there in Greece.

#### **So how was in arriving on the Cameronia and seeing**

32:30 **beautiful Greece for the first time?**

Oh it was altogether different, it was all lovely luxurious and the storks building, they built their nests in the houses and they just looked like fairy story places, the houses up in the hills like that and the people most generous and came out and welcomed us because most of the men were up fighting, they were at the front.

33:00 And of course when we get up there that was our first introduction into aerial warfare. We were there at the station and the engine driver wouldn't go on any further for what reason I don't know. But it didn't take long before, when you get a lot of people from the depression they do everything, doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs, you want a fireman, you want a carpenter you had them. And we had a couple of

33:30 Engine drivers with us and we were waiting for the change over and this German coming back he must have been somewhere and he came back in his plane and he started, he just sprayed the whole area and flew back again, used his ammo and took off. That was our first introduction and from then on of course we met nothing else but

34:00 the German Air Force.

#### **Where were you taken to initially when you first arrived in Greece?**

Oh we were taken to Daphne first and we entrained and then we finished up, we got out, I don't know where we got out of but Larisa and Thermopylae, Brallos and Thermopylae was where the Spartans defeated the Persians at Thermopylae until some mongrel

34:30 told them of a way around. Well we were there, we got as far as Larisa and we saw Mount Aleppo, we saw Aleppo was it, yeah, we saw that and some of our battalion went further right on the border of Turkey, Yugoslavia, whatever it was there, they got to that border. And then we,

35:00 the Germans started to come back, started to come down and the first we saw was a motorcycle past Thermopylae, no before then just out of Lamia and these motorcyclist came along, Germans and they had three of them and they had

- 35:30 one in a sidecar with a machine gun, one in the front driving and one behind, three. And they came along, we started to fire, bring fire to bear and nothing happened but they turn awry, yeah we knocked them off and another one came along but the English must have had a machine gun which we never knew and they had a MMG
- 36:00 and they opened up on them and they cut the bloody motorcycle in half practically, the one that was getting away. And then we saw them land in eyesight and they started to shell our position and then all of a sudden along a tank came, a couple of tanks came, Germans and out of this hat on our right which we didn't know about came this British
- 36:30 Tank and it went whomp, whomp and it blasted the two light tanks of the Germans, blasted them off and we withdrew. That was there but what happened was this Lamia I think it was, what happened was some of our fellow had gone forward, not our battalion, they'd gone
- 37:00 forward and they went to this canteen where all the canteen was and they had all this grog and they loaded up the grog in this truck and the truck tipped upside down on the road with a bombing and that, with the German bombing the road to stop the progress and they shelled it. And we could see the truck
- 37:30 and they said, 'That's where the grog is', and the grog seem more tempting than what the enemy did, wait til it's dark we'll go out and get it he said wait til it's dark, but the Germans must have had the same idea because they started too.

**Did they bomb it?**

No, no, they must have had the same idea, they must have known the grog was there also.

**I wonder how they knew?**

I don't know. But two of our fellows got left behind, they were drunk they

- 38:00 got further up and there were drunk, but they wouldn't they'd be oblivious and they'd wake up in the slammer.

**Did they survive?**

Yeah after the war they came back after the war, we met them after the war. And they were in the bag and they worked on a farm over in Germany so they had a pretty easy existence if you like.

**So they were taken prisoner?**

Yeah, they were taken, the

- 38:30 Germans treated you fair, they were fair. And that was it and from then of course it came the withdrawal and a few other incidences but mainly just withdrawal a hundred mile a night and drive with the lights on because the Germans wouldn't bomb at night because of the mountains, the hills and the animals knew when the plane were coming. And they
- 39:00 one party the 7th Div I think it was had a dog, Holly the wog dog and they bought him back, oh yeah the animals could tell when the planes were, see the German plane and the Japanese plane they never had their motors synchronised if I may use that expression and they'd got hmmmmmmm, hmmmmmmm, hmmmmmm instead of a
- 39:30 steady drone all the time hmmmmmmmmmm like that they'd go and you could tell. But by the appearance like the Jap when you had the Zero or the Wirraway or our whatever it was a Kookaburra what's the name of the other plane no, we had the Wirraway and something else well you couldn't tell the difference as far as the shape was concerned but you could tell by the hmmmmm, hmmmm, hmmmm, that's how you
- 40:00 knew and until you saw the red sun, rising sun you knew it was a Jap. The Wirraway and Boomerang that's what it was. Was it a Boomerang, no? What was it the Wirraway and some, the one that made an Aussie, down at Fisherman Bend, they made it, I'll think of it in a minute. The same simple, simple as a Jap because the Zero was an American fighter,
- 40:30 it was an American plane built originally and the Japs took it over.

**Well we'll have to stop now and change tapes before we run out of tape.**

## Tape 5

- 00:30 **O.k. Wal just before lunch we were talking about Greece?**

Yeah.

**I was just wondering if you could talk us through the retreat?**

Well we went, we got up as far as Larisa and a little bit further up we saw Mount Olympus and we heard that the Germans, the Jerry [Germans] were coming down

- 01:00 and we got to Larisa and we saw them and we got to a place called Motorcycle Pass I don't know whether it's got a name it's before Thermopylae I know that and this motorcycle pass is where the motorbikes came, we mowed them down and you could see the German, see the enemy they were pulling their planes up, assembling them and everything ready to come.
- 01:30 So they overpowered us for the time, we just retreated and we got to a place called Corinth which is mentioned in the bible and Paul, St Paul wrote letters to Corinth and when I got there I was an idiot I said to one of the inhabitants did you ever answer Paul's letters, St Paul's letters, he looked at me like I was an idiot, which I am
- 02:00 and we were guarding on an aerodrome, several of us were attached and there was A Company the 2/6th on that side and B Company on this side now A Company were dug in, they were settled there and B Company, they called up through the night. Now we were left, 4 or 5 of us were left behind on the different section
- 02:30 and this was 26th of April, one day after Anzac Day and we got a lift with this English chap and when we got there on the vote of Corinth we said cheerio Charlie, they were dropping these paratroopers, German paratroops they came by the thousands, they estimate there was 4000, I never counted them, I never stood there to count them, the planes were swooping
- 03:00 down low, strafing and my vivid memory or the memory that lingers with me is this Greek woman she'd in the field in a furrow no I don't know what they were growing there whether it was barley or wheat or something, some grain and there she was crouched down so I joined her or we joined her. The driver of the vehicle he went straight into the trees and out of the vehicle
- 03:30 and these planes were coming down so low you could see the pilot quite plain and they're dropping the paratroops and our fellows were firing. Now about 25 to 30 of B Company which was my company that I belonged to got out. Well they came across the bridge and the bridge blew up now Greece is divided, Peloponnese
- 04:00 and Greece is there and that side where the Corinth canal goes that's Peloponnese whatever they call it and the rest is Greece down the bottom and that's where I was. So they blew it, now I've heard two stories, I saw the bridge go, I heard the thing go, it was the enemy, the Germans were on it when it went thankfully or mishankfully depends which way you look at it.
- 04:30 And I saw an Azar, a car, armoured car, little armoured car, belongs to the Azar, the British was there and it's tearing down like that and next minute whomp up when the plane swooped right on it, blasted it, while they're blasting away there not so much while the paratroopers were coming down they're not firing whatsoever
- 05:00 and the gliders came down. So A Company got caught and B Company about 30 as I said, 25 to 30 came across, straggled across and we joined them and Corinth itself was flattened, it was only a small village and the enemy, the German came down with their might, with their power, with their air power which we had none and more
- 05:30 or less flattened the place and from then on it became a retreat. We put up an effort, we put up a show to stop them, we had no tanks, our artillery did a good job, Thermopylae and at one stage there, at night time we camped at Thermopylae and we never realised
- 06:00 we were under the guns and there was this battery, the 2/2 Field Artillery, and they were about 50 or 60 yards behind us and they opened up and our eardrums got shattered oh yes that was then. And from then on virtually now there's nothing more pathetic, nothing more
- 06:30 devastation than an army in retreat and to make it more so, more stressful it's your army, the army you belong to. And there's nothing you could do, we had no air force, we had no armour, they had the lot, they had the power and the air force and it was
- 07:00 and the three Messerschmitts [German fighter plane], they told me they were [Hermann] Goerring's [Nazi propagandist] own circus, they had yellow noses painted on the plane and one had swooped right down the centre of the road and the other two would swoop on the gutters, on either side cause that's where we used to hide, go for the gutters. And the ASC [Army Service Corps], the Armoured Corps, not the Armoured Corps, the transport fellows
- 07:30 those poor chaps, they did a good job, they couldn't even know they were driving along and the next minute brrrrrr like that, they couldn't see, they did a damn good job there. Well we retired a hundred mile a day, near enough, we hid in the olives during the daytime, the Greek people were good, helped us all the way along the line although we did have, there were a couple of traitors,
- 08:00 Germans posing and he tried to divert us at one stage; I've just forgotten the name of the place now I'll think of it in a minute in Greece and there was this MP, Military Policeman diverting the traffic but thankfully our commander had a map and he said, 'That's wrong,' now we heard about the

- 08:30 Germans posing as English in Australian uniforms or British uniforms and so one of our officers, who I was a great admirer of and I considered one of the best a George Wolf he got out and he blasted him, boom cheerio Charlie so we went on our way thankfully. And we finished up getting down
- 09:00 to, after days and days we finished up getting down to Kalamata where all these olives and the Greeks were saying, 'What do we do?' We tell them, 'Take everything mate, whatever you've got we're leaving behind get into it.' And they helped us and we got to Kalamata and we don't know what's happening
- 09:30 and we got out on these boats, on the kayaks or cakes whatever they are, they're a fishing boat, Greeks and you can't rely on them too much they said, 'We'll be there eight o'clock, they said they may come at 10 or 11.' And we stayed there and there was a bit of resistance back so they detached a few of our fellows to stop the enemy, the Germans -
- 10:00 which they did, they had the tanks in, they shot them up.

**Wal can you explain to me some of the rearguard action that you would actually do on that retreat, I mean how..**

Well you'd stop there and when they came you fought, you bought rifle fire to bear and you bought guns to bear and you'd hold them up. Now they weren't in full power and they didn't know our full strength either but they knew we didn't have any

- 10:30 tanks, they knew that but they knew we had artillery and they knew we had infantry men. And you'd hold them up and they'd have to withdraw and their men, their rifles would get going, what do we do next, what do we do next cause they're on dangerous ground they don't know what we've got, they don't know whether we've laid mines, they don't know whatever and they can't blow the roads too much because they want to use them. But we blew the bridges
- 11:00 and we left some of our men behind and they had to climb, and swim up the rivers and come back and joined us later on and your absent without missing, you know missing, where are they, oh they're over there. But that's how we fought which they consider a very good retreat. When I say retreat, as I said there's nothing worse than an army when it's your own being in retreat but we fought
- 11:30 a good retreat, a withdrawal, very good as a matter of fact. And you hold them up while the others are getting away. And we fought the rearguard.

**How close did you get to the Germans on some of them?**

Shaking hands, any closer.

**That's close enough.**

Yeah. Speaking der Deutsch,

**So was that fierce fighting?**

Hmmm?

**Was that fierce fighting?**

No,

- 12:00 oh no, they didn't, we never got that far, we got probably at rifle distance, got within a few yards when they're coming on a patrol, they'd send a patrol out and we'd just knock them off. But oh no there was any, no bayonets not with them. But they did that on Crete later, we thankfully missed all, most of it or all of it. And no but they were,
- 12:30 oh the Germans yeah they were 30, 40 yards. But they were a good army, they had all the power, they had airpower, which we didn't have and I know this is rather sacrilegious I suppose when you look at it but the first one, we saw the old RAF [Royal Air Force] one day when a Hurricane hurried the other way. And that's what they said but the Hurricane went up
- 13:00 and they fought, did well and we got knocked down and the air battles that go on, you read as kids you think that you know they're neck to neck like boxers in a ring, close to close but you can hear these air battles going on up top, you look up and there they're bloody miles apart, they way they circle around. I think it took about 5 miles for a Spitfire to turn around, Hurricane by the time they got around, none of this business
- 13:30 in and out, not with those. But we used to watch them. The air battles go on and the bloody Stukas [dive bombers] would come down brrrrrr and the ack ack [anti aircraft fire], the air force Ack Ack guns they'd draw the crabs, if you saw an Ack Ack gun you took off for your bloody life because you knew that would draw the crabs, that whoomp, whoomp and down came these Stukas and they drop the bomb, and you could see the bombs coming down.
- 14:00 we weren't worried about that, you could see it dropping down oh yeah. But and the machine guns and there was one, the Messerschmitts was all right but they had one plane I don't know what it was, I would know if I racked me brain but I'm too exhausted to rack but it had a bloody tail gunner and they'd

go br,br,br,br,br oh you beauty you missed me and then the tail gunner

- 14:30 would get going br,br,br, yeah. Oh yes, real good, real good, like buggery. And we offered the best resistance we possible could, we delayed them while our other fellows got out, we fought the rearguard, our battalion, our brigade.

**Was there a bit of a feeling amongst the fellows wondering**

- 15:00 **what you were doing in Greece in the first place?**

Well we were you see we wondered why. Now the Greeks surrendered, there's the New Zealanders on the coast and the Australians here, the English were there, well they all took off, they withdrew and there we were like crows on a slaughter yard fence, left. Now that was their order for them, to withdraw

- 15:30 and of course the NZer's [New Zealanders] they stayed, they were good fighters, I not worried about, I'm not belittling not by any means and we just happen to be the last and when we got off at Kalamata where they make all these olives, it was early hours, dark, dark, see the dawn darkness over there doesn't settle til about 8 o'clock at night
- 16:00 and we're all on tenterhooks, the lot of us. We hadn't slept for days, hadn't eaten for days, hadn't wash for weeks, I suppose we stunk to high hell, it doesn't matter. You'd walk in a river and not think nothing of it and the weather wasn't exactly warm, it was as cold as a mother-in-law's kiss and we're waiting on these ships to come in,
- 16:30 boats and some got stranded on the rocks whether it was deliberate or not we don't know. And there was a kite coming through he must have been out strafing somewhere, annoying somebody and just gone dusk and he's coming through and he had one egg left, one bomb and he dropped it, we could see. And here he comes and he drops it and this
- 17:00 ship the kayak the vessel, a fishing vessel belonged to the Greeks overturned, more or less went like that and a lot of people fell in the drink, now at darkness sets in, at dusk and I heard a voice say, 'I can't swim, I can't swim' and I heard somebody else say, 'Now's a bloody good chance to learn.' I thought it was the greatest, funniest bloody joke I've ever heard crack in
- 17:30 the war because your tensions are high, you nerves are steel and you don't sleep, we hadn't slept, we hadn't eaten for days.

**You hadn't eaten anything?**

No, oh you sleep, you stand up and you sleep standing up, believe it or not. You can sleep standing up like a bloody horse. You wake up, you've been asleep leaning against a tree, you go to sleep, olive trees.

- 18:00 So they shipped us off, put us off and I'll say this about the Royal Navy and the men they were very calm, very calm indeed. And some of the fellows said bugger this we'll never get off and they took to the hills
- 18:30 in Crete. So my mate and I tossed up and said, 'What are we going to do?' 'Oh well if we don't get off on the next boat we'll take to the hills too.' So we're taking to hills and they said, 'Right a few more.' And we were one of the last, that was the 31st of May, 41 I think it was 41, 42, 41.

**This is going over to Crete?**

Yeah.

- 19:00 No, yeah but they were going to unload us, we got off in the Ajax, it was a battleship it was in the River Platt against the big German ship was there and the German went ashore and sort sanctuary, he scuttled it to grab Spain was it? No. no anyway
- 19:30 the Captain of the German vessel committed suicide because Hitler told him to scuttle his boat yeah, to grab Spain, there was the Ajax, the Venger and the Uwer, the three ships that fought the River Platt whatever you call it down in South America yeah. Well we got off in the Ajax, we dropped at Crete and they said right you're going on blah, blah, no, no,
- 20:00 yes, no, no. Now the 2/7th Battalion our sister battalion they were on the Costa Rica cargo vessel I suppose, whatever you like to call it and they got a near miss and the plates were blown, the Germans come under the pile, you know under air attack and
- 20:30 the destroyers went alongside and latched on and the men, the 2/7th Battalion lined up and just calmly went onboard, everybody was saved and they went back to Crete, they steamed in, this is before, and from then on the men as we know, history records, they moved around always in 2's or 3's.
- 21:00 Now while we're there I don't know where he was, he was a Pommy, English Officer and this is in Crete when we were in the Suda Bay, there was 19 ships, 19 vessels sunk, you can count their masts, I counted 19. He said, 'I say chaps all you have to do is get yourself a load of ammunition take a box of ammunition and get yourself up the top there, the hill and

- 21:30 and you'll be able to pot the Jerries as he comes along, oh bully for you too, bully for you too, oh by god to be utterly exciting so.' Yeah like buggery, cheerio Charlie where'd he come from? No, no, thank you. And they came along and they got our meat tickets, they took our arms off us and we had
- 22:00 Greeks, Cypriots, Palestinians you name it onboard and they said, 'What's this 04 on the back?' That's a blood group and they had people to identify you in case they thought you know 5th Columnist [spies, traitors] get in. Oh yeah they were very security minded in the navy and they were a good mob, good mob, without them we would
- 22:30 have been buggered. Without the navy, the British Navy or the Australian Navy also for that fact. And so we stayed there for a while and the planes started to come over see Cheerio Charlie get out of this. I don't know whether I told a captain or whether he knew me, so we lit out for the cactus and we went to Alexandria, got to Alex I don't know the next day.

**So you got out of Crete before the main...?**

Yeah yeah, before, no

- 23:00 May the 31st, yeah we left on May the 1st, the 17th they started, that when they started the boys. We were there on the second and they, 'Do you want to go?' I said, 'No bugger it.' We was hungry, starving and they took us to Alex and they had us all lined up there to eat, we ate the table the wood and all.
- 23:30 I kid you not, we slept for weeks and a car would only have to backfire, we'd all get out of bed and go for the nearest hole. Not quite that but it took us a while to realise that we were safe. When you've had weeks and weeks of bombing and strafing it not exactly conducive to good health.

**Wal what do you reckon for you was the worst of all of that?**

- 24:00 Which?

**What was the worst of all of that for you?**

Oh I think the biggest fright I got was when I went with the Italian and I'm crawling through this trench, walking through just about and I came to this blanket, I came to this wall, there's a wall there, a parapet, wall rather as you were

- 24:30 and I pulled the blanket away, the cover it wasn't a blanket, I pulled the cover and there was this Italian with his rifle and I'm looking down the barrel and the barrel looks that big when you're looking at it, I kid you not. And I said, 'Naprale mani, put your hands up yeah. I had to change me underpants but never mind.

**What'd he do?**

- 25:00 Nothing. He put the rifle down and said, 'How you going mate?' No he was more frightened than I and I wondered why he never pulled the trigger as a matter of fact. But that was my biggest.

**And where was that?**

Oh this was Bardia, first up.

**Bardia yeah.**

And the next time was over in Greece and the plane swooped down and

- 25:30 I'm in a hole and the tree around me, I dived in this hole, this planes swooping right down, a fighter he was, he's strafing so I thought damn this and the bullets you could see them, oh not see the bullets, see the burst, so I entered the hole as he's swooping over but as I jumped in this hole there was gores bush or some damn thing, thorny bush and the bloody spike pierced me nose and down there was snakes,
- 26:00 was these black snakes and there I was plane circling around, there I was and the rest of the company they're up, when I say the rest of the company, about 50 of us, they're up there and they're all scattering too see, they're all hiding, this bloke oh, that was the funny part of it, this is lovely this is Wal you've got yourself in nice sort of trouble here. And all the, what
- 26:30 I'm still annoyed at, not annoyed but when you think over these years is in the packs I had souvenirs, nice souvenirs, paintings that I shaved from the Italian paintings and that and I had a nice from Razeanni's palace up in Libya beautiful oh
- 27:00 what was it silverware, lovely silverware oh you could see oh absolutely beautiful, knives and forks and that lovely. This would be lovely, my grandmother would love this, my Mum would love it, and there I had that in my pack and they took our packs off us, all of us and they lined them up and booby trapped them, yeah and blokes had money in there, blokes had this Italian Lira and that's all.
- 27:30 Booby trapped them yeah.

**Was this when you were getting off Greece?**

Off Greece yeah, and they had them lined up and I went up and they said I've got them booby trapped

and we complained, what's the use of complaining when they're booby trapped and we're moving out, so all you've got is your Greatcoat and your rifle and you had your pack up there and the water bottle. There's your pack there with all the goodies that we knocked off in the Middle East, oh not knocked off, fell into our hands lets say.

28:00 And oh yeah this was beautiful cutlery, you've got no idea, 'Where'd you get that from, where'd you get that?' up there oh yeah. And not only I, other fellows lost a lot stuff yeah.

**And this might sound like an obvious question but for the sake why weren't you allowed to take your packs with you?**

Don't ask me? I've never found out today to this and even in the book,

28:30 when I read the book, our book, they just lightened us of our packs, took them off us. I don't know why, I don't know, whether it's a ploy for the Germans or not, we lost good officers there, we lost a couple of good officers, a lot of men too. But we lost, when they strafed, oh we were strafed for days, bombed for days, not a day went past without being strafed. And

29:00 there was this several mile straight from Larisa and this road is several roads straight, straight as a die and when you went there of a daylight you were defying death and you'd see them, we'd be up in the hill and you'd see a traveller going along and the plane would just swoop like that and so we moved at night, we got caught once that was enough for us.

29:30 And so we moved at night and we went slowly with the lights off and all they had was the taillight of the vehicle in front and someone said, someone with brains said, 'The planes don't come of a night, switch the bloody lights on.' So away we travelled a hundred miles a day instead of a block, wait til the Jerry came

30:00 and on we'd go again.

**You wouldn't be under any kind of artillery or shellfire by the Germans at night?**

Oh yeah, they shelled us but mainly we, air attack, air attack but our 2/2nd our Field gunners did a bloody good job oh yeah they stuck to their post and they oh yeah a lot got lost of course but oh yeah they

30:30 were good artillery crowd they did well. But mainly it was aerial, see the Germans was an efficient army but he had all the power and we didn't have any air force and when you haven't got an air force you're beggared, you've got nothing at all. And all we had was Infantry but admittedly without your infantry you can do nothing, nothing whatsoever. The Infantry

31:00 occupies the place but they had the tanks and they had the airpower, we didn't have anything. And why we went there I don't know. They said we diverted after the war they said the Russians and all that came in and all that, they made an excuse but I think it was a boo boo [mistake]. That's my personal opinion I don't know, I wasn't leading the place at the time.

**Were you and the boys angry at Churchill [then Prime Minister of England] at the time?**

31:30 We never liked him after that, no way in the world did we liked him, not after sending back there, no way in the world, no way. And but I suppose at the time he was a good leader in a way, 'Never before in this human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.' Oh yeah some bloke wrote the speech for him, somebody spoke it for him. But Winston, oh no, he was there

32:00 oh yeah Winston, I'm yeah WC, Winston Churchill. 'I'll say old chap.' Yeah see no we was bloody crook on him at the time and we'd just came back from, when we're back to Alexandria, quick, quick, quick, his deputy came across, not Anthony Eden,

32:30 good looking bloke, he came across to pay his respect. Now we'd only got in a few days, we did a nineteen mile bloody march thank you very much, they never had the transport to help us and we had a nineteen mile march and there was Anthony Eden and he said, 'Righto men you march to attention' and Eden was talking to some bloke, didn't even pay us any respect so

33:00 fingers up to you Anthony Eden he went right down in our estimates yeah. I told you about the time in Ceylon did I? No, when we got to Ceylon about I told you yes about the Duke of Gloucester. Oh no but the desert show was good, the Greek show told us just how powerful the enemy were. And

33:30 when we got back I slept for days and days after that, they were dribbling back. Hill 69 we went back to, our old camp, the brigade, when I say the brigade, one battalion was missing, the 7th Battalion, the 2/7th on Crete and they formed a new battalion from the stragglers and they took some of our 6th Battalion, 2/5th

34:00 Battalion boys to make up officers. And what it is a battalion is never destroyed as long as you've got one man as long as that battalion, the battalion is never destroyed as long as there's one. And they were coming back in dribs, and they were arriving weeks after, coming back and so they had a meeting between the senior officers and the senior NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers]

- 34:30 of the brigade and they called them up and I was a corporal at the time and they said you take over the parade, now I had the parade which was the brigade, there was about 50 of us went back, that's what we had. , 'Righto fellows down the road we go, now don't piss off yet, don't go yet until we get around the bend so the bastards can't see us. And don't get in the bloody orange orchards they're over there
- 35:00 waiting for us,' the Arabs. And when I went around the bend I was the only one there. So away we went, back to our donga, back to our hut, crawl in through the wadis and up the hut and slept. Oh yeah.

**They didn't spring you?**

Hmmm?

**They didn't spring you?**

No, no they were too busy inside. And blokes were coming back days after.

**Were you keeping an eye out for your mates?**

- 35:30 Oh yeah of course you do, of course you look after them, he looks after you, you look after him.

**Did you lose some fellows...?**

Oh yeah, yeah.

**In Greece and Crete.**

Yeah I had them and bingo down he went. And I told you about the two brothers didn't I? Where they dropped at the same. Oh no I had them, a chap when we went

- 36:00 away, your parents are suppose to sign your document, you're underage well this chap and I went down there and the Sergeant who was a First World War Digger he was doing all the indoctrination, whatever the paperwork and he said, 'You fellows haven't got your parents consent you'd better go home and get it.' 'We said, 'Yeah, miles away.'
- 36:30 So we went up the hill waited about half an hour and we signed one another's document and the sergeant, 'Oh that's what I like about you, showed initiative, showed initiative, you're right, you're in.' Officer material, no thank you we've got more brains than that. So he was bayoneted in the throat coming through the kunai [grass] in New Guinea.
- 37:00 And our Owen guns and their Tommy Guns opened the enemy up, split him, cut him into four pieces and down he went, yeah. That how he went. That was the fellow that signed and I signed his. And the boy opposite the road, over the road,
- 37:30 he and I were there and we never joined together but he went over on the first or the advance party to Greece and a bomb came down the funnel of the ship they were on and it exploded and he was down amongst the, they had the trucks and that
- 38:00 the transport there and he finished up, he got killed, there was 5 of them got killed and he was one of them, the 5 and when I returned home, his mother came across and said, 'Why didn't you bring me son back?' Good.
- 38:30 Oh no, I didn't see him. But you get that way and after a while you accept it, it means nothing, you feel remorse but you don't, you know you don't go down whinging and crying on your hands and knees.
- 39:00 And oh it tends, you always feel sorry don't worry about that and you swear to Christ you'll get the bastards that did it and when you do, I wouldn't say you take the light, nothing at all after you knock, after you do one it's a bit like going down buying a packet of Weeties, you think nothing of it, cause if you start to think of it, you start to brood
- 39:30 about it and you wouldn't bloody well sleep. And what it was see the desert was all right, that educated us, the Greece showed us there was an enemy there which was strong and powerful but up there in New Guinea it wasn't only the enemy we fought it was the bloody jungle and the disease, the disease knocked more of us out than what the enemy did.
- 40:00 And if you could possibly hate anybody at the time, or dislike or you took pleasure let's put it that way, I wouldn't say a sadist or sadistic pleasure you took but you never worried about knocking a Jap off. In fact you glory in it. Oh well when I say glory I shouldn't say that, that's too strong
- 40:30 a word. But knock anyone off yeah, Oh beaut you'll be able to sleep tonight, bloody oath I will, things like that. Now he was a fanatic and he was a fanatic, he was a fighter bloody fanatic. And they get there they scream out, they'd yelled out, 'Banzai,' and away they go, they do honk honk honk in front of you, up and down and do a war dance and scream out
- 41:00 and as they came you'd just shoot them, cheerio Charlie come back next week I'll give you more.

**O.k. Wall we'll pause there.**



## Tape 6

00:31 **Wal, let's talk about going to Syria after...?**

Well when we came back the Syrian campaign was on and our men were coming back made of 5th Battalion, the 2/5th Battalion they hadn't been hit so much and they had more members than what the 6th and 7th did. The 7th was non-existent because some of the 5th and some of the 6th went over to make up the

01:00 senior NCO's eventually becoming officers there. Well the 5th Battalion was mainly intact, so when they said right the 7th Div they went up to Syria and we went up there but this 5th got in before we did, they saw the fighting, we didn't see much of it at all. Nothing but we went in later,

01:30 we went and followed them up there and from then we saw on the way up a beautiful place Syria and on the way along the beachfront or whatever you like to call it they had as you go along little oh caves, little worshipping places and you come to a mountain where you wound and wound around

02:00 the coast road and you see these places where they used to worship, little eeny shrines cut in, little eeny things.

### **Into the rock?**

Into the rock, yeah and they'd have a photo or something, an idol there, a statue of somebody and they used to go. Well we got to a place called Dejon [?], we went there, Homs went to Baalbek where

02:30 the Lion Heart, Richard the Lion Heart he was up there before and the crusades and all that and we had a good time and when we got to Baalbek and you're overlooking Mount Carmel rather we got to Mount Carmel and you look down and you could see the harbour, it was

03:00 absolutely beautiful and you can imagine what the place was like when the crusades were there and that. Absolutely lovely it was. But the snow started to come and we was at Dejon and we got snowed in and for nine solid days it snowed and you couldn't leave your hut, it snowed snow. And the

03:30 2/7th Battalion they were suppose to bring us up the rations, we were without any tucker and their Bren Gun carriers were suppose to come up, they set out with all the food in for us, they of course broke down. The 2/7th Battalion they loaded up, instead of when the carriers broke

04:00 down they loaded up the men, their men and they ploughed through the snow much to their glee I may as well say, they laughed their heads off yeah there's snow coming down and they've got miles and miles and they've got to go up 5 or 600 feet, climbing up through the snow to bring us tucker.

### **Are you being sarcastic about them being gleeful?**

Oh yeah of course, they'd be, wouldn't you laugh

04:30 your head off in the snow carrying tucker up, you know weighted down with about 40, 50 pounds of tucker, tins of bully beef and they brought it up and at each mouthful I had I could hear the blokes swearing his head off. 'You rotten,' yeah.

### **How would they carry it, in a backpack?**

Oh no on their packs and everything, oh yeah they had them packed up. And I was talking to one this morning as a matter of fact, my old mate he finished

05:00 up a Colonel and he was there, he was the 2/7th and we were talking about Dejon. And when the snow, we were more or less guards, safety guards, that's all. And you got to these places, Beirut and that and you'd see the French Foreign Legion, the 5th Battalion they got into a bit but the 7th Battalion did a good job they

05:30 got the French out and the people up there they were switching like you didn't know, you couldn't understand because some were Vichy French type, Vichy for the French, for the enemy and some were for us, you couldn't understand. But we enjoyed ourselves and when I say enjoyed ourselves the little glimpse that we did have, when we went into town, into Beirut or somewhere

06:00 we enjoyed ourselves; Anzac Harry's and we enjoyed ourselves. But what we found out, our drivers of our transport when they first went there they left the water in the radiators and the heads got cracked, the heads of the motors all got cracked.

### **Because it was so cold?**

Yeah, and when you freeze it

06:30 you know when it thaws out bingo, away it goes. So they learnt to drain their motors before. And another story which I may as well tell you we go, a fellow, one of the boys, he used to take his boots off at night and this is during the snow, all the snow and he found a bit of ice covered

- 07:00 and he said to me, 'Hey my boots have got ice in.' I said, 'Well it's only ice, water forms ice, fellow, Christ but snow doesn't.' he said, 'Well that means someone's urinating in my boots.' I said, 'Yes the bastards,' you know I said, 'damn decent chaps.' We go on leave and we find this skull on our way back, one of the dead French, so what he does halves
- 07:30 the skull and he keeps it, and, 'What do you do with that? , 'Never mind.' Now we used to have a potbelly stove, quite a number of the huts did, we were up the top here, the Poms were down below and we're on top of the hill and we've got these huts and they had these potbelly stoves with soup in it and you'd get up in the night time and you'd put a bit of wood underneath to keep the fire
- 08:00 alight, to keep the plates going warm because it's cold, the snow was coming right through the bloody window and everywhere, cracks and this particular time he said, 'Right,' and he brought the skull back, the half of skull and he put it in the pot, this is at night time and of course the blokes would get up at night and have some soup and in the morning they get there and they see this skull and out, they went blahhh.
- 08:30 Blahhh, and from then on he could take his boots off and they never had no ice in them anymore.
- He got his own back, he let them have it?**
- Yeah but what happened in the first place, they had the toilet, oh these are very humorous I suppose. They had the toilet and we had hessian around the toilets
- 09:00 and you'd wait til a bloke walked in and warmed the seat, you know brushed all the snow and ice off, or snow and you wait til he warmed it up and when he finished you'd shoot in and grab it because you'd find there'd be a line up.
- Isn't that funny, I wonder if that old English expression just warming the seat up for you, if that's where that came from?**
- I don't know but we used just go outside to deposit, oh when it got
- 09:30 when it got that bad, and came the thaw it all rolled downhill to the Pommies camp.
- So it doesn't matter?**
- No they wouldn't know the difference.
- Can I ask you Wal, with Syria were you there at the beginning of the Syria Campaign?**
- Yeah, but no, no, we went up after it started, oh yeah after it started, we was in Greece.
- Right so you came as the second battalion in there?**
- We went up, our 5th Battalion went up to help the 7th
- 10:00 and it was a battle on for young and old too and the 5th Battalion them were in block you may as well say and then we went up to join them and we more or less carried out what would you say peace work or something like that, guard duty, escort, you know guard duty. And it was there that I met, what was the name, the actress came out, that played in
- 10:30 **American Actress?**
- No the English actress
- Vivien Leigh?**
- Gone with the wind, Vivien Leigh.
- Was she so beautiful?**
- Well what happened is this, I'm at Haifa, not Haifa, Baalbek or somewhere, see it's all right to say now, your mind goes, you know you've been to so many places and you can't exactly pinpoint
- 11:00 to anyone time at the one particular place where you've been and I don't know whether it was Haifa, I think it was Haifa, I think it was this side, yeah, well she came out with Alice Deleezier, now Alice Deleezier, I'd never heard of her but she was a French singer and apparently one of the top liners, well she was a top liner and Vivien Leigh was just a bit player, now she'd made
- 11:30 Gone with the Wind but it hadn't been released and whether she's promoting at the time I do not know, I don't know the facts, all we know is they said, 'Right off you go and you're an escort for Alice Deleezier' now she is a noted French one, she's big time and the others are just garbage as far as it goes because well therefore
- 12:00 the elite, our army boss, high up, they took Alice Deleezier and us knucklehead, me corporal with a couple of blokes took Vivien Leigh this small English girl and I said, 'What's your name?' 'Leigh', 'How do you do, blah, blah, blah.' And so we escorted her around and everything. Now when the

- 12:30 movie came out of course she zooms by, years later I was in the fire brigade and I'm fireman that used to pull down the safety curtain up, 5 tonne of safety curtain in those days, you had to roll them down, the fireman on duty at the theatres, you had live theatre in those days and Miss Leigh was there with her husband of the time, what was his name, he was another film actor?
- 13:00 **Lawrence Olivier?**
- Lawrence Olivier. Oh Vivien Leigh was there performing at Her Majesty's or His Majesty's whatever it was, whoever was in charge at the time, her majesty or his majesty, her majesty and I'm there and I met her when she's going in early. I said, 'Excuse me Miss Leigh.' 'Yes' I said, 'I was your escort over at Haifa.' She said, 'Oh you were the corporal.'
- 13:30 I said, 'I was the corporal.' She said, 'Oh come walk along with me I'm going back to get changed, going to get ready, come and tell me how are you and all this.' So I went back, escorted her to her dressing room and, 'ta ta Charlie' she said, that's very nice and she remembered you know how she was and she told me then she said, 'She was just a bit girl and Alice Deleezier was the main attraction,' and whether I enjoyed the war and all the rest of it you know. Oh yeah you do that.
- 14:00 **Did she give you free tickets to the show?**
- I didn't need them, I was the fire brigade.
- And was she, she sounds like a nice woman?**
- Well, she was and yeah yeah, she was but these are only fleeting moments you know, you read them for that.
- Was she as beautiful in person as she is on the screen?**
- Oh yeah she was a good looking doll, I'll tell you. Brrrrrrrrrr.
- I suppose that means great looking?**
- 14:30 She, oh yeah Brrrrrrrr. Yeah she was very attractive, very attractive. That's Vivien Leigh, low and behold yeah.
- So when you first went to Syria did you go to Alexandria first again?**
- Yeah we was at Alex, oh we camped at Alex, yeah the salt lake there, we went in the sulphur. We were camped at a place when we went to Egypt
- 15:00 what's the name of the bloody joint, 13 Helwan, a place called Helwan, it was 13 mile out of Cairo and that is where they dug the stone, some of the stone to build the pyramid, now they've got a sulphur baths there, like a 50 yard pool and sulphur, it's sulphur, you swim in sulphur, sulphur bath and I swim in it and the Gippo
- 15:30 'Oh good for you, good for you.' And I saw others and they come for miles to swim in this sulphur and all you can smell is sulphur. Well how it went, like I said 13 and they dragged these stones and they put them on rafts on the Nile and floated them down to Egypt where they built the pyramids. Now we went through the pyramids, we climbed the pyramids
- 16:00 and spent time there and what was it, 452 feet or something, 252 feet high, 12 and a half acres, it's 400 yards this way, 400 yards, I don't know but we measured it out at the time, we climbed up the top because they've got a lot of pyramids throughout Egypt, not as big, this is Cheops we climbed and the three
- 16:30 Gazier [actually Giza] or whatever they call it.
- Gaza?**
- No, no, Mena, Mena and no Gaza is miles away from there. And oh what's the name, anyway that's of Cairo and you marvel at how good they were, the architect, the design.
- 17:00 You go inside the pyramid and you marvel at how astute they were without any machinery, what we know of today. Oh yeah a marvellous piece of constuction. Because there's a lot of pyramids right around, smaller ones. Whether they're built for tombstones or what, memorials or what but they're nothing like the ones where they are.
- 17:30 **Wal did you come across any conflict in Syria?**
- Any conflicts?
- In Syria?**
- No we didn't have any, we never saw any fighting, us mob, no, not us but the 5th did all the work, they went in well before we came up, we were guard duties mainly. Shelling petrol
- 18:00 to the cab drivers and things like that. And instead of filling up, we were on petrol dump and to make a deener you sold petrol, we thought bugger this. So what we used to do is get empty drums and fill most

of them with water and then pour about 4 or 5 inches of petrol on top and cabs were breaking down all over Beirut. They'd stick their finger in, petrol

18:30 oh petrol, petrol, oh course it's bloody petrol what do you.

**What about food, did you try selling them food or anything like that?**

Food, no we didn't have, we were guarding the petrol. No in Greece, over in Greece when we first got attacked, this place came down early and we had, they said, 'Right get up

19:00 there and guard the dump.' Now the trains were coming down from way up Yugoslavia wherever it was, coming down through Greece with immigrants, you know fleeing the German and their packed in this dog boxes, in these trains and this girl came out, I on this bloody, guarding this tucker, Bully beef and what not, beans

19:30 and three feet, four feet high and about 50 yards long, watching it at night time and the train pulled in and this girl came out and she went like this, I said, 'Mangare,' you know Manga and nodded her head and I looked around and I said, 'Here take this' and I get it out, I took a case and I threw it in and

20:00 with that some others jumped out and grabbed a case too. And someone came along and stopped them, now I'm bloody sorry when I think of it that I never gave them more, let them take the bloody lot because the Germans would have got it anyway.

**Well you weren't to know?**

Oh we knew they were coming down we, we knew when we got there because the British were retreating, they were

20:30 going out and they said, 'You'll never stop them with those pop guns. They've got tanks as big as bloody houses mate. Tanks as big as bloody houses coming down. You'll never stop them with those pop guns. All you can do is bloody look at them and you'll have to run like us.' This is what they were telling us when we were moving up. Oh no, so and that's where we became an Anzac Corps. They formed us into an Anzac Corps again,

21:00 the Anzacs, the New Zealanders and us. We had New Zealanders on the coast, the Greek Army in between and us and then the Greek Army surrendered naturally to save his country from destruction. They declared the place an open city which means you know anyone can come in and I don't want you to destroy Athens, I don't want you to destroy the place.

21:30 And they left us doing the fighting and the Brits. Kiwis [New Zealanders].

**Wal besides selling petrol to the Arabs in a sort of black market manner in Syria what else did you do there in Syria before you came back to Australia?**

What else did we do in Syria? Oh went to the pictures, had a few of the pictures and go on guard and do all this and then shovel snow,

22:00 clear the roads. We were slaves, and you cleared the roads.

**Who were you slaves too?**

Well on the roads, we cleared the roads.

**To the British though?**

No, no for our mob, for our mob.

**We were just slaves for the ...**

No we were doing all the work the roadwork and clearing the road so the traffic would move through and get everything organised to take over the whole command of the place. There was still isolated pockets further up but we didn't get

22:30 they got as far as the Turkish border.

**Why do you think the Australian Government after the withdrawal of Greece and Crete made you go to Syria?**

Well because of the free French. You see the French declared war and Syria were French and they came down, the Germans were coming down and things like this, the French they were the opposition, they came down. Now the story goes on that they sent

23:00 I think it was the 14th Battalion, yeah the 14th they sent them in with fur felt hats on thinking oh well they won't fire on us because Australians their free, but they went back and they took their fur felts off and put their tin hats on. And years [later] stories emerge how it changed three times, the French would move in, our blokes would send a patrol in and the French would move out, with no one there. And in goes our

23:30 blokes, no one there and that they've withdraw and the French would occupy the place. This is the

stories you hear. And we met fellows in the Legion, they met an Australian in the Legion, oh yeah and the mountains up on top, you've got to climb up and get up there, shinny up the mountains, it's very hilly country, Syria, very hilly and

24:00 very beautiful too at the same time. They even formed a ski club, they did, they formed a ski club up there. And when the peace was over, when they signed the peace. And oh yeah they formed a ski club and away they went these fellows skiing away, yodelling you know, getting on, not me no way, into Beirut, into the highlights, getting there

24:30 Anzac Harry's. whooping it up you know getting a bit of go life amongst the fellows.

**Did you become friends during any of this time with anyone else in another battalion?**

Oh yeah, a battalion is like a parent, it's your mother, it's your father, it's your home and your sister battalion

25:00 is your brother. Your 5th, 6th and 7th a Brigade you're one and all. You're one and all and you love one another, when I say love you know you care for them and, 'I belong to, good on you mate you bloody beauty.' 'I'm in the 6th good on you,' and you put the hand of friendship and you bond, you don't have to, you don't express it anyway but you just know it.

25:30 That you're there. Oh yeah my mate he's the 2/7th Battalion and we've got now 50, 60 odd years.

**Gees you'd know each other pretty well then?**

Oh yeah, yeah.

**When did you hear about having to come back to Australia from Syria?**

No, we were, where were we? I don't know where we were at the time when we heard the Japs were attacking

26:00 the joint, no Colombo, Ceylon. They'd bunged us off and that's right we heard about the Japanese and they dropped us off in Ceylon because the Japs were going to attack there and they did attack, they attacked on it was Easter Sunday 1942, 1941 whatever it was 41 there, they

26:30 attacked Colombo. Now we were unloading ships when these planes came in and they bombed them and from memory which tends to be a bit straight I think our aircraft, our fighters bought down 15 Japs, they were on the fleet they came in, in the fleet and that was there.

27:00 And we were unloading the ships at that particular time that they came in. Of course the town folk took off for the hills, left, right and centre and we were hot on the heels but they overran us, they were faster than feet. Very fleet of foot they were. And that was it, we were camped at Lake Cogula [?] and that was where the airplane base was,

27:30 seaplane and they were the first to discover the Japs coming in. Now I went down there you could hear them talking on the two-way radio, on the radio from the pilot to the, and you could hear them, now we were down there Cogula and it was a lake. And it was outside Colombo, miles out but then they shot a group of us down, but amazing, a funny incident occurred at the time.

28:00 We're patrolling the beaches, guarding the beaches, 12 guns for twenty miles that's how good we were, a brigade, strung out. And we dug these holes, trenches to stop the enemy from coming in, suppose to. If he did come, attack we were there.

28:30 And what happened is this sea turtle came up and it deposited eggs.

**In the trench?**

No, it dug, a big turtle came up. Now some brilliant brain, officer saw it and said, 'My god who's patrolling this beach, who's on patrol

29:00 here, this is a Japanese landing, tanks landing.' They saw the tracks of the turtle and they thought it was the tracks of a bloody tank, fair dinkum and it turned around and it went out to sea, and it's making a noise you know, this Japanese, it's a Japanese tank, amphibious tank, honest to God. And of course they

29:30 bought up the general, they bought up the air force, the admirals and everybody in the world. And they said, 'Who in the hell's patrolling this beach,' and by this time of course, Bernie Dam who I mentioned before, big Bernie he was a corporal there, now he came from Queensland and he knew all about these sea turtles, he never put it in his report, he's down the Salvo Shop, whatever it was the

30:00 aid shop in Colombo and of course by this time the whole bloody information, ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] whatever you like to call it, everybody's into it, Japanese and down they go and they search for Bernie and they find him, 'Where were you?', 'Of course I was, why what's wrong?' 'There's a Japanese amphibious tank there.' 'That's not, dig down, he said

30:30 dig down where the turn and find out for yourselves you stupid clots.' And they dug down and of course got all these turtle eggs. Yeah oh they thought,

**Did they say anything like, 'Gee I'm stupid?'**

No, no. It was funny, it was humorous.

**So even on your way back to Australia you were there when the Japanese invaded**

31:00 **Ceylon?**

Yeah they bombed the joint.

**They bombed Ceylon?**

On Easter Sunday, 42. They came in and they bombed the joint and the harbour where we were and the British planes were there and they came in and the navy was there, the Brit Navy was there they sent up all the firepower that they had, what guns they were. And the shore batteries opened up

31:30 and I think there was 15 planes shot down. Oh yeah you could see them, you could see them going out.

**And how long were you there then before you came back to Australia?**

We was there for 2 months, 2 and a half months I think. And that was where I told you about the guard, when they formed us for the guard to meet the Duke of Gloucester.

**But you racked off?**

Oh they bought us home.

**So that's when you came back to Australia?**

Yeah, they bought us back

32:00 to Australia, then we took a march through Melbourne to the applause of the crowd and then they shot us up to Greta on our way to New Guinea.

**Oh so you went to the Atherton Tablelands?**

Yeah we went up there after.

**To train?**

Yeah to train up there, jungle warfare. But rather humorous, may I tell this? Don't tell anyone where you're going, this is after the march and we have a month's leave or something. But

32:30 after 2 or 3 days when you're home, I bought home 13 pound of tea, 13 pound; I bought home all these stockings, which you couldn't get.

**Did you have sisters?**

Yeah. Oh yeah and girlfriends. Anyway they lined up there, I gave them these 15 denier they were,

**Oh beautiful.**

Weren't they ever?

**Silk stockings?**

Yeah silk stockings and I had thirteen pound of tea but don't tell anybody, don't tell anyone I got it,

33:00 because of all the coupons over here.

**To get tea?**

Yeah well the bloke said to me, 'What do you think of me suit Wal? I said, '20 pounds for the coupon, 4 pound for the suit.' That's what they had. And you got a petrol allowance so we gave it to publican and after about 4 or 5 days after you relieve yourself and told everybody of what you knew and gave all the gifts out which you bought back. You'd go and gather for your mate,

33:30 you go looking for one another. And you weren't happy unless you saw your mate, unless you got amongst you know a tight knit bond like that.

**What was it like to come back to Australia and sleep on clean sheets and?**

Oh when we got back, we saw how white the people were, you know we're used to seeing the sunburnt and the dark and everybody, you see the wharfies [wharf workers] down there, how are these bastards and they're

34:00 the wharf blokes. And oh joy and fine.

**Did your parents come down to Melbourne to meet you or did you wait until you got to...?**

Oh no, no, no, this was all silent nobody knew.

**Did you know that you'd be going to New Guinea or to the islands?**

No, no we didn't know at the time no we didn't. And they lined us up at, we went out to, where were we at? Outside of Seymour, just trying to think of the name of

- 34:30 the camp, about 12 miles out of Seymour, I've forgotten the name of it, doesn't matter, I'll think of it. Nagambie, near there, Nagambie and we were there for a while and they said, 'Righto fellows you're off to New Guinea.' Well we took leave from there that's right; they gave us leave from there. And when we formed back again they said, 'Right
- 35:00 you're off to New Guinea.' And they took us up, they shipped us up to Greta and that is when they told us, this is just outside of where the mine is, not Cessnock, not Castlemaine, what's the name of it? New South Wales where all the mines, right on the...yeah the boxer came from there, Les Darcy, anyway they shifted up to there but this is rather humorous
- 35:30 so we wanted to phone home but you're not allowed to tell them where you are so this bloke gets on the blower and there's a line-up about half a mile long waiting to use the phone and he said, 'I'm in Greta Mum,' he must have been deaf or she must have been deaf, he didn't need a bloody phone by the way he was shouting, she's in Melbourne. 'I'm in Greta Mum, no I don't want to meet you, no I didn't want to meet you.
- 36:00 I'm in Greta.' 'When are you coming?' 'I'm not coming home I'm just'. This was going on and we're there and you could hear him. What's the name of the joint? Newcastle yeah. Oh Les Darcy was a boxer he came from there, yeah the mine. A big mining place, coal mine and we're in Greta. And bugger me boots,
- 36:30 beggar me boots, guess what happens. We go on leave, take a day off, go on leave and they had a Field Service Security, we'd never heard of them before but they're Field Service Security they go around and make sure that everything's safe and secure. And we had our rifles there locked up in the tent, bingo chain through and off we went. We came back and they weren't there.
- 37:00 'Where in the bloody hell our rifles?' 'Oh they said the Field Service Security's got them.' 'Who the hell are they?' And they told us. 'Where are the rifles?' They said, 'Down the hut, down there.' So this 60 by 20 army hut, we peered in window and we saw the rifles. Bingo, bingo wait til darkness descended on the camp
- 37:30 in we went, there wasn't one thing left, not a thing in that hut. We took the lot.

**Wal can I ask you about the training at the Atherton Tablelands?**

Oh yeah.

**Did they try to get you ready for the jungle, was that the idea?**

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And they had us operating with tanks, silly isn't it, stupid but operating with them. They got us training with the jungle, miles of marching, miles of digging

- 38:00 and bought men down, told us and but when we got to Lae, as you were, to Milne Bay it was three years to the day that we joined, three years to the day the battalion joined, yeah, three years.

**So it was September 42, was it?**

November, October the

- 38:30 20th or the 22nd when we formed the battalion, oh we joined October 20th and that's when landed up there October the 20th.

**Gee.**

Three years to the day. Now within one month there was 125 down with malaria, the battalion strength, robbed like that. Now I was,

- 39:00 weeks later well we swam there and that, and weeks later I was taken, I was the senior man, senior sergeant there was no one else there, the CSM were all with malaria and I'm marching what's left of the company about 80 if that, 60 men on parade, marching down.
- 39:30 And instead of having a column, I had the column there, instead of having the marker in front I had the tail, I had them reversed and I was thinking to myself from up there, how in the hell am I going to get this reversed with the tape going round, put the head of the column up there and that's when I collapsed. Next thing I woke up down Charters
- 40:00 Towers.

**We'll have to stop there Wal but maybe you can tell Chris [interviewer] what happened to you?**

Yeah

## Tape 7

- 00:30 **What did they tell you about the Japanese before you went up to New Guinea?**
- 00:40 Well they told us they were a hard foe and expect no mercy and to move them with a bayonet. Be careful of their ploys.
- 01:00 They couldn't pronounce, 'L' so all our passwords had an, 'L' in it, Lullapaloogia', things like that because they couldn't pronounce an, 'L'. Now as it happened I was in, I just told you the name of the place now, in Queensland,
- 01:30 Charter's Towers in the hospital there with malaria with five other fellows from the battalion, same company and they sent us to Sellheim which is a convalescing depot just out of Charters Towers and we were waiting for transport back to New Guinea, because they were fighting by this time.
- 02:00 They got us ready to go three times, and each time they'd call it off because the Jap subs were around about, so it was three months after I left the battalion we rejoined it. Now in that three months at Wau I had flown over since, taken fellows up there that fought there. A Company of the 2/6th Battalion under Bill Sherlock
- 02:30 they saved Wau. Now as a company of about 60 men they met the Japs full on and it was on a narrow saddle like this, a gap, and they had to get through Bill Sherlock and A Company, what was left what A Company was, to get down. They applied their attack so they could take Wau, seize it and get the airdrome. Now the Wau airstrip is, you land uphill, 300 feet
- 03:00 difference. Where Bill Sherlock was defending was 5,000 feet up and the strip 3,000 feet below, 2,000 or more feet below the strip. Now Bill Sherlock and his men held out A Company they held out they're getting knocked off and
- 03:30 men wounded and they were carrying one another out going down there and we were waiting for the rest of the Battalion, 5th and 7th Battalion to come in, but there was a fog and you can't land while there is a fog on the strip, that was there. They got driven off. He was sending message down, 'It's on again, it's on again, send up ammunition,
- 04:00 send up ammunition, 'it's on again, it's on again'. They got driven off. The Japs were up there yelling out, shouting and dancing around and Bill Sherlock got his nine men together, rallied them and up he went Captain Sherlock with his crew of band of A Company the men he had, nine of them left, and they rushed up and Bill bayoneted four fellows on the way
- 04:30 up and another mob went up there. They put up such a fight that the Japs ran away. By this time, you must remember communication weren't the best and they didn't know where they were and they were getting all mixed up in the jungle. By this time they got very, they had to withdraw to withdraw to another place and where they withdrew to the Japs came
- 05:00 on either side. So they withdrew altogether. By this time other companies got there. As the Japanese were coming down on to Wau the fog lifted and in came the 2nd, 5th and 7th Battalion, and also the artillery, the 2/2nd which accompanied us all the way through from Formation
- 05:30 Day. They landed there and they went straight in to action. Some of them got wounded and taken back on the same plane that they arrived in. They went in to action, the artillery assembled their guns and were firing over rope and sight, they were picking people off just like a rifle. When they got in they drove, started
- 06:00 to drive the Japs back and they got him while he was on parade and they estimate over 400 Japs knocked off. When they were on parade they had 7th Battalion, 5th Battalion and bingo. Captain Sherlock with three men coming back and the Japs were hot on their heels and he was crossing a log across the river,
- 06:30 creek and he heard the Japs yell out, 'I'll get you Japs you bastard,' and then I mowed him down, he got killed. The day that he held the Japs up, the A Company, saved Wau.
- 07:00 I got cut off. Sherlock and his A Company, say what was left of them what was there at the time, remember this no company is at full strength in New Guinea, no company because you had diseases knocking them off everything and anything at all. Our company down to 40 odd men at one stage, instead of having 60 or 80
- 07:30 blokes and you're down to 40 you've got no one, hardly anybody. Malaria, beri beri what's another malaria almost the same thing you go up to a higher temperature when you get it, it's all malaria it's all done by the mosquito and despite us taking our tablets you still got it,
- 08:00 you still got it. They were evacuating left right and centre and you'd take two men to carry one man out



and sometimes four, and the boys they're the New Guinea boys they did a damn good show carrying the, they did a bloody good show without

- 08:30 their help, why they helped us because the Jap molested their women and killed their men. We were kind to them and not only that before a lot of them, coastal people, had contact with the white man before, but the hill people very few. Up at Wau they had the
- 09:00 Leahy brothers [first Europeans to reach the New Guinea highlands] they went through there in the 30s and they crossed there and they knew the white man. The Japs had their men, like the natives, prayed for them they had their men, traitors you call it.
- 09:30 We had ours. Our police boys, they did a damned good job for us. Without them, without the help of the native boys it would have made it very, very tough for us. I can say this, any man that went up there to New Guinea would sit there, we never saw the sun
- 10:00 for nine months, we were in the semi-tropics with the jungle overcast and we were in contact with the Jap all the way. Driving him back, we'd have skirmishes here, men dying here, going at skirmishes. You'd take out, which is the most nerve wracking I'd say, three man patrol for three days, and out you'd go in the unknown.
- 10:30 You'd take, you'd look for this you'd look for that. There was no maps, you had maps but they were aerial surveys and they're nothing like the ground when you're on the ground. To sit there at night time
- 11:00 when the rain's belting down what you put on is a ground sheet and a gas cape if you're lucky and you're sitting there and with your hat pulled down, we threw away the tin hat we never used those, and you're sitting there wondering what the people are doing back home and you're looking. Some of the trees up there are luminous, they're white the stand out white, you can see them in the night and the bamboo at times,
- 11:30 big thick bamboo thicker than a man's leg, cracks like a rifle bullet and you don't know whether what it is whether it's a rifle bullet or the bamboo. Because when you hear the crack of a rifle bullet you know they're close, right near you, if it's a whine or a buzz you know it's far away not near you. But when you hear
- 12:00 a, 'boom' a crack like that it's getting close and it would wake you up. Your nerves on edge or not nerves but tension all the time you're there and you're waiting until the dawn which is a likely time when they used to come in. Then you fired and just shot them down, or they killed you. That was
- 12:30 what I was, it was a way right through, we got to Salamaua up to the last battle we had Mount Tambu. We went to Tambu Bay just before there, forget these places, Komantium that was where, and the Yanks were in by this time and they joined us with the
- 13:00 artillery. They brought fire to bear. We landed at Nassau Bay, our company, not me, but our company landed them there at Nassau Bay. They sent three blokes out to find a landing place, they went through the Japs was occupying the beach they had to go through the Japanese line to get a way through to Nassau Bay where the American forces would land.
- 13:30 They went down at midnight, they landed at midnight the came in and they had flashed them with hurricane lantern and they had to block off the enemy that were occupying the beach incidentally, the flashed, 'OK' and the Yanks came in with their barges with 19 barges wrecked
- 14:00 and they came in with their bulldozers, Japs must have thought they were tanks and the medical crowd was the first, well we went down two days after and the Jap created a bit of a fight there. We went down there and they were digging, they didn't know how or what to do, the Americans. They didn't know
- 14:30 the offensive position, didn't know how to lay out a fire plan, anything. A fire lane you cleared the timber in front of you and you make a fire lane so you can see what's coming. They didn't have a plan because they'd never experienced it before. So we had to, we fostered them in and when they went in to their first battle they came to our battalion and, I'll say this about our
- 15:00 bloke, Harold Laver was a CI [Chief Instructor] at the particular time, he asked for volunteers, three volunteers. The other companies, they want three volunteers, therefore five companies 15 men to help the Yanks in. They detail them, you, you and you and they took the Yanks in to their first action, battle.
- 15:30 We were thankful for their firepower and we were thankful for their manpower, very thankful.
- 15:43 **How did they shape up as soldiers?**
- 15:44 They were green. The Indians, we had four Indians with them and they made the best trackers going, they were real good.
- 16:00 We went out, we showed them and at that time they said, 'You're not showing us anything', 'Oh you don't this', we introduced them to the, what's the name of that creeper poisonous cunjevoi no not cunjevoi, it's stings you. There's this plant, it's a tall plant, not, 'wait-a-while' creeper, doesn't matter

cunjevoi

- 16:30 Anyway this plant you get it on you, 'poov' it's got little weenie thorns, spikes in and it stings you and there's a lily type that grows near by, cunjevoi and you get that and break the sap from that and that eases it. Horses have been known to go mad for getting this bush on you.
- 17:00 They didn't know about that, they didn't know about, 'wait-a-while' creeper. 'Wait-a-while' creeper is a very thin plant, thinner than your finger and it's got hooks all the way along, that's how the boys the natives the kanakas we called them, they used to bring in the Jap prisoners trussed up like a pig. Put him on a pole and carry him in with this
- 17:30 'wait-a-while' creeper around him and he'd give him a packet of cigarettes off he'd go like a packet of biscuits. These prisoners they brought in, they were happy to bring them in. The Yanks, we landed them there and believe it or not they had packets of steak. 48 pounds in a packet of steak. They'd be cooking their steak and a plane
- 18:00 would come in, a Jap used to fly up and down every now and again, I forgot what we used to call him our side a rotten bastard, but we had a name for him and I think he was just observing. And the Yanks would take off and they'd be cooking their breakfast and the like, and they'd have this steak cooking and we'd be there so the first thing not to take off, 'Say where's this goddamn steak?'
- 18:30 'I don't know fellows, goddamn bloody steaks again'. They had steaks, bloody steaks, there we are with bully beef it's the best we can give them. 'I tell you what man' Negroes and they'd say when the planes came in, this is Milne Bay, rained
- 19:00 every day, four o'clock it would pack it in. That's where we all went down with malaria and that. They used to say, we were unloading ships, the first thing we wanted was to look for tucker. When you got on board the Japs would come down and got down by our fighters so we never worried. The lights would go off but we'd already planned where the tucker was, we'd grab it and you'd go out staggering about, everyone else was running for their lives and you'd be staggering about.
- 19:30 The American Negro would say, 'Lord lubricate my ankles licked behind my heels', 'Can you run brother?' 'No', 'Make way for a man who can'. They're on the deck this time, we're unloading and I saw this big American Negro looking up to the sky,
- 20:00 there was a floating wharf at Milne Bay, and his mate on the wharf the other Negro yelled out, 'Hey what you look for hey? What are you looking for man?' 'I ain't lookin' for nothing', 'Well when you see that nothing you tell me', 'Boy when I see that nothing you'll be hearing my echo'. I said to one of
- 20:30 them, 'What's the greatest fright you've had?'. 'The other night, I tell ya Aussie when those bloody bombers came over and they were dropping those eggs and I jumped in to a hole and a man said to me, 'Why boy what are you doing here?'
- 21:00 **Did you see any strife between black and white Americans?**
- 21:03 Any strife? No. But what they used to do, we were running short of rations, the Yanks were whooping it up so we used to drive our Jeep, we had a Jeep, we used to load all the Jeeps up like this and say, 'OK guys next'. You'd put a Jeep through and they'd load it up with rations. We'd get inside. We were unloading this day and
- 21:30 the Padre said, this is what he said, 'By the way boy you're going down there you'll find some Bibles of mine, keep an eye out for them will you?' 'Yes Padre, of course we will', we'd look out for our battalion stuff. We saw this case marked, 'Bibles' and we rattled it and we heard this rattle, it was bloody whisky!
- 22:00 **So what happened to it?**
- 22:01 Well we got a case of bully beef and we put that in. Took his whisky, took the case opened it up and changed it, put the bull beef in, and of course when he got his, 'bibles' it became bully beef. He never said a word about it.
- 22:29 **You were telling us about the three man patrols you were doing, can you talk us through how you'd work those patrols, how you'd run it?**
- 22:44 They'd detail three men out. We had two good patrol men with us both sergeants, I think both of them are dead now, and they'd walk
- 23:00 the legs of a giraffe. They would. You'd walk out to go out and they'd leave you within a mile, they were off they were terrific. They found a way in to where we'd been trying to get for days, they found a way in to Komantium up there we went. What you do is this, three men have a patrol they give you the map where the other patrol had been
- 23:30 and you go up there, you get briefed before you go out, 'This is far as they've been up to here', 'Now they don't know what's up there', 'See if you can, we suspect, this track, there's supposed to be a mule track.' 'See if you can find it and that's where the supply's coming through for the Japs'. 'Cut off their

supply to them, cut off their courage.' We'll do that, right. And out you go.

- 24:00 You look for these places, but there's so much bloody jungle and so little track that you just keep heading in the one direction, you know you're going to cross something. Then the track may disappear where you go across, it could be further down,
- 24:30 a hundred yards further down it opens up again. You go back, you find a track and sometimes you see a Nip coming past you'd hide in the cover and watch and count them. We were going out on patrol one day and I met the greatest man I've met and the funniest man, a hero if you want to model yourself on a hero was
- 25:00 George Wharf, the stories are legend about George he was a colonel, finished up a colonel started out a lieutenant in our mob and he took over this 2/5th Independent Company, they were like commandos, independent they go out and stir up the Japs and the Jap would come and they'd take off to the bush, take back off and the Jap would come and attack us. All the time. We didn't like them much, however bugger you bloke. So I'm out on patrol
- 25:30 this time, three of us and we've been told the area to patrol in the area of Colonel Wharf mob, the 2/5th patrol with them. You've got the independent company out there somewhere. On the second day out we were in strange company we hear movements, so in to the bush, down low
- 26:00 and there we see the hat. We saw them coming through. So I yelled out, called out, 'She's right, she's right' and there was George Wharf. A major. 'Giddy' he said, 'How you going?' because he knew us from way back, he was in our battalion before he switched over.
- 26:30 Mad explosive, he was mad actually, two gunmen George, the stories are legend. 'How are you going?' 'I'm out on patrol' I said, 'For the mule track', 'Well I tell you Wal, you go down there we've just been out there with the boys and I think we've found them. What you want to do is get down there,'
- 27:00 he told me where it was about 10 miles further down in the jungle over that way. 'What you want to do is tie a tree, get some string or vine, and tie it to a tree and pull the branches and rattle the tree and draw their fire and then you can see whether they are fit and healthy, whether
- 27:30 they're shaved and what their equipment's like. Draw it and if you're going to attack make a noise like a thousand men and draw their fire and find out the depth of their position. That's what you've got to do'. 'I'll do that', sure, 'which way did you say they were sir?'.
- 28:00 This is on Wau and there are the Japs cooking their tucker. The bloke said to him, this is when they were with us, and the fellow said, 'Bring fire?' 'No, no wait until they finish cooking first'. The gold mining was up there. They'd score gold in the stream, at Wau, that's what opened up the joint. So George is up there with his mob, his team
- 28:30 and the Japs are down there panning for gold. 'Bring fire?' 'No wait til they've finished panning, then we'll get, 'em'. Flamboyant? That's him oh he's a great. He went through Bardia and then he covered the Bren gun carriers and he had a straw deck, where he got it from I don't know, a straw deck and a cane and he's rounding up these Japs by the score.
- 29:00 He carried two pistols on his right side, you're supposed to carry them on your left side, he had two guns, Tex we called him, he was a bit bandy, and this particular day we were on church, Sunday, and they wanted Major Wharf. They sent from Major Wharf and over he came
- 29:30 the skyline, he's bandy with these shorts on, two guns, looked like a hero from the west, a wild west hero. It was George Wharf. I met him just after the war and I was with a friend, we'd been gambling and this place
- 30:00 not supposed to know about, you know one of these places. I was with this man and he belonged to our battalion and when we weren't in action we used to go back to the Provos, the miliary police. When we'd be back in action, he'd come and join us again. Circus, was his name we called him Circus. He's there, we're playing Baccarat
- 30:30 in this club, Elizabeth Street Melbourne about 11 o'clock at night I suppose. The fellow said to me Circus said, '70 quid up', 'How you going?' 'Alright I've got about 10 quid up', 'I'm 70'. A bloke came up to me and whispered and he said to me, 'Are you with that bloke?' I said, 'Yeah' he said, 'He was a Provo, a military policeman wasn't he?' I said, 'Yeah but, ', 'Get him out of here! He's a copper he'll offer to call the cops,
- 31:00 get him out!' I said to Circus, 'We're getting turfed out of here, we're getting the big A, out of here' and Circus said, 'Hah hah I'm 70 quid in front you bloody beauty, let's go'. That was Circus. So we get outside, we shake hands he goes his way I go my way. Now I see George Wharf
- 31:30 outside OG's hotel which is closed of course and there he is sitting in the gutter, sitting down. 'What are you waiting on?' 'Bugged if oh how you going? What are doing, where are you going?' 'I've just been some fair' he said, 'Christ I'm thirsty' he said, 'I've got a bottle of whisky here, can't drink it neat'. I said, 'No there's no bloody taps

- 32:00 around,' and just then a milkman came driving past. I pulled him up and I said, 'Excuse me milkman have you got a couple of bottles for a couple of old diggers here', 'Yeah' he said, 'Take a couple of bottles of milk'. So we knocked off half a bottle and we poured the whisky in to that. Slurp, slurp. Then we emptied the other. We finished up nice and high as kites the pair of us. Away we went.
- 32:30 **Wal can I just bring you back to New Guinea on the patrol, did you ever run in to any Japanese?**
- 32:35 Oh yeah, yeah, sure plenty of times. They had, I saw a number of them, you freeze, you see them coming through, you count them, you see how many there are and then you know quite well they're not the last of them, another party comes through and then
- 33:00 they bring their bearers. They had Indians, they'd captured them over in the island and they had these Indians carrying gear. They had chairs with the legs cut off. The chairs, with straps on, and they had them strapped and they had their cargo the tucker on the chairs. You'd go
- 33:30 past. To interfere with their kai line, what we called the boy line the kai line the tucker line that was our object to stop them. All you had to do was to fire a shot and let it, they had boys too Kanakas the boys, they had them also loaded up like donkeys and all you had to fire shots, open up and the boys would go. So you'd interrupt their line their kai line. When the boys
- 34:00 went to the bush they'd never get them back again. They'd throw the cargo off. But then you had to make your escape so you made bloody sure that you knew your way out when you opened up, and you'd open up on them too. You open up, you didn't hit the boy, nowhere near it, you just fired the shot at the Jap the last few coming through, you'd make sure they were the last and bingo.
- 34:30 Then knocked them off, the boys would go to the bush and you'd high tail it because you're only three of you, you can't, two with a rifle and one with an Owen. Could've had a Tommy gun at the time but Owen was the one mainly, we had both. Once upon a time they got the ammunition for the Owen gun mixed up with the Tommy gun.
- 35:00 Got them mixed, 45 with the 3 ml, 9 ml rather. That's what you did, what you'd try to do. I myself didn't bother so much come across but a lot of the fellows do it, draw the crab and they'd come and attack us then.
- 35:30 When the came down, normally early morning, early morning they'd come through. They'd dance up and down and yell out and away they'd come. You'd be in your, you built you're there for a time, you built your posts out of coconut logs, you built your trench
- 36:00 a crawl trench and a slit trench, and you put them in and made your dug out like, real good, fortified it and you had your Bren gun ready and your fuel the fire all around you, you clear the area so you could see. Put booby traps out, grenades with string you put them out.
- 36:30 They'd come through, attack and we'd mow them down. That was it. Some of your own would be dead.
- 36:43 **Did you end up having to get any hand-to-hand fighting?**
- 36:48 Oh yeah, not that much. When they came in they'd jump in the pit, in the trench and we did a bit. I never, very seldom a couple of times.
- 37:00 You'd blast them before they hit the ground. They'd throw grenades, they used to blow on theirs the smoke would come in and they'd throw it. Our grenades which were 36 you had four second fuses on the one you threw and the one you fired was seven second fuses.
- 37:30 So you put them through, you'd fire them out of an EY rifle [grenade launcher], extra yeardy rifle which was a special rifle and you'd fire out a grenade and bingo they had a great effect, a great effect. They were a very good grenade ours, the best.
- 37:53 **So were the EY rifle a special design?**
- 37:58 Extra Yoke, well
- 38:00 you bound them up different. The yoke was where you bound your 303 rifle with extra strength and you had a cup on the end and you put a different cartridge, you had this cartridge which fired the rifle, you didn't have a bullet you had this cartridge, blank a type of blank and you put your, attach your cup and secure it and
- 38:30 you put your grenade in, pull the pin out and just put it in as long as your lever was down you were right and you'd just fire it. Away it would go, 200 yards or so, a hundred yards. That was in between a 2 inch mortar. Oh yeah great effect and away it would go. When you use them, bingo.
- 38:58 **Improvised a grenade launcher.**
- 39:00 Well it was. It was. It used to kick a bit, when I say kick nothing kicks if you hold it right, but it did have,

if you weren't holding it right. It was in between a mortar. It would go 100 yards, 50, 60 yards. Bingo. When you fired those, boom, boom, boom

39:30 if you someone silly to fire about four of them. Replace your shoulder. That was the 36 grenade the best ever. The Yanks had a garbage one.

## Tape 8

00:32 **Wal something that Camilla just brought up about the Japanese, she said you weren't able to forget their smell. What was it like?**

00:43 The Pommy smelt. We went there and occupied their dugouts in the desert, we all had lice.

00:57 **How did you get rid of your lice?**

00:58 When

01:00 we got to Tobruk on the ocean we just went in clothes and all and pulled them out, took them off and we got rid of them. The dugouts that they had and they had these lice. They got to all of us. 'Are you sorting them out?' 'No. picking them out one by one thank you very much.'

01:30 And some mongrel there said a Pommy, 'That ship up there you know that's plenty of grog on that don't you know?' I said, 'No we don't know it' the group of us. 'It is you know'. Full of grog plenty of grog on board so we roll one out and the bloody thing blew up it was an ammunition chip. We were looking for the Pommy, we couldn't find him.

01:57 **To bash him?**

02:00 Bloody lovely isn't it? The air force had been up, and blown a bit up. Our air force, real good.

02:13 **The other thing that you mentioned**

02:19 Oh the smell. The French stunk. The French ooh they were rotten the French when we occupied their positions up in Syria they stunk, and the Jap too. He

02:30 stunk.

02:32 **What did they stink of ?**

02:33 Oh look. Body odour. The boys when I say the boys, the kanakas [native New Guinean carriers] the boys New Guinea boys they could smell the Jap. Their sense of smell. See if you smoke your sense of smell is not as strong as a non-smoker.

02:58 **Did everybody smoke with you?**

03:00 Well they used to give us an ounce of tobacco or 36 cigarettes, but we kept our tobacco in French, in condoms to stop them going mouldy. I smoked because they gave me a cigarette and we had nothing to do. They'd wake you up at five in the morning and breakfast wouldn't be ready until 7 and so

03:30 you had two hours sitting around, you'd sit there and other fellows were smoking and that was what got me, and a number of others take on the deadly weed.

03:45 **Did most of the men smoke?**

03:48 Oh well a lot of men were from the Depression years, yeah. When you get your tobacco free it's an invite an open invite.

04:00 You didn't have to become a smoker but let's say they enticed and you'd give your tobacco away to anyone else if you didn't smoke, 'Oh you can have it'. Majority smoked.

04:17 **Wal I interrupted you before, you were telling me about the smell of the Japanese people and that it was mainly body occur that the kanakas could smell them from afar?**

04:27 They could. They could smell the Jap, 'memiko'.

04:39 **Did they smell because they didn't shower or did they smell because it was their own smell?**

04:42 Well I don't know. According to the natives, we've got a smell, and the Japs have got a smell, but their smell is more

05:00 sickly than ours. Don't ask me, ask a dog or someone with a high sense of being able to smell the scent. They could tell, they used to smell them. In the finish I don't know whether it was imagination, 'imaginitis' you could smell them yourself.

05:30 And the Yanks they'd buy up anything you got was Jap they'd buy it off you. They would. What we went for was the Japs, their women folk would knit them a thousand and one stitches, they were like a handkerchief affair, a cloth,

06:00 with a thousand and one stitches and that thousand and one stitches was good luck and they'd give it to their boyfriend or whatever, their loved, husband and he'd go in and the thousand and one is what you're going for. Some of our wide boys especially back at base it was in the mechanical engineers they'd cut up jip springs and make swords and sold to the Yanks

06:30 as Japanese swords. They bought up the toes, the Jap had a split toe shoe and you'd see them all and you'd get that and the Yanks would buy it. Pick up these they'd go left right and centre.

06:47 **I wonder why they'd want to buy a shoe?**

06:49 They'd buy anything belonging to the Jap. 'You got any Jap souvenirs?' 'yeah here you are'. We must have struck, we came across

07:00 a group, anyway they departed, when one went down it must have been an orderly room, an orderly room clerk because he had all these pens he had on him. When I rolled him over. There were these type of lipstick, it was a stick and underneath was an impression. What it was, was a stamp, it was a seal you put

07:30 it in the red seal and stamp it like that. Now we had four or five of those. You'd stamp it down there was this seal a Japanese symbol I don't know what it meant. Eat here starve tomorrow, I don't know what it was. But I went and told the Yanks it was Hirohito's [Emperor of Japan], that was his signature,

08:00 the Emperor of Japan that was his signature, that was it.

08:06 **How much did you get for it?**

08:07 There was only one in existence I told them.

08:15 **How much did you get? A couple of pounds?**

08:16 No. About \$50 for the first one and then the second one and the third one and the forth one became a supply line by this time.

08:30 **What did you do with the money?**

08:30 No I didn't get all the money just 2 up or something like that or give it away, sent it home to Mama.

08:42 **The other thing you mentioned when we were changing tapes, was about the Japanese raping the young Indian boys. You can tell us about that?**

08:55 Well we don't know but they used them as women we knew that, we saw, well they

09:00 told us. They took them over in Malaya and things like that wherever they were and they brought them down and had them and use them as a supply line and slaves. That's what they were to the Japanese army. Now don't forget when the Japanese army were in Peking, Hong Kong there, when was that,

09:30 the rape of Nanking years before. They just went there and they blocked off a whole town, the Japanese, they rounded up children and men and rounded up the women folk on to the playground, we'll say a football ground for want of better knowledge, and they raped the women. They had open slather for three days.

10:00 That's what they did. The rape of Nanking, it's in the book. The same as they did when they conquered anywhere, they'd come and rape and pillage. That's one thing I can honestly say about the Australians, I think there's one charge or something like that, we never touched their women.

10:25 **Are you talking about the native women?**

10:26 Never touched any women. There was one fellow,

10:30 I think, faced the charge of rape in the Middle East. Now you've got 20,000 men in the 1st Division that went away and one case that we know of, so we. You don't touch any civilians, you didn't touch them, no, they weren't in the fight. Let them be. You don't touch anyone like that, you leave them be. And you befriend them otherwise they're liable to turn on

11:00 you. When we went right through the desert and we joined them, we fed them. Don't forget that the Italians, when they went through Abyssinia they murdered and slaughtered the natives. We captured

photos from the dead Italian they had photos there that showed you there women, the Abyssinian women and how they raped them and all that. Oh

- 11:30 exposed and naked and all the rest of it. Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law or whatever he was, when he wrote in his stories he dropped the bomb on a group of tribesmen and he opened them up like a rose, he said. That's what they did down there. And of course when they came to Libya, when they got to Barce,
- 12:00 the Arabs came down the hills to attack the villages. Now this was one of Mussolini's, beautiful fertile valley Barce right the way through that valley. Well it was one of his villages he set up and the people there were farmers, and they had these farms going. They sent us out to protect the farmer from the natives.
- 12:30 Well we didn't, all we did, we gave, when we got there, we gave the farmer our rifles and we slept inside while they patrolled. They had to defend themselves. That was out at Barce after the raids. They carried out terrible things there,
- 13:00 some of the Italians, not all of them. You get this nasty streak I suppose, sometimes you get with the Yanks they did the same thing that's why they're chucked out of Okinawa now.
- 13:17 **What do you think was the worst part of Wau for you?**
- 13:21 I wasn't,
- 13:30 I didn't get to the Wau business. That's when we joined just after it finished the Wau show. Four was joined just after and the Wau showed had ended and went to, where we were at I've forgotten, just after the Wau show had finished and they marching up and we joined them just before the next attack.
- 13:58 **Where was that next attack, was that in Wewak?**
- 14:00 No. This was at Lava Bere [?] or somewhere there. They shot us up there, we got up there and the first time I heard a tremor, an earthquake you know started, an earthquake. From then on we were nine months constant contact
- 14:30 with the Japs.
- 14:32 **Whereabouts were you though?**
- 14:34 In New Guinea. We went from Wau to Salamaua and from Wairopi to Wewak, but I wasn't at Wewak when they had the business. I got malaria once more and they shot us home. Not only that, I'd had
- 15:00 four years overseas.
- 15:04 **You didn't get to Wewak because you had a relapse of malaria, so for nine months in Salamaua?**
- 15:13 No we went nine months constant contact from Wau to Salamaua and then we went, wait a minute. We landed at Port Moresby.
- 15:30 Wau to Salamaua. Then we went back a second time, a year later or so, we left and landed at Wairopi and from Wairopi to Wewak.
- 15:47 **So what do you think in your opinion was the hairiest time in those nine months you were there?**
- 15:52 The first time ever of meeting the Japs.
- 16:00 Now we met him and they were the Tiger Division, they're the mob that took Malay, they're six footers amongst them. We thought Japs only small, bandy legged, didn't know a thing. All the hooey to get publicity, garbage. When you saw them, different. Big.
- 16:30 It was hand-to-hand on occasions. Not only me. It was twice I think. Other fellows wrestled with them. One bloke went ashore, attacked Ned Fisher as he was going out the Jap attacked him with his sword and Ned had his rifle, using his rifle like that, Ned didn't have a slug in his rifle at that time.
- 17:00 Didn't have a round up his spout and of course had the Jap there with his sword and going along like that anyway Ned finished up putting a slug up, opened his breach, closed it and boom, boom put one up and bingo away went the Jap and Ned brought the sword back with him.
- 17:20 **He would have sold that for a good price?**
- 17:22 No he brought the sword back, no what happened was this. He brought the sword back, and I said, 'Why didn't you get the bloody scabbard?' What the mongrels

17:30 used to do, pardon me I call them mongrels, they took the bloody swords off us, made them take them off us and they sent them back to some base wallah. So we finished up with beggar all.

17:50 **Who exactly are the mongrels?**

17:52 Well the officers said, 'Right, you've got to hand them back'. You give them back in,

18:00 they send them back to base. Who's going to get them from there? The fellows back at base aren't they. The same as tucker. All the tucker comes up, the good tucket gets sorted out down there and all you get is garbage, beans.

18:16 **Can you tell us the story about Captain Bill Sherlock and where he was?**

18:34 He was my first officer with B Company at Pucka [Puckapunyal], he was Geelong Grammar schoolboy, he's a champion swimmer down there.

18:45 **Now this is the mate that you lost?**

18:47 He was an officer, an officer he was. He saved Wau.

18:53 **How?**

18:55 Well by defending the place with his company with this small company

19:00 of men and he held the Jap up. See the Japanese by their log, by their diaries would be captured later on, they wanted to be in by the 29th in Wau to get the drome, to capture the airdrome so they could attack Moresby later on. This was their plan. Morimoto their general said, 'Right this is it'

19:30 and they worked at the plan, everything was going right until they came to Bill Sherlock, Captain Sherlock and A Company of 2nd Infantry Battalion, what was there, I think a few men because they were deleted. He held them up on this but they had to come through, couldn't go around because of the mountains, thousands of feet down. They came through

20:00 this battle and he held them up for the day, 24 hours, two days he held them up for really. By this time the fog lifted and the our reinforcements came in. It was bayonet to bayonet and the artillery were firing like a bloody rifle, the artillery were shooting single, putting an 18 pounder through.

20:26 **There were so many men there?**

20:27 Yeah. They were coming down,

20:30 it was on. Then they were still going, pursuing when I got, later on when we joined in and then they're fighting rear guard action from then on, the Jap. They were stubborn, don't worry about that. They were bastards oh Christ yeah. Where

21:00 Sherlock was and they were 3,000 feet to the air drome, 3,000 feet up above sea level and where he was he was 8,000 feet up. Like when we went to Death Valley, over in, when we went to Egypt when

21:30 we was on the Dead Sea, that's 600 feet below sea level, we camped there and asphalt in the Dead Sea. May I tell you a story, it may be a bit rough, we went down to Galilee, the same river supplies the both at the, quick, quick the river, Jordan.

22:00 We get down to Galilee the lake there and a mate of mine we go on a holiday, on a trip, and there across where the river is the lake comes in close, Galilee lovely and there was these buildings and we thought it's about three mile around walking around there, damn that, and there were these boats, yachts, fishing boats and there were these Arabs

22:30 there lolling about smoking cigarettes and we said, 'Will you take us across?' which was a quarter of a mile, I suppose, it's hard to judge distance by water because there is nothing there to gauge. He said, 'It'll cost you five quid'. 'Five bloody pound' my mate said, 'Now I know why he walked!'

23:00 Galilee. Real good, real good. Padre used to join us and he used to look at all these sites, all the biblical sites and he forgot the original sites are about 14 feet under, because of the crush down all the stones thousands of years before. The houses

23:30 collapse and they just build another one. It's all under there.

23:33 **I'd love to see that part of the world.**

23:37 Well it was nice then. Further out it was in its original state. Jerusalem wasn't. They've got a wall right around the joint. Jerusalem's got a wall, Old Jerusalem's got a wall right around, it was a very historic place,



24:00 nice place. Same as Athens, it was a nice place that was good to have a look at, steeped in history. All those things. There's not a bloody fish shop in Athens! And yet here in Australia all the Greeks, 'fish and chips'.

24:23 **I wonder why they don't have them in Athens?**

24:23 We went looking for fish and chips, they didn't have it, not a bloody one.

24:30 Did I tell you about the girl did I?

24:40 **Yes. Something I wanted to ask you, it's not very pleasant but when you were in New Guinea and men would be taken sick or indeed killed, you would have new recruits sent in. How would that affect the morale?**

24:58 No we never got the recruits.

25:00 What we went in with you came out with, very seldom you got your supply, recruits came in and you took them with you. But we never got recruits, sometimes you got the boys, like myself, coming back to rejoin, but no recruits you never got a recruit. That was that.

25:30 You blooded them and they took notice of you like there's a chappie that comes up here each year from Tasmania, he joined us. They took a photograph of him he was 5 feet and he

26:00 was 17 and he joined us, came with the Tassie group, he joined us and so went through the action up there and a photographer came up, an international photographer, Damien Parer [war correspondent] and all that, they arrived. Well they wouldn't let them in because they couldn't take responsibility for minding them. After it was over,

26:30 Parer and this other chap came up and they took a photograph of our mate with his foot on a dead Jap, which we did in the action. He said, 'Right' he took the particulars and all that, and away he went. Weeks later Rex who's the fellow that we're talking about,

27:00 Rex asked the photographer, 'When am I getting my bloody photo?' he said, 'You look too young, we couldn't put you, you look like a baby'. He's only a little fellow.

27:19 **Some of the men did look like babies though?**

27:20 Even today, Cam's much taller than me, we got a lot of Tassie's in, they came up

27:30 and they formed quite a nucleus, not a nucleus, they formed a, well in my platoon more than half were Tasmanian, in the finish.

27:48 **Were they good blokes?**

27:49 Oh yeah they were quite good, yeah no worries. But the trouble is you go down there you have a fight with one, you've got to fight the lot because they're all bloody related.

28:00 I had a fight in Queenstown I finished up in Hobart punching Christ out of them. 'You knocked off my mate Ben! Right you mongrel. Come out here ..'.

28:18 **What did the men do to let off steam in New Guinea?**

28:19 Nothing. You had no steam left.

28:23 **You were too tired?**

28:25 You're marching all day and you've got this bloody rain,

28:30 incessant rain, you don't see the sun, you get no mail you've got no bread or you're living on is dry rations. We did have a hot stove they brought out a, you pulled the wick like that and you'd have hot rations, you'd cook the tin and you'd have that.

29:00 But the bloody trouble was when you were in a hold, in a weapon pit, and you lit one of those it would light the grass. You had to beat it out. They had another one that you lit yourself, it was a do-it-yourself kit, it would come in a tin like this.

29:29 **Like Irish stew?**

29:30 Oh yeah or hash. I like the old bully beef that was about the best. The Yanks had hash.

29:46 **Now you were in some conflict, is it Aitape?**

29:50 Oh no. We landed at Aitape that was, the Yanks had been there. What happened

30:00 the Yanks had been at Aitape then they decided they'd go back to the islands to reconquer the islands. Now we thought we were going to go with the Yanks, we formed the Surf Life Saving Club up there, used to go there.

30:30 But the sharks so occupied everywhere we didn't, we never went on the beach hardly. We used to catch the sharks, get sig [signal] wire fashion a hook and throw out a bit of pork, a lot of pork on it and the sharks loved pork. So it was all salt water so it didn't worry us, boom and you'd get all these sharks and we'd pull them up on the beach and

31:00 we'd leave them and shoot them, leave them be and line them up there like this. There they were, that was at Aitape. When the Yanks went away they left everything behind, planes, tanks you name it, motorboat, motorbikes, the lot. The [HMAS] Kanimbla was a vessel and that was a supply vessel and also a goods vessel

31:30 and on board was a chappie I knew from the early days and he was a sparks, in other words he was a signal man. They came ashore. They used to supply us, we'd go out with ducks, the Yanks would have the ducks and you'd go out there and you'd get your supply. I saw him on board, 'What are you doing here? Come ashore'. When he came

32:00 ashore, 'What the hell's this?' 'Oh this is all Yankee'. He said, 'What we'll do, we'll paint the bloody thing, we'll make it navy, Australian Navy.' So we got the paint and away we went we painted it all blue, put the navy sign on and away he took it. It took a couple of days while the ship was still unloading, discharging cargo. It was

32:30 tiresome with the ducks going out. Away he takes it. Gets them on board everything's right, 'Ok Don see you later, don't worry about that' I used to get fed on board there. Years later his brother married my sister, during the war, but years later I saw Don and said, 'How did you go with that bike?' 'Don't talk about it you mongrel'.

33:00 He tried to take it ashore when they arrived at Port Melbourne, but the officer, 'Jimmy the One' they called him, he said, 'That's navy property you can't take it. You can't take it ashore. Look at it'. And then bugger you. The officer now had to account, 'Now how did he get a bike?'

33:30 because it's not on board, not checked. Went through all the naval jargon, same as the army, you must account for everything. 'What I want to know is how did you get that bike?'

33:46 **What did he say?**

33:46 I don't know. I left them to their own problems. They couldn't get it off. He decided he'd create a problem and he reported it to the captain,

34:00 and the captain had the account book and he couldn't, that hasn't been taken on board. Bugger if I know what happened. That's how it was. He was going to ride it around Melbourne, 'you bloody beauty this big thing' oh lovely. I think it was funny.

34:30 It'd still be on board. They couldn't account for the thing. He'd have to make out an indent form and that would have to go right through to headquarters.

34:48 **It would have caused a lot of paperwork?**

34:49 They'd still be writing.

34:55 **Is he still alive?**

34:57 I don't know whether he is, I haven't sighted him. The

35:00 brother-in-law died and I haven't sighted his brother Donny, no. I think he'd be dead. So we thought we were doing alright.

35:13 **You talked about coming back and training the Aussie blokes after the war. What happened in the islands, how did you hear about the war ending and coming back to Australia?**

35:25 I was on board a ship when it happened.

35:34 **On board a ship coming back to Australia?**

35:36 I was out to it.

35:38 **Because you were sick.**

35:38 Yeah there was about 14 of us on board, you know you get that way.

- 35:47 **Did you know that the war had ended though?**
- 35:48 Yeah. I spoke to the fellows after, the boys later on after at the reunion and they didn't believe it.
- 36:00 The signaller forgot to signal said the war's over, the war is over and he told the fellows the war is over, 'Oh get out'. They wouldn't believe him that that war was over. They never believed him. Then of course they had the parade, right on the edge which I saw later on when I went back. That's where they said, 'Right the war's over. That's it'. But the
- 36:30 Japs, a lot took to the hills the Japs. They even found fellows in the Philippine Islands 20 years after, had never surrendered, Japs. Fifteen and 20 years after never surrendered, one sergeant, in fact he was about 62 or 58 or something like that before he went back to Japan. They never surrendered.
- 36:57 **His family must have thought he was missing in action or killed?**
- 36:59 They did.
- 37:00 They like to take their bones back, they love their bones the Japs.
- 37:09 **So you were sick on the ship coming back to Australia with malaria?**
- 37:11 We flew one part of the way to Moresby and then they put us on board I forgot the name of it and we're back to where we were before, Charters Towers.
- 37:30 Took us back there again. They said, 'You're back here and you've got a lot of mates with you this time,' and I said, 'Yeah'. Like a match we were, like a match. When you get it, it affects you after. It affected me, my jobs when I first got out. It affected me for about two years. Come out and you just get it and away you go. I had a job first with
- 38:00 on St Kilda foreshore, right on the beach on the lawns and that, mowing the lawns, sweeping up the sand from the beach and mowing the lawns and I got it down there. The boss man, I'm spewing my guts out you may as well say, and the boss man came along and said, 'You got malaria Wally?' I said, 'Yeah' and he put me in his car and drove me home.
- 38:30 I was on leave one day, army uniform with another mate of mine, and we were walking down the street and he said, 'I've got the bloody bug, I'm going to chunder [vomit]'. I was holding him while he was chundering, while he's vomiting, this is what happens to you, and he's like this and a bus pulled up and I can still see them to this day, these people, 'Look at those drunken bloody soldiers'
- 39:00 I suppose they'd say. There's the poor bugger, there he was. When the bus went away I had to put him down because I couldn't hold him, both of us started. It was shocking.
- 39:14 **How many times have you had malaria?**
- 39:16 I haven't had it now for years, have I mama, when was the last time? Up in New Guinea wasn't it? When I went back there.
- 39:30 That's right
- 39:32 **You've had it like four or five times?**
- 39:34 No I had it about 15 or 16 bloody times. They come on you. You get dengue [fever] and dengue's worse, but dengue doesn't last as long but you get higher temperatures, 104, 103, 103.2 and it goes away from you. One minute you want all the clothes in the world,
- 40:00 the next minute you want to get in to the refrigerator. You couldn't give a continental. Up there when you got it, you started to get it they'd say, 'Right off you go' and you walked back, three day walk, to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] and you'd have, it wouldn't be you alone, there'd be other fellows with
- 40:30 you, you'd have your rifles with you. Away you'd go, you'd get back to the RAP and you'd stay there for a couple of days, they'd give you the pills and that and you'd rest and back you'd troop again. After a couple days rest and that's right, three days there two days rest and three days back, eight days and you'd march it out of your system, so they thought. But you'd never get it out of your system for a couple of years.

## Tape 9

- 00:36 **I have some questions that I want to ask you about New Guinea and the Japanese. Was there much of a hatred amongst the men because of the atrocities?**

00:49 Let's put it this way, you never took delight when you fired on

01:00 the other enemy, the Italian or Germany or the French, but you took great delight in knocking those bastards. They were the enemy at the time and the atrocities and what they did and the word spread

01:30 and you treated them like an animal, like you shot an animal like you shot a rabbit. You couldn't care about them. There may have been a bit of reluctance, well there was no reluctance put it that way at the particular time, but you don't get any satisfaction by knocking some off,

02:00 but with them that's another bastard out of the way, that's another one, bring them on, at that particular time.

02:15 **What had you seen or heard of what they'd done?**

02:18 Seen evidence.

02:22 **What kind?**

02:23 When they, we found a body carved to bits, not

02:30 to bits but carved. We saw a buttock of a man chopped and we heard other reports. I know quite well that they cut the boobs off the native girls. The natives were slung our way. Some were for the Japs, they

03:00 went on their own accord or whether they were forced but they treated them wrong. You must remember this, some of them had had no contact with the white man, some had never seen a white man, some never, and whoever treated them right they favoured them. Of course the missionaries were up there

03:30 before us, other white men, and therefore when they knew about it they'd come our way. But the Japanese had their boys who used to scout for them and we had our boys who'd scout for us. They were essential, we couldn't have done without them, there was no way in the world

04:00 we would never done without them. Sometimes it would take four men to carry one man out and some of the tracks were about 18 inches wide and down below several hundred feet. The boys wrangled the stretchers, and thankfully that they did. We would have never done without them, no way in the world.

04:30 We had scouts, they'd come with you at times not all time we had scouts and we used to try and get them to come with us, some would some wouldn't. You couldn't expect them because

05:00 they weren't carrying any firearms, but they'd tell you where they were. We couldn't have done without their assistance that's for sure. Let's say, couldn't have done perhaps I'm over emphasising, stressing it, but it would have been more bloody difficult and greater stress upon us because it would have meant four men carrying one man out.

05:30 You're not talking about ordinary walking down the street, you're talking about mud, slush, slime, going down hills, mountains coming down rugged steps where you've got to hang on to a bloody tree stump to get your bearings to pull yourself up. Not only that there's this rain and jungle and no light, dim light, oh no.

06:00 The jungle, they say the jungle is neutral. That's what they said. It is, but that's what beat the Jap, he had no supply nothing, we beat him too naturally we fought him but no supply there in that jungle. There's not a man that ever fought in New Guinea

06:30 with the rain belting down. You're thinking of home, you're wondering what they're doing. There you were worrying your guts out, keeping your wits about you oh yes. . It wasn't exactly enticing by any stretch of the imagination was it.

06:57 **Did you ever come across any lost or straggling Japanese?**

07:01 You'd meet them, yeah you'd see them starving. You don't want to see a man starving. Poor chap's starving, here have a taste of lead, have a lead breakfast. You'd see them dead sitting beside a tree like this.

07:30 Starvation. You'd see them lying on their belly, starvation. You'd go to a village, or what was a village let's put it that way, come to a clearing and a couple of huts and you'd smell and you'd creep up you'd make yourself come in if there was a native around you'd send him in first naturally, you'd go up there and they'd

08:00 be dead. Three or four lying on the floor, starved. They had no supply. We cut them off. Miles and miles away. They were there, they were fighting a rear guard action and they were fanatics, don't forget that, never forget that.

- 08:30 They were prepared to die for the emperor, we helped them, not me but the rest of the boys. I used to keep count, 'What did you get today fellas? How many today?'
- 08:47 **Did any of the fellows take out their feelings against the Japanese when they were asked to take prisoners? Or were you asked to take prisoners?**
- 08:54 We didn't, we had nine months campaign first, nine months
- 09:00 the second in constant contact we took five. They were for interrogation purposes and they spoke English, one was an English teacher. He hung around us like bad smells, he wouldn't let us go. We wouldn't let one of the fellows go. He hung around him, I don't know what happened to him, I think they sent him back. He spoke very good English.
- 09:30 He was a teacher over there. They, some were like that, the emperor mainly. We met the Tigers, they were the mob that took Malaya. They're six footers. Wasn't small Japanese.
- 09:57 **Were the natives keen to get their hands on them as well?**
- 10:00 Used to give them a packet of cigarettes or a tin of tobacco which was one ounce and they'd bring them in bound up in this wait-a-while creeper, they'd truss them up like pigs with all these hooks, wire them like fish hooks and bounce them up and down and make sure they hit every rock before they brought them in. Poor Japanese you felt sorry for them,
- 10:30 poor bugger, I better put him out of his misery, no you better not because. One Yank told me, this was the only time I felt like winning a VC [Victoria Cross], not a Victorian casualty, when they heard they overran these Yanks some of them lost \$60 Yankee money, this Yank.
- 11:00 The Japs overran them and the Yank lost \$60. 'Say guys lost \$60 those Japs have got \$60 of mine,' and from then on we became Jap hunters looking around, dead or alive, never found it of course. Whoever did kept his bloody mouth shut whoever did.
- 11:30 That's the only time I felt brave, 'Oh well Wall 60 bucks'.
- 11:40 **Was there any time during those two times in New Guinea where you felt sorry for the Japanese?**
- 11:45 Never. No. You don't feel sorry. I wouldn't say that killing became,
- 12:00 after the first one you don't worry about it, you don't worry, just like they holding a smoke, you just forget about and you don't go and lose sleep. The first, with the Italian when you saw the photos of how they treated the Abyssinians
- 12:30 and that, you didn't, when we saw our boys the thirteen of them and they never they didn't know it was so wide, it was bloody wide there was 400 men sleeping in those places. When you saw, you forgot all about everything, became an enemy.
- 13:00 There was no brutality associated with it. But with, up there in the islands a different kettle of fish altogether, you felt no remorse whatsoever, in fact you took delight let's put it that way. If I could possibly say that, if anyone outside of a murderer, to say you take delight
- 13:30 in knocking a fellow man off but up there it was like you shoot a rabbit. That was it because of their treatment, away they went. The natives, you'd go to a village and they'd see when you recaptured it
- 14:00 they'd welcome you, they'd come and they'd cry. The womenfolk tell you what, some of them you'd get, 'em, their breasts were cut off, and raped, and all the rest of it, oh it was shocking. That's how it was and that's the way you can't blame them I suppose because that's the way they were taught,
- 14:30 after the rape of Nanking, rape their women and destroy them altogether. At the same time they were doing that what they're doing is breeding hatred. That was their mode of thinking, I can't think like them. At that particular time the emperor was everything.
- 14:59 **How about after the war? I guess with time passed did you hang on to those feeling?**
- 15:10 No. I didn't. My friend and I went to Kings Cross one night, years later, and the Japanese were there visiting and my friend walked away he was going to start a fight.
- 15:30 He walked away, I said, 'Don't be so ridiculous'. No you don't feel bitter towards them because they're a different race, a different period, different time and you don't, I admire the German and I like the Italian. No, I didn't.
- 16:00 Not then at that time. Don't forget this is war time and don't forget your life was on the line and that was the main thing. Self preservation is a predominant factor in this I can assure you. Save yourself Charlie, pull up the ladder I'm alright, I'm safe, 'I careth not for thee Jonathon'.

- 16:30 They were bloody filthy. Stunk to high hell.
- 16:42 **During all those years in battle around the world, in the Middle East and in New Guinea what do you think helped get you through it?**
- 16:53 Mates. Your mates, your friends.
- 17:00 It's like a family, it is a family and you'd sleep we had half a blanket, you'd cut it up because you couldn't be bothered carrying a full blanket because it got wet, everything got bloody wet and was heavy, and you cut your blanket in half and you shared a tent, a half tent, and you'd marry up the two
- 17:30 and the pair of you would get in together. Your clothes were damp all the time, ninety times out of hundred and that's where you were. You slept in this one man tent, if you had the tent to put up quite often we never. That's what you did. You became, your world of mateship was there. You look after your mate.
- 18:00 'Oh Christ no has he?' 'Let's get the bastards that got him,' and out you'd go. That's what it was. A battalion is a family, irrespective of rank, creed or colour. We had three Aborigines in my platoon and one became, oh well one
- 18:30 in the 7th battalion became the first army officer, Reg Saunders, he became the first army officer, the Tablelands when they sent him over to South Australia, he and a couple of other fellows sent him over there he did pips, an officer. Years later
- 19:00 when I rejoined, Reg and I were in the same party the 15th National Service and we'd sit up there, we were the only 17th brigade boys the only battalion brigade and we'd sit on the a wood heap at night time and bring a couple bottles of grog and we'd talk about the old times, we reminisced. Nine o'clock, ten o'clock at
- 19:30 night so when the lights were out all the Nasho's were in bed we'd just get up there occasionally and talk about the old times and what a difference it was, things like that. There's a bond. Unbreakable.
- 19:53 **After you came back from New Guinea and the war was over, how did you find it settling back in?**
- 19:59 Very hard.
- 20:00 Very difficult. Very difficult and you'd wander around job to job, things like that. You'd look for your mate, you'd go hunting for them. Nobody can talk the talk that old diggers, your mates can talk. I went back alright, I got a job on the foreshore of
- 20:30 St Kilda, that foreshore and I got malaria and the boss drove me home. Then I left there and I went and joined the fire brigade, metropolitan. Which incidentally sling in the eye for everybody, and was considered the best
- 21:00 fire brigade in the world. How it came about, how it comes about is this. These are insurance companies, they'd take our saviour off the cross, you know that, and leave your mark in mid air insurance companies they'd rob a flea his back legs and wouldn't even give him his op. Well, they assess the population
- 21:30 of the city, they assessed the value of the city and they assessed the fire damage and how many firemen are there and for protection what their damage is. They found out of Tokyo, New York, us all of Australia were the best. We had a band, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Band that one the title, the Australian title and when
- 22:00 they awarded the money, 500 pound or whatever it was, the board took it away from them. They said, 'The fire brigade', broke his heart Papa Johnson's heart he was the grandmaster broke his heart, 'We want to buy new instruments', 'No you're not getting it'. The band broke up, didn't work any more, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Band. We used to do, each Friday afternoon we put on
- 22:30 displays, climbing the ladder, jumping out athletic displays, building pyramids, tumbling, yeah for the public to come in.
- 22:43 **Were you in the band Wal?**
- 22:43 Band books was about the only thing I was in. No. I used to blow my own trumpet. No I was stringed instruments, guitars that was mine.
- 23:00 Well the wife's strung along with me all these years. I used to watch them. We lived in and had brass poles. When I first joined I said, 'Don't want to be too quick down there too quick, by the time I slipped down the two brass poles, they were coming back from the
- 23:30 job. From then on I became quick too. This is in Melbourne. We had the brass helmets. You'd looked the picture, real good. A tram, I caught when the Empire, not the Empire a big there in Melbourne

24:00 went, and I missed the bells. I rushed outside, what was the name of the theatre, The Regent, when the Regent went up in Collins Street. The bloody Regent Theatre goes up, it's above the Plaza down below another picture theatre that's down below underneath. So the roof is alight and we had a call out. I rushed out and there's a tram coming and I jumped on that and said, 'look' I'm in uniform I said, 'Collins Street there's a fire at the

24:30 Regent Theatre', 'Regent Theatre's on fire, right I'll drive you right down there'. They stopped him of course as they had the hoses right across the road and I jumped off the tram. I got a tram to the fire, real good you know.

24:47 **Dedicated fireman? How long out of the service were you before you married?**

24:58 A couple of years.

25:00 A fair while.

25:05 **You ended up having four kids?**

25:17 Yeah.

25:34 **Wal did any of your children in the service?**

25:38 Yes the boy Wallace, he went to Vietnam twice. He was born in the military camp. I was in miliary camp when they were born.

25:50 **What did your wife do?**

25:55 One was born when I was in the fire brigade.

26:00 Gwen was born in the fire brigade, Janet was born in the army, no she was born in the fire brigade, that's right. Wallace he went to Vietnam twice. He was a 5th and 6th Battalion.

26:22 **Did you share much of your experience with him before he left?**

26:26 No I just told him to be careful, watch

26:30 an experienced soldier. That's what I said, get near an experienced fellow who's been there, watch him. That's the only advice I could give him. Watch an old digger and you'll survive that's for bloody sure. That's all you can tell them, wish them luck and stick with an experienced digger. He survived so there must be something in it. He knows

27:00 the rules. He went to Vietnam he was in the company there. I went to join and they pulled us, put us in nasho service that was for Korea. They pulled us old fellows out and put us in the Nashos. Don't forget in the tablelands they pulled us out there three of us to go to the 9th Divi because the 9th Divi, the men were on leave and they

27:30 get the reinforcements in and the rest were on leave, the main body was on leave and the reinforcements was pouring in and there's not enough instructors so they pulled us, in the 5th 6th and 7th they pulled one sergeant from each. I was one of them. So down we go to the 9th Div and of course the 9th and 6th are like cats and bloody dogs, so we went down there.

28:00 The adjutant said, 'If they give you any trouble down there just come back and tell them to go and get nicked, and come back. You've got my support. Welcome with the flowers in May.' They welcomed us because they never had any instructors.

28:26 **What was it like going from been in the service during World War II to going back in to the army peace time and training up?**

28:39 A lot of, there's a great number of our boys the fellows I was with had been in the army so just like old times. We tell all the lies in the world of course.

29:00 They were there and they were a good group. With the National Service it'd break your heart when they'd walk in and march in and you'd get a look at them, and oh a straggly lot, scungy looking mongrels, how in the hell were these allowed to walk the streets and when they marched out, you bloody near cried when as saw them

29:30 march out, you were proud. Bloody look what I did, look at that, bloody beaut. The married men were called up. We used to tell them to ackwilly

29:49 **What did you mean by that?**

29:50 Well you've got to, after you leave the army you've got to do compulsory parade. Go ackwilly and come

- 30:00 back here for 30 days and you're finished with National Service all together. What would you be doing, I said, 'You'd be in the cook house or you'd be on the wood heap' . They're in the cookhouse pearl diving washing knives and forks.
- 30:24 **That's very kind of you?**
- 30:25 They used to thank me. After they finished in there, 'You beauty mate'.
- 30:30 They're on a farm, 27,000 acres or something like that the boy had and they're on this farm and he said, 'Right 30 days I don't have to go back anymore. Thank you'. When you went up to those districts, Swan Hill or any of those places you were welcome as the flowers in May, just pop in. They'd buy you a drink. They were good, and they straightened the men out.
- 31:00 It's a pity they don't have it on today. As I said you had three months at the time they came in they didn't know their left from their right, in fact you had to put, 'L' and, 'R' on their boots. You had to show them the way and when they went out, proud as punch that was good.
- 31:28 **So you enjoyed returning to the service?**
- 31:31 I enjoyed it. I don't know it may have gotten in to my blood. You've got to be silly but I enjoyed National Service days, yes.
- 31:45 **Given the experience you had New Guinea in the war, what possessed you to go back up to New Guinea?**
- 31:50 Army put me up there and I was training up there too.
- 32:00 When I got up there it was altogether a different kettle of fish, there was no enemy up there. The only enemy up there would be yourself I suppose.
- 32:11 **In what way?**
- 32:12 The demon drink, there was nothing else to do. I don't know. The army up there and that was it. They'd drive you mad, the boys.
- 32:30 It was quite good. When you PIR [Pacific Islands Regiment] they come from all over. You go out recruiting. Now you tell a boy's age you look at his mouth, you look at his teeth same you do as a horse. I kid you not. They don't know their age, they didn't register births or deaths. They used to say how many houses have
- 33:00 you lived in? They had a new house every three years or so. Then you assess their age and send them back and put them on the boat, we had a boat going around, it was a landing barge type. You'd get about 50 and away you'd go, open up a few tins of bully beef tell them not to eat too much away you'd take them back.
- 33:30 They'd get examined by the doctor. Open his mouth, 'Oh yeah he's old enough'. That was it. They'd put them in the army, gave them a pair of boots the first pair they'd ever worn in their life, taught them how to walk in them. That was it. They were all right. Used to fight with the police force, the army and the police force used to fight, we had several fights.
- 33:59 **What about?**
- 34:00 The coppers thought they were doing, native police, they thought they were superior to the army and they'd take the light and hit them over the head with their batons, which was half the size of a telegraph pole. Of course the soldier objected but everybody picked himself up, not that he hurt himself hitting him on the head you couldn't hurt him. He objected and of course the army would turn out and have a fight with the police.
- 34:30 This is fair dinkum, I kid you not. They bung on a blue [fight] and the next day it would be all quiet. The police and the army. It was funny.
- 35:00 This is how they are. When they're building Murray Barrack, this occurred, these two fellows, two boys, they're digging this trench, it was a main a water main going through and they're digging this trench pick and shovel. They get down about three feet, the water main so had to cover it all over and don't want to be too near the top.
- 35:30 They see this fellow, the supervisor the boss man there and he's standing under the tree drinking lolly water. One of them said to other which is in English, 'What was he doing up there, he we are slaving and here's that bloke the white man he's under the tree drinking lolly water and we're out here in the blazing
- 36:00 sun. I'll go and ask him.' So down he went with the pick out he got of the trench, walked up and he said to the boss man, 'How come we're down there working and you're up here?' he said, 'Because I've got



more brains', 'What do you mean you've got more brains?' he said, 'Well I'll show you,' and with that the boss man

36:30 put his lemonade, put his birch water down and he put his hand against the tree, he said, 'See that hand?' he said, 'Yeah' he said, 'hit it,' and the bloke went to punch and he pulled his hand away and the fist went straight in to the tree. So back he goes having to nurse his hand, back he goes to the trench, jumps down and his mates say, 'What happened? What's he up there for?' 'He's got more brains', 'What do you mean he's got more brains?' he said, 'See this hand?' [places hand in front of face] 'Yes'

37:00 'Well hit it'.

37:08 **I got the picture. We've got a few minutes left on this tape and I thought it would be lovely to end with your rendition of, 'A Rose In Her Hair'.**

37:20 'A Rose In Her Hair' was a beautiful song, Dick Powell used to sing it.

37:30 'In her eyes there's moonlight, and a rose in her hair, in my arms there was no one, so I just put her there. On her lips was a promise, in her my heart was a prayer, when I finally went I went home with the scent of the rose in her hair.

38:00 I met her out walking on a street corner there, and we started a talking about the rose in her hair, and she made a suggestion and I say but yes, when she finally went she went home with the rent and

38:30 a few bob to spare. When she finally went she went home with the rent and a few to bob spare.'

**INTERVIEW ENDS**